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ART AND THE PUBLIC GOOD: INTRODUCTORY REMARKS **BOJANA CVEJIĆ** MARKO KOSTANIĆ ART AND THE PUBLIC GOOD: INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BOJANA CVEJIĆ & MARKO KOSTANIĆ

Following the transformation of the global financial crisis into the global fiscal crisis, which was caused by using public money to bail out banks, as well as by falling tax revenues owing to the recession, governments across Europe launched their so-called austerity measures. Those measures, whose proclaimed aim is to boost the competitiveness of certain European states and avoid the downgrading of their credit ratings, mostly come down to lowering the cost of labour and privatising state-owned companies, the public sector and resources. Since the latest crisis arrived at a time when the left has been thoroughly deformed and destroyed by the neoliberal counterrevolution and the collapse of real-socialist countries, its regrouping and devising strategies of resistance to the austerity measures could only be articulated from a defensive perspective, however massive some of the protests might be. Across Europe, those different forms of protests, concerning issues ranging from education to urban planning, have spawned a common declarative denominator: the public good. Having served well for agitation and mobilisation purposes, the phrase should now become a site of hegemonic struggle regarding its definition and instrumentalisation, as productive as possible, for struggles that are yet to come. As we know, the phrase "the public good" received its original seal of approval, in academic and epistemological terms, in the enemy camp, the domain of neoclassical economics. According to the classification of goods by their "natural" characteristics, the public good is defined by the presence of the non-rivalry and nonexcludability of "consumption". Beside the problematic nature of defining goods from the perspective of consumption, key here was the wrong methodological turn of treating a given good primarily in accordance with its "natural" characteristics whilst utterly disregarding the social and institutional relations of its emergence and production, whereas those relations are in fact contingent on certain historical processes and political struggles and are never irreversible. In today's struggles for that which is collectively and democratically decided as part of the sphere of the public good, the first step should be to analyse the historical processes and political struggles that ground the social and institutional relations in which a given sector or resource is reproduced.

Among the arts, it is the non-mainstream, experimental segment of the performance field that has borne the brunt of the austerity measures, whereas Europe's performance artists, cultural workers, programmers, and producers have found themselves politically ill-equipped to act. To explain this peculiar paralysis, several developments over the past two decades should be noted. The shift toward the freelance production model in Western Europe during the 1980s was regarded as hard-won freedom of expression, freeing artists from their obligations to national and institutional norms of representation endorsed by repertoire venues. The ensuing decade was then marked by a proliferation of freelance artistentrepreneurs following the project model of production, as well as by performance scenes formed around venues of networks that produced and promoted this work mainly in Europe's capital cities. The internationalisation of these networks, now acting more like an institutional market, has induced artists to take pride in their "nomadicism", claiming an ever-increasing autonomy in terms of managing their work time.

The trend, which has been defended under the Post-Operaist Marxist concept of "immaterial labour" as characteristic of performance practice more than any other art, has not only helped us to understand how the temporal conditions of work in performance make it precarious, but also weakened the sense of belonging to a place and entitlement to material means of production on the part of artists. Local communities are thus underrated in favour of international. non-localisable actors and projects, whereby the definition of the "common" is relegated to "the commons", in other words the free distribution of performance by-products, such as methodological tools etc. In a structural sense, the commons cannot adequately replace the public good. Because it distinguishes and defends itself by means of the indeterminacy of value, the commons is able to remain in the private domain, that is, within networks of participating individuals, often bringing the financial and technical costs of work down to a minimum of indispensible funds, thereby relieving the state of its responsibility toward art. Artistic collaboration is then contained inside the frame of knowledge exchange among peers, which blurs or appeases their status of individual competitors in the field.

Although artists' self-organising is the most constructive derivative of institutional critique and a valuable, though mild, pacifying alternative to the neoliberal market logic, the praise of self-reliance and flexibility in "liquid times" plays into the hands of those who seek to eliminate public support for the arts. Another ambiguous trend that is currently begging for revision is the so-called educational turn in the arts: the lure of academic degrees has been cajoling artists into leaving the public scenes of production and moving to universities, just like the academia in the US became the refuge and oasis of nonmainstream art in the 1970s. Here the sequence of events has been rather cynical: as soon as artists are ennobled by the recognition and revalorisation of their work in the academic sphere, tuition fees rise and humanities and arts departments are forced to shrink.

The case of the Netherlands is a dire omen about the prospect of privatisation in the arts, culture, and education that is awaiting the whole of Europe. The statement given by the Dutch minister of culture that subsidising art is a hobby of the left announces the beginning of retaliation from the right against artists, viewed as only so many parasites taking advantage of the welfare state. The massive budget cuts in the Netherlands have resulted in the closure of the few production houses that fostered experimentation, research, and radical critical thinking. That artists have failed to mobilise in protests comparable to students' strikes, the "Occupy" and "Indignados" movements, is a symptom of their political handicap. The inoperativeness and conceptual weakness of the emerging debate rest on the defence of art as a "natural" public good in the above-mentioned sense of neoclassical economics. The argument isn't political, but a moral platitude, because it appeals to the dubious sensibility of governments, hoping to make them recognise the selfevident value of art.

By contrast, in the former socialist countries, for example, in Belgrade, the onslaught of cultural industries against the background of the cultural and ideological heritage of social ownership, or in Zagreb, the transformation of struggles for spaces of cultural production into anti-gentrification struggles for spatial justice, have induced an edgier political protest. Thus artists from these contexts, which the international free-market circulation has not yet fully absorbed, are aware of the need for "topological solidarity", a term borrowed from the "Other Scene", a Belgrade platform for independent art, cultural, and activist organisations, where the struggle for public venues and state funds provides immediate access to the political and economic structures of production. If the austerity measures generate real revolt, then the prospect of losing the abundant opportunities that the former welfare state used to offer in the West might actually give rise to an articulation of political concerns, not only in the name of a retrospective defence of art's autonomy anymore, but also in terms of other demands and claims of the public good, regarding education, healthcare, or perhaps even politics itself.

Attempts at linking the struggle for art and culture as a public good with, for instance, the struggle for free education or healthcare, as well as attempts by different agents in the art field to organise a common front, typically produce irresolvable contradictions. As we already pointed out, the public good is not a given, but always a result of political struggles and historical processes; therefore, articulating art as a public good tolerates no methodologies predicated on finding an inherent ahistorical quality of art that might legitimise it as a public good. Rather, one must examine those historical processes, political struggles, and social conditions from the perspective of a normatively and abstractly, publicly funded, and democratically governed artistic production accessible to all, because those processes, struggles, and conditions produced that situation in the first place. Above all, one must also bear in mind that those processes are not irreversible. The way in which art might function as a public good is a matter of political struggles that are yet to come, not of definitions laid out in advance.

* * *

The field of art and culture, as the social mechanism that we know today, is structurally determined by a large number of different

factors, which must be examined from different historical and analytical perspectives. In this issue of the TkH journal, we bring several of those perspectives. With regards to the historical genesis of autonomy, Boris Čučković looks at the problems of arguing for autonomy in today's struggles for publicly funded art and offers an overview of several theoretical-activist articulations that have tried to transcend the social contradictions that unavoidably arise. In his text, Boris Postnikov lays out the historical and economic conditions of the proliferation of advertising as the dominant model of creativity in contemporary capitalist society and, by means of positioning advertising in public space, implicitly reflects on the position of art and the effects of its operation in that same public space. Mario Kikaš analyses the points of contact between the contemporary field of art and that of the academia taking performance studies as a case study and outlining their epistemological origins and ahistorical postulates, and points to their definite analytical inadequacy at a time of crisis, which calls for artistic and political self-articulation. By analyzing the respective artistic procedures of two artists, Goran Trbuljak and Hans Haacke, Vesna Vuković attempts to revitalise the concept and practice of institutional critique, eliminating the tangles of kunsthistorical narratives and activating the potential of institutional critique for the sake of understanding the inherent politicality of art as a social practice. Nina Power looks at the London riots of July 2011 to consider the political and legal processes that divide the public sphere in public space into the "good" public that merely defends its own property and the "bad" public or "rabble", which arises against social injustice and democracy that is smothering the public in its original sense; Bruno Latour explains the relevance of the 1930s concept of the "phantom" or "eclipsed" public sphere (Walter Lippmann, John Dewey) as the basis for an epistemological and political method of examining matters of concern as opposed to so-called matters of fact, as well as the conditions of politics as an exceptional activity. Sigrid Merx considers the neoliberal shift in Dutch cultural politics in the wider historical framework of the Dutch liberal tradition, in relation to the question of art's autonomy and the elimination of art's public sector. Finally, performing a public theoretical debate between two conflicting ideological stances, Igor Dobričić defends the concept of the ontological and political unity of the private-public, while Merx responds with political arguments in favour of the necessity of distinguishing and separating the private from the public sphere. The issue closes with a theoretical comic by Ana Vujanović and Siniša Ilić DULL SMART MOBS.

ART AND THE PUBLIC GOOD: Introductory remarks Bojana cvejić & marko kostanić

THE ONLY GOOD PUBLIC IS A MOVING PUBLIC NINA POWER

THE ONLY GOOD PUBLIC IS A MOVING PUBLIC / NINA POWER

Who is this public? The one that silently demands "public art", who mutely requests "public order", who endlessly opines in the narrow voice of right-wing newspapers expressing some kind of locationless "public opinion"? And who is the other public? The public that desires and increasingly occupies space, the public that wants, expects and needs to be cared for in times of crisis, the public that believes in and aspires to the "good" but is never permitted to be the "good" public? The first public is mute but constantly chattering; the second public alive but constantly silenced. With the ongoing, and perhaps almost complete, destruction of the public sphere in the name of privitisation, individualism and competition, we are at the same time confronted with the necessary ghost of the acceptable public, the one invoked by the state in the name of the preservation of order. This is the mute, static public used against the mobile, protesting public: the punishment of those involved in defending public services against austerity measures are punished precisely in the name of this other public, like two sides in a war where each participant perversely takes the same name. One of these publics is apparently unified in their outrage, right-thinking and eternal; the other is messy, unpredictable and prone to insurrection: one public must constantly be invoked to beat the other, yet the one that usually "wins" is a phantom and the one that loses, a reality obscured.

But who exactly, from the standpoint of the state, is the good public? This is the public on whose behalf the courts and the judiciary are endlessly aggrieved. In the appeals following long prison sentences for crimes committed during the English "riots" of August 2011, Lord Judge, The Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales made very clear the separation between an always-already shocked public and a shocking, mobile public: 'There can be very few decent members of our community who are unaware of and were not horrified by the rioting which took place all over the country between 6th August and 11th August 2011'.1 The public of this "community" terrified by 'the ghastliness inflicted' by the 'lawlessness' of this month are "aghast". Etymologically speaking, they have seen a ghost.² But, because the world is the wrong way up, they fail to realise that they are the ghost, and that the judges are speaking on behalf of someone that does not exist. We are not even confronted with Deleuze's claim regarding "the indignity of speaking for others"³ but of the far stranger idea of, from the legal standpoint, "the necessity of speaking for non-existent others": the law must punish on behalf of mythical offended others, because to punish for its own sake would be to scandalously admit that this is, in fact, its entire reason for existing. The law constantly reinforces its own identity by segregating members of the public-

1 Blackshaw, R. v (Rev 1) [2011] *EWCA Crim 2312* (18 October 2011). Available here: http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Crim/2011/2312.html

2 c.1300, agast, «terrified,» pp. of M.E. agasten «to frighten» (late 13c.), from a- intensive prefix + 0.E. gæstan «to terrify,» from gæst «spirit, ghost».

3 Intellectuals and power: A conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze' http://libcom.org/library/intellectuals-power-a-conversation-between-michel-foucaultand-gilles-deleuze 12

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who-are-no-longer-included in the name of a public-that-doesn'texist. Listen to the Judge in the riots appeal again:

There is an overwhelming obligation on sentencing courts to do what they can to ensure the protection of the public, whether in their homes or in their businesses or in the street and to protect the homes and businesses and the streets in which they live and work. This is an imperative.⁴

The obligation "overwhelms": the best the courts can do is deter through the excessive punishment of individuals stripped out of their collective setting but punished on behalf of the "mob", the "rabble", the crowd. This is an imperative: The imperative that announces itself in the form of an imperative: The law is the law. This public is the public of property, of course (homes, businesses) and although they do not own the streets, they are permitted by the good God of the public overseer to "live and work" in them. The ghost-public of

THE ONLY GOOD PUBLIC IS A MOVING PUBLIC / NINA POWER

the protester/rioter is nevertheless capable of 'causing injury and damage and fear to even the most stout-hearted of citizens', where stout conjures images of thick beer, roundedness and courage, yet is afraid, always afraid, of the shattering of the thin glass of "public peace". Listen to the voice of another judge, in 1970, where a student protest at Cambridge University was deemed to have become a riot:

When there is wanton and vicious violence of gross degree the court is not concerned with whether it originates from gang rivalry or from political motives. It is the degree of mob violence that matters and the extent to which the public peace is broken...

Any participation whatever, irrespective of its precise form, in an unlawful or riotous assembly of this type derives its gravity from becoming one of those who by weight of numbers pursued a common and unlawful purpose. The law of this country has always leant heavily against those who, to attain such a purpose, use the threat that lies in the power of numbers...

In the view of this court, it is a wholly wrong approach to take the acts of any individual participator in isolation. They were not committed in isolation and, as already indicated, it is that very fact that constitutes the gravity of the offence.⁵

The breaking of a public peace (the silence of ghosts) by those who "by weight of numbers" abuse it, who play upon "the threat that lies in the power of numbers" is intolerable. The law must punish individuals, of course, but this punishment must be amplified, multiplied in inverse proportion to the "threat of numbers". The arithmetic of the state will take individual actions and punish them to the power of whatever it feels like. The invoking of the silent public who demands peace against the individual who invokes the wrong kind of collective hides yet another subject, however: let us call this the class-subject that is committed to its own self-perpetuation, as opposed to the class that is dedicated to its own abolition. We could equally say of the ruling class that 'it is a wholly wrong approach to take the acts of any individual participator in isolation' because the class operates in the interests of itself, not only as individuals and on behalf of individuals, but as a collective subject that gains its power from the coupling of the exploitation of others coupled with the myth that it is comprised of atomized entities that look out only for themselves.

But sometimes the law forgets itself, and forgets where it usually carves up "the public", the "legal person" and "the law" itself. Last year, 145 protesters who sat down in a London shop to protest the fact that its owners avoid paying tax were arrested, stripped, given white outfits and redistributed across the city. They were given a date to appear in court. Yet, as 145 separate individuals, how could they possibly all fit in to the dock, designed perhaps for a maximum of twelve individuals? They couldn't of course, and the law had forgotten

5 R v Caird [1970] 54 Cr. App. R 499 at 506.

R v Blackshaw, cited.

that it cannot, according to its own rules, punish groups as groups, but only as individuals belonging to these groups. The arithmetic of the law had forgotten to show its working-out. The law would of course like to directly punish the bad public, the moving public, the public that self-organises and uses "public" space in a way that is faithful to the original meaning of the word – pertaining to the people – rather than as scared individuals scurrying alone through regimes of private property (businesses, homes, the surrveilled streets). But in order to defend property the law must invent and stick by the individual - the one who can and must be punished on behalf of the bad public, all the while invoking the only collective subject it can tolerate, and requires (the good public, the community). The law makes a revealing mistake when it forgets to punish individuals as representatives of groups and goes directly for the group itself. When several people alleged to have committed a serious public order offence are up in court together, for example during the Miners' strikes in the 1980s, they are often acquitted, according to one Barrister, because the jury 'falls in love' with their solidarity, their collectivity. So the courts shift back to punishing in single file, before shoving numbers into overcrowded jail cells where stepping out of line or organizing is swiftly curtailed by prison guards and endless transfers to other prisons.

What does all this *legal* stuff mean for art? For an art that strives to be public, that feels some connection to the public (as that which it wants to touch, interrogate, question, or be questioned by)? What does this mean for an art that desires or depends upon the "public purse"? The silent, ghost public perhaps deserves some of the "public art" put up in its name, as that which is loved by no one, literally. But the other public, the mobile, punished public creates something else: an art that is public perhaps, or a collective blurring of the boundary between the public and art itself. Against the legal artist-subject we can oppose the illegal artist-collective, the not-whole whose mobility creacks open the real illusion of the "good public" which exists nowhere and to which no one belongs, yet whose spectre hovers over every arrest, trial and prison in the land.

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AUTONOMY TODAY / BORIS ČUČKOVIĆ

AUTONOMY TODAY Boris čučković

Sooner or later, the conjunction of art and public good must broach the issue of the autonomy of art. The institutional semblance of its autonomy serves to distance art from the public sphere and thereby becomes an unavoidable subject in any consideration of that conjunction. Such a veneer of autonomy effects the refraction of political and economic pressures into specifically artistic issues. But is that really the only form of autonomy that we can think of today? Can autonomous art address the issue of public good? In this brief survey, I will take the concept of autonomy through the turbulent contemporary context of publicly funded culture, meandering through different understandings and determinations in relation to one of the key but often abandoned commonplaces of art.

The roots of the concept of autonomy are well known. They are often read in terms of the formalist tradition, which uses the concept to signify art that makes up its own rules and laws that are not linked to the everyday, whereby its artistic value does not refer to social or political values. Understanding the concept of autonomy in those terms is a product of modern, bourgeois society. The decline of aristocratic and church patronage toward the end of the 18th century left art devoid of its erstwhile social functions. Artists could no longer produce their works for specific patrons, but were forced to offer them to the market. Therefore, the birth of the modern artist was linked to the emancipation from feudal hierarchy, as well as to the emergence of the increasingly powerful art market.¹

The modernist myth of autonomous art, separate from society and politics, as well as, later, the collapse of that myth, which served as the foundation of many successful academic careers, are two important historical constituents of the contemporary art field and political processes related to it. Individual rhetorics linked to contemporary cultural politics read and use the concept of autonomy in different ways. In Britain, for instance, Third Way politics saw autonomy as an obstacle to its declared desire to restore the social function of art.² According to the vision of that cultural policy, the road to public good lay in linking art with certain important functions of the state. Andy Hewitt of the University of Wolverhampton has detected three types of rhetoric that characterised Third Way cultural policies (Hewitt 2011). First, the rhetoric of art as a form of cultural democracy emphasised that art institutions and the art they mediate could open up a space as a public sphere for debate on contemporary social issues, which could contribute to the revitalisation of civil society. Second, the rhetoric of art as an economic driver encouraged instrumentalising art for the sake of "urban regeneration" and the "re-branding" of Britain's post-industrial cities, for instance, by means of art biennials.

1 Adorno's influential view of the genesis of the modern understanding of art emphasises precisely the market's key role and places the autonomy of art in a relation with the process of its commodification. Cf. Hamilton 2011.

2 The Third Way here signifies the policies that New Labour enacted in Britain during their time in power, between 1997 and 2000.

Finally, the rhetoric of art as social amelioration, as the Third Way's declared policy ambition, was meant to improve the social standing of the lower classes by generating new possibilities for "economically marginalised" citizens, primarily in terms of encouraging them to participate in art and culture, which would supposedly inspire them to ascend the social ladder (Hewitt 2011, 2).

In Hewitt's view, those rhetorics of Third Way cultural policy are actually a distortion of the public sphere qua democratic communication between the state and its citizens, using art to generate an impression of positive social change, while state policy was in fact continuing the privatisation of the public sector, diminishing the transparency of governance and deepening social division (Hewitt 2011, 20). Another important experience of neoliberalism relates to understanding the (failed) model of social inclusion through culture. which cannot substitute social equality in economic terms. At the same time, the art field has not withdrawn from problematising public good within its specific semblance of autonomy, but plays an active part in the process of modifying the domain of public good for the sake of the dominant class. What exactly constitutes public good is posed here as an ideological question, or in Hewitt's own words: "public good might be beneficial to one social group but detrimental to another" (Hewitt 2011, 20). In that sense, cultural workers, artists or intellectuals, assume the role that Bourdieu has assigned to them - that of an underprivileged faction of the dominant class, which uses its own specific form of power to realise the interests of the dominant (Bourdieu 2005).

Unlike Britain's New Labour, the Dutch experience shows that the neoliberal has no need for public culture, not even as a smokescreen. The wider populist rhetoric of that political (sub)option, which takes great care to include an overview of the issue of immigrants as job snatchers, also covers the above-described role of diverting attention away from the class issue, which lies at the core of the problem of determining public good. In such a situation, deprived of the function that the neoliberal left had assigned to it and that it formerly carried out in ways comparable to the above-described British model, culture comes into the firing line of austerity measures as the cure for public debt and economic crisis. That is the source of the specific problem that marks any notion of resistance to such measures — should resisting aim to problematise public good or merely to restore its erstwhile positions and ideological functions?

Again, in such contexts, the concept of autonomy can help us to carve out our positions within the art field. In fact, the notorious Dutch state secretary for education, culture, and science, Halbe Zijlstra, has been using the concept of autonomy to defend the logic of cuts in his sector — if you are autonomous from society, then you need no state funding. The answer to such a political articulation of the issue of public funding in art has been twofold. On the one hand, some have AUTUNUMY TUDAY / boris čučković

abandoned the concept of autonomy altogether, though with different motives. For those institutions that can fit inside the right's distinctive view of art, whereby art is supposed to maintain the national identity. the aim is to demonstrate one's social relevance precisely in those terms and thus secure funding. In the Netherlands, this would refer to those institutions that house artworks from the country's golden age, for instance, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Those institutions that can offer their specific skills and bodies of knowledge to the market, such as new media institutes, which were state-funded until recently, lose every semblance of their autonomy in the process of presenting their applicability in the so-called creative industries. Finally, the main line of argumentation against the cuts, or simply the most readily visible one in protest actions, calls for a return to the most comfortable situation, akin to the above-described British example, negating art's autonomy by pointing to its social functions in generating an atmosphere of tolerance and cultural inclusion. Especially emphasised is the function of art (as a means of control?) in educating its audiences to adapt to the new environment, where "knowledge and information circulate in a visual form".³

On the other hand, an interesting response to the current situation in culture that I would like to pinpoint here has been articulated through The Autonomy Project, a collaboration of a group of cultural and university workers, artists and theorists.⁴ The project initially developed in the context of the Netherlands, but now also has participants from Britain and Germany, as well as other European countries. Instead of leaving the concept of autonomy to its function in justifying the cuts, the project has taken up to redefine autonomy in the current context. Its participants have recognised the cuts, which have spared only those modes of cultural production that may be used and subject to the market - mostly that which we have grown accustomed to calling the creative industries - as an ideological project that seeks to eradicate what used to be considered "autonomous experimenting". They view it as a weapon meant to effect a total depoliticisation of art. Fully aware of the concept's problematic past, they have engaged in a critical reconsideration of renewing the potential of autonomy and its possible forms today.

For John Byrne of The Liverpool Academy of Arts, a critical reconsideration of the concept of autonomy enables detecting key points that are relevant to any re-evaluation of the social role and function of contemporary art practices (Byrne 2010). In his view, one of those points is the inseparability of art from the commodified and globalised spheres of media and mass culture. Indeed, we may view the world of art today as just another specific niche, as only one among many different options of contemporary mainstream culture. In that sense, contemporary artists re-use existing media and

3 For more, see the letter to Mr. Zijlstra sent by a group of Dutch cultural workers: http:// classic.skor.nl/article-5520-nl.html?lang=en, 10 June 2011 (8 April 2012).

4 The Project's website is at http://theautonomyproject.org.

cultural forms, trying to direct our attention to an art world and an art object whose critical, social, and political value was lost long ago in its status as globalised luxury/leisure commodity (Byrne 2010, 16). Byrne considers that cliché of contemporary art industry analogous to the similar current situation in the advertising, television, and film industries — the absolute freedom of inscribing one's project into the dominant cultural economy. That is why in Byrne's opinion critical autonomy must resist the myth of occupying an artistic position outside of the economic system. What he calls for is, as he puts it, a "Napster moment" of art — "a way of re-thinking and re-routing the circuits through which art is produced, distributed, evaluated, and consumed" (Byrne 2010, 20).

Byrne points to the central role of the art object's commodity form and thus expects its "Napster moment" to occur/be found inside the art market. But as the history of modern art teaches us, the institution of art most easily assimilates those modes of resistance that do not even try to elude the market but simply reproduce the logic of capitalism. Remember, for Adorno, by contrast, autonomy emerges precisely as antithetic to the market. Can we reconcile Byrne's notion of critical autonomy, which does not flee the socialeconomic hierarchy but is to be realised within it, with resistance to the market?

For Joana Ozorio de Almeida Meroz, another participant of The Autonomy Project, the modern conception of autonomy stems from a society that subscribes to the abstract conception of freedom. According to Hegel, abstract freedom signifies an absence of external obstacles: I am free when I can do what I want to do and am not hindered by anyone. It is important to note that this does not mean that obstacles are not really there; rather, they are simply not sensed or perceived. This conception of freedom is inscribed in the foundations of neoliberal society and Meroz warns us that what we consider "autonomous identities" comes out precisely out of the social-economic system (market) in which we live (Almeida Meroz 2011). Therefore, the abstract conception of freedom figures as one of the strongest sections on the free market's defensive front. Through the lens of abstract freedom Meroz also views Adorno's well-known circular definition of autonomous art as that which performs its social function inasmuch as it does not have one. From the perspective of a critique of autonomy, that could also be said in the following way: "I am autonomous when I can do what I want and society does not interfere with my choices" (Almeida Meroz 2011, 66). In that vicious cycle, autonomy exists only for its own sake.

For the sake of arriving at a different articulation of the autonomy of art, Meroz advocates moving the autonomy debate into the realm of substantive freedom. Alternatively, we might clearly reformulate that in the spirit of political philosophy: autonomy *qua* freedom *from* – society, the state, the market – must be transformed and constituted

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as freedom *for/to.* In that perspective, autonomous subjects emerge only in relation to inequalities in the socio-economic hierarchy.⁵ Only such a redefinition of autonomy may come to connect art with public good. The question of what does and what does not constitute the domain of public good arises at that moment when the inequality of social groups results in one group's monopolising the right to use certain resources and services and excluding all others. Autonomy *for* political acting as a reaction to adverse redefinitions of public good, which characterise the neoliberal commodification of public services, complements the autonomy of artistic activity in materialising those "Napster moments", which resist market definitions of the cultural field and society in general.

To defend funding art with public money and abandon the autonomy of art all too easily means at the very least to abandon an important section of the front without a fight. The question is whether art is capable of defending itself on its own. A possible way out might be to use the function of art's critical autonomy in other sections of the struggle for public good. At any rate, the political content of the struggle for public good remains in constant search of a form that will be effective in representing public good as a real site of struggle. The project of negating autonomy has failed; what we need is to build art as an autonomous practice that will materialise the relevant political issues of its time.

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AN ARGUMENT FOR AUTONOMY: THE MISSING LINK IN THE DISCURSIVE ARFNA SIGRID MERX

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AN ARGUMENT FOR AUTONOMY: The missing link in The discursive arena Sigrid Merx

As in many other countries the arts in the Netherlands are under attack. They are facing not only outrageous budget cuts from the government, but also increasing hostility in public discourse. Spending public money on art is no longer considered self-evidently justifiable. And although the government has not gone as far as to eliminate all spending on culture, it has radically redefined the conditions under which artists and cultural institutions can gualify to receive funding. These conditions are drenched in the neoliberal market ideology. The message of the state is clear: the arts are part of the market system and have to operate according to its rules. The value of art in general is not denied, but expressed solely in economic terms. Art is not accepted as an autonomous domain, a distinctive field of knowledge production that is valuable as such and worth protecting. Autonomy no longer seems to be a valid argument in the Dutch debate about art. For some, as I will show, this has come as a bitter surprise. However, as I will argue, it is mainly the field of art itself that has contributed to the disappearance of autonomy as a useful tool of argumentation in the discursive arena.

THE MOTHERLAND OF LIBERALISMS In a recent article responding to the austerity measures that are affecting culture across Europe, German theatre maker Alex Karschnia, who, together with his performance group and company&Co resided in the Netherlands for many years, described my country as "the motherland of liberalisms". The qualification can be linked to a mix of popular images that trigger envy in some and repulsion in others: scarcely clothed gays parading on boats through the canals of our capital city; legal soft drugs on every corner; immigrants welcomed with open arms, provided with housing and education; healthcare and education available for everyone; people dying whenever they choose to with help from their doctors; autonomous art supported without any state meddling, no matter how experimental or avant-garde.

In this context, Karschnia describes the Dutch theatre landscape with a considerable note of envy: generously supported by the state, comprising not only big, representative houses, but also a vast network of independent ensembles, post-academic training facilities, and free production venues where young and innovative artists can independently pursue their work. As Karschnia emphasises, in Germany and elsewhere in Europe independent artists may only dream of such a state of affairs. Karschnia rightly traces the origins of this "miracle of Dutch theatre" back to 1969 when a group of young theatre makers began expressing their discontent in public, with the artistic quality as well as hierarchical structure of the heavily subsidised state theatres.

The protest — *Aktie Tomaat* — was named after the now famous "tomato-throwing incident" of 9 October 1969, when a couple of student actors deliberately disturbed a performance of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* by the Dutch Comedy. This incident launched a series of

debates about the state of theatre in the Netherlands that revealed both a looming generational conflict and a rapidly changing society. Young theatre makers felt that theatre was "dead". In their view, the repertoire was outdated, there was no investigation of new artistic forms, and the connection with the audience and society had been lost. The world, they argued, called for a theatre that could directly engage the most pressing issues of society: the war in Vietnam, the inequality between men and women, unemployment, and so on. They believed that the younger generation could play an important part in renewing theatre, in communicating directly with its audience, but felt that the state theatres' conservative hierarchical structures were depriving them of any influence.



The minister of culture at that time, Marga Klompé – and I think that was the real "miracle" of Dutch theatre – took their complaints seriously and decided in 1970 to effect a radical restructuring of Dutch theatre infrastructure and to redistribute available funding accordingly. One of her famous initiatives was a special budget for experimental and innovative work. As a result, all kinds of small groups, collectives, and ensembles popped up like mushrooms, some of which are still active today. This was the beginning of the development of today's unique and heterogeneous Dutch theatre landscape that Karschnia praises so much. However, much has changed, as not only Karschnia, but also many others in Europe and beyond have recently discovered. The purported motherland of liberalisms has thus revealed itself as a new model of restrictive rightwing politics with disastrous effects for, among many other aspects of life, the arts.

□ PHOTO OF THE PROTEST "MARS DER BESCHAVING" (CIVILIZATION MARCH) TAKEN BY FRANK KRESIN ON JUNE 27TH 2011 IN THE HAGUE (MALIEVELD).

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AN IDEOLOGICAL U-TURN? Since the Netherlands' present right-liberal minority government was elected in October of 2010, with crucial political support from the far-right Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV), the Netherlands has rather quickly shaken off its soft liberal feathers. The "achievements" of this apparent ideological U-turn, to name but a few, include the introduction of a ban on all face-covering veils, a service for lodging complaints about Polish workers, and an integration test for all immigrants that is so difficult that even Dutch citizens have trouble passing it. One of the latest pieces of evidence presented as an argument against subsidising art is an unprecedented slash in cultural spending, especially when it comes to experimental and non-mainstream art. The resulting severely limited arts budget is mainly used to support structurally a selective group of big cultural institutions, such as the National Ballet. National Theatre. and the Rijksmuseum, which are supposed to be representative of our national culture and preferably have an international appeal. Together, they form the so-called "Basic Infrastructure" (BIS). No doubt, the independent scene is under siege.

In total, the arts in the Netherlands are facing a 20% cut in spending (200 million Euros); the performing arts have been hit even harder, up to 50%. Although the budget cuts in the arts are part of a much broader package of austerity measures affecting healthcare, social security, education, and development aid – according to the government to fight off the financial crisis – it is clear that the arts have been hit disproportionately hard. At the same time, it is obvious that the 200 million Euros taken away from the arts will be a mere drop in the ocean of national financial needs. In the art field, this has led to the conviction that the government is deliberately picking on the arts, a view reinforced by continuous populist culture-bashing coming from Geert Wilders's far-right party, the PVV. Masters of rhetoric, Wilders and his party colleagues regularly disqualify art as "a left-wing hobby" and artists as nothing more than "subsidy eaters".

In his article, Karschnia notes his surprise at the absence of a public cultural mandate in the Netherlands. There has been no nationwide protesting to engulf the country. No one has taken to the streets to reclaim "their" art. No theatres have been occupied, as they have been in Italy and Greece. On the contrary, Karschnia observes, large segments of Dutch society seem quite compliant with the new populism. He concludes his article with a call on all cultural workers to unite and raise their voice! However, when it comes to defending the arts, I have noticed that the field itself has trouble speaking with one voice. Defending against what or whom? And more importantly, defending on what grounds? What has struck me about the debate is that trying to secure recognition for art by invoking its autonomy appears to be taboo. Although in different ways and with different interests at heart, advocates and opponents of the austerity measures alike go to great lengths in claiming that art can and should fulfil goals beyond art itself, such as social cohesion or economic profit.

In my belief, this is not helpful for securing a position for the arts in society in the long run. I will presently take a closer look at the debate and examine the different strategies of thinking that deny art its autonomy, so that I may challenge their effectiveness toward the end of the article.

MORE THAN ARTISTIC QUALITY..." Thus the motto of the current Dutch government's cultural policy. The idea that ultimately art must lead to something other than itself could not be expressed more clearly. Artistic quality, according to Halbe Zijlstra, the state secretary for art and culture, is only the starting point in deciding about funding art. Central to Zijlstra's thinking strategy is his conceptualisation of artistic quality in terms of "creativity". Culture, Zijlstra argues, produces creativity. Creativity is a prerequisite for both artistic quality and successful entrepreneurship. Against all economic trends, he remarks, cultural industries are growing. The same creativity that is used to produce high-quality works of art should be employed to find and keep new audiences. Budget cuts, Zijlstra argues, help to create an independent, strong and flexible cultural sector.

Obviously, the discursive frame Zijlstra employs is thoroughly economic. Creativity is posited as an economic force. Artists and cultural institutions are addressed as cultural entrepreneurs. In order to qualify for money they have to demonstrate their shrewdness in exploring new financial sources and strategic partners as well as ability to attract large and broad audiences and generate, at least partly, their own funding. The legitimacy of art is understood purely in neoliberal terms. Whoever is able to create or find their market, has a right to exist. Therefore it is hardly surprising that in prioritising its budget allocations the government has mainly chosen to support creative industries (economic development!) and those cultural institutions that are representative of the national culture (tourism!) and have an international appeal (cultural diplomacy!). Finally, cultural education is supported on the grounds that it stimulates creativity (that is, guarantees a steady supply of cultural entrepreneurs in the future!). Thus we may conclude that the government only superficially seems to accept art as a distinct field of production, in the sense that it produces a special kind of knowledge: creativity. But in the end of the day, its products serve a higher good: the economy. Art, like all other public domains, is subject(ed) to the logic and reality of the market.

Paradoxically enough, the fiercest opponents of funding art with public money do recognise, in a way, the arts as an autonomous sphere. However, in this populist discourse art's distinct position is used to suggest that art is different from other domains of the public sphere in a negative sense. Following the populist logic that whatever is different must be excluded or expelled, art is discursively positioned outside the public sphere. It is repeatedly stressed that AN ARGUMENT FOR AUTONOMY: The missing link in The discursive arena Sigrid Merx

art and artists are good for nothing (not even for themselves) and only cost us money. In a way, we could understand this as the idea of art's autonomy at its most radical: art serves nothing and therefore might as well not exist. Populist politicians use the "autonomy" claim to reassert their view that no money at all should go for such nonsense.

I would argue that, more than the announcement of the austerity measures, it is this populist discourse that has triggered the most emotional reactions in the cultural field. Its insensitive denigration of the arts has fired a burning desire to prove those culture-bashers wrong. However, as any art activist might tell us, trying to counter populist discourse requires its own strategies. Based neither on arguments nor on facts, but solely on perception and fiction, people mistakenly think that revealing fiction as fiction does the trick. Unfortunately, this method is unproductive, because not only is the



discourse not grounded in the facts, it is also radically indifferent to them. Constructing fictions is merely a strategic political choice, made to attract votes and please the crowds that feel excluded or neglected. There is no better cure than picking on others instead. No kind of truth will cause people to miss out on that pleasure.

Nonetheless, in response to all the accusations some have resorted to defending the arts by arguing that art is indeed a part of society, has things to offer, does not only cost money, and that it is thus valuable. To support this argument, two hefty piles of reports are typically put on the table, one calculating the economic benefits of art and culture to the public, the other demonstrating the positive effects of culture on social issues such as lack of social cohesion

□ PHOTO BY VO! OPERA ON JUNE 27TH 2011 DURING DE MARS DER BESCHAVING (CIVILIZATION MARCH) IN THE HAGUE. THE SIGN SAYS "KEEP THEATRE IMMORTAL" and respect, youth unemployment, and failing integration. As much as I understand and sympathise with the need to defend art, I truly believe that this line of argument is unproductive, not only due to the logic of the populist discourse as explained earlier, but above all because by trying to fight populist ideas one ends up affirming, no doubt unwittingly, the government's thinking that art can and must serve other, economic, goals.

Of course, for many on the government's side, the argument is a strategic one. In order to qualify for state funding and be included in the basic infrastructure one has to convince the state of one's entrepreneurial qualities. Again, this line of argument is highly understandable, but it is more about defending one's own position than defending art. One wonders if indeed it might eventually help us to build and sustain the idea that art is an indisputable and vital aspect of society, beyond political misconceptions of the day and relieved of quantifying measurements of its value.

THE TABOO ON AUTONOMY Stressing the social benefits of art is a recurring theme in Dutch policies on art and culture. It is a tradition for which we may very well be paying the price now. In the 1950s it was the government that emphasised art's role in educating the classes and strengthening moral values. Obviously, this was a top-down vision, based on the idea that elitist high culture should be brought to the people. In the late 1960s it was the young artists, mentioned before, who called on the older generation to get down from their ivory tower, to meet the public, and critically engage with social issues. By contrast, their approach was radically bottom-up. Of course, their engagement was part of a much broader social development that influenced contemporary politics and was reflected in the art policies of the '70s. During the '80s the government for the very first time refrained from making any claims or expressing any ideologically charged visions regarding art and its role in society. The government showed a hands-off attitude, operating in a practical and businesslike manner. In the '90s, as Camiel van Winkel argues, the art world made the unforgivable mistake of resuming, once again, the discussion of art and society, instead of cherishing its autonomous position.

In the 1990s the government began receding from the public sphere, handing over more and more of its responsibilities to the local levels of government and social and cultural players in the field. Artists and local authorities were increasingly teaming up and cultural institutions grew into powerful players in local politics. According to Van Winkel, artists couldn't wait to jump in to re-stitch the social fabric with socially engaged projects of all kinds, whereby they consciously sacrificed their autonomy for the sake of political power and legitimacy. Step by step, art got incorporated into the bureaucratic world of funding projects, project reports, feasibility studies, evaluations, and the like, in which it is still trapped today. AN ARGUMENT FOR AUTONOMY: The Missing Link in The Discursive Arena Sigrid Merx

Van Winkel rightly notes the many similarities between then and now. However, the crucial difference is that first, one does not need to prove art's social significance anymore, but rather its economic value and second, until recently, money was hardly an object and projects were mushrooming all over the country, whereas today the money tap is no longer running at all.

Somewhat cynically and slightly exaggerating, we could say that robbed of its social significance, art is now left with nothing but the skill of writing project proposals and funding applications; a skill most useful for securing a place in the system. But what might have happened if the idea of a radical autonomy of art had not been taboo for so long? Would it be easier, then, to resist the current trend? Would it be easier to mount a convincing attack against the populist argumentation and its underlying ideology from the inside, instead of merely criticising the government for implementing the new measures too quickly, giving cultural institutions too little time to adapt to their new roles as economically viable cultural entrepreneurs? Would it be easier now to defend art as a public good that is not meant for all and that does not target everyone, but remains open to whoever is interested in it?

The reality is that our performance in the ongoing debate has been under the mark. At any rate, I feel that I have failed in defending the arts, since making a plea for the autonomy of art in an article is not the same as actively claiming that autonomy, nor will this article change my government's thinking on the matter. Maybe there has been enough of talking. It might be a better idea to let art do the talking from now on. I am romantic enough to believe that thankfully, there will always be activist artists who can do no different than place themselves deliberately outside the system or on its borders. so as to be able to mirror, critique, or distort it; to carve out their own autonomy if society is not willing to honour it. I will take my hat off to them and applaud them. I am realistic enough to know that I do not have that courage, that I am among those who remain, although critically, within the system, trying to make the best of it given the circumstances, waiting till the hard times have passed (because I do believe that they will pass, if only due to the nature of political conjunctures). And yes, I am religious enough to realise that these activists are my indulgence.

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]]]] HOW ART WORKS (AND NOT WHAT IT SHOWS) / Vesna vuković

The purpose of this text is neither to celebrate the "heroic age" of the art of institutional critique nor lament over its institutionalisation, even though it begins by discussing several works by two of its notable representatives, those of Goran Trbuljak in their socialist context and Hans Haacke in the liberal-democratic context and then by and large remains in the domain of analysing their works. The ensuing analysis will turn away from aesthetic to poetic reflection, which is where I would locate the critique determined by their generic identification. Understood in those terms, institutional critique becomes relevant again in today's circumstances: on the one hand, it rids us of our disappointment over its institutionalisation and, on the other, by insisting on self-change and a radicalisation of poetics, it opens a new perspective, beyond specific disciplines of art and with regards to their changed historical circumstances.

In 1969, Goran Trbuljak would "occasionally wiggle his finger through a hole in the door of the Modern Gallery, without the management knowing anything about it". This innocuous, we might even say childish gesture marked the beginning of Trbuljak's artistic activity, while critics and historians of art consider it one of the first examples of so-called institutional critique in the Yugoslav context. Childish or innocuous, it started and set the direction of his focus on the system of art, its institutions, power relations and conditions that inform the making of artworks. Two years later, in 1971, at the Gallery of the Student Centre in Zagreb he exhibited "just" a poster that featured a photo of him and the following statement: "I do not want to show anything new or original". In 1973, Trbuljak got a chance to have his first solo exhibition, at the Zagreb Gallery of Contemporary Art and again, he only exhibited a poster, this time featuring a photograph of the Gallery with the following caption: "The fact that someone got a chance to have an exhibition is more important than what that exhibition will show".

We will leave aside all interpretations that might talk about procedures inherited from conceptual art, about "dematerialising" or eliminating the artwork qua object, as well as those that might view Trbuljak's procedure of rejecting conventional modes of production and presentation as an already inscribed self-critique of the artist's inevitable fall into the trap of authorship, or as enhancing his position as a charismatic figure or, if you like, star (see Bago 2007). Outside of such perspectives, I want to turn to that aspect of Trbuljak's practices which might point us, as I will argue, in the direction of reading their potentials beyond merely concluding that even in a socialist society there could be art practices that criticised the system of art and its specific rules. In the context of a socialist state in which criticising capitalist society and its forms of privatisation did not only permeate social life, but also represented the dominant mode of articulating its political project, whose horizon was the construction of a communist society, those examples might be branded as not really radical, since they were, with regards to the ruling discourse, innocuous

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Projekt from 1974 (which was censored, but the scope of this essay leaves us no room to problematise Haacke's political martyrdom) he exhibited a genuine still-life by Manet (*Bunch of Asparagus*, 1880) along with its *pedigree*: ten panels narrating the history of the painting's ownership, including a detailed biography of each of its proprietors, up to its current museum acquisition.³

Whether seeking to reconstruct cultural memory, as in the *Manet-Projekt* with its reference to Germany's Nazi past, or uncover commercial ties between museums and business, as in the *MoMA Poll*, which unmasked corporate philanthropy as a cover for corporate repression in Third World countries, the procedure was the same: factographic. In his factographic method, as well as in the uncovered facts themselves, we may read the author's tendency: to posit a firm link between historical fascism and the liberal-democratic politics of capitalism. But if we invoke Jakobson's scheme of communication once again, we might read from Haacke's choice of artistic method his poetics as well, taking as a clue his statements from an interview he gave in 1972:

I do not want to practice agitation which appeals or accuses. I am satisfied if I can provoke a consciousness of a general context and mutual dependence by *facts* alone. *Facts* are probably stronger and often less comfortable than even the best intended opinions. In the past one defined symbolic signs for the processes of reality and thus transposed them for the most part onto an ideal level. By contrast I would like to make the *processes themselves* appear and I see my work in explicit contradiction to "abstract" art. (Quoted in Buchloh 2003, 240)

Here, choosing factography amounts to more than referentiality: Haacke chooses this method in order to distance himself explicitly from then-dominant abstract art. At that specific historical moment, abandoning abstraction meant abandoning the concept of artistic autonomy, therefore endorsing a given tendency, as well as abandoning a certain procedure of artistic production, which necessitated a radicalisation of technique.

With the relationship between tendency and technique (or in Jakobson's terms, between the referential and poetic functions), Walter Benjamin resolved the debate about the relationship between form and content, in his 1934 lecture "The Author as Producer", positing both within their living social environment. Benjamin replaces the old materialist question of the artwork's relationship *with* its epoch's social conditions of production with that of its positioning *in* its epoch's social relations, whereby he aims at its function in the relations of production in art, that is, its *technique*. Benjamin

3 The ninth panel was the controversial one, as it revealed that the chairman of the board of the Wallraf-Richartz Museum at the time, where Haacke's work was to be exhibited, was Hitler's minister of the economy.

and even naïve. On the other hand, those looking for "Eastern art" in Trbuljak's actions will see them as harmless, because they did not contain the expected critique of ideology. But if we grasp that alleged harmlessness as an act of abstraction, as radicalising the dominant line of high modernist art, we might infer from it a critique that does not end with detecting the object of critique (in this case, the system of art along with the specific structures that produce it), but forcefully imposes a re-establishment of the possible and the impossible. Neither showing nor communicating "anything", Trbuljak's critique aims at its own carrier, at the message itself, a formalised abstraction. That aspect, for us crucial, concerns the manifesto tone of Trbuljak's works: he presents no analysis but instead, his strategy is one of utterance. We might see it as a poetics, or, to use Roman Jakobson's vocabulary,¹ in terms of the poetic function of language (focusing on the message), rather than referentiality (focusing on the context).

In Hans Haacke's installation MoMA Poll, according to his own testimony "his first truly political work", set up and performed at the New York Museum of Modern Art's 1970 exhibition Information, in fact right at the entrance to the exhibition, where visitors were greeted with the following question from Haacke: "Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon's Indochina policy be a reason for you not to vote for him in November?".² Visitors were instructed to slip their answers into one of two transparent Plexiglas ballot boxes, the one on the left for "yes" and the one on the right for "no". Not only were the ballot boxes thus laid bare, but so was the individual status of each voter: namely, the ballots were colour-coded to indicate the status of each voter: those who paid the full price of admission, Museum members, and ID carriers. Against the backdrop of minimalist art, to which Haacke himself belonged during the 1960s and which opened the artwork to bodily perception and restored the body to the viewer, Haacke restored to the museum qua institution not only its socio-economic givens, its function of an ideological apparatus, but also the viewer as a political subject. With a move that one might label factographic and that his critics called pseudo-journalistic, Haacke unmasked the art field's dark matter, the traffic between museums and business, trading in, on the one hand, symbolic and, on the other, financial capital. Thus in his Manet-

1 Jakobson's "Linguistics and Poetics" was a cornerstone of the line in literary theory that abandoned interpreting literature as a medium that points to reality, that is, whose main function is referentiality, focusing instead on the linguistic aspects of the literary text. In that text Jakobson distinguishes between six factors that determine any act of verbal communication: the addresser, the message, the addressee, the context, the code, and the contact, along with six different functions of language determined by them. Among those six functions, two are especially important for our present purposes: the referential function, which is aimed at the context of the message, that is reality, and the function that aims at the message as such, considered in isolation, which Jakobson calls the poetic function of language.

2 The mother of Nelson Rockefeller, then governor of New York, had founded the Museum, whereas at the time Rockefeller himself was on its board (between 1932 and his death in 1979) and in the middle of planning his campaign to run for president. traverses the long debate on the relationship between the quality and political tendencies of artworks with a formula that illuminates the relationship between those two factors: "The correct political tendency of a work includes its literary quality *because* it includes its literary *tendency*" (Benjamin 1970, 84). The latter tendency Benjamin locates in the progress or regression of literary technique, whereby his key references are Brecht's epic theatre and the activities of Sergei Tretyakov, in whom he sees an embodiment of what he calls the "operative writer":

This operative writer presents the clearest example of the function relation which always exists, in any circumstances, between correct political tendency and a progressive literary technique. (Benjamin 1970, 85–86)

In Benjamin's view, "Tretiakov distinguishes the operative writer from one who gives information. His mission is not to report, but to struggle; he does not play the role of spectator, but actively intervenes" (Benjamin 1970, 86). In specific, historical terms, in 1928, at the time of the total collectivisation of agriculture, Tretyakov joined the Communist Lighthouse commune and performed various tasks there, such as calling mass meetings, collecting money to pay for tractors, persuading still un-collectivised peasants to join the kolkhoz, organising reading rooms, editing wall-newspapers and the kolkhoz newspaper, reporting for Moscow papers, introducing radio and travelling films. None of these numerous activities could be said to be much related to literature, but Benjamin emphasises his example precisely to suggest the broadness of the horizon from which literary forms and genres should be reconsidered along the lines of the techniques that current social circumstances prescribed. Thus one should also read Haacke's factographic technique, which is, according to his critics, not really related to art, not only as a distancing from the technique of abstract art, but also in the light of the tradition that Benjamin espoused.

To think about all of the artworks discussed above without judging them according to the criteria and expectations formed by the tradition of aesthetic reflection (which was, as we saw above, how those works were most often criticised), is highly problematic, if not impossible. Aesthetics treats and thinks art from the position of the beholder, the recipient, one who expects art to yield an aesthetic experience. Such an outlook necessarily subordinates art production to art consumption;⁴ furthermore, to provide aesthetic pleasure, art must wipe itself clean from any referentiality to the concrete process of artistic labour in action. The aim of this text is to try to address the art of institutional critique from another perspective, that of poetics, in order to bring the complex relationship between referentiality and poetics back to the table, so as to legitimise its status as art

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against the attacks of aestheticians. Reducing every utterance about art to aesthetics, that is, focusing on the recipient/consumer, faces contemporary artistic production with the well-known problem of politicisation vs. aestheticisation. At least since Kant, we have known that anything, therefore not only artworks, can be viewed from an aesthetic perspective and become an object of aesthetic judgement and aesthetic pleasure. To experience aesthetic pleasure, we need first and foremost an aesthetic education, not an aesthetic object, since anything can be an aesthetic object and aesthetic education necessarily reflects the beholder's social grounding. While under that which Rancière calls the "regime of representation" (artistic production under the patronage of the church or autocrats) art was after "beauty" and artists served to provide aesthetic experiences, in modernity art began to serve a much wider public and thus became "obliged" to address issues of public interest. Today's audiences thus expect art to represent important social issues. But the problem is that those two allegedly separate artistic positions blend rather nicely, provided that they be observed exclusively from the recipient/ consumer's viewpoint. The so-called politicisation of art often boils down to a mere repackaging of certain political issues, so as to make them more presentable for public consumption. On the other hand, when it comes to real political engagement, aesthetic form becomes redundant, as direct political action does not necessitate art. That is why contemporary art must be analysed in terms of poetics, as I have already pointed out, and not aesthetics, which entails abandoning its obligation to make an impact on the beholder and turning instead to the choices and conditions that led to the emergence of the aesthetic object as such. Turning from aesthetics to poetics means turning to politics as well.

Focusing on art's poetic functions and techniques, on how art stands in its epoch's relations of production allows us to restore the notion of "critique" in the phrase "institutional critique", so that today we may talk about it at all and stop lamenting over its impossibility and institutionalisation (the fact that great museums today honour its representatives with retrospective exhibitions) and celebrating its "heroic age". Here I will briefly resort to Stefan Nowotny's discussion of the critique of creativity (Nowotny 2011), which, following Kant's critique of reason, locates its task not only in criticising creativity as an object, therefore its abilities and capacities, but also in terms of its actualising whilst criticising. Nowotny asserts that a certain possibility of creativity actualises in the procedure of criticising creativity, thus "it is not enough to fix 'objects' worthy of criticism or to strive for their 'change', if an operative structure is reproduced at the same time, which persistently produces precisely these objects in their reality" (Nowotny 2011, 14).

Hito Steyerl is suggesting the same perspective when she claims that contemporary art is no longer about beauty, but function within the neoliberal order, which mass-produces political art that successfully

reflects local situations across the world, packages injustice and poverty masterfully, while the conditions of its own production remain virtually unexamined. With the following formula, Steyerl relocates politics in the field of art from the sphere of representation into that of work: "Simply look at what it does - not what it shows" (Steyerl 2010). As I argued above, institutional critique used to do just that, but today, in the age of "democratic" globalisation, its role is quite different and much broader. A notorious ongoing issue concerns the direct funding of contemporary art by large corporations, usually banks, lately also purchases of works for the collections of large banks, companies, and corporations. Another issue is art's involvement with the rhetoric of gentrification. A third issue might concern exploitation, precarious work, unpaid work (interning), women's work... and so forth. All of that concerns the system of art. how artistic labour comes to be in the first place, and therefore also the domain of the interests and operation of institutional critique or, if you will, political art. It is about time, as Steyerl asserts, that art stopped trying to represent a politics that is always happening elsewhere and realised that politics is right in front of its eyes, that it resides in its (artistic) production, its distribution, and its reception.

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CUT, OR ELSE: ON PERFORMING (PERFORMANCE) THEORY IN THE NEW CIRCUMSTANCES MARIO KIKAŠ

ESTABLISHING THE "EPISTEMIC" FRAME Today, at an already considerable distance from the turbulent world events of the '60s and the (waning) domination of French poststructuralist thought, which began positioning itself on the academic markets precisely toward the end of that decade, we may find it easier to map various political, artistic, and epistemological rearrangements whose simultaneity was often explicated as mere coincidence (or inconsistency), instead of perusing the socio-political and epistemological conditions of "selective democracies"¹ and their academes where certain tectonics occurred. The (historical-)materialist viewpoint truly emerges as the alternative (to set up such a relation) to the dominant mathesis universalis of post-structuralism, which often showed a lack of self-reflection on the road to its institutional enthronement² (cynics might say that precisely that lack accelerated and facilitated its dissemination). Why open this historical closet now, already mystified enough, by means of various generically and methodologically intoned attempts to explain the '60s, in all their complexity? Those very years, which saw the beginning of globalisation in earnest, the setting up of the neo-colonial order, and somewhat later, the subjection of the South to (macroeconomic) experimentation, also saw the establishment of an order whose implications in the domain of art (especially performance art) are discussed below. Right then, in those years, performance art, along with various neo-avantgarde and emancipatory attempts (especially in the US), as well as attempts to break free from institutional bounds, came of age as a separate folder in the Kunst-historical division and then also as a separate academic discipline - performance studies. It is therefore crucial to establish the conditions in which performance theory came of age and was inaugurated as a so-called "post-discipline" with its specific field of theoretical practice, but certainly not immune to the adoration and uncritical embrace of theory, just like some other disciplines and the "institution" of Theory en général. Even though its starting point lay in the art (experimental) practices of the '60s and '70s, as well as its theoretical-methodological "emancipation" via anthropology³ as a relatively new discipline (that, however, came

1 From the truly large production of texts concerning this period I should single out Kristin Ross's contribution, that is, her book *May '68 and Its Afterlives* from Chicago University Press (2002), in which she uncovers, despite her focus on the historical topos of '68, mechanisms of political and academic repression in the form of frequent conceptual generalisations and erasures as well as depoliticisation, which would, in the ensuing decades, come to dominate both the media's and the academic community's perception of the period, partly due to recent institutional and epistemological inhabitations. For that which in most US glossaries usually goes under the name of *French theory*, as well as its institutional conditions at the formation of the theory canon, see Kauppi 2010. Thomas Pavel, a Romanian-French theorist currently residing in the United States, addresses the epistemological conditions of what he calls "speculative structuralism" in Thomas 2011.

2 On the institutional road of French post-structuralists during the '60s and '70s, see Kauppi 2010, which maps and problematises, in Bourdieuan terms, the relations within the academic field in which the *Tel Quel* crew operated, without thereby ignoring the context of the political, social, and artistic upheavals of the Fifth Republic during the late '60s.

3 In the manner of detecting "fateful friendships", the meeting of anthropologist Victor Turner and performance artist Richard Schechner at the 1977 conference *Ritual, Drama* and Spectacle, held at Burg Wartenstein in Lower Austria, is often considered the birthplace of performance theory.

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with some methodological baggage, which, dare I say it, eventually grew burdensome and unnecessary), including this heterogeneous branch, French theory, as they call it in Anglo-American circles, made a formative impact on the establishment of the vocabulary as well as direction of the problematisation of performance (performativity) during the '90s.⁴ Right then, following its gradual dissemination across the Ocean during the '70s, the ruling paradigm developed its own infrastructure on the US academic soil; I am referring here to the Yale school, which later spawned other carriers of theoretical practices in various areas of the application of the dominant theoretical model. A sort of pantheon was thereby erected, whereby different positions (albeit relatively aligned in epistemological terms) would be articulated, depending on the "gods" one chose to adore; for instance, concerning the relationship between performance and text (i.e. the adequacy of drama), the signing of theatre's death certificate (or that of its ideology, history, art, class), the demise of identity (of the author, the performer...), endless attempts to equate art and life, intercultural frameworks and foundations of performance practices, etc. When topics of theatre ontology were concerned, the same key guided the choice of (para-)textual links to tradition, in the form of eternal reference figures. Thus Artaud, with his Theatre of Cruelty concept and a performance practice proclaimed under the conditions of the neo-avant-garde and poststructuralist theoretical practice, became an indispensable reference in reflecting on the borders of the current "performance order". Unfortunately, with directions like that, some rich oeuvres are often reduced to lapidary "curiosities", such as turning to Asian theatre; for instance, Brecht's interest in Peking opera might be a case in point, or Meyerhold's interest in Japanese theatre. In such cases, those authors' developed systems are decontextualised and reduced to an anthropological fascination with the unknown and undiscovered, which was only one segment in their rich oeuvres. Such a concept (again, scarcely foreign to some other disciplines as well) provides established institutional hegemony with its reading list or matrix, i.e. apparatus, whereas one could easily illustrate its accompanying theoretical practice with Schechner's concept of (endlessly) restored imitated behaviour - in this case, that of certain theoretical gestures.

The above-mentioned historical-materialist perspective of criticising those tendencies usually focuses on one aspect of theory fashion, now (already) forty years old: a pronounced and intense dehistoricisation of, and then also an utter disinterest in, the economic relations in the

⁴ "That period [the late '80s and early '90s] saw the final strivings of structuralism and semiology, as well as the initial steps of postcolonial and post-feminist theory, gay, lesbian, and queer studies, along with the development of new ideas in anthropology, Western and Eastern philosophy, aesthetics, history and theory of theatre, and cultural studies" (Jovićević and Vujanović 2007, 10), which "coincided" with the dissemination of French theory in contemporary art: "as best as I can recall the terms 'deconstruction' and 'deconstructing' only began to enter the language of political artists in New York in the mid-1980s, shortly after the 1984 publication of an English translation of Derrida's *Grammatology*" (Sholette 2011, 62). CUT, OR ELSE: ON PERFORMING (PERFORMANCE) THEORY IN THE NEW CIRCUMSTANCES MARIO KIKAŠ

field where texts (performances) are made. British historian Perry Anderson resorts to a football metaphor to illustrate that epistemic turn, to use Foucault's vocabulary, as the game that French historical materialism lost in the midst of the PCF's crisis (followed by its total political marginalisation) as well as that of Marxism in the West (whose prominent thinkers have disappeared from the philosophy scene, either of natural causes or due to reactionary political deviations), as well as due to the end of the cultural revolution in China, and, last but not least, the dynamisation of capitalism. Without lamenting over the fate of (Western) Marxism too much, Anderson applies its method to observe a dehistoricising matrix (and a radical reductionism) in the "classics" of (post-)structuralist thought, for instance, in Claude Lévi-Strauss's "ritualisation of economy" carried out in his Structural Anthropology (and one could also cite more recent similar examples), which reduced economy to a symbolic system of exchanging goods, thereby extrapolating language⁵ onto all social structures, including kinship, which caricatured, for example, the double subjection of women.

Kinship cannot be compared to language as a system of symbolic communication in which women and words are respectively "exchanged", as Levi-Strauss would have it, since no speaker alienates vocabulary to any interlocutor, but can freely reutilize every word "given" as many times as is wished thereafter, whereas marriages - unlike conversations - are usually binding: wives are not recuperable by their fathers after their weddings. Still less does the terminology of "exchange" warrant an elision to the economy: if speakers and families in most societies may be reckoned to have at least a rough equivalence of words and women between them, this is notoriously not true of goods. No economy, in other words, can be primarily defined in terms of exchange at all: production and property are always prior. Levi Strauss's trinitarian formula operates, in effect, to screen out all the relations of power, exploitation and inequality which inhere not only in most primitive economies, let alone our civilization of capital, but also in every familial or sexual order known to us, in which conjugality is tied to property, and femininity to subalternity. (Anderson 1984, 43)

This posturing of language as the key to all mythologies (and not just that) opened the floodgates for a gradual linguistication of historical and social categories, including that of the *working class* itself, which was soon sent packing by that same circle of Gallic post-Marxism (sent where? — we don't know, but certainly not to history, since that is where it always was), with an indifferent *adieux* from André Gorz. It is therefore easy to understand the rhetorical aggressiveness with which the (now almost extinct) institutionalised left in the humanities has been warning against bidding *farewell* to economism in the dominant theories that had long ago secured their positions in

5 Anderson also invokes Saussure himself, who omitted economy as well as all family formations from his semiological analyses (see Anderson 2012, 96).

university departments, precisely after French post-structuralism and post-Marxism, sharing similar epistemological roots and historical conditions of emergence, established themselves as prevailing textual practices.⁶ It is therefore necessary (and not outdated) to re-actualise historical materialism as a method, in those disciplines where it functioned on the level of individual exhibitionisms, in this so-called post-industrial age as well, which is not for that reason bound by "class" any less than its predecessor, despite the postprefix in its name, attached to it for the sake of further development of the means of production and global "rearrangements" on the labour market. Precisely in our present context, when the doctrines of fiscal responsibility, the liberalisation of labour relations, and privatisation (in some cases, to grotesque proportions) are occupying the public sector (with growing intensity and extent), including its segments that belong in the field of culture, i.e. artistic production, it seems crucial to perform an epistemic turn, bearing in mind that current social relations show that this is not a late-19th-century episteme, as we were often misled to believe. Every depoliticisation of labour, including that of artistic production, i.e., immaterial labour, is an ideological construct (a sort of continuation of the founding gesture of the sacralisation of the art object), a construct that the reality of (neoliberal) capitalist relations of production has brought into question.

TRAINING THE METHOD Even without a deeper insight into the political economy and therefore also the genesis of the ongoing crisis of capitalism, the direction of the political decisions that are ostensibly meant to produce a "long-term solution" to the current situation is more than evident. The present onslaught on the public sector under the guise of the so-called austerity measures resulted from initially misguided ideas about the causality of the crisis and the misconception that such measures would alleviate the public debt. In his text "Reporting the Eurozone's Crisis: Lessons from the Greek Front", Greek economist Yanis Varoufakis easily demolishes the logic of such "commonsensical" measures (which have been imposed rather brutally on a number of countries on Europe's periphery); he attributes them to "the fallacy of aggregation", because the Greek example shows precisely that cutting public spending and increasing taxation only exacerbates recession (Varoufakis 2011). The paradoxes (in the domains of logic, history, and economics) that stem from such policies, relations, and then also decisions, are endless, as is their dramaturgy.⁷ In that sense, the apparatus and

6 For more on the setting of the economic, political, cultural, and epistemological path of so-called postmodernism during the '60s, see Jameson 1984; for more on post-Marxism, see Meiksins Wood 1998.

7 An oft-quoted (and simplified) description of the current economic state or, more specifically, the *bailout* act itself (the decision of the US Congress to use 700 billion dollars of public money to "save the faltering" financial giants) has been "socialism for the rich, capitalism for the poor", which rather accurately uncovers the above-mentioned logical, economic, and historical paradoxes of *neoliberalism* at this historical juncture. As for the

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matrix of theatre (drama) studies may truly hope to be adequate tools for pinpointing individual characters and basic structures (as they once served anthropology and ethnology), but, I'm afraid, not for much else. In this case, ritualising economics and politics may only serve to divert our attention away from the economic and political mechanisms (as in the already discussed case of Lévi-Strauss's application of structural linguistics) that seem crucial for understanding the attack on the public sector, as well as in the domain of theatre itself (regardless of its institutional positioning and relation to the planning of budget expenses), i.e., that which we might call the art sector or, more accurately perhaps, the cultural sector (with regards to the trans/inter/post-disciplinary intersections discussed below). Any attempt at decontextualising and then "theatricalising" historical contents, whether into artistic or academic forms, reduces those contents to a mere ornament. It is a familiar move in our theoretical field (the humanities in general - perhaps it is most easily observed at the sometimes elusive crossroads of ethnography/ethnology and performance theory), often conditioned by the positions of the fatherly authorial figures in curricula (or in institutional positions) and readers (and additionally intensified by "deviations" in the development of certain humanities, as well as belated translations of some figures mentioned earlier on).⁸ Using that apparatus should be posited within textual hermeneutics or all that affects the determination, for instance, in folklore and performance studies, which may sometimes cross the boundaries of the text; to be honest, that is not too hard, when one is armed with the Derridean white flag: the flag of textuality, political innocence, and/or simply capitulating before historical conditions, which are nonchalantly overcome by means of "textualisation". In his critique of Derrida, which could be extended without too much hesitation onto the entire echelon of poststructuralist thought (especially, dare I say it, to its peripheral parts, characterised by its belated reactions due to the logic of exchange and development of the means of production), Indian theorist Aijaz Ahmad points to such methodological (and be it said, logical) errors in the very choosing of the apparatus for a specific given material. Ahmad's critique, delivered in the heat of the "restoration of capitalism" in Europe's (South)East,⁹ addresses a text that Derrida wrote for the New Left Review to mark the publication of the English translation of his book Spectres de Marx: l'état de la dette,

dramaturgy: the existence of a large number of "split/double" characters speaks not so much of their symptomatics as it uncovers the "functioning" of the system itself, which deftly uses its hegemonic apparatus to conceal the "disguised" faces of the American and European banking-political establishment (from the state secretary of the treasury in every US administration so far to the imposed prime ministers of certain European countries' technocratic cabinets).

8 On the development of the conceptual apparatus and interest in our humanities with regards to the emergence of the "performance paradigm", as well as concerning the difficulties in translating and epistemological delays, see Čale Feldman and Blažević 2010.

9 Ahmad's discussion of Derrida's text, "Spectres of Marx", published in the New Left Review in 1994, was written on the occasion of his visiting lecture at the Ljubljana Institutum studiorum humanitatis in 1994, precisely at the time of the restoration of not only capitalism, but also liberal democracy in Slovenia.

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le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale (Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International).¹⁰ Right at the moment of the fall of the Berlin Wall and that of real socialism. Derrida suddenly realises that deconstruction is first and foremost - radicalisation, and then also radicalisation in a certain Marxist sense (see Derrida 1994, 56), calling for the creation of a new International, "without status, without title, and without name, barely public even if it is not clandestine [...] without party, without country" (Derrida 199453). Without touching any more of that text's painful places, I wanted to single out this one as an interesting gesture of the "bleeding" of Derrida's ideology through to the terrain of history (now open as a battlefield, following the collapse of the real socialism), rather artfully ignoring the economic, social, and historical conditions that created such an economic and geopolitical (and, indeed, "epistemic") domination. Ahmad completes his deconstruction of deconstruction by unmasking it precisely in its attempt to occupy an (a)political position:

Deconstruction has always been primarily a textual hermeneutic; in its political declarations it has always involved, to my understanding, not just extravagance but also too much methodological individualism, too voluntaristic a notion of social relations and of the politics that inevitably ensues from those relations. (Ahmad 1994, 106)

The *gestus* of Derrida's attempt to enter the political field with the flag of anonymity in hand becomes paradoxically emblematic of the domination of a certain "paradigmatic shift" in the form of French poststructuralist thought, which set the humanities' (and not only the humanities') epistemological and later also methodological direction. Aware of the generalisation that I am about to make, I will reverse this relation of the "textualisation of history", precisely in order to set up the framework for further considerations within the specific domain of performance studies, inside a specific politico-economic constellation: the historicisation of the text, or in this case, performance.

In the early 2000s, when performance (in different institutional arrangements) established itself in certain academic circles (Anglo-American at first, and then also European and Asian), Jon McKenzie, the American performance theorist, wrote his book *Perform or Else* in an attempt to set up a "general theory" of performance (or, as he put it, its "flight path" (McKenzie 2001, 26)). In a similar gesture (though this time one of "performatisation" instead of textualisation), McKenzie picturesquely uses a *Forbes* magazine front page as the source of a "close-reading" [iščitavanje] of performativity (during Clinton's accomplished galloping down the economy track that Reagan's administration had prepared for him long before) and spotting it in (among other things) certain poetic images of

10 Croatian edition: Sablasti Marxa: stanje duga, rad tugovanja i nova internacionala, Zagreb: Sveučilišna naklada, 2002. (American) late capitalism, such as organisational management and advocating the "digital paradigm" (as a new cycle of development and transformation). A magazine of the American economic establishment and elite, recognised among "the masses" by its periodical schematic presentations of the *dramatis personae* of the globally dominant system, becomes thereby a symptom (or image) of a ubiquitous performativity in American late capitalism of the '90s, during its short-lived simulation of the welfare state under Clinton's Democrat administration. But that *facade*, to paraphrase Erving Goffman, hiding behind high politics and economic solutions, remains unnoticed in the Performance Studies industry. What the industry does notice are the system's characteristics: the digitalisation, the cultural strife between conservatism and liberalism (and its implications on cultural policies and practices), the production of obscure volumes about improving workers' performance (that is, productivity - at the same pay and possibly with longer hours) in the workplace. But the industry's analytical apparatus, whether due to its epistemological wellspring or consent to facile diagnoses concerning the post-political/ideological condition, inevitably dehistoricises such phenomena, while its performative apparatus is merely "trained" on a content that is not (only) a performance text but also includes the context of the stagnation or deterioration of workers' rights, the abolition of labour unions, the development of the means of production at the periphery's expense, the bipartisan consensus about the country's economic path, and the bad cultural policies of the National Endowment for the Arts.

In other words, the theoretical apparatus becomes all-applicable with no methodological strings attached, as the vanguard of any analytical practice, whereas the analysed "object" itself is simply dehistoricised - the art practice is isolated from its social life, its own conditions as well as relations of productions, which make up its context. The wonder is thereby all the greater, since the establishment of such a paradigm in the humanities, i.e. at the crossroads of its various theoretical practices on the one hand and art on the other, coincided with the establishment of the economic and then also social framework that is reaching its apogee right now, through the ongoing economic crisis and further deepening of social divisions (as the paradoxical answer to the crisis identified already at the outset). Regardless of the geographical topos of its own theoretical and artistic operation at a time of interculturalism's domination as the ruling paradigm, following its (relative) institutionalisation and having established (again, relatively) its own vocabulary and methodological apparatus, the performance industry is facing the diktat that is presently conditioning the performance or practice of a number of other industries: Cut. or else...

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ART AND THE PUBLIC GOOD / / / TKH 20

PERFORMING CRISIS "TRANSITION" AND ON N THF ACTUALISATION OF CERTAIN CATEGORIES The performativity or (economic) efficacy of McKenzie's organisational management characterises not only the service and financial-insurance industries of cognitive capitalism, but also the (cultural) field of performance art and theory, as its interdisciplinary extension. It appears that the turbulent conditions of Milena Dragićević Šešić and Sanjin Dragojević's culture-managerial self-help book Menadžment umetnosti u turbulentnim okolnostima (Arts Management in Turbulent Conditions) have been permanent in this region since the '80s; it is just that people seldom note that (in Croatia's case) those turbulent conditions concern the economically "turbulent" years of the crisis of Yugoslav socialism, the restoration of capitalism, conservative fiscal policies, transition and privatisation, and then Croatia's joining the WTO and its later cabinets' neoliberal policies. Those segments of the book that do not adhere to the self-help genre accurately (though uncritically) detect precisely some of the above-mentioned attributes of so-called transition (and their importance for cultural politics) and then unabashedly proclaim crisis management (see Dragićević Šešić and Dragojević 2005, 23) as the answer to the crisis and the turbulent conditions that have befallen the cultural field; the conditions will not improve, the authors tell us, for as long as there is no "change in socio-economic and *political culture* - referring to the totality of values, beliefs, and modes of behaviour" (emphasis added; Dragićević Šešić and Dragojević 2005, 24). This kind of demanding changes in the cultural field is identical to the discourse of the most pronounced advocates of neoliberal policies: the making of an entrepreneurical climate and the abolition of the public sector, whereas the beliefs and values part invokes mentality as an explanatory category, which often leads to the dead-end of chauvinism or, in this case, selfloathing. Finally, after setting out with examples of the ritualisation of economy and application of performance theory's methodology arsenal, we have arrived, in performance studies, to the reciprocal demand for applying the economic doctrine to the cultural field, of which the performance industry is not an insignificant part. But history made sure that four years after the publication of this book crisis management has become a caricature emblem for a system in the midst of a financial meltdown of the market and then also the economic crisis, whose consequences on cultural politics as well as epistemological tectonics are clear but have yet to be identified.

The sudden leap onto the terrain of the still (*sic*!) existing public sector in the countries of restored capitalism has not posed significantly different epistemological or methodological conditions regarding the domination of the academic field's theoretical currents elaborated above, whereas an identical economic doctrine has been enforced even faster in the so-called *second transition*,¹¹ which has struck

11 According to Borislav Mikulić, this phrase was introduced by Vesna Pusić, an iconic figure of Croatia's liberal bourgeoisie and now the country's foreign minister in the current so-called centre-left cabinet. The phrase is meant to point to the necessity of another

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some Eastern European societies. Proclaiming depoliticisations of social structures, which has slowly spread from the academic field into the official political rhetoric, as well as that of cultural "workers". is exemplified, as Borislav Mikulić notes, precisely in the phrase political culture (Mikulić 2010, 190). Dissecting a selection of texts by three agents of Croatian "theatre life", Vitomira Lončar, Dubravka Vrgoč, and Snježana Banović, Mikulić detects in their utterances symptoms of depression and multiple proclamations of the death of Croatian theatre (Mikulić 2010, 189), which is entirely in sync with gestures from the late '80s and before, as well as with the act of depoliticisation, mentioned above. The three authors' striking up of "structural distances" is an expression of an objectivist understanding of theatre's politicality, Mikulić notes, whereby "the subjects of Croatian theatre are never inside its field of representation, are never subjects" (Mikulić 2010, 189). In other words, this would concern the traditional view of representing the political in theatre (which, in the end of the day, comes down to an apolitical theatre, in the sense of repeating that gestus of distance) and not the political in the sense of articulating the political by means of theatrical production, i.e. the labour of the producers of theatre and their awareness of their own position in production. Its attitude of ignoring the field and participants of production (regardless of its institutional frameworks) is an emblematic gesture of Croatia's performance industry, aping, with almost a ten-year delay, the philosophemes that soaked the very act of tearing down the Berlin Wall. Today, that distance emerges as dominant, right in the very agents of the industry regardless of their roles in production. And while there are positive examples of certain art collectives that have articulated critiques of contemporary art's symbolic and fiscal economy (see Sholette 2011, 31), the industry's theory branch has stuck to its gestures of depoliticisation with its more or less deep or shallow elaborations. ignoring the conditions of its own theoretical (academic) production, the production of institutionalised theatre or that of the independent scene, which most clearly demonstrate manifestations of post-Fordist capitalism in the form of immaterial, flexibilised, precarious labour(ers), as well as uncertain funding, given the abolition of the public sector, since the Keynesian argument that culture is not only an expense was abandoned long ago and replaced with the argument of artistic production's economic justifiability. Economic reasoning has thus supplanted reasoning based on society's needs and (precarious cultural) workers are left with only one choice.

transition, to follow the (misguided) first national-conservative transition personified by the figure and legacy of Franjo Tuđman. Similar programme structures may be observed in some other countries of restored capitalism: Serbia and Slovakia, for instance, with their authoritarian leaders during the '90s and pro-European and other Springs since 2000, which point to a continuity in economic policies, though this time with the gloves on.

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A FEW MESSAGES FROM OUR SPONSORS ADVERTISING BETWEEN ART AND PUBLIC SPACE **BORIS POSTNIKOV**

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A FEW MESSAGES FROM OUR SPONSORS Advertising between art and public space Boris postnikov

Advertising is also, in a sense, the official art of modern capitalist society: it is what "we" put up in "our" streets and use to fill up to half of "our" newspapers and magazines: and it commands the services of perhaps the largest body of organized writers and artists, with their attendant managers and advisers, in the whole society.

Raymond Williams, "Advertising: The Magic System"

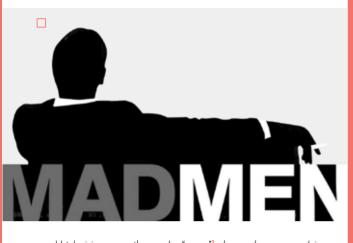
EPP,¹ OR HOW WE FORSOOK ECONOMY An old and by now already a bit tired joke says that advertising is the world's second oldest profession: invented to advertise the first. What is less familiar is that the joke, in a way, does command some historical legitimacy. Namely, there are historical surveys of advertising that consider an ancient, cryptic sign found on Marble Street in the ruins of Ephesus the oldest known example of the advertising genre: apparently, the sign was for a nearby brothel (Cook 1996, 3). The story is all the more amusing inasmuch as it implicitly represents advertising as a kind of dark side of the culturally codified narrative about Western civilisation's ancient roots, tightly associating advertising, right from its very beginning, to its most common content - sex - and pointing to the important coincidence between advertising and public space - if we agree that brothels are included. But the story has not been universally accepted: there are others who claim that ancient-Egyptian papyrus scrolls hold the world's oldest ads and yet others, who argue for 15th-century proclamations nailed to church and cathedral doors, the so-called *siguis* (Barnard 1995, 28).² However, there is not a lot that such historiographic explorations from the edge of the anecdotal can tell us about current constellations of advertising discourse and public space and therefore should be left to tourist guides and those theorists whose entire approach to advertising is contained in discursive analysis.

By contrast, a marginal media episode from more recent history suggests the direction that any approach to advertising must take in order to produce better results. The episode comes from the history of Croatia's struggle for independence during the early 1990s. In those days, the ideologised constitution of Croatia's *national being* and parallel construction of its century-old *historical continuity*, teleologically projected toward the phrase *sovereignty and independence*, entailed a radical linguistic turn toward the mumble-jumble of an imaginary archaicisation and an institutionally prescribed "newspeak" ["novogovor"]; among other things, the regime's revision of public discourse in Croatia delivered an entirely new name for an

¹ EPP – ekonomsko-propagandni program (commercial-propaganda messages), the standard phrase that Yugoslav television channels typically used to announce commercial breaks (Translator's note).

² The name comes from the Latin "si... qui..." (if... then...), which was their most common grammatical form.

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old television genre: the popular "epepe"³ ekonomsko-propagandni program, was turned into "pepe", 4 promidžbeni program (promotional messages). In the cacophony of this purist disciplining of public speaking, produced by the *dalekovidnice* and *krugovali*,⁵ this modest semantic shift went by mostly unnoticed. Still, it is a surprisingly pregnant summary of Croatia's transition story, at first understood as the ejaculatory climax of its wet millenary dream and only later recognised in the structural effects of the replacement of the socialist paradigm of production relations with that of neoliberal capitalism. Precisely that tragicomedy of confusion is the reason why replacing the ideologically suspect term "propaganda" - and its connotation of strategic, rational, centralised, and organised mass informing - with the "more Croatian" promidžba might have seemed more important at first than it really was. However, this example shows us with a remarkable clarity that what really transpired behind this manifest Croatisation of public discourse was a thorough suppression of "economy". Undoubtedly, the suppression was also inscribed with that naïve post-communist trust in the pluralist potentials of multiparty parliamentary democracy: every four years, political promotion would come to dominate "promidžbeni program" and the latter could therefore no longer be reduced to its commercial aspect. Twenty years on, we are seeing a spectacular Freudian return of the repressed: mostly due to the global economic recession, which has restored economic issues into broader public discourse, it is now clear that the proliferation of different political options serves only to hide the scandalously narrow variation scope of the imposed "austerity measures", that Croatia's modern representative democracy is only a local reflection of Alain Badiou's "capitalo-parliamentarism", and that all advertising channels, whether political or commercial, are ultimately playing the same commercial-propaganda messages.

3 Croatian pronunciation of the acronym *EPP* (Translator's note).

4 Croatian pronunciation of the acronym PP (Translator's note).

5 Croatian "newspeak" words for television and radio (Translator's note).

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A FEW MESSAGES FROM OUR SPONSORS Advertising between art and public space Boris postnikov

If this episode has taught us anything, it is never to read advertising texts outside of their politico-economic contexts. Leaving aside more or less interesting historical curiosities, the history of advertising, if it is to tell us anything really relevant about the ongoing colonisation of public space with commercial-propaganda messages, must unfold in parallel with the development of capitalism, follow the protracted rise of advertising toward the end of the 19th century, its expansion in the early 20th, and, finally, its media explosion over the ensuing six or seven decades.

AN "ART FOR OUR AGE"? A symptomatic echo of a parallel reorganising of public space resonates in Edward Bernays's popular theses about "invisible government" from the 20s: "We are governed", Bernays writes, "our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of" (Bernays 1928, 9). This moralising streak in the treatment of advertising practices continued to spawn conspiracy figures and deceits, as in Vance Packard's famous explorations of so-called subliminal advertising (Packard 1957), later elaborated by communication theorist and journalism professor Wilson Bryan Key (Key 1974). Nonetheless, it seems that their main accomplishment was a backfired legitimisation of the advertising industry's "rationality", a consequence of pointing to its alleged aberrations.

In the meantime, as we know, once influential claims about advertising and propaganda experts' hidden techniques of manipulation, drenched in paranoid narcissism, have mostly been discarded as sensationalist simplifications. However, a suspect fascination with advertising discourse may also be found in texts by some of today's highly esteemed theorists. A more notable colleague and friend of Key's, Marshall McLuhan, thus writes in his essay "Keeping Upset with the Joneses": "The historians and archeologists will one day discover that the ads of our time are the richest and most faithful daily reflections that any society ever made of its entire range of activities" (McLuhan 2003). In "The Culture Industry", Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno assert that the capitalist reduction of culture to its commodity form ultimately ends when the whole of culture "amalgamates with advertising" (Adorno and Horkheimer 1944). A similarly totalising drive regarding the impact of advertising practices may be found in contemporary authors as well: for instance, Sut Jhally, one of the most notable theorists of advertising, sees it as the new religion of modern life (Jhally 1990).

Moreover, such suggestive hyperboles of advertising's social functions have produced an interesting theoretical trope: establishing analogies between advertising and art has emerged as a commonplace in many discussions. Thus on the eve of the founding of the situationist movement, Guy Debord and Gil Wolman predicted that propaganda would rise by assuming the role that art used to play: Every reasonably aware person of our time is aware of the obvious fact that art can no longer be justified as a superior activity, or even as a compensatory activity to which one might honourably devote oneself. The reason for this deterioration is clearly the emergence of productive forces that necessitate other production relations and a new practice of life. In the civil-war phase we are engaged in, and in close connection with the orientation we are discovering for certain superior activities to come, we believe that all known means of expression are going to converge in a general movement of propaganda [...] (Debord and Wolman 1956)

Furthermore, Adorno and Horkheimer assert that modern advertising "becomes art and nothing else, just as Goebbels — with foresight — combines them: *l'art pout l'art*, advertising for its own sake, a pure representation of social power" (Adorno and Horkheimer 1944).

In this context, Raymond Williams's phrase of advertising as "the official art of modern capitalist society" (Williams 1999, 421) achieves an iconic status. American sociologist Michael Schudson's familiar formulation of advertising discourse as "capitalist realism" (Schudson 1986, 209–233) comes across, then, as a later poetic refinement of Williams's dictum.

Without a doubt, the rhetorical gesture of raising advertising to the level of an exemplary art form of modern capitalist society, regardless of its different authorial variations, parasitically extracts much of its effect from the ideologemes of the autonomous aesthetic field, established since the 18th century primarily by erasing the traces of the material conditions of artistic production: if the assertion "advertising is art" is to sound provocative and curious, it must be made against the backdrop of an already existent consensual trust in a special sublimity of artistic creation.

On the other hand, the advertising industry has also been reduced to its manifest quise of "creative communication". This is an ingrained, pop-culturally codified representation of advertising: it is not a coincidence that media reports about advertising agencies regularly focus on the so-called creative, the copywriters, designers, and creative directors and not on the so-called media planners, account managers, and other foot-soldiers of the rear echelon of the advertising proletariat; it is not a coincidence that most international festivals of advertising present awards for scripts, slogans, and designs, but not for the craft of buying up media space; it is not a coincidence that the unofficial history of the advertising industry remembers such significant "creatives" as David Ogilvy and David Abbott, but not producers or people responsible for contacting clients; it is not a coincidence that the main character of the popular television series Mad Men, Don Draper is employed precisely as the "author" of commercials, just as it is not a coincidence that the

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title of the only reader-friendly booklet on advertising published in Croatia is *Ma tko samo smišlja te reklame?* (But Who's Coming Up with All Those Commercials Anyway?; Belak 2008) and not, say, *But Who's Buying Up all That Media Space?...* Turned into a big, colourful playground of original ideas, witty remarks, and endless creativity, the advertising industry is then easily inaugurated into a seductive "art of persuasion".⁶ The main character of this ideological narrative, the advertising "artist", is the likable figure of a dishevelled, witty creative, whose ideas are worth millions, who blends artistic impulse with business results — adhering precisely to the petit-bourgeois norm — and ultimately delivers only a somewhat more likable and charming version of the old myth of the entrepreneur whose success in business comes directly out of his unique *vision*.

■ SUBVERTISING: FIGHTING FOR PUBLIC SPACE But what if things were actually quite the opposite with the advertising industry? What if none of our familiar brands could match the success of the advertising industry's own self-branding, which has turned it into the imaginative semantic playground that it is and the "art of our age"? What if Umberto Eco is right when he says that "every message merely reiterates what the consumer already expected and knew" (Eco 1973, 203), which would mean that "the commercial's creator, fooling himself that he has found new formulae of expression, is in fact subject to the impact of his own language" (Eco 1973, 204)? Or Michael Schudson, radicalising Eco's claim by suggesting that "advertising may be more powerful the *less* people believe in it" (Schudson 1984, 225)?

Apart from alluding to Slavoj Žižek's well-known warning that the ruling ideology today "is not meant to be taken seriously or literally" (Žižek 2008, 24), because it already takes for granted the cynicism and irony with which we will greet it - the claim that the art of persuasion owes most of its power to its own unpersuasiveness also partly explains the strange and symptomatic lack of any kind of critical reflexion on advertising production in the media. In newspapers and magazines, on television and web portals we still find, more or less regularly, reviews of books, films, the visual arts, theatre, and music; however, critical discourse concerning advertising is reserved for theoretical discussions in the best of cases and in the worst, for generalised culture-pessimistic lamentations by commentators who refuse to get their hands dirty with concrete examples, preferring instead to dismiss the entire advertising industry en général. If then, advertising is the official art of modern society, it is at the same time the only art that has no critics. It is therefore interesting to see how Joseph Goebbels, evidently one of the most successful propagandists in history, described the art of persuasion in his own time:

6 The title of a major exhibition dedicated to the history of advertising in Croatia, held between 12 June and 30 July 2006 at the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb. Propaganda must therefore always be essentially simple and repetitive. In the long run basic results in influencing public opinion will be achieved only by the man who is able to reduce problems to the simplest terms and who has the courage to keep forever repeating them in this simplified form, despite the objections of the intellectuals. (Quoted in Welch 2002, 26).

As we see, every word of Goebbels's lesson applies to today's commercial-propaganda messages, except the very end: the objections of the intellectuals have mostly disappeared, so it seems that in the meantime the efficacy of mass persuasion, freed from that minor obstruction, has made significant progress.

If we follow Schudson and Žižek and attribute that progress to the cynicism of the new ideology, which has replaced the grandiose Nazi meta-narrative of *blood and soil* with the casual pluralism of symbolic coverings of big business mechanisms, we will arrive at an explanation of the fiasco of so-called *subvertising*, "subversive advertising", whose subversive potentials were taken seriously until recently. Taking its cue from the tradition of certain early-

20th-century avant-garde procedures, Soviet samizdat poetics, the experiences of American independent journalism during the '60s, and Paris situationists' détournement practices, subvertising - as the most blatant example of so-called *culture jamming* or "cultural diversionism" - played with advertising discursive codes in a "guerrilla" fashion, appropriating them and inverting their ideology (Derry 2001). In his influential discussion "Encoding, Decoding", Stuart Hall develops a basic typology of the reception of the dominant ideology's messages, distinguishing between three "positions" or "codes": the "dominant-hegemonic", the "negotiated", and the "contrary". Subvertisers apparently activated the third code and then, in a way, their interventions supplemented the series from Hall's title with a new element: after encoding and decoding, subversive advertising introduced into communication something like a "recoding" of ideological narratives. Underscoring, in semantic terms, the ambivalence of all signs, on which Mikhail Bakhtin once insisted, subvertisers still failed to develop an understanding of signs as an "arena of class struggle" (Vološinov/Bakhtin 1986, 23), at least not dominantly - they recoded advertising from feminist, environmental, and any other underprivileged perspective at least as



often as they relied on class antagonism. Therefore, this series of diversified practices was never crystallised into anything approaching a coherent (anti)ideological movement; rather, they remained at the level of Guy Debord's "fluid language of anti-ideology" (Debord 1995, 146), but it seems that a more daring interpretative gymnastics might still detect a common strategy behind this multitude of different tactics, consisting primarily in fighting for public space.

Namely, whatever its message, subvertising always implied rebelling against advertising's colonisation of urban vistas and media contents and reclaiming public space: instead of advertising, acting, reclaiming public space. Despite unrealistic expectations in many quarters (see Debord and Wolman 1956; Klein 2000, Lasn 1999), the gesture ultimately proved remarkably unconvincing and the facility with which the official art of modern capitalist society re-appropriated the methods of its oppositional subgenre is probably at its most notable in well-known advertising campaigns by Diesel, which ironically interpellated potential customers as mindless consumers, while the company unabashedly pointed to the radical consequences of global inequality established by the capitalist organisation of production; "social awareness" has become yet another tool of differentiating target audiences and it seems that the claim about the dominant ideology's cynicism has received its most blatant confirmation so far.

If we wish to follow the lesson from the top of this story – the one about the necessity of transposing the critique of the advertising industry onto the level of its economic conditions – that thesis cannot satisfy us. It too, namely, adheres to pre-given interpretative frameworks regarding the impact of advertising, excluding all that remains outside symbolic practices: in the end of the day, we are still perpetuating the myth of advertising industry only if we could come up with funnier slogans, more striking messages and intelligent design interventions... Beyond the symbolic struggle, it is thus necessary to outline the concrete historical and material conditions of advertising's spectacular rise during the 20th century.

■ A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST UNDER MONOPOLISATION Again, "The Culture Industry" by Adorno and Horkheimer offers a significant testimony of that rise, linking the advertising industry's expansion with the tendency of moving from fragmented markets and relatively evenly dispersed economic power to the model of monopolistic domination, hidden behind the ideology of free entrepreneurship: "The triumph of the gigantic concern over the initiative of the entrepreneur is praised by the culture industry as the persistence of entrepreneurial initiative" (Adorno and Horkheimer 1944). Moreover, the function of advertising has also undergone a radical change: In a competitive society, advertising performed the social service of informing the buyer about the market; it made choice easier and helped the unknown but more efficient supplier to dispose of his goods. [...] Today, when the free market is coming to an end, those who control the system are entrenching themselves in it. It strengthens the firm bond between the consumers and the big combines. (Adorno and Horkheimer 1944)

If "The Culture Industry" gives a precise diagnosis of the economic context of advertising's current invasion, which enabled all those theoretical hyperboles and the inauguration of advertising as our epoch's representative art form, a more thorough elaboration of the process of monopolisation may still be found in Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy's Monopoly Capital. Baran and Sweezy employ the category of economic surplus as their point of entry into analysing 20th-century transformations of the capitalist system, defining it as "the difference between what a society produces and the costs of producing it" (Baran and Sweezy 1966, 9); moreover, ways of using economic surplus constitute a key mechanism that links the "base" with the political, ideological, and cultural "superstructure". As it turns out, one of the most significant effects of moving to an oligopolistic model of capitalism is the abandoning of the "price wars" strategy which characterises markets made up of numerous, relatively equal actors - because the interests of the monopolists converge around keeping the prices high. Their rising profits thus enable lowering the costs of production, which produces the "tendency for surplus to rise" (Baran and Sweezy 1966, 79). The main problem there concerns the issue of utilising that surplus, so that monopoly capitalism's inherent tendency to stagnate may be averted; therefore, selling become much more important than before. If advertising then comes onstage as a *deus ex machina* and one of the main engines of the emerging consumer society, then we cannot understand the mechanisms that bring it on without their illustrating their economic backdrop in this way. In other words, the sudden, historically unprecedented rise of advertising's social function is merely an effect of the capitalist system, which had to produce an adequate demand to respond to the growth of economic surplus. Or, in Baran and Sweezy's own formulation:

Under conditions of atomistic competition, when the industry comprises a multitude of sellers each supplying only a small fraction of a homogeneous output, there is little room for advertising by the individual firm. [...]

The situation is quite different when the number of sellers is small and each accounts for a large proportion of an industry output and sales. Such relatively large firms are in a position to exercise a powerful influence upon the market for their output by establishing and maintaining a pronounced difference between their products and those of their competitors. This differentiation is sought chiefly by means of advertising (Baran and Sweezy 1966, 116) We should therefore understand advertising as "the very offspring of monopoly capitalism, the inevitable by-product of the decline of price competition" and "as an integral part of the system" (Baran and Sweezy 1966, 122). Though at first sight, we might think otherwise, "the economic importance of advertising lies not primarily in its causing a reallocation of consumer expenditures among different commodities but in its effect on the magnitude of aggregate effective demand" (Baran and Sweezy 1966, 124).

Analysing the advertising discourse in systemic terms shows that the failure of subvertising practices was not simply a consequence of a dimly postulated co-opting adaptability and "cynicism" of capitalist ideology; just as much, those practices have failed because they directed their attacks at individual campaigns and commercials - usually those that are especially striking in sharpening various ideologemes of social oppression - without, however, addressing the logic of the system that turned public space into a terrain for maintaining and enhancing the power of monopoly capitalism. But subvertising at least shows an impulse for symbolic transgression. The already discussed total absence of critical reflection on advertising in the media, which have turned into agents of the privatisation of public space, emerges as a blind spot in the proclaimed democratic pluralism of thinking, a privileged point of (self)censoring, the centrepiece of the entire play of conflicting views, political- and worldviews: everyone is free to criticise cultural products, social phenomena, and political elites, for as long as they keep quiet about the advertisers, without whom privately owned media could not even exist. It is a brutal demonstration of power by monopoly capitalism, as John Harms and Douglas Kellner, among others, emphasise:

This investment in advertising, marketing, and promotion in turn promotes the trends toward monopoly concentration, conglomerate mergers and take-overs, and an economy dominated by giant corporations. In the expensive advertising and promoting marketplace, only the major players can compete. This leads to economic concentration and quasi-monopoly control of the economy by giant corporations who [*sic*] can afford the advertising and promotion efforts. (Harms and Kellner 2006)

It is probably needless to point out that neoliberal capitalism – established during '70s in bloody preludes in Indonesia and Chile, inaugurated as the dominant economic doctrine and ideology of the Western Bloc in the early '80s, and, with the collapse of the bloc dichotomy a decade later, turned into a globally incontestable strategy of radicalising the asymmetry of politico-economic power in favour of a scandalously tiny minority of the richest — is to a large extent only a continuation and escalation of the monopolistic tendencies that Baran and Sweezy observed in the mid-20th century. Moreover, the ideology of praising "the persistence of entrepreneurial initiative", described by Adorno and Horkheimer, has also been preserved. "While

the virtues of competition are placed up front", David Harvey writes in his *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, "the reality is the increasing consolidation of oligopolistic, monopoly, and transnational power within a few centralized multinational corporations" (Harvey 2005, 80).

If it is true that the advertising "artist", that wacky and witty nonconformist made to conform with the readymade phantasms of babbitry, is only the most congenial and likable exponent of the ideology of individual success based only in the unique knowledge, talents, and abilities of individuals, then his main role today still is not to sell a new loan package, mobile plan, or political manifesto, but to mask the neoliberal order's asymmetric architecture of social and financial power. That order has made occupying public space into one of its basic goals. If we wish to defend the public space, then unmasking the mythology of advertising as the exact and exemplary *art of modern society* and reducing it to the concrete, historicalmaterial givens of the advertising industry emerge as a necessary preliminary step in clearing the field for debate. TĸH 20

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REACTIVATE - PUBEIL REACTIVATING THE DISTINCTION (RESPONSE TO IGOR DOBRIČIĆ)

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HARP THOUGHTS" DEBATE: Igor Dobričić VS Sigrid Merx

During the first open day of the "Performance and the Public" research project, held in Amsterdam at the Het Veem Theater on July 1st, TkH [Walking Theory] presented "sharp thoughts" on the question of the relationship between the public and private spheres, featuring dramaturge Igor Dobričić and theatre studies scholar Sigrid Merx. "Sharp Thoughts" is a publicly performed debate format, devised by Ana Vujanović; its purpose is to stage a confrontation of two politically, ideologically, and/or theoretically opposed or merely different viewpoints regarding a contentious issue. The script below is a description of this format of performative discourse.

 "SHARP THOUGHTS" script Ana Vujanović, BY-SA cc, 2009

"Sharp Thoughts" is conceived as a 30-minute public discussion format, with performative and role-playing game elements. It consists of a short proposition – a consistent explanation of a single concrete concept, from a position inherent to it – by the proponent, followed by a brief polemic with a sparring partner, who takes the role of the opponent, challenging or contesting the proposed theses. Following the polemic, the discussion ends with a Q&A session involving the audience, during which both the proponent and the opponent stick to their respective initial discursive positions.

The "performative" here refers to the artificial, contractual, and illocutionary dimensions of speech vs. common sense, spontaneous reactions, and truthful statements, whereas the "role-playing game" mode refers to the articulation of clear and coherent discursive positions vs. genuine expression of thoughts and individual beliefs.

The aims of the format are the following: to introduce important issues to the public in an inquisitive way, to sharpen thinking about them, as well as to promote the culture of public debate through free speech, polemics, disagreements, and arguing.

I have proposed this format as a contribution to the still fragile democracy of the Region's (i.e., the former Yugoslavia) cultural sphere and wider social context, but the format might also present interesting challenges in liberal democratic contexts, preoccupied, as they are, with individualism, which inhibits public speech with the same tools – rights – with which it is supposed to protect it.

NB: The "performers" might find the format uncomfortable, since it requires them to remain within preordained discursive frameworks, which may sometimes oppose the opinions they really hold. The purpose of the exercise is to invest into the resulting supra-individual discursive situation, which can only be produced together. In most cases, only the audience will find it pleasurable. Like in theatre. 66



□ IGOR DOBRIČIČ IN SHARP THOUGHTS, OPEN DAY "PERFORMANCE AND THE PUBLIC", JULY 1 2011, HET VEEM THEATER, AMSTERDAM, PHOTO BY MARTA POPIVODA

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SHARP THOUGHTS" DEBATE: Igor Dobričić VS Sigrid Merx

THE "PRIVATEPUBLIC" Igor Dobričić

In regimes of power multiplicity there is nothing more than an endless multiplication of binaries. This operation produces not singularities but only binary relations, which manipulate with singularities. This proliferation of binary relations generates a semblance of multitude, whilst, in reality, it only maintains the dual structure of power. In fact, the only way that the concept of democracy as the rule of multitude could historically consolidate itself is by re-shaping itself, over and over, into an (un)willing container of the binary functioning of power.

In the complex constellation of binaries that regulate and control the social field, the dual relationship between the public and private plays a central political role.

Reflected and reinforced by the broader network of conceptual binaries that surround it — consciousness and unconsciousness, visibility and invisibility, truth and lying, male and female, etc. — the distinction between the public and private imposes (in)visible rules that regulate and maintain the political *status quo*.

As long as there is a binary distinction between the public and the private, passage from one to the other will be subject to a border regime that reproduces patterns of inequality, exclusion and discrimination. It is entirely irrelevant which one of the two contrary positions in a binary we choose to inhabit, uphold, defend, or promote; as long as we do not find a way to bring their dialectical relation to a standstill, to make it inoperative, we will keep exchanging places without really getting anywhere.

Hijacking for a moment the terminology that our guests used during their presentation today, I might say that inside the binary machine, we are caught in the performance of power. Instead of acting in a borderless world of possibilities, free to assume any role we desire or need, we keep performing the act of border crossing, whose conditions are defined by the construction of a dialectical social machine rather than by each of us as a singular agent. To perform is to meet existing conditions and repeat what is already proposed; to act is to break away from the repetition and — instead of trying to untie the dialectical knot — to cut through it with one decisive gesture.

So what might be the different promise that this decisive act holds for us, the act of unravelling the knot of the private/public and producing the privatepublic? I will try to formulate its imaginary consequences in the most provocative terms — in relation to the concepts of truth and honesty.

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"SHARP THOUGHTS" DEBATE: Igor dobričić VS Sigrid Merx

Our mental dependence on a strict binary separation between the public and private in the social field facilitates a border regime that regulates and maintains the political status quo. That separation also implies a distinction between public and private truth. Paradoxically, it is that claim that is the source of all lies. Without the distinction between the public and private, there would be no need to cultivate. protect, or uphold "truth" anymore. Outside of the border regime of the public and private, whatever appears in the social field is true and false at once. It simply exists. The pure appearance of things becomes in itself an existential and ethical act that needs no translating, verifying, or re-presenting. Honesty makes sense only inside the border regime of the public and private. As soon as that "dialectical wall" falls, binary distinctions between truth and lying, good and bad, right and wrong, are no longer important, having been replaced by a pure respect of the appearance of things, respect that goes beyond tastes and opinions, operating instead in terms of affections and complex perceptions.

PRIVATE – PUBLIC: REACTIVATING THE DISTINCTION RESPONSE TO IGOR DOBRIČIĆ BY SIGRID MERX

Duncan Kennedy, a professor of law, once wrote:

When people hold a symposium about a distinction, it seems almost certain that they feel it is no longer a success. Either people can't tell how to divide situations up between the two categories, or it no longer seems to make a difference on which side a situation falls. (Kennedy 1982, 1349)

I believe that this applies to the public-private distinction as well. In our social and political lives the private has become public, and what used to be public or of public interest has become a matter of individual responsibility, or has been handed over to private companies. Therefore, distinguishing between the private and the public has become increasingly difficult. Igor Dobričić, in his contribution to these Sharp Thoughts, proposes that we *deactivate* the distinction between the public and private. But I believe that doing away with them is only one way, and a rather radical one, of dealing with failing distinctions. Instead, abiding by the rules of this game, I will state the opposite: the public-private distinction needs to be *reactivated*.

Thinking in binary oppositions has a negative connotation in postmodern and poststructuralist thinking. At my university one of the first things we try to teach our students is not to view reality through such simplifications, but to understand how such distinctions are ideologically charged. The implication is that binary pairs, and the borders that separate them, are mostly constructed by those who have political or social power, in order to maintain power



thinking, many thinkers have actively deconstructed all kinds of binary pairs, such as truth and lying, reality and fiction, the body and the mind, the self and the other, the subject and the object, the public and the private, demonstrating their complex interrelations, blurring the boundaries between them, and replacing the oppositions with gliding scales or eliminating them all together. This has gone so far that critical thinkers today regard any tendency to think in boundaries as politically suspect by definition, whereas it might actually be that we are conflating here the instrument with the intention, thus risking throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

I would like to suggest that separating the private and the public, despite all the ideological hazards that come with it, might prove to be a productive thinking tool at a time of crisis. Holes are opening up in the cultural and social fabric precisely because the difference between the private and the public has become so blurred that we no longer know how to defend the public good, because the notion of the public as a meaningful concept with its own clear vocabulary is no longer recognised as such. I believe that the deactivation of the boundaries between the public and private, advocated by Dobričić, is, as far as I can tell, already a social and political fact. Moreover, it is a rather problematic fact, because, in a way, it stifles debate. Nowadays, most people seem lost when asked to express what the public means to them, even those among them who truly believe and claim that they are engaged. Facing recent disastrous spending cuts in culture, healthcare, and education in the Netherlands and elsewhere, we naturally feel obliged to defend the public good. But how to defend something that most people are no longer able to define, distinguish, or frame?

In a recent piece published in *De Volkskrant*, a Dutch newspaper, sociologist and journalist Warna Oosterbaan described the parliamentary debate on the government's new policy in the arts as ideologically poor. No one, not even the politicians who are opposed to the cuts, seems able to explain why exactly art belongs to the public sphere and should be a public good. In Oosterbaan's view, both the government's proposals and the political reactions to them reveal a cultural political vacuum of a previously unimagined magnitude. And the few that do hold strong opinions about the importance of art as a public good are confronted with a public that is by and large not really interested in their arguments, since the concept of the public that is stake doesn't mean anything to them and rings no bells.

We could say today that in our work, social lives, the media we follow, and the politics we engage in, we are experiencing less and less of any real difference between the private and the public. As a result, we have become increasingly *indifferent*, first of all to this distinction and then also, as a harmful side-effect, to these concepts themselves. By "indifferent" I do not mean that we do not care; on the contrary, our times are characterised by an intense emotional

IGOR DOBRIČIĆ

SIGRID MFRX

engagement with almost everything. Rather, it seems to me that we are becoming increasingly unable to distinguish between such categories, to see the difference. According to Duncan Kennedy, a distinction only can be effective when it is possible to make one:

[...] people must feel that it is intuitively sensible to divide something between its poles and that the division will come out pretty much the same way regardless of who is doing it. Second the distinction must make a difference: a distinction without a difference is a failure even if it is possible for everyone to agree on how to make it. Making a difference means that is seems plain that situations should be treated differently depending on which category of the distinction they fall into. (Kennedy 1982, 1349)

I believe that being unable to make this difference causes us to feel helpless, indeed, trapped in a vacuum. This becomes highly problematic as soon as we are confronted with a public sphere under siege. It is this feeling, I believe, that contributes to our unwillingness or disinterest to understand the public as a *distinct*, albeit multilayered, sphere, separate from others, and worth protecting. As a way of sharpening our thoughts, I therefore propose that instead of breaking down the dialectical wall as Dobričić suggests, we should rather call for the *re-instalment* of a clear and strict distinction between the public and private, so as to reclaim a vocabulary that would at least enable us to discuss the sense or nonsense of that distinction. Dobričić proposes that we respect the pure appearance of things beyond any distinctions and any form of representation. One could characterise his stance as almost Buddhist. And in different times, I would probably not object. But we are in the middle of a crisis. Such times call for more radical positions. For me, a plea for respecting the pure appearance of things is just one step away from relativism. It renders people helpless.

I believe that it is hard to take an interest in anything, if you don't know what that something is. Therefore I do appreciate the productivity of defining and thus separating things for the sake of debate. I am willing to accept that in this act of distinguishing truths are constructed and that, as Dobričić suggests, those truths will turn out to be lies. However, those are for others to unmask. No revolution has ever started out of nuance.

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A CONVERSATION WITH BRUND LATOUR

ROJANA CVEJIĆ MARTA POPIVODA & ANA VILIANOVIĆ

Bojana Cvejić, Marta Popivoda, and Ana Vujanović met Prof. Bruno Latour in his office at Sciences Po on December 19, 2011, as part of their research project "Performance and the Public" at Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers in Paris.

BC: During the initial phase of our research we were struggling to define the boundaries between the public and private spheres. Given that society is ruled by the interests of private capital and capitalism is driven by individualism, what are the protocols that filter or convert private interest into public concerns? If the public as such doesn't exist but only arises around issues that concern it, as Lippmann and Dewey suggest, this must involve instruments of "making things public", to quote the title of the exhibition you and Peter Weibel created at ZKM, Karlsruhe. We are wondering if performance and performativity can account for such protocols.

BL: In the Western capitalist tradition, as well as during and especially after communism, there was always a rather ambiguous divide between those who have their own, private interests, and those who have a mysterious view of the public as the common good by way of a strange mutation of cognitive, or affective interest. The students at this school [Sciences Po, Paris] are trained to get out there and somehow be able to represent the public, which is rather odd, because they have no specific tools or protocols; it's as if we actually believed that we could mutate their minds to enable them to envisage the public good. This is at the heart of the French Republican tradition, but of course, it was an important theme for communism as well. The passage from Marxism, which was based on the opposition between the public and the private, to capitalism doesn't change a thing, because the opposition between the public and the private is still entrenched in the organisation of thought. In the "Lippmann-Dewey" view,¹ our use of the notions public/private is wrong: basically, the private is everything that is formatted, already established, everything that has known consequences of action. It's arbitrated and there's a protocol for every action, there is habit of thought... The public begins to enter the picture not as the general will or common good but as the exploration of the unintended consequences of action. An issue becomes public when there is no knowledge of what to do and that is when one needs a protocol. To call this notion of protocol performative is good, because the exploration is blind, it's like tâtonner.

BC: Fumbling or groping in the dark.

BL: That's exactly what the public is... dark things, fumbling in the dark. Conceptualising the public in this way rids us of all those metaphors of vision, upper vision, directing, of the "chief". That's

See Lippmann 1925 and Dewey 1927. 1

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phantom public, something that may appear and disappear as long as we don't have feeding mechanisms. As we said in "Making Things Public",² the public belongs in the domain of disability studies. The public is a handicap. As long as one knows how to proceed, as in a private company, or when it concerns citizens, one knows the beginning and end of an action, the public is not needed. Things can be organised as they were in the old days: a town-hall meeting where the citizens assemble and say "we want this, we want that". That's the myth of a democratic public. Lippmann says that it is ridiculous to use this myth to define an action from beginning to end. So the phantom view of the public is completely opposed to Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, the Marxists... It's much more pertinent to our own current situation, because it likewise makes no distinction between the state and the private sphere: the state can be just as blind as the forces of the market and vice versa, the forces of the market are known to be blind and have many unintended consequences, which are called externalities, positive or negative; for awhile, we thought that the blindness of the state would be overcome by clarity, by the clairvoyance of the market, but no one believes that any more. So that's why Dewey's argument is so powerful, because it tells us to stop asking whether this or that is private or public, because that's not the way things are, but to become interested in what is not known, formatted, arbitrated, standardised, basically "managed"

BC: So it's a kind of proceduralism.

under a political task.

BL: The public emerges when one explores the unintended consequences of action. And you cannot do that without a protocol, because even fumbling or groping in the dark requires a principle that will help you to enter the situation, register what happens, and get feedback from your experiment. The private prefers if you stay out. This definition is perhaps slightly confusing, I admit, because in Lippmann-Dewey's terms the phantom public is private and the public begins to arise when the unintended consequences of the private are investigated. So this is why I think it's better to use "matters of concern", because that clarifies something that remains vague in Dewey and concerns his way of changing the perspective on politics, which can best be described as: "no issue, no politics". In that way you pixelise the political domain around the issues and that changes everything, because when you have an issue, you know what is going to have unintended consequences, from many different attachments, which might be the state, the private sphere in the classical sense, the citizens, the NGOs. So it becomes very different from one case to the next, e.g. the borders of Kosovo or pollution in the Danube or climate change or tuna fish or whatever... Contrary to the mainstream definitions of politics and the public, we have no comprehensive overview of politics that could address every single entity.

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BC: And that's why according to Lippmann-Dewey the public keeps arising around individual issues, always from scratch.

BL: Right. If you rebuild political sensitivity around matters of concern, you realise how different the landscape is from one element to the next.

AV: Does this also mean that whatever we do, whatever we discuss in this public sphere constitutes political activity? That was another question that arose during the first phase of our research: can we call all such activities political, or are there still some distinguishing criteria...

BL: "The public sphere" is a dangerous term because it implies that there must be a private sphere first, from which a public sphere is discerned, while in reality it's almost exactly the opposite, the public is a very small sphere that requires a very specific montage in order to be inhabited. Now, do we need to define politics as a special activity? If politics can't be identified with the public, or with institutions, it is because it is a kind of circulation that can happen whenever there is no management. Basically, the conception draws on Schmitt's principle of exception,³ where the rules cannot be followed. Politics begins where experts fail, where the rules are not being followed; then there is no procedure in place and you have to invent one, you have to make one up. That's where politics starts.

BC: But that means that politics is almost like an ephemeral event, of the order of rupture in the smooth functioning of procedure.

BL: The difficulty is that politics is very ephemeral indeed. Every time, it has to be started and restarted anew and that, of course, is very hard for any political activity. I could say that in this office, in the course of four or five years, I've had maybe a few weeks' worth of political moments in total. The rest was administration or management or whatever. Why? I can name the exact moment when it happened, when I started doing this ephemeral work of building a strange circle whereby you obtain something that is absolutely impossible: to speak in the name of several different people who say different things. And no habit can accomplish that. That's exceptional and if the principle of exception has an ephemeral quality to it, that's also what makes political activities hard. It has to be started anew every time. It's like love: it's not that because you have done it once - declared love - that you don't have to do it again and start all over again. And that's why politicians are under so much pressure. That's why a politician is someone who would do anything to avoid politics, because it's so hard. Look at the politicians, they do that every four years - addressing mothers, the miners, the firemen, pumping hands, as they say, over and over again. It works, but not because

3 See Schmitt 2005.

they have done it before. So that's why you cannot map this activity onto any institution, the best example being this very school, where you have masses of political scientists studying anything but politics. For them, politics is absolutely invisible. They entirely miss the true phenomena that we are talking about here. First, the public has to be reproduced by and around matters of concern that are constantly popping up, unexpectedly, and *ad hoc*. Second, once you have a matter of concern, you have to do politics around it. So the great ideal now, which I think is even worse than late capitalism, is good governance. The transition was really this: let's forget about politics and have good management instead: fight corruption, rankings, standardisations, procedures, the masses of European good practices... as if by doing that you might sort of cleanse yourself from political activity.

AV: Politics is about policy.

BL: It's policy and not politics, yes. Governance is about policy.

BC: How do we actually gather or assemble those various discourses that are called for when a matter of concern starts to engage heterogeneous actors? This would require involving many people who are not at all entitled to govern. In your writings, you often invoke the relationship between science — even art — and politics. We were wondering: how does it happen? How to force others to be concerned?

BL: The problem is that the gathering has to be *ad hoc*, that's Lippmann's view. But I would rather credit Dewey with that argument, that is, his book *Art as Experience*.⁴ I mean, your question is why we quit speaking, and the reason why we didn't make many things public, that's exactly why. So it will never be governance, it's not policy, but it has to be "instrumented" in some ways. How can it be instrumented? Well, here, of course, my own solution is to use the pragmatist tradition extensively; more specifically, all of science and technology studies tradition, because, of course, in addition to all that Lippmann and Dewey pointed out 70–80 years ago, the role of science is no longer stimulating. Between 1945 and the 1980s, social science was basically good enough. Now nobody believes that anymore, so the solution is to explore. Fumbling or groping in the dark doesn't mean eating yourself up.

BC: But does it mean trial and error? There has to be more direction than that.

BL: Right, it's not problem-solving, because problem-solving is already a managerial view. So what are the resources? My argument is to say that we have lots of resources. The first of those resources is basic research in social science; not applied research, but basic

research, the most theoretical, the most advanced in the entire field. especially in social science, history and the humanities and so on, because that's where the only possibility to reformat the problem might come from. The second resource is the arts, because that's where the reformatting occurs. And of course, the third comprises the old craft of politics and political art. That's why we use that old word, which has a whole set of habits - because they are difficult to account for. The politicians are listening, getting by, pumping hands, moving, finding compromise - all of this internal work which is hard to describe, in fact. There's not much that is incarnated in the body, in the political body, the body of the people, but in the body of a politician, in the tone of her voice, which may make or break the movement of the political, which I call a mode of existence. So it's not normative but it's not without equipment either. My equipment comes from the "Cartography of Scientific Controversies", a very important programme for me because, above all, it has an educational value for kids. It also provides us with an expertise of long standing, about 15 years, on what it means to explore "matters of concern" in a systematic way, without knowing that every case is different but instrumenting according to the characteristics of handling matters of concern.

BC: And that maybe comes close to Charles Sanders Peirce's notion of abduction: inventing rules on a case-by-case basis.

BL: It's a perfectly pragmatist term, abduction. But performance, too, is a good term in the way that you are using it. In every case, an issue comes into being in a mixture of media attention, a catastrophe, an NGO intervention, activists taking over when you turn your attention to matters of concern and find a way of representing them – re-presenting them — which could mean Greenpeace staging demonstrations, or it could be a scholarly paper published in a good journal — it can be very different. But for sure, there is always some sort of connection between scientific, political, and artistic representation, which makes the issue visible. Then once it becomes visible, it has to be maintained there and that's where the work is so difficult, because the issue might disappear, or be absorbed. So, in a way, when you listen to what politicians do all day, that's what they do, maintaining issues in existence or trying to deal with things that were not supposed to happen.

BC: Let's take another concern: when the so-called financial crisis broke out, the public rose against social injustice, in protests that we can still observe today, such as the "Occupy" movement and the "Indignados" in Spain. A political movement fails to establish itself as an issue, a matter of great public concern; it is treated like noise, or a slight irritation, but it's not taken seriously and doesn't mobilise those who might care about it. It opens up a rift between the state anda number of discontented citizens, which is not yet a political affect, but more of a feeling of dissatisfaction without an idea. Their demands are dismissed because they are never precise enough but tend to become too comprehensive, or too detailed, and it seems as if the list be endless. But the slogan goes: We are the 99%.

BL: It was a good slogan. This is a difficult situation, because "Indignez-vous" has a verb without an object, which I think is quite interesting. It means that politics has been so emptied of itself that now it's...

BC: An empty utterance.

BL: Policy has so much conquered everything else that politics has been reduced to indignation without an object. The success of the book *Indignez-vous* is guite extraordinary in itself because it's exactly a literal metaphor for the lack of a political object. Before that, all the parties were accusing the protesters of having no platform. The accusation was completely absurd because politics is not about having a platform. Politics is precisely about this circulation, exception, or, in your terms, abduction or performance, where you find what you want along the way, so to speak. So to say to these guys that they have no platform means that you don't understand politics. My problem is that I think my conception of politics as a mode of existence - not yet as an institution but as a mode of existence - is in danger of disappearing, the same as religion. The Occupy movement requires something very different from policy, from everything that is valorised. Indignation marks the moment of transition into something else and thus implies mobilising, arguing, counter-arguing; and at some point, obeying.

BC: Reintegration.

BL: It's not done by following rules. And that's why it's exceptional and ephemeral. That's why you can lose it, because you can stop seeing the possibilities themselves. Especially in countries like France. The US was surprising, actually; I don't know about Serbia.

BC: There was an Occupy.

BL: But in France it didn't take off, even with *Indignez-vous* and so on. It's quite interesting because the French still have the idea that whatever qualifies as a protest, indignation, etc. immediately has to be taken over by the lost state. So again, there is no politics there, because it's supposed to be the state that does it, which, of course, is not the case in countries like the US, where the state has always been perceived as the enemy. The fact that it didn't take off here has a lot to do with the idea that there is still no alternative to the state. So even though people say "the market, we have to fight the market, the idea that the state and the market are both blind and unable to produce the common good is not there. So people think they have

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done enough political action when they complain, as if the state had the cognitive apparatus to do anything about it. And if you say that the state hasn't got one ..., you are accused of being a liberal. In my opinion, as far as France is concerned, the Indignez-vous movement has made no impact whatsoever. I'm sure it's been very important in the States — I've been reading carefully what people are saying — because it shows that there is something, however little, that is other than the Tea Party, but all the documenters are also saying that it resembles the Tea Party in many ways. But the difficulty of covering the abyss between the many and the one gets wider and wider when you withdraw from the equipment of people the ability to speak politically.

BC: Britain seems to be half-way between Europe and the States. For instance, whenever the latest set of reforms is ready to strike continental Europe, it is tested in Britain first, and what's happening in education right now is probably the end of education in Britain. But there's been such a mobilisation around an idea that I think a lot of people share, namely, the idea to apply pressure on every level, onto those who are delegated with the power to solve problems. The student protest is quite strong, and in France I get the impression that people mobilise only when the state withdraws those privileges or rights that were conferred by the Republic or had to be fought for. Alternatively, we might say "manifest" rather than mobilise, which is very different. "Manifest" carries a different connotation from "demonstrate" or "protest". It's much more of a ceremony to remind the state of its citizens' rights.

BL: If the public is a phantom that constantly has to be reinstated, it should stop producing a public; it's not there, it disappears. Dewey used the word "eclipse": the public has been eclipsed; and he wrote that in the 1930s, so then you say "well, what's happened since?". Of course, there was the war, we lived in this mixture of victory and rational Governments, either in its Communist version or in Western Europe's liberal version. We're back to where Dewey was, which is amazing when you come to think of it. His every single word is as fresh and the same goes for Lippmann, too, only in a harder way. Almost everything written between the 1930s and the end of the century looks completely obsolete, which is very odd. What happened, what have we been doing over the last 70 years? This is very puzzling to me.

AV: We have one more question that relates to the topic that Bojana broached just now. For example, if you think about the Occupy protests and the like, from our perspective, they should reach more people than they actually do, and we have many cases of that. For instance, your example of the climate change is a matter of concern that could easily mobilise a lot of people, but usually it doesn't. So for example, the issue that the Occupy protesters are trying to open up and bring to the public is that of "precarity", how it's becoming all-encompassing and so on; but then for us, there is the question of the role of ideology. We couldn't find any mention of it in your writings, but we're curious to ask you about it: do we need ideology to mobilise people, to get them to identify with these problems and understand that they are also their problems, or is ideology always manipulative or... How do you see it? I can just briefly say that we are not against ideology *per se;* rather, we are against this Habermasian ideal of transparent rational debate based on an egalitarian structure; because, I would say, that ideal is likewise ideologically laden, but its ideology is somehow hidden in its rationality. So for us it's better to deal with ideology than say or pretend that it doesn't exist.

BL: Yes. That's exactly why I've never used it: because ideology is always juxtaposed with rational discussion. Rational is likewise a word I've always tried to avoid, for a similar reason: because it presupposes that there is an ideal of discussion undistorted by interest or passion. My solution is to say "no, we are at war" and no, it's not ideological, it's what I call cosmo-politics, a cosmo-political war where there is nothing in common between the warring parties. the US Republican and Democratic Parties, not even their definition of the Earth. Their differences aren't ideological. But that doesn't mean that the Democratic Party's position is rational. The Democratic Party's world is not the same as the Republican Party's world. It doesn't consist of the same elements, it's not a similar entity, it's not composed around the same matters of concern, it doesn't have the same definition of what is human, it doesn't have the same definition of what is God. These are cosmological, world disputes. And ideology always threatens to deceive us into thinking that by peeling it off, you get straight to the interests. That's why I always make my first-year students try to avoid "ideology". I mean, don't say "if I get the ideology out, the interests will be there", because knowing one's interests is an immensely difficult thing. If we try to compare what we call cosmograms, we then pose the question, what are the components of the world in which you want to live, what is the planet you want to inhabit...? This is a much stronger outlook than ideology: it really defines the existence you want to have, you can't cut it by saying: "If only we could have the ideology out, we could convert to a rational version of truth".

Matter of fact is an English expression for that which is indisputable. If we only had matters of fact, you could not disagree, because matters of fact are supposed to be indisputable. There's actually a very nice gesture [Latour hits the table with his fist]: "this is a matter of fact".

BC: The etymology of *Gegenstand*: an object that actually gives resistance.

AV: But the way I understand your writing, there's still a kind of negotiation between the physical existence of certain objects or things and our view that they should somehow be of our concern.

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BL: Yes, but that's a matter-of-concern view of matters of fact. But a matter-of-fact view of matters of fact would say no, it's not negotiable. It's just there. And if only we had lots of matters of fact, we could just converge, we could agree. We disagree because of our ideologies but we agree on the matters of fact; in the context of the current environmental crisis, it would seem most bizarre to believe in that, but until the last decade people still did. I mean, right now, climate change is the most divisive election issue in America. Refusing to believe in climate change, that's amazing. So the idea that matters of fact can bring us together is gone. It's still in the heads of all rationalist people. Now of course, we get a different problem: what do you do when there are only matters of concern? You have to reorganise the polity around a fact. You are not going to distribute the fact, even if you try to, in such a way that people will converge. When you try to distribute matters of fact, people diverge, and they diverge even in the most massive case, probably the best in the history of science, also the best known fact, apart from a few mathematical theories: the entropic origin of global warming. It's a very striking case because it concerns nine [sic!] billion people. You imagine that people should agree on something that concerns nine billion of them, but they don't. It's impossible to agree. And you can no longer hope for an agreement on matters of fact, it's finished. Of course, it was a great idea of our ancestors going back to Galileo, maybe even before Galileo, until the end of the 20th century. The best ideals were there, but now they're finished.

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THE ART OF SLOGANS (THE CONSTATIVE PART) SEZGIN BOYNIK

PART II (CONTINUED FROM FROM TKH 19)

THE ART OF SLOGANS (THE CONSTATIVE PART) / Sezgin Boynik

4. ART & LANGUAGE *QUA* ART & SLOGANS

Art is what we do; culture is what we do to other artists. Art & Language, 1975

As Michael Corris, a former member of the Art & Language group, stated recently, the reasoning in the 60s was that "the pragmatic dimension of language would enable a conceptual art with socializing potential" (Corris 2004, 8) and due to this approach artists developed a wide interest in issues of language. This was related to the "linguistic turn", familiar to Conceptual Art; and it was a symptom of a general interest in the relations between language and power, as well as the role of ideology in the processes of representation. Also, due to the pragmatic effects of language, it was possible to engage those issues in political terms, such as transformation, deconstruction, and, in more optimistic cases, revolution. In this section of the essay I want to look briefly at the possibilities of problematising the philosophical issues discussed above, in the field of Art & Language's theory and practice.

One of the major activities of the Art & Language group (henceforth A&L) was the publication of Art-Language: The Journal of Conceptual Art, which was especially dedicated to theoretical discussions of language-related issues in art. With their participation at Documenta V in 1972, the group modified their strict theoretical and analytical programme in favour of a broader self-reflexive direction. This is not to say that with their Indexing project A&L retreated from their erstwhile theoretical rigour, but apart from broadening their capacity (adding new members to the group) and branching out geographically by including members living and working in New York, the group also decided to schematise and structuralise their earlier as well as current work. The Indexing project, which Charles Harrison describes as a "summary work of Conceptual Art", is "a model of the sorts of connectedness there might be between various texts" (Harrison 2001, 71 and 75). These various texts were produced by people affiliated with A&L: critiques, statements, declarations, analyses, etc. Indexing was a reflection of A&L's general interest, or, in Christopher Gilbert's words, the group's raison d'être, defined by "conversational activity" and its own "intra-group relations" (Gilbert 2004, 326). Apart from being a genuine solution for the problem of using paper-text as an aesthetic object, the project realised in Documenta V also raised a further philosophical problematic related to the "inadequacy of extant theory for addressing the complexities of the conversational matrix" and to the issue of the relation of pragmatics to language (Gilbert 2004, 330). Later projects, initiated after the indexes, such as Blurting in New York and Dialectical Materialism, were all dealing with issues pertaining to the group's positioning itself; more precisely, with the theoretical and philosophical problematics and conditions of collective working. The use of language, which was crucial in these *Indexing* projects, pushed the group into a more explicitly political direction; or in Harrison's words, to "ideological self-examination", which intensified the problematic of a "language community" among the members of A&L. A&L probably took the pragmatism of language more seriously than any other conceptual artist or group did and exposed its consequences in their most extreme political manifestations.¹

Nevertheless, working on language leads one to politics, as we saw in the previous instalment of this text, but in A&L's case, working on language also led to a more solid interest in working on theory as well.² What happened after the *Indexing* project is that A&L completely dedicated themselves to the above-mentioned ideological self-examination of their own language constraints; or, to partake in their experience, we might say that A&L were now becoming interested in clarifying their own slogans and rigorously criticising the false slogans of the fashionable art discourse. For example, Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden's Comparative Models (1972) was based on a deconstructive reading of the Artforum's language. They commented on texts published in the Artforum by making explicit the annotations used in those texts and trying to expose their limited scope and ideological underpinning. Their critique was based on a survey that showed that the Artforum's critics' approach to art was "experience-laden", as opposed to the "theory-ladenness" of their own practice. This would amount to saying that while the Artforum's slogans were "experiential" (which now they are even

1 This concerns the rather delicate issue of the "politicisation" of A&L, which mostly happened in New York, with the group's work on the publication of *The Fox* journal and with A&L's involvement with organisations such as AWC (Art Workers Coalition), AMCC (Artists Meeting for Cultural Change), and AICU (The Anti-Imperialist Cultural Union). There is a limited body of literature on this interesting issue. For example, Zoran Popović's film *Borba u Njujorku / The Struggle in New York* was made in the heat of that transition. Of course, A&L's "political turn" was neither simple nor easy. For example, Harrison, who rightly censured *The Sunday Times* (2 July 1972) for reviewing the Documenta-Index as "a Stalinist reading-room", in the same book criticised the people involved in AICU, with whom A&L were collaborating at the time, as "Maoist-Stalinist" (Harrison 2001, 120).

In his article "Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy", Peter Osborne writes that the 2 Indexing project "marks both the culmination and the demise of strong [i.e. rigorous] Conceptualism: the fantasy of the resolution of the constitutive ambiguity of philosophy's double-coding" (Osborne 1999, 64). By "philosophy's double-coding", Osborne is referring here to its twofold role in Conceptual Art: first, that of eliminating the aesthetic or artistic element in the work of art and second, that of introducing a new artfulness to it, which was in this case theory. The inescapability of Modernist aesthetic elements forms the tension of the philosophy of Conceptual Art. According to Osborne, A&L, who problematised this tendency to the most, broke with conceptualising "art as philosophy" in favour of "philosophy as art". Discussing the philosophy of A&L, Osborne refers to the first six issues of the Art-Language journal, in other words, the Indexing project, which introduced the schematisation of these issues and brought the tension of philosophy's double-coding to a breaking point. My opinion is that Osborne's article, notwithstanding its great importance regarding this issue, overlooked the important twin notions of politics and ideology, both of which play a significant role in the constitution of philosophy. In other words, Osborne's interpretation appears to suggest that once A&L began focusing on slogans, they lost the "radical openness of purely logical possibility" that used to mesmerise their philosophy (Osborne 1999, 63).

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more), A&L's slogans were "theoretical". In the following year, A&L initiated their project *Blurting in New York*, which was completely based on the group's theoretical and ideological self-examination. The project's participants, including Ian Burn, Michael Corris, Preston Heller, Joseph Kosuth, Andrew Menard, Mel Ramsden, and Terry Smith, contributed by intervening in and commenting on (based on their readings of philosophical literature or earlier writings) a set of annotations that the group had chosen. The end-result, which was a book, included a schema of these "theory-laden" annotations based on their "narrow" and "wider" conjunctions. It was an attempt to demystify the concepts of collaboration, relation, work, and interest (i.e. ideology), by means of a rigorous re-examination of the patterns involved in these formations. From today's perspective, the work that A&L performed in *Blurting in New York* could clearly be described as an attempt to assemble their own "theoretical ladennes/practice". basing their references exclusively on their own annotations/ slogans. To put it in Althusserian terms, they were working in the field of the "object of knowledge" and not on the "real-object"; and A&L took great care not to conflate those two. As they wrote in their "Introduction to Blurting in New York": "the 400-odd blurts have been approached textually, as a self-defining/containing 'imploded' 'world'. The only relations suggested are internal, i.e., between blurts, not from the blurts to anything else" (Art & Language 1975). A&L rather schematically describe the structure of the conjunctions between individual blurts; however, there are different possibilities of using those conjunctions. As they note in the "Introduction", the meanings embedded in the various connections between individual blurts are "not meanings in the normal sense of reference but in the sense of pragmatic function". This means that reassembling them is always possible and that this possibility results from the pragmatic nature of language; but at the same time, any realisation of it must be internal and needs no extrapolation from outer "reality" (or "noise", as A&L sometimes called it, which could also be productive, though its inclusion would entail stricter and harder intellectual work). As we can surely tell, this is a completely un-Makavejevian world of words, which in some way may remind one of some of Deleuze and Guattari's conceptions (e.g. immanence, pragmatism, assemblage, etc). But I think that in their theory and practice A&L took these conceptions even further; first, they did not reduce the importance of working with language (blurts, annotations, slogans) to its capacity of being ultimately performative and second, they consequently underscored the necessarily constative character of utterances. A&L thereby drew a clear demarcation line from all tendencies that might be called "experiential". In practical terms, that means that artists who wish to work on the practical issues of the "world" (such as politics and language) must be vigilant and rigorous about their own theoretical positions, or to put it differently, they must be aware of the conjunction schema of their own theoretical references. To make it even more explicit, artists, same as communists, must know their own slogans. In this respect, no critical position could base its

practice in the improvisational nature of the use of language, or in the extreme conditions of language-suspensions-in-the-field-oflanguage, which were crucial in Deleuze and Guattari's world, as we saw in the first chapter of this essay. This does not mean that A&L were after some pure, natural language (notwithstanding some rather curious references they made to Noam Chomsky at one point), or some totalising language. To the contrary, A&L's practice of knowing their slogans leads to a very serious, heuristic practice of theoretical pedagogy, which consequently produces a state of pandemonium with the possible result of "unsorting" or "re-assembling" language (Art & Language 1975).³ But such an adventure, the production of new slogans, is possible only in theoretical work or theoretical practice.

This theoretical practice also produces some nasty consequences in art, which calls for further discussion. As Thomas Dreher notes, writing on the *Blurting* project, mutual relations between annotations constitute a kind of "language environment" where "possibilities of self-imbedding in the art-world are presented as conditions of the latter's transformation from the inside through 'theoretical practice'". This is the difficulty. The really nasty situation is exactly this: if by means of this "theoretical practice" working on oneself produces a certain assemblage that relates to that closed system, then how does this system connect to the outer world and what is this "theoretical practice" if not a simple construction of an (artistic) identity? How may one avoid the issue of fixation (as it relates to all constructed identities) and is it possible to communicate with identities other than those of a similar nature? As Charles Harrison notes, between 1972 and 1976, on both sides of the Atlantic, the main question for A&L was this: "how was a domain of Art & Language discourse to be distinguished from the world of all other utterances?" (Harrison 2001, 104). This problematic was directly related to the issue of ideology, or more precisely to the issue of ideological interpellation. If "theoretical practice" achieves some kind of social integration by means of synthetic subjectification (i.e. by means of schematised conjunctions), then there arises the question of the relation of this distinct ideological tendency (i.e. A&L's group ideology) to the general disposition of ideology (or more precisely to the Ideological State Apparatuses). In Blurting in New York one can trace some hints of this "problematisation": the annotation related to problematic (No. 282) directly refers to Althusser's conception of "theoretical practice", understood as the proposition that "concepts cannot be considered in isolation". This blurting could be familiarised (or conjoined) with another two annotations on theory, No. 346, which states that theory must be used in its own domain and with No. 347, which defends theory as a disavowal of experience and personality-laden orientations. No. 195 (Language) tells us that working on language is in some respects similar to working in theory and No. 201 (the language environment annotation) tells us that language is connected to ideology. The

3 In their "Draft for an Anti-Textbook" A&L also wrote that "most of our shows [...] deal with possible cultural/social transformation in language" (guoted from Gilbert 2004, 339). 87

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annotations on *ideology* can be perplexing, but two of them, Nos. 172 and 173, suggest how difficult it is to relate to ideologies other than your own; which consequently causes concern about the possibility of participating in the real world (i.e. politics), communicating with other artistic ideologies, and agreeing on a single ideological discourse within a group of various and heterogeneous individuals working together. Generally speaking, this is about the difficulty of working on one's own slogans, translating them to the outer world, and trying not to be normative with the statements that they propose. It is a difficult task, but A&L, I believe, took up this endeavour in the most effective way. For that reason A&L's modification of Carl Andre's slogan "Art is what we do, culture is what is done to us" to "Art is what we do, culture is what we do to other artists" should be understood from this perspective, the perspective of political participation. But unlike Andre's slogan, A&L's notion of political participation does not equate ideology to normative culture, nor does it posit (autonomous) art as a shelter, a political decision still within ideology qua normative culture, or a detachment from it. But A&L's politics is only halfway politics. Apart from attaining an alternative organisational practice,⁴ art is also the practice of building new formulations, new cultures, and new ideologies. This "what we do to other[s]", which is related to impact and effect as the moment of transformation in art is related to a "culture", is what A&L strove to realise in their own theoretical (art) practice. They understood perfectly that such a practice could not be realised with a retreat to "autonomy",⁵ but with participation, with this "what we do to other[s]" attitude, which sees art also as a practice of issuing declarations, statements, and slogans. A task for the future might probably be to intensify these discussions by transferring the Art and Language discourse into a less euphemistically Art and Slogans practice.

5. LENIN ON SLOGANS

[I]n "Anarchy in the U.K." they had damned the present, and in "God Save the Queen" they had damned the past with a curse so hard that it took the future with it. [...] "No Future in England's dah-rrrreeming!": England's dream of its glorious past, as represented by the Queen, the "moron", the nation's basic tourist attraction, linchpin of an economy based on nothing, salve on England's collective amputee's

4 Some critics tend to dismiss A&L's problematic of working together as some kind of escapist and introverted socialising. For example, Gilbert sees it as having "a political significance which they obtained by opening a space of learning, or a sheltered conversational community, within the highly administrated culture of advanced capitalism" (Gilbert 2004, 331).

5 Here are two blurts on the annotation about *autonomy* that are linked to each other: "The scientist does not ask himself about the historical presuppositions of his work while working. He takes the trivialities which he lives and works with (his Lebenswelt) for granted. Husserl has said that you can't ignore these trivialities if you want to understand the meaning of science" (No. 60) and "Autonomy has been a: condition of art's ideology. An art without autonomy would be an ideologically different art" (No. 62) (Art & Language, 1975). itch for Empire... So one heard, when Johnny Rotten rolled his r's; [... Richard Huelsenbeck's Dadaism from 1918, Ranter Abiezer Coppe's cruelty from 1649, and the Situationist International's prophecy from 1961] (Marcus 1989, 11, 27)

I would call this system Lloyd-Georgism, after the English Minister Lloyd George, one of the foremost and most dexterous representatives of this system in the classic land of the "bourgeois labour party". A first-class bourgeois manipulator, an astute politician, a popular orator who will deliver any speeches you like, even r-r-revolutionary ones, to a labour audience, and a man who is capable of obtaining sizeable sops for docile workers in the shape of social reforms (insurance, etc.), Lloyd George serves the bourgeoisie splendidly, and serves it precisely among the workers, brings its influence precisely to the proletariat, to where the bourgeoisie needs it most and where it finds it most difficult to subject the masses morally. (Lenin 1964, 117–118)

Lenin's short text On Slogans faces us with a strange situation: even though he criticises unjust and false slogans, Lenin does not propose a correct slogan to replace the old ones. Most of Lenin's text is a critique of "slogans which lost all meaning - lost it as 'suddenly' as the sharp turn in history was 'sudden'" (Lenin 1964, 183). Lenin is alluding to the slogan "All Power Must Be Transferred to the Soviets!", which was valid from 27 February to 4 July 1917, while a peaceful transfer of power to the Soviets was still possible. But the course of history changed and after July the peaceful option was no longer there, so the only possibility for revolution was a violent takeover of power. But nowhere in his text does Lenin propose this "new slogan" to replace the old ones. Here we see that slogans are collective enunciations (i.e. a slogan cannot be written by an isolated individual). that they keep evolving all the time, and that they are elements of language related to power (Lenin is interested in slogans primarily due to their performative character, which will be realised when the revolution comes: "the fundamental issue of revolution is the issue of power" (Lenin 1964, 183). All of these characteristics and elements of slogans were also used and theorised by Deleuze and Guattari in interesting and exciting ways. But there is one characteristic of slogans according to Lenin that Deleuze and Guattari overlooked or, perhaps, chose to ignore: slogans must tell the "truth". This obligation, which is tightly related to the "thought" content of slogans, is at the same time also strongly connected to force and power; or in Lenin's own words: "primarily, and above all, the people must know the truth - they must know who actually wields state power" (Lenin 1964, 185). The intellectual or, as we dubbed it above, constative aspect of slogans Lenin defines thus: "every particular slogan must be deduced from the totality of specific features of a definite political situation" (Lenin 1964, 183). This is a purely theoretical axiom of slogan politics, at loggerheads with Deleuze and Guattari's politics and its opposition to any legislation by constants or stable contours. Given that the 00

performative (or *force*-related) character of slogans is obvious in their appearance, I believe that insisting on their intellectual (or, better, theoretical) aspect is very important, not only for any "theoretical practice", but also for any evaluation of the programme of art (primarily Conceptual Art) as a heuristic practice.

Louis Althusser even wrote in slogans (earlier on, I called this theoretical manifestation of slogans *Althusserian slogans*): *Reading Capital, For Marx, Lenin and Philosophy*, considering just the titles of his books. Describing Althusser's philosophy in Leninist terms, as "the ability to draw lines of demarcation within the theoretical", Alain Badiou reminds us that those lines are drawn with theses (Badiou 2009, 63). This is, as Badiou writes, a philosophy conceived as a *declaration*, which is, or must be, a political word (Badiou 2009, 66–67). What makes Althusser's philosophical theses so close to slogans is not only his insistence on demarcating his materialist philosophy off from the idealist ideology, but also his conception of philosophy not as isolated cognitive appropriation but as a forceful declaration and statement.

In his article "Lenin the Just, or Marxism Unrecycled" and book A Marxist Philosophy of Language, Jean-Jacques Lecercle discusses Lenin's pamphlet on slogans as crucial in Marxist linguistics. In Lecercle's view, not only Deleuze and Guattari but also Althusser and his followers gathered around Les Cahiers marxistes-léninistes were influenced by Lenin's pamphlet. Lecercle analysed the "Vive le léninisme" issue of Les Cahiers marxistes-léninistes, where a considerable number of discussions concerned slogans. According to Lecercle, what was most important for Althusser in his reading of "On Slogans" was his understanding that, apart from being concrete analyses of concrete situations, slogans also command great strategic importance. In this reading, slogans constitute a conjunctural analysis that is strongly related to the struggle, or to "the power relationship that it establishes", as well as a "concept linguistic conjuncture which combines the state of the encyclopaedia (the compendium of knowledge and beliefs of the community of speakers); the state of the language (sedimentation of the history of the community of speakers: taken together, the language and the encyclopaedia from what Gramsci calls a 'conception of the world'); and the potentialities of interpellation and counter-interpellation that exist in the situation" (Lecercle 2006, 100-104).

In order to assess the use of Leninist slogans and slogans as a theoretical practice in the arts, in the concluding part of this essay I will address the use of "Lenin" by Art & Language and Dušan Makavejev, representing two antagonistic artistic directions.

After the *Blurting project*, A&L continued working on issues in the philosophy of language, with special emphasis on the conversational matrix inside their collective. Their discussions concerning this

problematic were published in their collectively signed Draft for an Anti-Textbook in 1974. A similar text was published the following year under the title of "The Lumpen-Headache", which discussed issues in the philosophy of language as well as "the [group's] relation to the name 'A&L', its commitment to socialism and its basis of unity" (Gilbert 2004, 335). This commitment to socialism introduced "external elements" into A&L's practice, elements that were foreign to their previous work undertaken in the *Indexing* project. This broadening of A&L's field of interest was seen as a schism between the group's UK and New York factions. Beginning with the Blurting project, a number of works that incorporated this "socialisation" effect in A&L's theory and practice (communicating with external elements and broadening the group's field of interest) were realised in New York with significant international participation. Many of the participants in these projects regarded A&L's work as not political enough to make a meaningful impact on cultural politics inside the very repressive art system of the United States. So they decided to collaborate with different, more politically engaged artistic groups, such as AWC and UICA, to expand the work methods of previous A&L projects so as to include various other communities, such as repressed sexual and ethnic groups, and to work more openly with labour movements. This was the route that lan Burn took, among others; for some ten years following the definite schism between A&L's "artistic" and "political" factions, Burn concentrated exclusively on various organisational activities among Australia's labour movements. By 1976 The Fox and along with it the New York section of A&L ceased to exist. This was not simply because one section was less political than the other; the conventional wisdom has it that A&L's UK faction was more interested in the formal problematic of the pragmatics of language, as opposed to the New York faction, whose political activism was more explicitly pronounced. This is partly true, because the group's very consideration of their group problematics, including issues of theoretical practice, ideology, autonomy, etc. as constatives of the performativity of language was that which made A&L on both sides of the Atlantic into a political art theory and practice group. I believe that the inclusion of external elements in the group's theoretical practice without dealing with the issues of communication, relation, and ideology in their full complexity contributed to the dissolution of the group. Without having dealt rigorously enough with the problematic of the influence of their "culture" (i.e. "what we do to other artists"). A&L decided in favour of an unrestricted openness. This is not to suggest that the problem was caused by Amiri Baraka's "Stalinism", to which they decided to open up; rather, it was more of a technical issue, involving uncritical cooperativeness that seemed to arise from this activist practice. A&L regarded cooperation and harmony as stalemate practices that would bring not only theory to a dead-end but also any kind of heuristic activity, without which there could be no revolutionary practice. As A&L's UK faction stated in 1975, their politics was based on conflict: "It's no good just carrying-on with good intentions. The progressive intellectual's task is to generate ideological conflict" (Art & Language 1999, 352).

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Before returning to "Lenin", I would like to remind us of Močnik's theory, the starting point of which was that "communication is a nuclear instance of the ideological mediation of social integration"(Močnik 1986, 176). As Močnik clearly realised, social integration was integral to the communist ideology; also, the communists used "speeches, passions and illusions" to integrate and consolidate their own ranks. It seems then that this ideological integration transcends all individual "ideologies" and constitutes itself as a general "human" condition of sorts. The ground for its self-constitution is communication that sucks everything into its force field. Then how are we to think the difference between communists and non-communists? Is it the same "speeches, passions, and illusions" but with different constatives and their structures of conjunction that distinguish the speeches of communists from those of non-communists? I think so. We can likewise arrive at the same problem from the point of the discussion above if we consider that communication takes place, or that language materialises in the process of ideological interpellation through the force of "constative-performatives", which we called slogans. So we might claim then that both communists and noncommunists communicate through slogans, but that the constative aspects of their slogans and their intra-relations differ. Following Lenin's argument, apart from having the effects of force and power (the strategic point), communist slogans are also utterances, words that are related to truth and knowledge. That is why we may refer to those slogans as theory slogans. Therefore it is possible to say that communist slogans aim at truth-effect. That would be enough to demarcate them from advertisement.⁶

But it is common knowledge that communist slogans are indeed different from non-communist slogans. From this perspective it seems that the "problematic" is different: how is it possible for two communists to communicate? If they are to integrate socially with the communist ideology by means of communicable "performative-constatives" *qua* collective enunciations, then how may communication between the two of them amount to anything else than tautology? The question comes down to this: how is it possible to communicate differently as a communist? That is why theory slogans, with their double role of articulating the collective nature of enunciation and providing at the same time elements for non-personal communication, are crucial here.

So far, we have seen that it is possible to claim that one of A&L's primary concerns was precisely this problematic. A&L's policy was to intensify research on their theory slogans, to schematise them without succumbing to any kind of "personal is political"

⁶ Or as Lecercle distinguishes between those two: "The insistence on the correctness of the naming of the moment of the conjuncture by the slogan is what distinguishes good old 'propaganda', in the Leninist sense of the term, from the 'political communication' that the imperialists are so fond of, which aims to sell a policy in the same way that an advertising slogan sells a product" (Lecercle 2006, 103).

emotionalism, to place their production outside subjectification by means of abstract elements of theory, and to try to communicate with other communists along these lines (remember, A&L was a "Marxist-Leninist" group).⁷ In A&L's case, this was an immensely difficult task, because their integration was to be realised in the general field of artistic production or, more precisely, in a theory and practice of art that inclined toward the communist tradition.

According to Močnik, who separates "aesthetic interpellation" from normal interpellation, the former, apart from subjectifying illusion (which is common to all ideologies), must also meet the condition of being subversive (in order to realise itself as an artistic process) (Močnik 1986, 185). This daunting task, almost impossible, is only thinkable in the context of those artworks that have a "multi-serial" or polyphonic character, which always manages to thwart interpellation. In Močnik's words, the illusion never ends - but neither is it ever consummated (Močnik 1976, 187–188). This particular feature of the nature of art is why A&L insisted on working on their theory slogans from within their field. The meaning of communication between two communists may be understood as making explicit the structures involved in the constitution of their integration. This process is in itself a re-assemblage, as we saw from the "Introduction to Blurting in New York"; but it is not the same as the Deleuzian position of escaping schematisation through constant/permanent variables or through the transition of eternal pass-words. The problem might be simplified even further if we consider what is the minimum required practice that aesthetic interpellation entails: to look at art. What we want to know is whether there is any difference as to how communists look at art. After 1976 this question was probably the main source of headache for A&L.

Their provisional answer was *A Portrait of V. I. Lenin in the Style of Jackson Pollock*, which comprised a series of paintings, an essay, and a song recorded with Red Krayola, all realised in 1980. This "impossible picture" or, in Harrison's words, a "monstrous détente", was a summary of A&L's long-time "communist headache", as it were. How are we to understand a painting of Lenin rendered in a style that art criticism typically sees as quintessentially non-communist, or even anti-communist? Harrison, who took part in its production, interprets it as a "critique of fashionable artistic forms of left-wing theory" (Harrison 2001, 139). But at the same time, according to Harrison's interpretation this was a practical solution

7 In Charles Harrison's opinion, when A&L used slogans, for example in *Nine Gross and Conspicuous Errors*, their musical work realised in collaboration with Red Krayola in 1976, they were "self-consciously ironic to naive optimism associated with Chinese propaganda posters" (Harrison 2001, 109). Nevertheless, Harrison is indeed aware of the theoretical – even if reduced only to aesthetics – character of collective enunciations (as diverse as, for instance, Constructivist and Surrealist imagery): "both were treated simply as episodes, from which certain durable and canonically acceptable works of art might nevertheless be extruded in order to be admitted into Modernist critical and technical categories" (Harrison 2001, 110).

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against the appropriation of Conceptual Art by a superficial detached semiotic aesthetic that was starting to look a lot like commercial advertisement. Accordingly, the Lenin-Pollock project could be seen as a possibility of bringing two completely antagonistic signs inside a single frame and of generating tension between at least two modernist collective enunciations. But if that was indeed all, then it could be seen as a step back from A&L's theory and practice, which had been so cautious not to include extrapolations in their system or limit their interest to the aesthetic problems of the Modernist canon (see Annotation No. 37). First we have to be clear that A&L were not homogenous or very consistent about their theory, which included many contradictory elements, ranging from analytical philosophy to communist theory. But we should remember that at times A&L comprised as many as ten different people. So one might claim that the idea behind Lenin-Pollock, in terms of bringing contradictions together, had been present in the work of A&L as far back as the early 70s. Second, at the time of Lenin-Pollock, politics in Europe and the United States was undergoing a swing to the right, which resulted in the oppression of all kinds of communist thought. The Lenin-Pollock project was also strategic inasmuch as it brought much-needed abstraction to the issue of communism, which was previously lacking, either due to fashion or reductionism. In order to avoid these constraints, which affect the way one sees a picture, A&L proposed the "reconstruction of the causal relations, rather than any iconic consideration", which meant shifting their interest from structural to generic analyses (Art & Language 1984, 154). This might also strike one as a very regressive decision, since A&L introduced the schematisation of the conditions of production in its most extreme manifestations (as indexes and annotations of the existing conjunctions) as a critical practice; a retreat to "causality" might then seem like a theoretical step back to determinism, historicism, or, worse, evolutionism. A&L's interest in the generic conditions of a picture (or, say, a slogan) did not come out of the blue: it was already present in the problematic of Conceptual Art. It is hardly surprising that Ian Burn, writing at the same time about his personal dissatisfaction with Conceptual Art, conceptualised its failure as the disappearance of history.

A&L's insistence on the concept of genesis instead of iconic analysis should thus be understood as an attempt to re-historicise those slogans that were no longer used and, perhaps more importantly, to trace their transformations by looking at what had happened to them. That is what A&L attempted to do with their portrait of Lenin in the style of Pollock: to direct our attention to forgotten but still not thoroughly processed conjunctions in modernist cultural history, of routes of ideas from overall ambition to stupefied recuperation and more importantly to all-beautiful slogans that meant so much for the emancipation of millions. In their own words, "the notion of genesis directs our attention to the world, to the problem of material causation and not to the patrician intricacies of an idealised cultural coherence"

(Art & Language 1984, 154). Considering Lenin in conjunction with art is somehow usually a bit of a problem, which, I believe, A&L's theory and practice might help us to address. If we tried to reconstruct Lenin's relationship with art based on the recollections of Lunacharsky, Gorky, or Krupskaya, and the snippets that he wrote on the subject, we would face a man who was apparently uneasy about art. Most notably, this would include his unpredictable relationship with Mayakovsky, as well as some works of art that he admired, such as the sonatas of Beethoven. His remarks allegedly made to Gorky whilst listening to Isaiah Dobrovein's rendering of Beethoven's *Appassionata* are probably the most commonly quoted passage in all of Lenin's writings:

I don't know of anything better than the *Appassionata*, I can listen to it every day. Amazing, superhuman music! I always think with a pride that may be naïve: look what miracles people can perform! But I can't listen to music often, it affects my nerves, it makes me want to say sweet nothings and pat the heads of people who, living in a filthy hell, can create such beauty. But today we mustn't pat anyone on the head or we'll get our hand bitten off; we've got to hit them on the heads, hit them without mercy, though in the ideal we are against doing any violence to people. Hm-hm — it's a hellishly difficult task! (Gorky 1967, 247)

This passage occupies a central place in Dušan Makavejev's 1971 film W. R. – Misterije organizma (WR: Mysteries of the Organism). In this film classic, when Makavejev posits a Lenin unable to confront art, he is actually reproducing Lenin's own world, in which politics and art formed two completely separate fields of interest. As an irresolvable tension, this incompatibility is a dead-end for thinking art in terms of concepts, theoretical postulates, and declarations. As I tried to show elsewhere, to take up this position is not to disavow Lenin, but rather to include him as an external factor in an otherwise transcendental and experiential art practice. More precisely, it amounts to a cultural politics based on the following postulate: to create an "artistic politics" by means of an artistic immanency based on experience, creativity, and spontaneity. By pointing to Art & Language, I tried to show that there is another possibility, that of thinking art as a practice in itself, a "theoretical practice" that poses the question of purity not as a question of identity anymore, but as a position of demarcation.⁸

8 Here we must add one more recollection of Lenin's relationship with art. Among other things, Lenin made the following remarks to Clara Zetkin: "I have the courage to display myself as 'barbarian'. I cannot regard the works of Impressionism, Futurism, Cubism, and other 'isms' as the highest revelations of artistic genius. I simply don't understand them and I get no pleasure from them" (Zetkin 1967, 250). In his article "Lenin in Las Meninas", Geoffrey Waite uses this recollection to develop his thesis that demarcation is the condition and attitude necessary for a truly historical materialist description of, among other things, artworks. Waite applies his thesis, which I have also found extremely useful, to Velázquez's Las Meninas (Waite 1986).

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SINIŠA ILIĆ & ANA VUJANOVIĆ

SMART

MOBS

POLICEMEN HAVE JUST BEATEN UP A MORON. ...A MORON'S SKIN IS Thin and Fragile. It is torn and opened under the beats, ceasing to be a firm border between his body and the world. The moron's flesh is seeing the light of day. Good Morning. A nice day, ISN'T IT? Wonderful Weather

INDEFE

PUBLIC SPACE...

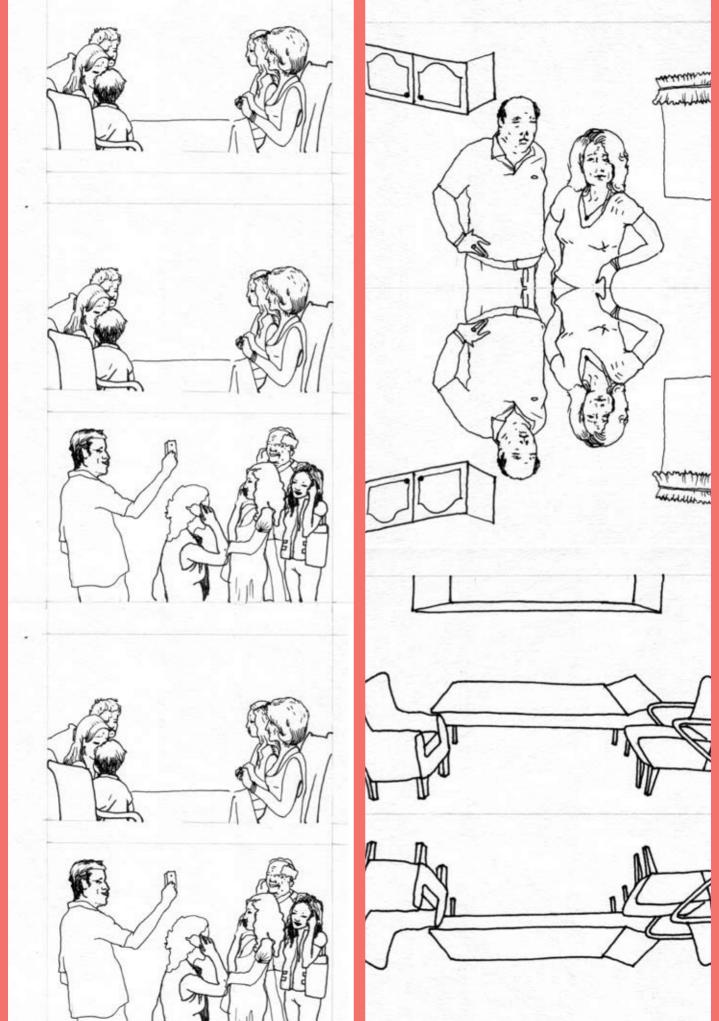
THERE MUST HAVE BEEN A MISUNDERSTANDING HERE: THE POLICE MEN AND THE MORON HAVE QUITE DIFFERENT DEFINITIONS OF THE WORD "BEAT" (NOT TO MENTION THE WORD "MORON"). THEY OVERLAP AT THE POINT OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE. AND, IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE POLICEMEN HAD MADE THEIR BEAT CLEAN, THEY REALIZED THAT 99% OF US WERE MORONS. (I THINK THEY MISCOUNTED.) TENS... HUNDREDS... THOUSANDS... OF THE MORONS HAVE APPEARED, SWARMING AND OCCUPYING SLOWLY THE

IT SEEMS NO ONE STAYS HOME TODAY. IT'S A VERY NICE DAY, I TOLD YOU.

IT'S THE DAY WHEN THE MORONS OF THE MODERN WORLD NAMED "CITIZENS" INFER THAT THEY LIVE IN THE MOMENT "THAT JOINS IN A UNIQUE EPOCHAL KNOT THE FAILURE OF ALL COMMUNISMS WITH THE MISERY OF NEW INDIVIDUALISM".



OMG! IT'S A GOOD PLOT FOR A BLOCKBUSTER. FOR A STORY WE TELL OURSELVES ABOUT OURSELVES. WE LIKE TO THINK ABOUT OUR MOMENT AS EPOCHAL. EVEN IF FAILURE AND MISERY IS THAT WHAT MAKES IT SO UNIQUE.





THEY ARE LADEN WITH NOTHING. EMPTY SIGNIFIERS...

A TABLEAU VIVANT: WE'RE MANY WE'RE MESSY WE DUNNO WHAT ISITO BE DONE THE FUTURE RELONGS TO US

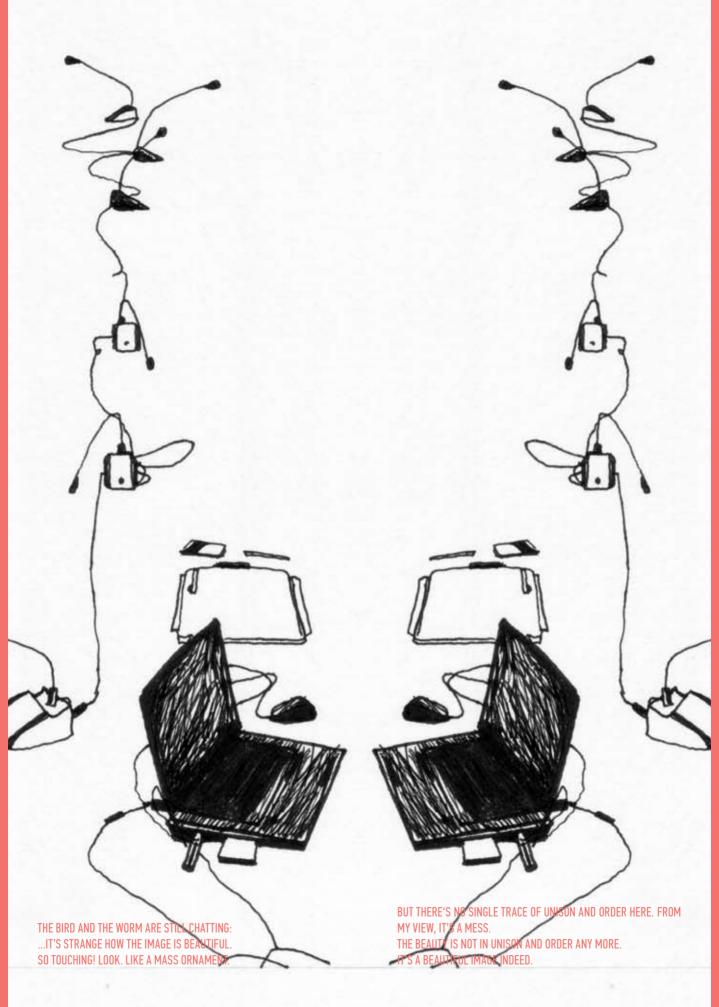
IN THAT MOMENT THE SMART MOB REALIZED THAT THE IMAGE THEY WERE WATCHING WAS A MIRROR REFLECTION. THEY'RE CORRECTING THEIR HAIRCUTS AND SHIRTS. THEY'RE SINGING: WE'RE MANY WE'RE MANY WE'RE MESSY WE DUNNO WE DUNNO (OMG! WE'LL MAKE A CLIP AND PUT IT ON YOUTUBE! WE WILL BROAD-CAST OURSELVES!)

THE FUTURE BELONGS TO US WHICH ONE?

I DUNNO, THE MORON SAID "\(°_0)/". – THEY LAUGHED OUT LOUD. WE DUNNO, THE TWO MORONS SAID. – THEY GRINNED. WE DUNNO, THE DULL SMART MOB HAS STARTED TO SPREAD THE WORD FROM MOUTH TO MOUTH. – THIS TIME, THEY GRINNED RATHER BITTERLY.

WE DUNNO — HAS STARTED TO SHAKE THE WORLD. THE POWER OF THE WEAK, SOMEONE COMMENTED. OR THEIR WEAKNESS IN ITS FULL? $^{(^{0}-0)}$

SEND "WE DUNNO LOL" RINGTONE TO YOUR CELL.

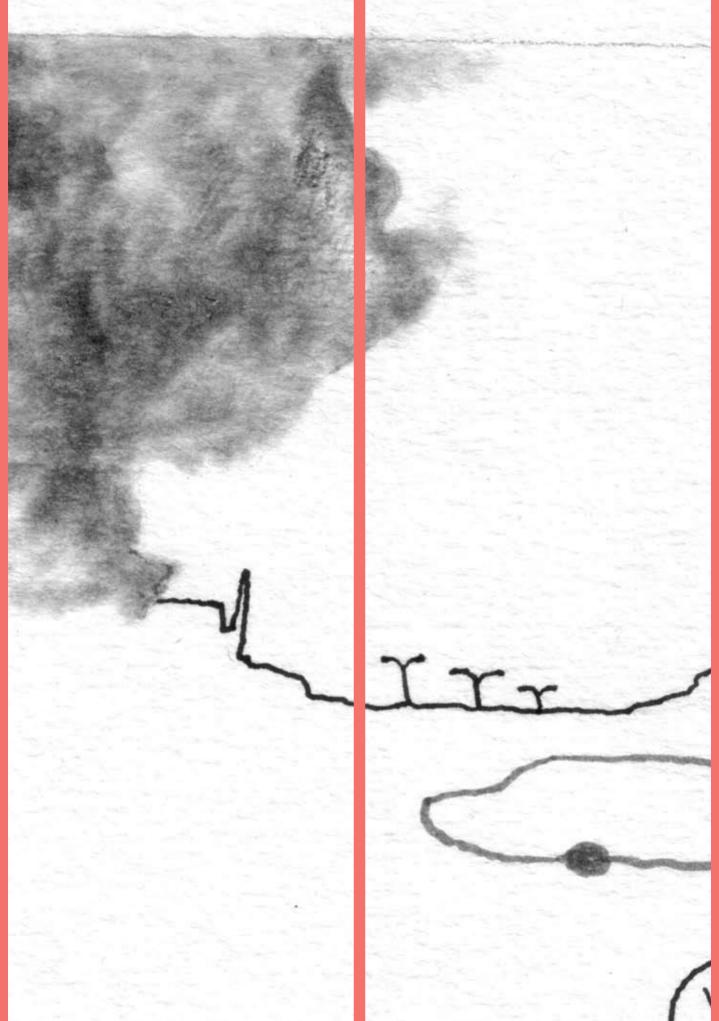


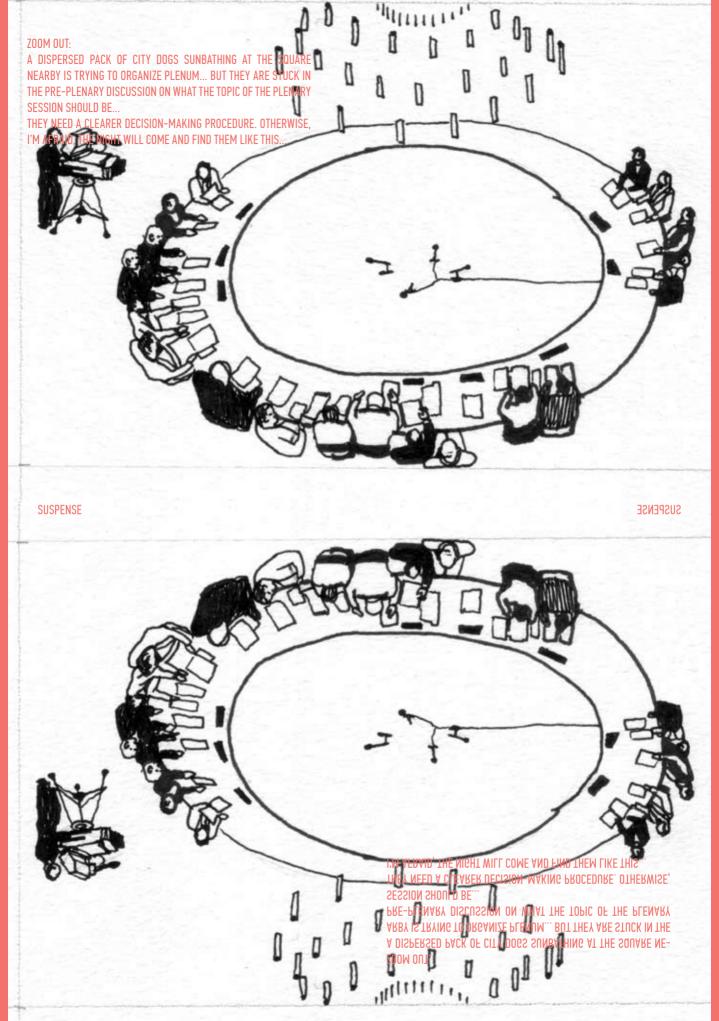


WE'RE CLOSING DOWN THE COMICS, VERY PROUD OF WHAT WE'VE DONE, AND JOINING THE MOB. WE ARE ALL STARTING TO LIKE IT. TO LIKE IT VERY MUCH. WE'RE GETTING TO FEEL STRONGER AND STRONGER. WE'RE STARTING TO BROADCAST OURSELVES BETTER AND BETTER. WE'RE STARTING TO MORE AND MORE. TO LOVE IT VERY IMAGE. TO FORGET THAT WE'RE ALONE, IN THE RTING 'RE WEAK, A D MANY...

NG TO LOL. THEN TO LOL. WE'RE LOLLING, LOLOLOLOL OUR EPOCHAL MOMENT OF FAILURE AND MISERY? OL OUR EPOCHAL

TY OF THE DAY IS D F۷ CREASING





ART AND THE PUBLIC GOOD TkH Journal for Performing Arts Theory No. 20

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