

A publication of -empyre- soft-skinned space

Sydney, Australia

January 2007

A collaboration with documenta 12 magazine project

Featuring special guests

Melinda Rackham

Chris Molinski

Claudia Reiche

Ollivier Dyens

Christiane Robbins

Ricardo Rosas

Illyana Nedkova

Sharon Daniel

Deborah Kelly

And moderator Christina McPhee

On the topic

"what is to be done [education]?"

edited linear pdf from the original hypertext archived at <https://mail.cofa.unsw.edu.au/pipermail/empyre/2007-January>

Introduction by Christina McPhee, January 5, 2007

This month we are returning to the Documenta Magazine Project [www.documenta12.de/english/magazines.html](http://www.documenta12.de/english/magazines.html) , in which we're collaborating with Documenta to generate a discussion around "what is to be done [education]?"

Background: the editors of Documenta Magazine project approached us last year to integrate a series of three questions into this year's programming (2006), with an eye towards publishing some of our conversation in 2007 in connection with the launch of Documenta 12, in Kassel, Germany. It's been a pleasure to already launch one such conversation, "Is Modernity our Antiquity?" in March 2006.

<https://mail.cofa.unsw.edu.au/pipermail/empyre/2006-March> and "What is Bare Life?"

<https://mail.cofa.unsw.edu.au/pipermail/empyre/2006-July/>

This month marks our third and last collaboration with Documenta. Posts from readers, especially the quiet ones, are most welcome. If you want to post in a language other than English, please feel free to do so,

Editor's introduction:

Are we at the margins of a huge flattening and empty-ing out process leaving the shells of modern structures yet producing something of an ethos, a critical space? A 'third space' (Soja) always destabilizing a dialectical or binary debate or opposition – what Bojana Cvejic speaks of as 'affirming positive practices' and 'enabling a heterogenesis' ?

" Artists educate themselves by working through form and subject matter; audiences educate themselves by experiencing things aesthetically. How to mediate the particular content or shape of those things without sacrificing their particularity is one of the great challenges of an exhibition like documenta. But there is more to it than that. The global complex of cultural translation that seems to be somehow embedded in art and its mediation sets the stage for a potentially all-inclusive public debate (Bildung, the German term for education, also means "generation" or "constitution," as when one speaks of generating or constituting a public sphere). Today, education seems to offer one viable alternative to the devil [didacticism, academia] and the deep blue sea [commodity fetishism]." –Roger Beurgel, artistic director, documenta 12

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—————>Ricardo Rosas (BR) editor of the Rizoma e-magazine and a former member of the Miatatica.org network. Rosas helped organize the Mídia Tática Brasil 2003 and the Digitofagia 2004 festivals in São Paulo, both of them aimed at discussing the tactical media scene, free software, and the creation of collaborative projects in art and activism involving new media. Rosas was the Net Art curator of the Prog:Me festival, in Rio de Janeiro (2005); and a lecturer at the fourth edition of the Next 5 Minutes festival, in Amsterdam (2003), the first international event dedicated to the mapping of tactical media. He also participated in the Super Demo Digital festival in Rio de Janeiro (2004); in the Networks, Arts, a Collaboration conference at the State University of New York, in Buffalo (2004); and in the 15th Videobrasil International Electronic Art Festival. Rizoma, his edited website on arts and activism is currently taking part on the Documenta project of publications for the Documenta 2007. <http://www.rizoma.net/hp10.htm>

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—————>Melinda Rackham (AU) Dr Rackham is the Executive Director of the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT), Australia's peak body for artists working with science and technology, creating opportunities for innovation, research and development both locally and globally. As an artist, writer and curator she worked with Networked Media for over a decade in web, 3d multi-user, game and mobile environments. Her award winning artworks are widely shown and her writing appears in diverse art and theory publications. Melinda founded -empyre- media arts forum in 2002 and in 2003-4 was curator of Networked Media at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), Melbourne. <http://www.anat.org.au/home.htm>

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—>Sharon Daniel (US) An Associate Professor of Film and Digital Media at the University of California, Santa Cruz, Sharon teaches classes in digital media theory and practice. Her research involves collaborations with communities that focus on the use and development of information and communications technologies for social inclusion. Her role as an artist is that of "context provider," - working with communities, collecting their stories, soliciting their opinions, and building online archives to make this data available across social, cultural and economic boundaries. <http://arts.ucsc.edu/sdaniel/>

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—>Chris Molinski (US) director of The Art Gallery of Knoxville, a community space devoted to discussions of new and emerging art in Knoxville, Tennessee. Recent exhibitions have involved collaborations with the Center for Urban Pedagogy, Max Neuhaus, and the exhibition "Distribution Religion" with Critical Artware, People Powered, and Temporary Services. <http://www.theartgalleryofknoxville.com/>

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—>Claudia Reiche (DE) is a media theorist, artist, and curator. Her work focuses on (cyber)feminist approaches to questions of how man/ machine relations are designed with words and images. She is a member of thealit Frauen.Kultur.Labor, Bremen ( <http://www.thealit.de> ) and of the first international cyberfeminist alliance 'old boys network' <http://www.obn.org>. She has been director of the European project 'Cyberfeminism.Lab' (Culture 2000 programme of the European Union). Currently she is curating with Helene von Oldenburg The Mars Patent, the first exhibition site on Mars <http://mars-patent.org>, and with Andrea Sick, do not exist, europe, women, digital medium, a transnational European conference and exhibition lab , <http://thealit.de/lab/donotexist/program.htm>. <http://www.claudia-reiche.net>

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—>Ollivier Dyens (CA) is Chair of the Department of French at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. He is the founder and webmaster of Metal and Flesh ([metalandflesh.com](http://metalandflesh.com)) 1998-2003, as well as Continent X ([continentx.com](http://continentx.com)). He is also the author of Metal and Flesh, The Evolution of Man, Technology Takes Over, published by MIT Press Ollivier Dyens has lectured in Europe, the United States and Canada. His digital artwork has been exhibited in Brasil, Canada, Venezuela, Germany, Argentina and the United States. <http://www.continentx.com/>

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—>Deborah Kelly (AU) has been making socially engaged artwork since 1983. Collaborative projects include the ongoing artists gang boat-people.org, and the prize-winning public artwork series, "Hey, hetero!", with Tina Fiveash. She has given lectures and workshops around Australia and in Berlin, Amsterdam, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Ottawa. She was invited by Martha Rosler to a political artists' residency in 2002, and produced a large collaborative artwork with that crew for Utopia Station in the 2003 Venice Biennale. Her current project, Beware of the God, was commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. It is a cross-media artwork considering the rise of religiosity in public life; documented and extended at [www.bewareofthegod.com](http://www.bewareofthegod.com) More work can be seen at: <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/yours/artists/kelly.htm> [http://abc.net.au/arts/visual/stories/venice/hh\\_01.htm](http://abc.net.au/arts/visual/stories/venice/hh_01.htm) [http://www.mca.com.au/default.asp?page\\_id=10&content\\_id=1947](http://www.mca.com.au/default.asp?page_id=10&content_id=1947)

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—>Iliyana Nedkova (BG/SCT) Iliyana is a Sofia-born Edinburgh-based curator, producer and critic of contemporary art and design. Currently, Creative Director New Media at Horsecross, Perth where she is responsible for curating the Threshold artspace, Scotland's first dedicated gallery for digital public art. A founding Co-Director of ARC: Art Research Communication (with Chris Byrne), a curatorial practice working nationally and internationally with artists, exhibitions, art fairs, editions and critical context. Latest ARC Projects include the international symposium of curating new media Art Place Technology, Liverpool and a series of limited editions by artists Susan Collins, Alla Georgieva, Pravdoliub Ivanov, Ivan Moudov and Dan Perjovschi.

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→Christiane Robbins (US) is a visual/ media artist and scholar working in video, digital imaging, database aesthetics, and locative/ spatial studies. Her work is found in permanent collections including the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Museum of Modern Art, NY, the Kitchen, NY, the Banff Centre for the Arts, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and The Getty Museum. Her films have won international awards including best in category at the San Francisco International Film Festival. She is a Visiting Fellow at Stanford University and Associate Professor at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. She was the Executive Producer of the AIM Festival, a co-organizer of Race in Digital Space (MIT/USC's multi-year project including conferences and exhibition. ) and a co-Director of the On-Line Against Aids Project, one of the first on-line global cultural events.

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→Christina McPhee (moderator)

•Subject: [-empyre-] "what is to be done?" introducing Ollivier Dyens •From: Christina McPhee <[christina112@earthlink.net](mailto:christina112@earthlink.net)> •Date: Fri, 5 Jan 2007 11:00:17 -0800

Please welcome Ollivier Dyens.

Ollivier Dyens is Chair of the Department of French at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. He is the founder and webmaster of Metal and Flesh ([metalandflesh.com](http://metalandflesh.com)) 1998-2003, as well as Continent X (<http://continentx.com>), websites dedicated to the study of cyberculture. He is also the author of "Metal and Flesh, The Evolution of Man, Technology Takes Over", published by MIT Press whose French version (VLB Éditeur) was awarded Best Essay by the Société des Écrivains Canadiens. Among his other publications are Les murs des planètes, suivi de la cathédrale aveugle (VLB Éditeur), short listed for the Revue Estuaire/Terrasses St-Denis prize for Poetry, Continent X, Vertige du Nouvel Occident (VLB Éditeur), long listed for the prix Roberval, and The Profane Earth (Mansfield Press), long listed for the ReLit Award. He has lectured in Europe, the United States and Canada. He was guest speaker at the Parson School of Design, at the New Museum of Modern Art, at the Baltimore Institute College of Art, on the Empyre list, at the Centre Européen de Technoculture, at Ars Electronia, etc. His digital artwork has been exhibited in Brasil, Canada, Venezuela, Germany, Argentina and the United States. Ollivier Dyens is also a founding member of the NT2 research lab (<http://www.labo-nt2.uqam.ca/>), dedicated to the study of new forms of narrative.

I've asked Ollie to join us as he was the very first guest on -empyre- back in January 2002. Coming full circle five years later, along with documenta (2002 was the 11th, this year is the 12th). <https://mail.cofa.unsw.edu.au/pipermail/empyre/2002-January>. Celebrating five years of -empyre-, we are honored to be a forum once again for his reflective and compassionate perspective as an artist and scholar of new media.

At the beginning of things in January 2002 Melinda wrote,

"I first came across Ollivier in the mid 1990's when I read his article 'The Emotion of Cyberspace: Art and Cyber-ecology,' in Leonardo. At the time i was deeply questioning my newly formed relationship with computer technology; and on reading his essay, the lines "the living being is the sacred text of cyberspace... our body is the screen (the signifying surface ) by which the machine has access to reality" deeply ressonated with me, and profoundly influenced my approach towards working on the net."

From: [odyens@alcor.concordia.ca](mailto:odyens@alcor.concordia.ca)

Date: Sat, 06 Jan 2007 08:53:44 -0500

What is to be done?

More than ever the question of our relationship to both art and the aesthetic process must be addressed. In a world of shifting boundaries, of profound and fundamental changes, a world where universals such as life, death, consciousness and uniqueness are being challenged by technological reality, the question of art, of our relationship to it, the question of its purpose and of its objectives must be tackled.

[What is technological reality? It is the perception of the world through both human \*and\* non-human senses. With technological reality, we now have access to numerous strata of reality that were formerly impenetrable to us: those of genetics and neurology, of protons and photons, of relativity and quantum physics. Technological reality questions the fundamental distinctions between life and death, consciousness and non-consciousness, the organic and the non-organic that we once believed to be universal. In fact, the more we get access to different slivers of reality, the more difficult it becomes to clearly distinguish between these phenomena. On our own biological scale for example, the difference between a table and a man is clear. The man is alive while the table is not. But on an atomic scale of reality, to which we only have access through technological reality, there are no differences between one and the other].

What is to be done? What is to be understood by art today should probably be our starting point. For how should we define art in the 21st century when machines, technologies and software provide most of the actual artistic process, when some ?machines? [such as Ray Kurzweil?s Cybernetic Poet] even produce the entire artwork?

If art is now as specific to machine's ontology as it is to humanity's, then the question of what is to be done must be dealt with differently. Art embedded in machines and technologies is art embedded in the profound transformation of our world. It's art within video games, themselves within the culture of war. It's art spreading technological reality. It's art intruding into the physical reality (where special effects become genetic manipulations). It's art initiating the Inhuman Condition. Art embedded in machines is art slipping away from human control, art creating territories of emotions outside our realm of understanding, of sensitivity.

The question of what is to be done? must thus be understood as including the whole concept of art. What is to be done with a process that helped create our perception of the metaphysical, but whose operations, whose forms and sometimes even content are now within the control of machines? When most of what art produces today ignores humanity's need for the transcendent, when what most of what art produces today responds to machine's perceptions of the world?

What is to be done? when humanity is confronted with research clearly showing that art, as well as the aesthetic process, are nothing else but algorithmic structures, structures that can be identified, defined and reproduced mechanically (when we respond to Jackson Pollock's paintings, we actually respond to fractals in his images. When we respond to a film or a musical piece, we respond to certain structures, pitch, tone, location, dialogue, that are clearly algorithmic)?

On Pollock:

<http://materialscience.uoregon.edu/taylor/art/scientificamerican.pdf>

Music and Film:

[http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/061016fa\\_fact6](http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/061016fa_fact6)

What is to be done when a simple computer program can decipher the algorithmic structure of a work of art? When a simple computer program (Kurzweil's Cybernetic Poet for example) can generate an aesthetic experience? What is to be done when beauty appears to be nothing else but a harmonious mathematical structure? When the transcendence of art appears to be nothing else but a numerical pattern? What does it mean to be human when splendor is not a mystical experience but a mathematical configuration? When machines will soon produce beautiful and moving works of art?

What is to be done when machines and technologies force us to confront our inhumanity through the process of art?

-Ollivier

•From: Brian Holmes <[brian.holmes@wanadoo.fr](mailto:brian.holmes@wanadoo.fr)> •Date: Sat, 06 Jan 2007 17:05:28 +0100

Ollivier wrote: "What is to be done with a process that helped create our perception of the metaphysical, but whose operations, whose forms and sometimes even content are now within the control of machines? When most of what art produces today ignores humanity's need for the transcendent, when what most of what art produces today responds to machine's perceptions of the world?"

This is a great text, with interesting references and a clear relation to present reality. But I think the onus is on you to give some initial ideas of what is to be done. There is, effectively, nothing in the Western philosophical tradition that will help respond.

I am currently reading a philosopher from that retrograde country, France, one who writes in the minor imperial language most of them still use over there, his name is Bernard Stiegler. He thinks that the entire European production of technological writing machines in the enlarged sense - the kind of machines with which we cultivate ourselves, along the lines sketched out by Foucault in his text "writing of the self" - should be reoriented so as to basically save the inhabitants of Europe and perhaps elsewhere from a threatening reduction of human singularity, and with it, of any possible ethics. He thinks that capitalism, in the advanced economies, is now primarily cultural, focused around the different devices whereby memory and creativity of all kinds is exteriorized into objects and traces. He thinks such machines are essential, a basic part of the human experience in time, but that care needs to be taken with their production, so that persons can go on becoming individuals ("individuating") in a relation of creative tension with societies which are also constantly individuating. If this care for the social and psychic self cannot be translated into a change in the kinds of machines which are produced, he believes that a generalized disenchantment with democracy will grow more widespread, leading to a collapse of desire into gregarious, instinctual outbursts of destructive violence. His latest book, *Reenchanter le monde: La valeur esprit contre le populisme industriel*, begins precisely with a chapter entitled "What is to be done?" However, if I have understood the post you sent, this whole approach and anything like it is already obsolete. So I am quite curious what you think is to be done.

-Brian

•From: Alette Certhoux <[aliette@criticalsecret.org](mailto:aliette@criticalsecret.org)> •Date: Sat, 06 Jan 2007 22:10:59 +0100

First: "What is to be done?". Mostly the question is problematic if it is applied to education. What "forms" the consensual things having to be taught, to contribute to life in society: but which/ what society? Is it an activist project of a corporatist project or a reformist project and so on? Why from the tech? The tech as ideology of the well?

The question is that our traditional process of questioning this field installs or i.e. regards a project. Which project?

There is a funny reply as metaphor, that nobody -being so much informed in the matter of Marxism and post Marxism and, more, post-situationism- among the different critics, having reviewed the book of McKenzie Wark since 2004, seems have noticed that if A Hacker Manifesto begins by a critical plagiary of the first sentence of the manifesto of the communist party, from communism to abstraction, it also delivers real challenge instead by simply quoting traditional reference to commodification in The Society of the Spectacle, because Debord's work exactly begins by a critical plagiary of the first sentence of Marx's Capital - from commodity to spectacle. It is not a succession, it is a disjunction, you know. A disjunction that appears to me as an interesting view to the present thematic.

After the cycle of post modernity we are integrating the iconoclast society. It is a point from which to represent, once again, education as a collective project of society, but this can be more problematic than it appears.

In every case, at least in France, we noticed the subtlety in between the successive critical post marxist avant-gardes when Debord's book appeared - after others and specially, after the situationist event itself, being a book from 1967-, and consequently we French would not have been able to miss the critical successive report of the first sentence of the book of McKenzie Wark. So sometimes it's good to be in some old-looking society; at least it allows recognition of subtle differences. It is probably no longer useful except as voluptuous cognition.

Thus thank you Brian for your remark. I am proud to be out of things in currency. More your quotation of Ziegler of course interests me...

"What is to be done?":

As a former activist and among the oldest here, having experimented inside this frame of reference, I can follow (who could negate that the repetitive choice of this sentence is not connoted) the successive approach of a radical pamphlet written in 1902 by Lénine. It was an answer to the different positions of the revolutionary movement in Russia (the title being a quotation from a novel by the communist utopist Nikolai Tchernychevsky - Wikipedia says:). It is the generative text famously confirming the theory as mode to bring about both the reorganization of the movement and to redefine objectives; all the leaders of the revolutionary Marxism have always re-quoted this text, particularly Mao from whom the women hold that they are the half of the sky:) so, at my view, this reappearance all the more looks strange, coming as it does from Documenta 12 / 2007. Mao Tse Dong leaving the city for the country and beginning the Long March. Hô Chi Minh, redefining a communist society from the communism of war. And so on. Always a redefinition of the society such that action in the revolutionary movement transforms society which is progressing/producing the socialist/ communist revolution.

But please, tell me which revolutionary situation you see in our world. One from the tech emergence? Is the tech the motor of economy? No. Yet now the economy is abstracted.

Whatever a world finishing by itself does not assure, is that a world is birthed by ourselves, more: it may be that the time of directly acting the change is over; first we have learnt from the past that utopia is only paper and view, not social reality because it ignores its relative entropy even social tracks of entropy from several point of views or situations (that can be predicted but not described); second, all our central structures of understand and act the world in the continental and occidental societies has turned into net periphery. Delocalized intelligence takes now a fundamental part of power supported by the central armies in all the world. Activism of nowadays it is the same as terrorism: both are means of the struggles and of the power: see Iraq, Palestine, Chechnya, but more Madrid, London or Bombay: which opportunities

conveniently tending such various and different attacks. You cannot go believing that the generalized war [the universal a-synchronic multiple war] is dialectical.

So what of education if it is not dialectical any more?

If I well hear Brian, so far from the new world that I could take place myself, being rather more French than Martian French, I regard post-modernity as being without ending, no matter what the field and social field through the tech avant-gardism may be: I prefer ask several questions; notoriously, in what utopia of the ideal society do we may consensually trust the future to the tech communication and tech information system with regard of the general environmental crisis? In what situation may we be at present? What of the environmental lesson and impacts as well History, as well economy, as well ecology, on our own bodies?

What culture you say? You suppose one that values to be generalized in the place of the others, (saying to credit others consists the same as 'in the place of') and specially discounting otherness? Why do we would tribute to the development of the communication if this consists in misinformation about a large part of the material conditions of the life?

In name of which education are we talking? Tech? As well writing and reading after the commune de Paris or after the commune of Chicago? Tech in the place of reading and writing? But the public education did not consist in learn the use of the printer machine itself, you know? There was as well the emergent question of the analogical capacity of physically writing and reading to advance the mental capacity of thought, the project being the increasing autonomy away from the limits of one integrating body.

Please tell me what you mean by the importance credited to digital tech modifications in this process?

As to plagiarism: A Hacker Manifesto: at which disjunction as critical opening (note well that I do not say progressive), being just a real opening as a view, do you install, in between education in the common language (not the tools but the abstracted concepts cannot being simply a code ? anthropologic languages being not simply a code of competence and of performance) and contribute to the actual: do you really see concepts emerging from the digital codes as well from the capacity of reproduce the texts by printing ?

I do not think so. I am in opposition to views which accord symbolic value to data.

If you really want to begin such an exploration of education: which disruption: whether you choose the spectra you can announce in advance of any explanations, or you call for the common debate and common conception of education ? but orders and commands?

The question still available, being not a revolutionary question, is the regressive question: the self-capacity of thinking criticism from any human who is coming at current education.

-Alette

From: Brett Stalbaum <[stalbaum@ucsd.edu](mailto:stalbaum@ucsd.edu)> Date: Sat, 06 Jan 2007 16:53:55 -0800

There is a habitual or received assumption about the ontology of both art and theory that is bound to the very problem of beauty that Oliver references. There are many ways to describe this assumption, I will try my best here. Both artists and cultural theorists participate in an activity of representing gestalts that lead to new knowledge. As in, representing something through form, organization of discrete elements



(including arguments), balance, harmony and the quest for an analytical clarity of sorts expressed either in an aesthetic or intellectually communicative language. This is true even if that clarity is clarity regarding that which we are unclear about or are on the precipice of understanding; both artists and theorists specify and define "problems" to be solved, as well as occasionally solving them. The languages and techniques may be different very different between art and theory, or between various schools of theory or between various schools of art, but they all try to express something that is at the end of the day pedagogical if not didactic. Even if, as is often the case in art, that pedagogy is often delivered via an intentionally obscure or subversive methodology. In other words, I don't think many of us would disagree that art and theory are both in their own ways trying to speak something that we [artists, theorists] assume will or at least might lead anyone digesting it toward a gestalt of some type. The assumption includes an audience, a conversation, and ultimately beauty if we conceive of it as form, organization, comprehension, understanding, or as Kant said the "free play of the presentational powers to directed to cognition in general."

Thus the assumed ontology of art and theory is communicative - and as Ollivier points out, the [digital] materials we analyze and work with as media now have unprecedented abilities to participate in the conversation and even to produce aesthetic experience, and further, to lubricate the relation between the material world as now represented by digital technologies and human culture. It can't be said often enough that one of the surprising and terribly interesting consequences of the computer and communications revolution is that it enables more rigorous, dynamic, near-real-time feedback to occur between humanity and the environments we inhabit, in effect causing a phase shift. The exponential explosion of feedback and exchange between human culture and the material world has emerged an organizationally different relationship today than it was only 20 years ago. In a formal sense, materials have always spoken to artists (the triteness of a painter who "lets the materials speak"), but today we can imagine the materials speaking without relying on some foo-foo-psuedo-metaphysical rubbish where a human artist is assumed required as mediator or receiver of aesthetic experience. Not only do machines write, they are capable of writing for each other.

So, what to do? Well, certainly we have returned to a state of befuddlement where we are unsure as artists how to proceed. We are desperate for answers and in due diligence are asking "what is to be done?" For me, there is no clear answer yet, but I posit that it could be a productive strategy to let go of our received assumption about the ontology of both art and theory: that these are in some sense pedagogical, (or healing, or enlightening, or can produce an important critical gestalt). At the same time, I hasten to add, I am not re-proposing to wallow in the dead waste of postmodernism, the endless mirrors of negation, or the nihilism of hovering in our own confusion. No, there is an escape hatch, and I am not sure what to call it, productive-theory, local theory, the art of exploration, or a move toward performance and experimentation with the data that now mediates the relationship between us and our environment, (I am confused as anyone else, obviously.)

The closest I can come to specifying this in theoretical terms that might map well to the problem is to say that beauty can not help us at this moment. Beauty is the aesthetic of quality and understanding, the terminal state of reason. Pursuing the sublime, which Kant related to quantity and the stimulation of our reasoning capabilities out of necessity (because the problems are too big for us to understand, the sublime is the starting point of reason and not its terminus), is to me a productive strategy. The necessary tactics of course remain to be explored, which gives us all plenty of work to do. How artists and theorists relate to our material environments, and their mediation (and shift to very different forms of feedback and organization) through "art" will require a lot more experimental doing as research that constitutes practical exploration of the new realities. It should be a surprising and adventurous time, leaving us in awe of the historical novelty of our new condition. Maybe art and theory will be able to "say" something about this unique cultural moment at some future time, but for now, our confusion can at least be made productive if we try to create (and report on) experimental configurations of experience within our strange new reality.

-Brett

From: Jim Andrews<[jim@vispo.com](mailto:jim@vispo.com)>

Date: Sat, 6 Jan 2007 18:01:59 -0800

It is a little-appreciated irony that Turing's mathematical model of an all-purpose computing machine fell out of his successful efforts to solve Hilbert's Entscheidungsproblem (literally 'decision problem'). The fundamental object of the theory of computation—the Turing machine—was developed in an attempt to solve a famous math problem. Turing proved that no algorithm exists that performs the task Hilbert had asked an algorithm for. It is ironic that the Turing machine, that abstract mathematical machine which can do anything that any computer—now, or into the foreseeable future—can do, was formulated by Turing in a successful effort to show the existence of tasks for which no algorithm can ever possibly exist.

The theory of computation was born not out of an expression of limitless possibility for computing, but in a successful attempt to show that there are things that no machine will ever do. Not that these are things that humans \*can\* do. There is no accepted proof that there exist thought processes of which humans are capable and computers are not.

It seems that, in the processes of computation, we do indeed have an all-purpose machine that could eventually pass the Turing test, but there are things that neither machines nor we, apparently, are capable of.

Machines are not going to 'outshine' humanity. They are going to help us understand our humanity and the limits of the possible, the limits of what is possible by humans or any other sentient being.

Already we appreciate better what it is to be human by the deep problems that artificial intelligence has encountered. We are more subtle and complex than we understand.

Already our notions of what it befits intrepid artists to do have changed in light of what is possible with machines. How many of us are still in the art of making pretty pictures? Or writing poemy poems? Or playing the blues? The edges move. From production of the objects of art to automation of the production, to an art of algorithms that leaves both behind as the fundamental activity of interest. The machines follow in imitation, and the drones continue as before. The art of algorithms, meanwhile, continues to explore what it means to be human in these times.

– Jim <http://vispo.com>

From: Christophe Bruno <[christophe.bruno@gmail.com](mailto:christophe.bruno@gmail.com)>Date: Sun, 7 Jan 2007 14:00:56 +0100

Obviously, each time that a field of human activity becomes more industrialized, the question of what is left for humans pops up again. But, linked to that, a new question also arises: are we reaching limitations of the world-system that are not only "external" (like ecological disasters) but also "internal"? This is actually the thin cut where I try to maintain my artistic activity...

As far as I seem to understand the historical process of capitalism, it has evolved in different breakthroughs in the production and exchange modes that allowed scale savings (economies d'echelles in french) and displacements of the surplus value, among other things (if I trust the recent books I've read, these breakthroughs can be more or less localized in space and time according to the following "hubs": Bruges in 1200, Venice, Anvers, Genova, Amsterdam, London (industrial revolution), Boston (taylorism, fordism), New-York and L.A. (silicon) from 1980

to nowadays...). These breakthroughs depend on many factors but the relation with science and technology is crucial of course. From the beginning the fate of the production modes was mechanisation, getting rid of the workers by replacing them with technology and coping more or less with what was left to humans, ie non-mechanisable tasks in a very broad sense...

The network is the last breakthrough that allowed to make new tasks profitable and industrializable: like finance, administration, marketing (Google), democracy and information (e-vote, pools, news circulation...) etc... tasks that were once made by humans only. As the world-system reaches its limitations (depletion of natural resources, expected end of low-cost labour, the end of the ideology of liberalism, etc.), capitalism uses the irony of history to try to relaunch its paradoxical machinery by pushing back its internal limits: freedom of speech promoted by Google et al. is revealed to be the prerequisite for the scientific colonization of intimacy; global terrorism and reality TV feed a spectacle regulated by the panoptical enslavement mechanism of the blogosphere and of the web 2.0. (Actually I do'nt know if the web 2.0 belongs to the L.A. phase, maybe the L.A. phase ends in 2001). Speech or democracy for instance are too expensive for a state at the age of hypercapitalism so we expect here big changes, more generally the very idea of state might become too expensive at some point...

... But surplus value is a concept for humans only, linked to the indestructibility of desire. How interesting and ironic! since the web 2.0 is an attempt of scientific monitoring of this very desire for maximizing the surplus value.

So: Maybe there are new territories to colonize : intimacy... Maybe there are new slaves : bloggers that extract freely their intimacy for the only profit of Google... Maybe there are new martyrs willing to sacrifice themselves for the beauty of the machinery : hackers... Maybe there are new proletarians : NGOs... etc. Of course there are still proletarians of the former phase that make the whole thing work, in China etc... Quantitatively, the former phase is much more important and the suffering is much greater in the old phase than in the new one. Artists do not escape this evolution. There is a schizophrenia among artists and inside artists which probably reflect somehow the old lutte des classes and the different pulses at play, from pop art to hacktivists ....

Art does not escape this evolution but at the same time, it has to escape it somehow, as we all have to. As an artist I don't consider myself as a hacker in the sense of McKenzie Wark's manifesto for instance... Unfortunately I feel more delocalized as far as my desire is concerned. Delocalized between the "external" and the "internal" and between pop and hacktivism.

-Christophe <http://www.logohallucination.com>

Subject: RE: [-empyre-] what is to be done? From: "Dirk Vekemans" <dv@vilt.net>

Some of the discussion/questions seem to be hart-related, I will deal with that towards the end.

Firstly, however: What is to be done?

My dog Neo and I are convinced we definitely should try and save the planet. We both are still very much attached to it, in spite of the fact that there are fewer nice places to go walking these days. The children are all in favor too. I can't reach my wife at the moment, but I'm sure she'll second that opinion.

Furthermore, saving the planet will involve activities that will seem to contradict taking care of ourselves and our children. We should therefore aim our education towards such activities or at least indicate their necessity in order to ensure the proper co-operation of a sufficient number of active persons.

Next our exploration of non-human algorithmic potential should be brought up to speed by further de-humanizing their procedural organization. We really should learn to use the word non-human and reserve the 'inhuman' to the usual atrocities committed by humans. While such de-humanization had been introduced in a limited scale early in the development cycle of our IT-evolution, it is nowadays largely been neglected by the industries responsible for our informational infrastructures, allowing them to build on what is built (wrongly) only at the expense of material resources we are no longer allowed to squander to such selfish aims. We might need a global disaster or two to stop this machinery, but perhaps it can be done without such harsh means. Some research should perhaps be directed at selective deluge-techniques, there are by now, unfortunately, sufficient data to enable simulations. We could call these deluge-simulations Extended Windows to the Futu[mail-file truncated here]

Next, people should be stimulated to engage in creative activities that give no immediate reward. As Jim pointed out, enabling people to share pictures and video and have them write down opinions in an analyzable format, is nice and beneficial to the algorithmic research efforts, but it doesn't suffice. People should be made aware that their human potential can only be realized fully along the axis of generation-generous-deviation-enactment-engagement-involvement. We should enable the masses to talk about such activities by promoting a name-giving process that auto-poetically results in a meaning-generation process. There used to be a word for this, but I keep forgetting it. It doesn't matter much, the word is bound to be obsolete by now. Most words are obsolete once they are spoken. Only some religious persons claim to have knowledge of words that are not obsolete when spoken, but they say these words won't do you much good when trying to save a planet.

Finally, the run-by-a-company-that-is-run-by-a-couple-of-nice-guys paradigm won't fool anybody much longer. We need to give a high priority to the generation of some decent decision-making algo's that don't run out after two or three cycles.

This is nearly the end.

As to the art matters, here's a provisional answer from the Board for Speeding Up the Abolition of Art (the BSUAA is a local organization headed by my Aunt Sizzle here in KesseHo, Belgium. I can't vouch for these answers, you'll have to deal with them as Aunty answers come):

"Art, like any other business, has a rather clear business logic. Part of the business logic is concerned with brand-protection. There, the human origin is still largely considered the best way of tackling the art-identification problem, should it arise. Mostly, however, calling it Art on the Cover should suffice.

If machines are nowadays able to produce a Pollock look-alike we can do away with the Pollock look-alike contest. This will free our budgets towards a strengthening of the Art-lack, our Board is currently dealing with a proposal for a nation-wide campaign involving oranges and the Art Needs You [tm]-slogan."

This is the end.

happy waving, dv @ Neue Kathedrale des erotischen Elends <http://www.vilt.net/nkdee>

From: [odyens@alcor.concordia.ca](mailto:odyens@alcor.concordia.ca) Date: Sun, 07 Jan 2007 16:58:00 -0500

Thanks to all of you for your answers and comments. As you may have gathered by reading my first post, I, like, you do not have definite answers to the questions I asked.

Here's a very brief summary of what some of you have written (my apologies in advance for what was left out): According to Jim, machines have shown us how complex human beings are (research in AI have clearly proven that intelligence is a much more complex structure than first thought). Brian sums up Bernard Stiegler's book in which Stiegler makes his case for a return to what seems to me a romantic notion of humanity. Brian also asks me to suggest some possible answers to the questions I asked. Brett makes a crucial distinction between beauty and the sublime and suggests that a productive strategy would be to let go of the ?our received assumption about the ontology of both art and theory.

Now what is to be done? How should we tackle the profound transformation of our world? As you know, the questions about the role of art and its relationship to humanity, are just a symptom of a much deeper metamorphosis. I do not use this word lightly. To me, we are in the process of a true transformation. There are, all around us, many proofs of that. Kurzweil's law of accelerating return being just one of them. <http://www.kurzweilai.net/articles/art0134.html?printable=1> Alexandre Leupin's Theory of Epistemological Cuts being another. <http://www.alexandreleupin.com/lectures/cummings.htm>

According to Leupin, a paradigmatic revolution can be clearly seen when words become homonyms. Before and after Galileo, for example, the word cosmos, though the same, does not mean the same thing. Before and after Christ, the word God means something completely different. Today, words such as life, death, consciousness and even art do not mean the same as they did only a few years back).

As Leupin and Kurzweil clearly show, we are right in the middle of a deep transformation of the very fabric of life. Xenotransplantation, genetic therapy, genetically modified organisms are not just exotic events: they are signs of a great alteration in the foundation of life. Life is becoming one great genetic pool out of which forms emerge. Some are natural (i.e. age-old), others not so (i.e. created in labs), but all are present in today's world. Here, then, are my thoughts:

In my initial post, I mentioned technological reality. Technological reality is the human/machine perception of the world. As opposed to biological reality (which is the physiological perception of reality, i.e. that which is gathered by our senses), technological reality lets us see slivers of reality we are not cognitively or psychologically equipped to see and understand (the quantum level of reality, for example). In Consilience, E.O. Wilson wrote: the brain is a machine assembled not to understand itself but to survive. This, I believe, is fundamental. Biological reality is our brain trying to decipher the world in order to survive. Technological reality is our brain trying to cope with the world as technology sees it. But these new levels of reality are so alien to our understanding of the world (to our brain's structure of survival), that they become true fiction. We might intellectually understand their existence but we cannot truly grasp what they mean (what does 9, 10 or 11 dimensions, as string theory suggests our world is made of, actually mean?).

Thus, technological reality offers us a perception of the world which is both frightening and beautiful. Frightening because it questions all of our notions of what it means to be alive, to be human, to be conscious and intelligent, all of our notions of what the fabric of reality is. Beautiful because it shows us that reality is infinite, that the universe is made of strange and exotic structures, that what we thought were the universal (and simple) laws of physics are but a tiny fraction of the fabric of the universe. Frightening because it suggests that the world is beyond our understanding; beautiful because it celebrates the observer (as defined by quantum theory) as an essential component of reality. Technological reality does not deconstruct; rather, it fragments objects, forms, individuals into an infinite series of layers. Technological reality folds and enfolds phenomena until the microscopic meshes into the macroscopic. Thus, through technological reality the world appears both beautiful and inhuman.

This is why I call our present situation, The Inhuman Condition. I do not use inhuman pejoratively (as in horrible) but rather in the proper sense of the word (that which is not human). The inhuman condition tells us that since our age-old understanding of life, death, individuals,

intelligence and especially groups and families, are specific to our biological level of reality, since these notions are only constructions of our physiology (itself build from the challenges of evolution), we must completely redefine what it means to be human, we must completely rethink our notions of the fabric of life. The inhuman condition also tells us that beauty and the sublime can co-exist with the unnatural, the inhuman. To me, the inhuman condition creates many troubling consequences. The most obvious one is a deep malaise. According to the inhuman condition, what our senses tell us of the world is nothing but a familiar and comfortable fiction. We may feel human, we may feel unique, conscious and intelligent but science (and technological reality) tells us otherwise (as you know, Richard Dawkins has labeled living beings survival vehicles for genes. Recent research has shown that the actual genetic content of the bacteria living in our stomach is 99 times bigger than our own genetic material [Gill, Steven R: The Institute for Genomic Research, in Harper's Magazine, vol 313, no 1876, September 2006, p. 13]. Thus, are we survival vehicles for our genes or for our bacterias? Who's the vehicle here?]).

If humanity becomes inhuman, what, then, are the consequences on the artistic process? But first, we must ask ourselves what, exactly, is art? We could, of course, spend an entire year discussing it. Let me suggest my own definition here (which is as flawed as any other). To me, art is the sensitive questioning of metaphysics (science would be the objective questioning of metaphysics). But since the fabric of life must be redefine, so must be metaphysics: how can we question life, death, suffering if we do not know what life is, when death occurs, what or who is suffering? If we don't even know what reality is, where it originates, where it ends? How can we question metaphysics if its basis, humanity, suddenly appears to be just one level of reality (what are life and death if one is considered an colony of different living beings, beings that can actually keep on living after the colony's death? There are more than 200 different living species in each human. Death does not occur at the same time for each of them. Further, the actual process of life and death is quite different for many of them).

Art, I believe, must address and reflect this deep transformation. How? Well, what the inhuman condition tells us is that the world that surrounds us is not made of frontiers but of overlapping dynamics and levels (both horizontal, between species, and vertical, between levels of reality). Art must then search for beauty and the sublime within this new condition, i.e. by letting go of the human as its founding and exclusive phenomena. How should it do that? I'm not quite sure but I'll suggest the following: By using machines as co-creators. Not only do machines makes us see a deeper, stranger, more exotic universe than we ever thought possible, they also help us understand the world, make sense of it, they help us extract a new beauty, a different sublime out of that world (e.g.: fractals). Machines are not only instruments, they have become an extension of our senses (as McLuhan mentioned), they have become an extension of consciousness. Thus, they play a vital and fundamental role in art. Now, is that something completely new? Well, not really, especially if we consider language as a machine, one that opened the world for us, made it much richer, much more beautiful, language is a machine that filled the world with signs, symbols and representation. The original machine (language) is what enabled humans to create art. Today's machines are doing the same, albeit with a different entity, that of the inhuman.

But for that to be possible, we must abandon our notion of humanity, of what it means to be human, we must accept that today's humanity is shaped by a new reason, by a new rationale, one which might seem irrational to our age-old notions of what it means to be human (humanity is now a colony of bacteria, genes and memes; it's a swarm of many collective intelligences, themselves part of larger collective intelligences; it's a mass of many different survival vehicles, themselves feeding larger collective intelligences such as civilization). Once we are able to do so, we will see the rise (I believe) of a new form of art, one that seamlessly integrates the inhuman into its forms and content. What is the inhuman in art? It's the sublime that emerges through the combination of both man's and machine's languages. It's the sublime in the intertwining of forms and contents (the rational with the irrational). Machine and humans will feed off each other and produce art forms that reflects each other's needs and questioning (can a machine have a will? Well, not in the human sense of the word, but a will to survive, spread and disseminate? Yes, I believe so. Machine are survival vehicles for memes, they belong and are intertwined in the planetary fabric; they thus obey the structure of evolution).

By the way, digital art, and especially database art, are already a sign of these new, emerging art forms, one closer to the inhuman condition than to the human one. Digital art show us a different side of metaphysics, where to be human is not to be enmeshed in story telling, is not to belong to a linear evolution, but to be intertwined in an imploded notion of time, space and narratives, where to be human is to be a receptacle of data, is to be an ephemeral form, produced by the convergence of different languages (machine's and well as man's) and levels of reality, where to be human is also to be everything but a unique individual, where to be human is to be both read and written by machines, where to be human is to be inhuman.

Just an aside here. The point of my first post was not to promote some type of neo-conservative agenda where machines take over the human form or intention. The point was not to suggest that machines should create Pollock-type artworks, but rather to point out that what we think is specific to human beings, what we thing belongs to the transcendental (art) is maybe just a very complex algorithm. Art might be nothing else but a series of mathematical structures, complex and rich ones, yes, but algorithmic ones nonetheless. I am not saying this is so, only that it might be so. If this proves to be, even partly, true, we then must address what it means to be human.

I am, myself, a poet. I, myself, truly believe in art, in education, even in the idea of progress (as the lumières defined it). I am, thus, really troubled by this algorithmic encoding of art. Does it mean we must disregard it? No. Does it mean we, as artists, have to re-evaluate what we do? Yes. But art is, by no means, the only thing questioned by this algorithmic perception of the world. Please read Jonathan Rauch's article on artificial societies. You will see that even something as horrible, and specifically human, as genocide, is maybe nothing else but an algorithm?

<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/prem/200204/rauch>

-Ollivier

Subject: Re: [-empyre-] what is to be done?

From: Christophe Bruno <[christophe.bruno@gmail.com](mailto:christophe.bruno@gmail.com)>

But it's very easy to become non-human, there are many ways and it has always existed – one of them is called death—I don't see why we need all these Kurzweil's calculations ;) The truth I see in that curves is that indeed, at some point, being human might become too expensive, but only in the point of view of another human being. So we'll probably need to save at least one human greedy accountant to be sure everything goes.

"where to be human is also to be everything but a unique individual, where to be human is to be both 'read'and 'written' by machines"

But that's exactly the idea of being human!! that's our everyday life since the beginning of times; personally I enjoy it quite a lot like that.

-Christophe

From: Melinda Rackham <[melinda@anat.org.au](mailto:melinda@anat.org.au)> • Date: Mon, 08 Jan 2007 18:59:29 +1030 ••

Multiple choice is preferable I read three lines per screen

I move on in 2 seconds I am always networked

I like bytes I want more I want it now

The sense and sensibility of the statement "education seems to offer one viable alternative to the devil [didacticism, academia] and the deep blue sea [commodity fetishism]" are both problematic. To attempt to walk a middle ground between these two supposedly opposing cultural forces seems to be particularly fraught. Perhaps I'm a little rusty [to use an iron age term -I'm not sure what the appropriate silicone age equivalent is] in the online arena as I've been away from it for a while doing things like developing artist skill augmentation programs and designing projects that aspire to be understandable by and appeal to a general public who don't have the benefit of the sort of education we are talking about here. I'm afraid that the most probable outcome of alternative educative cultural design, based on concepts accessible only to an elite, is that it will be found to be either boring, incomprehensible, unengaging or irrelevant by a mass audience. So: What is to be done? Who is supposed to do it? and Why should we care?

-Melinda (Butting in b4 I'm introduced)

From: Christina McPhee <[christina112@earthlink.net](mailto:christina112@earthlink.net)> Date: Mon, 8 Jan 2007 03:38:20 -0500 (EST)

hi everyone, I was out at the movies (Almodovar's Volver) and missed introducing Melinda! Melinda founded the -empyre- list as most of you know... a bio:

Melinda Rackham (AU) Dr Rackham is the Executive Director of the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT), Australia's peak body for artists working with science and technology, creating opportunities for innovation, research and development both locally and globally. As an artist, writer and curator she worked with Networked Media for over a decade in web, 3d multi-user, game and mobile environments. Her award winning artworks are widely shown and her writing appears in diverse art and theory publications. Melinda founded -empyre- media arts forum in 2002 and in 2003-4 was curator of Networked Media at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), Melbourne. <http://www.anat.org.au/home.htm>

-Christina

From: Saul Ostrow <[sostrow@gate.cia.edu](mailto:sostrow@gate.cia.edu)> Date: Mon, 8 Jan 2007 10:25:38 -0500

Democracy - science - literacy were and for some continue to be some of those concepts thought accessible only to an elite, a thought would be found to be either boring, incomprehensible, unengaging or irrelevant by a mass audience who are obviously only capable of understanding the most base concepts.

Actually I find your statement below offensive and demeaning it is caricaturish and represents a paternalistic and low opinion of what people may or may not find interesting if people like you thought of how those elite concepts might be shown to be relevant to their lives

"I'm afraid that the most probable outcome of alternative educative cultural design, based on concepts accessible only to an elite, is that it will be found to be either boring, incomprehensible, unengaging or irrelevant by a mass audience."

-Saul

From: Alette <[aliette@criticalsecret.org](mailto:aliette@criticalsecret.org)> Date: Tue, 09 Jan 2007 01:38:27 +0100



Hello Melinda ! Fine to see you again in great energy! The next book by Mckenzie Wark at Harvard University Press, "Gamer Theory" integrates a part of interactive work in mirror of the subject in real time, with his students at New School: as a real experiment of help the best level of discussion through the real time of the publication online outside the school. As a practice on the part of each partners who contributed - professor, students, outside partners of debate (Hardt and others). In the matter of the sciences of communication, it is really forming the capacity of discussing, not a simulation, but an appropriate application that turns into a public performance (in two versions: digital then print: this educates more the difference of language following the media). In pedagogy of the code, what can be done for example as collective works in real time expecting a real publication, performance, exhibition? Several composers have made this. But what of the digital designers?

-Aliette

From: Henry Warwick <[henry.warwick@sbcglobal.net](mailto:henry.warwick@sbcglobal.net)> Date: Mon, 8 Jan 2007 23:09:12 -0500

A provocation:

I have pointed out this issue before, on this forum. I have also discussed what I see as the most significant problems facing humanity. Over the past several years I have been doing a great deal of research into these issues. One of the first things to be shown the door is "Art", and in our present circumstance, this comes as no surprise, as Art is little more than the Intellectual Wing of the Entertainment Industry. It has very little credibility, and people only keep it around because it can be amusing. It has always been a plaything of the wealthier classes, and it continues to be so. The 20th century tried to make it a religion for a secular society, and failed. It was never designed to do that. The impulse toward the "sublime" is simply the latest manifestation of the same historical trend.

The Gallery/Museum Industrial Complex has its own star system and patronage patterns. Artists are urged to mythologise themselves, create a back-story, with all the other accoutrements of post Lucas Public Relations. It's a crummy racket, and everyone in the industry knows it. To borrow and distort from Hunter S Thompson: The Art business is uglier than most things. It is normally perceived as some kind of cruel and shallow money trench through the heart of contemporary culture - a long plastic hallway where thieves and pimps run free and good men die like dogs, for no good reason.

And, yes, there is a down side. Because as it has decayed over the past several decades, beauty became the property of the bourgeoisie. "Art" became the badge of political balkanisation and the refuge of every third-rate hack imaginable. So, no - there is nowhere for Art to go. It has run its course, and is now in the realm of historical and commodity fetishists.

The only effective art is that which is done without hope.

This does not mean one should give in to hopelessness and despair. No - it is more a reflection of a deeper social and cultural insight. Think of such a state as an awareness of duty - something greater than happiness. Think of it as a maturity of composure, where that which is completely uncertain is allowed to manifest without fear - a dynamic openness to Being in Time. And if your actions conform to localised notions of beauty, all the more useful to extend the reach of your actions and notions.

What is needed to happen before we do what must be done is a sense of acceptance and a rejection of denial. Hope requires a desire for an outcome. The grass bends in the wind and requires no hope. At the same time it tenaciously holds its ground - it does so out of duty and self-

actualisation, not out of stubborn pettiness an spite. We need to organise our communities - our neighbours, as much as we find them peculiar and stupid - we need to work with them and in so doing bring ourselves to them - we are someone else's weird neighbors.

To borrow and distort from Spinrad: we should ignore and give up on the art world. Don't participate. Look to your neighbors and friends for inspiration and Art.

The deepest problems facing humanity are, in order of immensity:

1. over-population
2. resource depletion
3. climate change

There are too many of us. We are destroying the earth to sustain our numbers. We are using up all the resources, and are condemning the tenth or hundredth generation (if there is one) to a neolithic existence. Our effect on the planet's various biospheres are dramatic and destructive, and the climate is changing rapidly, and in such a way that we won't be able to properly adjust given the resource depletion we are facing and the immensity of our numbers.

What is to be done?

1. reduce population
2. conserve resources, radically
3. move to higher ground...

What is to be done?

1. Wake up.
2. Get with the program.
3. Organise.

Eno:

I was just a broken head I stole the world that others plundered Now I stumble through the garbage Slide and tumble, slide and stumble.

Thompson:

Thieves and pimps running free. I stole the world that others plundered.

Fine. Live in denial. And watch your world die.

Art? Who needs THAT?

BUT BUT BUT...

In this age of grand delusion, Denial is the only rational choice for the many who insist on hope.

We have a choice: Die Down - at home, surrounded by friends and family at the end of a long and productive life or DIE OFF at a young age of starvation and pneumonia in some transit camp in Oregon.

-Henry

From: Christina McPhee Date: Tue, 9 Jan 2007 11:06:52 -0800

dear list,

it's my pleasure to introduce to you two curators who've been extraordinary in their new approaches to education and art in the public space, Iliyana Nedkova (SCT) and Chris Molinski (US).

Described as 'a curator of taste and critical discernment', Iliyana is a Sofia-born Edinburgh-based curator, producer and critic of contemporary art and design. Currently, Creative Director New Media at Horsecross, Perth where she is responsible for curating the Threshold artspace, Scotland's first dedicated gallery for digital public art. A founding Co-Director of ARC: Art Research Communication (with Chris Byrne), a curatorial practice working nationally and internationally with artists, exhibitions, art fairs, editions and critical context. Latest ARC Projects include the international symposium of curating new media Art Place Technology, Liverpool and a series of limited editions by artists Susan Collins, Alla Georgieva, Pravidoliub Ivanov, Ivan Moudov and Dan Perjovschi.

Over twenty new Horsecross commissions by artists from 11 different countries have been premiered at Threshold artspace since September 2005. New shows are continuously produced and exhibited as part of the evolving Threshold collection of artists' films, video, digital photography, visual poetry, interactive titles, sound toys, Internet art and computer games. The Threshold artspace features nine unique spaces available for artists' interventions including an interactive entrance box; a 'canvas' of 22 screens dominating the foyer; a playground with flexible screens and interactivity; a trail of sound boxes embedded in the floor; a surprise audiovisual treat tucked away in public toilets; copper-clad roof of the concert hall for an added visual delight. Threshold artspace unique locations are linked together by an 'intelligent' control system and open source software which allows artworks to be displayed and experienced up to 14 hours a day throughout the year.

Chris directs The Art Gallery of Knoxville, a community space devoted to discussions of new and emerging art in Knoxville, Tennessee. Recent exhibitions have involved collaborations with the Center for Urban Pedagogy, Max Neuhaus, and the exhibition "Distribution Religion" with Critical Artware, People Powered, and Temporary Services. <http://www.theartgalleryofknoxville.com/> I've been intrigued in Chris's work ever since he 'appropriated' an entire month of the -empyre- list discussion into a printed book as an art 'object' for an exhibition/project last year called "Building an Archive". -empyre- was shown with On Kawara, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and Sean Mlcka.

Like Iliyana, Chris has been developing what I might call, after Edward Soja, 'a third space' for critical art practice in the public sphere. By creatively remixing the lessons of the situationists with the ethos of a new regenerative 'commons'.

Please welcome Chris and Illi to -empyre- soft-skinned space.

-Christina

From: "The Art Gallery of Knoxville" <[art.gallery.knoxville@gmail.com](mailto:art.gallery.knoxville@gmail.com)> Date: Tue, 9 Jan 2007 15:21:26 -05

Thank you Christina – I am excited to participate in this conversation. Our space at The Art Gallery of Knoxville can be seen as a type of experiment that actively addresses these issues. The space was founded by myself and several other graduates from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2005. The question "What is to be done?" was very conscious in the formation of our space. We were also very concerned with issues such as: Where are the spaces committed to culture production? What ideas do these spaces protect, and how does an audience interact with them?

Some of our recent exhibits deal with the idea of Art, Education and Community in different ways. In particular our exhibit which opened this last Friday, "Distribution Religion" – with work by criticalartware, People Powered, and Temporary Services, discusses new forms of open / distributed Art that I think are very important to this topic.

I am certainly interested in the discussion of new art processes (value and mechanical conditions) that have been brought up – but this is not the most important concern to be addressed. In many instances we must first deal with the physical conditions of cultural space and how it interacts with a community.

It is not a question of "What is to be understood by Art" but "How is Art understood? In what context? How can understanding be motivated to happen on a personal level?"

The first thing to be done is encourage the further development of independent (critical) space everywhere. In order to make these spaces effective they must be encouraged to represent any of the ideas and material they find most important without regard for ownership or authority.

In this sense, an importance of independent space can be the reform of power structures. The text "Art and Reality" by artist group N55 is an exciting framework for new conclusions on the structure of community space:

– (excerpt on "concentrations of power") –

"Concentrations of power do not always respect the rights of persons. If one denies this fact one gets: concentrations of power always respect the rights of persons. This does not correspond with our experiences. Concentrations of power characterize our society. Concentrations of power force persons to concentrate on participating in competition and power games, in order to create a social position for themselves. Concurrently with the concentrations of power dominating our conscious mind and being decisive to our situations, the significance of our fellow humans diminishes. And our own significance becomes the significance we have for concentrations of power, the growth of concentrations of power, and the conflicts of concentrations of power."

"It is clear that persons should be consciously aware of the rights of persons and therefore must seek to organize the smallest concentrations of power possible."

[http://www.n55.dk/MANUALS/DISCUSSIONS/N55\\_TEXTS/ART\\_REALITY.html](http://www.n55.dk/MANUALS/DISCUSSIONS/N55_TEXTS/ART_REALITY.html)

–

In order to further encourage new situations of power, all of our cultural spaces must consider "artist" / "audience" relationships in a new way. Both an "artist" and an "audience" should experience things directly – by working through a personal understanding that involves ideas of production, ownership and use.

Public education strategies have often involved the idea of personal ownership as an effective means for learning. Cultural spaces need to respect our audience as producers, and acknowledge the need for a public to use cultural products on a personal level.

Education is not an alternative - it is part of every cultural practice. We can enable the changes we need through the creation of personal space dedicated to the independent exchange, understanding, and production of culture.

- Chris Molinski

From: "The Art Gallery of Knoxville" <[art.gallery.knoxville@gmail.com](mailto:art.gallery.knoxville@gmail.com)>Date: Tue, 9 Jan 2007 15:23:42 -0500

I agree very much with the direction that Melinda sent - but not with all the points. Forcing this opposition (between the devil and the deep blue sea) - and somehow assuming that education works in the middle - is indeed a problem. (It's also quite an odd association ... I would flip the analogy.)

The focus must be on enabling a type of open educational practice that is recognized as part of all Art and not a special or separated practice. Any time we talk about ideas ("what do you think?") - or promote and distribute objects (with embedded information) we are creating an educational system.

If we respect the actions and ability of people - they can have the opportunity to respond. The issue of objects being "boring, incomprehensible, unengaging or irrelevant" has to do with degrees of personal ownership - In what ways do people feel alienated or excluded from cultural conversations? There is very little that could honestly be considered "boring, incomprehensible, unengaging or irrelevant" about much so-called minimal or conceptual Art. So why are they often rejected in public discourse - or subjugated to restricted "movements" that are often meant as some type of public apology or excuse?

"based on concepts accessible only to an elite"

I think it is dangerous to assume that concepts are only accessible to the prepared. Many people are unable to participate in an active discussion out of an insecurity, or lack of confidence in their expressive knowledge. Many modern artworks that are seen as being highly "conceptual" were created to include the audience rather than exclude them – even the most often stated comment of rejection - "I could do that!" - is misunderstood: you can do that! you should do that! we can do it together!

-Chris

From: Christiane Robbins <[cpr@mindspring.com](mailto:cpr@mindspring.com)>Date: Tue, 9 Jan 2007 17:56:39 -0800

Or ... one could possibly engage with any 'art practice' or cultural product in such way that may be antithetical or not preconceived within the the narrow bandwidth/focus of the varied art market systems - including the academy ( to which I believe Melinda may, in part, be referencing ) or the artist / "author's" intent.

We find ourselves operating within an hierarchical framework - complete with its cultural cliché of an elitist activity of the "arts and leisure" class which is, unfortunately, more and more an accurate representation in the USA these days. As Saul alluded to - conceptual thinking and elitism are not bed partners. If one were to simply recall the tenets of conceptual artists working in the '60's and 70's, they were simultaneously referred to by the popular media as elitists, but their work was also concurrent with and, arguably, generated by the more radical political, social-economic imperatives of the time. Further, conceptualism was an incisive and reactive stance to the ultra-commodification of the art market. Without question, movements such as Fluxus were instrumental in the realization of many art practices which flourished in the latter part of the 20th c /early 21st c.

The challenge for those who identify themselves artists, historians, critics, educators, etc. is to not only recognize and participate in a rather open source and quotidian dynamic with others ( disciplines, people, the public, whomever... ) It is also to value this exchange and engagement as a critical source of cultural advancement in need of sustained and concurrent public and private support, rather than to further insulate in a relatively hermetic, insulating and exclusionary frame.

To my mind, the salient point rests upon our recognition of the complex need to have a core belief instilled - a knowledge, respect and curiosity for a myriad of cultural and critical practices embedded into our value systems on all levels . Indeed, education is one vehicle. However, when we look at the stratification of public and private education( on all levels) coupled with the recession of public funding for the arts in public education here in the USA (in favor of vocational training directives if any at all ) and the relatively entrenched value offered to art/ media practices in private schools, we witness in the 19th century, the circuitous legacy of class dynamics playing out within the fields of visual art and experimental media practices. I may well be incorrect but I believe reform in educational practices and funding soon followed .... at least in the 19th century.

-Christiane

From: Jim Andrews <[jim@vispo.com](mailto:jim@vispo.com)>

"According to Jim, machines have shown us how complex human beings are (research in AI have clearly proven that intelligence is a much more complex structure than first thought)."

I meant to suggest slightly more, Ollivier.

It is more the failure to produce real intelligence in 50 years of research than the research itself that is most dramatic in convincing us of what we already knew, ie, that the brain and the mind are very complex.

Life on earth is apparently the product of over 3.5 billion years of evolution. The universe itself is apparently only 15-20 billion years old; the evolution of life on this planet has not taken place in a blip of cosmic time, but is of the same order of temporal magnitude as the age of the universe itself. I think we probably have much to learn about the evolution of life and intelligence.

Should there be an 'age of spiritual machines', it seems likely to be preceded both by the current 'age of machines not significantly more intelligent than a bag of hammers' and then possibly an 'age of machines nearly able to tie their own shoe-laces'. But come it shall, should we not destroy ourselves within 300 years. Darwin's work is 150 years old, at this point. It has borne very beautiful fruit, but it is, even yet, not fully worked out. We don't even know how the brain stores/creates memory at this point.

Concerning the marvels of medicine and biology, I wonder how significant these can be if they are only for rich people. here in Canada, the health care system is bad enough that it is rare to have a family doctor in these parts; there aren't enough doctors; and the hospitals are in disarray through lack of funding and understaffing.

Digital art is mostly the province of scholars with grants showing to a class of 30 and the more public, accessible form of digital art, net art, is sneered at as something anyone can do and no one can sell.

I think part of what artists can do is help build an internet that provides people around the world with net art that allows us to grow in our new sense and sensibilities. net art should be to the world as the paperback book was many years ago: an internationally widespread form of intellectual challenge, enlightenment, solidarity and delight.

-Jim

Subject: Re: [-empyre-] Sense and sensibility From: "G.H. Hovagimyan" <[ghh@thing.net](mailto:ghh@thing.net)>

The art world has three spheres of influence, the academy, the museums and the market. This is also the social structure or organizing principal that reflects the current capitalist societies of the Western democracies. The most recent manifestation in the art world is the art fair. This is pure market or more precisely a hypermarket. As an artist I participate in these realms but without much enthusiasm. I teach sometimes but dislike the demands of education. In new media we are simply teaching computer skills. More to the point media artists tailor their work and theories to attract more students to their classes. And the Museums are dependent upon courting collectors to donate their collections on the one hand and attracting star curators on the other. Those artists advance who fit into whatever organizing principal or theory a particular curator is enamored. It was hoped that the internet would provide a vehicle for radical discourse that went around these systems. This would be similar to the alternative space movement of the 1970's that provided a free experimental arena for some time. The cries of "elitist" often come from left wing social activists who view the world with an us or them lens. This means that unless your art work is subsumed to a radical cause and advances that cause you are called an elitist. Of course there are other radical critiques such as the "Yes Men" that fit perfectly into the globalism-entertainment matrix.

So my question is this; is it possible to create art and be an artist while functioning outside to the three main spheres? Obviously I believe so because that is what I do. The larger question is this: if one is part of a culture and chooses to critique the culture in their art work who is the audience? In other words aren't we all simply salesmen plying our wares to various clients such as the chairman of our academic department or the students or up and coming curators or the wealthy art collectors? Where is the spirit of anarchic freedom that is the real arena of art?

-G.H. Hovagimyan

Subject: [-empyre-] what is to be done? witness to a critical space From: Christina McPhee <[christina112@earthlink.net](mailto:christina112@earthlink.net)>

It's been a difficult start for our discussion, as some have looked to poetics and others to politics, with great gulfs between. I wish I could describe to you something of the critical spatial practice I believe is possible, indeed is happening now, in many places around the world, such that there is the possibility of a heuristic—a new kind of generative model—coming out of a tangential, even impossible 'we' amidst turmoil and confusion. I also believe that it is very important not to overdetermine roles such as 'artist', 'curator', 'market', etc and rather to adopt a flexible mind regarding the human/posthuman possibilities in collective cultural collaboration and participation.

I wish to share with you a letter I wrote to documenta magazine project editors at their request, after a transregional meeting in Cairo, Egypt in November, 2006, to which -empyre-, myself as editor/ representative, was invited, together with editors and writers from around the world, to discuss 'what is bare life' and 'what is to be done[education]?'

The others around the table came from Santiago, Havana, Singapore, Guatemala City, Brussels, Oldenburg, Moscow, Beirut, Amman, Berlin. I was the only American present, and representing, to the best of my ability, Australia's -empyre-, despite being from California.

Perhaps you will recognize some of the names; perhaps just reading through to the story here, may offer some sense of how broad our discourse here really can be, how beyond the confines of the rationales and cliches of whatever is 'the art world', and how much into a new space of transformation, even heterogenesis, as Ollivier has implied.

Of course the views expressed here are only mine and do not attempt to speak on behalf of anyone.

The participating editors mentioned in my text below are;

- Rosina Cazali, art critic, curator, writing for
- Keti Chukhrov, writer, philosopher, Moscow Art Magazine <http://xz.gif.ru>
- Bojana Cvejic, writer, performer, editor, TkH (Walking Theory)
- Lucy Davis, visual artist, curator, founding editor of FOCAS/ Forum on Art and Contemporary Society, Singapore
- Dalal al-Bizri, Arab cultural production researcher, sociologist, journalist, al-Hayat, Cairo
- Maren Lubbe-Tidow, editor, curator, Camera Austria
- Carmen Moersch, artist, educator, researcher, art and mediation, Institute for Cultural Studies, University of Oldenburg, Documenta 12 mediation coordinator
- Desiderio Navarro, editor, Criterios, Havana

This is a time when the confusion of threads in a hypertext is much like the confusion of cultural production, beyond the relational aesthetics of Bourriard. In a space of encounter, as Bojana has written, where, "when we would like to speak about certain ways of working together in the contemporary art [collectives, collaborations, movements, participations] which are no longer linked to progress and history, to the common goal, but rather, articulate and demand thr space through incoherency and contingency of their meeting." ([http://www.drustvo-za-estetiko.si/prostror\\_abs\\_cv.htm](http://www.drustvo-za-estetiko.si/prostror_abs_cv.htm) )

Pulling rabbits out of a hat, I offer you these reflections.

I have been pondering what was 'crucial' and feel that i can't hope to really do justice to all of the contributions and interactions, forgive me! but, I have come away with certain thoughts about what documenta 12 / and the magazine project can be/ or what its ethical or poetics touch on, perhaps.

Documenta 11 – although incredibly rich in content – seemed a bit like, you the 'spectator' approaching the other, or the others' pain, and feeling strange or terrorized or implicated by it, but still, like spectacle. It was still trying to be 'engaged' with contemporary margins. It



'regarded' the space of the other. Now 5 years later is a time of a different poetics. We know ourselves at the margins of a huge flattening and emptying out process leaving the shells of modern structures, like the impoverished banalities of Dalal's university desert, where the research university becomes a Kafkaesque travesty where there is no remedy, no external validation or markers, when 'everything' is hypermediated. 'other' "R" us.

And at this margin it is able to produce something of an ethos, a critical space. To live in flat world, just another media moment in the global crush of fundamentalist/neoliberal rhetoric.

And yet the possibility remains alive that acts of art production or, better yet, performed acts, intervene and interpret simultaneously at a point of encounter at the edge of 'bare life' because we acknowledge we all live, must live, close to it now. This encountering creates some kind of new space, in which everyone produces. Keti spoke of the point of encounter, at which you produce something of heuristic value.

I felt all somehow touched on something about this production of critical space, always drawing attention to the considerable danger involved in doing so, risks of the health of the body and mind through extreme performance (Regina Galino and Rosina Cazali), risks of imprisonment (Nelly, Desiderio, Lucy). (Unfortunately I missed all of Salwa's talk because of a bad headset, so I cannot comment about her presentation).

With regard to publication strategies, Nelly spoke of how layering of images and text as a graphic design strategy for avantgarde leftist reviews might counter the administrative bureaucratic ('data driven') market driven conventions in mainstream media. Rosina argued that to move 'subversive' critical content into mainstream media was crucial, rather than to hold onto outsider status. This idea appeals to me because of its subversive tacticality. As Maren described Jo Spence's performative photography, I found my thoughts continually circling around Spence's obsession with creating a performative methodology, as if each step would teach to others as well as teach herself how to live, in the face of, in the space of, terminal illness.

Speaking about the performance artist Regina Galindo, Rosina's powerful witness to her experience accompanying Galindo as she was 're-channeling all visual, metaphoric, symbolic and semiotic power onto her body' made me ponder the role of the witness, as much more than observer, but indeed, one who makes the critical space possible by her engaged response to the crisis created by the site of pain (whether in the body of the performance artist or, as Keti and I have engaged in work with marginalized people, in the site of places where people have lost their ability to construct their own identities and their sense of place [Keti's "lost time".])

Over and over again, the sense of being compelled to witness, and to act from within a place of the desert, of parched or undernourished conditions, or of a place of evacuation, recurred. Like Hala's stories of the complexities of dealing with censorship, gender codes and closed access in Cairo's film scene, Desiderio's complex discussion of a decade of tactical moves around the ideological fortress of Cuban institutional-revolutionary bureaucracy reminded me of K, in Kafka's Castle, who uncannily persists in sorting through the absurd nightmare of impossible contradictory demands from on high, accidentally finding breath, the prelude to voice, in the impersonal passionate arms of a barmaid, absurdly- in the midst of his struggles to make sense of the maddening bureaucracy of the Castle.. Hala's and Desiderio's method is Socratic, simply asking basic questions, over and over, and this becomes an absurdist act of resistance, which entails a life in refusal of the 'subject' definition or identity that the bureaucracy requires; like K each has no 'place' in the Schloss; yet he and she are the ones who breathe, who speak.

Bojana spoke of how she and her friends figured out how to perform theory in places where theory was not desired or expected. Discursive sites, in which performing was a masking within known narrative technique. She emphasized a self organizing topology within a 'luxury of the margin', where theatre might become a concrete space that is an enabling tool, not based on ideological constraints but rather on a generative, open source collective action. Literally as physical mobile architecture, as a performative theatre (maybe as in the tradition of Augusto Boal?)

-empyre- wants to generate a 'third space' always destabilizing a dialectical or binary debate or opposition. In the 'soft-skinned space' of -empyre- and in my visual and multimedia practice there's always the structuring of actions into a zone of what Bojana spoke of as 'affirming positive practices' and 'enabling a heterogenesis'. As I wrote today on post.thing.net, [http:// post.thing.net/node/1112](http://post.thing.net/node/1112),

"All I meant to suggest is that as a working model I don't assume a priori superior status/ priority/ privileging of my observations and actions in a site specific practice, over against the place itself and the people who live there. I just have an instinct that if I can submerge my 'self' deeply into the environmental conditions of the site, the work that I perform subsequently, whether it's drawing, photomontage, video installation, will unfold a layered open work, or critical space, that moves beyond the dialectic of the participant-observer vs the site. Certainly I would assume that the presence of work as a consequence of this encounter with third space has power for other people. In that it's open to them to interpret and then construct new thought and content. Thus the site study (or non site ! study) may become a critical space for generative knowledge, a heuristic, even."

In other words, a transpersonal and transmedia condition.

Keti made an intriguing coda by noting that her poetics of encounter at the edges of bare life, like the skin head kids, was a practice of 'a kind of contemporary Stoicism'.

Intrigued, I looked around the net and found this:

The Stoics developed a sophisticated psychological theory to explain how the advent of reason fundamentally transforms the world view of human beings as they mature. This is the theory of appropriation, or oikeiasis, a technical term which scholars have also translated variously as "orientation," familiarization, affinity, or affiliation. The word means the recognition of something as one's own, as belonging to oneself. The opposite of oikeiasis is allotriasis, which neatly translates as alienation. Our human reason gives us an affinity with the cosmic reason, Nature, that guides the universe. The fully matured adult thus comes to identify his real self, his true good, with his completely developed, perfected rational soul is exactly what virtue is.

<http://www.iep.utm.edu/s/StoicEth.htm> <http://www.iep.utm.edu/s/StoicEth.htm> In this Stoic sense, Carmen's mission to teach or structure a space of teaching within documenta 12 implies performing this ethos of affinity or appropriation, oikeiasis, – performance of boundaries, multiple linked knowledge exchange, 'critical friendship' and the soft logic of analogy and empirical observation. The 'mediation' is itself the generative chaos of critical voices that make a heterogenesis! possible across many barriers.

-Christina

From: Iliyana Nedkova <iliyana@arcprojects.org> Date: Thu, 11 Jan 2007 11:22:32 +0200

Greetings from Sofia,

Echoing Chris Molinski's view that art education is not an alternative,

I would like to suggest that education is primarily a curatorial issue and thus part of every curatorial practice. Indeed, issues of contemporary art education have recently gained in urgency and relevance in the UK, at least. Alongside the curator, the art educator has emerged from obscurity and assumed a stellar position in institutions up and down the country. What is being done? From governmentally funded education initiatives to corporate community projects, a range of activities at galleries, even artworks disguised as guided tours around biennales.

A more pertinent question would be – what is to be done to avoid considering art [education] as Roger M. Buergel puts it "a repair business for removing misery and injustice from the world." (See Gregory Williams, Heir Unapparent: Gregory Williams on Roger M. Buergel, In ArtForum, February 2004). I would raise another concern – what is to be done to avoid misusing art [education] for generating funds for

funds' sake? What follows is an overview of a few projects as an invitation to critically evaluate what is being done; to assess their significance for both artists and audiences involved. Art education has long ceased to be confined to the publicly funded sector in the UK. Since 2003 London's Frieze Art Fair – probably the most successful of the new breed of contemporary art fairs – has been running Frieze Education. In 2006 this programme of artist-led, practical sessions for families and young people was expanded thanks to Deutsche Bank's community investment programme run by its Corporate Social Responsibility UK unit in conjunction with Camden Arts Centre which describes itself as London's only international art and education space. With four artists employed to work on site at the fair, these free sessions were spectacularly popular and fully booked in 2006. The sessions were carefully planned with the artist team to capture an insightful experience of the fair and encourage creativity and critical thinking. It would be interesting to be able to investigate whether those young people participating have improved their understanding of the business world; whether they raised their aspirations and skills as to aim higher in school and in life as prescribed in Deutsche Bank's statement. Another point for reflection would be the overwhelming demand for such activities in the context of the art market place while similar initiatives at the white cube still remain underattended.

If Frieze Education is once a year, Spin is an all year round opportunity or an exclusive members' club set up to help its members = 'get to the heart of contemporary art'. Spin was also launched in = 2003, by the National Galleries of Scotland and its dedicated Education Department, funded directly by the devolved government of Scotland. Spin is run in conjunction with Glasgow City Council and Contemporary Art Society – the UK charity that promotes the collection of contemporary art by both museums and individuals. Spin's yearly membership fee, its monthly guided tours (often by the exhibiting artists or curators) at contemporary art exhibitions in Edinburgh and Glasgow, plus occasional Spin-offs at international art fairs and biennales has proven to be a very successful commercial model adapted by public bodies. One of the forthcoming Spin-offs is the members' visit to the Threshold Artspace in Perth – the home of Scotland's only collection of digital (public) art always on view through a daily programme of specially commissioned 22-channel video installations, interactive soundscapes, live Internet transmissions, single-channel video art and art games projections. Spin members will be treated to a guest curator's walking tour of the artspace and a private view of NY Fresh – a programme featuring works by emerging New York artists – all new additions to the Artspace collection guest-curated by Anne Barlow, Artistic Director of New York's Art in General. This tour is only an extension of the fortnightly curator's tours specially tailored for non-visual arts specialists, primarily classical music lovers following their attendance of a lunchtime concert. The Threshold Artspace itself is located at the threshold of the new Perth Concert Hall with all the multiple screens, projections, speakers, sensors and cameras embedded in the fabric of the building. This symbiosis between music and visual arts under one roof makes these educational tours highly appropriate and very popular. While Spin pampers its members in specially orchestrated private views, the curators tours of the Threshold artspace convert a concert-going audience into visual arts aficionados. In other contexts, artists are hijacking the formats of education and outreach programmes for their own artistic means. Bulgarian artist Luchezar Boyadjev 'specialises' in offering guided tours to audiences at various international art exhibitions, connecting artworks from different shows through his often-humorous analyses. Typically, Boyadjev's 'artwork' for Singapore Biennale 2006 was an unusual service: a series of live performances or guided tours about other artworks at the biennale. The tours were conducted by the artist himself and a 'franchise' of recruited volunteers (aka 'Guiding Agents of Belief'), trained to guide in Boyadjev-style through the biennale.

These artist's guided tours are relational artworks which could be judged on the basis of the 'inter-human relations which they represent, produce or prompt' (from Nicholas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*, France, les presse du reel, 1998). Boyadjev's tours are also a prime example of how to tackle 'the global complex of cultural translation that seems to be somehow embedded in art and its mediation' (Roger M. Buergel, *Three Leitmotifs of documenta 12*). Often the artist would re-organize the exhibitions' interconnections, invent interpretations, joke around and comment as he wishes. As this happens mostly after the opening, his fellow artists are unable to answer back.

We can only speculate that if conducted within the context of a major exhibition or a biennale in Scotland, Boyadjev's artwork would have received one of the Scottish Art Education Awards. This initiative is one of several organised by the Visual Arts Department of the Scottish Arts Council to recognise and encourage the importance of visual arts education. The Council embodies the principle of arms-length public

funding which is soon to be replaced in favour of direct government support through the Minister of Sports and Culture. While in transition, the Council has funded several new education posts in visual arts organisations. Only a few years ago two Scottish galleries had dedicated posts for art educators, but now this number has grown fivefold, including galleries in Skye, the Western Isles, Stirling and Glasgow.

The Council has also supported the recent appointment of an 'uber-arts educator' – a co-ordinator for the Scottish branch of engage – the UK association for gallery education (also with an international membership) promoting good practice in making visual arts accessible and enjoyable to a wide audience. The fact that such an international members' association has been established is indicative of the significance of art education in the publicly funded art establishment. The need for engage services by the growing membership base seems to be on the rise. These include an educator locator; engagements news bulletin; the forum around issues of gallery education, and the rigorously compiled case studies under the rubric 'what works'. 'Collect & Share' is more than another engage service. It is an Europe-wide lifelong learning programme in which engage is collaborating with leading museums and galleries.

Finally, it is my belief that it is the responsibility of the curator (who often doubles as the art educator) to be crucially aware of what is being done in contemporary art education; to adhere to the best practice and to constantly question the need and means of spreading the artists' message around.

Links: [www.friezeartfair.com](http://www.friezeartfair.com) [www.spinScotland.co.uk](http://www.spinScotland.co.uk) [www.singaporebiennale.org](http://www.singaporebiennale.org) [www.scottisharts.co.uk](http://www.scottisharts.co.uk) [www.engage.org](http://www.engage.org)  
[www.collectandshare.eu.com](http://www.collectandshare.eu.com)

-illie

From christina112@earthlink.net Fri Jan 12 13:51:09 2007

dear -emptyreans- , please welcome Claudia Reiche (DE).

Claudia is a media theorist, artist, and curator. Her work focuses on (cyber)feminist approaches to questions of how man/machine relations are designed with words and images. Claudia Reiche has been teaching at the Universities/Art Academies of Hamburg, Braunschweig, Paderborn and worked as a Counselor for the Department of Women's Culture of the City of Hamburg. Member of the thealit Frauen.Kultur.Labor, Bremen <http://www.thealit.de> and of the first international cyberfeminist alliance 'old boys network' <http://www.obn.org>. She has been director of the European project 'Cyberfeminism.Lab' (Culture 2000 programme of the European Union). Currently she is curating with Helene von Oldenburg The Mars Patent, the first exhibition site on Mars <http://mars-patent.org> and with Andrea Sick do not exist, europe, women, digital medium, a transnational European conference and exhibition lab , <http://thealit.de/lab/donotexist/program.htm>. Her current research focuses on Feminism, Psychoanalysis and medical Visualization. Some of her publications: with Andrea Sick [Ed.]: *technics of cyber<feminism <mode=message>* (2002); with Andrea Sick, Ulrike Bergermann et al. [Ed.]: *Eingreifen.Viren, Modelle, Tricks* (2003); with Verena Kuni [Hg.]: *Cyberfeminism. Next Protocols* (2004); *Digitaler Feminismus* (2006).

<http://www.claudia-reiche.net>

From christina112@earthlink.net Fri Jan 12 14:49:21 2007

this is a forward from Claudia-

The third leitmotif for documenta 12 by its artistic director Roger M. Buergel is posited in the form of a question. („ After all, we create an exhibition in order to find something out. “ Buergel in his artistic statement).

He will not by chance have chosen „What is to be done? “ as a quotation of V. I. Lenin’s famous book from 1902 with the subtitle „Burning questions to our movement. “ Let’s read Buergel’s statement as a comment on Lenin’s text, if not a formula of how to trump Lenin’s theoretical and practical notion of a proletarian revolution, as today’s world order seems to have proven Lenin wrong.

When Buergel writes: “ Artists educate themselves by working through form and subject matter; audiences educate themselves by experiencing things aesthetically, “ doesn’t this optimism regarding the abilities of artistic and aesthetic approaches to ‘things’, forms and subject matters’ echo Lenin’s way of freeing the approach to ‘things as forms and subject matters’ in philosophical scientific, and political ways by generalized application of the self education of the working class? When Buergel concludes, (already having found the answer to his third question): “Today, education seems to offer one viable alternative to the devil (didacticism, academia) and the deep blue sea (commodity fetishism),” one can’t withhold the suspicion any longer that maybe Lenin’s project is meant to be finally fulfilled, with a simple switch from revolution to education.

When Lenin promised the awakening of the worker’s class, he already relied on self training, on education by the things themselves: “Or do you think that our movement cannot produce leaders like those of the seventies? If so, why do you think so? Because we lack training? But we are training ourselves, we will go on training ourselves, and we will be trained! The time has come when Russian revolutionaries, guided by a genuinely revolutionary theory, relying upon the genuinely revolutionary and spontaneously awakening class, can at last – at long last! – rise to full stature in all their giant strength. And we will achieve that, rest assured, gentlemen!” (What is to be done?, Chapter iv, The Primitiveness of the Economists and the Organization of the Revolutionaries)

Only that Buergel’s contribution on a new and viable historical and dialectical materialism does not credit didacticism (the devil) and commodity fetishism (the deep blue sea) as true constituents (*Bildner*) for his own articulation of education as such, (dialectically speaking and more). The commodity fetishism then returns as personal trade mark as the ‘great educator’, which is revealed by a phrase that has been partly omitted in the English translation of the third leitmotif for the documenta: “To educate/constitute an audience does [...] mean indeed to provide for a public sphere.” Didacticism in the sense of mass media’s compatible style perfectly allows an understanding of education as conservation of values or if preferred as justice finally done to the particularity of ‘things’ .

Why not posit: “Education is empty like a mathematical set” can be as an alternative to the third documenta leitmotif, freeing it from the empty promise of a possible general knowledge, accessible at least to the artistic director and author? What is to be done...

-Claudia Reiche

From art.gallery.knoxville@gmail.com Sat Jan 13 02:17:35 2007

On 1/11/07, Iliyana Nedkova <iliyana@arcprojects.org> wrote: I would raise another concern – what is to be done to avoid misusing art (education) for generating funds for funds' sake?

I agree this is a concern - but it implies more, and deserves some discussion:

Within an economy of cultural exchange, exhibition structures (like documenta) are often self-sustainable economic enterprises that effect national / international capital without regard for the rights of Art. For this reason the arena of an exhibition like Documenta is directly a realm of conflict for many people.

What happens when artwork that acts very intentionally in reaction to particular social conditions is appropriated through exhibition space? Rather – each exhibition space is a social venue that has particular social / business / cultural relationships and must also have a particular political agenda. How are artists able to understand the full context of an exhibition space and the effect it has on meaning? The agenda of Deutsche Bank, Frieze, or any City Council is imposed on the spaces they sponsor.

It is disappointing that the educational contexts you mention seem to create a very specific audience.

Iliyana wrote: "In other contexts, artists are hijacking the formats of education and outreach programmes for their own artistic means. Bulgarian artist Luchezar Boyadjev 'specialises' in offering guided tours to audiences at various international art exhibitions, connecting artworks from different shows through his often-humorous analyses."

The Center for Land Use Interpretation ([www.clui.org](http://www.clui.org)) does exactly this type of work. They coordinate tours of various sites in and around Los Angeles - creating (sometimes false) histories around real or imagined sites - as well as "Extrapolative Projects in the field."

"Finally, it is my belief that it is the responsibility of the curator (who often doubles as the art educator) to be crucially aware of what is being done in contemporary art education; to adhere to the best practice and to constantly question the need and means of spreading the artists' message around."

I completely agree. Curators are responsible for the type of social space that is created - and for enabling accessible public discourse. To do this responsibly we must be aware of the different social contexts surrounding the artwork and be champions for the needs of our art and artists ... (even if it means eliminating funds for art's sake).

-Chris

From [dv@vilt.net](mailto:dv@vilt.net) Sat Jan 13 03:05:07 2007

Chris wrote:

Dirk: Could you describe this idea a bit more?

*From: Dirk Vekemans <[dv@vilt.net](mailto:dv@vilt.net)> We should enable the masses to talk about such activities by promoting a name-giving process that auto-poetically results in a meaning-generation process. How do we create a "name-giving process"?*

What are some different situations that auto-poetically result in meaning-generation? Which of these situations are you interested in promoting?

Roughly, it's the Cathedral idea that resembles Badiou's loyalty to the event, but Badiou reifies his 'events' too much to my taste, reintroducing an eschatologic, 'politicizing' reflex on a smaller scale. You don't need art at all, art is killing art by wanting to be art.

It's the old Beuys thing too. The problem with not having 'art' around to fall back on, to revert to is an indication to me that we really should banish the idea for the time being at least. Just a moment ago Annie Abrahams pointed out in a post to the Rhizome list that creativity in and of an active process does not need to be widely known, or mediated like 'art' is. You have lots and lots of people going about doing extremely creative things on all different sorts of skill-levels, like all those youngsters hacking away at new media stuff, sure most of them will drop out off their 'cool' hobbies but still.. There's this overwhelming feeling that everything exposing itself as art is ruined from the instant it does that. And yet people within the art-communities keep insisting on 'being art'. What is the 'strange attractor' here but money power and social esteem?

On the other hand the industry, the machinery of capitalism is doing its best to harness all these kinds of creativity running wild. Blogs and stuff like Second Life are essentially monitoring what is going on, channeling the energies in controllable objects like 'posts' (where too?) 'archives' and 'avatars'. And even there we want to overcode what is going on into artistic dictates, we want to have machine art, we need blog-art, yet these obnoxious and shitty web-applications will only satisfy the needs of the advertisers. Why is the blog as we know it now so ubiquitous? Because it is that well made an app? Surely it is only this format that allows large streams of personal data to flow in without disrupting the network. Can it be done otherwise? Of course. Will that ever happen? Probably not.

Gregory Bateson use to stress that education is essentially a two-way process. You need to be wanting to learn something if you want to educate. If you don't want to learn anymore from your students, you're not educating anymore. That's an extremely simple and wildly deep definition of didacticism. You don't really believe that you will \_ know\_ anything more when you die then what you did when you were little do you? Perhaps time is just an illusion, here, a mask for the continuum. So unless you want to do yourself injustice, we will need to be(have) extremely modest in our assumptions.

& here's the Badiou related part. Someone ought to give this brilliant French guy a good spanking. There's something dreadfully wrong with what he's doing, but of course he's also awesomely right about lots of things. For comparison: if i get very lucky i might be vaguely right about a line of poetry or two. But then I am the unchallenged King of KesseHo. Luckily, i don't have the time to elaborate on this, i haven't read sufficiently yet, but I think he's making some sins regarding some of Bateson's rules. Anyway, later perhaps.

Difference > absence> difference. Ok suppose we have a zero. Complete Coca Cola World Domination. Or Pepsi, any black thing will do.

1. How do you create a name-giving process? By giving a name. Recursively enacting code. The code means what it does. A Cathedral is a cathedral. What does it do? It er, cathedrals. Name your cathedral as you see fit

2. Add cathedralic stuff to your Cathedral. If it's called Neue Kathedrale des erotische Ellends you might want to add erotic stuff. Or some miserable drawings.

3. Go about your life the usual way. You now are a guy/girl running a Cathedral. Wow, enjoy that. There's a difference in your life, but you can't quite grasp it. You seem to go about things as if you're inside a Kelloggs' ad. You want to look deeper into this. This is the auto-poetic part. If a song begins you get enchantment. It's also a bit sad because a cathedral can only be a cathedral, nothing more, or it wouldn't be a cathedral.

4. Investigate what makes your Cathedral cathedralic. What is feeding on what? Try and widen some joints, fool around with the relations, like your hand is consisting of four relations between fingers instead of the dead meat you're counting.

5. Build a Cathedralic language, establish a protocol and try to communicate with other Cathedrals. Beware, they might be named "Fey" or some other weird name. *Untsoweiter.*

So the situations I would be interested in promoting is where people are forced to name things where there are none. Places where we can be brought to feel the presence of the non-human. Monstrosities that might frighten or fascinate. Exposing these things as art denies them the force they represent, (but there is no representation) a force that is of such nature that it will resist any harnessing anyway.

But there are some caveats. As Deleuze has pointed out, there's a very destructive side to dancing along the progressing crack of the Real.

-Dirk

From sostrow@gate.cia.edu Sat Jan 13 03:26:03 2007

Seemingly the problem (and this holds true for Lenin) is that when we are critical of others we tend not to judge ourselves or our solutions by the same terms – the failure to be self reflexive leaves us running in place.

-Saul

From dv@vilt.net Sat Jan 13 07:03:33 2007

Claudia wrote,

"...seemingly the problem (and this holds true for Lenin) is that when we are critical of others we tend not to judge ourselves or our solutions by the same terms – the failure to be self reflexive leaves us running in place."

Excuse me getting wordy here but you seem to presuppose levels where there are none, I think, and then proceed to a negative conclusion where perhaps an affirmative incitement would be better.

A failure to be self-reflexive would imply a possible extraction or at least abstraction of a judicial instance (your 'same terms': let's suppose that would be a kind of measuring standard or device) that could be ported from one instance of the judging machine (e.g. us judging Lenin) to another (in that case: us judging us). In my view any judging taking place is always a process that cannot that easily be anatomized into conceptually distinct levels. Judging is always local, aggressive, destructive etc out of necessity because at some point in the judging process the implied scales of judging criteria lose their differentiating power, the event of a choice takes place, an event that has largely been steered by those judging criteria and their circumscription, their auto-describing area of validness. You follow the code because the code is all you have to base your judgment on, but then the code gets running and you need to follow the code again, but you will have become the code.

The failure to be self-reflexive shouldn't be conceived as a failure, it is a prohibition from the given set of rules, requiring an absence (The Thing to be Done), an area or undefined multiplicity that does the searching/judging and a distinct area/undefined multiplicity that creates the field of possible actions. Our problem thus is the human condition of these things taking time, and changing essentially while doing so. Once the Lenin statue is down the robes needed to bring him down have turned into an elaborate cobweb of threaded instances of misplaced concreteness.



If you can't judge a book by its cover (we all need to, for lack of time) you most certainly can't tear off the cover of one to smack the other in the face with.

This doesn't mean we are left running in place. The running in place feeling is a gentle but not altogether harmless nostalgia of the Romantic DeathWish called Progress. The Charles Bronson Grin of Frustration in the Face of the Bad and equally Ugly. What we do acquire is what is required by the changing condition. We acquire the knowledge of a phase-shifting *ritournelle* of judging habits and aptitudes. We acquire the means to communicate rhythms to recognize and memorize the rhythms of ourselves the educators in our education-candidates performing our tricks. We can make audible what we bring about in others, what is left there- vestiges -tracings of our own efforts. But, should you be inclined to pursue the programming paradigm further here, attempt to encapsulate the sought-after human quality of educational process, you will only cut a portion off it dry from its one and only source and unity. That's a wisdom already acquired by Giordano Bruno before he got burned in Rome.

The evolutionary shift some folks want to read into exponential growth of data-processing that are equaled only by an exponential deterioration of our global resources seems to be a bit longer in the making for me. I do believe we are in a genuine crisis but such speculations are, I presume, not allowed in this time of immediate urgency. They make me want to get ugly, very impolite so I get sarcastic instead. Like we are experiencing a slight crashing incident, the crew is supposed to stick to getting the plane horizontal again. I'll join everyone gladly in talking shop on Singularities and other Divinities ex-machina when some of these approaching things no longer scare the living daylight out of me. Deviate, then divinate.

Perhaps, getting back to education, that was the something our esteemed director Buerger was looking for: a making together (confession) of the rhythms detected in his own longings, just like we all are looking to shake hands together, praise to be praised, raise to be part of the elevated. Shake rattle and roll, by all means do let us act as if we're under current, electrified bodies strung together in a weird and seemingly pointless dance. But collaboration is never a collaboration in the sense of one knowledge plus another one will make us two knowledges being less stupid than one. We need to acknowledge that a human doing intricate things is a monadic machine bent on survival and procreation. Basically it hates your guts. We are all pretentious bitches and dickheads wanting to be winners *sub specie aeternitatis*. So?

We dance and pass on the dance we dance too. This is what we do, while living, as running code. We can only escape the infamous double bind of capitalism bent on self-destruction if we positively embrace our human need to be human and allow the non-human to check us where needed. The escape-hatch logic of reward on the next-level is really quite illegal in any system wanting to survive public scrutiny. You can fool a lot of people sometimes but you can't...

Sure nothing will come of it, except, in the distance perhaps, the sound of one hand, clapping, performing a whole new roaratorio of its own.

-Dirk

From christina112@earthlink.net Sat Jan 13 07:21:46 2007

Dirk, thank you for those profound (if witty and sarcastic) notes you just sent. I struggle every day with these themes. Everything seems so futile, the dance just goes on and on, I am uncertain what to do next, and yet, yet, the beauty keeps blasting out even in the middle of frustration and isolation. Your comments make me want to just wildly get back to merz city. :) I just shot at the in-construction federal building in San Francisco by Morphosis, it's a scary gorgeous thing/ then nearly got shot at when rounding the corner on Market Street as two cops fully loaded chased down and pinned a couple of thugs. Is this 'educational' / I guess, for street smarts? maybe there is another piece in this.

-Christina

From office@claudia-reiche.net Sat Jan 13 13:52:20 2007

"seemingly the problem is that when we are critical of others we tend not to judge ourselves or our solutions by the same terms – the failure to be self reflexive leaves us running in place." One can judge, that's for sure, if the same terms (words) are used .... hmm, I do not know how to judge myself for instance by the same terms like Lenin or Buergerl? Could you? The only sure way of not running in place I've heard of is to judge the difference that lies between the repetition of words, events, images etc. and their former appearance, or even to notice that there will have been a repetition. One could even call this the core of education, as potentially freeing history from running in place.

"The true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again. 'The truth will not run away from us' : in the historical outlook of historicism these words of Gottfried Keller mark the exact point where historical materialism cuts through historicism. For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably [ ] To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the = way it really was' (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. ] The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it.." Walter Benjamin, On the concept of history

-Claudia

From art.gallery.knoxville@gmail.com Mon Jan 15 05:54:40 2007

I would like to present three groups that The Art Gallery of Knoxville has been privileged to work with, and which represent the different strategies we believe in - types of (as Brett Stalbaum <stalbaum@ucsd.edu> indicated) experimental research or "practical exploration" - or direct examples of "what is to be done" with regard to Art and Education. Each of these groups create a type of 'system' or 'platform' that enables personal understanding through production, ownership and use.

[1] criticalartware

[2] Superflex

[3] The Center for Urban Pedagogy

[1] criticalartware <http://criticalartware.net/>

criticalartware (who many of you know as guests on -empyre- in May of 2004) is a Chicago based platform constructed to "examine the pre-internet era of early phase "Video Art" and the growth of software art in the channels of contemporary "New Media" theory practices." They use an online application / platform to enable an open, distributed practice that remains specific to the needs of their discussion. This particular aspect of their work is an interesting example for the development of future space. I've often seen an impulse online to encourage entirely open, unregulated space - but I think it is very helpful to form particular, mediated spaces that remain consciously open to any type of comment or contribution. Exhibition space can be an arena for meeting and discussion around particular cultural ideas - an opportunity to

combine different views, material and publics within a particular (inherently educational) experience. I believe that criticalartware facilitates this.

"Through the development of criticalartware as an online application and platform, we will map the curve of arcs, the development of themes and the formulation of topics. Within criticalartware, we are building an application to map the intersections, ruptures, influences, leaks, reinforcements and slippages between subjective histories and social moments. We intend for our activities to facilitate further discussions and developments of criticalartware producing a feedback loop or multiple recursive code structures. As an application, criticalartware will carry out your instructions, becoming personalized to your requests, site structures modifying based on your queries and activity. In this manner, criticalartware will become a shared and open system of community resources. We will invite artists, developers and cultural agents of the two afore mentioned historical moments to join us, sharing their perspectives and contributing to discussions of the fields they are involved in formulating. Responding to their input, our contributions and your responses, criticalartware will reshape and map those outcomes, providing a resource for dynamically determining contemporary histories." - criticalartware

Likn (previously known as liken) was developed by criticalartware member ben syerson. Likn functions as the primary platform for criticalartware activity.

"Liken is a path-based method of organizing, discussing and navigating bodies of information organically." "likn departs from a hierarchical site structure which over-categorizes information, relinquishing some of the supremacy of "hard-coding" links between documents. part discussion platform, part [plastic/collaborative] site structure, + part [iterative/genetic] search engine, liken [encourages/ necessitates] a more [subjective/personalized] form of navigation. unlike anonymous "browsing," the paths that liken users follow can be [stored/reviewed/discussed], + affect the structure of the [application/platform] itself, creating a [literal/cybernetic] feedback loop in which less-used paths wither away, well-used paths are strengthened, + entirely new paths grow + crisscross recursively in response to discussion + new resources. Like lichen, itself a composite meta-organism resulting from the symbiotic growth of algae + fungus, liken's [form/structure/body] is [a/an] [product/agent] of criticalartware's resources that grows symbiotically with related discourses."

Likn + criticalartware present a direct example of what can be done in relation to Art and Education. criticalartware enables a distributed system (which is shared, open, productive, and inherently educational) for the early video and code-based movements. It is an appropriate form of organization for the data they address - but it also functions as an example for future exhibition. They utilize an ability to create open associations, forming an opportunity for feedback and growth, while still encouraging a platform for particular ideas.

[2] Superflex

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<http://www.superflex.net>

Superflex is a Copenhagen based group that enables new systems for Art. They create and distribute social tools for the work of understanding and community.

"... they devise 'tools' that create new types of encounters between people and spark alternative projects. ... Superflex create works, or tools, that contribute either to solving a concrete problem for a community or increasing the communication and cooperation. Superflex seek close collaborations with their users and each work functions as a physical and social framework and starting point for concrete use."

- ARKEN Museum of Modern Art

The Superflex strategy (among many things) involves artworks that function through different types of business-like models - as a result, the projects have a viral or distributed component that is able to become part of community, business, exhibition or 'art fair' structures without concern. Often this is because the projects carry an embedded ideology that is able to self-sustain. With this structure they are able to encourage various types of promotion / distribution (take advantage of cultural capitalism) because the artwork invades the context where it is presented.

Of course this type of work is a well-established tradition - a Buren painting invades social space with embedded meaning, consciously able to adjust to many situations since it understands itself through a set of relationships. ... The power of 'Relational Art' is not that it takes a stance as being "interactive" (all Art is already interactive) but that it is highly conscious of its future exchange / interchange in social space. Good 'Relational Art' holds a solidarity of meaning where it creates an ideological space within itself.

As types of "productive-theory" or "local theory" (mentioned by Brett Stalbaum <stalbaum@ucsd.edu>) this approach can be of great advantage in building new forms of Art and creating new types of educational relationships through exhibition space.

"MAKE SURE THAT YOU ARE SEEN (SUPERCRIQUE)" by Nicolas Bourriaud has some excellent comments on the Superflex relationship to social practice and (re)mediated content:

<http://www.superflex.net/text/articles/supercritique.shtml>

"The consumer society, and the type of stories that the capitalist economy suggests, do not adapt well to the linear form of narration: consumer products require a cyclical sequence, with a hint of liturgy. The market wants Christmas Day on 25th December every year, and Halloween, Mother's Day and Thanksgiving on the same days too. It doesn't want changeable stories that are inevitably full of unexpected incidents. Art desires the opposite. ... The social scenario is dominated by the law of profit. Why invent others, we are asked, when a revolution would be impossible and when the free market economy is self-regulating anyway? Everyone is free to produce their own film using a camcorder and to show it in their home cinemas. All public showings must be discouraged."

The work of Superflex could moreover be defined as the production of tools. Its formal strategy is to provide (initially) these tools within the context of the art world. The editing suite must be shared by the greatest number of people in order to prove its necessity and its definite effectiveness. All the important works of the 20th Century can also function as tools, to different degrees of operational urgency. ... Reality, wrote Karl Marx, is merely the transitory result of what we do together. The 90s saw the emergence of collective intelligence and the 'network' trend in the art world. The artists are searching for representatives: since the public remains an unreal entity, they are obliged to include this symbolic representative in the production process itself. The meaning of a work of art is thus going to be born out of a movement which links the signs expressed by the artist, but also out of the collaboration of individuals in the exhibition area. This is what I have called relational aesthetics. The Superflex group, evidently, perceives the interhuman sphere as the production area and the area where its activities appear. ... Superflex ask the question of the Internet in terms of democracy, but in the context of an extremely important problem - distribution. Thus Superchannel presents itself as a democratic tool, because it distributes words and the format in which to broadcast them at the same time. From installing telephones, through to distributing power, and on to providing the artwork for a local authority, Superflex work in terms of distribution and equipment. Superflex recognised that distribution represented the dominant plastic form of commercial companies."

- "MAKE SURE THAT YOU ARE SEEN (SUPERCRIQUE)" Superchannel By Nicolas Bourriaud, 2002 /

[3] The Center for Urban Pedagogy

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<http://www.anothercupdevelopment.org>

The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) is a Brooklyn, NY based group that "makes educational projects about places and how they change." CUP is interested in enacting a civics education that associates our spaces with our ideas. The audience they address is the local community - the exhibits (which are educational programs, media projects, and community partnerships) examine the built environment and public decision-making. This is both an Art practice directly - and a practice that cannot be separated from other Art concerns.

CUP: "Our projects bring together art and design professionals - artists, graphic designers, architects, urban planners - with community-based advocates and researchers - organizers, government officials, academics, service-providers and policymakers. These partners work with CUP staff to create projects ranging from high school curricula to educational exhibitions."

We asked CUP to collaborate on our November 2006 exhibition to help examine development and change in Knoxville. The exhibition enabled us to better understand our surroundings - and become directly involved with the role of history and change in Knoxville.

The structure of a CUP project involves many people working on a community level. Although the resulting project creates a broad educational exhibition, CUP enables a micro-education through the direct involvement of the researchers and community participants. (Our Gallery participants were able to create new associations with our community, the development of that community and our relationship as a community space by developing this exhibition.) The information researched is culled down and used to create graphic material for display. The project result - most often an exhibition of images, text, and dimensional models - uses the tactics of presentation found in educational contexts like Science or Children's Museums (simple, personal, interactive relationships to complex ideas).

It was remarkable to see how interested (and excited) people were to learn about the history of their community. The use of humor and concise visual relationships made the information easy to navigate. Our exhibition immediately allowed people to become involved with the ideas that made their surroundings and understand the city in a different way. It was clear through the exhibition experience that people were excited and willing to discuss a civics education through an Art context - it is very easy for our cultural surroundings to relate through the open action of a cultural space.

CUP: "Our work grows from a belief that the power of imagination is central to the practice of democracy, and that the work of governing must engage the dreams and visions of citizens. CUP believes in the legibility of the world around us. What can we learn by investigation? By learning how to investigate, we train ourselves to change what we see."

#### Educational Services

"CUP works with youth to create collaborative projects that explore the urban environment. Our educational projects build on the everyday experiences of young people to ask questions about democracy, civic participation and social justice. We believe that civic engagement requires a new kind of civic education, one that explains how important decisions actually get made, what is at stake, and how residents can be involved. Our projects use art, design, and technology to draw the connections between everyday life and the decisions that give it form."

"CUP creates project-based learning experiences that bring youth face-to-face with the people who make decisions that affect their lives: community advocates, government officials, and businesspeople. Students then work with CUP staff to create educational projects to solidify and spread their knowledge and understanding to the general public."

"At City-as-School High School, an alternative public school in lower Manhattan, CUP organized a semester-long investigation into how New York City deals with its garbage. Students visited significant garbage sites and conducted interviews with garbage experts, community activists, and government officials. Finally, the class created a 30-minute documentary and a series of educational posters to communicate what they learned to the broader community."

"CUP works in-school, after-school, and outside of school to reach students where they're at. Our programs range from single-session workshops to semester-long projects."

In what other ways can we create a 'system' or 'platform' that enables personal understanding through production, ownership and use? I am interested in replicating the strategies seen in blogs, libraries, warehouses, and soft "common" areas - all these spaces imply types of open relationships, which are inherently social, and still can remain specific to a particular subject. Exhibition should involve a self-aware combination of the already well regarded (which is a strategy for the distribution of ideas), new experiments (not local) and regional work. It is better if we disregard the idea of exhibition as 'History' and instead use the exhibition form as a variable venue for public gathering where new associations can be formed.

The feed from digital media (as a physical experience, because we are always experiencing the information in some form of social space ... the Internet is an excellent enabler for Art because it inherently creates the private space necessary for personal ownership over ideas) can be an important tool for exhibition. I think of exhibition structure in terms of acoustic space - how multiple objects create a separate (third) resonant space (this could be called the 'conclusion' or the 'question') that exists only through their relationship. We can enable the changes we need through the creation of personal space dedicated to the independent exchange, understanding, and production of culture.

- Chris

From office@claudia-reiche.net Tue Jan 16 05:16:34 2007

"The difference does not lie between the repetition of words etc. and their former appearance" Does it mean, there is no difference or does it mean this difference is irrelevant? If so- probably - , in what respect irrelevant? If interested in effects? "...but in the effect that these have on the context" So: as "effect" seems to be used in this quotation contrary to "difference" what is so interesting about 'effect', if it has no noticeable influence, one would necessarily have to describe as "difference" in the context?

Maybe the Freudian Insight from on the 'compulsion to repeat' from "Remembering, Repeating and Working through" and "Beyond the pleasure principle" is forgotten (instead being acted out)? If according to Freud's examples repeating were not imitating, but replacing (in order not to remember)... This I think was my point in noticing that Buergel uses Lenin's famous title for the third leitmotif. Repeating it in a sort of 'radical chic' for philosophers, but paying the price of not working through. At least in this conceptual text we are invited to talk about here.

-Claudia

From Christiane Robbins cpr@mindspring.com Wed Jan 17 05:39:49 2007

It could be suggested that Roger Buergel's laudable utterance of "what is to be done?" is being imagined within a seeming consensual utopian dream for global salvation through the exhibition of various cultural practices. My reading of the subtext of his statement is as a collective consciousness or understanding of art practices as inhabiting the realm of an almost secular spiritualism and, as such, a wish for artists to engage in a somewhat evangelical aesthetic response.

The implicit assumption of a narrative trajectory for art practices - for education practices - assumes a collective set of purposes and necessities and, yes, impossibilities. It requires that we think and evaluate education practices and directives through the gelled lens of globalism which offers a branded patina of regionalized specificity and individuated experience. Any understanding of what constitutes education and artistic practices needs to be based upon what it is that artists do, where they do it, how they do it ... and why they do it. As we understand, artists do different things in diverse cultures and are accompanied by a dissimilar range of relational dynamics and understanding. Where they are "educated," how they are "educated" or "trained" and what they ultimately produce speak to the complexities and inherent ambiguities that exist within these varied contextualized and often, institutionalized and commodified platforms. A relevant query here is whether or not the construct of an exhibition such as Documenta is effective in adequately providing a context for various art practices to function as modes of transferable knowledge within the "global complex of cultural translation?"

-Christiane

From art.gallery.knoxville@gmail.com Wed Jan 17 08:23:25 2007

Christiane, thank you for the post - I would like to see more conversation about this.

"A relevant query here is whether or not the construct of an exhibition such as Documenta is effective in adequately providing a context for various art practices to function as modes of transferable knowledge within the "global complex of cultural translation?"

I was talking with a friend about this conversation, posed through Documenta, who was immediately concerned: "Why does this have to be done under Documenta? Why can't there be an autonomous outside that is preserved?" This is something to be reminded of.

It is important to consider our own practice in terms of spatialized resistance. We need to maintain independent spaces - in order to create a physical independence - an ability to act / participate on our own terms.

-Chris

From art.gallery.knoxville@gmail.com Wed Jan 17 08:25:36 2007

Trebor Scholz provides some additional perspective / solutions to the question <<http://www.projectnml.org/node/308>> :

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"WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE: This situation calls for multiple levels of intervention:

1. School based – designed to integrated into existing school disciplines

2. after-school programs – designed to expand creative opportunities for kids in a way which also emphasizes the cultural context and ethical consequences of those practices.
3. informal learning – collaboration with creative industries to insure that ideas about media literacy feed back into popular culture.
4. teacher training – designed to provide teachers with models for classroom practices which foster the new media literacies.
5. parents training – designed to give parents the knowledge and skills they need to foster media literacy in preschool children and to support the informal learning of their school aged offspring.

We are proposing an integrated approach which works at four levels:

- Exercises (E1) – designed to refine and rehearse preliminary literacy skills.
- Exemplars (E2)– designed to illustrate creative processes and practices and provide a critical vocabulary for the aesthetic evaluation of media.
- Expressions (E3) – designed to allow kids to put these skills into play through individual and collaborative creative projects.
- Ethics (E4) – designed to encourage reflections on the social contexts in which media is produced and circulated, including a strong focus on the ways individuals relate to larger communities and the ability to make meaningful choices and weigh their consequences.

We can understand this more fully if we look at a specific subject area: digital storytelling. Basic Pedagogical Goals:

- 1. A recognition of the ways stories change as they move across media (multimodal, convergent) and an appreciation of new kinds of storytelling media (mobile, immersive, interactive) which may deal with stories in different ways.
- 2. A recognition of the basic building blocks of canonical stories, including questions of sequencing, exposition, and point of view, as well as an awareness of the ways that these basic principles can be manipulated to create alternative storytelling practices. (transformative)
- 3. An appreciation of the functions stories play within cultures, including the value of stories for entertainment, transmitting traditions, opening up new possibilities and alternative perspectives, etc. (generational)
- 4. An appreciation of cultural differences in the form and content of stories (multicultural, global).5. An awareness of the role which stereotypes and clichés play in the construction of stories as well as the impact that such devices can have on the ways we interact with other people. (negotiation)
- 6. the ability to identify core elements of stories and rework them to communicate alternative perspectives (appropriative).
- 7. a recognition of those factors shaping which stories get told in the media and how those stories get structured.
- 8. an understanding of how story elements can be dispersed across multiple media channels in order to create a range of different experiences. (Convergent) (synthesis)
- 9. practice in translating one's own experiences into stories which can be understood by others both in your own community and beyond.(expression, performance)
- 10. refine technical skills in media production as well as developing criteria for evaluating stories within different media contexts. (Judgment)
- 11. recognize that people in different communities might narrate the same experiences in different terms or might form conflicting interpretations of shared stories (negotiation)
- 12. understand the ways that authors build upon pre-existing stories as well as recognize the current legal conflicts over who should control what use gets made of one's creative work. (sampling)

Our overall approach emphasizes comparison across different media, across different historical periods, across high and popular culture, across mainstream and experimental media, and across different cultural traditions. Any opening session needs to emphasize the diversity of



current storytelling media with an emphasis on both commonalities and differences. At the same time, this approach is designed to bring together literature, art, and social sciences so that people understand what stories are, how to express one's ideas through stories, and how stories operate within cultures" [Trebor Scholz]

-Chris

From aliette@criticalsecret.org Wed Jan 17 07:17:17 2007

Sorry to express myself in FR but whether it could be worst in English.

-Alette

Par infini/ infini, dessous, j'entends le processus de reproduction de l'infiniment petit (microcosme) cadré par le macrocosme et l'infiniment grand (Dieu). Au contraire par fini / infini j'entends l'infini par reproduction de l'identique du fragment limité, en fragments respectivement égaux à lui-même = e (l'image de la production fractale) ; c'est à entendre comme la reproduction = n du fini dans une répétition infinie - et infiniment différente (la pensée, l'homme)...Et dans tout ça d'après Badiou, il y a, non pas seulement les mathèmes comm = e équivalence de symptômes communicables entre thérapeutes, chez Lacan, ou états entre philosophes (qu'on trouve aussi chez Badiou), mais le nombre - producteur de la répétition...La répétition est trois fois l'objet déclaré du marxisme et de la critique de l'économie politique : à propos de l'idéologie et à propos de l'histoire, et enfin corrélativement, à propos de la production industriel = e elle même comme dispositif de reproduction (un miroir infini).

*By infinity/infinity below, I mean the process of reproduction of the infinitely small (microcosm) orders by the macrocosm and the infinitely large (God). In contrast to the finite/infinite dichotomy, I understand the infinite in terms of the reproduction of the identical limit of a fragment, amongst fragments respectively equal to themselves (image produced by fractals); this is understood as the reproduction of a finite condition within an infinite repetition, and infinitely different (thought, humans)... And in all this, according to Badiou, there is not only the matheme as equivalence to communicative symptoms between therapies, as with Lacan, or states between philosophies (as is found also in Badiou), but also number itself, producer of repetition. Furthermore repetition is, three times over, the object declared by Marxism and its critique of political economy: a propos of ideology and history, and finally, as a correlation, with regard to industrial production: production itself is a dispositiv (apparatus) of reproduction (an infinite mirror). [translation: c.mcphee]*

C'est d'ailleurs un contre jeu auquel on peut se livrer. Il y a un ouvrage de Baudrillard "le miroir de la production" consacré à cette question prédictible, (mais de plus étant un thème récurrent ou en filigrane, ou en fragment, dans presque tous ses ouvrages depuis "Les stratégies fatales"), dont le défi est construit à propos de cette qualité de la situation dialectique et para-dialectique chez Marx. Aspect de Baudrillard (traducteur de l'allemand au français des Manuscrits de 44, il ne faut pas l'oublier) qui déclare une dimension Borgesienne de l'utopie chez Marx ; mais comme pensée ironique et même symbolique de la répétition (pas seulement à propos de l'exemple de Napoléon III vu comme une réapparition ironique de Napoléon premier, sous une remarque de Victor Hugo, mais aussi la répétition protocolaire du rituel de la référence), dont s'inspirent aujourd'hui des amis d'une façon tout à fait différente l'un de l'autre, tels McKenzie Wark et Nicolas Ruiz III, pour ne citer que ceux des plus proches.

*Elswhere a counter-game within which one may engage. Baudrillard's "The Mirror of Production" is dedicated to the predicates of this question (but, more surprisingly, is a recurrent theme, or a filigree, or fragment, in almost all of his books since "Fatal Strategies"), wherein the line of discourse is constructed with regard to this quality in the dialectical and para-dialectical situation in Marx. This is an aspect of*

*Baudrillard [translator, from German to French, of the Manuscripts of 44, one mustn't forget—who declares a Borgesian dimension in Marxist utopia; however, as ironic thought and even, symbolic of repetition; not only with regard to the example of Napoléon III, as seen as an ironic reappearance (reapparition) of Napoléon the first, as Victor Hugo had noticed; but also as a protocol of repetition as ritual of reference]. This [Baudrillardian aperçu regarding Borgesian dimension in Marxist utopia] today also inspires affinities in entirely differing ways, one from another, in the writing of McKenzie Wark and Nicholas Ruiz III, to name two with whom I am most familiar.*

Toujours "A hacker manifesto" : on découvre la simulation du tissu fractal de la composition du livre, plus quelques autres paris (du verbe parier) en miroir infini d'un paysage chaque fois différent, par ses arrangements différents du même ; c'est pourquoi je dis que c'est un ouvrage qui voit la réalisation pataphysique du monde comme réalité collective du pouvoir, d'où justement la population ironique peut tirer son épingle du jeu... D'où sans doute le grand intérêt de Baudrillard lui-même pour ce livre iconoclaste - où se joue de plus la part maudite, le don, et le contre-don, toute la philosophie post-moderne, et le miroir critique de La société du spectacle dans la forme même d'un style...

Nicholas Ruiz III : Métaphysique du Marxisme ; on y découvre la critique du modèle anthropologique dans l'usage de la référence génétique, comme limite de la construction de la pensée depuis la reproduction du modèle de reproduction - anthropologique- lui-même,

*Over and over again, in "A Hacker Manifesto", we find the simulation of a fractal tissue within the composition of the book, plus among several other parts (the verb, to parse), in an infinite mirroring of a passage that is, each time encountered, different, in terms of different arrangements of itself: this is why I say that it is a work that actually conceives of a 'pataphysique of the world as a real power of the collective, on which an ironic polity may set out its play (or game). From this no doubt derives Baudrillard's great interest in this iconoclastic book, wherein the author plays devil's advocate against the givens and contradictions of postmodernist philosophy, as well as the critical mirror represented by "The Society of the Spectacle" [Guy Debord], by means of a stylistic form...*

*Nicholas Ruiz II: "Metaphysics of Marxism": here one may discover a critique of the anthropologic model in its usages of genetic references, as a limit to the construction of thought relative to reproduction and models of reproduction – anthropology itself.*

Une hypothèse pourrait être que dans l'oeuvre au sens large de Marx, serait, pourrait-on dire, le dispositif organique de la construction "littéraire" dialectique elle-même, comme énoncé qui simule le dispositif matériel de la production et sa reproduction, et l'économie politique en l'actualisant par sa critique, et de plus, dans le même transport, avec les sociétés de la production et de la consommation ; ceci constituerait non seulement sa face visionnaire en ce qu'elle intègre la dynamique de son objet d'étude matérialiste, mais encore à travers la dimension sociale symbolique que l'énoncé actualise, par conséquent, comme une philosophie, nous voyons sous un autre éclairage, tout au contraire, la théorie léniniste. La théorie léniniste se sépare de sa philosophie de référence sauf en son projet (en quoi procède l'idéologie de la séparation de l'objet de la pensée et de l'énoncé de celle-ci), la théorie qui intègre la philosophie et son objet e= n réalité, les rationalise en les discutant avec les conditions extérieures : où se joue autrement la notion de répétition chez Lénine.

*A hypothesis might be made relative to the work, in a larger sense, of Marx: that is, one might hazard to say, the organic dispositive [apparatus/inbetween flux] of "literary" dialectical construction itself, as articulated simulations of a material dispositive, which occurs within its own production and reproduction and consumption; herein may be construed, not only the visionary face [of Marx's literary construction]—insofar as it integrates the dynamics of his materialist object of study [within its discursive apparatus, or dispositive]—not only this, but also the discourse [as self actualizing apparatus]: the discourse itself moves through the actual social/symbolic dimension, that he [Marx] announces as actualized and real. Consequently, philosophically we move or function beneath/ towards another kind of clarity, altogether in contradiction, namely Leninist theory, which separates itself from its own philosophical references, its moorings, only in its project*

*(from which proceeds the ideology of the separation of the object from thought and its trajectory), the theory that integrates philosophy and its object in reality, rationalizes them in discourse with exterior conditions; this is where the alternative notions of repetition play out in Lenin's thought.*

Chez Lénine et ses émules politiques, c'est la répétition pragmatique des données réalisables, donc le travail de théorie sur des fragments de la source intégrés par l'analyse dialectique des composantes extérieures, visant à dégager des tendances prédictibles modifiant le contexte externe. Dans ce cas, la répétition est répétition partielle et fragmentaire, à vocation tactique -utilitaire-, non structure de recherche et de connaissance, comme chez Marx, mais outil de réalisation du projet, éventuellement incantatoire (le côté catalyseur du discours). Ici, commencerait en quelque sorte le premier révisionnisme marxiste, celui qui édifie la théorie marxiste des luttes de masse pour le pouvoir en l'extrayant de sa complexité philosophique, donc théorie s'installant extérieurement de sa référence et non pas installée par sa référence, pour définir une pratique de la décision, la pratique Léniniste - pour l'application sociale et politique et même militaire (Trotsky, Giap) du dispositif marxiste lui-même rationnellement reproduit (mais non philosophiquement - la philosophie étant une pensée non reproductible au contraire des sciences.

*Amongst Lenin's political emulators, pragmatic repetition exists with respect to realizable givens: thus the work of theory on fragments of source (Leninist text) integrates by means of dialectical analysis from exterior compositions, lives by way of extracting predictable tendencies which are being modified by external contextual conditions. In this case, the repetition is partial repetition, fragmentary, functioning as a tactical, utilitarian vocation, not a structure of research and understanding as with Marx, but rather use-driven, relative to realizations of project, eventually incantatory [the catalyst of discourse]. A first Marxist revisionism will have begun here, such that mass struggle for power edifices theory, itself now alienated from its philosophical complexity; thus theory is installed in a condition of exteriority, outside its own palette of references, and is no longer instantiated by its references. To define a practice in terms of decision-making, Leninist practice developed the application of social and political, even military aims (Trotsky, Giap) from the dispositive (apparatus/metonym) of Marxism itself, rationally reproduced (but not philosophically, philosophy being a non reproducing condition of thought, in contrast to the sciences).*

A ce point je reviens sur mon premier post où j'évoquais le texte de Lénine "Que faire ?" qui a inspiré tant d'autres prises du pouvoir que celles des soviets. Ce que j'ai oublié de faire remarquer, c'est que chaque fois que l= a théorie supplante la philosophie, fatalement elle opte ou optera pour l'idéologie ; en même temps, en cela consiste le pouvoir lui-même (de substituer l'idéologie à la pensée symbolique, le rationalisme réducteur à la logique paradoxale, la théorie à la philosophie).

Ainsi, qui pourrait dire que la rupture Léniniste avec les Mencheviks, ou celle de Mao Tsé Toung, avec Chang Kai Cheik, lorsque l'un appela "tout le pouvoir aux soviets" et l'autre se replia sur la campagne pour commencer la Longue marche, ne furent pas d'excellentes idées pour inverser l'ordre du pouvoir, en commençant par élargir la base convaincue de devoir le prendre ? Mais il reste que la rupture sociale de l'avant garde qui passe à l'acte de l'autonomie sans entrave, pour faire la révolution - entendre dans ce cas pour monter au pouvoir victorieux de la dictature du prolétariat (ou des paysans alliés aux ouvriers) - s'énonce de façon exclusive de tout ce qui diffère d'elle-même.

*At this point, I return to my first post wherein I evoked Lenin's text, "What is to be done?" which inspired so many other seizures of power besides that of the Soviets. What I've forgotten to note, is that each time that theory supplants philosophy, fatally, it is co-opted by ideology: at the same time, in this consists power itself (to substitute ideology for symbolic thought, the reductivist rationalism subsumes paradox in logic, theory and philosophy).*

*Therefore, when one wishes to speak of the rupture of Leninism with the Mencheviks, or that of Mao Tse Toung, with Chiang Kai Chek, whilst one called for "all power to the Soviets" and the other dedicated himself to the campaign to commence the Long March, were these not excellent ideas for inversion of the order of power, commencing by enlarging the power base of those convinced of their obligation to take it?*

*Nonetheless it remains that the social rupture of the avant-garde which moves to autonomous acts without hindrance, in order to make revolution—understood in this case to show the victorious power of the dictatorship of the proletariat (or the peasants allied with the workers)—alienates itself, in exclusive fashion, from all that would differ from itself.*

Depuis cette forme de négation de l'autre au crédit pragmatique de la réalisation du projet, où l'on voit que si le modèle extensif du marxisme est à la différence de sa théorie, une véritable philosophie de la différence sociale entre la production et la reproduction, sous le régime intégré de l'entropie - d'où la prédiction de la disparition progressive de la dictature de l'Etat -, on voit aussi bien l'entropie de la production collective des richesses collectives et la répartition de celles-ci tendre = à leur retournement politique. En voyant la disparition du politique on voit aussi par extension la disparition de la valeur, au terme de la réalisation du système d'équivalence. Il s'agit de la suggestion d'une structure infinie/ finie, dont le projet ne pourrait être, paradoxalement, que le changement compris comme rupture et comme aventure (de l'inconnu).

Au contraire, le modèle multiple du même, dans la reproduction sous le régime du modèle libéral, est un modèle de la connaissance comme reproduction scientifique de la preuve - et reproduction de la connaissance=. On y voit aussi la solution solidaire dans la cognition globale, ce qui cadre une structure ne supposant pas d'autre changement que de matière de concret à matière d'abstrait comme tautologie englobante et réductrice, donc son extension propre du même infini/ infini - jusqu'à la réalisation de l'infini divin sur terre (en quoi consistent d'autre part les prédictions millénaristes).

*Following this form of negation of the Other, for the benefit of pragmatic realization of project; one sees that if the extended model of Marxism is in a condition of differentiation from its own theory which is a veritable philosophy of social difference between production and reproduction, it subsists as an integrated entropic regime, from whence comes the prediction of the disappearance of the dictatorship of the State; one can easily see also that entropy of collective production—from riches to redistribution—draws back into political reversal. In witnessing the disappearance of politics, one can also notice, by extension, the disappearance of value, in terms of the realization of systems of equivalence. All turns on the suggestion of a structure infinite/finite, thus the project could never be, paradoxically, other than change comprised as rupture and as adventure (from an unknown condition).*

*On the contrary, the multiple modality of self, in the reproduction regimes of the liberal model, is a model of understanding/knowledge as it pertains to scientific reproduction as proof, hence reproduction of knowledge. One may here see also the solution of solidarity in a global cognition, one that orders a structure which does not anticipate any change other than concrete material to abstract material, as a reductive globalizing tautology; from this follows its own extension to the same infinite/infinite—until the realization of divine infinity on earth (of such consists, in another sense, the predictions of the millenarists).*

D'où l'écartement de l'économie politique, alors qu'on la pensait tendre à la fusion de sa critique, jusqu'au néo-libéralisme (radicalement différente de la prémonition de l'entropie dans la théorie marxiste). Ce qui ne suppose qu'une extension infinie sous les auspices de la globalité et par conséquent, le néo-libéralisme : c'est la machine pataphysique elle-même. Peut-être y a-t'il d'avantage la notion de fatalité dans le bouquin de Ruiz plutôt que dans le bouquin de McKenzie Wark, dont l'exubérance demeure imprévisible ?

*Although one thinks of it as drawing on the terms of its own critique, political economy is in a condition of disjunction with neoliberalism (radically different from the entropic premonitions in Marxist theory). Would this be other than an infinite extension under the auspices of globalization and by consequence, neoliberalism; this is the 'pataphysic machine itself. Perhaps there is an advantage in the notion of fatality in Nicholas Ruiz's book, more than in McKenzie Wark's, where exuberance remains unpredictable?*

Moi je parie pour l'entropie de la sensibilité (y compris toutes les formes de déperdition de la culture) comme fin de l'art et de la culture dans la société, plutôt que l'entropie de la théorie comme fin de l'art chez les experts savants de culture et de sciences dans des sociétés sans culture... (situation qui rappelle la situation privilégiée de l'information des artistes institués dans les régimes stalinien).

Ce choix non par goût, mais parce que c'est une réalité incontournable d'une division existentielle profonde que l'on peut constater chaque jour dans notre environnement quotidien de la "vie vraie". Cette entropie sociale de la sensibilité suggère l'annulation pure et simple des efforts de penser la théorie qui l'ignorent, ou qui s'installent comme pouvoir au-delà.

*I speak of the entropy of sensibility (comprised of all the forms of loss in culture) as the end of art and culture in society, even more than the entropy of theory as the end of art, as is often the view of expert savants of culture and science in the societies that lack culture (a situation which recalls the privileged situation of publicity for artists patronized by Stalinist regimes).*

*This choice, not by taste, but rather because it is an incontrovertible reality of a profound existential division that one can take note of every day in our daily environment of 'real life.' This social entropy of sensibility suggests the annihilation, pure and simple, of efforts to think theoretically about things of which one is thus far unaware or with which one is able to come to terms.*

-Alette

From sostrow@gate.cia.edu Wed Jan 17 08:25:23 2007

Can you clarify what you mean by these two statements?

- On Jan 16, 2007, at 1:37 PM, Christiane Robbins wrote:

"the gelled lens of globalism which offers a branded patina of regionalized specificity and individuated experience"

"art practices to function as modes of transferable knowledge within the "global complex of cultural translation"

-Saul

From christina112@earthlink.net Wed Jan 17 17:35:50 2007

Dear list, introducing Christiane Robbins...

Christiane is a cross-disciplinary director, artist and scholar working within the mutable environment of studio practice, digital media and cultural components of Media and Visual Arts production. Robbins' studio practice focuses primarily on digital media - video, digital imaging, database aesthetics, and locative/ spatial studies. It includes installation, site-specific, and public art/ space projects as well as work in architectural, object- oriented, curatorial and publication projects.

Her work has received international recognition including one- person shows in the U.S., Canada and Europe. It has been reviewed in publications such as Art Forum, Wired, the LA Times and Village Voice. She has also participated in numerous international film and video festivals winning several awards, including the Best of Category Award at the San Francisco International Film Festival, and has been broadcast on American Public Television, Channel 4, UK, and cablecast throughout the world. Her work is found in numerous permanent collections including the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Museum of Modern Art, NY, the Kitchen, NY, the Banff Centre for the Arts, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and The Getty Museum. She is currently a Visiting Fellow at Stanford University and Associate Professor at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. She was the Executive Producer of the AIM Festival, a co-organizer of Race in Digital Space (MIT/USC's multi- year project including conferences and exhibition. ) and a co- Director of the On-Line Against Aids Project, one of the first on- line global cultural events held in 1990. She received her MFA from the California Institute of the Arts.

-Christina

From art.gallery.knoxville@gmail.com Thu Jan 18 02:24:49 2007

To clarify - the text was not proposed by Trébor - it was taken from the end of a link towards <<http://www.projectnml.org/node/308>> : New Media Literacies, a project at MIT. It may be interesting to view the entire text - it begins:

#### HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

Ancestor: Oral Culture Residual: Print Culture Dominant: Mass Media Emergent: Participatory Culture

I had thought that the conclusion of "what needs to be done" by this group could be a helpful aside to our conversation. Yes - it is a point taken out of context, but towards a "curiosity for a myriad of cultural and critical practices" as Christiane Robbins suggested:

"To my mind, the salient point rests upon our recognition of the complex need to have a core belief instilled - a knowledge, respect and curiosity for a myriad of cultural and critical practices embedded into our value systems on all levels."

Beyond this - I believe that we can adjust our practice of "Art and Education" by examining the different ways educational contexts have developed - we can listen to many points of view about the subject of learning. I think it is sometimes helpful to display information like this with an undefined context - or slightly dislocated origin. In my view, the disconnect allows for open situations where parallel ideas can be merged. It can be useful to confuse information.

Is this the education of the parents? Yes. Must we not always encourage the education of the "parents" along with the "students" ?

- Chris

From Christiane Robbins cpr@mindspring.com Thu Jan 18 05:10:19 2007

Saul- Hi-

To respond to your question re: the statements cut and pasted below, I'll begin by saying that as one already knows context determines meaning, and by this I also include historical timing within the perception of context replete with its specificities, as well. When we are looking at Documenta itself – one of the most historically significant of contemporary art exhibitions continuing to this day and increasingly attracting an international audience – a public if you will - of over 650,000, suffice it to say that issues arise. In my earlier statement I had been referencing back to Roger Buergels' statement: "The global complex of cultural translation that seems to be somehow embedded in art and its mediation sets the stage for a potentially all-inclusive public debate."

This statement strikes me as one based on an assumption of consensus (if not universality) of the function of art practice enabling the transference of a specific, yet ambiguous, knowledge. The issue is raised as to how that knowledge is being represented and if, indeed, its ontology (including his assumption "the ability of art to mediate the global complex of cultural translation") is being mythologized as device servicing public debate. This leads one to question which public and which forum of debate is he referencing? Where is this forum taking place and within which historical context?

For now I'll synthesize this point for further consideration: what I note in taking a look at documenta is a capitalistic forum that very much mirrors current governing global economic systems (artistic as well as technological, industrial and knowledge-based systems.) Yet at the same time it appears (based on limited knowledge) not to allow for another structure (for said purposes of mediation) to be put in place that questions these hegemonic form of exchange and access. Thus, whatever exchange - translations- takes place does so within the reifying reinscription of documenta and these systems themselves. I believe that Buergel may well be aware of this conundrum by virtue of his acknowledgment "how to mediate the particular content or shape of those things without sacrificing their particularity is one of the great challenges of an exhibition like documenta." Which returns us to his suggested salvo of art practice and its function of mediation for a global cultural translation.

-Christiane

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From cpr@mindspring.com Thu Jan 18 08:26:47 2007

To be honest, try as I might, I am not at all certain what Roger Buergel is actually suggesting. I'm unsure if should take his statement at face value. If so, I assume that he is viewing this context of a magazine for documenta 12 – albeit an online magazine in which this very discussion will be catalogued, published, distributed and archived – as a tool of mediation for this suggested global cultural translation. If so, could that be seen purely as one rather imperfect mode of communication, translation and global distribution via this on-line channel. However, if PeBuergel is referencing the formation of new art markets that reflect, as well as translate, globalism we must ask where individual artists see themselves within this frame. I sense a reticence for artists themselves to step forward – individually - as =if only the curator/ dealer/collector/critic/ marketplace can ensure their identity and success. This is becoming more and more evident in the online realm as the proliferation of portals take on the role of cultural gatekeepers amidst our information overload. It is these external market bearers who then provide the only languages necessary to be translated. More often than naught, they reflect the branding of the material world. Relatively speaking and afraid of re- inscribing a cliché , most artists that I know are not particularly sophisticated or savvy when it comes to developing effective agency, external relationships, social engagement, or the implementation of the strategies associated with politics and business, etc. In fact, I often witness the self-protective cocoon of the great shrinking artist when it comes to this realm. But, increasingly we cannot remain nestled into the warmth of our complacency within the 21st c.

BUT a number of self-identified and non self-identified ( i.e. the folk artists of "you tube") artists I know do possess the intrinsic and incalculable abilities of incisive perception, cogent and distinct analysis, representational strategies, and a discerning capability to impart significance. The convenient cliché is that our creativity and inspiration needs to be guarded from the pedestrian forces that govern us. However, we are often babes wandering through the dark woods of the socio-economic sphere – and we seem to like it that way. Our deliverance is that as babes, we do not yet know fear and subsequently, are not afraid to act. And act we must. But we must do so all the time recognizing the agreement to which we have already signed.

As an artist – as a cultural producer – for some time now my question has always been, how am I complicit in all of this? How can I make sense of what is it that I do and where I do it ? How am I unwittingly and wittingly reliant on late capitalism and institutionalization for my identity? Back in the early/mid 80' s ( when I was actually a baby myself ) I collaborated on some video art pieces including, "Perfect Leader," which was then coined "television art" as its self-reflexivity was a crucial conceptual underpinning. The uncomfortable position (which to this day makes me squirm ) is the paradox of critiquing the system one is working within, the same one which enables one' s production ... and, of course, one is then still being sheltered and fed by that overarching structure. Can that still be considered a critique or is it merely a shape-shift into mimicry or worse yet, a feckless form of adolescent rebellion? As a friend keeps reminding me, this can only happen in the art world. If this is true ( just for the moment lets consider this position ) how then does one take that knowledge, that cultural transfer and remain viable outside the context of the art world? Is it indeed preferable and/or necessary? It strikes me that various art systems have remained in a state of arrested development or arrested maturation - due to a blatant dependency upon a system of patronage, market dynamics and fluctuations, as well as a hermetically sealed, popularly-rendered mystique of difference and alienation.... and in the midst of all of this, I continue to ask myself what is to be done ... what can be done ... what should be done?

But then I also ask myself, is this simply binary – is everything only seen as 0 and 1s, black or white? I find myself going back to graduate school cultural studies and revisiting Foucault whose strength lay in his ability to concurrently occupy the inside and outside . He just seemed to do it as if it were the most natural thing to do in the world. It is a position which I have struggled to make my own and it provides a priceless instrument with which to inhabit a world increasingly based on the regulatory, binary thinking of categorization engendered by the advance of technologies and the information implosion.

–Christiane

From jackysaw@telus.net Thu Jan 18 09:02:00 2007

The question "What is to be done...." provokes irritation in me. It's in the future tense, it's a bit patronizing. Ignored in this question is what is done and has been done. I find the wording of the sentence very indicative of a culture that needs to reinvent the wheel again. I am rudely throwing this into the discussion. More later..

–Jacky

From cpr@mindspring.com Thu Jan 18 17:11:56 2007



Jackie makes a good point re: the need for us to acknowledge what has been done. In the context of this list, it is easy to point to Ili Nedkova's post of January 11th and the projects which she so cogently delineated as inspired examples of what has been done in the recent past.

With that in mind I am taking the liberty of copying below a section of an on-line conference which took place in 1994-95 â " a period representing a dramatic shift in the American cultural landscape. This online conference spoke to that specific cultural moment and history. I am hoping that it may place in evidence the struggle that experimental media (cinema: film, video, digital) has been wrestling with for some time. X-factor responded as to what could be done. It was but one of innumerable responses which took place during this period which helped to foster the continuance of today's call â'what is to be doneâ, as I don't believe = that question will ever be irrelevant.

Apologies in advance for not directing you to this website but it has been offline for sometime. When I repost the site, I will send out the url .

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## History

X-Factor was founded in 1992, after a meeting with then-director of the Independent Television Service John Schott who told a group of fifteen assembled artists that experimental media artists "didn't have a constituency." Those present at that meeting understood that in order to become a viable force in the art and funding worlds, experimental media artists needed to make themselves visible as the large, active and vital community that they are and to begin doing actions.

On a volunteer basis, a group of San Francisco film and video artists, curators and art administrators got together to formally advocate on behalf of the community, addressing various issues such as the abysmal lack of funding, distribution resources, publicity, and critical discourse, as well as problems surrounding developing audiences and exhibition.

â In 1994, the group received a modest grant from the National Association of Media Art Centers to launch an ambitious conference on issues surrounding experimental media exhibition. At first the conference was to be held on-site in San Francisco, but given the impossibility of securing additional funds from foundations and government agencies, X-Factor decided to use the NAMAC money to create a Virtual Conference. It was thought that a much larger and geographically diverse constituency might be reached via the World Wide Web, and that an on-line conference could grow and develop over a longer period of time.

Organizers: Craig Baldwin, Kathy Geritz, Linda Gibson, Christine Metropoulos, Christiane Robbins, Erin Sax, Steve Seid, Jeffrey Skoller, Valerie Soe, Scott Stark, Jack Walsh. Papers were submitted by: Thyrza Goodeve, Bill Horrigan, Laura Marks, Yvonne Rainer, Nino Rodriguez, Keith Sanborn, David Sherman, Elisabeth Subrin, Julie Zando.

## The End of More Than a Century The X-Factor Manifesto

The dismantling of the welfare state has reached into unexpected corners that few acknowledge. Take a look at the re-tooled programs now funded by significant national foundations and you'll see the curious devastation. As if responding to the dimly-flickering call of George Bush for

"a thousand points of light," private foundations and =public funding agencies alike have not only come to the aid of a stumbling government, they have reconceived of the arts as a new ally in the struggle to stave off the disappearance of social services.

The implications of such a rethinking of the arts is alarming, wrongheaded and irresponsible, especially when imposing this new function on the experimental arts. Experimental film and video have been particularly hapless within the current funding climate and for several reasons. First, basic funding decisions are informed by misconceptions that actually disregard the unique aspects of the works themselves. The scenario goes something like this: spectatorship, a requisite behavior in contemporary culture, brings with it an intuitive grasp of moving images, resulting in the instant recognizability of mainstream film and television. Because experimental works are committed on the same physical media, they too share in this innate familiarity.

DOESN'T FAMILIARITY BREED CONTEMPT? OR AN ALL TOO EASY INDIFFERENCE? Of course, this flies in the face of media literacy which declares that even the most common of visual conveyances, such as television, contain messages and ideologies beyond our ken. Nevertheless, experimental film and video are enlisted as brethren of mass popular media, but with alternative viewpoints. They then have a healing social application, as well as the benefit of an entertainment form.

WHERE IS THIS HEALING CONTAINED? WITHIN THE MEDIUM ITSELF? OR AT THE CRITICAL MOMENT OF RECEPTION? To amplify the disservice to the field, funders then valorize use value, the haziest of incentives for making art. Works that foreground accessibility, works that advance simplified arguments, works that turn away from hybridity are championed for their functionality. If this funding preference is catered to, the experimental media are reduced to the superficiality of mere exposition—innovation is scoffed at as gratuitous and complexity of argument deemed elitist.

In times of scarcity, funding patterns easily dictate modes of expression. Supporting media works that embrace convention in form and explication not only discourages creative invention but robs the audience of the challenges that foster growth. This same focused funding favors works that have a convenient topicality, but slip into irrelevance as soon as issues mutate or are resolved. In the parlance of the marketplace, they have little or no shelf life.

MUST ART MAKE A CLAIM TO PERPETUITY? ISN'T AN IMMEDIATE, SHORT-TERM IMPACT GOOD ENOUGH? To ignore or devalue the experimental media is nothing new. Certainly part of the discipline's history is this legacy of disregard. However, we find that the present support climate and its insistence on utility is particularly threatening to the welfare of the medium and its community of artists. To understand the deleterious consequences for the artists, their oeuvre, and the audience, one must have some sense of the nature and motive of the concerned works.

WATCH OUT FOR REQUISITE NOTIONS. THEY SMELL LIKE ESSENTIALIST MORALITY. One vital principal guiding these works is that formal experimentation is an expression of resistance—resistance taking place within the arena of convention, as well as proactively along the peripheries of known practice. Once this primary notion is recognized, it becomes clear that the alternative ideas and perspectives embedded in these works commingle in a transfiguration of the medium. The transfiguration of the media is necessary, because the conventions presently manufactured by mainstream practice vitiate all aspects of our spectatorial behavior. To leave expectations intact, to regurgitate worn out modes of expression is to service the ideology of mass culture. In an attempt to rouse the audience from passivity, experimental film and video engages normative form in its own destruction. Viewers are challenged to witness the abolition of their assumptions, to observe the vulnerability of dominant practice. =

By doing so, viewers can see beyond official thinking and glimpse possibilities implied, in part, by new visual vocabularies and visions.

SO WHOSE THINKING IS THIS? THE UNOFFICIAL RISING TO PROMINENCE? SECURE YOUR FRANCHISE NOW. This project of transfiguration can encompass all subject matter. Issues of gender, ethnicity, social parity, individuation and cultural reclamation can be addressed with forthright lucidity. Formal experimentation is not a limiting factor as is often announced, but a liberating practice that allows both artist and audience to survey critical ideas in unfettered ways. Experimental media artists are not a cloistered or disengaged few, but a considerable community vitally linked to the ongoing welfare of society-at-large. It is worth reiterating that the decision to abandon conventional form is informed by a politic underlying the aesthetic. And again: radical ideas couched inside of traditional media modes tacitly inform the audience that social and political change is possible only within the dominant structure. Ironically, this posits change as an inconspicuous alteration at best, a self-negating sham at worst.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU WERE OUTSIDE THE SPECTACLE? INDEED, IS THERE AN OUTSIDE THERE? Experimental media demands a total renovation in both perception and thinking. By discarding inherited forms (and their ideological cues), the ideas forwarded—which can be historical reconnoiterings, or urgent topical investigations—implicitly suggest that change be considered within a total reconstruction of social assumptions and institutions. This is not a utopian project, but a modest proposal acknowledging that social reformation cannot be piecemeal; nor can it be an entertainment, or a leisure exercise in viewership. The discoveries and revelations that lead to change come only after exertion, whether it be intellectual, aesthetic, or political. It is at the juncture of art and use value that experimental media parts company with common practice. Under the banner of functionality, it is presumed that media aids in a corrective understanding of the world and, subsequently, inspires an altered response in the audience. Functionality is also related to topicality and so mediaworks are called upon for a spontaneous revision of the viewers' sense of their own historical moment. Films and tapes serve as panaceas, quick-fixes for social wrong or political inequity. What this notion over-values is not use, but efficacy. It assumes that media has a transformative property. The accessible and deliberate delivery of right-minded information will somehow instigate the politicization of the viewer—voodoo media.

THERE'S NOTHING MORE CONVINCING THAN A CONVINCING ARGUMENT. AM I RIGHT? Enlisting the arts in such a venture betrays their basic orientation. Taken as just one discipline, the experimental media work through a process of slow, if not glacial accretion. A zone of contemplation is created in which viewers can deliberate or intuit possibilities beyond the mundane. Without this poetic construct, this realm of artistic speculation, the spectatorial moment is mired in routine and familiar images that confess their allegiance to the status quo. Through successive visitations, the viewer subtly assimilates a more creative response to the world. This does not mean being moved to redress some wrong, or sympathize with some underdog; instead, deep-seated alignments are quietly but fundamentally dislodged, promoting new categories of informed engagement. Experimental media is not a prescriptive art with a standard dosage. There is no guarantee that proper usage will resolve some dissonance, some ambivalence in the viewer. Cultural injustices will not be rectified by their visual mediation. However, the enlistment of film and video in the expanded realm of social service suggests that the myth of curative power is still operative. Based on little more than wishful thinking, the fabricated capacity for problem-solving is nevertheless trumpeted when evaluating film or tape for their expedient impact. This same chasing after curatives has also transformed many alternative exhibition venues into pseudo-self help centers.

DIDN'T SOMEONE ONCE SAY A SOCIETY WITHOUT THE ARTS IS NOT A SOCIETY AT ALL? IS THIS THE GENERAL DRIFT? Exploiting the media arts for their pragmatic engagement has its chilling ramifications. As an adjunct to social service, the act of viewing a film or tape becomes a transaction. The expectation is one of purposeful outcome—information imparted, a conflict resolved. The short-term palliative triumphs over the long term emancipation of the viewer. What we are witnessing is the conquest of one more sector of experience by the germ of capital.

DO WE NEED AN ANTIDOTE FOR THIS GERM? OR WILL ANOTHER ANECDOTE DO JUST AS WELL? Post a Response to the X-Factor Manifesto "The End of More Than a Century"

-Christiane

From lexicontrol@gmail.com Thu Jan 18 17:01:09 2007

I agree on where Art is going (no pun intended :-).

Specifically – isn't there a big enough intersection between oral culture and participatory culture to render their differentiation irrelevant?

Vijay

Wed, 17 Jan 2007 01:32:37 -0000

Dear Art gallery,

Here can be the very example of a piece outside of its context so cannot being a philosophy:))

Tout ce dispositif organisé imaginé et proposé par Trébor, (qui heureusement dans la pratique de iDC est bien plus ouvert à l'altérité qu'il n'y paraît quand il se met à formaliser...) ne laisse même pas imaginer qu'on puisse être libre de la pression de l'éducation pendant les moments les plus intimes...Je pense que cette citation de Trebor sauf si elle est un morceau romanesque, devait se situer dans le contexte d'un fil thématique de contenus déjà discutés, environnement sans lequel ce modèle ne pourrait être pertinent.

Tel quel, hors contexte, ce modèle installe un cadre et des organigrammes sans contenus défini, juste présumés par leur "enveloppe" et leur case : mais alors nous serions tous d'accord sur les contenus implicites en ellipse, quelle que soit notre culture nos croyances et nos conceptions de vivre, nos idées philosophiques - quand j'entends parler d'esthétique des médias je tombe à la renverse - ce dont je doute y compris dans le même côté d'inspiration. Contenus qui devraient normalement précéder l'organigramme pour que l'organigramme soit vital...

A l'âge de la supergravité où l'on construit l'hypothèse de la matière sur une fiction du boson de Higgs et la topologie mathématique s'occupant d'espaces non euclidiens dont le champ s'applique en Physique, on se croirait soudain revenus au tableau de Mendeleïef (donc à Aristote).

De quelle éthique s'agit-il ? Sur cette base telle qu'elle nous est présentée on pourrait aussi bien se trouver dans un cadre d'éducation et de comportements de laboratoire, que dans la société de Big Brother. Il y a un vrai problème de la demande et de la réponse, là...

N'était-ce pas Matisse, d'abord clerc de notaire apprenant tardivement la peinture dans une académie de village (ou de quartier) qui dit "celui qui n'imita pas dans sa jeunesse imitera toute sa vie" ? et bien sûr imité lui-même par la suite.) Il y a d'autre part dans A rebours de Huysmans une excellente critique de l'éducation de l'école technique post napoléonienne par le modèle des jésuites, quand ils imposent le contact direct avec les grandes oeuvres grecques et latines les plus difficiles, aux adolescents de leurs collèges, à partir desquelles ensuite ils devisent avec eux pour les passionner, lors de promenades dans les jardins ou la nature:))

Et puis ne pas oublier la querelle terrible qui divisa les socialistes les anarchistes et les communistes sur l'éducation et le travail des enfants.

Si l'école n'est pas un ailleurs de la vie contingente alors que peut-elle apporter à celle-ci ?

Quant à la part du rêve, je ne vois pas où elle se trouve ? Est-ce dans l'éducation des parents ?

Aliette writes,  
"dear Art Gallery,

*Trebor's imaginatively organized purview ( happily, within the practice of the IDC (Institute for Distributed Creativity) list, alterity is much more openly engaged than it appeared that it would be when it was organized...), even so doesn't allow us to imagine freedom from the pressure of education during periods of greatest intimacy.....*

*I think that the citation from Trebor, unless it is simply a romantic bagatelle, should be considered within the context of a thematic thread of content we've already discussed, an environment without which his model lacks pertinence. Such that, taken out of context, this model would instantiate a framework and a flow system, without defined content, simply an 'envelope' of presuppositions, a case study; then again, surely we'll all agree that elliptical content may be implied, whatever our culture—our beliefs—our conceptions of life—our philosophical ideas; when I intend to speak of aesthetics I fall into reverse, into that which I both doubt and understand (as if these two come from a single inspiration). Content ought normally to precede the flow chart, in order that the flow chart is vital [relevant]..*

*In an age of supergravity, wherein the construction of an hypothesis about materiality rests on a fiction, the Higgs boson ( see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Higgs\\_boson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Higgs_boson) ), and mathematical topologies occupy non-euclidean spaces, within which the 'field' is applied to Physics, we could construct out belief systems around a return to the periodic tables of Mendeleief (and thus, back to Aristotle).*

*Of what ethical dimension might this turn consist? From what basis, such as been presented, may we just as easily find ourselves in an framework of education and a compartmentalization as in a laboratory inside a society dominated by Big Brother?*

*This is a real problem, and it demands some kind of response. Wasn't it Matisse, who initially studied to become a notary in the village academy before a late start in painting, who said, "one who does not imitate, in his youth, will imitate all his life?"; and of course, imitate himself in the process :).*

*Elsewhere, in Huysmans's *À Rebours*, there's an excellent critique of education in the technical schools of the post-Napoleonic period in light of Jesuit models. Here a contact with the great works of Greek and Latin antiquity, of the greatest difficulty, was imposed upon adolescents in their colleges, from which followed an effort, at length, to interest students deeply in discourse about these works during extended promenades in natural settings and gardens :).*

*Then too, we must not forget the terrible quarrels that divided the socialists, anarchists, and communists on the issue of childhood education and child labor. If school is not elsewhere than in the contingencies of life, meanwhile what can it bring to life? As for dreams, I do not see where they may be found. Perhaps in the education of the parents?"*

*-Alette (translation by Christina)*

From melinda@anat.org.au Thu Jan 18 19:39:26 2007

I have also found the provocation irritating. My apologies for not responding any sooner as I have been travelling and focused on launching our re-skin wearable technology lab. But that's not the whole reason - it has been difficult to get involved and im not sure why that is. I guess - empyre- is was set up in 2002 to provide another space for dialogue open to anyone, to provide a forum that doesn't suffer from the closed loops and self absorption of some academic arenas, and i am here looking for the sweet voice of dissent - I used to like it when the guests were naughty.

The basic polemic annoys me.. we cant operate today without speaking the language of economics. Culture and commerce do go hand in hand. Are we trying to dive an educative wedge into this ? I don think that's in any way a reality . Of necessity cultural producers embrace the language of policy and the languages of spin. This is basic survival in producing sustainable "education" and by that I mean cultural events, spaces for dialogue, skills development, introducing new concepts to new audiences.

For example introducing emerging medias to regional communities who don't have access to the same information we all take for granted for both economic and sometimes racial reasons . They've never heard of locative media and what it could do for them.. Will it make their lives better, more comfortable, more intellectually enjoyable, create more community cohesion and a sense of belonging if they do know?

G.H. reacted to the elite word - the domain of bleeding heart 70's lefties. Get over it.. You become part of an elite just by being in this discussion and there's nothing wrong with that ..it wasn't a judgement .. it was a statement.

Saul wrote: "actually I find your statement below offensive and demeaning it is cariacturish and represents a paternalistic and low opinion of what people may or may not find interesting if people like you thought of how those elite concepts might be shown to be relevent to their lives"

Great.. I'm pleased. I find it interesting that you don't see the irony of posting this in a forum which is discussing how we, the knowing, are charged with educating the masses ! I am of the great unwashed and had to look up cariacturish .

Dirk wrote that Second Life is harnessing all the creativity out there.. Is that wrong? I used to be highly critical of it, but have changed my mind. It Performs a fabulous educational and social role in our society. Art organisations are falling over themselves to have galleries exhibitions and residencies there - be part of the culture you've got.

Love the one you're with.

-Melinda

The Future of Technology is Wearable WearNow :: National Museum of Australia :: 2-3 February <http://www.anat.org.au/reskin>

From christina112@earthlink.net Fri Jan 19 05:57:24 2007

Please welcome Ricardo Rosas, who comes to us from Rizoma, his Sao Paulo based online magazine.

Ricardo Rosas was born in Fortaleza , Brazilian Northeast but lives in São Paulo since 1990. He´s a writer, translator, theorist and organizes festivas concerning media activism and tactical media in Brazil . Editor of the Rizoma e-magazine and a former member of the Mídiatática.org network, Rosas helped organize the Mídia Tática Brasil 2003 and the Digitofagia 2004 festivals in São Paulo, both of them aimed at discussing the tactical media scene, free software, and the creation of collaborative projects in art and activism involving new media. Rosas was the Net Art curator of the Prog: Me festival, in Rio de Janeiro (2005); and a lecturer at the fourth edition of the Next 5 Minutes festival, in Amsterdam (2003), the first international event dedicated to the mapping of tactical media. He also participated in the Super Demo Digital festival in Rio de Janeiro (2004); in the Networks, Arts, a Collaboration conference at the State University of New York, Buffalo (2004); and in the 15th Videobrasil International Electronic Art Festival. Rizoma, his edited website on arts and activism is currently taking part on the Documenta project of publications for the Documenta 2007.

-Christina

From art.gallery.knoxville@gmail.com Fri Jan 19 06:50:12 2007

Aliette wrote, "By the schematic cognitive map you determine the territory of the practice; we can think that we are conceptualizing the new but reproducing the former world by exceeding to repeat the misunderstanding of the conditional limited territory."

Yes - I think you are absolutely right.

But I would reiterate the notion of engaging a "myriad of cultural and critical practices" in order to form an effective community / educational model. We can look at research suggestions such as this as equally 'correct' and 'incorrect' - of course we understand that any text is no "readymade paradise" - but we can make it useful. Why start from scratch? Why not take the proposition and change it? I think you were beginning to do that in the last mail.

Our conversation here can prove a type of 'soft\_skinned' schematic - addressing the issue of Art and Education in many directions. The projectnml.org node examines education from one view. We can use this found research as ideas+examples for our own practice.

What are some other models? I would love it if anyone on the List forwarded a few examples of cultural practice ("events, spaces, dialogue, skills, development, introducing new concepts to new audiences" etc) - suggestions for forming [Art + Education] relationships with a community.

Personally, I see no reason to maintain a linear conversation - I think that scatter is a more effective means to fill a space with suggestions.

- Chris

From ricardorosasc@gmail.com Sat Jan 20 05:07:51 2007

I am entering this discussion just now and I am really impressed by the diversity of points of view on the topic of education and the whole packet of questions it brings with. Given my background of work with grassroots groups, art collectives and media activists, I tend to have a less institutional approach to education, instead of some views presented. I come from this country, Brazil, where education is a basic and deep problem, amongst many others, but where there have been also many projects or attempts to overcome a situation of poverty, ignorance and difficulty. Not only that has appeared in theorizations like Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of The Autonomy, where the learning process is a process of raising consciousness with the construction of both the one who teaches and the one who learns, but also in very grassroots projects dealing with open source and digital inclusion which I'll talk later.

So from this point of view, education, as much as it, in a way or another, may involve art, can happen in many situations outside institutional contexts or market-driven interests. I believe education is a very broad term, and if we talk about art, (or activism, in another guise), why not see an artwork that intervenes in the public sphere as educational, or else an activist manifestation as a form of "critical pedagogy" as in Freire's idea?

The projects I'll talk about here in a way or another run away from the "closed" idea of education and in their own manner provide dialogue, information, teach and instill ideas working as art or either activist actions. As part of Documenta's publication project, reports and articles on some of them will be published in the magazine I run in Portuguese, Rizoma ([www.rizoma.net](http://www.rizoma.net)) The first ones are strongly related to the artworld as most of its authors come from the art circuit from Brazil but most of them created their projects in a grassroots or community-based way.

The first one I may have in mind is JAMAC (Jardim Miriam Art Club), which is sort of a association (it has indeed now become an NGO) founded by a famous Brazilian Artist, Monica Nador and other artists in the periphery of São Paulo, more specifically Jardim Miriam, a very poor region full of criminality, police persecution of the poor and black young guys and such. One thing we must have in mind is that São Paulo's Periphery is "said" to be ugly and without aesthetics. It in part is that. But Jamac's work tries first to ask, to investigate what are the symbols, what are the images that matter the most to those communities and persons. That can be the flower vase in the towel, a picture in a book, whatever. That "symbol" then becomes a pattern that is painted and adorned both inside and outside the house. Monica says her proposal is to bring beauty to those so suffered people. Jamac is also a space, so it gives courses and teaches how to paint and such. Two of its "students" became monitors in the last São Paulo Biennial and are very interested towards becoming artists. But Jamac itself took part in this last biennial, as it was mainly directed towards community and relational art.

The second one I want to call attention is Base Móvel (Mobile Base), a project created by a collective in the Northeast of Brazil, a region known by its poverty and poor resources. Base had its origins in Fortaleza and consists of an archive of the exhibitions of the group or the exhibitions of their network of collectives (there is a fever of collectives in Brazil since at least the middle of the nineties). This archive consists of catalogs, books, CDs, DVDs, posters, whatever concerning the activities and related material from the Brazilian artworld. The interesting thing is that all this material is archived in an enormous box (like one of those musicians that use to put musical instruments for shows) and they take it by hand traveling by bus all around the Ceará State (to which Fortaleza is the Capital) in little cities, villages and such, and contacting the local artists (usually very naïf ones who know nothing about the subtleties of the artmarket, the circuit of exhibition, even the production, of its Whys, Whats, and for Whats. Base Móvel epitomizes a need not only for Ceará but for most of Brazil, even São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro's countrysides. The circuit itself is so self-concerned, small and limited to the capitals, and ignorance prevails. So an initiative like



that may bring information, dialogue and awareness of how the art world functions and how to become an artist if one wants to be so, mainly those ones that would not become otherwise.

Another art-related project is Arquivo de Emergência (Emergence Archive). It was created by artist Cristina Ribas and is an authorial project fed by many collective projects. From the 3 projects presented till now, it's probably the more institutionally linked of them, once it is shown in collective exhibitions. And what does it consist of? To explain that we may understand a very specific situation as for the situation of Brazilian arts. First, as I mentioned before, the fact that there is a whole alternative circuit of collectives and urban intervention artists with their own networks, discussion-lists, urban art festivals, activist gatherings, actions with social movements, and art works all made and disappeared in the streets. All this material is yet to be researched and a history (if so) is yet to be written. Cause the question is that the majority of those collectives and individual artists are, in a way or another ignored or excluded from the normal art circuit. Critics don't write about them, in fact we could say "they don't exist". A project like the Emergence Archive tries exactly to document a lot of those actions describing the actions, the group (or individual artist) and putting a photograph in a paper covered with plastic. Along with that, a collection of texts concerning art and politics, collectives and magazines produced by the groups. It's an invaluable and important material for this generation and also future ones who may look at Brazilian art from the beginning of the 21st Century and that not everything meant the market or the international jet setters and stars like Ernesto Neto and such.

Well, I may be a bit longer still (just a bit), and I hope I may not leave you tired. I also hope you understand that all those references to local situations (at least for other participants of empire that come from other peripheral countries but not only), also contain symptoms that reflect global situations. So I make a shift towards more grassroots-activist practices that also deal with art (in a tangential way) but very much represent efforts to educate or bring awareness and raise critical consciousness to disenfranchised communities.

The first one was a project made by a network I was part of in 2004 and it was composed of tactical media activists, electronic sound producers, graphic artists, open source programmers, computer recyclers and Indymedia-Brasil activists. All those people gathered together, after some actions in group like a festival and such, to a project of giving classes of sound production, internet access, recycling of computers and all those specialities quoted before, all these using open source softwares. Chosen were 3 regions from São Paulo's Peripheries, very poor and lacking basic resources. 300 youngsters from those districts were selected by an ngo that decided to work with us and even Unesco decided to help us with some funding. Those labs of autonomous learning were called Autolabs. Most of the students were women and course lasted around seven months. It was a very rewarding experience to all the participants once what they were teaching was not based on school books but in their own experience, so we may imagine the problems, the adaptations, the changes during the classes and such. None of the workshop givers were teachers, but the knowledge acquirement was also essential for some of the attendants. It may be said that the Autolabs were the very first seed for the known Cultural Hotspots promoted by the minister Gilberto Gil and his open source approach to Brazilian Culture, as most of the group that worked on this project came from the Autolabs.

The last one is for me the most significant of them all. It was born inside of a homeless occupation in São Paulo's downtown, the Prestes Maia building. An abandoned building from the 1950's, that building is drowned in billionaire duties by its owner. As the problem of homelessness is a terrible problem in São Paulo, some of those homeless people organize themselves in movements and invade abandoned buildings. That was the case of Prestes Maia, invaded and commanded by women. The question is that never before had artists or artistic groups merged with those homeless movements, what started to happen by the end of 2003, with an exhibition inside the occupation. I won't go too deep in the history of this movement (one part of it is being told by Gavin Adams in an article for Rizoma in the Documenta project) since what really interest is one of the outcomes that became a focal point for a lot of changes both in the relation of the artists and collectives with the movement and the society in general. Many events were realized in the occupation during the years of 2004 and 2005, most of them concerning the possibility of expelling by the police as the city government wanted them to be out and also because of the attempt to gentrify downtown. What happens is that most of those events uniting artists and homeless people did not call proper attention to

the problem be it by the media channels, the society, the intellectuals, whatever. Someone between the artists discovered a space in the subterranean of the building where people got books and dumped them there. What was the brilliant idea following? Creating a library, with all those humble, abandoned, dirty books, there inside, organizing them, collecting more books, asking for donations, involving institutions, alternative schools, and so that was the first time the "marginalized" Prestes Maia started to appear in national newspapers, magazines and media in General, calling attention to the problem of homelessness and also showing that those people were not the dumb ones they were supposed to be but they would also like to consume culture and such. More than ever, from that discovery on, intellectuals started to visit the building and promote debates and conferences, the society at large accepted the movement with more tolerance and problems with the police diminished extremely. The library was organized by artists and homeless people who live there and is currently being used by the inhabitants.

I just wanted to think with some of those examples that education may have a much broader field of discussions that not only concerns algorithms or philosophy but can be linked to very real and painful problems, i.e. concerning the most immediate reality that many of us may not know - maybe.

-Ricardo

From christina112@earthlink.net Fri Jan 19 17:41:01 2007

the mailman software is having problems of its own, so I am just forwarding several posts that have been rejected for no human reason :)

as follows:

from netwurker:

hi mel + all.

"The basic polemic annoys me.. we cant operate today without speaking the language of economics. Culture and commerce do go hand in hand. Are we trying to dive an educative wedge into this ? I don think that's in any way a reality ."

i suspect those m.mersed in the \_production\_ [as opposed 2 the codification] of culture cogitate less about their place in the [socio]economic stratsosphere + more about the manif[r]e[al]s[a] tation of their ideals+concepts. the notion of b.ing unavoidably mired in a "language of economics" seems tied 2 a framework driven by =

certain processes that seek 2 n.stitutionalise these n.deavours via a formal[recogn]ised/parcelled 'cultural' product/stream [i'm seeking clarification on ur use of the term "we" here?] ....

....."we" [as in certain n.divi\_duals that /loc.ate themselves (either geospacially or perceptually) elsewhere from a heavily westernised conception of reality that d.fines worth thru capitalistic n.dicators/ m.mersion] can function quite fine [thk\_u!] in a reality that may b quantitatively different 4rm urs - does this then make it invalid according 2 how u box ur definition of reality?

i find certain modes of cu[ltural]rrency veering strongly \_away\_ 4rm this top-down/ratified-via-precedent/sanctioned approach x.tremely n.teresting...@ present i'm x.ploring/researching/plotting a faux soc\_network project [\_feralC] that cs this formalisation as clinging within stratified fibres n.dicative of a close-ended/linear approach 2 weaving acculturation:

"The academy ... is today so swamped by the assumptions and practices of market economics that it is deeply implausible for academics to tell their students they inhabit a postmodern world where a multiplicity of ideologies, world-views and voices can be heard. Their every step hounded by market economics, academics cannot preach multiplicity when their lives are dominated by what amounts in practice to consumer fanaticism. The world has narrowed intellectually, not broadened, in the last ten years. Where Lyotard saw the eclipse of Grand Narratives, pseudo-modernism sees the ideology of globalised market economics raised to the level of the sole and over-powering regulator of all social activity - monopolistic, all-engulfing, all-explaining, all-structuring, as every academic must disagreeably recognise. Pseudo-modernism is of course consumerist and conformist, a matter of moving around the world as it is given or sold."

- Alan Kirby

"Of necessity cultural producers embrace the language of policy and the languages of spin."

they do? in order 2 have them con[de]fined + validated with a rubber\_stamped acceptable sign [ie make it in2 the inner-sanctioned- power-definer's eye\_path] i agree....but 4 those not oriented within the "reality" [my definition of reality is more a heavily\_variable faceted patterning] of becoming culturally relevant or mass marketed along a e[ducative]conomic axis, i'd beg 2 diffa.....

"This is basic survival in producing sustainable "education" and by that i mean cultural events, spaces for dialogue, Of necessity cultural producers embrace the language of policy and the languages of spin."

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This is basic survival in producing sustainable "education" and by that i mean cultural events, spaces for dialogue, skills development, introducing new concepts to new audiences"

....again, according only 2 those status\_quo channels geared 2wards the event/xhibition/object/"the pitch" as defining how cultural landscapes lie....fomenting abstractions currently perceive "education" [as defined thru these means] as essentially perpetuating a dynamic molded within expressive confines out-of-step with the n.credible rewriting of hub\_networking or flattening of the creator/absorber/audience [think:myspace, blogging, liveleaking]....in the potentiate infoclimat of social nets redefining m[eme]odes 2wards anything \_but\_ the sustainable, of rewriting the market/canon from the inside via a removal of the x.clusivity of function according 2 n\_dividual creator labels [such as an artist, definer, teacher] education as such ceases 2 b....

[troll\_bait snipping here]

Dirk wrote that Second Life is harnessing all the creativity out there.. Is that wrong? I used to be highly critical of it, but have changed my mind.

i'd b really n.terested 2 c wot in fact changed ur position here mel - if it was the gradual seeping of Second Life as an acceptable platform for corporations/'educators'/other m[eme]ainstream\_signifiers?

It Performs a fabulous educational and social role in our society. Art organisations are falling over themselves to have galleries exhibitions and residencies there - be part of the culture you've got.

bzzzT: i say:m.plode.the.cult[ural].trend

Love the one youre with.

bzzzT: i suggest: luv.the.1.ur.not

-][m][

From melinda@anat.org.au Fri Jan 19 20:02:24 2007

Mez hi.. Nice to know you are still around - I've missed your unique perspectives..

By we i am referring to cultural producers -that's the spot i sit in this conversation.. have you produced any projects which raised money and/or secured resources to benefit other artists or writers or the community at large lately? I guarantee that that funders and institutions won't be philosophically musing on whether they subscribe to a heavily westernised conception of reality .. They will be wanting outcomes which are beneficial to their aims and goals and public profile.

And sure you can route around that and slip into the institutional gaps and exploit the bugs in the social software and hardware, and get projects up in other contexts, not reliant on these avenues, but really we all know that isn't sustainable. You get tired.. e.g., the facilitators of - empyre- change cause no one can devote that much time to doing a community service when they have to pay rent.

Perhaps you are alluding to romantic notions of symbiosis where interactions just happen and neither party is harmed nor helped - process similar to that of epiphytes - Air plants that absorb what they need from the air through their leaves, not through their roots - so they are unusually hardy and adaptive . You can put them in anything...seashells, teacups, empty vases, driftwood...many people like to hang them on fishing line. These truly are a perfect gift for plant lovers and for people who can't grow anything... Ahh but I wander in pseudo-modernist reverie.

Then there are the benefactors who give you money for nothing, people who don't seem to want anything but the good of media arts.. But if one objects to western capitalism so much then all money is sullied and must be rejected. Do you stop Bill Gates from doing AIDS research in Africa cause you object to Microsoft saying that if he didn't sell computers and strip 3rd world countries of resources then the problem wouldn't exist. ?

I changed my mind about second life cause i realised i was being an arrogant intellectual wanker of the worst kind.. Holding a high moral ground on the basis of my PhD research - i was forewarned by the lovely Neal Stephenson of the social hierarchies surrounding white thrash off the shelf Brandy avatars and I believed anything I could create would be far superior. Someone pointed out to me another perspective on how perverse the whole of Second Life representation is. And I saw the wonderment of that world and error o f my ways.. I truly appreciate Eva and Franco Mattes' 13 most beautiful avatars series.

-Melinda

From dv@vilt.net Fri Jan 19 22:18:51 2007

One of the things i know about and am looking to get more involved into is exemplified by 'The Great Lakes Reconciliation Radio Project' in Rwanda where mass media communication tools combined with individual creativity, the use of narrative (soap) seems very successful in breaking the circling continua of violence, and in healing the traumata of conflicts.

I only have most of this from hearsay, conversations with a friend of mine who's actively engaged in the project but it seems this model allows for a minimal input of resources with a maximal output and that a blueprint for it is usable in a variety of regional contexts. You can read more about it here: <http://www.vilt.net/nkdee/benevolencija/index.jsp>

What we will (perhaps, it's still very provisional, i only dare mention it here because i think it's a good example of some matters that have some urgency - there does seem to be a sense of 'ja und?' demanding an immediate directional impulse lest the energies involved should go dire) be attempting that might interest you more in the context of products formerly known as art is an enforced conflux along hardcoded infrastructural lines of 1 / a hands-on application of this blueprint to western Demockcrazies (i. c. the Lowlands) where it might come in particularly useful for downtuning the fearfully growing feelings of discontentment, downright racism including attempts of 'fashionablized' racist ideology to get re-institutionalized

2/ some aspects of what is considered marginal by the mainstream machines of political harnessing, like literature and more specific poetry (because most of the fiction still gets taken up by the product-flow, poetry on the other hand is still largely unsellable), 'modern' musick, most elitist visual codings etc, in short what could more or less be un-labeled as counter-culture-de-facto, the swarming of residual creativity.

The expression 'an enforced conflux along hard coded infrastructural lines' is the kind of language I'll be using in trying to get the funding for the only thing that is required to get these things further to where they are going anyway, namely a decent streaming server facility, meaning a reliable mediatic independence, meaning an opening to a potentiality beyond the mass-media that are driving themselves up on empty beaches like whales anyway, an event that both these highly energized processes can turn back on/to to further their beneficial impulses. You see even the highly 'holographic' impact of poetical output can do with a little strengthening, it's all very nice to be mystically joined with a higher or more implicit order of things, but some of the juices need to be redirected to where they're most needed, not that i would want, dare or need to be critical of anything here.

In this time of great turbulence one does need the occasional re-appearance of some old-fashioned Vorticism to get things going, although of course the turn acquires an entirely neue meaning in doing seuh.

One thing I learned while building Cathedrals is that high-end models always arrive late like Female Movie Stars on the premiering of their movies. Didn't they do that on purpose in order to get that kick out of splitting the lined-up audience in a two-walled sea of admiring faces? Originally?

-Dirk

From aliette@criticalsecret.org Sat Jan 20 03:33:31 2007

on "What is to be done" - one subject of inescapable current events to tribute by bare life to the Documenta 2007. [This is not an attack this is a tribute as historic remind of the year, a testimony, and may be a calling].

-Alette

What happened at Al Aqsa university from the danger where are quite all the professors and lecturers whatever their belief or unbelief at the moment they would be inter professional contacted and soldierly linked front of the repression? But a part of them both linked with Israeli intellectuals having too the solidier view. What are they becoming?

Who has any friend till now in Gaza may be know that it is quite impossible to communicate and not more by the way of email but making in danger your correspondent in these time of "collective punishment", at the moment Israel realizes the global enclosure by closing the foreign borders (for example with Egypt) as well from outside to enter as well from inside to leave. They miss water food electricity and so on more Israel evocates the "Aviaire flu" for dissuade the foreigners to come even in Israel from the North for observe the bloody rains which cannot look the same as the color of the sand dragged by the wind from the desert.

Doesn't this situation of siege playing the collective disappearance remind another enclosure in the Past. It was in Warsaw, where only tunnels allowed to appear outside the ghetto, then all the exits were denounced and filled. You know the continuation.

But now and without delay: what to be done? Please to read these actual news on Gaza and on Cisjordania by Ilan Pappé...

"Ilan Pappé is senior lecturer in the University of Haifa Department of political Science and Chair of the Emil Touma Institute for Palestinian Studies in Haifa. His books include, among others, The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict (London and New York 1992), The Israel/Palestine Question (London and New York 1999), A History of Modern Palestine (Cambridge 2003), The Modern Middle East (London and New York 2005) and his latest, Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine (2006)."

Two-as well different as possible but soldierly interlinked-sources; please note that the socialist link (that is not my party) from IT radioradiale does not present any resemblance with FR Socialist Party (that is not my party);-where all the contrary they make deep silence on the situation: <http://electronicinfada.net/v2/article6374.shtml> <http://fainotizia.radoradiale.it/2007/01/17/ilan-pappe-palestine-2007-geno-cide-in-gaza-ethnic-cleansing-in-the-west-bank>

—

Palestine 2007: Genocide in Gaza, Ethnic Cleansing in the West Bank Ilan Pappé,

On this stage, not so long ago, I claimed that Israel is conducting genocidal policies in the Gaza Strip. I hesitated a lot before using this very charged term and yet decided to adopt it. Indeed, the responses I received, including from some leading human rights activists, indicated a certain unease over the usage of such a term. I was inclined to rethink the term for a while, but came back to employing it today with even stronger conviction: it is the only appropriate way to describe what the Israeli army is doing in the Gaza Strip.

On 28 December 2006, the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem published its annual report about the Israeli atrocities in the occupied territories. Israeli forces killed this last year six hundred and sixty citizens. The number of Palestinians killed by Israel last year tripled in comparison to the previous year (around two hundred). According to B'Tselem, the Israelis killed one hundred and forty one children in the last year. Most of the dead are from the Gaza Strip, where the Israeli forces demolished almost 300 houses and slew entire families. This means that since 2000, Israeli forces killed almost four thousand Palestinians, half of them children; more than twenty thousand were wounded.

B'Tselem is a conservative organization, and the numbers may be higher. But the point is not just about the escalating intentional killing, it is about the trend and the strategy. As 2007 commences, Israeli policymakers are facing two very different realities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In the former, they are closer than ever to finishing the construction of their eastern border. Their internal ideological debate is over and their master plan for annexing half of the West Bank is being implemented at an ever-growing speed. The last phase was delayed due to the promises made by Israel, under the Road Map, not to build new settlements. Israel found two ways of circumventing this alleged prohibition. First, it defined a third of the West Bank as Greater Jerusalem, which allowed it to build within this new annexed area towns and community centers. Secondly, it expanded old settlements to such proportions so that there was no need to build new ones. This trend was given an additional push in 2006 (hundreds of caravans were installed to mark the border of the expansions, the planning schemes for the new towns and neighborhoods were finalized and the apartheid bypass roads and highway system completed). In all, the settlements, the army bases, the roads and the wall will allow Israel to annex almost half of the West Bank by 2010. Within these territories there will be a considerable number of Palestinians, against whom the Israeli authorities will continue to implement slow and creeping transfer policies – too boring as a subject for the western media to bother with and too elusive for human rights organizations to make a general point about them. There is no rush; as far as the Israelis are concerned, they have the upper hand there: the daily abusive and dehumanizing mixed mechanisms of army and bureaucracy is as effective as ever in contributing its own share to the dispossession process.

The strategic thinking of Ariel Sharon that this policy is far better than the one offered by the blunt 'transferists' or ethnic cleansers, such as Avigdor Liberman's advocacy, is accepted by everyone in the government, from Labor to Kadima. The petit crimes of state terrorism are also effective as they enable liberal Zionists around the world to softly condemn Israel and yet categorize any genuine criticism on Israel's criminal policies as anti-Semitism.

On the other hand, there is no clear Israeli strategy as yet for the Gaza Strip; but there is a daily experiment with one. Gaza, in the eyes of the Israelis, is a very different geo-political entity from that of the West Bank. Hamas controls Gaza, while Abu Mazen seems to run the fragmented West Bank with Israeli and American blessing. There is no chunk of land in Gaza that Israel covets and there is no hinterland, like Jordan, to which the Palestinians of Gaza can be expelled. Ethnic cleansing is ineffective here.

The earlier strategy in Gaza was ghettoizing the Palestinians there, but this is not working. The ghettoized community continues to express its will for life by firing primitive missiles into Israel. Ghettoizing or quarantining unwanted communities, even if they were regarded as sub-human or dangerous, never worked in history as a solution. The Jews know it best from their own history. The next stages against such communities in the past were even more horrific and barbaric. It is difficult to tell what the future holds for the Gaza population, ghettoized, quarantined, unwanted and demonized. Will it be a repeat of the ominous historical examples or is a better fate still possible?

Creating the prison and throwing the key to the sea, as UN Special Reporter John Dugard has put it, was an option the Palestinians in Gaza reacted against with force as soon as September 2005. They were determined to show at the very least that they were still part of the West Bank and Palestine. In that month, they launched the first significant, in number and not quality, barrage of missiles into the Western Negev. The shelling was a response to an Israeli campaign of mass arrests of Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists in the Tul Karem area. The Israelis responded with operation 'First Rain'. It is worth dwelling for a moment on the nature of that operation. It was inspired by the punitive

measures inflicted first by colonialist powers, and then by dictatorships, against rebellious imprisoned or banished communities. A frightening show of the oppressor's power to intimidate preceded all kind of collective and brutal punishments, ending with a large number of dead and wounded among the victims. In 'First Rain', supersonic flights were flown over Gaza to terrorize the entire population, succeeded by the heavy bombardment of vast areas from the sea, sky and land. The logic, the Israeli army explained, was to create pressure so as to weaken the Gaza community's support for the rocket launchers. As was expected, by the Israelis as well, the operation only increased the support for the rocket launchers and gave impetus to their next attempt. The real purpose of that particular operation was experimental. The Israeli generals wished to know how such operations would be received at home, in the region and in the world. And it seems that instantly the answer was 'very well'; namely, no one took an interest in the scores of dead and hundreds of wounded Palestinians left behind after the 'First Rain' subsided.

The bar set continually higher: Palestinians pass by a pool of blood after the Israeli shelling of a residential area in Beit Hanoun in the northern of Gaza Strip in which at least 18 people were killed, 8 November 2006. (MaanImages/Wesam Saleh)

And hence since 'First Rain' and until June 2006, all the following operations were similarly modeled. The difference was in their escalation: more firepower, more casualties and more collateral damage and, as to be expected, more Qassam missiles in response. Accompanying measures in 2006 were more sinister means of ensuring the full imprisonment of the people of Gaza through boycott and blockade, with which the EU is still shamefully collaborating.

The capture of Gilad Shalit in June 2006 was irrelevant in the general scheme of things, but nonetheless provided an opportunity for the Israelis to escalate even more the components of the tactical and allegedly punitive missions. After all, there was still no strategy that followed the tactical decision of Ariel Sharon to take out 8,000 settlers whose presence complicated 'punitive' missions and whose eviction made him almost a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize. Since then, the 'punitive' actions continue and become themselves a strategy.

The Israeli army loves drama and therefore also escalated the language. 'First Rain' was replaced by 'Summer Rains', a general name that was given to the 'punitive' operations since June 2006 (in a country where there is no rain in the summer, the only precipitation that one can expect are showers of F-16 bombs and artillery shells hitting people of Gaza).

'Summer Rains' brought a novel component: the land invasion into parts of the Gaza Strip. This enabled the army to kill citizens even more effectively and to present it as a result of heavy fighting within dense populated areas, an inevitable result of the circumstances and not of Israeli policies. With the close of summer came operation 'Autumn Clouds' which was even more efficient: on 1 November 2006, in less than 48 hours, the Israelis killed seventy civilians; by the end of that month, with additional mini operations accompanying it, almost two hundred were killed, half of them children and women. As one can see from the dates, some of the activity was parallel to the Israeli attacks on Lebanon, making it easier to complete the operations without much external attention, let alone criticism.

From 'First Rain' to 'Autumn Clouds' one can see escalation in every parameter. The first is the disappearance of the distinction between civilian and non-civilian targets: the senseless killing has turned the population at large to the main target for the army's operation. The second one is the escalation in the means: employment of every possible killing machines the Israeli army possesses. Thirdly, the escalation is conspicuous in the number of casualties: with each operation, and each future operation, a much larger number of people are likely to be killed and wounded. Finally, and most importantly, the operations become a strategy – the way Israel intends to solve the problem of the Gaza Strip.

A creeping transfer in the West Bank and a measured genocidal policy in the Gaza Strip are the two strategies Israel employs today. From an electoral point of view, the one in Gaza is problematic as it does not reap any tangible results; the West Bank under Abu Mazen is yielding to



Israeli pressure and there is no significant force that arrests the Israeli strategy of annexation and dispossession. But Gaza continues to fire back. On the one hand, this would enable the Israeli army to initiate more massive genocidal operations in the future. But there is also the great danger, on the other, that as happened in 1948, the army would demand a more drastic and systematic 'punitive' and collateral action against the besieged people of the Gaza Strip.

A source of satisfaction for Israel: Palestinians inspect a burnt vehicle belonging to Colonel Mohammad Ghareeb, the deputy chief of preventive security in Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip. The vehicle was burnt during factional clashes between Fatah and Hamas. (MaanImages/Wesam Saleh)

Ironically, the Israeli killing machine has rested lately. Even relatively large number of Qassam missiles, including one or two quite deadly ones, did not stir the army to action. Though the army's spokesmen say it shows 'restraint', it never did in the past and is not likely to do so in the future. The army rests, as its generals are content with the internal killing that rages on in Gaza and does the job for them. They watch with satisfaction the emerging civil war in Gaza, which Israel foments and encourages. From Israel's point of view it does not really matter how Gaza would eventually be demographically downsized, be it by internal or Israeli slaying. The responsibility of ending the internal fighting lies of course with the Palestinian groups themselves, but the American and Israeli interference, the continued imprisonment, the starvation and strangulation of Gaza are all factors that make such an internal peace process very difficult. But it will take place soon and then with the first early sign that it subsided, the Israeli 'Summer Rains' will fall down again on the people of Gaza, wreaking havoc and death.

And one should never tire of stating the inevitable political conclusions from this dismal reality of the year we left behind and in the face of the one that awaits us. There is still no other way of stopping Israel than besides boycott, divestment and sanctions. We should all support it clearly, openly, unconditionally, regardless of what the gurus of our world tell us about the efficiency or *raison d'etre* of such actions. The UN would not intervene in Gaza as it does in Africa; the Nobel peace laureates would not enlist to its defense as they do for causes in Southeast Asia. The numbers of people killed there are not staggering as far as other calamities are concerned, and it is not a new story – it is dangerously old and troubling. The only soft point of this killing machine is its oxygen lines to 'western' civilization and public opinion. It is still possible to puncture them and make it at least more difficult for the Israelis to implement their future strategy of eliminating the Palestinian people either by cleansing them in the West Bank or genociding them in the Gaza Strip.

-Alette

From christina112@earthlink.net Sun Jan 21 03:01:36 2007

Brian Holmes has asked me to forward .....

Hello Ricardo -

It is really brilliant to hear from you on this subject. Thanks a lot!

I can add little but still want to say how much I've been struck, in my visits to Brazil, by the lack of a state. The phrase is shocking (and certainly only true in one specific way), but it sums up an aspect that's hard for people from the developed world to understand, and maybe illuminating when you do.

The thing is that in the Brazil I have encountered, the great majority of art events, funding, publications, education and experience is limited to the classes who can pay for it out of their pocket. Before the Lula government, as far as I can tell, there were very few chances to do anything like the Autolabs. Art seems to be largely paid for and appreciated by multimillionaires, by the corporate officers of obscenely profitable banks and by the people who tag along with them. And to "tag along" with these people, as I briefly did on one visit, is really devastating: you realize that what is represented in national institutions is mostly also what's represented in these people's living rooms, where the decisions are made. Think hard before you say it's exactly the same in the developed world. What this additionally means is that all kinds of intermediaries, where they do exist - cultural centers, project funding, publishers, courses - are largely oriented towards a highly commercial and status-conscious scene set by the monied interests. Even Monica Nador's Jardim, when I visited it a couple years ago, betrayed lots of traces of this orientation, transformed in a kind of charitable way (but that was the very start, it is likely much different now). In such a context, for sure, the kinds of archiving projects, portable museums, informal discussion groups, popular libraries, webzines like Ricardo's and so forth are really fundamental.

You could say this is also true in Europe or North America or Australia, but not really in the same way. In all those places a broadly accessible university system has been frequented for generations by vast waves of people from rural and working class origins, who have made niches within the university and other state functions, developing a relative autonomy from the rich patrons that used to define art exclusively. I am sure this has happened in Brazil to some extent, maybe Ricardo can comment, but it seems very very different to me. Even in the Sao Paulo equivalent of municipal art centers - the relatively autonomous, often very welcoming and socially oriented SESC institutions, paid for by a tax on business - one can feel that it is someone else's property, that one's presence is tolerated, but maybe only sometimes. (I dunno, I was largely impressed with the SESCOs, but even there I got that feeling.) The incredible vitality and also combativeness of many of the young Brazilian art groups I have met - mostly "middle class" people who cannot stand their isolation from the rest of the population - all too often seems to come up against a wall of privilege.

The effect this realization had on me was less to make me romanticize marginal Brazilian projects - which I really admire, factually and without romanticization, no doubt about it - than to think much more about how to use the social-state functions in the developed countries, and for what. When I saw a world without a middle class in the litteral sense of the word (in Brazil, where the so-called "middle class" is maybe 10% of the population) or a world where the middle class is under attack (in Argentina, where there has been a huge slide toward poverty over the last 10 years), of course it made me appreciate the huge importance of what is "just another center-left reformist government" (as some would-be radicals want to say about Lula and the PT). But above all, it gave me different eyes to look on the social-state institutions back home, whether in France or the US. What I now see there is a whole segment of national populations who managed to escape the coordinates of the dominant-subordinate relation and institute a zone in which it is possible, sometimes, with luck, to become something else - to experiment, to develop another sensorium, another vocabulary, another way of thinking, to escape this painful orientation of "culture" to the ideal figures of the aristocracy and the industrial bourgeoisie or now, the financier class that inherited from the old aristocracies. I'm not talking about so-called "popular culture" which is often a nostalgic category - I am talking about a mutant culture, a culture that only emerged in the twentieth century. I am wondering if maybe, in our amnesiac societies, it is only possible to see such things when they are threatened. In a period where there is really a neoliberal attack on those social-state institutions, it is particularly important to go on trying to open them up to more kinds of circulation, more kinds of uses, and not just to defend the possibility to make pseudo-aristocratic art because you happen to have found your way into a safe or prestigious position.

Anyway, I recognize that all the above is painfully naive, and those who have always understood these things might have much much more to say.

thanks again Ricardo,

-Brian

From netwurker@gmail.com Sun Jan 21 20:30:10 2007

Melinda wrote,

"By we i am referring to cultural producers -that's the spot I sit in in this conversation.. have you produced any projects which raised money and/or secured resources to benefit other artists or writers or the community at large lately?"

...i'm currently n.gaged in a project doing just that...the proj is auction/exhibition for drought relief in the upper lachlan shire where the artists n.volved agree 2 auction off 1 of their wurks. it n.volves raising \$650,000 [2 fund drilling 14 community water bores on Council controlled land] + n.volves around 30 artists.

"I guarantee that that funders and institutions wont be philosophically musing on wether they subscribe to a heavily westernised conception of reality .. They will be wanting outcomes which are beneficial to their aims and goals and public profile."

actually most of the ppl n.volved have their primary motivations more altruistically oriented. granted there r those ppl [mostly agents] trying 4 a more market-based angle but surprisingly the n\_[stitutions]frastructures n.volved r trying to actually lessen the red tape rather than confuzzle with it....

"And sure you can route around that and slip into the institutional gaps and exploit the bugs in the social software and hardware , and get projects up in other contexts, not reliant on these avenues.. but really we all know that isn't sustainable."

in my neck-of-the-reality-woo[u]ds i use choice as a variable rather than [as you seem 2] offering a perspective of viewing the world thru blanket motivators/conceptions. ....+ i subscribe 2 the notion that the pervading theories prevalent at the time rn't th only 1's via which cultures b.comes viable. sustainability is now an xtremely load[irty]ed term [IMNSHO] appropriated via economical rationalism in order 2 mainstream [pigeon-hole] alternatives in2 an acceptable [moolah-bottom-line\_"reality"] framework. mel, i do understand that in ur world's architecture [which has obviously come about thru ur own choice\_set] u perceive this 2 b the only way 2 establish + maintain adequacy in terms of cultural formation[s]; i am just not convinced it's the only way; n.deed, i [+ a network of others] live the difference....."

"You get tired.."

u do sound exhausted :/

"Eg the facilitators of -empyre- change cause no one can devote that much time to doing a community service when they have to pay rent."

...whereas those of us that moderate the \_arc.hive\_ list have it set up on principles via which the vl of moderator control [like that here on empyre] isn't necessary?

"Perhaps you are alluding to romantic notions of symbiosis where interactions just happen and neither party is harmed nor helped - process similar to that of epiphytes - Air plants that absorb what they need from the air through their leaves, not through their roots - so they are

unusually hardy and adaptive . You can put them in anything...seashells, teacups, empty vases, driftwood...many people like to hang them on fishing line. These truly are a perfect gift for plant lovers and for people who can't grow anything... Ahh but i wander in pseudo-modernist reverie."

a lovely wandering, tho i'm b unkeen 2 equate my position with a type of romanticism if [by that] you're m.plying a lvl of fanciful projection that doesn't gel well with the practicalities of how this all manifests?

"Then there are the benefactors who give you money for nothing, people who don't seem to want anything but the good of media arts.. But if one objects to western capitalism so much then all money is sullied and must be rejected."

i'm not sure how 2 respond 2 this type of x.treme polarising; i'm not advocating a complete rejection of western capitalism @ all but am rather trying 2 offer a modality description that doesn't display n.trinsic/absolutist economic rationalism @ its core ?

"Someone pointed out to me another perspective on how perverse the whole of second life representation is. And i saw the wonderment of that world and error of my ways.. I truly appreciate Eva and Franco Mattes 13 most beautiful avatars series."

fair enuff.

-][mez][

From henry.warwick@sbcglobal.net Mon Jan 22 16:41:21 2007 Mez wrote:

i'm not sure how 2 respond 2 this type of x.treme polarising; i'm not advocating a complete rejection of western capitalism @ all

=====

why not?

=====

but am rather trying 2 offer a modality description that doesn't display n.trinsic/absolutist economic rationalism @ its core ?

=====

You write: modality description I read: rationalisation for acquiescence

Rejecting global suicide != absolutist economic rationalism

-Henry

From melinda@anat.org.au Mon Jan 22 23:32:13 2007

Mez wrote,

"...i'm currently engaged in a project doing just that...the project is auction/exhibition for drought relief in the upper Lachlan shire where the artists involved agree 2 auction off 1 of their works. it involves raising \$650,000 [2 fund drilling 14 community water bores on Council controlled land] + involves around 30 artists."

Mez, this is great and I hope the project raises lots of money for the drought affected communities.. I see that Woolworth's is donating its profits tomorrow to the drought relief as well..its pretty heart breaking to see our county becoming barren and the animals dying. Jared Diamond's predictions as Australia being the continent to collapse first are starting to seem quite possible. My city is predicted to run out of water next year.

However I was referring to projects which benefit or skill or provide good income and working conditions and facilities to artists , rather than ones which rely on the artist, yet again , donating their time and services to the good of society as a whole.. I m talking about asking Australian society to support art practitioners not the other way around.

An example: In 2005 I was one of 6 or 7 judges on a \$10,000 blog award,, there were ten finalists from 100s of entries, wine blogs, car blogs, young mother parenting blogs, 1 art blog. the artist won it.. Both she and i were slagged off mercilessly in blogs around the county ..she for basically being an artist and accepting grant money.. And me as I was the judge suspected of giving her a high score, as in the opinion of a segment of the blog community , artistic merit didn't merit.. In fact another judge gave her a higher score than me - however I said nothing publicly at the time, as it just would have inflamed it more and that's judging etiquette.. but to me this exemplified our extreme cultural distrust and dislike (among intelligent articulate well educated people ) of anything differently creative..

The tabloid press loves nothing more than to talk about how our public money is being miss spent on un-Australian art.. think "escape from wommera" think disbanding of the Australia council's New Media Arts board and CCD board -funnily enough the two areas of arts practice in the country that produce art which is highly visibly critical of government policy and cultural norms.

"me, i do understand that in ur world's architecture [which has obviously come about thru ur own choice\_set] u perceive this 2 b the only way 2 establish + maintain adequacy in terms of cultural formation[s]; i am just not convinced it's the only way; indeed, i [+ a network of others] live the difference.....".

Great..i wish you well..and lets talk about it again in another ten years..

"...whereas those of us that moderate the \_arc.hive\_ list have it set up on principles via which the lvl of moderator control [like that here on empyre] isn't necessary?"

Yes and its very different list.. I think empyre aims for plurality of opinion.

"a lovely wandering, tho i'm b unkeen 2 equate my position with a type of romanticism if [by that] you're m.plying a lvl of fanciful projection that doesn't gel well with the practicalities of how this all manifests?"

I'm really liking the Air Plant metaphor.. I think its a little catchier than Keith Gallashe's media artists as slime mould and bottom feeder metaphors.. (people outside of Australia may not get this reference) In fact the more I think about it, the more I'm speculating that air plants and soil free gardening must have been the inspiration for Ken Wark's " we no longer have roots - we have ariels" byte.. I didnt know Ken liked gardening...

-Melinda

From christina112@earthlink.net Tue Jan 23 04:44:16 2007

dear list,

please welcome Sharon Daniel (US).

Sharon is an Associate Professor of Film and Digital Media at the University of California, Santa Cruz where she teaches classes in digital media theory and practice. Her research involves collaborations with communities that focus on the use and development of information and communications technologies for social inclusion. Her role as an artist is that of "context provider," - working with communities, collecting their stories, soliciting their opinions, and building online archives to make this data available across social, cultural and economic boundaries. Her new project on women in California prisons is very shortly going to be launching online with the Vectors project (see <http://www.vectorsjournal.org/> )

-cm

From sdaniel@ucsc.edu Tue Jan 23 05:04:44 2007

My sincere apologies for entering this conversation so late. I have lurked a bit, and today I sped-read through the month's posts, but I have been unable to join you up to now because of a pressing project deadline. I have been working around the clock to prepare for the launch of project that I have been engaged in for more than three years. This project, "Public Secrets," will be published online in Vectors Journal of Culture and Technology in just a few days. "Public Secrets," is, in part, why Christina invited me to participate in this discussion - because it implicitly and explicitly addresses the question "What is Bare-life," the second Documenta leitmotif and the focus of an earlier exchange on -empyre-

The 'public secret' - the secret the public keeps safe from itself - is interposed between the question of "what is Bare-life" and the question of "what is to be done." It is difficult to acknowledge the atrocities that we are implicated in - the pervasiveness of bare-life (the refugee, the prisoner, the illegal immigrant, the shanty-town resident), when we cannot see "what is to be done."

There have been many interesting and valuable points made so far in this discussion of "what is to be done," particularly in the various critiques of the of the question itself; its focus on futurity and problem solving, its assumptions and presumptions, its self-reflexivity in this context, and its implicit acceptance of power relations. I am too late to join in these threads and not sure I would have anything useful to add except to paraphrase Foucault (just in case no one else has) 'all domination is power, but not all power is domination' Power relations are inevitable but I believe that ethical resistance is possible.

To explain briefly what I am suggesting by the phrase "ethical resistance" I will to quote David Hoy -

"I use 'ethics' broadly to refer to obligations that present themselves as necessarily to be fulfilled but that are neither forced on one nor enforceable. Ethical resistance involves the individual more than the institution or the population. It may be the basis for an individual's choice of engaging in social or political resistance. Yet it requires a different kind of explanation. For Emmanuel Levinas, ethical resistance is not the attempt to use power against itself, or to mobilize sectors of the population to exert their political power; ethical resistance is instead the resistance of the powerless." - Critical Resistance

To build on Hoy's explanation of ethical resistance I would like to return to an earlier adaptation of our question - "what is being done." The most obvious approach to me is to look at the practices that each of us engage, from within our own ethos, as artists, scholars, activists, colleagues, daughters.

I am interested in developing an anecdotal theory of what can be done by looking at what we do and what we learn when we act out of our own ethos in response to our socio-political context on any scale - global, institutional or personal. I'd like to thank Ricardo Rosas and Dirk Vekemans for providing descriptions of wonderful projects in their recent posts. This is what I have to offer (not as an answer to "what is to be done" but as an indication of what I feel I should do - how I see my own responsibility to act in ethical and critical resistance), two projects; "Palabras\_" and "Public Secrets".

You can find "Palabras\_" here - <http://palabrastranquilas.ucsc.edu> "Public Secrets" will launch in just a few days, here <http://www.vectorsjournal.org/> or you can go directly to the project at [http://vectorsjournal.org/issues/04\\_issue/publicsecrets/](http://vectorsjournal.org/issues/04_issue/publicsecrets/) =20 but you will miss all the introductory statements. Here is a copy of my "authors statement" about the project below. I apologize for the length. "Truth is not a matter of exposure which destroys the secret, but a revelation that does justice to it." Walter Benjamin - The Origin of German Tragic Drama

There are secrets that are kept from the public and then there are "public secrets" - secrets that the public chooses to keep safe from itself, like the troubling "don't ask, don't tell." The trick to the public secret is in knowing what not to know. This is the most powerful form of social knowledge. Such shared secrets sustain social and political institutions. The injustices of the war on drugs, the criminal justice system, and the Prison Industrial Complex are "public secrets."

The public perception of justice - the figure of its appearance - relies on the public not acknowledging that which is generally known. When faced with massive sociological phenomena such as racism, poverty, addiction, abuse, it is easy to slip into denial. This is the ideological work that the prison does. It allows us to avoid the ethical by relying on the juridical.

The expansion of the prison system is possible because it is a public secret - a secret kept in an unacknowledged but public agreement not to know what imprisonment really means to individuals and their communities. As the number of prisons increases, so does the level of secrecy about what goes on inside them. The secret of the abuses perpetrated by the Criminal Justice System and Prison Industrial Complex can be heard in many stories told by many narrators, but only when they are allowed to speak. After a series of news stories and lawsuits documenting egregious mistreatment of prisoners in 1993, the California Department of Corrections imposed a media ban on all of its facilities. This ongoing ban prohibits journalists from face-to-face interviews, eliminates prisoners' right to confidential correspondence with media representatives, and bars the use of cameras, recording devices, and writing instruments in interviews with media representatives. Women incarcerated in California are allowed visits only from family members and legal representatives. Inmates are not allowed access to computers, cameras, tape recorders or media equipment of any kind. Such restrictions preserve the public secret.

For the past three years, I have visited the Central California Women's Facility [CCWF] as a legal advocate. I work with a non-profit, human rights organization, Justice Now <http://jnow.org>. =20 Together we have been documenting conversations with women prisoners at CCWF,

the largest female correctional facility in the United States in an effort to unmask the well known, yet still secret injustices that result from our society's reliance on prisons to solve social problems. Given the ban on conversations with the media, I would not have had access to the women who have contributed to Public Secrets without the support of Justice Now. As a "legal advocate" I am allowed to record my conversations with the women and solicit their stories, ideas, and opinions.

The visits require adherence to Kafkaesque regulations and acceptance of invasive search and surveillance procedures. I am registered for each visit in advance and searched on entry. I am allowed to bring in only a clear plastic baggie with a clear ink pen, my drivers license, a blank legal pad and my mini-disc recorder. The recorder has to be approved weeks in advance (the serial number is registered and checked) and the device is inspected on entry and exit. Only factory-sealed discs are permitted in.

After our interviews the women are subject to strip search and visual body cavity searches that may be performed by male guards.

Clearly, the women I work with are highly politicized and are seriously committed to this endeavor. For these women our conversations are acts of ethical and political testimony - testimony that challenges the underlying principles of distributive justice and the dehumanising mechanisms of the prison system. They are quite literally historians and theorists who speak out in an effort of collective resistance. I collaborate with them first as a witness and then as a "context provider." After soliciting their opinions and collecting their stories, it is my responsibility to create a context in which their voices can be heard across social, cultural and economic boundaries. My conversations with these women therefore form the basis of Public Secrets which in turn brings their voices into dialogue with other legal, political and social theorists such as Giorgio Agamben, Michael Taussig, Walter Benjamin, Fredric Jameson, Catherine MacKinnon, and Angela Davis. While this is a dialogue that I have constructed between interlocutors whose perspectives originate from very diverse social locations, for me all of their voices emerge out of a shared ethos and converge in critical resistance.

The linking of these voices that occurs in Public Secrets began in an essay "The Public Secret: Information and Social Knowledge [http://www.intelligentagent.com/archive/Vol6\\_No2\\_community\\_domain\\_daniel=20](http://www.intelligentagent.com/archive/Vol6_No2_community_domain_daniel=20) that I wrote for a special issue of the online journal Intelligent Agent. The essay also provided a point of departure for the design of the data structure that organizes the content of Public Secrets. In all of this work, I see the public secret as an aporia - an irresolvable internal contradiction, between power and knowledge, between information and denial, between the masks of politics and the goals of an open society (one in which the state is expected to act for the people as guarantor of human and civil rights). Building on this concept, we have created three main branches within Public Secrets, each structured as an aporia; inside/outside, bare-life/human-life, and public secret/utopia. Each aporia frames multiple themes and threads elaborated in clusters of narrative, theory and evidence. Together they explore the space of the prison - physical, economic, political and ideological - and how the space of the prison acts back on the space outside to disrupt and, in effect, undermine the very forms of legality, security and freedom that the prison system purportedly protects.

Three years ago, on visiting day, I walked through a metal detector and into the Central California Womens' Facility. It changed my life. The stories I heard inside challenged my most basic perceptions - of our system of justice, of freedom and of responsibility. Walk with me across this boundary between inside and outside, bare-life and human-life, and listen to Public Secrets.

-Sharon

From [henry.warwick@sbcglobal.net](mailto:henry.warwick@sbcglobal.net) Wed Jan 24 11:24:25 2007 Sharon wrote:



There are secrets that are kept from the public and then there are "public secrets" - secrets that the public chooses to keep safe from itself, like the troubling "don't ask, don't tell." The trick to the public secret is in knowing what not to know. This is the most powerful form of social knowledge. Such shared secrets sustain social and political institutions. The injustices of the war on drugs, the criminal justice system, and the Prison Industrial Complex are "public secrets."

=====

OK - here's a few public secrets:

1. There are too many people.
2. We are way into overshoot and unless massive sacrifices are made immediately in terms of economic and material wealth that is re-directed into mitigation efforts, the planet will experience a massive die off in the 21st century.
3. Government exists to protect and project the interests of the ruling class.
4. We Are Atlantis.

-Henry

\*\*\* TRIAL VERSION OF TEXTSOAP 5

From sdaniel@ucsc.edu Fri Jan 26 05:53:54 2007

I just want to say to Henry that I agree - the phenomena that he lists certainly fit the definition of the public secret, particularly because of their apparent intractability. It is difficult to know what is to be done in the face of such overwhelming problems. It is much easier to slip into collective denial. How do we force ourselves to face our own self-annihilation? and at the scale of the problems Henry addressed? The list he posted - his focus on overpopulation and depleted resources - made me think of an interestingly controversial project "A-Portable", a refurbished shipping container that functioned as a mobile gynecological clinic designed by Atelier Van Leishout in collaboration with Dr. Rebecca Gompers, founder of "Women on Waves" in Amsterdam. "A-Portable" was designed to allow Dr. Gomperts to make first trimester abortions available where the procedure is illegal by performing them in international waters - 19km from shore just outside national jurisdiction - free of charge. "A-Portable" was exhibited as a work of art in the Venice Biennale and the subsequent media attention was intended to provoke activism that would lead to legislative change. There were many questions around the actual use of "A-Portable" after the exhibition and initial launch. I admit have not followed the history of the project and I don't mean to suggest that it was a successful intervention but I bring it up merely as an example of a pragmatic strategic approach to both education (direct education in the clinic setting and political education through the media) and activism that operated, in part, in the realm of art practice and exhibition. It also provided a catalyst for legal activism. I was very taken with a quote from the text, which accompanied the exhibition at the Venice Biennale,

"To understand the work one must move from ontology, [what is art?] to pragmatism [what can art do?]. Herein lies a possible revival of avant-garde politics - no longer historically "ahead", nor operating through shock and estrangement, but rather producing works that make things possible right now..."

I think that A-portable actually did operate through shock and estrangement and, I think that is why it succeeded in getting the attention that it did - - if it was ever really operative it could also have changed the realities of the individuals and communities it engaged. While I tend to see the latter as much more important there is the problem of scale that Henry's post makes clear.

There are many answers to the question "what can art do?" in productive and practical resistance to the public secret at varying levels of scale - Ricardo's post provides a number of really productive answers in the realm of grass-roots activism and critical pedagogy which do not rely on shock estrangement and do not always get the attention of the art world or media that is necessary to facilitate social change.

-Sharon

From marc.garrett@furtherfield.org Fri Jan 26 09:30:52 2007

"To understand the work one must move from ontology, (what is art?) to pragmatism (what can art do?). Herein lies a possible revival of avant-garde politics - no longer historically "ahead", nor operating through shock and estrangement, but rather producing works that make things possible right now..."

beautiful...

marc

From cpr@mindspring.com Sat Jan 27 04:58:45 2007

It somehow seems in keeping with our discussion to forward this link to a piece recently produced by one of our former MFA graduates, Mindy Shapero, the title of which is:

"The one eye that saw everything before it was sent to the circle traps, it rotates in order to maintain all secrets but once it stops they begin to slip out, " 2006

<http://artkrush.com/mailler/issue46/popups/w1.html>

-Christiane

From sdaniel@ucsc.edu Sat Jan 27 05:35:52 2007

Ricardo wrote: "So from this point of view, education, as much as it, in a way or another, may involve art, can happen in many situations outside institutional contexts or market-driven interests. I believe education is a very broad term, and if we talk about art, (or activism, in another guise), why not see an artwork that intervenes in the public sphere as educational, or else an activist manifestation as a form of "critical pedagogy" as in Freire's idea?"

I agree that it is useful - in this context and in general - to think of community based activist art practices as a form of education. Freire's pedagogy is, of course, a well known and extremely productive approach to the problem of hierarchies and relations of power mentioned earlier in the month in this discussion.

In the projects Ricardo described the artist often apparently functions as an organizer. I was lucky enough to be able to attend a one day symposium led by the members of the UltraRed collective where there was considerable discussion of the difference between the terms "organizer" and "activist" in relation to art practice. Here is their record of the event. <http://www.ultrared.org/publicrecord/archive/2-01/2-01-011/2-01-011.html> And here is Leonardo Vilchis's statement that addresses how he sees the difference between organizer and activist <http://www.ultrared.org/publicrecord/archive/2-01/2-01-011/2-01-011-05.mp3> for him the difference has to do with the artist/activist/organizers' position within the community that is engaged by and in the work itself.

I'd like to add to the list of descriptions of work that "intervenes in the public sphere" as critical pedagogy an organization in Buenos Aires that I have had the privilege of working with - Crear Vale la Pena <http://www.crearvalelapena.org.ar/> The foundation was started by choreographer and sociologist Ines Sanguinetti in the mid 80's. Crear has established educational, community and program centers in some of the poorest neighborhoods in Buenos Aires. They use Artistic training for Social Transformation.

Crear Vale la Pena is an independent non-governmental organization based in Buenos Aires. Founded and directed by sociologist and choreographer Ines Sanguinetti, Crear Vale La Pena works for Art & Social Transformation. Crear has established educational, community and program centers in some of the poorest neighborhoods in Buenos Aires, providing nearly 1,000 children and young adults every year with a range of some 90 different courses in various artistic disciplines. The courses offer young people living on the social and economic fringe the opportunity to receive training in modern dance, Hip Hop, street dance, theatre, music and comedy from professional artists. These young people also learn important social skills at the three self-administrated cultural centers in the city.

In my opening post I mentioned two projects - one of these, Palabras\_ <<http://palabrastranquilas.ucsc.edu>>, is in part a collaboration with Crear Vale la Pena. In August 2005 Argentine Choreographer Susana Szperling began working with Palabras\_ at the Foundation with a small group of young dancers who collaborated in developing choreography through improvisation based on their day-to-day experience in their own neighborhood (a shanty town in the northern part of Buenos Aires called "la cava"). The dancers used Palabras\_ tools to extend their investigation of life in their neighborhood and provide a background setting for a dance performance. The palabras tools are also being used in schools in Buenos Aires and Kiel, Germany as a platform for cultural exchange. In Buenos Aires these workshops are directed by young people who have been trained at Crear. The Palabras\_ collaboration is just a very small part of the extensive, long-standing and very successful efforts of Ines and Crear which are described at their site. I have included a description of/reflection on my work with Crear in a residency in Kiel below for anyone who is interested. This was cut and pasted from a piece written for another context so I apologize for the length - again - a brief description of a workshop residency collaboration with Crear in Kiel is near the end.

best, Sharon

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Palabras\_ <http://palabrastranquilas.ucsc.edu> is a web application that employs tagging to generate a spontaneous or "improvised" map of correspondences and connections between communities in various locations.

The project was based on the concept of the "community computer," first proposed by activist Bruno Tardieu. The "community computer" is a social and technological system much like a typical computer in which words can make things happen and associative memory evolves over time. While the "personal computer" provides a communications gateway to the Internet where communities of interest can evolve regardless of distance, the concept of the "community computer" is intended not to bypass, but to strengthen, communities of place - particularly marginalized communities - and to enable and empower them.

Unlike other Folksonomic media sites (Flickr, and Utube, for example) Palabras\_ employs tagging in the context of place-based workshops designed to allow communities that may not normally have access to the internet to use media and information technologies to represent themselves and their own circumstances. Palabras also adopts the tactics of Do-It-Yourself technology to provide low cost and context appropriate media acquisition tools. Through Palbras\_ workshops communities not traditionally thought of as scholarly or academic, produce knowledge and interpret their own experience.

The Palabras\_ website currently provides access to an archive of over 2000 video clips created in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Kiel, Germany, San Francisco and San Jose, California (US) and Darfur, Sudan, through the folksonomies participant-communities have evolved. The Palabras workshop tools and database browser adopt the folksonomic method to give participants the opportunity to interpret and classify their own content. This method also simultaneously generates a map of semantic associations between the self-representations created by participant-communities across languages and cultures.

At each site Palabras\_ workshop participants document their daily lives with inexpensive, disposable digital video cameras "hacked" to make them reusable. They subsequently "tag," organize, and share their videos online using the Palabras\_ "editor". This custom-built web-application was designed to facilitate the discovery of relationships and connections between participants' personal stories by allowing them to label or "tag" their video content with a shared vocabulary that is both originated by, and familiar to them. The web-application also provides simple tag search, editing and sequencing tools participants may use to create video sequences using clips created by members of their community as well as their own clips. Participants can search for relevant clips from their site by tag or browse via their site's tag cloud. The tag cloud visualizes all of the tags that belong to a site using a distribution algorithm, which scales the size of a tag related to the number of times it has been used. For example, a participant at Crear Vale la Pena in Buenos Aires might scan the site's tag cloud and decide to make a sequence of clips tagged with "cuerpo" or "body" by which is very large in the site's tag cloud - indicating that there are many clips associated with this tag. The participant may select a tag and then choose from the clips that are subsequently displayed. The clip editor also lists related tags for each clip - all the other tags associated with the clip - and the participant may choose to search these tags to look for clips in order to construct a sequence based on this network of semantic associations. Visitors to this site may also add tags to clips and sequences in the archive.

Palabras\_ workshops in local cultural centers at each Palabras\_ site have focused on strategies for collective self-representation. Most recently, Palabras\_ was used by participants in a ten day workshop/residency in Kiel, Germany. Dancers and Musicians from Foundation Crear Vale la Pena (creativity is worthwhile) <<http://www.crearvalelapena.org.ar/>> in Buenos Aires traveled to Kiel to collaborate with young people from the Mettenhof neighborhood on the development of a media and dance-theater presentation exploring the concept of "respect." Participants used Palabras\_ video cameras, tagging and editing tools in a series of "investigations" of the concept which were incorporated into the media/dance-theater presentation developed over the course of the residency. The results of these investigations are accessible through the Palabras\_ browser under the site named "respect". The Argentinian dancers and musicians from Crear Vale la Pena and the

young people from Kiel did not speak the same language. For several of the young people from Kiel, German was a second and relatively new language. Therefore, discussions on the meaning of respect were conducted in several languages simultaneously (Spanish, German, English, Romany, Kurdish and Russian) first in translation and then through the development of extra-linguistic means of communication in exercises designed to develop trust and mutual respect among the participants. These exercises engaged the participant pairs in a joint effort to articulate and represent their own experiences of social exclusion and inclusion through movement, music making, video making, discussion, and analysis.

For example, the first video making exercise began with a discussion (translated) on the meaning of respect and social inclusion. Everyone present participated in developing a series of ten questions on the nature of respect, which were written down in Spanish and German. The participants were then organized into pairs - one Spanish speaker and one German speaker - and given one of the "hacked" video cameras. The partners used the camera to record each other's answers to the questions and then to record each partner attempting to interpret the other's answers. Since the partners did not speak the same language they had to develop extra-linguistic means of both communicating and interpreting meaning in order to complete the task. Over the first five days of the residency the same pairs were given several other tasks in video making, movement and music making, which involved extra-linguistic communication. There were also many other translated discussions and rehearsals. When all of the video exercises were complete the pairs worked together to tag and sequence their clips using the Palabras\_ editor. The clips were incorporated into the public media/dance-theater presentation primarily as segments displayed in a projection of the Palabras\_ browser between each dance or musical segment. During the performance each workshop participant triggered a clip to play by selecting a tag and told the story and meaning of the clip to the audience while the clip played. In the dress rehearsal there was a moment of confusion. One of the narrators, Vanessa, whose first language is Romany and second language is German, could not remember the tag she had used for the clip she was to narrate and was searching for her password instead of the tag. Confusion increased as the problem was translated in English, Spanish and German - to no avail. Finally, Cachito, Vanessa's video making/tagging partner, who's only language is Spanish, was called upon to help. Vanessa and Cachito sorted things out in a few seconds, communicating by means of idiosyncratic gestures, facial expressions and un-translated Romany and Spanish 'key' words.

Through the tagging, editing and video exercises, Vanessa and Cachito, and all of the Spanish/German speaking pairs, improvised a method of communication that used translation, not merely in its linguistic sense, but in the sense of "a motion across, a traversal." Their method of translation reflects its mathematical definition - "a transformation in which the origin of a coordinate system (in this case, the complex coordinate system of nationality - language, cultural identity, political citizenship, class, and race), is moved to a new position or across a boundary, while the direction of each axis (in this case, each individual's subjective identity), is maintained (respected, recognized, accepted, and acknowledged)."

This is mode of translation mapped in Palabras\_.

The "hacked" disposable cameras provide the means by which participants can document and represent their own experience. The browser interface allows a global and international audience online to examine the ways in which place-based communities and individuals describe their own social contexts. Visitors online can contribute to the evolving folksonomy that organizes these representations in clusters of semantic association.

What is shared among and between participant communities, and interpreted by both visitors and participants alike, is visualized in the tag cloud as an improvised map of correspondences across cultures.

The folksonomy generated here constitutes an emerging language - a common language that is associative and cross-contextual - a hybrid language that merges word and image into a kind of mediatized Esperanto. This common language - this folksonomic Esperanto - is the result of the use of media and information technologies and it is the use of technology.

The Palabras tools and interfaces translate - shifting the social location of knowledge to produce critical consciousness necessary to challenge existing relations of power.

The fundamental premise of Palabras\_ is that the images through which we view the experience and perspectives of others should be originated in context, interpreted, organized and disseminated by those who are represented. In this way communication, exchange, awareness and understanding can be generated from the bottom up, not the top down.

-Sharon

From cpr@mindspring.com Sat Jan 27 08:04:53 2007

I am finding myself in a rather remarkably tricky position here given my own history as an artist and cultural producer. Perhaps that is best, as it allows me a measure of validity to take a rather polemic stance in this discussion. It appears that we have come full circle from the questions and positions which I posed in my initial posting. "It could be suggested that Roger Buerger's laudable utterance of "what is to be done?" is being imagined within a seeming consensual utopian dream for global salvation through the exhibition of various cultural practices. My reading of the subtext of his statement is as a collective consciousness or understanding of art practices as inhabiting the realm of an almost secular spiritualism and, as such, a wish for artists to engage in a somewhat evangelical aesthetic response.

During the course of the past 15 years or so, and especially so in urban pockets of Northern California, I have witnessed a regional cultural specificity of art practices which reflects the imperative and enculturation of a wider political spectrum. It takes the form of revamping mid-20thc notions of engaging with issues of possibility over those which now demand we engage with issues of necessity ... those of survival, of social and cultural welfare, if you will. In other words we ( at least those of us in the US and I suspect elsewhere as we have seen) no longer have the luxury of engaging with the "possibility "of intrinsic forms of art practice = as we ( at least some of us ) are now necessarily preoccupied with "necessities" required by our own and others survival.

This engagement appears to include:

1. an advocacy - a pragmatism if you will - that mirrors a form of 20th c US New Deal-style political activism. Only this time around it is without the benefit of substantive governmental public funding and support. It is now incumbent upon those individuals who can now afford to engage with cultural production to provide such support to those that may not be able to do that for themselves. Where I feel discomfort is in:
  - a. the unfortunate glare of neo-colonialism which now is truly privatized within the dynamics of class relationality and cultural practices;
  - b. The vulnerability of the sustained life of such efforts when they are subject to the fickleness of privatization and the marketplace.
  - c. The binary opposition of the economics of the art market with those of the narrowcasting of 20thc notions of the social function of art. By this I refer to the seeming inability to see value in art practices other than those of the market value or those of the use value associated with

community art practices. Does art practice not have an intrinsic cultural value in and of itself? How does one negotiate and re-situate that meaning within the construct of this binary frame?

2. A charge to American artist and intellectuals (often synonymous with the Left here in the US) to take the fight for social justice out of the ivory tower, out of the galleries and museums and back into the streets of wherever.

3. That art will rehabilitate an increasingly pessimistic and theoretical liberalism, for which hopelessness has become fashionable... as a viable agent for social change. The affirmation that art practices can offer communities what self-respect can offer individuals: a necessary condition for self-improvement - in whatever form that may take.

4. The implication that in order to make meaningful social contributions, artists need to more or less kick their conceptual habit. This may harken back to Melinda's earlier statement and demand more critical discussion.

Whether an artist/interventionist needs to speak the plain language of Dr. Phil's "tough love," a political /analyst, or secular theologian of the religion of utopian democracy. At least some artists have chosen the role of active rather than that of passive spectator or the lap poodle with a Mohawk fashionably populating the marketplace. However, this persistent identification with what is perceived by many to be a liberal/leftist political position ( re: G.H earlier response) locates artists in a seemingly moral high ground - as privileging a particular set of values for art practice and human interaction. It defines an artist as not one who continually advances existing vocabularies ( dominant cultural legacies ) but one who is reinscribing existing social-economic imperatives and, subsequently, must then defend the position created by that reinscription.

This is tricky and becomes increasingly problematized for any attempt to situate an individuated cultural socio- politico- artistic discourse. It is easily ( and often wrongly ) construed as a demonstration that one lacks the broad-based intellectualism, sophistication, courage, enterprise and elasticity this thought requires. It calls for an artist to be pulled in all directions needing to be simultaneously everywhere nowhere.

We all need to acknowledge the problematic position that we have created in our attempts to bridge the gap between the conventions of the market place of art practice, social theorizing and political activism. In doing so, this concession is just as much an invitation to enter this labyrinth of the intricately wrought contestations of the art world, as it is an admission of possible conceptual inadequacy driven by the exigencies of social necessity. Certainly, we can justify the compromises of any of these modes of cultural engagement as problematic precisely because they constitute an inscription of a new mode - one that is impossible to validate in the present as "a new vocabulary ... which will have its utility explained only retrospectively". We will only be able to look back from the ever-receding future.

As critic Sande Cohen states in *Academia and the Luster of Capital* "Historical thought," writes Cohen, "is a way of establishing the power of what is believed to be irreducibly social.... We have to say that past 'victims' nonetheless 'resisted'; we have to say that a better future is possible; we have to say that we are not socially extraneous, but necessary agents of larger processes."

-Christiane

From melinda@anat.org.au Mon Jan 29 19:03:34 2007 I am forwarding this post from Sean Cubitt to the Crumb list , where there is a good conversation going on t about economics of art, as it seems quite pertinent..

— Forwarded Message From: Sean Cubitt <scubitt@UNIMELB.EDU.AU>

I guess people have already read George Yudice's superb book on The Expediency of Culture. But it's worth recalling the problem he starts with: that today in order to secure funding it is not enough to say you are going to do something cultural. You have to supply an economic argument, that there will be a short and preferably a long-term economic benefit from your activities. And a social result - that you will be supplying some of the welfare, physical or psychological or community-building, that has otherwise been trampled on and to some extent destroyed in the market liberalisations and neo-liberal de- nationalisation / deregulation and destruction of the welfare state. And you will supply a moral result which replaces the old religions but must not offer messianic solutions, revolutionary or Islamic - an ethics without ethics, which is kinda hard to achieve in its own right.)...

Not surprisingly, so burdened, culture loses the central imperative to do something cultural. And it becomes increasingly difficult to either find a precise or at least workable definition of culture as creativity, or to find a rationale comprehensible to anyone other than the beneficiaries of the grant-aid system or the art economy for art-making as a pursuit worth undertaking in its own right. The idea that the level of art activity and participation is a measure of 'civilisation' risks being pure PR for social formations with the barest qualification for the term 'civilised' (treatment of indigenous people, tent cities, invasion after invasion of developing nations . . . ).

When democracy, truth, justice and freedom are ashes in the mouths of Bush, Howard and your least favourite politicians, is it possible to make a case that these are the resources that art brings? And that neo-conceptualist and shock-jock art does anything like that?

To quote Bjork, I believe in beauty. We know that beauty is often a lie; that any commercial, any porn flick, can claim the beauty we might claim for art; and that refining what we mean by the word is likely to result in alienating anyone whose idea of beauty is dissimilar, populist. The Irish poet John Montague has a poem called the Pursuit of beauty where he describes quite lovingly a farmer who lugs home a concrete swan he has bought for five bob in the market.

Is it about the things / actions; or is it about enabling the richness of experience of that farmer?

There are already works in the new media field which, like Bert Brecht's plays, are crowd-pleasers \_and\_ go on producing ideas, experiences, emotions, sensations that you never had before. And, in Robert Lowell's phrase, 'commence in delight and end in wisdom'. Koons loots the supermarkets of pop culture for the delectation of Manhattan socialites. Brecht loots the glories of the Western Tradition for the benefit of factory workers. Ditto Mayakovsky and Eisenstein. Though I disagree with relational Aesthetics, Bourriaud seems to be doing this kind of work at the Palais de Tokyo.

New media arts can be as well-crafted as The Matrix, as emotionally satisfying as Deadwood, as intellectually stimulating as Simon Sharma, and more so, \_and\_ offer that multi-levelled experience that allows you to come back again and again to the work for all those things, and find them new. Curation is the art of placing works in dialogue so that even more is revealed (unconcealed?). To get those audiences, we just have to make shows that are more fascinating than Liverpool FC, Gnarl's Barkly and Quake.

Long live neo-populism! " —Sean Cubitt

-Melinda



From melinda@anat.org.au Mon Jan 29 20:30:33 2007

This has been a wide ranging discussion.. from Olivier's beautiful scene setting postings through many manifestations of political engagement or non engagement. There have been some great projects discussed and some openings opened..we haven't really carried through much though.. Perhaps postulating is enough?

As a guest I've been rather flipant as I have mostly been at a loss for anything to say. However my lovely Post Office Box has provided me with another perspective.. Odd unexpected gifts arrive in it. In the last few months it has mysteriously yielded such delicious surprises as the - empyre- publication from the Art Gallery of Knoxville, and a hilarious show reel from Happy Inc.

Its most recent offering is a copy of the Autumn 06 Maska magazine from Slovenia, on Artistic Activism. In an article called "the Collaboration and Space" philosopher Bojana Kunst from the Uni of Ljubljana writes at length about the Russia collective of artists writers and theorists "Chto delat" or in english "What is to be Done?" and their art work also titled "What is to be Done?" shown in the Collective Creativity exhibition at Kunsthalle Fridericianum Kassel in 2005. I believe Brian Holmes who commented earlier on the list this month wrote an article for the reader which accompanied the show. I couldn't find a copy online.

Read the e-flux add [http://www.e-flux.com/displayshow.php?file=3Dmessage\\_1113928400.txt](http://www.e-flux.com/displayshow.php?file=3Dmessage_1113928400.txt)

Here's another take from absolutearts.com: "Collective Creativity focuses on specific kinds of social tensions that serve as a common axis around which various group activities are being organized. It is interested in different emancipatory aspects of collective work, where collaborative creativity is not only a form of resisting the dominant art system and capitalist call for specialization, but also a productive and performative criticism of social institutions and politics. Which strategies are taken by collectives in public space? Which alternative forms of sociability are generated? In which ways do they occupy and change the system and the conditions of production and representation? How do they affect the social order?"

Collective Creativity does not see group activity solely in terms of the scope and efficiency of tools used in attempts to change the sociopolitical situation; it also traces the paradox of self-sufficient enjoyment in group work, which inevitably overcomes and betrays its own instrumentality and use value. The interest in the specific politics of collective creativity is not restricted geographically, but it does seem to be especially interesting from the perspective of the New Europe and in the context of other geographical points with similar troubles with modernism and tradition of artists self-organizing. Collective Creativity does not see group activity solely in terms of the scope and efficiency of tools used in attempts to change the sociopolitical situation; it also traces the paradox of self-sufficient enjoyment in group work, which inevitably overcomes and betrays its own instrumentality and use value. "

So "what is to be done" has already been recently collectively re-done. Maybe this is exactly what our esteemed director Roger M. Buergel is referring to.. And being globally distributed we missed the localization of the Kassel inspired reference .. perhaps Brian has another perspective on it as well..?

In the MASKA article Bojana Kunst speaks about collectivity and spatiality; collaboration and social exchange in relational aesthetics; the fetishisation of collaboration, communication and connection; (quoting Esche) the museum is a space of "democratic deviance"; the risky conclusions which could equate to a 60's ideal of participatory democracy.

The important question being raised for me is "why are we doing something together?" Why discuss it? Why search for coherence or for that matter argument? What do we get out of it?

It seems particularly relevant to this list which was always envisioned as a collaborative entity held together by some subtle etheric forces. Is -empyre- still viscous, or is it time to disperse?

-Melinda

From odyens@alcor.concordia.ca Wed Jan 31 02:51:30 2007

What is to be done?

Hi everyone, I apologize for not having intervened for a while. But here are a few more thoughts:

If you take a look at page 97 of this month's Atlantic Monthly (January/February 2007), you will see a graph that is truly worrying: While spending per pupils in elementary and secondary public schools in the US has steadily increase in the last 30 years (in constant dollars), while the student/teacher ratio has steadily dropped, while the number of public school teachers with a master's degree has almost tripled, the results of 9, 13 and 17 years old in reading and math, are exactly the same today as they were 30 years ago. Why is that? Well the answers are probably numerous, but let me suggest here that this levelling of results can be seen two different ways.

-Education is a myth. Whatever the environment, whatever the conditions, the strong ones will always succeed and the weak ones always fail. While this might actually be true, I will choose to ignore that possibility. I, as a teacher, must believe that what I do has a positive impact on students

-The surrounding world has changed so much, what our children see and experience of the world has been so deeply transformed that even though great improvements in the education system have been implemented, our inability, as teachers, administrators and artists to acknowledge these sociological changes have essentially cancelled the pedagogical and financial investments of the last 30 years.

As a university professor, I strongly believe that education, and especially education through art and the humanities, has the ability to change the world for the better. As a teacher, I strongly believe that intellectual challenges will help the world become less violent and more open to complexity, both cognitive and cultural, both political and artistic. However as a prof, I also see, hear and read things that trouble me, things that might explain students' failure to make any progress.

First, is our inability, in the university system, to come to terms with how knowledge acquisition has changed in the last quarter of a century. For reasons too numerous to list here, we are, as a community, afraid to recognize that media culture, and video games in particular, are sources of knowledge and empowerment. True, we study video games, but very few actually acknowledge its ability to frame and reframe the way we think, see the world, understand its complexity, identify structures of power. Video games alter the way today's youth experience the world. Video games transform our relationship to art, both from a production and a reception standpoint. With video games, the player is also a producer. With video games, the player decides on the emotional content of the artwork, he or she decides how the artwork will crystallizes,

how its different possibilities will coalesce. Not only do video games materialize fantasies (both man's and machine's), they delve into mythical realms where man's and machine's words and actions have 'magical' powers (a command, either linguistic or manual, can 'save' the player's life, make him fly, jump, swim, etc.). Video games are a completely new form of expression, they are a Schrodinger's Cat type of artwork, where the participant, along with the machine, decides, by his mere presence, the ultimate shape the artwork will take.

The failure of art and education today, to me, is in part, the inability to use video games and media technologies in ways that are radically different. Not in a master/pupil relationship where one teaches about video games theories or challenges, but in a dynamic relationship where the games itself serves as an interface between learning and knowledge, between the student's emotional perception of the world and the teacher's theoretical understanding of that same world. Our failure today is our inability to engage and use things like video games, SMS, Wikipedia creatively and dynamically in our classrooms. Why are we so helpless? Because video games challenge the way we, as artists, profs and administrators, perceive the world. Video games tell us that the realm that contains our emotions, fantasies, fear, love and desire can be both controlled and produced by audiences and machines.

What is to be done? we ask. What is to be done is to take advantage of student's ability to engage visually, to solve clues and puzzles, to react quickly to challenges, in order to decipher the world more thoughtfully, in order to create more knowledge. As long as we will see classical education as the one and only route to knowledge, we will continue to lose the battle.

'But the usual critiques fail to recognize its [gaming] potential for experiential learning. Unlike education acquired through textbooks, lectures and classroom instruction, what takes place in massively multiplayer online games is what we call accidental learning. It's learning to be - a natural by-product of adjusting to a new culture - as opposed to learning about. Where traditional learning is base on the execution of carefully graded challenges, accidental learning relies on failure. Virtual environments are safe platforms for trial and error. The chance of failure is high, but the cost is low and the lessons learned immediate.' (John Steely Brown and Douglas Thomas :You Play World of Warcraft? You're Hired!, Wired, Aprils 2006, p. 120)

Let me come back to my opening statement on this list: The world we see and experience today is radically different from we have come to know. Man's definition of himself is profoundly challenged by science's many strange discoveries (the DNA of the bacterium living in our stomach is a hundred times bigger than our DNA for example). Being human today is understanding the need to rethink and re-evaluate what we call the human condition. Being human today demand that we accept the irrational and the illogical as part of what we are. And one of the ways to do this is to rethink education, our investment in education and, mostly, the tools and the pedagogical dynamics we use with students. We all want the world to be better. But using Marxist notions of who dominates and who is dominated will not help us. A great number of young people today are using cultural tools to express themselves, to disseminate their cultural artefacts, to communicate with others. YouTube, Wikipedia, video games, SMS, mangas, the structure of cultural production and of knowledge acquisition is changing. To better understand this process, we must redefine who we are, what we consider knowledge, what we understand as power, powerlessness and exploitation. What is to be done? Understand that we need, as intellectuals, new ways of looking at the world; that we need, as profs and teachers, to acknowledge, understand and use the new dynamics of knowledge acquisition that our youth is already using; that we need to let go of obsolete ideas about Marxism and capitalism and realize that our youth is beyond that, that new forms of liberty, new forms of creativity, new cultures and yes, new forms of exploitation, of cruelty, of repression are emerging right now, right under our nose.

What is to be done? We must integrate the changing world into the classroom, we must integrate the changing forms of culture and knowledge into our modes of thinking, we must incorporate the new dynamics of politics, of gender, of production and distribution into our understanding of what free expression is. As long as we will disparage television, video games, cell phones, blogs, etc., we will fight a losing battle. As long as we will refuse to accept that the definition of humanity is now inseparable from that of machines, software, programming and science, we will lose the battle. As long as we will deny that art can be created by man and machines, that the emotion of art might not

be something strange and mysterious but a complex mathematical structure that can be reproduced by machines and manipulated by programmers, hackers and young people of all cultures, we will lose the battle.

-Ollivier

From christina112@earthlink.net Wed Jan 31 08:29:08 2007

hi -empyreans-

I want to introduce at last, Øjeblikket, Copenhagen, who've just now sent me some comment about the leitmotif, "What is to be Done? (education).

Øjeblikket carries the subtitle 'A magazine about art and what art is about' and is based in Copenhagen, Denmark. The magazine is dedicated to the theory and critique of contemporary art. Throughout its existence the journal has tried to address issues of significance to the present situation thereby hoping to contribute to the creation of a critical public sphere.

Each issue of Øjeblikket carries a theme which is approached from different angles – philosophical, political and feminist. The magazine includes essays, interviews, and artist projects in each issue. In 2005 Øjeblikket launched a new section called Øjeblik! dedicated to reviews of significant exhibitions, projects and publications. The magazine is published in Danish and distributed in the Nordic countries.

<http://www.ojeblikket.net>

"Literally translated Øjeblikket means 'the moment', however in Danish this word can be divided into two: øje and blikket which respectively means eye and gaze. As the German word Augenblick. Currently Øjeblikket is working on the third Documenta topic: 'What is to be done (education)'. This issue will primarily consist of artists contributions from groups or collective praxis's operating critically right now. Among others we have for this issue proposed a number of groups and networks, with a somehow expressed or unexpressed 'counter-public' agenda, the following question(s):

"While the tendency of globalization is rapidly progressing and the welfare society of the 20th century in Northern Europe is ever more challenged, it is necessary to rethink what kind of education and communication channels that are the most adequate. Established institutions are coming under increased pressure and are in need of reinventing themselves. Simultaneously a wide range of alternative institutions emerges in the periphery of the established education and art world. These 'Institutions' organize themselves differently and act critically towards the handed down illusion of education. So, what is to be done?

An increasing number of artists feel that it is necessary to react on the rising political crises both globally and locally. There is however great discrepancy on how such a reaction should be articulated. How do you feel artists could and should act politically today? Our manifesto:

What is to be done?

We renounce Consensus and its entire works and all its ways.

We believe in counter-communities, Founders of a civil society.

We believe in alternative institutions, their only daughters, our hope, who was conceived by forethought,

Born of necessity, Suffered under Alienation; Attempted crucified, left to dye and be buried; In order to be descended into oblivion;

The third day they rose again, never dead; Ascended into vividness, and sitteth at the midst of Consensus, displaying the illusion of  
Almightiness;

From Thence they shall come, stripping away Power to judge and to exclude the living and the dead.

We believe in forethought never Absolutes, but in counter-action and alteration; and will never commit to Forgiveness of Sins;

We believe in all that is, seen and unseen, and in life.

Let it be done!"

Forwarded from Øjeblikket

-Christina











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