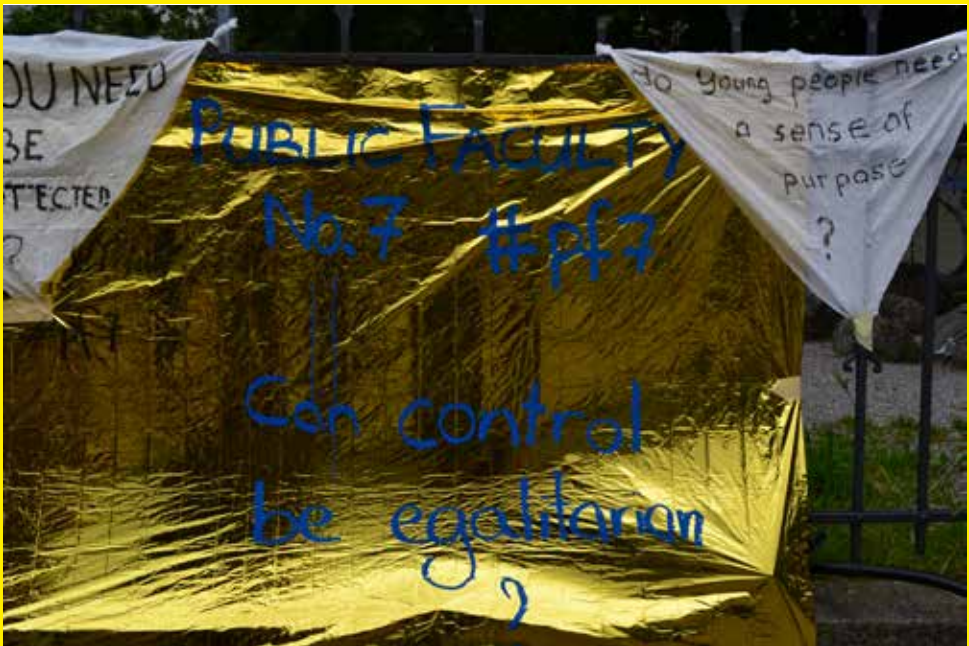Dorothee Richter

Curating: Politics of Display, Politics of Site, Politics of Transfer and Translation, Politics of Knowledge Production
A Fragmented and Situated Theory of Curating

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This publication is part of the ongoing series of publications on theoretical perspectives on curating.

z — hdk University of Reading

In this publication, photographs are used as part of an academic argument and are therefore shown in a small format.

"After all, the subversive intellectual came under false pretense, with bad documents, out of love. Her labor is as necessary as it is unwelcome. The university needs what she bears but cannot bear what she brings."[1]

1 ——— Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, (Wivenhoe; New York; Port Watson: Minor Compositions), 26.

1. CURATING AND ITS RELEVANCE

1.1 Prelude: Feminist Perspectives as a Compulsion to Repeat

Before I begin with the main line of argument, I will insert a short chapter here which shows that one can imagine a critical investigation of the art field and curating only as a compulsion to repeat. Racist, anti-feminist, and class-based ideological components are hidden in all cultural expressions, so we must never stop denouncing, discussing, and counter-proposing acts of curating. To illustrate this, I will provide an example of how ideologically loaded messages are processed through curating and the discourse around it (if one wants to differentiate between a material discourse and a text-based one) before entering into the straightforward academic discussion. And a warning: even if I originally planned to write a theory of curating, the practice, the case studies, the interviews, or fake interviews, started to pop and squeeze into the text. So, this will not be a theory of curating; instead, it will be a meandering in and out of curatorial practice and theory, a fragmented and situated theory.

The archival exhibition *Materials* at Kuenstlerhaus Bremen 1999
alongside a symposium on feminist positions in contemporary art

Any form of institutional critique should address distribution, production, and reception, all parts of the art system that are still infected with patriarchal orderings. This means that a feminist urgency in curating would have to stay with this repetition compulsion (*Wiederholungszwang*),

in finding other forms of curating, so called non-representational forms of curating,[2] which would create space for other forms to live in a curated space, to discuss, to inform, to laugh, to share, to contradict, to infect with an attitude. This was the motivation for the archival exhibition *Materials* at Kuenstlerhaus Bremen in 1999, featuring thirty feminist artists, art historians, and theorists alongside a symposium on feminist positions in contemporary arts.[3] [4]

To give you an example of how the underlying ordering of gendered roles is also embedded in this relatively new discursive formation called "curating" and how much a critical approach is needed in the field of curating, I would like to analyse one of these contemporary examples from the sector of publishing in detail.

2 ———— Non-representational forms of curating—this notion might entail a contradiction in itself, because so-called non-representational forms also represent, but it is worth thinking about what is actually happening in an exhibition space and about what a project represents. See Nora Sternfeld, Luisa Ziaja, "What Comes After the Show? On Post-Representational Curating," in eds. Saša Nabergoj, Dorothee Richter, *OnCurating* 14, *From the World of Art Archive* (2012).

3 ———— The symposium "Dialogues and Debates - Feminist Positions in Contemporary Art," which I curated, was held at the artist residency Die Höge; the accompanying archive/exhibition was shown at Künstlerhaus Bremen. I asked all speakers to name at least five artists, theoreticians, or curators for the archive. The contributions to the symposium were published in Dorothee Richter, Die Höge, eds., *Dialoge und Debatten - Symposium zu feministischen Positionen in der zeitgenössischen bildenden Kunst* (Nuremberg: Verl. für Moderne Kunst, 2000 (German/English)).

4 ———— At Künstlerhaus Bremen, I also co-curated (with Sigrid Adorf and Kathrin Heinz) a series of talks on feminist issues in the visual field, which was published later in Sigrid Adorf, Kathrin Heinz, Dorothee Richter, guest eds., "Frauen Kunst Wissenschaft, Im (Be)Griff des Bildes," *Heft* 35 (June 2003). This series was often combined with exhibitions inspired by a feminist approach, for example, an exhibition by the artist group De Geuzen; see also Dorothee Richter, *Programming for a Kuenstlerhaus* (Nuremberg: Institut für zeitgenössische Kunst, 2002). Curating from a feminist perspective inspired the exhibition series with the provocative title *Feldforschung Hausfrauenkunst (field research in housewifery)*, see Dorothee Richter-Glück, Kulturzentrum Schlachthof, eds., *Feldforschung Hausfrauenkunst*, exh. cat. (Bremen: Kulturzentrum Schlachthof, 1992), and the project *female coalities*, with exhibitions, dinners, screenings, talks, and performances in different venues all over Bremen (see Dorothee Richter-Glück, eds., *female coalities*, exh. cat. (Bremen: Zentralstelle für die Verwirklichung der Gleichberechtigung der Frau, 1997).

The archival exhibition *Materials* at Kuenstlerhaus Bremen in 1999

Case Study: *The Exhibitionist*

The birth of the museum is closely related to the burgeoning bourgeois class; it is clearly related to contemporary curating in a historical timeline. The Crystal Palace is described as a paradigmatic site of instituting a new scopic regime. Tony Bennett briefly describes the goals related to the famous Crystal Palace in London as follows: "Just as in the festivals of the absolutist court, an ideal and ordered world unfolds before and emanates from the privileged and controlling perspective of the prince, so, in the museum, an ideal and ordered world unfolds before and emanates from a controlling position of knowledge and vision: one, however, which has been democratized in that, at least in principle, occupancy of that position—the position of Man—is openly and freely available to all."[5]

He continues in a very poignant turn: "It is, however, around that phrase 'at least in principle' that the key issues lie. For in practice, of course, the space of representation shaped into being by the public museum was hijacked by all sorts of particular social ideologies: it was sexist in the gendered patterns of its exclusions, racist in its assignation of the aboriginal populations of conquered territories to the lowest rungs of human evolution, and bourgeois in the respect that it was clearly articulated to bourgeois rhetorics of progress."[6] As a subject construction, the situation of seeing through a controlling perspective of overview and of being seen,

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[5] ——— Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum, History, Theory, Politics* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 97.

[6] ——— Ibid., 97.

the bourgeois subject has installed the agency of control inside her- or himself .

In many ways, curating inherited forms of exclusion, some of which we will discuss throughout the text. As Olga Fernandez uttered, "Curators' expertise is usually defined by a set of procedural skills and organisational abilities, and intellectual production."[7] Her argument is that this knowledge combination is also a key element in the post-Fordist economy: "The entrepreneurial abilities of the curator and the expanded exhibitions formats are symptomatic of the new economic conditions that require new contexts of collaboration and interaction."[8] This means that the fascination and the pre-occupation with curating and exhibition-making of so many countless publications and symposia are partly due to the ideological concept of this figure, the curator, who seems to have gained authorship in this rather confusing new world order with its newly installed infrastructures.

The area of curating therefore provides this imaginary promise and is thus an especially contested field—a special representational battleground—and, as mentioned before, a new discursive formation is therefore installed. This is also why the ideological discussions around curating matter.

As a case study, I would like to discuss *The Exhibitionist*, a magazine published since 2009 by Jens Hoffmann, sometimes with collaborators. In this screenshot, you see the image of the Crystal Palace on the cover in the middle. For the newer issues, it has also been accompanied by a blog. From the beginning, only a part of curating was the topic of this journal, and I quote: "*The Exhibitionist* does not intend to occupy itself with all forms of curatorial practice. Rather, it is specifically concerned with the act of exhibition making: the creation of a display, within a particular socio-political context, based on a carefully formulated argument, presented through the meticulous selection and methodical installation of artworks, related objects from the sphere of art, and objects from other areas of visual culture."[9] Just to remind you, dear reader, curating could mean many more different things: publishing, organising symposia, opening up digital platforms, intervening in archives, in radio stations, presenting editions, working in the public space, creating a social space, or social sculptures, or a series of discussions. The main task of *The Exhibi-*

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7 ———— Olga Fernández, "Just What is it That Makes 'Curating' so Different, so Appealing?," *OnCurating* 8, Institution as Medium, Curating as Institutional Critique Part 1 (2011): 40.

8 ———— Ibid.

9 ———— Jens Hoffmann, "An Overture," *The Exhibitionist* 1 (2009), accessed 9 March 2015, http://the-exhibitionist.com/archive/exhibitionist-1/.

Screenshot *The Exhibitionist*, April 2016

tionist, according to Jens Hoffmann, is therefore as follows: "We concur that the curatorial process is indeed a selection process, an act of choosing from a number of possibilities, an imposition of order within a field of multiple (and multiplying) artistic concerns. A curator's role is precisely to limit, exclude, and create meaning using existing signs, codes, and materials."[10] From my perspective, this represents a very narrow concept

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10 ———— Ibid.

of a curator or an exhibition-maker: the reduction of the role to an excluding of positions.

Perhaps the name of the journal has to do with this limited concept of exhibition-making; the core issue is therefore also reduced to a specific subject position, which more or less ironically is claimed to be an exhibitionist, which means generally speaking, "A person who behaves in an extravagant way in order to attract attention," as my online translator suggests.[11] The German and English versions of Wikipedia differ in defining an exhibitionist; while in English, the exhibitionist condition could be theoretically subscribed to either men or women, even if more often recognised in men, the German version says bluntly: "An exhibitionist is generally a male person who gains sexual stimulation out of showing his own arousal to normally attractive female persons," in brackets, "showing an erect penis for publicly achieved satisfaction."[12] It ends with the addition: "In Germany, all exhibitionism is prosecutable."

So, I suspect that this relation to a clinical sexual disorder, which has its specific life in patriarchy, is programmatically inscribed in some concepts of a curatorial subject. And it might explain why I felt so strangely moved when I recently came across the website of this publication again.

I will show you the covers of the publication online (see image above)— what narrative does this image production offer? You see here a very prominent the historical example of the Crystal Palace, the reference to a new concept of a bourgeois subject, who sees and is to be seen. A subject that will become a well-behaved citizen because the agency of control is installed inside this subject.

And here, the very first issue, with a specific cover: this somewhat mysterious image is explained in the editorial note: "In homage to Marcel Duchamp we have chosen an image of his final work, *Étant donnés* (1946–66), for the cover of our first issue.

Anyone familiar with the piece knows that what is shown here, an old wooden door with two peepholes, is only a small part of the full experience of the work. Behind the doors there is an illuminated landscape and a naked woman; the exhibitionism of the scene invites us to look but it also exposes us, standing at the door in the midst of our voyeurism, to the gazes of others just entering the room. The pun of this publication's title speaks to that doubling, to the way in which the curator is not only an exhibition-maker but also one who publicly exposes his or her arguments and commitments in a vehemently visual fashion."[13]

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11 ——— See https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exhibitionismus, accessed 9 October 2016.
12 ——— Translation by the author.
13 ——— Hoffmann, "An Overture."

Screenshot *The Exhibitionist,* No.1, April 2016
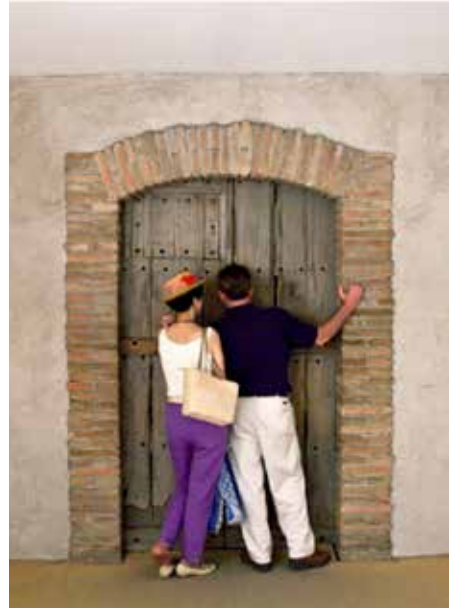
Screenshot of Philadelphia Museum of Art website showing a couple in front of Duchamp's *Étant donnés*

I show here an image from the website of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where this work is on display. This last work by Marcel Duchamp on which he worked during his final years, when the art world considered him beyond the material production of art, is seen as a double projection of a female-connotated body and the visual field, as Sotirios Bahtsetzis describes.[14] This transition, or double projection, shows the main characteristic connotation of a space of vision and images of the female body. This transaction, as Linda Hentschel has analysed in depth,[15] is exactly the moment of production of a technique in the visual field that produces gendered spaces. Hentschel shows that one of the main structures of Western image production is grounded in this scopic turn in the structure of desire. Hentschel argues (and here I also follow Bahtsetzis) that the his-

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[14]   Sotirios Bahtsetzis, "Die Lust Am Sehen Marcel Duchamps 'Étant Donnés': Zwischen Der Skopisierungs Des Begehrens Und Der Feminisierung Des Bildraumes," *The Marcel Duchamps Studies Online Journal* (2004): 1–18. http://www.toutfait.com/articals.php?id=4418.

[15]   Linda Hentschel, *Pornotopische Techniken des Betrachtens: Raumwahrnehmung und Geschlechterordnung in visuellen Apparaten der Moderne* (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2001).

torically conditioned construction of gender, and the relation of optical apparatuses, the visual field, and a feminised space, go hand in hand with an underlying education of seeing as a sexualised activity, an education towards a scopic drive.

Albrecht Dürer, *Der Zeichner des liegenden Weibes* (The Draftsman of the Lying Woman), 1538

This phenomenon is connected to a scientifically described and controlled space, as presented by the instituting of a central perspective. In this new science, the male and female positions are clearly defined in a hierarchical order. The historical turning point is paradigmatically visualised in this work of Albrecht Dürer: *Der Zeichner des liegenden Weibes* (*The Draftsman of the Lying Woman*) (1538). This woodcut was an illustration in a treatise with the title: instruction in measurement. From a feminist perspective, Sigrid Schade and Linda Hentschel showed that the effect of this construction was not only the sexualised visual field but also the creation of a voyeuristic pattern, which was loaded with binary codes: the female associated with nature, the male associated with science; the female with the untamed landscape, the male with cultivated plants; the controlled position and the controller. The demonstration of controlled and subdued female sexuality is obvious. Interesting is the position of the viewer of this woodcut who is denied the viewpoint of the male subject, who instead has the full view of the female genitals, the so-called "beaver shot." So, the moment of presentation and denial is simultaneously inscribed into this image.

To come back to Duchamp's *Étant donnés*, with the full title: *1. La chute d'eau 2. Le gaz d'éclairage (1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas)* (1946-66). In the abovementioned article by Bahtsetzis, he argues that Duchamp was well aware (to use a title by Jacqueline Rose) of sexuality in the field of vision and aimed at a critique of the gendered space. For my argumentation here, I condense Bahtsetzis' lines of thoughts to the conclusion, in which he states that Étant donnés is in this respect a special case of an anamorphic snapshot: as the viewer is excluded from the position of seeing, he has to testify to the phallic construction of the scopic regime of

modernity. But to cut the discussion short, the damaged body, which was actually put together from casts of Duchamp's secret lover Maria Martins, plus a cast of the arm of his wife in later years, and its presentation in the rather bourgeois setting of hiding images suspected of pornography, did from my point of view reinforce this setting instead of questioning it. The scattered body is not shown just in its fragmentation, it is—even if looking violated—holding up a clearly phallic shaped lamp—"honi soit qui mal y pense"—by the arm cast of Duchamp's wife. The piece shows an uneasiness about the "real", an uneasiness about what Lacan calls "jouissance" ("female" sexual pleasure), and an effort to maintain the phallic position.

Screenshot behind the door: Marcel Duchamp, *Étant donnés, 1. La chute d'eau 2. Le gaz d'éclairage* (1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas), 1946-66

Let's go back to the initial presentation of this hiding door as the cover of the first *Exhibitionist*. We see the door of this scene, which may or may not double the structure of contemporary visual settings: the engendered space, the scopic structure which presents a clear hierarchy of gendered spaces, of relations between an objectified position and a subject in its full rights. What does it initiate in the row of covers we see here, which all revolve around the bourgeois setting of the Crystal Palace?

We see the representation of a secretary (a work by Cindy Sherman) and another beaver shot, if one wants to put it like that, a work that was intended to be a feminist commentary on sculpture by Niki de Saint Phalle.

Screenshot of *The Exhibitionist*, 1 April 2016

We see as male representations a dangerous looking Count Dracula, a beautiful Narcissus, in danger of drowning himself because he is so in love with his reflected face, a strong boxing champion, and a beautiful, oversized sculpture of *David* by Michelangelo. I am very much aware that each of these covers could be interpreted in detail with all their underlying meanings and connotations, but in this case I would like to stay focused on the brief overview of male and female stereotypes, which, as I see it, presents a narrative in this configuration of a row of covers: they define the framework of the curatorial subject for the already very gendered figure of the exhibitionist. The repetition of these stereotypes double and redouble traditional gender roles, even if the original artwork was intended to criticise gendered spaces. The slightly sarcastic attitude that is also conveyed does not question this in an in-depth way; instead, the traditional roles are presented with a subtle smirk. In this way, *The Exhibitionist* presents what it stands for: a traditional concept of exhibition-making, which, *of course*, goes hand in hand with a conservative, gendered space in the visual field. The content often also centres on exhibition-making as an associative visual format that does not need too much theoretical insight (and as a postscript, some months after this part was written, Jens Hoffmann was accused of sexual harassment during the #MeToo movement, and he resigned his job as director of the Jewish Museum).[16]

16 ——— See https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/jens-hoffmann-responds-termination-jewish-museum-following-alleged-sexual-harassment-9545/.

Just as an interlude in terms of how a cover could function, perhaps not as an artwork as such, but as a cover, it is also important to be aware where, how, and for whom an image works. It can, as Roland Barthes has discussed intensively in *Mythologies*, always be de-historicised and put together to generate a myth, an ideological construction.[17]

This cover was put on the famous German journal *NEID* ("envy" in English) by artist and DJ Ina Wutdke and shows a work by Claudia Reinhardt, an injured body, the hidden patriarchal anxiety of castration quite openly addressed.[18] This image shows the gaze of the other that is deemed threatening, since it would be able to disorganise the field of vision. As Margaret Iversen demonstrates, Barthes' "punctum" is a reference to Lacan's concept of the gaze, and the very use of the terms sting, wound, and puncture can be recognised as a relationship to deficiency as a result of the symbolic threat of castration and which indicates the disturbing incursion of the "real" into the consciousness of the subject.[19]

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17 ———— Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, 1972).

18 ———— NEID # 7 Cover, 1998/99, ed. Ina Wudtke; Photo credit: Claudia Reinhardt "Ezikiel" 1996 L.A. cover image) *Neid* (Envy) was founded in 1992 by Ina Wudtke, Heiko Wichmann, Hans Christian Dany and Claudia Reinhardt, the journal existed between 1995- 2004, see http://www.inawudtke.com/html/arbeiten/neid.html, accessed 9 April 2016.

19 ———— Margaret Iversen, "What Is a Photograph?," in *Art History* 17, no. 3 (September 1994).

NEID # 7 Cover, 1998/99, Ed. Ina Wudtke, Photograph by Claudia Reinhardt "Ezikiel" 1996 L.A.

2. INTRODUCTION: CURATING AS A NEOLIBERAL SIGNIFIER?

In the beginning of the 21st century, "Curating" as a combination of different artefacts is widespread. "Curating," started in the vicinity of contemporary art, and, as there is cultural capital associated with this area, has trickled into other parts of cultural production. One can come across curated shop windows or across curated sections of short films or sound pieces. In the area of contemporary art, it has developed since the '70s as a new form of knowledge production but also as a new form that is instituted as power relation and through power relations. When Diedrich Diedrichsen claims that contemporary art is often the lubricating layer of internationally acting accelerated capitalism[20] and that "in today's capitalism of immaterial labor, the capitalism that exploits knowledge and commercializes aliveness in the service industry"[21] (additionally the same could be said for the cultural industry and educational surroundings), then curating would be seen as the willing helper in installing these ideological superstructures, to use the Marxist term. Along these lines, it was often argued that artistic project work acted as a forerunner of neoliberal working conditions, even more so for curating, as Olga Fernandez has claimed.[22]

Curating is in this way a paradigmatic work situation in neoliberalism. For the art field this might be demonstrated by this new player, the curator has been transformed into the product itself, the curator turns into the object that has to be bought for a successful cultural event: Diedrichsen describes this as follows: "So what we experience today is the sublation of the old distance between reified labor and alienated laborer, but not by way of a reconciliation between living work and dead product: instead, the product has come to full life just as the worker has been transformed into the product itself. The latter is now human, alive, biological, sexual, and emotional. The worker is the object of her own subjective labor, which is nothing but herself, which is nothing but a product. This process traces a perverted dialectical logic of negative synthesis, or bad sublation."[23] As the figure who structures and produces power relations, the curator paradigmatically represents this development. On the other hand, one could argue that the ideological space of exhibition-making, these spaces of representation from big biennials to off-spaces (the differ-

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20 ———— See Diedrich Diederichsen, *(Over)production and Value / (Über)Produktion und Wert* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017).

21 ———— Diedrich Diederichsen, "Animation, De-reification, and the New Charm of the Inanimate," *e-flux Journal* 36 (July 2012), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/36/61253/animation-de-reification-and-the-new-charm-of-the-inanimate/.

22 ———— Fernandez, "Just What Is It That Makes 'Curating? So Different, So Appealing?'"

23 ———— Diederichsen, "Animation, De-reification, and the New Charm of the Inanimate."

ent modes came quite close in recent years), could also influence the ideological sphere of a society, as Oliver Marchart has shown in discussing the subtexts of documenta 10, 11 and 12, and therefore influence the general understanding of race, class, and gender.[24] Marchart discusses four discursive shifts: politicisation and depoliticization; de- and recentring of the West; the art-theory interface; and mediation strategies; as well as criticism of Israel as the spontaneous ideology of the art field as an excursus. So, from the start of this argument, the Janus-faced position of curating is obvious; curating oscillates between a dissident attitude and involvement in new forms of governmentality. Curating is integrated in many ways into economic logics, and thus always remains in an ambivalent relationship to a critique of capitalism. In this regard, Beatrice von Bismarck even speaks of an inextricable entanglement.[25] I would probably not go that far here, but rather try to understand how certain positions can be read as emancipatory and liberating and others as reactionary. Likewise, it is my endeavour to understand the mechanisms of the art market and art historiography as a mechanism that devours revolutionary potential.

2.1 (Anti-)Methodologies

Along these lines, one could argue that curating is a new discursive formation, a formation as defined by Michel Foucault and taken up by feminist thinkers. This formation has which has rapidly developed since the 1980s. Like any other discursive formations (medicine, discourse on sexuality, etc.), it contains and differentiates institutions, attitudes, and positions. The period that is reflected here starts around 1990 and ends 2022. It starts when the new powerful figure was installed and it ends when collective curating arrived at documenta. This new profession's main tasks are the production, distribution, and reception of cultural meta-structures through the combination of cultural products like artworks, display, mise-en-scène, commentary, different media, spatial aspects and architecture, everyday objects or other cultural artefacts, and therefore specific social situations. It results in exhibitions, art projects, publications,

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24 ———— Oliver Marchart, *Hegemonie im Kunstfeld, Die documenta-Ausstellungen dX, D11, d12 und die Politik der Bienalisierung*, eds. Marius Babias, n.b.k. (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2008).

25 ———— See Beatrice von Bismarck, *Das Kuratorische* (Leipzig: Spector Books, 2021), 75.

film or theatre programmes, sound projects, digital media or projects in public space; one project often consists of a conglomerate of different media, a specific constellation. Similar to other fields, the yearning for a material aspect was put forward recently in the form of curatorial research—for example, by Wiebke Gronemeyer, when she claims to propose a perspective on curatorial practice—as an activity of knowledge production whose particular modes of hosting, exhibiting, and producing a contention with art has an intrinsic social dimension—that entails proposing a "material turn" for curatorial practices. On the contrary, it proposes a political dimension which has found its expression in opening up the restricted exhibition space to social cultural events inviting new parts of the global population. I find equally problematic the description Beatrice von Bismarck provides when she applies the term constellation to curating, wanting to capture both the participation of human and "non-human beings" (again materiality) in the curatorial fabric of relationships. Of course, I also see the damage that the so-called Anthropocene, or better, Capitalocene is doing to the environment, and I agree that the environment responds to human activity by becoming polluted and trying to restore a balanced status, but this may not be transferable to an exhibition situation. In fact, I see some of the circular reasoning of New Materialism as problematic and definitely not transferable to cultural artefacts. The danger here is that it becomes nebulous who is the agent; for human subjects, things only have meaning when they are in a context that is comprehensible to them and pregnant with meaning. The greatest danger I see in such a description is that the power and desire relations in the field of the curatorial are ultimately neglected.[26]

In contrast to this, I will discuss curating according to Foucault's theory on discursive formations, as presented in *The Discourse on Language* (1969),[27] where he formulates a differentiated structure of rules, effects, and methodological demands. Any curatorial project not only presents different artworks or artefacts but also puts forward ideas on subjectivity, on community, on culture, on identity, on agency, on gender, class, and race; it is involved in the politics of display, the politics of site, and the politics of transfer and translation. In this perspective, curating as a discursive formation entails, of course, a material side, a text-related side, an institutional side, and so forth. And, of course, "knowledge production" would always mean a process in which "truth" is produced through acts of consecration; if this has a hegemonic or anti-hegemonic effect, or oscillates between these poles, will be discussed throughout this publication.

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26 ———— von Bismarck, *Das Kuratorische*, 87.
27 ———— Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

Thus, knowledge production is in no case a neutral notion; knowledge and power are deeply interrelated. Oliver Marchart brings forward an understanding of the art field as a contested field of ideological struggles when he speaks of "hegemonic formations," thus bringing Gramsci's understanding of hegemony close to Foucault's discursive formation. "Hegemony is always an unstable balance, this unstable balance— between social forces struggling for dominance—this unstable struggle of forces in which there are always dominant and subordinated forces is consolidated by the network of civil society institutions. Hegemony refers to the balance of power between rival forces; one does not possess hegemony, but constantly struggles for dominance" as Marchart argues in a talk on biennials as hegemonic machines.[28] He mentions that power in the exhibitionary complex does not show itself in episodic spectacles like coronations in former times, or marriage spectacles and execution spectacles, but rather power establishes a network of exhibition institutions, which allows power to show itself constantly by presenting thereby a certain order of the world and assigning and allowing people a place in relation to this order. The "revolutionary" moment we are looking for can at least emerge in exhibitions and curatorial projects, as Marchart puts it: "Biennials have always been points of attraction for political movements that have organized themselves under the protection and in the shadow of the spectacle, known how to use the representational space."[29]

In this publication I will focus on this transgressive aspect of curating and its special meta-discourse of production, and on the research of its specific entanglement/interrelation with post-Fordist societies/accelerated capitalism with the involved changes in all modes of production. Marchart sees curating as a hegemonic battlefield, like, of course, other cultural productions, structuring a field that is deeply involved in power relations—in real politics, so to speak. On the level of curating as a theory of a practice and a practice of a theory, I want to discuss what this might also mean on an institutional level. Is institutional critique possible with curating, or how far is it possible with curating and what exactly does this mean? And how does the institution change in this process?

The aim of this research was originally on the one hand an outline of a critical theory of curating that is exemplified through specific case studies in the young history of curating. In contradiction to the available literature on curating (and exhibition displays), this study will not just look at changes in the field of exhibition-making but specifically into the politi-

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28 ———— Oliver Marchart, as keynote speaker in the symposium, *Contemporary Art Biennials – Our Hegemonic Machines in States of Emergency*, 27 June 2020; see recorded talk on www.curating.org.

29 ———— Ibid.

cal, psychological, and sociological implications. It therefore aims at a radical feminist, critical, democratic perspective to argue curatorial approaches and what could be called "curatorial knowledge production," seen under the abovementioned sceptical framework. With the written outcome and the curatorial production in the form of a documentary video platform on curatorial positions, the research undertakes to be a theory of a practice and likewise a practice of a theory.

The discussion of "methods" will present a variety of possible new and already proposed combinations of theoretical approaches, ranging from discourse analysis, art history, psychology, sociology, postcolonial theory, philosophy of communities, and feminism. The intrinsic background of this research is a constellation of critical discourses; as feminist thinkers like Sigrid Schade and Silke Wenk have proposed, I see the production of art/curating and art history as entangled endeavours: "We propose to decipher the art historical discourse—with its intertwining of 'objects on view' and commentary—as a text. 'Discourse' is used here in the sense of Michel Foucault, not as speech or writing in the narrower sense, but as the sum of practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak."[30] It follows that I obviously consider myself to be part of this process.

My perspective is based on an understanding of aesthetics as an ideological apparatus that reflects, comments on, and produces subjectivity, as discussed by Terry Eagleton from a neo-Marxist perspective,[31] and on feminism, like Jacqueline Rose in *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*.[32] I see these efforts as different branches of an emancipatory project.

Some feminist theorists, such as Sigrid Schade, Silke Wenk, Judith Butler, Jacqueline Rose, Renata Salecl, Abigail Solomon-Godeau and Kaja Silverman, have already undertaken the linking of psychoanalytical and structuralist perspectives with power-theoretical perspectives, to which I will refer throughout the text. A method in a narrow sense does therefore not

30 ———— Sigrid Schade and Silke Wenk, "Inszenierungen des Sehens. Kunst, Geschichte und Geschlechterdifferenz," in *Genus. Geschlechterforschung/Gender studies in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften*, eds. Hadumod Bußmann and Renate Hof (Stuttgart: Kröner Verlag, 2005), 344. Translation by the author. Original: "Wir schlagen vor, den kunsthistorischen Diskurs – mit seinem Ineinander von Anzuschauendem und Kommentar – als einen Text zu entziffern. ›Diskurs‹ wird hier verwendet im Sinne Michel Foucaults, nicht als Rede oder Schrift im engeren Sinne, sondern als Summe von Praktiken, die systematisch die Gegenstände bilden, von denen sie sprechen."

31 ———— Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1990).

32 ———— Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 2005).

exist, but I will present a discussion in which I will mention what has influenced the research object and my own standpoint. In her introduction to *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, Jacqueline Rose describes the points at which feminism adopted political demands that were initially discussed in psychoanalysis. "The feminist step, therefore, was to add sexuality to the historically established links between psychoanalysis and the theory of ideological mechanisms. In this context, sexual difference was analyzed as a fundamental, if not the most fundamental, human law." [33]

Race, class, gender—which kind of structural violence is more depressing depends on a specific situation, and Black women in particular have claimed that the layering of different systems of oppression do reinforce each other. Intersectionality plays a specific role in the discursive formation of curating.[34] Intersectionality describes different overlapping and intertwined forms of discrimination and marginalisation in relation to various forms of social stratification, such as class, race, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, disability, and gender and their social, political, and cultural effects. To discuss how and why these categories play a role in contemporary art and curating, one must likewise rely on a variety of approaches that open up an insight into the multidimensionality of structural violence.

Psychoanalysis is for feminist analysis both a historical point of reference and an instrument that must be subjected to critical scrutiny, as it is a practice that initiates adaptations to society. To what extent is it therefore legitimate to refer to a method that, as we will see, is also an effect of power processes?

Michel Foucault relativises the significance of the practice of psychoanalysis in *The Will to Know*, the first volume of *Sexuality and Truth*, when he describes the changing apparatus of sexuality as an effect of the polymorphic techniques of power.[35] From his point of view, he seems to point out that beginning in the end of the 16th century, the concepts of sexuality and truth through the "discoursification" of sex was not subject to a process of restriction, but on the contrary to a power mechanism of increas-

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33 ——— Here, translated by the author from the German version: Jacqueline Rose, *Sexualität im Feld der Anschauung* (Vienna: Turia und Kant, 1996), 13.

34 ——— In intersectionality, forms of discrimination such as racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, antifeminism, homophobia, transphobia, dis- or abhorrence of disability, age discrimination, or classism do not appear in isolation from one another, but are considered in their interdependencies and intersections. They not only add up in one person, but also lead to separate experiences of discrimination in which different forms of oppression enforce one another.

35 ——— Michel Foucault, *Sexualität und Wahrheit*, Bd. I: *Der Wille zum Wissen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983).

ing incentives; that the power techniques affecting sex did not obey a principle of strict selection, but rather a principle of scattering and implanting polymorphic sexualities; and that the will to know did not stop at an irrevocable taboo, but rather eagerly endeavoured to constitute a science of sexuality.[36] I take up Foucault's distanced evaluation of psychoanalysis (as a practice) because, from a feminist researcher's perspective, it seems indispensable to me to know the gender-bound relations of domination that are also inscribed in psychoanalysis, such as that of the "psychiatrist and his hysterical[s]" which Foucault compares with the prostitute and her client. Psychoanalysis appears to me both as a symptom of the shift in power constellations and effects and as an analytical instrument. Psychoanalysis has undoubtedly also played and continues to play a decisive role in the installation of an apparatus of sexuality. Today, a changed sexual apparatus has been installed and in its vulgarised form is permanently transmitted to us via mass media as an instance of conditioning and standardisation. The basic concept of the new version of sexual relations might be an extreme form of objectivation, or reification, as the sociologist Eva Illouz claims.[37]

As mentioned, Pierre Bourdieu also examined the internal power relations in the field of art from a sociocultural point of view. The analysis of a certain cultural habitus and the transformation of social and cultural capital into economic capital is helpful for reading certain phenomena of the curatorial field. Bourdieu himself largely ignores a gender-specific perspective, but it is easy to deduce, since it is precisely through a sociological approach that the exclusion of women can be made clear through subtle mechanisms. Bourdieu himself even traces this possibility of a continuous reading in the rules of art: "It is clear that the primacy that the field of cultural production gives to youth refers once again to its underlying denial of power and 'economy.'" He introduces a section to come to gender positions at the end of which he continues: "According to this logic, the relationship between the sexes within the dominant region of the field of power should also be analysed, and more precisely the effects of the position as both ruler and dominated, which belongs to the women of the 'bourgeoisie' and which (structurally) brings them closer to the young 'bourgeoisie' and the 'intellectuals', predisposing them to the role of mediators between the ruling and the dominated factions (a role that has always played itself, especially through the 'salons')." [38] Bourdieu repeat-

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36 ———— Ibid., 122 et seq. (author's translations)

37 ———— See Eva Illouz, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and Eva Illouz, *Oprah Winfrey and the Glamour of Misery: An Essay on Popular Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

38 ———— The author's translation from Pierre Bourdieu, *Zur Soziologie der sym-*

edly refers explicitly to Foucault, with whom he defines art as a "field of strategic possibilities." This proposition could be also read as the role of a shifter that is proposed by Donna Haraway as a feminist research approach.[39]

Yet, new forms of resistance can also develop from a position of oppression and of intersectional oppressions. The possibility to take part in cultural production through other semi-public fora like a salon was, for example, developed by doubly marginalised persons—a historical example is provided by the influential salons of Jewish women especially in Berlin and Vienna.[40] Elke Krasny points out that this form of amicable gathering can be seen as a forerunner of feminist strategies in art and curating, which actively involve care for others in a cultural practice and, at the same time, manage to influence political thought.[41]

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bolischen Form. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 316; Bourdieu: "Im Grunde genommen findet sich die stringenteste Formulierung der Grundlagen der strukturalen Analyse kultureller Produkte bei Michel Foucault. Er ist sich dessen bewußt, daß keines von ihnen aus sich selbst heraus existiert, das heißt außerhalb der Beziehungen, die es mit anderen Werken verbinden, und schlägt vor, das ›geregelte System von Differenzen und Streuungen‹ innerhalb dessen jedes einzelne sich definiert, als ›Feld der strategischen Möglichkeiten‹ zu bezeichnen."

[39] ——— See Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 1988): 575-599.

[40] ——— See Hannah Lotte Lund, "Der jüdische Salon," Handbuch Jüdische Kulturgeschichte, http://hbjk.sbg.ac.at/kapitel/private-raeume-salons/.

[41] ——— Elke Krasny, *Archive, Care, and Conversation: Suzanne Lacy's* International Dinner Party *in Feminist Curatorial Thought* (Zurich: OnCurating, PhD Publication Series, 2020).

2.2 Instead of Methods: Positioning

My discussion will meander between curatorial practice and curatorial theory. As Wiebke Gronemeyer has argued, curatorial practice as knowledge production is intertwined with the cognitive cultural economy of post-Fordist societies; therefore, in her view, the question "What is knowledge production?" should be recast as "What is knowledge if it is in production?"[42] She claims that, "Curatorial practices are discussed as an activity encompassing as much thinking as doing, oscillating between reflection and production, determination and disruption, and representation and presentation."[43]

I see both written text (signs on paper or spoken) and projects (sign systems in space and time) as articulations which I conceive as parts of a discursive formation that produce meaning in a specific context. Even more so for the media in which exhibitions—in themselves already conglomerations of different media—are transferred, consisting of images and texts in newspapers, websites, television programmes, and in rumours in the art world, as artists, curators, professors, lecturers, students, collectors, museum curators debate the nodes in the discourse, that is, prominent exhibition events.

Therefore, an artistic and curatorial line of thought manifests itself in an installation, as an object, indicates an agency—as a complex sign system—, an opportunity for an ideological reframing; this would be also argued by Gronemeyer: "Elaborating on the meaning of the term 'practice' as a concept of action and reflection, while setting it in relation to artistic and curatorial practices, is intrinsically linked to conceptions of agency."[44] Maybe the interest with which contemporary art is met is exactly that it marks the point when a thought is materialised. In this context, I want to recall a Marx dictum: "The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical* question. Man must prove the truth, i.e. the reality the power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely *scholastic* question."[45] It is evident that Marx did not have in mind the "reality" of

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42 ———— Gronemeyer, *The Curatorial Complex*, 13.

43 ———— Ibid., 14.

44 ———— Ibid.

45 ———— Karl Marx, "Concerning Feuerbach," in *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingston and Gregor Benton (London: Penguin, 1975), 422. Original German text: "Die Frage, ob dem menschlichen Denken gegenständliche Wahrheit zukomme—ist keine Frage der Theorie, sondern eine praktische Frage. In der Praxis muss der Mensch die Wahrheit, *d. h.*

an exhibition space or art and curating as a representational system, and it is clear that some of the more superficial exhibition concepts (and curatorial writings) tend to negate this systemic difference between lived-through socio-political realities and representational space. As curating is a process, it actually does oscillate between reflection and production, determination and disruption. As a heterotopic space (being situated in society as an autonomous area), the art space as a space of representation has the capacity to make proposals for worldviews, as Antonio Gramsci developed theoretically in his concept of hegemony, and the concept of an organic intellectual, a position for curatorial practitioners, which was proposed by Oliver Marchart.[46] In this way, curating is continuously involved in producing 'truth.'

For an exhibition or curatorial project, the moment in which ideology is produced is precisely the whole discourse existing in a variety of written, spoken, photographic, object-based media, and their institutionalised relations. This whole media complex is what Roland Barthes described in "Myth Today."[47] A sign in the first level combines a sound plus the image in the imagination, exemplified by Barthes with *Baum*, *arbre*, *tree*. These very different sounds would produce more or less similar images in the mind. This combination in a sign is arbitrary, not intentional. But in the moment when sign systems are connected, and they create meaning through their special constellation, they are intentional. This meaning production is never objective or transhistorical: it operates in a historical moment and environment in a specific way. He also shows that, to achieve this meaning through combinations of signs, the "myth" de-historises the signs it uses and forces these signs into new relations. And for his argument, he uses the young Black boy on the cover of *Paris Match*, the intentional message of this mythological construction being that the colonised subject seems to be perfectly happy with being colonised, but, of course, his actual living conditions, his situatedness, his wishes and dreams become overwritten by the combination. This meaning is intentional. In an analogy,

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Wirklichkeit und Macht, *die* Diesseitigkeit seines Denkens beweisen. Der Streit über die Wirklichkeit oder Nichtwirklichkeit des Denkens—das von der Praxis isoliert ist—ist eine rein **scholastische** Frage." Karl Marx, *Thesen über Feuerbach* (1845); the book was published by Engels, and exists in different versions: 1) transcript of the original with modern orthography, *Marx-Engels-Werke* Vol. 3 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1958), 5–7; and 2) transcript of the original with original orthography, *Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe* Section IV, Vol. 3 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), 19–21.

46 ——— Antonio Gramsci, *Gefängnishefte*. Kritische Gesamtausgabe, eds. Klaus Bochmann, Wolfgang Fritz Haug and Peter Jehle, Vols. 1–10 (Hamburg: Argument Verlag, 1991).

47 ——— Roland Barthes, "Myth Today," in *Mythologies*, 109-164.

one could speak of an exhibition situation as a complex myth in the Barthesian sense.

Coming back to the notion of agency in the exhibition space, mentioned by Gronemeyer, it becomes immediately evident that agency is distributed unequally between the agents "artist," "curator," and "public," and that this agency could be better translated as knowledge production. Later, I will demonstrate what else is involved in this situation, like the institution as such.

As shown above, I doubt the possibility of pure "curatorial activism,"[48] because this might be a contradiction in itself, or, in other words, curating implies the problem of fetishisation of a political articulation as a curatorial gesture. As mentioned before, another figure of resistance has been developed around the concept of the "organic intellectual." In *Conflictual Aesthetics: Artistic Activism and the Public Sphere*, Oliver Marchart sets out to reread the role of the curator as an organic intellectual in a Gramscian sense: "The curatorial function lies in the organization of a public sphere."[49] In principle, Beatrice von Bismarck also sees the exhibition as a public appearance of art and culture. Here, she emphasises the moment of re-reading, that is, of new constellations, each framed by contexts; she mentions duration, movement, and timing, for new combinatorics.[50] The public sphere is in Marchart's understanding a synonym of a conflictual sphere. A conflictual sphere is here understood as the conflict of interests between different societal groups, or perhaps better, the conflict between different social groups and the dominant sector of a society. The public sphere would evolve if a situation in a society arises that is in need of negotiation, in need of profound social change: "The essential criterion for a public sphere that can be considered a true political sphere—and not just a simulation of a public sphere—is this conflict, or antagonism,"[51] emphasises Marchart with reference to Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau.[52] Therefore, in Marchart's understanding, a public sphere, or in other words true political events, cannot be organised, curating as organising a public sphere is under these auspices an impossibility.[53] He turns to Gramsci to situate the organic intellectual as a figure who will help articulate these conflicts. I suspect that Marchart got himself involved in contradictions, since the agency of an organic intellectual would by far

48 ———— See also Steven Henry Madoff, ed., *What about Activism* (Berlin: Sternberg, 2019).

49 ———— Oliver Marchart, *Conflictual Aesthetics: Artistic Activism and the Public Sphere* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2019), 144.

50 ———— von Bismarck, *Das Kuratorische*, 29.

51 ———— Marchart, *Conflictual Aesthetics*, 145.

52 ———— See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony And Socialist Strategy: Towards A Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2014).

53 ———— Marchart, *Conflictual Aesthetics*, 146.

exceed the organisation of conflict, or he sees this as the preliminary solu-
tion of this contradiction. Valeriano Ramos's understanding of the terms
ideology, hegemony, and organic intellectual brings the economic materi-
alist moment of any cultural uttering into the foreground.[54] In his under-
standing, the concept of ideology reminds one of the notion of discursive
formation by Foucault: "Antonio Gramsci's conception of ideology over-
came epiphenomenalism by describing ideology as a 'terrain' of practices,
principles, and dogmas having a material and institutional nature consti-
tuting individual subjects once these were 'inserted' into such a terrain.
Since ideology constituted individuals as subjects and social agents in
society–the same social agents playing also economic roles at the level of
production–ideology had an important function in the realm of produc-
tion as well as in the overall structure of society."[55] From my perspective, it
is important to relate the economic side to the different roles in the pro-
cess of curating, an aspect which we have to keep in mind.

Further on Ramos indirectly refers to concepts by Louis Althusser when
he argues, "In this respect, we could say that an organic ideology is dif-
fused throughout civil society (social institutions and structures such as
the family, churches, the media, schools, the legal system, and other
organizations such as the trade unions, chambers of commerce, and eco-
nomic associations) by virtue of the integration of diverse class interests
and practices into a unified system of socioeconomic relations."[56] The idea
of the integration of different interests is here contrasted with the more
conflict-oriented notion of the public sphere and ideology by Marchart.
Ramos hopes for an ideology that would transgress classes and societal
groups. The understanding of organic intellectuals would then embrace
the capacity of negotiation, as I read it, without necessarily taming differ-
ent demands. But this could be a way of taming a conflict, a fetishization.
A problem I see in the notion of the "organic intellectual" is that s/he is
thought of as a singular person, even if this person acts from an embed-
ded position in a particular class interest, as positioned by Gramsci. But
from my perspective, especially in the curatorial realm, a singular figure
as a conceptual position will not do, as curating is a specific collective
undertaking. Therefore, one could go a step further and see curating as
being conceptually positioned in a communal situation, a shared struc-

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[54]   Valeriano Ramos works for the foundation "Everyday Democracy,"
        which is engaged in social change and community work. Before that,
        he was director of constituent services under former Connecticut Sec-
        retary of State Susan Bysiewicz.

[55]   Valeriano Ramos, Jr., "The Concepts of Ideology, Hegemony, and
        Organic Intellectuals in Gramsci's Marxism," *Theoretical Review* 27
        (March-April 1982), Transcription, Editing and Markup: Paul Saba, see
        https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-7/tr-gramsci.htm.

[56]   Ibid.

ture. This is also understood by Marchart, when he emphasises the "curatorial function"—a structural notion, instead of an individual organic intellectual. The organisation of curating, including transferring its different economic roles into a more egalitarian model, would be absolutely necessary for a curating of the commons, which I will come back to later in this discussion. This would also entail more integrational possibilities such as, for example, co-organising the chain of equivalence that is proposed by Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, which is conceived more as a temporary alliance of different groups in order to articulate their demands. And in this instance, I would like to think back to Fluxus, as it would be something that is not elitist, of course.

One could argue that Ramos reads Gramsci in such a way that, "This transformation and redefinition is achieved through a rearticulation of ideological elements into a new world-view which then serves as the unifying principle for a new 'collective will.'"[57] Curating can be part of this process. This collective will would be part of bigger struggle, between an anti-hegemonic and hegemonic cultural position, which has a lot to do with economics, on the micro and macro levels.

The war of positions is ongoing in the arts and in curating, or as Oliver Marchart has put it, this war is sometimes hard to understand, the trenches are difficult to oversee, positions can be changed or blurred, the lines of combat may change overnight. As George Caffentzis provocatively puts it: is the future of "the commons" neoliberalism's "plan B" or the original disaccumulation of capital?[58] Oliver Marchart spreads hope when he optimistically sees anti-hegemonic and anti-capitalist efforts as not being limited to a specific time and date; they are ongoing, and that leads, in his view, to a necessarily optimistic outlook,[59] as it emphasizes seeing cultural work as a utopian and futuristic project.

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57 ———— Ibid.
58 ———— George Caffentzis, "Is the Future of 'the Commons' Neoliberalism's 'Plan B' or the Original Disaccumulation of Capital?," *New Formations* 69, no. 1 (July 2010): 23-41.
59 ———— Marchart, *Contemporary Art Biennials.*

2.3 Curating from a Feminist Perspective

What would this mean for an anti-hegemonic kind of curating, as a special form of knowledge production? Curating is a gendered form of knowledge production: therefore, what would make a curatorial project a feminist one? I came to the conclusion that four categories need to be met:

Categories for Feminist Curating

1. The first category should be considering gender equality in terms of numbers in exhibitions and curatorial projects. I remember that this demand was thoroughly discussed because of the problem of reproducing a simplistic notion of "male" and "female." We as feminists always fought for a multiplicity of sexes, beyond the binary code of a conventional paradigm. "Normal sexuality is thus, strictly speaking, an ordering, which the hysterics deny (then becoming sick),"[60] as Jacqueline Rose, following Lacan, has put it. This would mean that it would be a feminist project in art if one could infer from it the ordering of gender, as well as the difficulty or impossibility of this adjustment process, and also make it possible to identify the fictitious category of normal sexuality. This would distinguish an art that criticises and unsettles existing gender roles from an art that, in a proxy function, affirms "sexual fulfilment" while at the same time cementing an ordering of gender. A conventional affirmative art would basically conceal the splitting of the subject, to make it possible to see entire bodies and idealized images. A critical, feminist, potent art would reveal the splitting of the subject of the gaze; it would have no stress-relieving function. However, also derived from a Lacanian perspective, it is important to be aware of the position of "women" in patriarchy; "women" are denied a subject position insofar as the only possible subject position is that of the dominant male position, of the one who has the phallus. So, however creatively we play with gender roles, stealing the subject position by mimicking "male" behaviour or appearance, we should be aware of the mimicry and nevertheless still make a demand from the perspective of lack, from the position of the negated subject. I would, as a political demand, still adhere to the counting of numbers of men and women, especially when in the artistic field—in curating, exhibition-making, art, and universities—the imbalance is still in full bloom, or to put it differ-

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60   Rose, *Sexualität im Feld der Anschauung*, 57.

ently, as long as white men hold most of the top positions in universities, in ranking lists of the art market, and in institutional jobs. Where there is still an urgent need for the masked Guerrilla Girls! Therefore, I think that the demand for equality of representation has to be maintained, seeing this as a temporary strategy, a support structure on the way to diversity and multiplicity beyond fixed categories as a horizon.

2. The second category would be citing historical references correctly. This means referring to the movements, not to the singled out artistic geniuses, or stars—a paradigm which the art market prefers. This means in our context seeing the revolutionary movements of the '60s like Fluxus, Happenings, *Womanhouse*, and other feminist group works embedded in a struggle for new forms of communities, new forms of working together, new forms of meaning production/organisation that would be later called curating.

Bici Forbes-Hendricks und Geoffrey Hendricks, *Fluxdivorce*, 1971, as part of a social reconfiguration of the "*dispositif* of sexuality"

This means staying with the questioning of paradigms, like authorship, modes of production, new forms of distribution, and reception. These forms had in mind a specifically changed interrelation between audience and artists, between participants and producers, between high and low cultural production, between "races," and, last but not least, between the relations of gendered roles. These transgressive practices from the past are always in danger of being connected back to one author or one artist, which limits their potential revolutionary approach in production, distribution, and reception. For contemporary curating, it means keeping to the approach of transgressive practices, creating new forms referring to archives, community-based projects, concept exhibitions, meeting spaces, and interventions in the public space, and acknowledging historical forerunners and initiatives in their complexities.[61]

3. The third category would be disturbance through the image, through the display. That does not mean, of course, that I see an exhibition as an integrated work of art; it is a specific, very complex narrative. Therefore, disrupting an easy narrative would be an important mission. According to Jacqueline Rose, Freud "relates—quite explicitly—the failure to depict the sexual act to bisexuality and to a problem of representational space. [...] A confusion at the level of sexuality brings with it a disturbance of the visual field."[62] Jacques Lacan differentiates the potential disturbance or calming which can result from art or painting. He sees the mode and manner of an artist in the desire to become visible as an author, to be a subject, to convey in the individuality of style something that gives the viewer the impression of being looked at from within the picture: "Thus they will see in the end, as in a filigree, something so specific for each of the painters that they feel the presence of the gaze."[63] The gaze is understood here as the disturbing, unsettling moment, the recognition of being viewed from the outside.

If this concept is transferred to an exhibition, one might say that in curatorial work the production of meaning can give rise to an encounter that looks at the viewer. In some opposite cases, however, certain paintings or exhibitions assume the function of something for the eye to feed on, by which the visitor can lay down his/her gaze (like weapons). This would provide the pacifying, Apollonian effect of painting, which Lacan calls the

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61 ———— This is why we (Ronald Kolb and I) published the film *Flux Us Now*: *Fluxus Explored with a Camera* with eleven chapters, one of which refers specifically to gender in Fluxus; it follows up on some of the political agendas of Fluxus and emphasises the complexity and the contradictions of the movement. See www.fluxusnow.net.

62 ———— Rose, *Sexualität im Feld der Anschauung*, 229.

63 ———— Jacques Lacan, "Linie und Licht," in *Was ist ein Bild?*, ed. Gottfried Boehm (Munich: Brill Fink, 1994), 70.

"*dompte-regard*," or the tamed gaze. The project *Female Coalities* (which I curated in 1997) emphasised this taming effect of the visual, but also of an author's name. The artists Isolde Look, Irmgard Dahms, and Anne Schlöpcke invited Barbara Bloom, Cindy Sherman, and Kiki Smith and put children's stuffed animals in an auction with a professional auctioneer in a gallery in Bremen, which sold off most of the items, and the sold animals were replaced with a polaroid of the owner with it.[64] The purchase prices often related to the fame of the respective artist.

This eye trap, with its pacifying effect, is revealed by the artists in the abovementioned project. This disturbing element would therefore also be unsettling and would call into question the normative ideology of *race*, *class*, and *gender*.[65] Contemporary theoreticians, here Denise Ferreira da Silva, imply the relationship between concepts of property and of individuality, to accelerated surveillance capitalism: "That thing with property, that is, the juridic-economic figure taking precedence over any alternative description of existence is not, however, self-sufficient. For it has always depended on colonial juridic-economic architectures and the

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64 ———— Exhibition at Gallerie Cornelius Herz, Bremen, in the framework of the project *female coalities*, curated by Dorothee Richter, 1996.

65 ———— See also Dorothee Richter, "In conversation with False Hearted Fanny, Feminist Demands on Curating," in *Women's: Museum. Curatorial Politics in Feminism, Education, History, and Art | Frauen: Museum. Politiken des Kuratorischen in Feminismus, Bildung, Geschichte und Kunst*, ed. Elke Krasny (Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 2013), 75-83.

Exhibition in the framework of *Female Coalities* curated by D. Richter, artists: Isolde Look, Irmgard Dahms, Anne Schlöpcke with Barbara Bloom, Cindy Sherman and Kiki Smith, Galerie Cornelius Hertz, Bremen, 1996

racial ethic-symbolic arsenal, improvement itself, the quality and capacity said to distinguish has also always being contingent upon our impropriety."[66] One way to imply resistance is to ridicule the holy author function in the art field. I also suspect that the once-hyped notion of "the curatorial" might work as an "(eye) trap." The notion of "the curatorial" implies a problematic ennoblement of curating as a meaning producing activity which takes place (as I see it) in a politically and ideologically contested field. Putting "curating" on eye level with philosophy, it is in danger of asking for essentialist, supra-temporal meaning production from curating, which would function outside of history. Instead, I would propose staying with re-contextualising, historicising, localising, and being aware of the political demands and alliances. Feminist curating can only be understood as a part of a political movement.

4. Institutional critique: to transfer this to exhibitions would mean always calling into question the context of the exhibition, using curatorial methods to unsettle the curatorial authorship of an exhibition's discourse on truth and "quality" discourse. This means, from a feminist perspective, institutional critique should be embedded in projects. This would, of course, mean that any hierarchical positioning between curator and artists must be questioned. As types of naturalisation effects in art institutions, Oliver Marchart—citing the museum as an example—singles out four components that each have a gender-specific aspect: firstly, the power to define, which claims that the art institution is a neutral agency of mediation and judgment, is presented as being natural; secondly, the exclusions and inclusions, which make people forget that there are always very specific exclusions; thirdly, the constraints of cultural policy, budget, and similar factors to which the institution itself is subject; and fourthly, its class-based character.[67] The behavioural norms and built-in ideological concepts that, as subtexts, structure art institutions derived from the interests of a specific group, of which the paradigmatic representative is the white, male, middle-class subject. In the post-Fordist era, however, a clear classification like this has begun to undergo a shift, given that in the production process the subject is downgraded in favour of group processes. This makes it possible to speculate, for instance, that the middle-class subject is in retreat, as Felix Ensslin has remarked.[68]

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66 ——— Denise Ferreira da Silva, Foreword to Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *All Incomplete* (Colchester; New York; Port Watson: Minor Compositions, 2021), 7-8.

67 ——— Oliver Marchart, "Die Institution spricht," in *Wer spricht? Autorität und Autorschaft in Ausstellungen*, eds. Beatrice Jaschke, Charlotte Martinez-Turek and Nora Sternfeld (Vienna: Turia & Kant, 2005), 39f.

68 ——— Felix Ensslin, on the occasion of my lecture on artistic authorship at the Kunstakademie Stuttgart, Dec. 2015.

Nachdenken statt Herrschen

...Richter fordert feministische Gesten beim Konzipieren von Ausstellungen

...urators hat in den letz-
...einen Siegeszug ange-
... den Kunstbetrieb hi-
..., das etwas auf sich
... einen, sondern gleich
...n. Kuratoren jetten –
...ände – von einer schil-
...ennale zur nächsten,
...h kreativen Flows.
...me der „Neue Geist
...“ zum Ausdruck, zi-
...Richter, Leiterin des
...ogram in Curating an
...chschule der Künste,
...tvortrag an der Hoch-
...ung die französischen
...oltanski und Ève Chia-
...lt, die als „projektba-
...turiert sei, verspreche
...Anerkennung und ge-
...rfolg. Das Credo der
...el, mobil und kreativ.
...lungslinie mit Harald
...t der documenta 5 die
...n Kuratoren" etablier-
...e zentrale Figur des
...markts, Hans-Ulrich
...ale Kuratorensubjekt:
...und vielfältig einsetz-
...s Kurators erfahre mit
... von männlicher Ge-
...iarchale Aufwertung.

WILL RÄUME DER REFLEXION SCHAFFEN: Dass Kunst soziale Bewegungen in ihrer Diskurs aufnimmt, soll laut Dorothee Richter in Ausstellungen sichtbar sein. Foto: Späth

False Hearted Fanny and myself, lokal newspaper, Karlsruhe, 29 May 2015

Institutional critique also means that, from a feminist-political perspective, all behavioural patterns are in question as well, all conventions and structures. This is why in some of my talks "False-Hearted Fanny" interferes, demonstrating the multi-layeredness of any discourse; she does not feel bound to institutionalised behaviour patterns and tends to show a subject as a split subjectivity. To take into account the structural and material side of curating means—again—thinking of feminist curating as involved in and part of political and economic struggles. Thinking of curating as a form of producing knowledge or, in other words, of interpellations, means consciously taking up a position in an ideologically contested space. Individual museum presentations and their underlying ideological frameworks have been discussed and convincingly analysed in detail by Mieke Bal,[69] Jana Scholze,[70] Anna Schober,[71] and also (jointly) by Gerlinde Hauer, Roswitha Muttenthaler, Anna Schober, and Regina Wonisch,[72] to mention

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[69] ——— Mieke Bal, "Telling, Showing, Showing off," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1992): 556–94.

[70] ——— Jana Scholze, *Medium Ausstellung. Lektüren musealer Gestaltung in Oxford, Leipzig, Amsterdam und Berlin* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2004).

[71] ——— Anna Schober, *Montierte Geschichten. Programmatisch Inszenierte Historische Ausstellungen* (Vienna: Dachs Verlag, 1994).

[72] ——— Gerlind Hauer, Roswitha Muttenthaler, Anna Schober, and Regina Wonisch, *Das Inszenierte Geschlecht. Feministische Strategien im Museum* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1997).

only a few. And during the writing and rewriting process of this publication, the notion of "institution" and of "art as institution" became increasingly important. I will address the problem of "institution" and "instituting" later.

Bici Forbes-Hendricks und Geoffrey Hendricks, *Fluxdivorce*, 1971

2.4 From Situated Knowledges and Herstories (plus some hard facts)

For an understanding of new forms of positioning from a feminist perspective, it is worthwhile to think back to the argument about situated knowledges that Donna Haraway formulated in 1988, as her writing is surprisingly and shockingly contemporary: "We have used a lot of toxic ink and trees processed into paper decrying what *they* have meant and how it hurts *us*. The imagined 'they' constitute a kind of invisible conspiracy of masculinist scientists and philosophers replete with grants and laboratories. The imagined 'we' are the embodied others, who are not allowed not to have a body, a finite point of view, and so an inevitably disqualifying and polluting bias in any discussion of consequences outside our own little circles [...]."[73] This pseudo-objective assertion gesture is also all too familiar to us in the context of exhibition-making.

Haraway also ridicules the grand intellectuals of the current discourse, when she denounces: "But then came the law of the father and its resolution of the problem of objectivity, a problem solved by always already absent referents, deferred signified, split subjects, and the endless play of signifiers."[74] In her witty and eloquent manner, she attacks the French school of thought in a way, in which she cannot be attacked easily. Indirectly, she points at Foucault, Barthes, Lacan, Derrida, to whom we owe a great deal, may nevertheless recognise the demonstrative philosopher's gesture as difficult.

But what really disturbed me during the course of writing and re-writing this book is that, still today in contemporary critical discussions on culture and curating, the male authors effectively quote other male authors excessively. A perspective by someone who is identified (rather then who identifies) with being female, she is not really intended, she is missing or she is seen in her struggle, laid out as "on the table with self-induced multiple personality disorder," as Haraway puts it—the marginalisation, the status of being abject, is always close.[75]

This was, for example, my impression when I reread *Cosmopolitanism and Culture* by Nikos Papastergiadis,[76] in which he speaks at length about differences and resemblances between Gerald Raunig and Jacques Rancière

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73 ———— Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 575.
74 ———— Ibid., 576.
75 ———— Ibid., 578.
76 ———— Nikos Papastergiadis, *Cosmopolitanism and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012).

in the chapter "Aesthetics through a Cosmopolitan Frame,"[77] but any thought which might include a feminist perspective is not even touched upon. Even the theoretician Oliver Marchart, whose writing I find profoundly valuable from a political perspective, presented a lecture in Berlin in 2019[78] insisting on the importance of micropolitics as a way to integrate politics into everyday life and into lived experience. Of course, this is exactly what feminists have been claiming for many decades, but this was not even mentioned. These are, of course, random examples, but it has a systematic significance to it, as even our esteemed male colleagues seem to be affected by partial amnesia with respect to the gendered production of cultural discourses.

Haraway describes Marxist humanism as being polluted from the very beginning by its structuring theory about the domination of nature in the self-construction of man and by its closely related impotence in relation to historicising anything women did that didn't qualify for a wage.[79]

Obviously, we could relate this thought to Silvia Federici's achievement, in which she provided a historical foundation for the feminist demand for wages for reproductive work.[80]

Her work helps us understand the deprivation of the surplus of female-connoted work areas as a class/gender struggle as part of the accumulation of capital. This accumulation of capital was the necessary precondition for implementing capitalism in the enormous shift in systems from medieval societies to modernity. Part of this struggle was the genocide of women designated as witches and the destruction of forms of commoning. Commoning means here both the actual shared facilities and land as well as the communal structure of work. Federici claims that Marx overlooked the fact that an essential aspect for the development of capitalism was the division between the production of (industrialised) goods and the labour force. Only the production of goods was recognised as labour, while the reproduction of labour, especially the part that takes place in the home and is usually called domestic work, was defined as personal service not worth renumeration. This dichotomy was and is an immense source of economic accumulation. It has lightened the heavy shoulders of the working class, mostly at the expense of the women who reproduced

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77 ———— Ibid., 93-101.

78 ———— Oliver Marchart, "Thinking the Political, After the 'Ontological Turn,'" Institute for Cultural Inquiry, Discussion on 25 September 2019, see https://www.ici-berlin.org/events/thinking-the-political/; Marchart was accompanied by two male "master" thinkers: Allan Dreyer Hansen and Vassilios Paipais, while a female PhD student, Sara Gebh, was allowed to moderate the discussion.

79 ———— Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 578.

80 ———— Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2004).

the labour force. Here, it must be again emphasised that the field of repro-
duction meant much more than "just" giving birth and raising children;
often, in addition to field work and providing for cattle, women were
responsible for preserving food for the winter months, as well as weaving
cloth and producing all the clothes. They also produced herbal medicine
and looked after the elders. The division of labour within the family was
less strict than this list would suggest, as field work or handicrafts were
often done together, since the survival of the family was dependent on the
working adults, but nevertheless there were these general divisions.

Federici argues then that the function of the "Great Witch-hunt" was first
of all to destroy a world of practices and social subjects that were incom-
patible with capitalist development. Secondly, it broke down the social
power of women and forced them into the passive role they played in rela-
tion to working men. This consequence of the separation of production
and reproduction is unthought of by Marx, and this naturalisation of
female domestic work and the deepening of gender differences trans-
formed women into a physical machine for the reproduction of labour.
Women who contradicted this by their way of life ended up being tortured
as witches. Many forms of communal life were destroyed, as were the life
and spaces of other deviating groups like the heretics with their polyga-
mous sexuality.[81] And we might think that this brutal subordination has
been behind us for centuries, but Federici recognised similar processes in
contemporary Nigeria, where communal land was suddenly "owned" by
the elder men of a village, since their positions are the ones recognised by
the World Bank representatives. The transforming of common land into a
possession of one single individual, of becoming private property, goes on
in many ways globally, as does the subordination of women under the
(economic) power of men. Structural violence against women is not over,
not even in the Western countries where I live and work. In the following
paragraphs, I will provide some examples from my surroundings, even
though I am well aware that this situation is still much better in compari-
son to the situation of women in other parts of the world.

I remember that Valie Export, one of the prominent feminist artists of her
generation, lost custody of her daughter. I remember that in the case of
my older daughter, who was born outside of marriage, the Youth Welfare
Office was automatically appointed as guardian. That was frightening.
These structures are still relevant, in addition to being overlooked by my
male colleagues. The Youth Welfare Office would not automatically inter-
vene nowadays, but poverty is still female, and especially for single moth-
ers and especially in the arts, in often precarious work situations. Gisela

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81 ——————— See also Silvia Federici interviewed by Tim Stüttgen,
"Die Hexenjagd ist zurückgekehrt," *Die Tageszeitung*, 10 October 2012,
https://taz.de/!552063/.

Notz listed the reasons for this in a conference on poverty in Berlin in 2019: "Women become poor because they have less access to education and training. Women become poor because they are unemployed. Women become poor because they work in precarious jobs. Women become poor because they do more unpaid work. Women become poor because they earn less than men. Women become poor because they do not live in a normal family. Women become poor because they are seen as strangers or others. Women become poor because the pension system misses the reality of their lives."[82] We can suppose that by "normal family" she means the nuclear family. The abovementioned assertion is illustrated with figures by Verdi Union, which shows that women will earn 22 percent less than men in 2012. "Across Germany, only 36.7 percent of full-time positions are filled by women. For part-time and "mini-jobs" (marginal or part-time employment), however, the proportion of women is 71.4 percent. Almost 4.7 million women work in mini-jobs nationwide—an increase of 77.7 percent within ten years. The risk of being poor has increased, especially for the unemployed, mini-jobbers and single parents—and these are predominantly women. Women are the big losers of the German low-wage spiral. Especially mini-jobs are often poorly paid and become an employment trap for women."[83] And we are informed that more than **three-quarters of all women** who today only work in mini-jobs have not had a single regular job subject to social insurance contributions since their first mini-job.[84] I think it is clear that the situation in the arts is not at all different. Becoming a parent means for women to be mostly dependent on men, as the traditional roles are reinforced in that very moment, and the women who decide to become single mothers risk poverty.

At the same time, it is necessary to understand Haraway's appeal to rethink materiality and bodily being-in-the-world under these preconditions when she announces: "Feminists don't need a doctrine of objectivity that promises transcendence […]. We don't want a theory of innocent powers to represent the world, where language and bodies both fall into the bliss of organic symbiosis. We don't want to theorize the world, much less act within it, in terms of Global Systems, but we do need an earthwide network of connections, including the ability partially to translate knowl-

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82 ———— See Gisela Notz, "Why poverty is (often) female," Congress on Poverty in Berlin, 2019, accessed 10 November 2020, https://www.armutskongress.de/armutsbloganzeige/ak/warum-armut-oft-weiblich-ist/; the author's translation.
83 ———— Ibid.
84 ———— See website of Verdi Union, Faktenlage: Die Armut ist weiblich [Facts: Poverty is female], accessed 10 November 2020, https://www.verdi.de/themen/nachrichten/++co++87e5258e-1639-11e3-a5ae-5254008a33df; the author's translation.

edges among very different—and power-differentiated—communities."[85] Therefore, in all the feminist-inspired curatorial projects I have initiated, the longing for achieving agency and also simply representation for this disrespected form of living has been a driving force. Patriarchal ordering is structural violence, which also is mirrored in visual representation.

Related to the visual domain, Haraway deconstructs an omnipotent view as "the god trick," looking at the world from above and denying one's own position; she defines the history of science as tied to militarism, capitalism, colonialism, and male supremacy—distancing the knowing subject from everybody and everything in the interests of unfettered power, culminating in the illustrative sentence: "And like the god trick, this eye fucks the world to make techno-monsters. Zoe Sofoulis calls this the cannibal-eye of masculinist extra-terrestrial projects for excremental second birthing."[86] Haraway then proposes feminist objectivity, which is in my understanding extremely relevant for curatorial practice: "The moral is simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision. All Western cultural narratives about objectivity are allegories of the ideologies governing the relations of what we call mind and body, distance and responsibility. Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see."[87] Relevant for curating and the visual field, she points out the patriarchal Western position as "a wandering eye, a traveling lens," which is (perhaps not astonishingly) close to how Walter Grasskamp describes the visitor subject in a traditional exhibition setting.

I assume that Haraway's argument translates very well into a curatorial way of working: she reassesses the theories she rejected before—the split subject, deconstruction—but she uses the theoretical outlines from another perspective; she wants to put them together in unusual combinations and imaginary distortions. Situated knowledge would therefore be more a kaleidoscope of knowledges: "Splitting, not being, is the privileged image for feminist epistemologies of scientific knowledge. 'Splitting' in this context should be about heterogeneous multiplicities that are simultaneously salient and incapable of being squashed into isomorphic slots or cumulative lists. [...] Subjectivity is multidimensional; so, therefore, is vision."[88]

The text produces a kind of manifesto, when she argues "for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational

85 ——— Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 579-580.
86 ——— Ibid., 581.
87 ——— Ibid., 583.
88 ——— Ibid., 586.

knowledge claims. These are claims on people's lives. I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body [...]."[89] Here, I see her argument as being close to Lacan—the body as being constructed, as split and as full of contradictions—but, of course, she formulates her position from the position of oppression, suffering, and rage, as opposed to any disembodied vision. In her view, rational knowledge can only be gained through power-sensitive conversation.[90] "Feminism loves another science: the sciences and politics of interpretation, translation, stuttering, and the partly understood. Feminism is about the sciences of the multiple subject with (at least) double vision."[91] This manifesto already leads us into a moment of commoning as a feminist curatorial practice. Of course, this also implies that curating and art have to come to terms with the problem of class, given that contemporary art tends to be an elitist undertaking. But to paraphrase Jens Kastner, the elitism of art is not necessarily evidence of its conservative, preserving social function, just as mass suitability is not a criterion for emancipatory effects.[92] I want to reiterate here that commoning/curating will be a fundamentally open-ended, multi-actor, contradictory affair.

2.5 Summary: Developing Categories

In order to provide an un/stable basis for an analysis of curatorial practice, I will summarise here several categories on which I will base my argument. I will discuss some of them in more detail; some will be clearly relevant for a specific case, others remain latent. It is necessary to clarify the position of curating as an ideological state apparatus that is supposed to make us accept or reject our economic, material existence. I will paraphrase Valeriano Ramos's above-quoted description[93] and apply it to curating. With Antonio Gramsci and Foucault, curating can therefore be described as a "terrain" of practices, principles, and dogmas that have a

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89 ——— Ibid., 589.
90 ——— Ibid., 590.
91 ——— Ibid., 589.
92 ——— See Jens Kastner, *Die Linke und die Kunst, ein Überblick* (Muenster: Unrast Verlag, 2019), 272.
93 ——— Ramos, Jr., "The Concepts of Ideology, Hegemony, and Organic Intellectuals in Gramsci's Marxism."

material and institutional character and constitute individual subjects once they have been "inserted" into such a terrain. Since ideology constitutes individuals as subjects and social actors in society (as well as in different community contexts)—the same social actors who played an economic role at the level of production—ideology mediated by curation has an important function both in the field of production and in the overall structure of society. In this respect, curating always claims to analyse, criticise, or conceal our living conditions, our material existence.

In this respect, I will refer roughly to three aspects: one major trajectory is how subjectivity is organised and perceived through curating, which also includes being singular/plural; secondly, I am interested in the material foundation of curating, which means production processes and materiality of objects on the one hand, but also the material, infrastructural basis of an institution and how the material basis of a context it thought of, which leads to the third area, the ideological function of curating; is a curatorial project as knowledge production disseminating a hegemonic or anti-hegemonic message?

1. Subjectivity, or being singular/plural

What biopolitical or hegemonic proposals about subjectivity/community are put forward? What proposals on gender roles are on display? Which inclusions/exclusions are performed? How are "race" and class situated? What role is played by single authorship in relation to co-productions? Are visitor subjects destabilised by disturbance through the image, the representation, the content?

2. Material, infrastructural foundation

Curating exists as a conglomeration of different media. What materials are used, including temporality, as part of an infrastructure? How are existing institutional formats used? In what kind of relationships are objects, artworks, spaces, talks, and events organised? Let me mention just a few bullet points: duration, beginning and end; process orientation; different genres; different agents; development and decision-making; how open or narrow is the curatorial framework and production mode; equality, multi-authored or single-authored; hierarchies in the process; how is the public addressed or integrated, participation; which channels of distribution are used; relationship to the specific context; relationship to political struggles.

How are our economic foundations of life communicated? What role does institutional critique (class, "race", and gender as moments of exclusion) play, as well as the recognisable material, economic basis of a curatorial project? How are digital media integrated and reflected? How is the institution organised? Here, I am interested in naturalising effects, in canoni-

sation and anti-canonisation, in participatory moments. In what way is an expected format disturbed, the so-called V effect[94] used?

3. Ideology

Where does a curatorial project operate on the axis of de-politicisation, re-politicisation? What is the relationship between art and curating and society, in what way and with which result is the art field considered to be autonomous? Where does a curatorial project stand in relation to the de- or re-centring of the West? How is the relation to theory constituted in a curatorial project? Between the scale of a spectacular event and non-representational project, where is the project positioned? How does a project rely on affect and emotion? Is there a connection to interventions in the political sphere (keywords: collectivism, organisation, strategy, and conflictuality)? Which possibilities of identification are offered? What claim, what view of the world is put forward with the curatorial project? How is myth or intentional narration and its layers constructed through an exhibition? In what way are members of the public identified as agents, what subjectivation lies behind the project, what biopolitical message is embedded?

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[94] The V Effect (alienation effect) was used by Berthold Brecht in his theatrical plays. The audience is sometimes addressed directly so that the audience would be reminded that it is a play and not real life. Theatre is understood as a place of insight and knowledge; the audience is to be addressed as spectators, not as emotionally involved. In this sense, alienation effects are used to prevent audience identification: commentators on stage, songs inserted into the action, banners, projected texts. A closed illusion of the action should thus be hindered.

3. A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF EXHIBITION DISPLAY— AN OVERVIEW

This brief introduction undertakes to sketch curating as an activity embedded in historical events. Using various illustrations, this short outline will delineate the history of exhibition display and establish connections within that history.[95] The outline begins at a point in history when art emancipated itself from being a cult object and became an exhibition object. Interpreting various depictions of exhibitions, I raise questions about representation, specifically who or what is represented, and about the human subjects involved, specifically how these are addressed as recipients or as depicted figures. How did such address and depiction affect the formation of identities? Which kinds of being-in-the-world, arrangements of power, and gaze regimes are conveyed by these illustrations? What status do art objects have within the context of an entire staging, and how does its arrangement predetermine meaning?

David Teniers the Younger, *Gallery of Archduke Leopold William of Austria*, Painting, 106 x 129, 1653

This painting by Daniel Teniers does not depict a particular exhibition, but instead a fictitious and programmatic exhibition, or what Ekkehard Mai has called a "personal pantheon of painting."[96] Depictions of galleries from Francken to Teniers, Panini, and Robert exhibit an art collection whose display was meant to demonstrate the connection between power

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[95]   Originally, this chapter was translated by Mark Kyburz, then revised and expanded by the author.

[96]   See Ekkehard Mai, "Ausgestellt – Funktionen von Museen und Ausstellungen im Vergleich," in *Kunst des Ausstellens, Beiträge, Statements, Diskussionen*, ed. Hubert Locher (Stuttgart: Schulte, 2002).

and spirit, in order to substantiate the claims of one's own dynasty against the claims to power asserted by an array of courts, states, churches, and countries. The paintings need not necessarily reflect actual collections, and those on display were probably exhibited in different places, or they were copies, or they were actually in the possession of the respective ruler only at a certain point in time. The guiding principles of the collection were size, the number of figures, and theme. "It was not until the eighteenth century," Mai observes, "that nation, state, and history became equally valid points of reference, not only for contemporary art but also for that of the past and so the representative discourse changed into a public discourse."[97]

Cartesian perspective is mostly associated with the abstract and detached subject of a central perspective, who observes matters from a safe distance. The gaze from within Teniers's painting gallery falls directly and authoritatively upon the viewer. The geometry of the mathematical certainty afforded by a central perspective seems to be equated with the certainty of an order established by God. Inscribed in the "show"-room, moreover, are the concepts and effects of gender differences, which since the Renaissance had been constructed upon distancing effects and upon the male subject as the subject of a central perspective. "Woman" became an object—of the male gaze—and thus became readily available and her image commodified. The gaze is as a rule associated with the male (subject) and the viewed or displayed with the female (object). In structural terms, "woman" bears within herself the place viewed and taken aim at. Anja Zimmermann, for instance, identifies this structure when she summarises the insights that many contemporary cultural studies scholars have arrived at: "Both the position 'within' the image and the position of whoever is gazing at the image are gender-specific positions. Not so much by way of attribution to concrete subjects, but in relation to the significance of this gaze regime for the definition of gender difference itself."[98] The eroticising of the gaze, that is, the pleasure derived from looking, remains the unalterable prerequisite for addressing viewers: the sexually charged nature of the exhibited results from this particular structure.[99]

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97 ——— See also Hubert Locher, "Die Kunst des Ausstellens, Anmerkungen zu einem unübersichtlichen Diskurs," in *Kunst des Ausstellens, Beiträge, Statements, Diskussionen.*

98 ——— Anja Zimmermann, *Skandalöse Bilder. Skandalöse Körper. Abject Art vom Surrealismus bis zu den Culture Wars* (Berlin: Reimer, 2001), 119.

99 ——— For a detailed discussion and extensive bibliography, see Sigrid Schade and Silke Wenk, "Inszenierung des Sehens, Kunst, Geschichte und Geschlechterdifferenz," in: *Genus, zur Geschlechterdifferenz in den Kulturwissenschaften,* eds. Hadumod Bußmann and Renate Hof (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1995), 340-407.

Beat Wyss[100] also made me aware of the precise messages this painting may have transported in the time of its first presentation to a courtly society. The three main paintings above are all by Titian, *Shepherd and Nymph*, *Danaë*, and *Mary Magdalene.*

This would be, as Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat has discussed,[101] a negotiation about constructions of male and female "identities." First of all, as Hammer-Tugendhat argues, female acts became connoted with sexuality by male artists, which became a cultural paradigm: the sexualised female body, turned into art by a male protagonist. Thus, the "female" became associated with the material body, with nature, with drives and sexuality, and the "male" with reason and spirit; this structure can be followed back to Aristotle's theory of reproduction. The described connotations made it necessary that any male protagonist disappear from these sexually loaded paintings over the centuries. In particular, the depictions of the mythological figure of Danaë have undergone very specific re-interpretations.[102] The antique sources recount the story of the daughter of Akrisios, who was put into a brazen chamber because it was foretold by an oracle that her son would kill his grandfather. But Zeus caught sight of her and fell in love with her. He had intercourse with her in the form of a golden rain. As Hammer-Tugendhat argues, Horace and Ovid had already interpreted this event as a striving for material gold and associated the Danaë myth with venal love and prostitution. Therefore, Danaë was often seen as a symbol for being corrupted through money, especially in the interpretation by Boccaccio. Parallel and deeply antagonistic to this interpretation, Danaë was seen as personified chastity and a prefiguration of Mary. In the mythological narrative, Danaë was willingly turned into a bay leaf to avoid the pursuit by her lover, which positioned her as a helpless creature in relation to the all-mighty Zeus. Beat Wyss associated another layer of messages when he took into consideration that, for a courtly society, the aspect of a courtesan giving birth to an unwelcome child and therefore being banished from court might also be transmitted.[103] Even a painting like the *Shepherd and Nymph*, which could also be seen as a strong woman instructing a younger man, is mostly seen in contemporary interpretations as a repetition of the traditional nature/female para-

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100 ———— Beat Wyss published the influential book: Beat Wyss, *Vom Bild zum Kunstsystem,* (Cologne: Walther König, 2006), in which he argued that discursivity produced truth in images through a threefold layer of theoretical approaches: semiotics, psychoanalysis, and system theory.

101 ———— Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, "Kunst, Sexualität und Geschlechterkonstruktionen in der abendländischen Kultur," accessed 23 November 2014, http://www.musieum.at/029/pdf/kunst_sexualitaet.pdf.

102 ———— Ibid., 7.

103 ———— Beat Wyss in a shared seminar at Hochschule der Gestaltung, Karlsruhe, 12 November 2014.

digm, as the following quote shows: "The underlying theme of this picture has not been satisfactorily explained to this day, yet Titian has raised it to the mythical by the psychological depth of its conception. Awkwardly sprawling on an animal's fur, naked except for a veil, the woman with her all-knowing, almost cold look seems to represent universal natural power at the centre of the cosmic landscape. In contrast, the youth with the flute who has been pushed to the picture's edge, dressed and crowned with leaves, is an expression of temporal movement, perhaps transience, too. Stability and instability also characterise the dramatically lit landscape, implying eternal change, with which the figures are merged into a visionary alliance."[104] I wonder what a courtly society would make of this picture which shows a self-assured, strong woman, obviously in charge of her own pleasure, stroking herself, watching alluringly as the young man plays his "flute"? But the self-assured woman is banned on canvas, and this representation of the whole noble collection is put into view by mighty men in the foreground, the possessors of all the representations of femininity. One of the other paintings in the painting shows Mary Magdalene, another Titian, the woman in a typical Christian position, a sinner who might be forgiven by a male god.

Pierre Subleyras, *The Studio of the Painter*, 125 x 99, after 1740

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104 ———— See http://www.europeana.eu/portal/record/15502/GG_1825.html, accessed 27 November 2014.

These are just some of the more or less subtle messages about desirable female behaviour which could be derived by the paintings that are offered so convincingly to any addressee in this exhibition view.

Pierre Subleyras's representation of the painter's studio leaves a striking impression of exhibiting what were still pre-modern values at the time. The atmosphere seems calm and inward, focused on the painter's craft. Malcolm Baker has outlined how the places where art objects were traded were transformed over time: "The artist's studio or workshop, as apparent in Subleyras's painting [...] were a place where art was presented and where business transactions between artists and clients could be conducted. But the commodification of art, which the growing art market indicated on the one hand, and the way in which art took on a life of its own as a separate aesthetic category on the other, both led to the establishment of new spaces serving the viewing of images and sculptures by an increasing wider public."[105] The fine arts progressively emancipated themselves from their status as an artisanal, manual craft, while their commodity aspect became nebulous.

Gabriel Jacques de St. Aubin, *The 1767 Salon,* aquarelle and gouache, 1767

One such newly established space was the Salon de Paris (or simply the Salon), as shown in Aubin's aquarelle. The Salon was first held following a royal sanction, initiated by Louis XIV in 1667, installed in the Louvre in 1669. Various genres were exhibited alongside one another, including history paintings, portraits, landscapes, portrait busts, and stucco models for large sculptures. Exhibits were displayed hierarchically, depending on size. Malcolm Baker has observed that, "The exhibitions at the Salon were

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105 ———— Malcolm Baker, (Deputy Head of Research at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London), in *Geschichte der Kunst* (The Oxford History of Western Art) (London: 2000; Cologne: DuMont, 2003), 288-289.

discussed extensively in contemporary periodicals and art literature, thereby attracting the attention of a wider public to the exhibition event."[106] The profane and direct trading with art became increasingly invisible; competition among artists, and the discourse on their works, now moved into the foreground."[107] Moreover, "This shift occurred in the second half of the eighteenth century, especially in France and England. The exhibition artist now became the new leading type of artist, taking the place of the employed court artist; the second leading type who rose to the fore was the artist-as-entrepreneur who accepted commissions for different clients or worked for the market," as Oskar Bätschmann's extensive historical research has revealed.[108]

Johann Zoffany, *Charles Townley's Library in Park Street*, 127 x 99, 1783

In the eighteenth century, art was increasingly depicted as a place of tasteful pleasure and critical judgement. Being able to speak appropriately about art was regarded as an expression of educated behaviour. The ability to pass individual judgement and to behave accordingly imputes a self-responsible subject, an ideological construction that assumed increasing significance. For Immanuel Kant, one of the most important

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106 ———— Ibid.
107 ———— Locher, "Die Kunst des Ausstellens," 22-23.
108 ———— Oskar Bätschmann, *Ausstellungskünstler, Kult und Karriere im modernen Kunstsystem* (Cologne: DuMont, 1997), 9.

Enlightenment philosophers, aesthetics assumed a prominent place: for instance, the current Suhrkamp edition of his *Critique of Judgement*, in which the first and second versions of the text are reprinted, runs to 456 pages. Terry Eagleton has shown that Kant discusses aesthetics as an ideological function through which aesthetic judgement produces individuality.[109] Jointly savoured, judgement renders aesthetics a utopian place, the only place where a sense of community can arise. Such thinking differs markedly from the Middle Ages, where human beings occupied a fixed, unalterable position in certain social strata, for instance a guild, family, or system of belief, and regarded themselves as part of a group, from whose determined positions behaviour and moral stance largely resulted. The ideology of the autonomous subject coincided with the development of a mercantile class.

Dating from 1883, Zoffany's painting shows the British officer and collector Charles Townley (1737-1805) surrounded by sculptures or their casts amid a group of men engaged in discussion. The men are positioned at eye-level between the Greek sculptures. The casts of ancient sculptures refer to the democratic ideal of ancient Greece, as the pictorially represented historical legitimation of democratic values claims.[110]

The first public exhibition for the "common people" was held at the Louvre in 1792, as a "Museum of the French Republic." Images, furniture, and art objects taken from the defeated aristocracy were placed on public display. Written into this spectacle were both the appropriation and affirmation of prevailing circumstances. Hubert Locher describes how exhibitions were increasingly regarded as narratives or stagings, in which the meanings of single, autonomous works of art were placed within an overall context: "Shortly after 1800, Friedrich Schlegel, the German philosopher and theorist of art and literature used the term 'exhibition' in the context of a museum presentation. While in Paris, he visited the Louvre to see displayed the works that Napoleon had looted, especially from Italy. Schlegel described his experience for German readers interested in art in a journal that he edited. In the light of a series of the most important canonical paintings, he observed that each arrangement of a series of paintings in an exhibition presented the viewer with a new "body," and that such presentation entailed a new concept.[111] The rightful owner of the Louvre art collection was the Republic, that is to say the nation, and no longer an individual ruler, around whose gesture of display art objects had previously been grouped. The context of exhibitions therefore had to be organised around another (imaginary) place of representation.

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109 ———— Terry Eagleton, Ästhetik. Die Geschichte ihrer Ideologie (Stuttgart; Weimar: Metzler, 1994).

110 ———— Baker, *Geschichte der Kunst*, 288-289.

111 ———— Locher, "Die Kunst des Ausstellens," 20.

George Baxter, *Gems of the World Fair* (Belgian section), wood engraving, coloured, 12,1 x 24,1, 1854

During the nineteenth century, national gallery exhibitions and world fairs were held across Europe and in the United States. World fairs were still exhibitions that jointly displayed commercial products, technology, and art as expansive, large-scale international exhibitions: London in 1851 (Crystal Palace); Paris in 1855; New York in 1853; Munich in 1854, 1867, and 1878; Paris in 1889; Philadelphia in 1876; Sydney in 1879; Melbourne in 1880; Amsterdam in 1885; and Brussels in 1888. From about 1850 on, museum associations began establishing bourgeois museums. Sculptures on display at world fairs included items assembled from what we would today consider unusual combinations of materials, for instance, volcanised rubber or papier-mâché, since at the same time they represented new technologies. The participating countries and their products competed against each other, in an attempt to draw attention to themselves. Statues, industrial products, and other artefacts were exhibited side by side.[112]

Writing about the spectacle that such large exhibitions involved, Walter Benjamin asserted: "The world fairs glorify the exchange value of goods. They create a framework in which their use value recedes. They open up phantasmagoria, into which the human being enters for the purpose of distraction."[113] The interrelation of mass audience, industrial products and art can be seen as a precursor of the "culture industry," that is, the blending of commerce, spectacle and culture that became subject to

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112 ———— See Philip Ward-Jackson, *Geschichte der Kunst*, 348.
113 ———— See Walter Benjamin, "Das Passagen-Werk," *Collected Works,* vol. 1, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974).

Adorno's critique and that of other representatives of the Frankfurt School in the mid-twentieth century.

Adolph von Menzel, *The Studio Wall*, 111 x 79.3, 1872

Access to studios was still reserved for an exclusive audience, and art was disseminated to bourgeois society through illustrated journals. Philip Ward-Jackson writes that, "In the early nineteenth century, it became a fashionable obligation for high-bred foreign visitors to Rome to tour the workshops," and that "engravings depicting artists' studios appeared in popular illustrated journals and sculptors explained works in progress to select visitors."[114] Adolph von Menzel's painting shows a later atelier setting, and the serial hanging of casts and death masks conveys a notion of serial, industrial work. There is an uncanny and dramatic air about the death masks, and bodies are shown in dismembered form. Visitors are emotionally involved in the picture. A threatening feeling looms, evoked, among other things, by the fact that we can see but a small excerpt of the whole space. Viewers are kept in the dark about the remaining space, and no autonomous subject position exists. This is no longer a simple work and sales space; instead, the "studio" is here charged in variable and mysterious ways.

[114] Ward-Jackson, *Geschichte der Kunst*, 348.

The New Salle des États, Paris. Louvre, illustration, 1886

The doors of the new Salle des États are flanked protectively by neo-Baroque figures, personifications of France. The discourse attendant upon exhibitions and the founding of museums at the end of the nineteenth century was oriented toward the national. Collections, moreover, were organised along historical and stylistic lines.[115] Carol Duncan stresses the ideological benefit of public art museums in a world increasingly defined by the bourgeoisie. Existing princely and royal art exhibitions were often rededicated as public exhibitions. She observes that, "In 1815, almost every Western capital, whether a monarchy or a republic, had such a museum. Some of the so-called 'national galleries' were obviously nothing other than established princely collections bearing new titles."[116] While the audience had now expanded to the affluent citizenry, large parts of the population nevertheless remained excluded from the outset, or as Duncan mentions, "The Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, for instance, still required visitors to wear glamorous gala dress until 1866."[117]

An expanded circle of visitors was subject to disciplinary measures, as Tony Bennett has discussed at length.[118] Bennett conceives the museum not only as a place of instruction, but also as a place that ostentatiously altered behavioural norms and inscribed them in the body. From the mid-nineteenth century, a series of measures were developed to educate

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115 ———— Carol Duncan, *Geschichte der Kunst,* 405.
116 ———— Ibid.
117 ———— Ibid.
118 ———— See Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995).

broad social strata to appreciate art. Brochures, guided tours, and instructions served to inculcate a specific chastened habitus. The paternalist instruction of manual labourers at the world fair in Glasgow included a ban on spitting, raising one's voice, or excessive movement.[119] This setting of instruction effectuated a choreography with implicit actors, behavioural drills, and distance-maintaining regulations. Stephanie Carwin made me aware, through her PhD research, that there were similar instructions right after the opening of the Louvre – no drunkenness, no dogs, no setting up fruit stands, and no touching of any artworks.[120]

Jules Alexandre Grün, *Friday at the Salon des Artistes Français*, 3.60 x 6.16, 1909

Sculptures were exhibited at large fora, like the Salon de Paris and the Royal Academy in London. These fora partly represented the performance of a bourgeois public sphere, comparable to cafés, parliaments, and newspapers, thereby rendering obvious that access to the "public sphere" and thus to the discursive power was reserved for a small section of the population. How images were assessed was now related to a "public" discourse.[121]

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119 ———— See Oliver Marchart, "Die Institution spricht, Kunstvermittlung als Herrschafts- und als Emanzipationstechnologie," in *Wer spricht? Autorität und Autorschaft in Ausstellungen*, eds. Beatrice Jaschke, Charlotte Martinz-Turek, and Nora Sternfeld (Vienna: Turia & Kant, 2005), 36-37.
120 ———— Archives Nationales, F7/1285 and F7/520/1.
121 ———— Locher, "Die Kunst des Ausstellens," 23.

Galerie 43 at the Landesmuseum Hannover, and Galerie 44 after Alexander Dorner's Reorganisation of the Landesmuseum, c. 1920

Walter Grasskamp's exhaustive chronology shows that the practice of hanging images in a single row on a white wall was largely established in German museums.[122] While eighteenth- and nineteenth-century museums commonly adopted the former courtly practice of presenting art objects on coloured wall spans and vivid wallpaper, a gradual shift occurred toward upper-class interiors featuring quasi-residential collection arrangements. The Impressionists assumed a pioneering role when they mounted sales exhibitions in their workshops-cum-studios around 1870. In 1888, Paul Signet demanded exhibits be hung in a single row, and already in 1888 gray fabric was used preferably to cover exhibition walls. We can nevertheless imagine late nineteenth-century exhibition spaces as distinctly colourful and splendid. Between 1870 and 1900, single-row hanging became the preferred convention; human eye-level became the

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122 —————— Walter Grasskamp, "Die weisse Ausstellungswand," in *Weiss,* eds. Wolfgang Ulrich and Juliane Vogel (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2003), 29-63.

basic measure; and exhibitions spaces were planned accordingly with lower ceilings.

The white wall, however, derives from architecture and the interior furnishing of modernity, and can be traced to the brighter design factories and workspaces. In 1906, white walls were used to design one part of the *Jahrhundertausstellung deutscher Kunst* [Centennial Exhibition of German Art] at the National Gallery in Berlin. The director of the National Gallery thereafter retained this exhibition technique on the upper floor. Almost concurrently, this form of presentation was also introduced in the Rhineland. Initially, walls were mostly covered with white or pale-gray fabric, and a white or light-coloured wall design also began to assert itself in the academies. Especially in the Vienna Secession, exhibition arrangements became increasingly colder from 1903 onward. In 1910, a solo exhibition of the works of Gustav Klimt presented the modern exhibition practice to an international audience. The Venice Biennale, founded in 1895, played a decisive role in spreading this practice. In the second decade of the twentieth century, studio aesthetics increasingly became a convention of museum exhibition practice. The early exhibitions of the Russian Constructivists were important stations for abandoning the picture frame; exhibits were, however, not hung in linear fashion. As Grasskamp observes, it was the *Große deutsche Kunstausstellung* [Great German Art Exhibition] of all things, held in the newly built Haus der deutschen Kunst [House of German Art] in Berlin in 1937, that bears witness to the triumph of the white exhibition wall.[123]

Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich: The Velvet and Silk Café, Ladies Fashion Exhibition, Berlin 1927; colours: golden, silver, pale-yellow silk; orange-coloured, red and black velvet, 1927

123 ———— Ibid.

Nevertheless, numerous experimental exhibition and spatial designs existed, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, to which contemporary artists often refer these days. One such example is Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich's Velvet and Silk Café (1927). Here, visitors' bodies were conceived not only as disembodied pairs of eyes, but also as subjects enjoying themselves and exchanging ideas. The softly flowing fabrics create niches and blinds, providing spaces for smaller groups.

Herbert Bayer, Walter Gropius and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy.
Trade Union Building, Berlin, 1935

Another example is the education of workers in a very modern-seeming exhibition set-up, which provided a predetermined itinerary on different levels. The viewer became the subject of instruction. Visitors were offered the possibility of a change of perspective, together with different lines of view and vistas. At the same time, they could draw close to the artefacts on display. Auratising the objects was dispensed with; instead, they served as print media conveying knowledge and as means of directly addressing visitors as a political group.
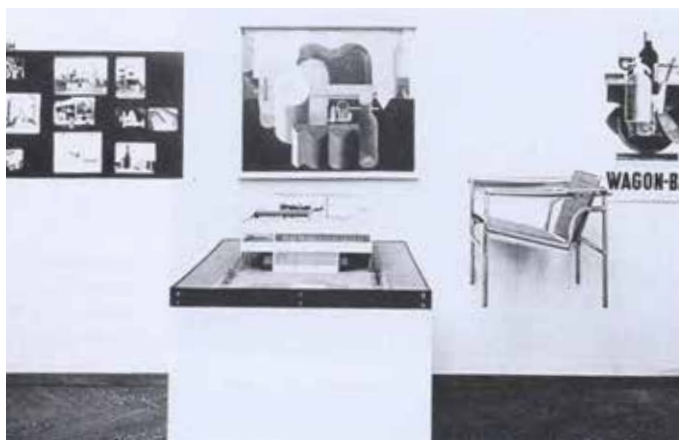
A Glance at the Exhibition on Cubism and Abstract Art, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1936

The exhibition convention now widely known as the White Cube asserted itself on an international scale in the 1930s and 1940s, among others at the Museum of Modern Art in New York where the exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* was mounted in 1936 in what was now acclaimed as "International Style." From 1945 on, this type of exhibition was considered the generally accepted norm.

Exposition internationale du Surréalisme, Man Ray, Max Ernst, Miro, Dali, Tanguy, Ceiling installation: Duchamp, Paris, 1938

Artists also began to question the single-row, auratic hanging of exhibits and its implications, among others at the 1938 exhibition of Surrealist work in Paris. Of special interest here is Duchamp's installation using bags of coal suspended from the ceiling. The only source of light was the

stove at the centre, said to be coal-fired. In effect, the bags were empty, stuffed with paper, and the stove was lit with electricity. Duchamp thus established a relationship between the gallery space and its implicit presuppositions. An abundance of artefacts, things and fabrics, odour (a coffee roaster), and the laughter of asylum inmates via a loudspeaker were supposed to evoke a synaesthetic and confusing experience, and to arouse desires.[124]

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,
Atrium, 1959

A new wave of museum building began in 1945. Due to the migration movements and the altered international balance of power brought about by the Second World War, American collectors now had huge collections of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works and, moreover, they collected modern and abstract works.[125] New economies of attention developed with the differentiation of the art system, in which spectacular museum buildings played an important role in the competition for public favour. The paradigm of such buildings is Frank Lloyd Wright's sensational Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, designed in 1943 to house the

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[124] ———— Bätschmann, *Ausstellungskünstler, Kult und Karriere im modernen Kunstsystem*, 189-190.

[125] ———— See Serge Guilbaut, *Wie New York die Idee der Modernen Kunst gestohlen hat* (Dresden, Basel: Verlag der Kunst, 1997).

collection of abstract art, and built between 1956 and 1959 on a corner plot on Fifth Avenue.[126] Such spectacular buildings deviate from the linear design of former museum buildings, enabling vista and relations almost capable of producing hallucinatory effects. Architecture often competes with and stands in a conflicting relationship with the art on display. In the exhibition hall, visitors are positioned less as individuals than as a mass divided into small sections. Central perspective is no longer the exclusive architectural paradigm; vistas and open spaces no longer deploy the subject as a ruler of perspective but instead subject it to the events occurring in the exhibition space.

Yves Klein, *Anthropométrie et Symphonie monotone,* Paris, 1960

The new art forms, like video and performance, also provided women with access to art, since these fields were less occupied by men than traditional genres like painting and sculpture. The new media of art were nevertheless pervaded by patriarchal patterns, even though these had meanwhile been modified. The ideal of the idle, culturally refined aristocratic male had shifted into the ideal of the energetic, enterprising male. This relationship also emerged in the new art directions, and the topos of the genius was once again revived. As Abigail Solomon-Godeau writes: "This development is largely the consequence of the redefinition of masculinity under the auspices of a bourgeois culture. The aristocratic, courtly ideal of male comeliness and elegance was irreconcilable with a new gender ideology, according to which the concept of beauty and grace was increasingly and exclusively associated with femininity."[127]

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126 ———— See Brandon Taylor, "Kunstmuseen," in *Geschichte der Kunst*, 514.

127 ———— Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Die Beine der Gräfin," in *Weiblichkeit als Maskerade*, ed. Liliane Weissberg (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1994), 121.

Andy Warhol, *Silver Pillows*, New York Castelli Gallery, 1966

The exhibition space also increasingly became a subject for discussion among conceptual artists. Andy Warhol's work follows on iconographically from Duchamp's ceiling installation. Nevertheless, this work does not negate the white space, but instead renders it visible.
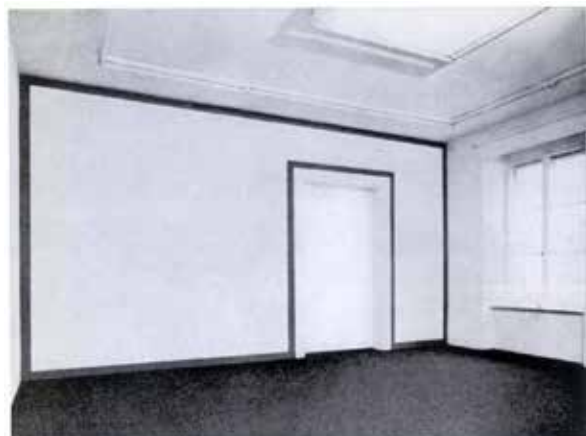
Blinky Palermo, *Wall painting*, 1971

In the 1960s, a radical paradigm shift occurred in the fine arts: Pop Art, Fluxus, and conceptual art all focused attention on "the art institution" and the relationship between art and the financial market. Artists integrated references to philosophical discourses into their works. On a theoretical level, moreover, the fine arts were subject to review, as Brandon Taylor, among others, has observed: "A sociology based on statistical empiricism, as developed for instance by Pierre Bourdieu in *The Rules of Art* (1969), related a dedication to art institutions with factors like education and class membership. Since the 1960s, conceptual artists have repeatedly and directly addressed the relationship between art museums and the power to define culture; for instance, Michael Asher and Hans

Haacke, and most recently Louise Lawler and Andrea Fraser, have debated institutional structures and the meaning of gaze conditions in the work."[128]

Harald Szeemann on the last day of *documenta 5* (8 October 1972),
black-and-white photograph taken by Balthasar Burkhard

Harald Szeemann was the prototype of the freelance curator. His exhibitions became "works" and the impresario staging them an author. This development occurred since curators no longer worked only as salaried staff for museums or other institutions, that is to say, as a "function" of the museum, but as independent guest or migrant workers, requiring them to make themselves known and recognisable, like freelance artists. This brought the various actors in the field of art into competing positions where the structure was clearly hierarchical.[129] Daniel Buren has commented on the curator's unifying meta-function: "More and more, the subject of an exhibition tends not to be the display of artworks, but the exhibition of the exhibition as a work of art. [...] The organizer assumes the contradictions; it is who safeguards them."[130] While this critique became visible as a contribution to the catalogue for *documenta 5*, it was also integrated into the exhibition as a whole. Robert Smithson cancelled his participation. Positionings in the field now had to be negotiated between curators, artists, and institutions. Power—and social, cultural, and economic capital—is subject to negotiation. Professionalisation points to the emergence of courses in curating. Postgraduate courses, like

128 ———— Taylor, p. 515.

129 ———— Beatrice von Bismarck, "Curating," in *DuMonts Begriffslexikon zur zeit-genössischen Kunst*, ed. Hubertus Butin (Cologne: DuMont, 2002), "Kunstmuseen," 56-59.

130 ———— Daniel Buren, "Exposition d'une exposition," in *documenta 5, Ausstellungskatalog*; quoted in Bätschmann, *Ausstellungskünstler*, 222. The original English version is reprinted at: http://www.e-flux.com/projects/next_doc/d_buren_printable.html.

the Postgraduate Programme in Curating at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK), aim to provide theoretically well-grounded training, leading to collaborative working methods and projects.
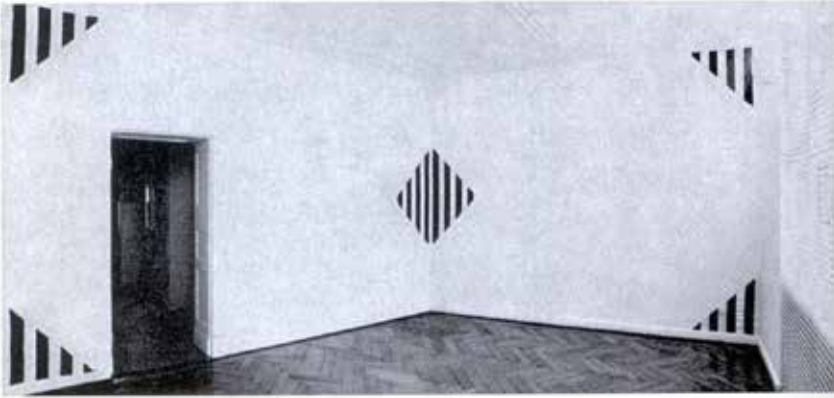
Daniel Buren, *Une Peinture en 5 sur deux murs*, 1973-76

Brian O'Doherty's collection of essays, *Inside the White Cube*, published in 1976, attempted to describe the framing power of the white exhibition space as an institution within art, especially its elevating, charismatic, and ideological effects. O'Doherty's polemical and combative tone revealed that aesthetic debates also involved social groups formulating and rejecting claims. Thus, he writes:

> In the classic era of polarized artist and audience, the gallery space maintained its status quo by muffling its contradictions in the pre-scribed socio-esthetic imperatives. For many of us, the gallery space still gives off negative vibrations when we wander in. Esthetics are turned into a kind of social elitism—the gallery space is *exclusive*. Isolated in plots of space, what is on display looks a bit like valuable scarce goods, jewelry, or silver; esthetics are turned into com-merce—the gallery space is *expensive*. What it contains is, without initiation, well-nigh incomprehensible—art is *difficult*. Exclusive audience, rare objects difficult to comprehend—here we have a social, financial, and intellectual snobbery which models (and at its worst parodies) our system of limited production, our modes of assigning value, our social habits at large. Never was the space, designed to accommodate the prejudices and enhance the self-im-age of the upper middle classes, so efficiently codified.
> The classic modernist gallery is the limbo between studio and living room, where the conventions of both meet on a carefully neutralized ground. There the artist's respect for what he has invented is per-

fectly superimposed on the bourgeois desire for possession. For a gallery is, in the end, a place to sell things—which is O.K. The arcane social customs surrounding this—the stuff of social comedy—divert attention from the business of assigning material value to that which has none.[131]

In these essays, O'Doherty referred to illustrations of conceptual art, which used visual means to formulate strategic counter-discourses, and which reflected the fetishistic nature of art and the conditions of its production, distribution, and reception. Prompted by philosophy, linguistics, and structuralism, art, its installations, and objects were subject to a radical reinterpretation. These visual re-readings did not remain only on a formal level but also revealed political connections.[132]

Entrance Hall, Architecture and Design Collection, MoMA, New York, 1984

Art and exhibition institutions now became a subject increasingly discussed in art journals and academic publications. The dehistoricising effect of the neutral presentation of artefacts, as occasioned by an idealising, ennobling exhibition practice, was criticised, among others, by Douglas Crimp in *On the Museum's Ruins*. Writing about the exhibition of a combat helicopter at MoMA, which celebrated it as a beautiful object, Crimp classified this performative presentation as a hegemonic demon-

131 ———— Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, expanded ed. (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, [1976] 1999), 76.

132 ———— See film on conceptual art by Stefan Römer: *Conceptual Paradise*, 2006.

stration: "The hard facts are that Bell helicopters are manufactured by the Fort Worth corporation Textron, a major U.S. defense contractor, which supplies the Bell and Huey model helicopters used against the civilian populations of El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. But because the contemporary art of exhibition has thought us to distinguish between the political and the aesthetic, a *New York Times* editorial entitled 'Marvelous MOMA' was able to say of MOMA's proud new object: 'A helicopter, suspended from the ceiling, hovers over an escalator in the Museum of Modern Art…. The chopper is bright green, bug-eyed and beautiful. We know that it is beautiful because MOMA showed us the way to look at the 20th century.'"[133]

Meeting Point, Künstlerhaus Bremen, 1999

Works of the 1980s and 1990s were subsumed under the term "context art" and displayed in an eponymous exhibition; the works focused explicitly on institutional, political, and social contexts, that is, the context of discourses. Subsuming very different artistic practices under a single term is, however, in itself reductive, a programmatic monopolising of discourse that some artists therefore rejected.[134] Institutional critique affiliated itself with political concerns and sought new formats of self-organisation. Once more, the power structures within the institution of art were subject to negotiation. Under the artistic direction of Helmut Draxler, Andrea Fraser examined the Kunstverein München in 1993 as a *Gesellschaft des Geschmacks* (A Society of Taste).[135] Fraser thus exposed

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133 ——— Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, MA, London: MIT Press, 1993), chapter on "The Art of Exhibition," 275.

134 ——— The eponymous publication emerged from the exhibition in Graz; see Peter Weibel, *Kontext Kunst* (Cologne: DuMont, 1996).

135 ——— Andrea Fraser, *A Society of Taste*, 20 January – 7 March 1993, "The exhibition was developed in cooperation with the nine board members of the Kunstverein. Andrea Fraser conducted interviews with each individual board member, which resulted in 27 hours of voice recordings. The material[s] were transcribed, edited, and anonymously published

the petty bourgeois mentality of the board members, ultimately leading to a break between the board and the curator in charge, Helmut Draxler.

In addition, free-floating groups of cultural producers committed to politics and feminism protested against traditional art institutions and tried to claim them as sites for the articulation of agonistic interests. Besides the occasionally booming market for paintings, a "counterpublic" based on cooperative working methods has emerged in the niches of culture. (In the German-speaking world, this includes, among others, Büro Bert und Botschaft e.V. in Berlin, Shedhalle in Zurich, Künstlerhaus in Stuttgart, Depot in Vienna). Reflecting on this development, Marion von Osten remarks: "Beyond the familiar artistic strategies, there also existed, from a historical perspective since the rise of the transmission complex of bourgeois art, a tactical usage of institutionalised spaces by groups of artists, left-wing, anti-racist, and feminist collectives and of course consumers themselves. These tactics, including the use of the art gallery for debates, meetings, workshops, film programmes, community projects, and so forth, became active in the shadow of the official art market, its power of distribution and a bourgeois public sphere; in Michel de Certeau's terms, they can be considered an attempt to appropriate and reinterpret hegemonic structures—in the knowledge that they will not simply 'vanish.'"[136] Other forms of knowledge production, oriented not towards display but process, also mattered in these bureaus, clubs, action groups, artists' houses, and media initiatives. Integrating these groups and their working methods into the spaces of representation ran the risk of keeling over into a stylised, symbolic gesture.[137]

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in the accompanying catalogue. The then following German-language recordings, conducted in a sound studio, were reduced to a sound collage lasting 90 minutes, which was included as an acoustic installation in the exhibition. The show also contained a further 25 artworks that were on loan from the Kunstverein's board members; however, these were exhibited anonymously, with neither the artist's nor the owner's name displayed." See https://www.kunstverein-muenchen.de/en/program/exhibitions/past/1993/andrea-fraser.

136 ——— Marion von Osten, "Producing Publics - Making Worlds! Zum Verhältnis von Kunstöffentlichkeit und Gegenöffentlichkeit," in *Publicum: Theorien der Öffentlichkeit*, eds. Gerald Raunig and Ulf Wuggenig (Vienna and Turin: Republicart, 2005).

137 ——— Detailed but with problematic evaluations: Holger Kube Ventura, *Politische Kunst Begriffe, in den 1990 Jahren im deutschsprachigen Raum* (Vienna: Edition Selene, 2001).

Sturtevant, *Warhol Flowers*, 1965, View of exhibition space, Museum
für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, 25 September 2004 – 30 January 2005

In Sturtevant's work, the White Cube functioned as a self-quote; the sta-
tus of space, art, and the bodies arranged therein became questionable;
certainties dissolved. Appropriation Art still deployed the subject as the
subject of central perspective; this subject must exhibit restrained, con-
trolled behaviour and become a pair of "wandering eyes." Nevertheless,
the status of the art object, space, spectator, and artist changes, for where
am I if art is no longer art but imitation?

Seldom disclosing her first name and only signing her works with her sur-
name, Sturtevant thus also indirectly broaches the subject of gender and
the attributions of masculinity and femininity bound up therein. What do
we see—original or copy? Sturtevant eventually claimed in the catalogue
that one collector passes off one of her works as a genuine Warhol, since
he is no longer able to match artists and works. Subtly, this failure also
calls into question the art market.

We have now arrived in the present, where the advent of digital media
often renders impossible the distinction between copy and original; in
reality, pixeled printouts of a so-called "original" are indistinct therefrom.
Manipulated images are also no longer distinguishable from "reproduc-
tions." The truth claim of art and re-production is thus dissolved. The gaze
regime of modernity is shifting towards a hallucinatory visual, which
Martin Jay has presented in detail as one of three overlapping scopic
regimes of (post)modernity.[138] Notwithstanding the manifold artistic and
theory-based critiques of exhibition displays, of the ensemble of rule-gov-
erned procedures for the circulation, production, and reception of art, of
the disciplining of subjects, of the practices deployed to contain dis-
courses, the White Cube remains the preferred mode of presentation in

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138 ———— Martin Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity," in *Vision and Visuality*, ed.
Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988).

contemporary museums and galleries. Often, reference is made to the sensuous, self-explanatory presence of the work, and the object is situated within the tradition of idealistic aesthetics as an inexplicable, incircumventable thing-in-itself. Objects and subjects are arranged in a relatively rigid hierarchical relationship. All types of exhibitions—whether art exhibitions or indeed video, design, history, or knowledge exhibitions—are meanwhile often subject to politics with regard to their commercialisation, their connection with the tourist industry, and their representative function (that is, to represent the city, nation, professional group, industry sector), and less with regard to an expanding educational remit. The key measure of things is the number of visitors.[139] Exhibition formats consequently become aligned—the staged media spectacle enters classical art and knowledge exhibition formats, and the ennobling gesture of the museum moves into product fairs.[140] Media-based modes of display do not alter the passive strolling through an exhibition as such, but they can also create an infantilisation of visitors towards the senses. Instead of this apparent compensation of the passivity of visitors in the mass-media-staged exhibition, a new diversification of exhibition formats would need to be claimed. One measure of quality is a fundamental involvement of the public in terms of participation, discussion, and self-empowerment. Available as a banner and sticker, Antoni Muntadas's statement (which can also be read vice versa) points in this direction: "Warning: Perception Requires Involvement."

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139 ——— Beatrice von Bismarck, "Making Exhibitions, Processing Relations," in *Protections, Das ist keine Ausstellung, This is not an Exhibition*, eds. Peter Pakesch and Adam Budak (Graz: König, 2006), 41-57.

140 ——— Anna Schober, *Montierte Geschichten, programmatisch inszenierte historische Ausstellungen* (Vienna: Dachs, 1994).

3.1 Examples for a Theoretical Approach to Exhibitions and Curatorial Projects: Oliver Marchart

Oliver Marchart has made structured and always politically positioned proposals for a theoretical analysis of exhibition displays with a series of essays and lectures. His contribution on documentas 10, 11, and 12 is particularly impressive, criticising, among other things, the racist, especially anti-Semitic tendencies of *documenta 12*.[141] Since he himself does not work as a curator but as a theoretician, his contributions are rarely found in the circulating readers on curatorial practice and theory. In the early essay "Die Institution spricht" (The Institution Speaks),[142] Oliver Marchart argues, for example, that exhibition institutions in themselves are a mediating instance, not just so-called museum pedagogy. The institution therefore speaks through its entire setting; the guides (or curators) are thus only "organs" of the institution. In the first two sections, Marchart examines dominatory pedagogy (i.e., dominatory curating); in the subsequent sections, he attempts to outline the conditions of emancipatory pedagogy (or emancipatory curating). As is well known, Tony Bennett has shown the change in the governmental structure, if you will, that has been achieved by changing the structure of the knowledge/power complex. Instead of spectacular individual events such as public punishments, beheadings, royal weddings and so on, governmental indoctrination is now established as a permanent condition, and bourgeois museums play an indispensable role in this. They convey the individual's place in the given order, and they convey new fields of knowledge, such as (art) history, anthropology, and biology. They convey an idea of a national history combined with a quasi-universal claim. As Bennett explains, "The exhibitionary complex was also a response to the problem of order, but one which worked differently in seeking to transform that problem into one of culture—a question of winning hearts and minds as well as the disciplining and training of bodies."[143] The knowledge that is ultimately conveyed

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141 ——— Oliver Marchart, *Hegemonie im Kunstfeld: Die documenta-Ausstellungen dX, D11, d12 und die Politik der Biennalisierung* (Cologne: König, 2008). An excerpt of this interesting text is published in *OnCurating* 8: Oliver Marchart, "Curating Theory (Away) the Case of the Last Three Documenta Shows," *OnCurating* 8, *Institution as Medium. Curating as Institutional Critique? Part 1*, eds. Dorothee Richter and Rein Wolfs (2012).

142 ——— Marchart, "Die Institution spricht."

143 ——— Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 62.

to visitors in an authoritarian gesture is not disembodied, but always affects the body. As an example, Marchart describes the disciplinary techniques applied to visitors made up of the common people at the beginning of the bourgeois museum. Moreover, the way objects are presented makes us forget that the power of definition is not self-evident. Marchart points out the naturalisation effect that makes one forget the historical conditionality of the institution. Here, he relates naturalisation effects to the following moments: the power of definition, exclusions, conditionality of the institution, class character.

Marchart refers to Althusser in order to classify exhibition displays as ideological state apparatuses, which according to Althusser also included the church, the family, the educational system, and so forth. Gramsci refers to these institutions as civil society, which on the cultural level imposes a hegemonic structure on a voluntary basis. The central point in Althusser's argument is that every regime needs the acceptance of the people. The people have to face on the one hand the state power as state apparatus (army, police) and on the other hand the ideological state apparatuses, which organise this voluntary acceptance of the regime, hence of the basis. The basis is, in a Marxist sense, the means of production, the relations of production, and the processes of reproduction. The basis is generally the material basis, which includes all infrastructure. The term interpellation by Althusser tries to describe the process of integrating the way one is addressed into the respective subjectivity, in the constitution of this person, or entity.[144] Here, too, we can see parallels to Bennett. Bennett explains the process of creating a modern, self-regulating Western subject as a complex process of overlapping gaze regimes in paradigmatic museum structures: "Yet, ideally, they sought also to allow the people to know and hence to regulate themselves; to become, in seeing themselves from the side of power, both the subjects and the objects of knowledge, knowing power and what power knows, and knowing themselves as (ideally) known by power, interiorizing its gaze as a principle of self-surveillance and hence, self-regulation."[145]

Based on this theoretical analysis, Marchart outlines emancipatory pedagogy, proposing a) interruption, and b) counter-canonisation. An interesting example of this would be *documenta X*, which proposed a new weighting of discourse with new formats such as a lecture area installed in the main building, the documenta-Halle, and a transparent bookshop designed by Vito Acconci.

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144 ——— See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971).

145 ——— Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 63.

Bookshop designed by Vito Acconci. © documenta Archive

The interruption would also address the naturalisation effects described above, in which the spatial staging had already somewhat commented on the previously dominant presentation of painting and other classical formats. The counter-canonisation would use the defining power of the exhibition institution to extend its canon in content as well as in formal settings. In the comparably extremely small project at the Künstlerhaus, the difference from mere cultural gestures on political issues was that the actual political fights and demands were present (not just represented), and a wider coalition of activists and artists became thinkable. One weakness of the project was not being able to perpetuate this momentum. In his text, Oliver Marchart chose *documenta11* as a valid example, since it sought to expand Eurocentrism with new formats—the so-called Platforms: "Democracy Unrealized" (Vienna, 15 March–20 April 2001; Berlin, 9–30 October 2001); "Experiments with Truth: Transitional Justice and the Processes of Truth and Reconciliation" (New Delhi, 7–21 May 2001); "Créolité and Creolization" (St Lucia, 13–15 January 2002); and "Under Siege: Four African Cities, Freetown, Johannesburg, Kinshasa, and Lagos (Lagos, 16–20 March 2002)[146]—and showed many previously unheard-of

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[146] ——— See https://www.documenta.de/en/retrospective/documenta11#. Okwui Enwezor, a native of Nigeria, was the first non-European art director of documenta—and the first documenta of the new millennium was the first truly global, postcolonial documenta exhibition. "Documenta11 rests on five platforms which aim to describe the present location of culture and its interfaces with other complex, global knowledge systems." Thus, the exhibition in Kassel was the fifth and last platform in the concept introduced by Okwui Enwezor and his curatorial team, composed of Carlos Basualdo, Ute Meta Bauer, Susanne Ghez, Sarat Maharaj, Mark Nash, and Octavio Zaya. Transdisciplinary "platforms" devoted to different themes were presented on four continents a full year in advance of the official opening: "Democ-

and unseen artists. In his opinion, the accompanying curatorial pro-
gramme also contained emancipatory, self-empowering approaches.

3.2 Discussing Exhibitions: Julie Ault

Julie Ault, a member of the influential artist group "Group Material,"
believes that exhibitions are openly or covertly advocating something[147]: a
political position, a product range, or transcendent aesthetic experiences.
Messages and meanings are negotiated on a visual, spatial, aesthetic, ide-
ological, psychological, and emotional level. As a level below the obvious
meaning, it recognises certain subtexts, for example, the code of conduct
to which visitors are subject. This gives it a historical foundation, since
museums were conceived as educational institutions. She contrasts the
presentation of art objects with the presentation of commercial goods.
With some products, the presentation is heightened to create stylish envi-
ronments with a narrative atmosphere, which, similar to works of art,
ennoble the objects on display. In the case of public spaces, too, she finds
that these have been planned and manufactured to evoke certain reac-
tions in the public. Ultimately, Julie Ault finds similar procedures for com-
mercial goods and cultural objects: specific narratives and symbolic oper-
ations that reproduce ideological positions. This is exactly what we came
to in the research project "Exhibition—Displays," in which we compared
art exhibitions, design exhibitions, car shows, thematic exhibitions on
sport, and film exhibitions on the basis of a few parameters.[148] The meth-

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racy Unrealized" (Vienna, 15 March–20 April 2001; Berlin, 9–30 Octo-
ber 2001); "Experiments with Truth: Transitional Justice and the Pro-
cesses of Truth and Reconciliation" (New Delhi, 7–21 May 2001);
"Créolité and Creolization" (St. Lucia, 13–15 January 2002); and "Under
Siege: Four African Cities, Freetown, Johannesburg, Kinshasa, and
Lagos (Lagos, 16–20 March 2002). Many of the works of art later pre-
sented at the exhibition took up these themes and other issues of
global significance in different ways. In keeping with the premise that
"Art Is the Production of Knowledge," many of the projects were docu-
mentary in nature—yet fears that the show would be "overburdened
with theory" (a prejudicial assumption that had already been proved
false at *documenta X*) turned out to be unjustified.

147 ——— Julie Ault, "Ausstellung: Unterhaltung, Praxis, Plattform," in *Agenda.
Perspektiven kritischer Kunst*, ed. Christian Kravagna (Vienna: Folio
Verlag, 2000).

148 ——— *Ausstellungs-Displays*, Research project at the Institute for Cultural
Studies in the Arts, Zurich University of the Arts.

ods that Julie Ault unconventionally sees used in displays of goods in the supermarket are basically the same in all exhibitions. She also states that orientation guidance for the public—paths, itinerant signage, sign systems—are used as tools to suggest meaning.

She regards the museum presentation methods as outdated compared to the presentation in the video shops, as well as less audience-effective, as she mockingly adds. The omnipresence of mass media influences the entire cultural spectrum; museums are therefore in danger of becoming obsolete and react in turn with a kind of entertainment, with interactivity and other "visualisation strategies," with catering and business areas. Museums have lost their authority, according to Ault. Contradictions between elitist historical versions and popularisation tendencies are being renegotiated. In the art field, she notes a polarisation in the 1980s: marketable neo-expressive art on the one hand, and institutional critique and participatory models on the other. Using *Group Material* projects as examples, she presents attempts to formulate places based on self-determination and non-hierarchical models of organisation. Representation is thematised here as a contested arena. The examples of Group Material's projects question different paradigms of art institutions, such as the power of definition, the separation of sociological material and art objects, and mechanisms of exclusion, high and low. She refers to the projects "The People's Choice," "Americana," and "AIDS Timeline."

To refer again to the "politics of display, politics of site, politics of transfer and translation," one must not only discuss the variety of media, displays, and sites, but also the more complex situation of transfer and translation. As Group Material was both an artist group and a space, their work undoubtedly had a curatorial side. To include, for example, artworks from their neighbours showed the sociologically class-based side of curatorial decisions on the one hand, while also showing a practice of resistance against the role artists play in gentrification processes.

3.3 Paul O'Neill: The Culture of Curating, or Foreground, Middleground, and Background

With *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s),*[149] Paul O'Neill undertakes to present a broad outlook on the newly developed field of curating as a distinct practice of mediation, and he wants to "reconfigure our understanding of the multiple actors and agencies at work within the field of cultural production."[150] In chapter one, he sketches a brief history of exhibition-making from the 1920s onwards, and then looks into the most important shift in paradigms in the 1960s. For this period, he notes "an implied critique of the autonomy of the work of art". As the main characters of the curator as auteur, he identifies Harald Szeemann, Rudi Fuchs, and Jan Hoet, and he defines the activity in an interesting way as a coproduction: "The appearance of the verb 'curate' began to articulate 'curating' as a mode of proactive participation in the processes of artistic production,"[151] but this new player in the field is also related in his view to a hypervisibility of the curator. The second part of the book is concerned with the developments in the realm of biennials and large-scale exhibitions, and seeks to scrutinise "discussions around globalism, nomadic curating, and issues of transculturalism,"[152] and the tendency of mobile curators to embrace the biennial model as a vehicle for validating and contesting what constitutes the international art world. The concept of a traveling curator is conceived through the lens of Hardt and Negri's notion of "the multitude," as an open and expansive network "in which all differences can be expressed freely and equally, a network that provides the means of encounter so that we can work live in common."[153] Biennials are therefore adopting the creative multitude as a flexible, post-Fordist workforce to varying degrees, as O'Neill states. Biennials also provide a vision of globalism, and they are able to embrace art practices from the periphery. But, of course, this is also a problematic cultural practice, as it developed parallel to the global flow of capital and information.[154] Throughout

149 ——— O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s).*
150 ——— Ibid., 1.
151 ——— Ibid., 5.
152 ——— Ibid.
153 ——— Ibid., 65.
154 ——— Ibid., 68.

his text, O'Neill develops his argument alongside contemporary practices such as those by Okwui Enwezor, Ute Beta Bauer, or Vasif Kortun. He also briefly discusses practices of collective curating (Manifesta and *Documenta11*) and on curating beyond the exhibition format.

The third chapter, "Curating as a Medium of Artistic Practice: The Convergence of Artistic and Curatorial Practice Since 1990," follows an exploration into smaller and very contemporary projects, including O'Neill's own practice, for which he specifies the terms of the background, the middleground, and the foreground as three organisational categories. "The background is the architecture of the exhibition space, the primary layer of the exhibition [...]. The middleground is an area with which audiences are partially intended to interact. [...] The foreground represents a space of containment, in which the viewer takes part in a subject-to-object relationship with those artifacts, images, and works of art that could be categorized as autonomous objects for study in their own rights."[155] It would be intriguing if he also reflected on the background of the historical, social and political situation. Even if this proposal includes a conservative idea of art and of curating, the projects he then shows, which are based on these assumptions, look rather interesting: *Coalesce: Happenstance*, Amsterdam, 2010;[156] *Coalesce: With All Due Intent*, Sligo, 2005.[157] The spatial approach in which different artists are asked to work with the walls, or the spatial middleground with sculptures, or the foreground with other objects, the curatorial gesture managed to break away from the linear idea of presentation on white walls without turning the space into a comfort zone. In this case, one could speak of a curatorial installation. In the following pages, he presents different curatorial experiences including the *Curating Degree Zero Archive*. In many aspects, O'Neill has presented the first in-depth theory-inspired discussion of curating as an emerging field, meandering between a more critical understanding of the implied agencies of curating and a more traditional understanding of the triad of curator, artist, and audience. In an effort to show the discourse on curating in its historical formation, I will eventually discuss the terms "the curatorial" and curatorial constellation later.

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155 ———— Ibid., 93.
156 ———— Installation view, Ibid., 94.
157 ———— Ibid., 96.

3.4 Display, the Curatorial, Curating—What Do These Notions Imply?

Under the pressure of accelerated capitalism, in other words, the era of the Capitalocene,[158] the political potentiality—or should we say pregnancy—of curating has been discussed repeatedly, and the urgency to formulate a position from the sphere of representation seems to be pressing. With the aim of discussing an epistemic dimension, this effort culminated in the notion of "the curatorial." "The curatorial" is a term that was coined by Irit Rogoff; it was presented and discussed in different symposia, like "Re-Visionen des Displays. Ausstellungs-Szenarien, ihre Lektüren und ihr Publikum" (Re-Visions of Display. Exhibition Scenarios, Their Readings and Their Audiences),[159] in Zurich in 2007 at the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, organised by Jennifer John, Sigrid Schade, and myself; and "Kulturen des Kuratorischen, Cultures of the Curatorial"[160] in Leipzig in 2010, organised by Beatrice von Bismarck, Jörn Schafaff and Thomas Weski, which found its way into printed matter in the publication of the same name following the symposium in Leipzig in 2012. Until then, the discussion was led around the notion of "curating"; other terms that occasionally occurred were "display" and "exhibition-making." Exhibition-making and exhibition-maker was mostly used in the '70s with its first prominent protagonists such as Harald Szeemann. As we will see later, the noun is connotated with the idea of an auctorial subject position.

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[158] ——— Capitalocene instead of the more objective sounding anthropocene is used by Donna Haraway and Jason Moore; see, for example, Jason Moore, ed., *Anthropocene Or Capitalocene?: Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland: PM Press, 2016), and Donna Haraway, "Staying with the Trouble: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene," in *Anthropocene Or Capitalocene?*, 34.

[159] ——— Conference "Re-Visionen des Displays. Ausstellungs-Szenarien, ihre Lektüren und ihr Publikum," concept by Jennifer John, Dorothee Richter, Sigrid Schade, in collaboration with the Migros Museum and Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts, Zurich University of the Arts, at Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, 28-30 June 2007. The follow-up publication, mainly in German: John, Richter, Schade, eds., *Re-Visionen des Displays*.

[160] ——— Conference "Kulturen den Kuratorischen/Cultures of the Curatorial," Hochschule fuer Grafik und Buchkunst, Leipzig, 22-24 January 2010; the follow-up publication, Beatrice von Bismarck, Jörn Schafaff, Thomas Weski, eds., Cultures of the Curatorial (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012).

Even as recently as the early 1990s, the English word *display* was not particularly widespread in reference to exhibitions in the German-speaking world. (presentation, staging) was popular from about the mid-1970s onward, as was *Ausstellung* (exhibition). The word *Inszenierung* is derived from the French *mise-en-scène*, or "putting on stage," and hence suggests the world of theater, cabaret, opera, and later film and then by extension the exhibition (as medium). By contrast, the term *Ausstellung* is related to *zur Schau stellen* (putting on display) and hence with presentation and exhibitions at annual fairs.[161] Walter Benjamin derived the concept from the culture of display and fairs and in that context alluded to an ancient culture of eventful displaying and enjoying.[162] At markets and fairs, all the senses were still synergistically addressed, and the crowds, that were later so feared, behaved unabashedly. The English word *display* has only recently been used in German-speaking lands for exhibitions, for about a decade. Its semantic context of presentation display, display and packaging, advertising and computer display points to new economies and new conceptions of (re)presentation based on a particular "screen," a "user interface." *Display* can be used in English to refer to a computer screen and the visual presentation of facts. The semantic horizons of the word already point to a primacy of the surface against a complicated, difficult, and intelligible background.[163] Understood in this way, a study of "exhibition display" already transports us into certain conceptions of the manner of performing objects and subjects within an exhibition. If we think of the complex constitution of exhibitions in the sense of a socially and politically located and effective apparatus, then we can view the *dominance of phenomenalism* as an effect of this apparatus.

The curatorial or curating? The notions of the curatorial or curating are embedded in a corona of associative word fields, and as a result their slightly different meanings are rather significant.

"The curatorial" has become a fashionable term in recent years; many articles carry this term in the title. Irit Rogoff described it in the above-mentioned publication as follows: "To my mind the differentiation is the distinction of curating as a professional practice, which involves a whole set of skills and practices, materials, and institutional and infrastructural conditions. It has everything to do with what goes in to the making of exhibitions, or alternatively what we can call 'platforms of display,' as I don't think it is so narrow as to include only exhibitions. In this practice

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161 ———— Schober, *Montierte Geschichten*, 9.

162 ———— See Walter Benjamin, "Jahrmarkt des Essens," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 4/1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 527-532.

163 ———— See Michael Barchet, Donate Koch-Haag et al., eds., *Ausstellen. Der Raum der Oberfläche* (Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 2003).

there are a series of transfers of works that move from one world to another in that movement become a presentation—they are operating in the realm of the representational."[164] This is the most crucial moment, the representational mode of curating in her argument, which is contrasted by the curatorial: "The curatorial makes it possible for us to affect a shift in emphasis to a very different place, to the trajectory of activity. So if in curating, the emphasis is on the end product—even if the end product is often very complicated and ends up performing differently than one might have assumed—in the curatorial, the emphasis is on the trajectory of ongoing, active work, not an isolated end product but a blip along the line of an ongoing project."[165] Rogoff sees the curatorial as an "epistemic structure," which shows her relation to philosophy. This epistemic structure is, in her words, "a series of existing knowledges that come together momentarily to produce what we are calling the event of knowledge, a moment in which different knowledges interacting with one another produce something that transcends their position as knowledge."[166] Rogoff deserves credit for initiating this necessary discussion of terminology, but I would tend to agree with Raqs Media Collective's argument. They emphasise the quality of a verb before a noun, here exemplified with culture: "Culture is also a verb, and it can be an active verb. An active verb is a word that gives primacy to the doing of things. Culture as a noun is something that one acquires, or possesses. It is an object. But culture as a verb points to things that a subject does. There is a world of a difference between possessing and making. 'Cultures of the curatorial' can mean different things depending on whether we give the term 'cultures' the gloss of a noun or the vigor of a verb, on whether we think of curation being a matter of 'representing' or 'exhibiting" culture, or 'doing' culture. We are practitioners, not nomenclatural fetishists. Verbs suit us better than nouns. So, let us stick, for the moment, with the verb."[167] I also fear a mystical charge being added through the mysterious term "the curatorial," and I prefer "curating" to downplay it to the activity and agency it allows, and see it as primarily embedded in politics. I (and other colleagues) never had in mind that we were working for an "end product"; instead, we worked for interference in a discursive field, and we were quite conscious of the platform that is provided with representation, a platform that is contested, the battlefield of different positions. This interference has practical parts and/or more theoretical parts. It is precisely the argumen-

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164 ——— Irit Rogoff in conversation with Beatrice von Bismarck, in *Cultures of the Curatorial*, 22.
165 ——— Ibid., 23.
166 ——— Ibid.
167 ——— Raqs Media Collective, "To Culture: Curation as an Active Verb," in *Cultures of the Curatorial*, 100.

tation offered by Raqs Media Collective that could be applied to the differentiation between the curatorial—which obviously is a gesture to claim something, a possession, an intellectual claim—and the verb curating, which is connoted with the active part in doing something in a process and its effects. The discourse formulating curating is not just there; it had to be constructed and carried on by specific subjects in specific contexts. This led me to another connotation of the term "epistemic," which Rogoff used in relation to the curatorial. The so called "epistemic community," which has actually been formed through the usage and repetition of the notion "curatorial," is understood by the political scientist Peter M. Haas as a transnational network of knowledge-based experts, "a network of professionals with recognised expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area."[168] He also acknowledges the normative moment: "Epistemic communities are socio-psychological entities that create and justify knowledge."[169]

My possibly misguided concerns are that, by introducing the notion of the "curatorial," we are just emphasising a limiting ritual, as used in a discursive formation. The limitations of a discursive formation, following Foucault, are defined, for example, by the ritual.[170] On the one hand, the ritual defines the qualification and role of the speakers; it lays down the gestures to be made, the behaviour, the circumstances, and a whole range of signs, and the supposed or imposed significance of the words, their effect on those addressed, the limitation of their constraining validity. The ritual plays such an important part that Foucault sees religious, juridical, therapeutic, and in some ways political discourses as barely dissociable from the functioning of ritual. And secondly, the fellowship of discourse, whose function is to preserve or to reproduce discourse, but in order for it to circulate within a closed community, according to strict regulations, without those in possession of it being dispossessed by this very distribution. It functions through various schema of exclusivity and disclosure.[171] And as much as I appreciate Irit Rogoff as a critical and feminist cultural analyst, I cannot follow her in this imposition of a particular activity. I would like to see curating not enclosed within an epistemic community; in my

168 ———— Peter Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination," *International Organization* 46, vol. 1 (Winter 1992): 3.

169 ———— Ibid.

170 ———— Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (London: Routledge, 1981), 51-78.

171 ———— See also John Lym, "'The Discourse on Language' by Michel Foucault: A Summary," website of Brock University, accessed 15 February 2015, http://www.brocku.ca/english/courses/4F70/discourse.php.

view, I see curating as a practice that is deeply involved in the politics of display, politics of site, politics of transfer, and translation and regimes of visibility. I see it as a practice that should evoke maximum openness. Instead, curating is often based on a concept of the overly simplistic understanding of the curator as a new agent in the fields of art and culture—or it is overcomplicated as a quasi-philosophy. I understand the curatorial/curating as a multi-authored approach to the production of meaning, which is intrinsically linked to transformations of contemporary societies, the reorganisation of labour, cultural policies, politics of inclusion/exclusion, and issues posed by points of intersection.[172] Therefore, the projects and programmes that emerged around this position, the MAS in Curating, the PhD in Practice in Curating, Curating on the Move, and the web journal *OnCurating* have been developed in the context of cultural analysis, theories of power, and theories of communities; they are based on feminist, queer, postcolonial, ecological, post-Marxist, and other political and emancipatory positions. Many of these positions emerge out of political struggles or social movements. Therefore, I see curatorial knowledge production as a space for the negotiation of social, political, cultural, and economic conflicts. I understand curating as agency from which new constellations emerge.

3.5 *Curating Degree Zero Archive*— A Travelling Research Tool

As promised, here is another version of practice as theory and theory as practice. My own involvement with "thinking about exhibitions,"[173] or in my case "thinking about curating," emerged with the first series of exhibitions I curated at a social centre in Bremen in northern Germany. From the very beginning, I was interested in challenging the boundaries of the "art as institution"—to use the notion Peter Bürger coined[174]—and there-

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172 ——— This is based on the concept for the PhD in Practice in Curating, a cooperative project of the Zurich University of the Arts and the University of Reading, initiated in 2012, led by the author and founded by Susanne Clausen and the author.

173 ——— Here, I refer to another anthology: Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, Sandy Nairne, eds., *Thinking About Exhibitions* (London, New York: Routledge, 1995).

174 ——— Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974).

fore I proposed a topic for one year of projects, which was called "Field Research into Housewifery Art." For me, it became clear that in the superficially and pretentiously free art world, a lot of things were forbidden, for example, referring to anything so unfashionable and so uncool as daily life, the most devalued topic, and a word that was nearly not to be mentioned at all was "housewifery." I will speak about this project later in detail. Later, I understood that this is part of a process which Silvia Federici[175] has researched and described, i.e., the devaluation of care work and communal work that was part of the long history of primitive accumulation, which in her understanding requires a constant infusion of expropriated capital, which she connects to women's unpaid labour, and to any kind of slave labour, connected to reproduction and otherwise, and which she frames as a historical precondition of the rise of a capitalist economy predicated upon wage labour. Related to this, she outlines the historical struggle for the commons and the struggle for communalism. Instead of seeing capitalism as a liberating defeat of feudalism, Federici interprets the ascent of capitalism as a reactionary move to subvert the rising tide of communalism and to retain the basic social and economic contract.[176]

Alongside this feminist interest came an obsession to know more about Fluxus, an art movement which has obviously upended many paradigms in the most radical way; even gender was under performative re-evaluation, but women were nevertheless often excluded from the inner circle. In the '60s and '70s, they were in many ways progressive; for example, Black and Asian artists were included in the performances. This interest later turned into a dissertation[177] and a film, based on fourteen long interviews with protagonists of the movement.[178] The political and gender aspects and the notion of everyday life interested me immensely, so from different perspectives it became obvious that form and content had to be discussed in relation to one another, since both categories produce meaning. I understand the essay film *Flux Us Now. Fluxus Explored with a Camera* as a curatorial work, insofar as it provided a setting and a support structure for opening up ideas about Fluxus and bringing back a multiplicity of voices.

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175 ——— Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004).

176 ——— Ibid.

177 ——— Dorothee Richter, *Fluxus. Kunst gleich Leben? Mythen um Autorschaft, Geschlecht, Produktion und Gemeinschaft* (Zurich: OnCurating, 2012).

178 ——— Dorothee Richter and Ronald Kolb, *Flux Us Now. Fluxus Explored with a Camera*, 2013. See http://www.fluxusnow.net/.

Working for some years in occupied buildings with a curatorial group, I had the opportunity to set up a symposium for the Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Association for contemporary Art, in Bremen, which I organised in collaboration with Barnaby Drabble, who was still a student at Goldsmiths University at that time: *Curating Degree Zero, 1998.*[179] The title unfolded in the realm of a reference to Roland Barthes' *Writing Degree Zero.*[180] Barthes had in mind a way of writing that was entirely free as a future horizon with his emphatic sentence: "Feeling permanently guilty of its own solitude, it [literary writing] is nonetheless an imagination eagerly desiring a felicity of words, it hastens towards a dreamed-of language whose freshness, by a kind of ideal anticipation, might portray the perfection of some Adamic world where language would no longer be alienated."[181]

We thought of curating as something that has to be discussed and even though "degree zero" is impossible, we wished to scrutinise this upcoming cultural activity in a shared process and to work for a world, to use Barthes emphatic tone, where art and culture would no longer be alienated.

Therefore, we invited curatorial positions which were acting in (then) new ways, which were engaged in social issues and also engaged in experimental formats. Actually, we also invited several artists whose practice meandered between an artistic approach and a curatorial practice at that time, such as Roger M. Buergel, Jeanne van Heeswijk, or Ursula Biemann. From our perspective as involved contributors, the conference produced an ongoing discourse which lasted for years with some of the participants and was therefore enormously important for our thinking. Through these meetings, symposia, smaller panels, and informal groups in the archive, we nurtured the discourse in this practical sense. Soon after the symposium, I became the artistic director of Künstlerhaus Bremen, with a programme that had at its foundation the task of producing new works in the form of projects related to relevant topics of the social and political situations and an awareness of producing discourse as well.[182]

In 2002, Barnaby Drabble and I worked on a second symposium on curatorial practice with the now defunct art and media venue "plug.in" in Basel, whose director at that time was Annette Schindler. Instead of finding the money for the conference, we ended up with a rather small budget, which we wanted to use in the best way we could think of and decided on an archive on "critical curatorial practice," which was at first initiated as a

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179 ——— See the follow-up publication: Dorothee Richter and Eva Schmidt, *Curating Degree Zero* (Nuremberg: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 1998).

180 ——— Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967).

181 ——— Ibid., 94.

182 ——— Dorothee Richter, *Programming for a Kuenstlerhaus 1999-2003* (Nuremberg: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 2003).

by-product of the conference. This project took on a life of its own; curators and initiatives asked us to show it at other venues, and we tried to find a form and structure to present it in a way that would mirror and expand our ideas. We were aware that any archive produces history and is part of instituting a discourse, as we described in the outlines for the archive, and I rely on our background text from 2003:

> Archives have become an increasingly common practice in the art world since the 1960s. On the one hand, there are archives founded by artists or collectors; on the other, a more recent development, there are those founded by curators, who sought to make their collections of materials accessible and make their selection criteria public. That desire may have arisen from the dissolution of the notion of the self-contained artwork, which has been eclipsed by a contingent art object that makes a new form of cultural memory necessary and always contains a note of protest and a critique of museum practices. At the same time, archives that collect material and make it publicly available are always concerned with a kind of self-enabling, to ensure that they are themselves inscribed in the cultural memory and can be heard in the "murmur of discourse," as Michel Foucault calls it.
>
> We tried to work with the material in order to be consistent with the kind of critical material that the participating curators have made available, therefore *Curating Degree Zero Archive* strived to preserve an open character in its narrative structure. The arrangement was not immutable; rather, it travelled from institution to institution and, in collaboration with the host institution, constantly changed and expanded the selection of positions represented. The fundamental idea behind the archive was to enlighten and to discuss: to bring together information that is difficult to find and then make it accessible.

The website had a navigational structure available to the users of the archive as a basis for scholarly and practical research, both for the participating curators and for other members of the 'operating system' of the art world. The archive was not intended to establish a self-contained narrative but rather to present a range of divergent positions in order to provide a framework for and shed light on the contexts of the work of individual curators who wished to be critical and political. With that in mind, the contradictions that became evident in an overview of divergent practices seemed fruitful to us. We wanted to allow these contradictions, fissures, and rifts to stand, and to use the questions that arise from them as an

opportunity to gain knowledge.[183] Rereading our earlier texts today, I see that we were also heavily involved in the battlefield around this new notion and job description, but we also tried to keep up a very specific trajectory, as we already acknowledged:

> The concept of critical curating is inherently not a unified one. It is subject to constant historical change, just as the discursive formation of the visual arts is subject to constant transformation. In this context the making of exhibitions should be understood as a practice that produces, influences, and alters the object of which it speaks.
>
> On the one hand, we take critical curatorial practice—as it relates to the *Curating Degree Zero Archive*—to mean an orientation around content that addresses political themes such as feminism, urbanism, postcolonialism, the critique of capitalism, and the mechanisms of social exclusion. On the other hand, we are interested in finding ways to go beyond the structure of the 'white cube' and classical exhibition formats. This can take the form of interventionist practices, questioning the art world's 'operating system,' or new ways to impart knowledge processes.
>
> When the Archive was reinterpreted at every venue on our tour by artists, curators, designers or architects, it became itself a visual manifestation of (materialized) discourses around display and mediation of content. The presentations have ranged from funky displays to sculptural presentations and discussions - and these pose the central question: how is it possible to make material accessible and encourage curiosity, to create a debate and to call into question the traditional positions and normalizing effects of the power of display?[184]

The production of meaning of these displays is particularly discussed in detail in a following paragraph, titled "The." During our tour to eighteen venues with the growing material, we also questioned our assumptions and were certainly questioned by the public and also some voices who used the archive as an example of a bold new understanding of what a curator is allowed to do. Most prominent was the article by Anton Vidokle, "Art without Artists," which explicitly mentioned *Curating Degree Zero Archive* as one of the examples of a curatorial production of meaning as opposed to an artistic one: "Yet another example of such a tendency is the '*Curating Degree Zero Archive*,' a traveling exhibition of 'curatorial research' designed as a kind of artistic installation. Conceived by curators, the exhi-

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183 ———— Barnaby Drabble and Dorothee Richter, *Background of Curating Degree Zero Archive*, trans. Steven Lindberg (Unpublished material, 2003).
184 ———— Ibid.

bition circulates through a network of public art institutions largely run by curators. The issue is not whether curators should have archives or open them to others, or to what degree this is interesting or not; rather, the question concerns whether the people in charge of administering exhibitions of art should be using the spaces and funding available for art to exhibit their own reading lists, references, and sources as a kind of art-work. Even more ludicrous is the fact that the dissolution of the self-con-tained (autonomous) artwork is cited as a justification for supplanting the work of artists in the museum altogether[...]."[185] Of the somewhat vague accusations, this one was obviously the motor behind the argu-ment: "Many artists—from extremely established artists to younger prac-titioners new to the field of art—feel that curatorial power and arrogance are out of control."[186]

Even in retrospect, it sounds a bit strange that one of the founders of the most productive money machines through advertisements in contempo-rary art, *e-flux*, is accusing *Curating Degree Zero Archive* of misusing public money when a project like *Curating Degree Zero Archive* is invited to an institution. I think what Vidokle is, of course, tackling here is the curator as a new power figure, in a structural sense, which is one of the reasons we set up *Curating Degree Zero Archive*. It was planned and has functioned as a platform to discuss curatorial approaches and the supposedly difficult question of criticality. Of course, since Fluxus and other movements of the 1960s, the fields of curating and artistic practice have emerged in overlap-ping and also, of course, in competing modes. Cultural production cannot any more easily be put into one category or another, but one should be aware of monetary flows and power structures.

These were precisely the topics which *Curating Degree Zero Archive* put forward, to explore and discuss curatorial practice in all its tendencies and to open up a discourse about curating. We wanted to discuss the shift of power relations and expose it as an ongoing power struggle. What we did was precisely have a closer look into curatorial practice and the inher-ent power struggles. There are other areas of the Archive that can be ques-tioned.

As the Archive was originally based on the proposal by Barnaby Drabble (UK), Annette Schindler (Switzerland), and me, originating from Ger-many, the invited participants were mostly from our European network. *CDZA* is now permanently installed at the library of the Zurich University of the Arts. (The archive travelled between 2003 and 2008, after this time it became too heavy to be transported to other parts of the world.) As a

185 ——— Anton Vidokle, "Art without Artists," *e-flux* 16 (May 2010), accessed 3 December 2019, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/16/61285/art-with-out-artists/.

186 ——— Ibid.

result, this quite dominant Western perspective was questioned and critiqued, since many curatorial positions did research into postcolonial issues and problematised the migration politics of Europe and the West. Much later, in 2020, the historian and curator Jose Cáceres Mardones investigated these perspectives and came to the following conclusion:[187]

> It has to be mentioned that the *CDZA* does not claim any idea of totality and continuity. On the contrary, its founders are very conscious of the historicity of the field of curating and also of the archive itself through the mutability of the arrangements in the different exhibition sites. Neither have they established an "unquestionable authority" over the documents; the archive rather intended to present "a range of divergent positions". *Curating Degree Zero Archive* presents a consistent critical position towards itself. *CDZA* aims, furthermore, to the discussion of critical curating, a critical curatorial practice means "an orientation around content that addresses political themes such as feminism, urbanism, postcolonialism, the critique of capitalism, and the mechanisms of social exclusion" and "to go beyond the structure of the 'white cube' and classical exhibition format". Accordingly, there are clear commonalities between the archive and a decolonial critique such as anti-discrimination, epistemic disobedience and anti-capitalism.[188]

Nevertheless, at the moment the archive mostly contains examples of exhibitions and projects situated in the West.

Participants after the last venue were the following, and each participant handed in different catalogues, articles, sometimes a CV, DVDs, and websites, which we had to delete after some time, as the links had expired. The following curators, artist curators, and curatorial groups are part of the archive; I have left the indicated nations after the name, even if this might be unusual today:

Arts Initiative Tokyo (JP), Rosanne Altstatt (USA), Amasté (E, Basque Country), Artlab (UK), Anthony Auerbach (UK), B+B (UK), Marius Babias (D), Basekamp (USA), Ute Meta Bauer (D/USA), Lorenzo Benedetti (ITA), Tobias Berger (D, Hong Kong), Ursula Biemann (CH), Beatrice Von Bismarck (D), Blok (HRV), Lionel Bovier (CH), Tim Brennan (UK), c a l c (E), camouflage (BE), Ele Carpenter (UK), Daniela Cascella (ITA), Vaari Claffey (IR), Barbara Clausen (A), consonni (E), Copenhagen Free University (DK), CRUMB (UK), Alice Creischer & Andreas Siekmann (D), D.A.E (E) , Catherine David (F), Joshua Decter (A), Clémentine Deliss (UK), Claire

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187 ——————　[93] Jose Cáceres Mardones, *On Decolonial Curatorial Practice. Toward a Decolonial Archive of Curating* (CAS seminar thesis, ZHdK, 2020).

188 ——————　Ibid., 8-9.

CDZA at Bergen,
September – October
2007, talks, debates,
performances, con-
certs and presenta-
tions, organized by
artist duo Rakett
(Ase Lovgren,
Karolin Tampere)

CDZA at Bergen,
September – October
2007

CDZA at Northern
Gallery for Contempo-
rary Art , Sunderland
April – May 2005
Installation design
and archive reinterpre-
tation by Gavin Wade
Discussion Event
with Liliane Schneiter,
Tim Brennan,
Stevan Vukovic and
Barnaby Drabble

CDZA at Edinburgh College of Art October – November 2005.
Flexible display system designed and built by Duncan Bremner

CDZA at Künstlerhaus, Bremen, September 2003 Discussion with Stella Rollig, Frederikke Hansen, Helmut Draxler, Barnaby Drabble & Dorothee Richter

NABA - Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti, Milano Organised by Marco Scotini & Maurizio Bortolotti as part of the program *The Utopian Display*. Installation designed and re-interpreted by Gruppo A12 The Archive was invited to Milan as a result of the efforts of the curators: Daniele Balit, Cecilia Canziani & Benedetta di Loreto. www.curating.it

CDZA at Galerija Miroslov Kralejevic, Zagreb, October – November 2008. Re-interpretation by Ana Janevski and Ivana Mestrov Design: Dora Budor and Maja Cule, Damir Gamulin

CDZA at Galerija Miroslov Kralejevic, Zagreb, October – November 2008

CDZA at Halle fuer Kunst, Lüneburg February – March 2005 Installation design and archive reinter-pretation by Reinigungs-gesellschaft. (Martin Keil and Henrik Mayer) Mediation project with students of the University Lüneburg

CDZA at Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva, June 2003. Installation concept: CCC Course (Critical Curatorial Cybermedia) ESBA Geneva Sound: Mental Groove Records, Geneva

CDZA at Point Éphémère, Paris, June – July 2007. Re-interpretation of the archive by Association Drash (Celia Cretien, Marie de Bouard, Mélanie Mermod) www.pointephemere.org

CDZA in Basel, January – February 2003

Doherty (UK), Barnaby Drabble (UK, CH), Sergio Edelsztein (IL), Eichelmann, Faiers & Rust (UK), EIPCP (A), Octavian Esanu (Mo), Jacob Fabricius (DK), Elena Filipovic (BE), Fiteiro Cultural (BR, CH), Freee (UK), Mark Garry (IE), Sönke Gau (D/CH), Catalin Gheorghe (RO), GMK (HRV), David Goldenberg (UK), Horst Griese (D), Frederikke Hansen (DK, D), Kent Hansen (DK), Maria Hlavajova (NL), Justin Hoffmann (D), Manray Hsu (TW/D), Andrew Hunt (UK), Per Hüttner (SW, F), Instant Coffee (CA), International 3 (UK), K&K (D), Christoph Keller (D), Alexander Koch (D), Annette Kosak (CH), Holger Kube Ventura (D), Kuda.org (SP), Kuratorisk Aktion (D/DK), Daniel Kurjakovic (CH), Simon Lamuniere (CH), Kelly Large (UK), Maria Lind (SW), Locus + (UK), Chus Martinez (E), Bernd Milla (D), Elke aus dem Moore (D), Nina Möntmann (D), Heike Munder (D/CH), Lise Nellemann (DK, D), Tone Olaf Nielsen (DK), Hans Ulrich Obrist (CH/F/UK), NEID (D), Paul O'Neill (UK), Marion von Osten (D), Sarah Pierce/The Metropolitan Complex (US/IR), Planet22 (CH), Tadej Pogacar (SL), Prelom (SP), Aisling Prior (IR), Protoacademy (UK), Catherine Queloz (CH), Reinigungsgesellschaft (D), RELAX (CH), Dorothee Richter (D/CH), Maria Riskova (SL), Stella Rollig (A), Sabine Schaschl-Cooper (CH), Annette Schindler (CH), Katharina Schlieben (D/CH), Eva Schmidt (D), Trebor Scholz (USA), Marco Scotini (ITA), Yukiko Shikata (JP), Nathalie Boseul Shin (KR), Gregory Sholette (USA), Joshua Simon (IL), Lisette Smits (NL), Reinhard Storz (CH), Bettina Steinbrügge (D), Szuper Gallery (UK/D), Toasting Agency (F), TNC Network (F), Attila Tordai (RO), Trinity Session (SA), Mark Tribe (USA), Unwetter (D), Value (CH), Sencer Vardaman (TR/D), Yvonne Volkart (CH), Stevan Vukovic (SR), Gavin Wade (UK), Florian Waldvogel (D), Cristine Wang (USA), Astrid Wege (D), Lee Welch (IR/USA), What, How and for Whom / WHW (HR), Jan Van Woensel (BE/USA), Ina Wudtke (D), Florian Wüst (D), Tirdad Zolghadr (CH, IR, D), Tal Ben Zvi (IL).

As previously mentioned, the archive is based on our network, with a strong Western perspective. From the numerous projects and writings from the archive, Cáceres Mardones has chosen to discuss several examples: *Kültür*, at Shedhalle, 1996, curated by Ursula Biemann*; Grenzbespielungen*, by Beatrice von Bismarck; *Capital: It Fails Us Now*, Young Artist Society, Oslo, 2005, by Simon Sheikh; *Platform5 Documenta11*, Kassel, 2002, by Okwui Enwezor, in the archive by Ute Meta Bauer. Cáceres Mardones concludes:

> *Curating Degree Zero Archive* presents, as its name suggests, an introduction not only to the discourse of curating, but also to postcolonial, even partially decolonial, curatorial practices. I would like to suggest that the *CDZA* has, by means of its critical and political posture, permitted a multilayered simultaneity of positions towards

curating that negates the possibility to resort to universalizing dichotomies. As I have already mentioned, a decolonial practice should not only create new ways to decolonize the present, but to make visible practices that have already pointed in this direction: the *CDZA* undeniably documents a series of learning processes towards a decolonial practice. The *CDZA* thus serves as a fruitful body of material to be researched or, in our case, as a tool kit to develop further instruments.[189]

In our discussion with Cáceres Mardones, the possibility we raised that he and other colleagues would initiate a new edition of *CDZA* (which might have another name) for Latin America. Additionally, Ronald Kolb and I are working on a new archive, which is based on seventy video interviews and a long list of talks about curatorial practice, which will be published through a website covering different topics around curating; postcolonial and decolonising aspects will be one of the chapters.

It was important for Barnaby Drabble and me to make the network and system behind the archive transparent; the participants were proposed by our hosting institutions or associated individuals or proposed themselves. We always then negotiated the term "critical curatorial position" in panels and discussions with our hosts, and at each venue with the public. The archive is therefore an aggregation of a certain group at a certain historical period. The next question that came up at every discussion organised alongside the tour was about "criticality": what does this mean, who set up the definition for the archive, who could question it. For us, the possibility to question this notion, to discuss it with visitors, participants, and hosts of the archive had an intense and specific quality. We tended to refer to Irit Rogoff's notion about criticality: "Rather than the accumulation of theoretical tools and materials, models of analysis, perspectives and positions, the work of theory is to unravel the very ground on which it stands. To introduce questions and uncertainties in those places where formerly there was some seeming consensus about what one did and how one went about it."[190] What, why, and for whom curatorial projects "work/produce meaning" should accompany the archive.

189 ——— Ibid., 17.
190 ——— Irit Rogoff, "From Criticism to Critique to Criticality," in *eipcp*, transversal texts 1 (2003), accessed 1 February 2015, http://eipcp.net/transversal/0806/rogoff1/en.

Interview with Aric Chen, Design curator, M+, Hong Kong, 2015

Interview with Hammad Nasar, Asia Arts Archive, Hong Kong, 2015

Interview with Pauline J. Yao, M+, Hong Kong, 2015

Christina Li, Spring Workshop, Hong Kong, 2015

Binna Choi, CASCO Utrecht

Grand Hotel Cosmopolis, Augsburg

Eyal Danon, Holon Digital Art Archive, Holon, 2015

Interview with Sergio Edelsztein, Tel Aviv, 2015

Binna Choi, CASCO Utrecht, 2015

Joshua Simon, Bat Yam Museum Moby, 2015

N'Gone Fall at Biennale Venice, 2015

Dorothee Richter, Ronald Kolb at Tel Aviv Art Museum

4. DIVING INTO CONTEMPORARY CURATING

4.1 Where Are We at the Present Moment?

After the above tour de force through art history in images, there are some major questions which we will discuss in this chapter: Where are we with respect to curating and art mediation? And where are we heading?[191]
I would like to argue that certain institutional settings are still persistent in the realm of curating, such as the paradigm of the White Cube, the visitor who is positioned as citizen, the apparatus of the art institution with its hidden political and economic dependencies, the curator as a meta-artist and as a post-Fordist figure of desire, and art education/mediation as a paradoxical method of freeing the subject from its fixed position.

4.1.1 The Paradigm of the White Cube

The paradigm of the White Cube is still extremely persistent. It is still the main matrix of representation, which combines a specific visual regime; it has the power to put forward special topics, and it confers nobility and value to everything that is presented therein. The most important theoretical reference in relation to this topic is Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube,* which was originally published as an anthology of already published articles:

> If art has any cultural reference (apart from being "culture") surely it is in the definition of our space and time. The flow of energy between concepts of space articulated through the artwork and the space we occupy is one of the basic and least understood forces in modernism. Modernist space redefines the observer's status, tinkers with his self-image. Modernism's conception of space, not its subject matter, may be what the public rightly conceives as threatening. […] Space was clarified not only in the picture, but in the place where the picture hangs—the gallery, which, with postmodernism, joins the picture plane as a unit of discourse.[192]

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191 ——————— Originally, this chapter was translated by Judith Rosenthal, then reworked by the author.

192 ——————— Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, expanded ed. (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, [1976] 1999), 38-39.

As O'Doherty points out, a new actor is established: a wandering phantom, the Spectator. "Who is this Spectator, also called the Viewer, sometimes called the Observer, occasionally the Perceiver? It has no face, is mostly a back. It stoops and peers, is slightly clumsy. Its attitude is inquiring, its puzzlement discreet. He—I'm sure it is more male than female— arrived with modernism, with the disappearance of perspective. He seems born out of the picture and, like some perceptual Adam, is drawn back repeatedly to contemplate it. The Spectator seems a little dumb; he is not you or me."[193] The Spectator is no longer a potential owner of the art object; s/he is more of an ignorant witness. We should especially keep in mind the Spectator's dumbness. This situation is also addressed by artists on a visual register, like by Thomas Struth, for example.

Photographs by Thomas Struth

4.1.2 The Visitor Positioned as a Bourgeois Citizen

The techniques of self-discipline of "autonomous" bourgeois subjects form and are formed by seeing and being in the image. There is always an imagined observer; even the subject is to some degree always running the risk of becoming an object. The distance of seeing is the main sensual regime; objects are not allowed to be touched. Again, as Tony Bennett asserts: ".... in the museum, an ideal and ordered world unfolds before and emanates from a controlling position of knowledge and vision: one, however, which has been democratized in that, at least in principle, occupancy of that positions,—the position of Man—is openly and freely available to all."[194]

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193 ——— Ibid., 39.
194 ——— Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 97.
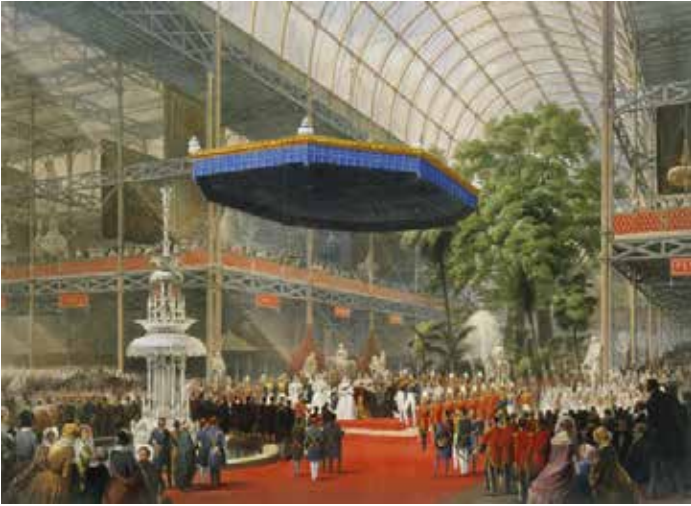
Crystal Palace Exhibition, 1850

An important moment in the history of these new techniques of surveillance is the building of the Crystal Palace in 1850 for the world fair, as Bennett analyses. The palace was built out of iron and glass, so visitors had the double role of being on display themselves and being a spectator of the art, the other people, and the spectacle. As Tony Bennett states: "One of the architectural innovations of the Crystal Palace consisted in the arrangement of relations between the public and exhibits so that, while everyone could see, there were also vantage points from which everyone could be seen, thus combining the functions of spectacle and surveillance."[195] According to Tony Bennett, the surveillance in exhibitions was in conjunction with an overall tendency to render the city visible and controllable in the urban space. And when the lower classes were invited in, they had to learn the rules of behaviour: they were not allowed to spit, shout, run around—or to touch anything, and so forth. Surveillance is an important function of a surveilling position in prison, as Foucault has analysed in depth. He differentiates between two systems of disciplining the contagious or delinquent masses: one executed in times of leprosy as strict segregation; the other in times of the plague, when each individual was restricted to one house and one room, with very strict rules and behavioural commands, or in other words as strict government control. Discussing Bentham's famous architectural model of control through surveillance, the Panopticon, Foucault's argument culminates as "visibility is a trap."[196] This, of course, resonates in a very particular way in

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195 ——— Ibid., 65.
196 ——— Michel Foucault, "Discipline and Punish, Panopticism," in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York:

the age of social media. The most important concept of the Bentham model, is, as Foucault argues, that "power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so."[197] In many ways, this is perpetuated through social media and, as we will discuss later, has especially been the case with the pandemic, which has forced social distancing upon people (see Chapter 7: The Pandemic and Digitalisation).

This is the moment when a subject starts to become aware of being seen. The function of control has shifted from the rigorous punishment of the mediatically spectacular public punishment of bodies to the subtle level of a control mechanism inside a subject. Therefore, it is an important mechanism, for it automatises and dis-individualises power.

From a Foucauldian perspective, this specific structure has spread through all formations in modern societies and proofed to be a special new form of a controlling power:

> On the whole, therefore, one can speak of the formation of a disciplinary society in this movement that stretches from the enclosed disciplines, a sort of social "quarantine," to an indefinitely generalizable mechanism of "panopticism." Not because the disciplinary modality of power has replaced all the others; but because it has infiltrated the others, sometimes undermining them, but serving as an intermediary between them, linking them together, extending them and above all making it possible to bring the effects of power to the most minute and distant elements. It assures an infinitesimal distribution of the power relations.[198]

In a crystal palace, one individual becomes the controlling force of any other individual; the most powerful underlying control system is the (imaginary) knowledge of being under surveillance. In the age of social media, surveillance is installed permanently into subjectivity as well; a false image of an imaginary self is constructed and permanently presented to be seen. How far away the staged self-image is from the contradictory, difficult, or even sad and violent existence of individuals is shown by the extreme example of Gabby Petito and her boyfriend, Brian Laun-

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Vintage Books, 1977), 195-228. Citation taken from http://foucault. info/documents/disciplineandpunish/foucault.disciplineandpunish. panopticism.html, accessed 4 January 2015.

197 ———— Ibid.

198 ———— Ibid.

drie, who staged themselves as a happy young couple, to the point of femicide. Self-staging has also found its way into exhibitions; at biennials, art serves as a backdrop for equally "happy" or "funny" experiences. Although at first glance it seems welcome that the power of images is distributed among many, one has to admit that images are rarely used to show truth about production processes, living conditions, and the relationships in a certain context. To what extent does this mean a permanent self-alienation?

4.1.3 The Apparatus of the Art Institution
With Its Hidden Political and Economic Dependencies

The whole apparatus of an art institution, with its political and economic dependencies, is made invisible in a traditional exhibition institution, as are the backstage rooms, the administration, and most of the staff.[199] To position the art institution as an objective, neutral agent of inclusion and exclusion, it is necessary to obscure the real dependency of art institutions on financial support, foundations, and state support and therefore on political parties and decision-makers. In the foreground of the institution, the director or curator is positioned as a spokesperson. All other staff are mostly hidden in the background—the technicians, the cleaning staff, the guards, the people at the entrance desks, the art educators, and so on. The concept of the apparatus describes the principal material or textual—that is to say, discursive—constitution of the "exhibition" apparatus and points to its function as an "educational" model. The display would thus be only the "user interface" of a differentiated process of production from material, the production of knowledge, and the rules of discourse and ideology inscribed therein.

Borrowing Foucault's perspective of *a discursive formation,*[200] one could name external and internal mechanisms of exclusion that try to rein in the unpredictability of discourses and events by means of procedures of classification, by ordering the principles of distribution, types of speech, the commentary and function of the author and various disciplines. This also refers to the "will to know" and is thus an academic, analytical approach to the exhibition apparatus and thus ultimately to disciplining,

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199 ——— Parts of this chapter were translated by Steven Lindberg, first published in: Dorothee Richter, "Exhibitions as Cultural Practices of Showing: Pedagogics," in *Curating Critique*, eds. Marianne Eigenheer, Barnaby Drabble, and Dorothee Richter (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2007), then revised and expanded by the author.

200 ——— Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language" translation appears as an appendix to the *Archaeology of Knowledge* trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972), pp. 215–37.

the stemming of the "murmur" of discourse in which the resistant and deviant are expressed.

One the one hand, the "exhibition" function is conceived as the product of a process to control, select, organise, and classify meaning that then reveals itself to be a material setting. The concept "apparatus" transferred to exhibiting incorporates the material location, the exhibition space, the exhibition hall, the museum and the respective architecture, the budgeting, the respective concept of publics, the hierarchical organisational structure of the staff, the working conditions of the employees, the education of the employees, the connections to the sites of social consensus-building such as committees for cultural policy and interest groups, the production and the deployment of the media, the concept of subject and object that the display offers, the ideological composition of presenting, the ennobling of the object, the possibility of the viewer's passivity/activity, the opportunities for subsequent action by those who have seen it, the budgeting and financing of the exhibition project, the people who commissioned it, the way the exhibition product is discussed, the narration of the display, the gaps in the display, the performance of the objects, the exhibition architecture, the lighting, the labels, the sounds, the exhibition spaces open to the public in relation to the backstage, organisational, and storage spaces.

As a specific entity, the exhibition apparatus is itself positioned in a historical, cultural, and political context—it is influenced by this context, and all image production in a society is equally able to influence the ideological narratives of a society to a certain extent. Nevertheless, Nora Sternfeld mentions that it seems that despite all critical inquiries into museum practices, this critique has remained almost completely separate from the actual praxis of institutional production. Since "the 1990s, institutions have been privatized, working conditions have become more precarious, and the pressure to compete has increased as well. Everything has been attributed a measurable value. A result of expressing everything in numbers and ranking lists is that we are no longer able to work together, but rather against one another, as competitors."[201] This is despite artistic interventions like the one by Maria Eichhorn in the Kunsthalle Bern, which was described in *Frieze* this way: "Simply titled 'Money at Kunsthalle Bern', Maria Eichhorn's enterprise was an exploration of the structures that enable an exhibition space to function. The first phase of her project was the provision of a much-needed renovation to the Kunsthalle

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[201] ——— Nora Sternfeld, "Thinking Critical Practice," announcement of a talk during the symposium "Critical Management in Curating," 9-10 December 2014, organised by Schnittpunkte, Vienna, see https://www.academia.edu/9686420/Critical_Management_in_Curating_Handout?email_work_card=view-paper.

building itself, where a lack of funding had resulted in leaky skylights, uncomfortable reception areas and large cracks in the façade. Eichhorn chose to use her exhibition budget to pay for the repairs, which were listed (including prices and names of contracted companies) on the invitation card, the poster for the show and the catalogue cover. This matter-of-fact inventory quietly focused attention on the individual's experience of the Kunsthalle rather than the artist's gesture. Inside, builders could be seen busy at work, fixing the plumbing and repairing a windowsill."[202] This was accompanied by a research project on the economic entanglements of the Kunsthalle:

> Work on the building itself was only one phase of the project. Another was the catalogue, for which Eichhorn had documented the history of the Kunsthalle, from the way funds were collected for its creation by an association of artists at the beginning of the century to the institution's relationship with the city and with private and corporate donors. At a time when the shift towards entertainment, corporate management techniques and a general Disneyfication of the artworld is becoming increasingly pronounced, her patient enquiry seemed ever more relevant. Closing the loop between research on the institution's structure, funding and the actual repair works, for the final element of her project Eichhorn issued an unlimited edition of share certificates.[203]

Again, we have encountered the great contradictions within the art field; the economic system often blatantly contradicts critical perspectives, but one must not forget that other narratives are also part of the system. Big art institutions are also part of a tourist industry; they also function as part of an overall process of nation-building, defining and redefining the attributes of a nation or a national industry. As a very obvious example, we could take the Museum für Gestaltung in Zurich, which changed from a surprisingly manifold conglomeration of exhibitions with different topics and formats into a showcase for Swiss design between 2000 and 2022, which in some ways can be seen as a clumsy promotion of the nationally important industry that is Swiss design. Also, the opportunities for outside curators were reduced. In 2004, one of the last more critical exhibitions took place, curated by Marion von Osten, which dealt in a differentiated way with work in the cultural sector, a markedly different standpoint than the promotion of Swiss design:

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202 ———— Mai-Thu Perret, "Maria Eichhorn, Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland," *Frieze* 67 (May 2002), accessed 28 September 2022, https://www.frieze.com/article/maria-eichhorn.
203 ———— Ibid.

The project *Atelier EUROPA* focuses on a social context in which cultural producers must position themselves today, because they are increasingly stylised into role models of commercial privatisation and an economicising of society. In the acceptance of political and economic discourses, not only are inequalities in other careers suppressed to the level of unemployment, but also the resilience of cultural activities to the economic evaluation process. Instead of describing the field of cultural and creative work as an area where the source of economic innovation lies, the exhibition and congress bring people and groups together who in the past few years have worked on criticism of neo liberal economics from the cultural perspective and reflect their participation as actors in this discourse. The desire for diversified production, activity and living concepts, new forms of collaboration and knowledge production in interdisciplinary contexts becomes a starting point and theme for desired social change, which clings to the criticism of the organisation of paid work and consumer relationships in a control society.[204]

So, the conservative backlash in the example of the Museum für Gestaltung, Zurich, again covers up any means of production, or anything about the situations of the involved cultural or industrial workers. The shining surface has become the most important issue in exhibitions like: *100 Years of Swiss Design*, *Swiss Design – Perspectives*, and *Swiss Style – International Graphic Design* and not even disguised by any kind of critical approach, One of the titles of exhibitions promoting Swiss industries was for example: "Bally – Das Geschäft mit dem Schuh [Bally – The Business With Shoes]." Accordingly, the exhibition design looks exactly like a shop window; the difference between a shop window and an exhibition is abandoned, which also means that the distance which would open up a space for critical reflection has vanished.

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[204] Marion von Osten, Atelier Europa, Museum für Gestaltung Zurich, 2 April 2004 – 13 June 2004. See http://www.ateliereuropa.com/3.0_exh_ conference.php; the exhibition was also shown in an altered exhibition design at Kunstverein München.

Marion von Osten, *Atelier Europa,* Kunstverein München, 2004

Installation view, *Bally, das Geschäft mit dem Schuh*,
Museum für Gestaltung, Zurich, 2019

4.1.4 The Curator as Author and as Post-Fordist Figure of Desire

This section[205] discusses artistic and curatorial authorship and attempts to situate it within history. Are artists and curators competitors for authorship in the fine arts? Have curators adapted procedures of artistic

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[205] ——— This section was originally translated from German by Mark Kyburz. It has appeared in different versions in English and German: Dorothee Richter, "Artists and Curators as Authors – Competitors, Collaborators, or Teamworkers?" in *Cultures of the Curatorial*; Dorothee Richter, "Künstlerische und kuratorische Autorschaft," in *Autorschaft in den Künsten, Konzepte, Praktiken, Medien*, eds. Corina Carduff and Tan Wächli (Zurich: ZHdK, 2007); Dorothee Richter, "Künstlerische und kuratorische Autorschaft," in Kritische Szenographie, ed. Kai-Uwe Hemken (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2015).

self-organisation, and if so, with what consequences? Or are artists and curators collaborators in an area in which attributions are uncertain, and therefore also more flexible and negotiable? I will discuss these questions based on several concrete historical examples:

1. Photograph of Harald Szeemann at *documenta 5*.
2. Case study: Fluxus artists and their struggle for the power of definition.
3. Case study: The *Curating Degree Zero Archive* as an attempt to negotiate and hold in suspense the relationship between artists and curators.

Harald Szeemann on the last day of *documenta 5*
(8 October 1972), black-and-white photograph taken
by Balthasar Burkhard

In this paragraph, I will follow an argument that Beatrice von Bismarck has developed[206]: the pose adopted by Harald Szeemann on the last day of *documenta 5* established the occupational image of the authorial curator as an autonomous and creative producer of culture, who organised exhibitions independently of institutions. For the first time ever in the history of documenta, an individual curator single-handedly defined its theme, calling the central section of the exhibition "Individual Mythologies" (within the overall exhibition theme *Questioning Reality – Image Worlds Today*). Szeemann was solely responsible for the selection of artists, while previously artists had been chosen by a committee of art historians, politicians, and association chairmen. Szeemann was appointed "General Secretary of documenta 5."[207] Image 1 operates within my argument as a

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206 ———— Bismarck, "Curating," 56–59.
207 ———— See Sören Grammel, *Ausstellungsautorenschaft. Die Konstruktion der auktorialen Position des Kurators bei Harald Szeemann, Eine Mikroanalyse* (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2005).

switch point onto which I fasten various attributions concerning this fig-
ure. I will draw several historical comparisons to reveal the underlying
process of signification. The image unmistakably reveals a specific
arrangement of power: a central figure enthroned amid a group of people
is a highly traditional kind of image composition. In what follows, I will
discuss three pictures selected at random from DuMont's Encyclopaedia
of Arts and Artists. Each of these depictions adheres to the basic pattern,
since the restaging of this pose resonates with previous patterns of mean-
ing. I will comment briefly only on the image composition of these works,
ignoring other aspects[208] because I will especially be looking into the
appealing character of images in the political sphere.

Spanish Antependium with Christ in the Mandorla
and with the Twelve Apostles around 1120, Barcelona

The meaning of this image arises from its interaction with a divine ser-
vice, in that it serves to instruct and situate the congregation. Its primary
purpose is to depict Christ as a God who has become human. The rigid
composition of the image and its schematic figures make it clear that a
firmly established hierarchy exists, in which relations are entirely formal
and impersonal. The arrangement of power is rigid.

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208 ——————— I refer to Wolfgang Kemp's reception aesthetic approach; see Wolfgang
Kemp, ed., *Der Betrachter ist im Bild, Kunstwissenschaft und Rezeptions-
ästhetik* (Cologne: DuMont, 1985); and Wolfgang KEMP, "Der rezep-
tionsästhetische Ansatz" in *Methoden-Reader Kunstgeschichte, Texte
zur Methodik und Geschichte der Kunstwissenschaft,* eds. Wolfgang
Brassat and Hubertus Kohle (Cologne: Deubner Verl. für Kunst, Theo-
rie & Praxis, 2003), 107 et seq.

The proportions of the figures clearly establish and substantiate an obvious hierarchy between divine creation and mortal humans. One figure stands at the centre of the picture. While the arrangement of figures and their proportions vest the central figure with power and authority, God is at the same time also human. The picture presents itself as a truth, hierarchically situating us as viewers standing in front of it and accepting instruction.

Duccio di Buoninsegna, *Maestà*, 1308 – 1311, tempera on poplar, (antependium = altar substructure)

Duccio's *Maestà* also fulfils a cultic function. Its composition implies worship and veneration, specifically the veneration shown towards a woman with a male, God-like child on her lap. The sheer size of the Mother of God removes her from the human mortals turning towards her and the child. She holds the child in her arms and lowers her gaze, whereas the baby Jesus looks with authority out of the picture into the world. Like the previous picture, Duccio's also hierarchically situates its viewers, who can to a certain extent identify themselves with the gesture and movement of the worshippers in the picture.

Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres, *The Apotheosis of Homer*, 3.86 x 5.15, 1827

The Greek poet Homer is the central figure in Ingres's *The Apotheosis of Homer* (1827). Clearly apparent in the painting is the attribution of an ingenious spirit bestowed upon the poet by divine powers. Inscribed in this arrangement, moreover, are additional concepts and effects of gender difference, which since the Renaissance have constructed the male subject as the subject of the central perspective. The female muses sit at the poet's feet. The specific dynamics of composition are such that the painting radiates beyond its edges and involves us in the events shown. The figures in the foreground turn towards us, appealingly, and direct our attention to the poet in a kind of substitutional testimony. As viewers, we close the circle around the poet, albeit on a much lower level. We complete the painting, as it were, whose composition is obviously meant to address and include us.

Seen thus, Harald Szeemann's pose is a distinctive positioning, based on historical schemata, especially of the curator as a god/king/man among artists. Comparable to earlier visual demonstrations of power, this picture also endeavours to position its viewers, plainly appealing to their attention. Viewers are thus positioned opposite a scenario in which the artists form a clearly lower-ranking group as the curator's adepts. Szeemann's casual and sprawling pose makes it clear that here is someone who can take liberties. As viewers, we occupy an even lower hierarchical position than the artists; we are situated as eyewitnesses of a spectacle, not as members of a bohemian community. Nevertheless, our role is to provide affirmation.

Beatrice von Bismarck has observed that Szeemann's curating of *When Attitudes Become Form*, an exhibition that he organised as director of the Kunsthalle Bern in 1969, firmly established his position and recommended him to direct *documenta 5*.[209] In 1969, Szeemann voluntarily resigned as director of the Kunsthalle Bern to found his own agency. He called the agency "Agentur für geistige Gastarbeit im Dienste der Visualisierung eines möglichen Museums der Obsessionen [*Agency for Spiritual Guest Work in the Service of Visualising a Possible Museum of Obsessions*]." He didn't register the agency and, according to Sören Grammel, it had no legal status. Szeemann described the curator as a "custodian, sensitive art lover, writer of prefaces, librarian, manager, accountant, animator, conservator, financier, diplomat, and so forth."[210] He positioned the Museum of Obsessions as an ideal construction, as a curatorial concept. Employing the notion of the museum as a fictional institution, Szeemann brought it close to mimic existing institution as part of "the art institution,"[211]

209 ———— Bismarck, "Curating,".

210 ———— Harald Szeemann, 1970, p. 26, quoted in Grammel, *Ausstellungsautorenschaft*, 16.

211 ———— Peter Bürger argues that art is an institution in itself; it is autonomous

implicitly positioning himself as a museum director. At the same time, such positioning distanced the Museum of Obsessions from actually existing art institutions. While Sören Grammel's study of Szeemann's authorial position argues that "agency" points to a division of authorship in the production process, I would like to suggest that the term by all means implies hierarchy, and thus largely revokes the notion of divided authorship. Agencies have executives who are granted the right to commercially exploit their products; agency profits, however, belong to executives, not to staff.

Szeemann's demonstration of power did not unfold without conflict. How did the dispute between the artists and the exhibition curator actually happen? The following remarks were made by Robert Smithson, and Szeemann appropriated the quote in that Smithson's article appeared in the exhibition catalogue for *documenta 5*:

> Cultural confinement occurs when a curator thematically limits an art exhibition instead of asking the artists to set their own limits. One expects them to fit into fraudulent categories. Some artists imagine that they have this mechanism under control, while in reality it controls them. Thus, they support a cultural prison house that escapes their control. The artists themselves are not restricted, but their production most certainly is. Like asylums and prisons, museums also have inpatient departments and cells, namely neutral spaces that are called "galleries". In the gallery space a work of art loses its explosiveness and becomes a portable object cut off from the outside world [...] Could it be that certain art exhibitions have become metaphysical scrap yards? [...] The curators as wardens still depend upon the debris of metaphysical principles and structures because they know no better.[212]

In retrospect, Szeemann commented self-confidently on his function as a warden, selector, and author: "Nevertheless, this was hitherto the most comprehensive attempt to turn a large exhibition as the result of many individual contributions into something like a worldview [....]." He formulated "Individual Mythologies" as a "spiritual space in which an individual

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in relation to society, but therefore also without much influence. Hegemony theory says otherwise: Gramsci emphasises that every society depends on the consent of its citizens in the long run, and culture is one of the spheres in which this consent is produced, or dissent formulated.

212 ——— Robert Smithson, "Kulturbeschränkung," quoted in *Kunsttheorie im 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Ostfildern Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2003), 1167.

sets those signs, signals, and symbols which for him mean the world."[213] Admittedly, Szeemann's view focused entirely on himself as author, and he considered the exhibition to be an image of one single worldview. While Daniel Buren participated in *documenta 5* as an artist, his contribution to the exhibition catalogue criticised the absorbing gesture of Szeemann, the meta-artist:

> The exhibition is tending increasingly towards the exhibition of the exhibition as a work of art and no longer as an exhibition of works of art. Here it is the Documenta team, under Harald Szeemann, that is exhibiting (the works) and presenting itself (to criticism). The works on display are spots of colour – carefully selected – of that picture that each section (hall) has assembled as a whole. There is even an order prevailing in these colours, since they have been targeted and selected based on the concept of the hall (selection) in which they exhibit and present themselves. Even these sections (castrations), which are – carefully selected – spots of colour of the painting that the exhibition is working out as a whole and as a principle, become visible only if they surrender to the organiser's protection, he who unites art by equalising it in the box screen that he rigs up for it. He [the curator] assumes responsibility for the contradictions; it is he who veils them.[214]

Even though exhibitions had been deployed since the French Revolution as new overall contexts of signification, capable of ideologically representing the state, nation, or the bourgeoisie, the focus on a single curator organising an exhibition was new. Seen thus, the photograph of Szeemann marks a turning point in the discourse and becomes effective alongside the resonant meanings handed down over time. The curator became a meta-artist. Which position were artists chased from in the process?

Walter Grasskamp's history of documenta might give us some idea in this respect. documenta is a paradigm of the production of art history, because in discursive terms it represents the most powerful exhibition enterprise of the post-war period in the German-speaking world. By mounting this large exhibition, post-war Germany demonstrated its endeavour to overcome Nazi ideology, a nationalist conception of art, and the National Socialist aestheticising of politics. The Nazi regime's aestheticising of politics had occupied large parts of public representation and thus also of public consciousness.[215] Seen thus, the early documenta exhibitions were

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213 ——— Szeemann and Bachmann, quoted in Grammel, *Ausstellungsautoren-schaft*, 39.
214 ——— Buren, "Exposition d'une exposition," 222.
215 ——— Walter Grasskamp, *Der lange Marsch durch die Illusionen, Über Kunst*

a means of, and evidence for, the re-education of the German people. Similar events occurred at the Venice Biennale: in 1958, Eberhard Hanfstaengl, the German commissioner, presented as a national representation a retrospective of the work of Vassily Kandinsky at the German Pavilion (a neo-classical pavilion previously converted by the Nazis). Grasskamp notes that the exhibition [he refers to the Venice Biennale] "signalled to an international audience the intention of the Federal Republic of German to adopt previously banished and persecuted modern art as state craft."[216] Therefore, each subsequent documenta is placed in a relationship to this historical development; see also the critique of *documenta fifteen* in Chapter 10.

The Heroes of an Exhibition: Artists as Citizens

Walter Grasskamp has pointed out that *documenta 1* placed artists centre stage. Besides the actual catalogue images, the catalogue for *documenta 1* featured an architecture section and "a highly odd image section containing 16 pages, which the table of contents referred to quite laconically as *images of the artists*. Among others, this section included images of Picasso, Braque, Léger, the Futurists, Max Beckmann, and other participants either at work in their studios or taking up a pose. No artwork shown at the inaugural documenta can be more typical of the particular reception of art at the time as this slim collection of images, in which modern artists are explicitly presented as heroes. These hero images share an aura of seriousness and respectability."[217]

The entrance hall was also framed with portraits of artists, whose faces welcomed exhibition visitors. The portraits seemed rather like images of politicians or bankers, thus presenting the artists as citizens, as men clothed in suits and ties. They personified the new heroes, who replaced military and dictatorial leaders. The portraits were hung almost at eye level, from which we can infer a visualising of egalitarian principles. The *documenta 2* catalogue lacks a concentrated glorification of artists, as Grasskamp observes: "Instead, the portraits of the artists are interspersed in the catalogue section, and could hardly be more pathetic, in some cases even worse. Such portraits are completely missing from the documenta 3 catalogue; as if one had sought to correct an embarrassing lapse, the works alone now stand for the name, and the same applies to the cata-

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und Politik, Chapter: Kunst der Nation (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1995), 131–153.

216 ——— Ibid., 140.

217 ——— Walter Grasskamp, "Modell documenta oder wie wird Kunstgeschichte gemacht?," *Kunstforum International* 49 (1982).

documenta 1, 1955

logue of the fourth documenta."[218] It should be stated that instead of showing the prosecuted or murdered Jewish or political artists, it was a kind of evasive gesture to show what is now known as classic modernism as an internationally accepted style.

documenta 5, however, no longer featured any serious bourgeois portraits, but instead a hierarchically structured group, which nevertheless amounted to a rather anarchic overall picture. The dispute between artists and exhibition-makers seemed to have been settled for the time being. The curator was now not only the "warden," but above all the figure subsuming the exhibition under one single heading. He prescribed a certain reading of the works, the title became the most distinct (succinct) version of a programme, and his name emerged as the discursive frame. Szeemann had thus wrested the naming strategy and labelling from the hands of artist groups and had successfully transferred the exhibition into the economic sphere. For visitors, the title "Individual Mythologies" blended with the individual works and thus predetermined meaning—with the works forming small parts of a mythological narrative. Where, however, did the anarchistic bohemianism seen in the photograph come from? Which artistic strategies were possibly (iconographically) adopted between 1955 and 1972, which new forms of organisation preceded this gain in power, and which new forms of creative potential were tried out beforehand?

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218 ——— Ibid.

This poster announces the first Fluxus festival held in Wiesbaden in 1962, that is, ten years before Szeemann's appointment in Kassel.
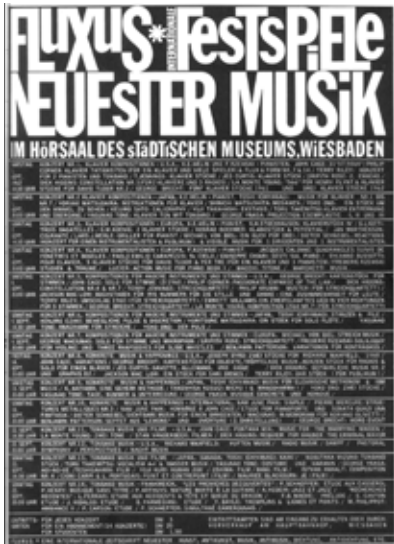
Left: Poster, Wiesbaden Festival of New Music, 1962.
Right: Comment: "The madmen are loose"

FLUXUS—Artists as Organisers

The 1960s witnessed a growing number of artist groups, including Fluxus, Viennese Actionism, the Situationists, the Affichistes, the Destruction Art Group, the Art Workers' Coalition, the Guerrilla Art Group, Nouveau Réalisme, the Lettrists, the Happenings, and the Gutai group. Each movement developed under specific social and historical conditions.[219]

In the German-speaking world, Fluxus and the Viennese Actionists became especially well known, as well as the Happenings, which were, however, not strictly distinguished from the two other movements. The reformulations introduced by these revolutionary art movements implied an altered positioning of art towards politics, and of the private sphere towards the public. They exploded genre boundaries, questioned the author's function, and radically changed the production, distribution, and reception of the fine arts. Artist groups organised their own opportunities for public

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[219] ——— Justin Hoffmann, for instance, subsumes Fluxus, the Viennese Actionists, numerous individual artists, the Situationists, the Affichistes, the Destruction Art Group, the Art Workers' Coalition, and the Guerrilla Art Group under the designation "Destruction Art," which has, however, failed to assert itself as a term in art history. See Justin Hoffmann, *Destruktionskunst: Der Mythos Der Zerstorung In Der Kunst Der Fruhen Sechziger Jahre* (Munich: Silke Schreiber, 1995).

appearances. Their scores were performed jointly and differently in each revival; they took charge of distribution, of publishing newsletters and newspapers, and of establishing publishing houses and galleries. Audiences were now directly involved and subject to provocative address. The inversion of terms instituted by Fluxus, by mapping their methods of composing music onto all aspects of the visual, made it possible to consider everything as material and as a basis for composition.[220] They challenged hitherto prevailing cultural hegemony and manifoldly anticipated on a symbolic level the 1968 student riots and protest movements.

Wiesbaden Festival of New Music, Pictures of the Philipp Corner's "Piano Piece," September 1962–3

In Philipp Corner's "Piano Piece," an alternating number of performers dismantled the piano on the subsequent weekends of the festival; the event score suggested various activities with the piano, such as "drop objects on strings on other parts of piano or draw chains or bells across, act in any way on underside of piano"[221] (two out of nine instructions). The individual parts of the instrument were auctioned at the end of the festival.

"Fluxus" spread via newspaper reports and photographs and was thus known to a large number of people. This black-and-white photograph shows eight people, of whom six are intensely busy with a piano while two are sitting at the right edge of the picture observing the proceedings. The first impression of the photograph is one of extreme artificiality. It looks so forcefully composed that one initially believes it is a photomontage. The hard, high-contrast lighting and the jutting of a ledge or wall into the picture on the left makes it seem decomposed by a series of cuts. The

220 ——— See Diedrich Diederichsen, "Echos von Spielsounds in Headphones. Wie Kunst und Musik einander als Mangelwesen lieben," *Texte zur Kunst* 60 (December 2005).

221 ——— See Fluxus, *1962 Wiesbaden Fluxus 1982*, eds. Harlekin Art, Museum Wiesbaden, and Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD (Wiesbaden: Harlekin Art; Berlin: Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD, 1982), 194.

upper right part looks curiously blurred and cloudy, and the traces of irregular image development and the coarse-grained quality convey spontaneity as if "documentary" were the implicit message, since its technical development is somewhat amateurish. The photograph has obviously slid from a horizontal position, thus adding to its dramatic effect together with the hard shadows of the figures.

The opened-up piano, into which we see from above, reveals its partly wrecked inner life. The arrangement of the figures around the piano recalls images of medical operations or anatomy classes from art and film history. This concentration and the serious faces of the actors support these associations. The seriousness of those involved also brings to mind children dismembering an animal or disassembling an alarm clock; it seems quite obviously incommensurate with the dismantling/destroying of a piano. The two spectators on the right side of the photograph are the only figures facing the photographer, or rather the present-day viewer. Both are smiling rapturously, almost ecstatically, and their expression reminds me of the concept of "jouissance," that is, of (female sexual) pleasure.

The actors destroying/disassembling a piano can be easily read as an attack on one of the symbols of the bourgeois conception of education and morality. The photograph, which appeared on the front cover of a catalogue in 1982 (the photo had been taken in 1962 but was shown in this prominent position in 1982), must have been considered an enormous affront against the bourgeoisie and its values when it was taken in 1962. Justin Hoffmann has also suggested that in the 1960s art frequently involved the destruction of musical instruments, for instance Nam June Paik's *One for Violin*, Terry Riley's *Guitar Piece*, and so forth. Hoffmann sees this as a destruction of the status symbols of bourgeois culture.[222]

In retrospect, we can read the piano as a symbol that, just like classical literature, provided the bourgeoisie with a certain noble possibility to withdraw from the boredom of everyday politics, that is to say, with an innocent "that is, blameless" retreat from the memories of Nazi crimes against humanity and the latent question of guilt. Without a doubt, the piano is a complex symbol in post-war Germany. Those advocating reactionary positions have repeatedly had recourse to timeless cultural values. One prominent example is Hans Sedlmayr, who claimed that he had never adopted another position other than harmony and timeless values.[223]

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[222] ——— Hoffmann, *Destruktionskunst*, 126.

[223] ——— Sedlmayr was an especially early follower of the Nazi regime; in his post-war lectures, his attitude is typical for beneficiaries of the Nazi regime and their right-wing line of argument: "Above and below are not only spatial relations, but symbols of intellectual ones. [...] It cannot be that one refers to the upper as the lower. You will never call the upper instinctual life and the intellect the lower? These are entirely objective observations. Just don't feel attacked all the time and con-
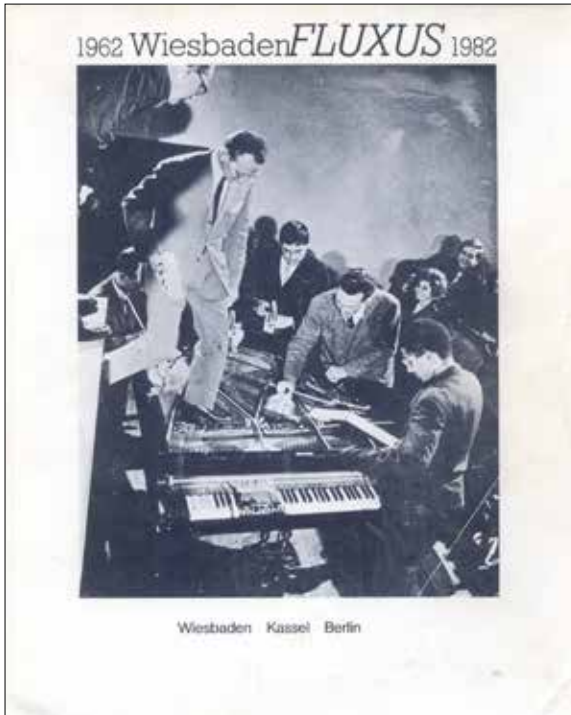
Book cover, *Wiesbaden Festival of New Music*, 1962–1982

Fluxus artists took up educated middle-class concepts in both their choice of venues (museums, universities, galleries, concert halls) and the terms employed in their events, such as score, composition, symphony, or concert—only to subsequently subvert them. Silke Wenk has shown that, in the post-war period, Federal Germans' need for a clearly structured order organised according to stable values, which found only partial expression in political discourse, was displaced onto high culture.[224] Hierarchised

stantly take offense! I believe that I take modern art more seriously than all the whitewashers and embellishers who run to its defense. [Applause – stamping and acclamations: Heil Hitler! Acclamation: Pfui!] All I can reply is that I have presented the same matters before and during Hitler, in precisely the same way, with the same avowal of the power of the mind and without the slightest concessions. [Applause]." Hans Sedlmayr: "Über die Gefahren der modernen Kunst," Lectures delivered in 1950, in *Darmstädter Gespräch: Über das Menschenbild in unserer Zeit*, ed. Hans Gerhard Evers (Darmstadt: Neue Darmstädter Verlagsanstalt Gmbh, 1950), 48–62, quoted in *Kunsttheorie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 801.

224 ——— See Silke Wenk, "Pygmalions moderne Wahlverwandtschaften. Die Rekonstruktion des Schöpfer-Mythos im nachfaschistischen Deutschland," in *Blick-Wechsel, Konstruktion von Männlichkeit und Weiblichkeit in Kunst und Kunstgeschichte*, ed. Ines Lindner et al. (Berlin: Reimer,

high culture therefore appears as a refuge from the collapse of a collective nationalist identity at the end of the Hitler regime and the aggressions and sense of guilt bound up with this breakdown. Adorno, a contemporary of the Fluxus movement, concluded "that secretly, unconsciously, smouldering, and hence particularly powerful, those identifications and the collective Nazism [here Nazi ideology] were not destroyed at all but continue to exist."[225] The destruction of the piano under the "misleading" headings "concert, New Music, score, etc." shattered precisely this bastion of retreat to "timeless" hierarchised high culture. The Fluxus actions revealed a fissure in the imagined unassailability and sealing off of this cultural sphere. When gazing into this fissure, the contemporaries perceived an atmosphere of gloom: excessive sexuality, guilt, and violence.

Already in 1965, Fluxus artists began publishing sarcastic articles that had previously appeared in the *Bildzeitung* (Germany's major tabloid) and middle-class feuilletons, together with photographs of their performances and reports penned by the artists. Reprinting an article from the *Bildzeitung*, a paper known for its right-wing tendencies, in a Fluxus publication, as it were, situated the artists' actions as left-wing and potentially revolutionary. The description of the audience in this article as "bearded young men, demonically looking teenagers, and elderly women"[226] carries sexual connotations. It is precisely those individuals most likely to be of an age at which they would be living in a well-ordered sexual relationship, namely a middle-class marriage, who are conspicuously absent from such a description. Even the "elderly women" appear to have come without elderly men. Each of the groups mentioned implies a certain sexual openness, not to mention availability. The suspicion of sexual debauchery, at least by way of allusion, underlies the description as a subtext. Press comments varied from mere boredom to derisive remarks. Reprinting the articles in documentation published by artists foregrounds the narrow-mindedness of the press and buttresses the mythologisation of Fluxus actions as those of a protest movement. Moreover, engaging in negative discourse about a work of art also produces meaning (and ultimately enhances its value), as the artists realised. [227]

1989); and Barbara Schrödl, *Das Bild des Künstlers und seiner Frauen* (Marburg: Jonas, 2004).

225 ——— Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften, Volume 7: Ästhetische Theorie*, eds. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 135.

226 ——— *Bild-Zeitung*, 4th September 1962, documented in Becker, Jürgen; Vostell, Wolf, *Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme*. Reinbek 1965, without pagenumbers.

227 ——— See also Pierre Bourdieu, *Die Regeln der Kunst*, trans. Bernd Schwibs and Achim Russer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2010), 276. English version: Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Cam-

One further connotation of the piano is virginal innocence, since learning to play the piano was still considered part of the virtues of the unmarried daughters of middle-class families. Since the eighteenth century, spaces were increasingly classified along various parameters: public vs. private, work vs. recreation, and male vs. female. In this respect, we can bear in mind the determining of gender roles, which assigned middle-class women to an extremely restricted sphere, comprising not only a lack of sexual freedom but also a general subordination to their husbands' needs and affairs, as well as economic dependency.

The aggressive assault of the Fluxus artists resembles a violent prising open: the piano seems naked, innocent, and raped. The actions of the all-male attackers are brutal; the only figure whose entire body is visible can be seen thrusting his full body weight onto the strings; another is gripping a hammer; and yet another is captured halfway through encroaching upon the piano with an unrecognisable instrument. The enchanted faces of the two spectators (a man and woman) support the connotations of a sexual act.

One level of meaning of this image would thus be the dismantling of bourgeois values and sexual morals, without, however, abolishing gender hierarchy. The spectators' enchanted faces bestow upon events the aura of excitement and fascination.

Dick Higgins commented on one of the pieces performed on that particular weekend as follows:

> "By *working with butter and eggs for a while* so as to make an inedible waste instead of an omelette. I felt that was what Wiesbaden needed."[228] The latter remark certainly applied to the entire performance. The festival also provoked comments from the Wiesbaden population in response to the re-education to which they were exposed; this poster was reprinted three years after the event as an instance of self-positioning in *Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme*:[229]

As mentioned, the artists organised their own performance opportunities. Below, I will cite from the letters of George Maciunas, which are largely concerned with organisational details, but also have an ideological streak. Astonishingly, Becker and Vostell's abovementioned publication already blended a variety of different texts as early as 1965, displaying

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bridge: Polity Press, 1996).

[228] ——— Owen F. Smith, *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude* (San Diego: San Diego State University Press, 1998), 74.

[229] ——— Jürgen Becker and Wolf Vostell, *Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme, eine Dokumentation* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1965).

these without further ado in the art context. Not only reports of the participating artists (predominantly male), but also details of the "making of an exhibition" were included. Disclosing organisational processes implies institutional critique. The conventional notion of a closed, presentable, image-like performance is subverted. "Backstage" affairs are laid bare, thereby dismantling the aura of a work and of the idea of the authentic, spontaneous, and ingenious artist-as-subject.

In 1963, George Maciunas wrote to Joseph Beuys before the latter became a member of the Fluxus movement:

> "To Joseph Beuys, 17 January 1963
>
> Dear Professor Beuys:
> I received your letter yesterday evening, and herewith respond to your questions.
> 1. Coming to Düsseldorf already at 10am on 1 February would be somewhat uncomfortable as I would have to stay away from work and would lose 80 Marks. I could come on Friday evening towards 11pm. I must consider the same problem that Emmett Williams has. I will come on 1 February at 10am if it absolutely necessary. Actually Saturday would be enough to prepare things.
> 2. Our manifesto could for instance be a quote from an encyclopaedia (enclosed) on the significance of Fluxus. I enclose a further manifesto.
> 3. We would be delighted if you could perform at the Festival. Wolf Vostell, Dieter Hülsmanns, and Frank Trowbridge will be also be taking part as performers and composers. I have revised the programme once more and have included your compositions, although I don't know which of Trowbridge's compositions can be performed. I would need to see them before I could agree [….].
> 5. We will not destroy the piano. But can we distemper it (that is, paint it white) and then wash off the paint afterwards?
> 6. My daytime telephone number in Wiesbaden is 54443.
> Regards
> G. Maciunas."[230]

This letter, politely phrased and keen to assure Beuys that the piano would suffer no damage, undermines the image of the wild and revolutionary artist-as-subject. Prevailing social conditions, however, become apparent in the avant-garde artist's addressing Beuys as "professor." The publication

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230 ———— George Maciunas in *Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme, eine Dokumentation*, 197.

conveys the hiatus between revolutionary impetus and polite, bourgeois manners, and makes plain the changing roles of artists, organisers, and collaborators.

Maciunas's self-positioning strategy of compiling lists and graphics that invent and determine the genealogy of the Fluxus movement can be considered both a canonising and hierarchising process and its visualisation. The debates among the artists were first waged in semi-public form in newsletters and subsequently made available to a wider public through the abovementioned publication. Heated, open-ended debates on inclusion and exclusion and ideological directions were published.

In retrospect, Maciunas's role as organiser, arranger, presenter, funds procurer, public relations agent, and namer bears a remarkable resemblance to that of the independent curator, who emerged as a new actor in the cultural field from the 1970s and 80s. In his capacity as Fluxus organiser (and chief ideologist), Maciunas anticipated not only the attribution of creativity, the meaning-giving acts of establishing connections and re-contextualisation, but also the authoritative gesture of inscriptions and exclusions. Also, his attempts to subsume as a meta-artist the works of other artists under a single label ("Fluxus") recall the role of a contemporary curator. Just like today's independent scene, mounting exhibitions and events depends not only on large venues and funds, but also other kinds of desire relations. Personal friendships, networks, group affiliations, and positioning within the field all account for the social capital that allows one to operate in the fine arts. This social network represents social and cultural capital, which can be translated into economic capital. Thus, Maciunas's role transgressed the established roles in the field of art and anticipated new structures and modes of operation. While the Fluxus images indicate no hierarchical relations among the group of artists, the group is predominantly male. Szeemann's staging, however, partly adopted and established a hierarchical relation between gestures and stances, suggesting an anarchic, liberated image of the artist as yet another facet of the myth of the artist.

Maciunas's List of Artists

Diagramme by Geoffrey Hendricks, video still, Flux Us Now

Third Example: Subject to Negotiation: *Curating Degree Zero Archive* (*CDZA*)—An Attempt to Hold in Suspense the Relationship Between Artists and Curators

CDZA at [plug-in] Basel, Jan 2003. Installation concept:
Elektrosmog, Zurich. Online discussion - hosted by Crumb List

I would like to return to the *Curating Degree Zero Archive* in its first edition: In 2003, Barnaby Drabble and I initiated *CDZA*. Together with Annette Schindler, director of plug.in (Basel), we invited curators, artist-curators, and groups of curators from the area of "critical curatorial practice" to take part. *CDZA* is an archive on the one hand, and a touring exhibition and website linked to participant projects on the other. Elektrosmog, the Zurich-based design group, developed a display and navigation system, and Wolfgang Hockenjos designed the *CDZA* website.

Via its website, *CDZA* aims to provide archive users with a navigation structure and to operate as a basis for scientific and applied "research" for both the participating curators and other arts and culture agents. It does not aim to establish a closed narrative, but to situate critical and politically intended curatorial work of individual curators within a framework through a non-uniform range of diverging positions and to render contexts discernible. We consider the contradictions arising from the presentation of different practices to be fruitful. We aim to preserve the contradictions, fissures, and divisions and to use the resulting questions as a possibility for obtaining knowledge and insight.

Both Barnaby Drabble and I had until then worked chiefly as curators and authors, but, following our commitment, we moved into the position of an artist. Our declared aim, moreover, was to share the power of defining the archive with others in various ways. Thus, the archive is reinterpreted and expanded at each location. We experienced the difficulty of assuming the role of artists towards the host curators when Annette Schindler proposed to display a world map indicating the various exhibition locations. I refuted this idea for various reasons, among others because it would cement a Eurocentric worldview and buttress the conception of the curator-as-author. A standard world map, as a pseudo-egalitarian sign of a television consumer society, would obstruct other views of topography and their national, cultural, and geographical meanings. I was unable to assert this position. On the one hand, we programmatically agreed to outsource the power of definition, as described in our concept—while on the other, we found ourselves in a pre-structured, power-shaped institution, which granted us as "quasi-artists" less power than the curator.

The images that we selected to not only document but also represent the archive do not for the most part contain this view of the Basel installation. From Basel, the archive subsequently travelled to Geneva, Linz, Bremen, Birmingham, Bristol, Lüneburg, Edinburg, Berlin, Zurich, Milan, Seoul, Bergen, and Cork.

In line with the title, small panel discussions involving the audience dealt with various issues, for instance, how a critical practice could be defined, the relationship between artists and curators, how curating could be taught, and how the relationship with a wider public could be conceived. In order to make the archive productive, debating the archive with local audiences became our central concern.

CDZA in Geneva, June 2003

CDZA in Halle für Kunst, Lüneburg, February – March 2005

CDZA in ArtLab Imperial College, London, May – June 2005

CDZA in Edinburgh College of Art, October – November 2005

In some locations, discussions were conducted via web logs. Here is an excerpt from our concept, pinpointing questions for discussion:

> The notion of critical curating in itself already refutes uniformity. It is subject to ongoing historical change, just as the discursive formation of the fine arts is subject to permanent change. In this context, exhibition making is understood as a practice that brings forth, influences, and alters its subject matter. Within the context of *Curating Degree Zero Archive*, we on the one hand conceive a critical curatorial practice as a content-focused undertaking concerned with political themes, including feminism, urbanism, post-colonialism and a critique of capitalism, and mechanisms of social exclusion. On the other hand, we are interested in structural transgressions of the "white cube" and classical exhibition formats. Such transgression can refer to interventionist practices, to questioning the art system, and to new forms of transmission as epistemological processes and knowledge production.

The archive turned itself into a visual manifestation of a discourse about the displaying and mediating of contents. Modes of presentation ranged from funky displays over sculptural forms to discussion form—which raises the key question how materials can be made accessible and curiosity aroused, how they can initiate debates and challenge traditional positions and also the normative effects of displays. Presentations became a balancing act between promising pledges of interaction and amusement for post-Fordist subjects and a realised (not merely symbolic) possibility for debate. For us, the re-interpretation was as good as the many possibilities it offered for the public to engage with the material.

CDZA in Sparwasser HQ, Berlin, September – October 2005

The re-reading of the archive proposed by Lise Nellemann in Berlin in particular provided an opening that made the contours of the group's "audience" and "actors" permeable. Lise Nellemann invited participants, visitors, artists, and curators in transit to present their archive "favourites." Over ten evenings, two or three participants would present their projects for joint discussion. This setting enlarged the group of those mastering the discourse; publications, DVDs, and videos housed in the archive thus became the starting points for the exchange of knowledge and opinion-making. Users thus unfolded the archive's potential, employing it as a platform for their concerns; our power of definition as initiators and co-deciders on new admissions was also questioned.

CDZA in Sparwasser HQ, Berlin, September – October 2005

Let me return to the world map displayed at the first presentation: within Sasa (44) and MeeNa Park's reinterpretation of the archive in Seoul in December 2006 and January 2007, the world map prepared by Peters, a Bremen-based scientist, and published by Alfredo Jaar, functioned as a

visual node of the discourse. It ended up in the archive as part of the "Do All Oceans Have Walls" project curated by Eva Schmidt and Horst Griese. This world map was presented differently, in that European countries were very small compared to their usual size. It allows us to see how multi-authorial discursive practices in art proceed, namely as a process involving resignification and various authors. Thus, the "world map" was re-performed. Its re-performance clearly revealed that "critique" and signifying processes can be linked and become a joint practice, resulting in an *Archive of Shared Interests*, as formulated by the De Geuzen artist group.

CDZA in Insa Art Space, Seoul, 2006, with edition of world map by Alfredo Jaar on the left

Based on the material presented here, one preliminary finding is that artists and curators are involved in a power-shaped constellation. Only through shared content-related interests, political articulation, and joint positioning strategies can concerns be formulated that shift hierarchical arrangements into the background. Artists and curators become collaborators, as evidenced by numerous groups, whose protagonists come from different fields. Curators have quite clearly adapted the procedures of artistic self-organisation and transformed these into hierarchical constructions. However, "artists" and "curators" are no longer functions that can be distinguished in each and every case. Both are involved as cultural producers in signifying processes. Some curators first considered themselves artists (for instance, Ute Meta Bauer and Roger M. Buergel), while in other cases artistic practice contains elements of curating (for instance, Ursula Biemann, Andreas Siekmann, Alice Creischer). Therefore, the term "cultural producers" makes sense. Nevertheless, it is imperative that concrete situations are discussed in relation to how power evolves in their cases. This becomes even more necessary in this situation, since the nature of art as a commodity suggests an increasingly intense focus on an individual author, thereby misappropriating complex relations and signifying processes.

The possibility of positioning audience members as active participants either in front of a painting a group receiving instruction or as eyewitnesses or as participants in the picture is fascinating. However, we should not let the matter rest with a promising gesture on the level of a funky display, that is, of participation as a spectacle. The course that power takes must be reversible, and authorship must be (and acknowledged as) many-voiced. For us, this meant making available and relinquishing the archive and its interpretation. The archive makes sense for us if it occasions and encourages discussion and processes of self-empowerment, that is, if positions are reversed and remain negotiable.

4.1.5 Some Problems with Art Education

Art education or mediation is nowadays in the uneasy position of having the goal of setting the motionless visitor-subject free from his/her fixed situation and very limited patterns of behaviour; art education aims at releasing these subjects so as to bring them into a more active situation, to transfer them into a participatory action; this may range from events in exhibitions, from an extremely emotional exhibition concept and artefacts (so that the subjects are at least involved emotionally) to participatory projects that will give the visitors the possibility to act or to interact, or to retort. The whole task in which art education is involved is a tricky one—it is contradictory from the very beginning. The visitor is addressed at the same time in many different ways, or we might say with Althusser that s/he is confronted with confusingly different interpellations. Within the art institution, this is mediation on the one hand and modernist exhibition situations on the other; this first contradiction is the position of wandering eye, the position of the citizen as discussed above, and the approach of mobilising the spectator, at least to a certain (quite limited) extent. But s/he is not only addressed inside the art institution; s/he is also subject to many more and sometimes also much more powerful ideological approaches—as a result of the ongoing bombardment by advertising and media with ideological gender models, for example. Nowadays, it seems to me that all media, including television, the Internet, and digital games and network communication, have altered a lot of these influences. We should keep in mind that Althusser defined the ideological apparatuses as a battleground.

4.2. From a Feminist Perspective: Being Singular/Plural in the Exhibition Context of the documentas: documenta 5, dX, D12, d13

In my view, each documenta proposes a number of specific paradigmatic models of subject and power constellations, which in each case function as appeals to the visitors. These paradigmatic models of the subject operate in the political sphere: they give us a sense of how we should function as male or female citizens; they propose modes of order, and they subtly convey constellations of power—in short, they communicate conceptions of race, class, and gender. In this way, they produce, as it were, a network of relationships in the sphere of culture and politics. In the following, I will be analysing the effects and contradictions of these paradigmatic models of the subject as "consensus machines," or as counter-hegemonic, which will involve discussion of the subtle interconnection between affirmation and criticism. The interpretation and dissemination of these models of the subject take place in catalogues and through gestures of self-positioning, but these latter are also discussed in the arts pages of newspapers and magazines, which in turn position and re-interpret them.

One provisional suggestion for such analysis would be to investigate the scenarios of appeal on the basis of the categories of verbal/iconographic statements (self-positioning/media), visible protagonists (curators, artists), invisible protagonists (administration, management), the relationships between them/constellations of power, displays (artworks in context), exhibitions as conglomerations of different media, art education and those to whom it is addressed, the institution, the concrete conditions of production, and social and political contexts in Kassel and other locations of the documentas. Oliver Marchart has, for instance, discussed documentas 10, 11 and 12 from the points of view of politicisation/depoliticisation, the decentring and recentring of the West, the interface between art and theory, and the strategies of mediation. So, my approach will be more from the angle of the apparatus of an exhibition, and I fully expect to find contradictory appeals within one and the same documenta. In the following, I will confine myself to very few aspects, namely the verbal and iconographic statements of the visible protagonists, in this case the curators.

The Positioning of the Curating Subject in *documenta 5*, *dX*, *D12*, and *dOCUMENTA (13)*

Here, my aim will be to draw attention to some blind spots in these constructions of subject identity.

I will start by very briefly summing up a previously published discussion of *documenta 5*,[231] and then take a critical look at the blind spots underlying the constructions of the subject in *dX* (Catherine David), *D12* (Roger Buergel and Ruth Noack), and *dOCUMENTA (13)* (Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev).

Earlier, I put forward a detailed argument that the image of the profession of curator has been based in part on Harald Szeemann's self-staging. To summarise: the composition of the photograph mentioned above, which was widely circulated as a significant snapshot, alludes to a large number of pictorial constructions that are already charged with meaning in the Western canon. It stages a hierarchical relationship between artists and curator, with the curator positioned as a god, a man, and a genius: these images seem, as it were, to unite in the establishment of the curator's new-found authority. Earlier, I argued that the bohemian group surrounding Szeemann can in fact be traced back to an earlier revolt by artists who—as part, or even as precursors, of the student revolt of 1968— mapped out new forms of community, production, and distribution. Happenings, actions, Fluxus, and the Situationists became movements that turned against the art establishment. The established institutions were bypassed; the public was to be involved. Political messages and ideas were presented, even though there was no clearly defined common political stance (not even within a given group). Gender roles and social institutions like marriage were reinterpreted: by implicit new role models against conventional marriages, for example a FluxDivorce and FluxWedding. Editions, newspapers, mail art, and print productions were intended to make art affordable and, through large print runs, accessible to greater numbers of people. Through the provision of "scores" of instructions for use, almost anything could become art: seen in this way, everyday actions and high art merged. That Fluxus performances were invited to Germany (to Wiesbaden) at all was due in part to a desire for the re-education of Germans; anything "American" was seen as something to be encouraged—which is quite amusing, given that the chairman of Fluxus was a young Lithuanian who lived in Germany for a number of years before emigrating with his parents to the United States.

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[231] ——— Richter, "Artists and Curators as Authors."
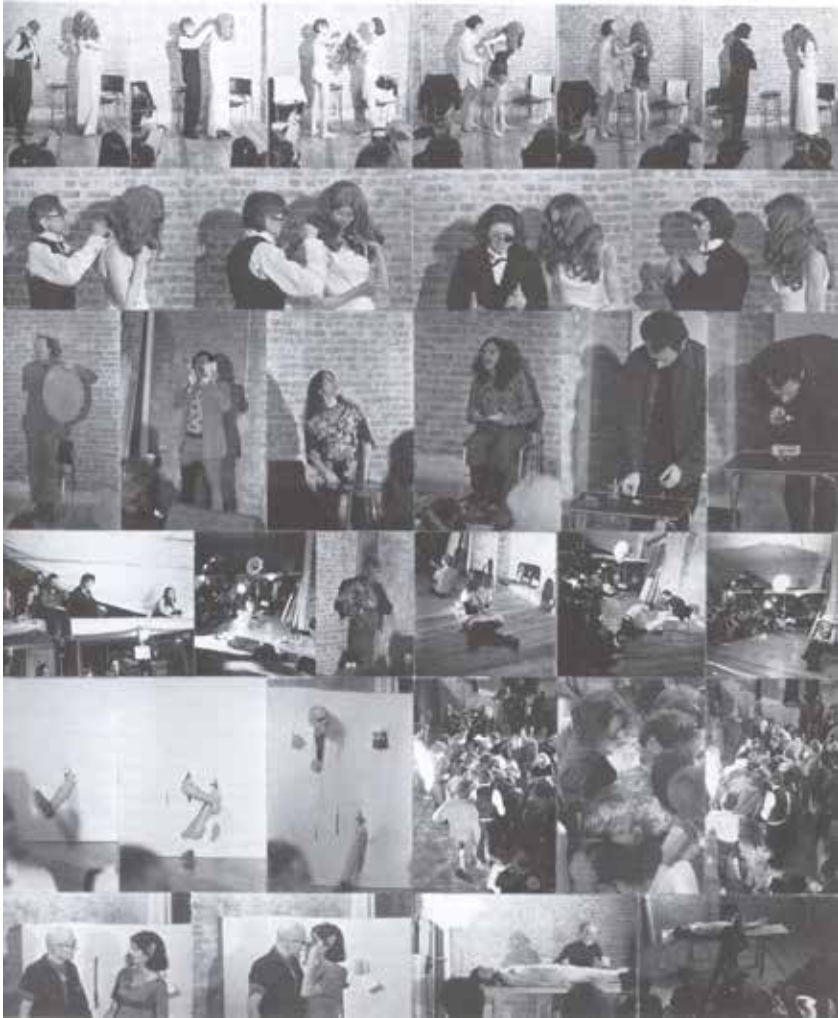
FluxWedding with a cross-dressing event, among others

But to return to the grouping of figures in the photograph: Szeemann. This paradigmatic photograph clearly shows that having a curator with sole responsibility created a new position of power; the originally chaotic and revolutionary activity in the art of the 1960s was once again part of a power-based relationship. Above, I cited the well-known examples of Daniel Buren and Robert Smithson, but there were numerous other clashes between Szeemann and artists, for instance, Klaus Staeck and Gerhard Steidl's fight for a "political information stand" containing documentation relating to Kassel, including the city's cultural politics and aiming to show the effects of the documenta on Kassel, the art market, and artists, and to openly reveal the organisation and structure of documen-

ta.[232] After some initial skirmishing, Harald Szeemann gave his response: "Dear Klaus Staeck, many thanks for your letter [of 22 February 1972]. I confirm what was said in our telephone conversation, which concluded with a 'No' to your stand. Sincerely yours, Harald Szeemann."[233] Staeck fought back, publishing the exchange of letters and other material to coincide with *documenta 5*, under the title *Befragung der documenta, oder Die Kunst soll schön bleiben* (Questioning documenta, or Art is Supposed to Remain Beautiful).[234] I mention this example just briefly because it so happens that, later on, I, together with some students, picked up on Staeck's idea—though without being aware of it at the time—of using the format of a small stand. But perhaps this in itself tells us that content and form are linked in complex ways; critical analysis makes use of argumentation and texts, while a critical artistic and curatorial action may turn to small formats and editions, performative interventions, democratisation, and participation. But more on this later.

Ready Trade Trailer, with artist editions Künstlerhaus Worpswede, 2007

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232 ——— Klaus Staeck, ed., *Befragung der documenta, oder Die Kunst soll schön bleiben* (Göttingen: Steidl, 1972), 10.

233 ——— Ibid., 14.

234 ——— Ibid., 10–16.

Ready Trade Trailer, during *documenta 12*, Kassel, 2007

Ready Trade Trailer, Bremen, 2007

Ready Trade Trailer, edition Joseph Zehrer, 2007

dX: Catherine David, or the Blind Spot

As has often been noted, *documenta X*, curated by Catherine David, represented, on many levels, a break with the past, which I would like to characterise briefly, while the different levels deserve a lengthier and more detailed comparative analysis. The changed interpretation of what is to be understood by contemporary art was noticeable at the very entrance to the documenta-Halle. Peter Friedl set his stamp on this documenta, declaring the hall, in neon letters, to be a CINEMA. This in itself indicates that the status of the "exhibition" had become uncertain, as had the status of the visitors as subjects.

Peter Friedl, *Kino, documenta X*, 1997

On the level of the display, the emphasis was no longer entirely on individual pictorial works: instead, the visitor was enveloped in whole "environments." So, the status of the work was no longer that of a classic, autonomous work of art: it might, for example, be a landscape created out of photo wallpaper, with the appearance of having been digitally produced, by Peter Kogler. This, too, situates the visitors: it appeals to them as subjects operating in the digital age.

In the central area of the documenta-Halle, the curator dispensed with works of art altogether and set up a bookshop designed by Vito Acconci and a discussion area designed by Franz West. By doing this, she positioned art as part of a social and political discourse that included cultural and art studies. Overall, this pointedly demonstrated the nature of contemporary art as a complex discourse made up of a variety of subject-matters, concepts, commentaries, and political contexts.

I would quickly like to add, more or less in passing, that Catherine David appointed Simon Lamunière as curator of the website and facilitated the creation of a Hybrid WorkSpace. The Hybrid WorkSpace was above all a largely uncontrolled space, which is hard to imagine when you think of

previous and subsequent battles over access to the "documenta" exhibition space.[235] The Hybrid WorkSpace was organized by an entire group of individuals: Eike Becker, Geert Lovink/Pit Schultz, Micz Flor, Thorsten Schilling, Heike Foell, Thomax Kaulmann, Moniteurs [initiated by Catherine David, Klaus Biesenbach, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Nancy Spector (Berlin Biennial)]; the group was given the use of a five-room apartment where they could invite guests, make radio broadcasts, communicate with the outside world, and establish contacts with web initiatives and make them accessible.

With regard to content, Catherine David showed—again in complete contrast to the emphasis placed on painting in the preceding documentas—many works from the 1960s that had either fallen into oblivion or not yet attracted attention in the Western context. The main themes ranged, as the documenta Archive puts it, "from the debate on post-colonialism (as in Lothar Baumgarten's *Vakuum* series, 1978–80, or the *documenta documents*), various models of urbanism (Aldo van Eyck, Archigram, Archizoom Associati, Rem Koolhaas), and the meaning of the visual image in the media society (exemplified by Marcel Broodthaers's *Section Publicité du Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*, 1968), to contemporary web art."[236]

I am only briefly mentioning all this to make it clear that, in both form and content, *documenta X* broke with many previously accepted paradigms of contemporary art. What was surprising was that there was relatively little debate about the director's approach in terms of structure and content, while the press focussed its discussion instead on Catherine David as a person.

The documenta website still refers to this: "Instead of genuinely engaging with the questions raised or with David's achievement as a curator, the general tendency among art critics was to make continual reference to the exhibition's 'over-emphasis on theory' or 'intellectualism' and its alleged 'lack of sensuousness.'"[237]

Dirk Schwarze discusses the language of the documenta criticism in an article published online, as we will hear in the following quotes; obviously, the fact that for the first time a woman was the artistic director [and also that her photograph had been used almost as a logo in press announcements ahead of the show] tempted commentators into using formulations that were sometimes distasteful:

235 ——— See *documenta X* website: https://www.documenta.de/en/retrospective/documenta_x.

236 ——— Ibid.

237 ——— Retrospective of documenta: https://www.documenta.de/en/retrospective/documenta#, accessed 14 December 2016.

"Catherine David has a very narrow head. But there's an awful lot in it. Catherine David looks as fragile as a fairy. But she has all the charm of a deep-frozen crowbar. Catherine David has an attractive mouth, usually painted with dark red lipstick, but she is never seen to smile. Whether she is really like that, or is artfully staging herself as an arrogant, unapproachable intellectual diva, is hard to tell, given how self-marketing ploys are proliferating at the higher levels of the art world." (Martin Jasper, *Braunschweiger Zeitung*)

"There has been much puzzling over the eyes, the physiognomical trademark of the current director, who has sole charge of the documenta. David is said to be unpredictable and snappish, to be a Parisian sphinx; the word 'merde' easily crosses the lips of that Snow White face." (Roland Gross, *Darmstädter Echo*) [...] "She looks like Snow White – twenty years after the episode with the seven dwarfs. Yesterday the beautiful documenta boss was an object of desire for photographers[...]." (Birgit Kölgen, *Westfälische Rundschau*).[238]

And Schwarze's survey also includes the following, from Dorothee Müller of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*: "Sometimes, with Catherine David, you have [...] the feeling that a nun has turned up in a brothel. A nun who, with missionary zeal, wants to convert the scene of vice into one of virtue. The brothel is the art world and an event like the documenta is a part of that world [...]. Large parts of the documenta [...] are totally lacking in sensuousness, and its creator is not so much a high priestess raising art onto an altar as a stern disciplinarian demanding that we perform rigorous religious exercises."[239]

Well, the way she stages herself in photographs, like the ones we see here, does not support any of those comments. If we try to interpret them as stagings, what we see is the restrained black-and-white uniform of a female curator or professor who, in line with common practice, takes her cue from the classic black and white of a man in a suit, albeit in a slightly freer version. The only claim to status that the photos make is that of an autonomous subject. So, what prompted this extreme malice, which strikes us today as so inappropriate? Seen from a feminist point of view, this kind of "criticism" caters to the typical denigration of women. There is no discussion of content; instead, the woman is reduced to externals and thereby to her gender role (imposed by a patriarchal society). Viewed in this way, the director of documenta is primarily a woman who has had the

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238 ———— See Dirk Schwarze, "Zur Sprache der documenta-Kritik." This article was uploaded under documenta on 26 April 2010, http://dirkschwarze. net/category/documenta/page/169/.

239 ———— See http://dirkschwarze.net/2010/04/26/zur-sprache-der-documen- ta-kritik/, accessed 28 September 2022.

Catherine David, *documenta X,* 1997

gall to take up such a high-profile public position. However, I suspect that other subtle, unspoken ascriptions also play a part. Walter Grasskamp has pointed out what an important ideological role art exhibitions played after the Second World War: thus, he argues, the dominance of abstraction at the first Venice Biennale following the war was intended to demonstrate that Germany had connected with an international style and was pointedly turning away from the National Socialists' reactionary, conventional, and grandiose concept of art. In various ways, documenta likewise played a notable role in repositioning the approach to art in the Federal Republic.[240] documenta developed into the most important and internationally most visible exhibition in the Federal Republic and later in reunified Germany.

The connotations of this rather harsh critique towards Catherine David are very typical for devaluing or mystifying Jewish women. One hears the subtly racist character of their ascriptions when, for instance, they speak of a "high priestess," or of "Snow White": they specifically target Catherine David's dark hair and pale complexion. Vague religious connotations waft through the texts, as we have seen: high priestess, religious exercises, nun. At the same time, implicit reference is made to the myth of the beautiful Jewess—a myth about which Elvira Grözinger has written and which paints Jewish women as seductresses and destroyers, with Snow White a frequent metaphor. This specific tone and connotations are so often used historically in the German-speaking context to racially mark subjects.

This racially tinged pejorative was so pervasive that I myself firmly assumed that Catherine David was Jewish. However, Catherine David is not Jewish, but this is a mechanism that can often be observed. The mechanism of devaluation always remains the same, but how it is filled with content varies. The negative attributions are shifted from one particular

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240 —————— Richter, "Artists and Curators as Authors."

group to another: from Jewish women to intellectual women. In addition, racist attributions often contradict each other completely; what remains consistent is the form of emotionalised denunciation. Note to myself, never believe anything that is implied by an emotional devaluation; all relations and all meanings produced in this way are dangerous and deeply wrong!

One can therefore draw the conclusion that the refusal to engage with the themes and formats of *documenta X* is based on a refusal to acknowledge the leadership role of a woman. Retrospectively, as it were, the arts pages deny her the position of a producer of meaning beyond the physical, gender-based, or "racial" characteristics to which she is implicitly reduced.

Thus, the autonomous subject status accorded to Catherine David—caught as she is between her own self-staging and ascriptions from the outside—can be seen to be extremely precarious and fundamentally contested: she is represented as someone who is permitted only with reservations to create meaning at a (Federal) German exhibition venue. Okwui Enwezor as a director of non-Western origin and Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev as the second female director of a documenta each developed, in the run-up to the event, strategies for avoiding partly this kind of radical verbal rejection and negation; it would be worth analysing those strategies in detail.

Entrance hall, *documenta 12*, 2007

Subject Positions in the Context of *documenta 12,*
or Scenes from a Marriage

What is striking in both official and less official photographs of the curators—or rather of the director and the curator, Roger Buergel and Ruth Noack, who were partners in private life—is that, iconographically, they stage themselves very much as a couple. For example, some pictures show

Entrance hall, *documenta 12*, 2007

Roger M. Buergel, Ruth Noack, *documenta 12*, 2007

their respective clothing as carefully coordinated in both style and colour. They also often relate to each other through the direction of their gazes. Thus, they are clearly presenting themselves as a couple, and not merely reflecting their essentially hierarchical professional relationship. As the man, Buergel often assumes the more dominant position, he appears larger and looks straight out of the picture, while Noack's gaze is often turned towards him. For comparison, the curators of the fifth Berlin Biennale, Adam Szymczyk and Elena Filipovic: their clothes show no such striking correlations in style and colour, nor do their postures suggest a hierarchical private relationship. Oliver Marchart comments critically on the conscious projection of the couple relationship between Buergel and Noack: "D12 [...] is in fact the first major international exhibition to be curated neither by a single individual, nor by two individuals together [...], nor by a team (as with D11), but by a bourgeois nuclear family. In the preface to the catalogue, the only subjects, apart from the authors Buergel und Noack themselves, are their children, Charlotte and Kasimir. A truly innovative form of collective practice in the field of art," Marchart contin-

ues with some sarcasm, "which not only, unfortunately, betokens a new bourgeois respectability—despite the assertion of feminism that distinguished the d12—but also has more far-reaching implications."[241]

The reaction of Christian Kravagna to this shift was similarly critical: "Enwezor was a curator who unquestionably had more international experience prior to taking on the documenta, yet despite this, or precisely because of it, he chose to operate with a team of six co-curators who brought with them a wide range of knowledge drawn from a variety of artistic and living environments. Buergel and Noack, by contrast, act as a family, which brought about a shift of emphasis from the political to the personal that manifested itself in, among other things, a delight in the discovery of beautiful and interesting objects that one could come across in foreign lands and then present as individual lucky *trouvailles*."[242]

This self-staging of documenta director Buergel and documenta curator Noack not merely as a couple but as a family is reinforced by the added touch that the Roman numeral twelve in the documenta logo is said to have been designed by one of the couple's children. To me, as someone who has often collaborated with both Roger Buergel and Ruth Noack, this narrative of a traditional nuclear family came as a surprise. After all, when I had invited Ruth Noack to take part in a symposium on feminist strategies in contemporary art, she had offered to turn over her place as a speaker to the group "Frauensolidarität/ Frauenbeziehungen" (Solidarity between women/relationships between women), so they could present a radical discussion of the connection between form and content. Noack felt a close connection with this Austrian group. At that time (in 1999), Noack, although in a relationship with Buergel, identified herself as a lesbian. In her contribution to the publication resulting from the symposium, she wrote: "As Roland Barthes pointed out, identity that is created by narrative follows an Oedipal structure: 'If there is no longer a father, why tell stories at all?'"[243]

It is not part of my argument to discuss the sexual orientation preferred by Noack or Buergel: for one thing, that is their business, and for another I consider the requirement of a clear-cut sexuality and gender attribution on binary lines to be a patriarchal imposition, as has been discussed by Jacqueline Rose particularly in relation to the visual field.[244] Yet, I would

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241 ———— Marchart, *Hegemonie im Kunstfeld,* 63–64.

242 ———— Christian Kravagna, *Texte zur Kunst* 67 (September 2007): 205, quoted here in Marchart, *Hegemonie im Kunstfeld,* 64.

243 ———— Ruth Noack, "Wer ist man, wo endet man, und wo beginnt die oder der andere? Zur Videotrilogie 'Me/We; Okay; Gray' von Eija-Liisa Ahtila," in *Dialoge und Debatten, ein internationales Symposium zu feministischen Positionen in der zeitgenössischen Kunst*, ed. Dorothee Richter (Nuremberg: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 1999), 97.

244 ———— Jaqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision.*

like to raise as an issue the fact that both Noack and Buergel, when they assumed the direction of documenta, gave their own public image a new interpretation as a conventional narrative. It would have been possible to show a different kind of partnership, one not intrinsically defined as a hierarchy, in which gender roles might be more fluid and both partners could stage themselves as professionals of equal status. Instead, Buergel and Noack conducted their public appearances in an unusual way: while Roger Buergel introduced the programme or particular concepts, Ruth Noack, from among the audience, critiqued or questioned his statements. Perhaps the intention of this publicly performed dissent was to offer an insight into the discourse between the two, but as a spectator, one was uncomfortably reminded of scenes from a marriage.

It would be well worth investigating what effects the return to a more conservative approach, which Oliver Marchart identifies at many levels in the documenta directorship, had on the production of the exhibition and the meaning it created. I suspect that there were many contradictions, with messages that were in the end very mixed, some conservative, others progressive. For instance, *documenta 12* did feature a higher percentage of female artists than any previous edition and gave ample exposure to feminist works overall.

It is possible that Buergel and Noack were attempting a strategic move that misfired, using conservative elements like the staging of a nuclear family and Buergel's frequently mentioned return to the Romantic and the beautiful in order to smuggle in critical messages. This apparently farfetched idea is suggested to me by the fact that the last exhibition Roger Buergel created before being appointed documenta director was *Das Privatleben der Werder Bremen Spieler* (The Private Lives of the Werder Bremen Players) at the Künstlerhaus Bremen, to which, in my role as artistic director of the Künstlerhaus, I had invited him. The title was intended, like an optical illusion, to raise false expectations: the exhibition presented no images of anyone's private life but instead a subtle narrative made up of textual fragments and photographs, some by Buergel himself, some by artists. This was intended to show how he conceives exhibitions through associations as well as through inspiration from theoretical ideas. Perhaps it was this media-reflexive game with unfulfilled expectations and surprisingly critical content that originally suggested the idea of staging a perfect, conservative relationship between a couple. In the execution, the use of this framework may have proved less manageable than expected. The topos of the conservative couple was enthusiastically received and perpetuated by the press; here is an example from *ART* magazine: "There is the sound of footsteps along the corridor, and Ruth Noack arrives—Buergel's partner and comrade-in-arms of twenty-three years. She is a pleasant woman with a candid expression and a slightly dreamy

air. She too loves bright colours, and likes to dress nostalgically in wide skirts and high-necked blouses. As curator she works with him on the exhibition on equal terms, and the collaboration takes place 'often without words.'"[245]

Noack and Buergel both emerged from the critical German-language discourse surrounding the Austrian magazine *Springerin*. Their exhibitions, few in number but often produced jointly, had previously had unequivocally political titles and messages, for example *ReVisionen des Abstrakten Expressionismus* (ReVisions of Abstract Expressionism) at the Kunstraum der Universität Lüneburg, and (again curated by Noack and Buergel together) *Dinge, die wir nicht verstehen* (Things we don't understand) at the Generali Foundation in Vienna; *Gouvernementalität* (Governmentality) in Hanover, and the exhibition already mentioned, also a small one, at the Künstlerhaus Bremen. Their retreat to the couple relationship came about with their sudden enormous gain in power resulting from their appointment to direct documenta. By a whole series of authoritarian acts, both partners cut themselves off from the group they had previously identified with, which included Oliver Marchart and Christian Kravagna. This was followed by further autocratic behaviour, with Buergel, in particular, dismissing criticism and brushing off any questioning of power relationships. He simply acted as a curator with arbitrary authority, for instance, in the matter of how the Spanish chef, Ferran Adrià, was made part of documenta. The fact that Buergel had been chosen to direct documenta was advanced as sufficient reason for him to select the guests who would be allowed to enjoy the chef's Spanish cuisine.[246] However, given that, as I

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245 ———— *ART, das Kunstmagazin*, accessed 14 December 2016, http://images. google.de/imgres?imgurl=http://static.art-magazin.de/bilder/be/ c4/15664/facebook_image/buergel-462.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www. art-magazin.de/kunst/7128-rtkl-roger-buergel-ruth-noack-docu- menta-12-die-gluecklichen-desperados&h=622&w=462&tbnid=BL7an 9VFS09BKM:&tbnh=90&tbnw=67&docid=3FDNiIt9S3bQ0M&usg=__ g99agZ9UZwvKdPlsU5dFHoDP5A8=&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjhyL- H6pYjPAhVF1ywKHacFDw4Q9QEINzAE.

246 ———— Stephan Detjen and Alexandra Mangel, "'Das ist keine landwirtschaft- liche Leistungsschau': Künstlerischer Leiter Buergel über die docu- menta 12," Deutschlandradio Kultur, 14 June 2007, accessed 14 Decem- ber 2016, http://www.deutschlandradiokultur.de/das-ist-keine-land- wirtschaftliche-leistungsschau.1013.de.html?dram:article_id=167002: "**Stephan Detjen:** And now here in our outside broadcast unit are the artistic director of *documenta 12*, Roger M. Buergel, and the curator, his wife Ruth Noack. Welcome to you both [...]. [On the subject of cura- torial arbitrariness:]
Roger M. Buergel: [...] Anyone in their right mind knows that Ferran, with his highly complicated cuisine that is as complicated as brain surgery, can't cook for 650,000 people. That's not the point. The point is to find an appropriate way to present a chef. We thought a lot,

have said, the internal relationship between Buergel and Noack was continually being put on show, and that Noack criticized Buergel's statements at public events and in press interviews, the performance of a classic marriage was distorted or even torpedoed. With only a little exaggeration, one might say that this discourse, artificially reduced to the pair's relationship, was reminiscent of the artificially sealed-off live situation in *Big Brother*-type TV shows and put the witnesses to this performance in an oddly voyeuristic position. It was a performance of an intimate relationship that at times aroused a mixture of mild horror and fascination in the professionals observing it. One could only guess to what extent the style of the performances was tailored to different audiences, such as the local audience, the professional audience, and audiences addressed via the media.

Here, of course, it might be useful to examine a number of other internal relationships, such as the collaboration between artists and curators, the collaboration with the educational staff, the dominant display, the organisational structures, and the collaboration with the exhibition producers.[247]

together, about how we should do it. We knew that there were a few options, but we rejected them all. Just having bits and bobs, handing around snacks and suchlike, seemed vulgar. You can't represent food by means of photos, and using smells is a bit esoteric. So, then we just opted for the simple, no-nonsense solution of saying okay, El Bulli is one venue of the documenta.

Mangel: So, what will happen is that at El Bulli a table for two is reserved for visitors to the documenta. And when you were asked at the press conference yesterday who, or how the lucky people would be chosen, you said you would do it. And that gave rise to some disquiet, some muttering in the audience. And then you said that you would decide this following the time-honoured model of curatorial arbitrariness. What is that, curatorial arbitrariness?

Buergel: Surely, there's no clearer way of putting it. With the documenta, there is an appointments committee which appoints the artistic director. You can't apply for it. It's the same with the artists: they are chosen. As the artistic director, you have carte blanche. I don't have to justify myself. And the same with restaurant guests. I walk around the exhibition, I keep an eye out and spontaneously invite people who I feel could just do with it. There are various artists whom I would like to have this experience and whom I also think that Ferran would be interested in meeting. I basically follow my gut feeling."

247 ———— Professor Philipp Oswalt, Universität Kassel, see http://www.livedocumentation.de/?page_id=288:
"**livedocumentation**: The artistic director of documenta 12, Roger M. Buergel, has said that the documenta can't just land in Kassel like a UFO. But is that in fact what it does?
Oswalt: I have compared this year's documenta with documenta X in 1997. The artistic director of that documenta had a very difficult relationship with Kassel and made no secret of the fact that it was not her

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev with former documenta directors,
dOCUMENTA (13), 2012

dOCUMENTA (13): Angel in the White Cube

With the photograph below, on 18 September 2009, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev ushered in *dOCUMENTA (13)*. For this, her first appearance, she framed herself with previous documenta directors. From the outset, she staged her authority iconographically; she was letting it be known that, with this conference, documenta had already begun. In this way, she was providing herself with support—from documenta authority figures in general, not merely from individual past directors to whom specifically she, in her position, might be able to look for assistance or inspiration. This is one of the strategies I mentioned earlier to avoid excessive criticism.

Here, I will offer a few insights, beginning with a quote by Nanne Buurman: "One of the main objectives of artistic director Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev

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kind of place. Despite that fact, she created a documenta that did relate very strongly to Kassel, both in its content and in the way it was organized in spatial terms. Although the people of Kassel were slightly wary of the newcomer, it was nonetheless an exhibition that was very strongly rooted in the city. With documenta 12, the situation is completely reversed. There is the assertion by Buergel that he had tried, through the city's advisory council, to integrate the documenta into the city. However, the council met in private, and what it did was not part of the exhibition and not part of the catalogue either. Buergel opened up a kind of little playground for local players in order to counteract criticism, and in this he succeeded. Many Kassel residents were delighted, despite the total failure to fulfil the claim that had been made. What Buergel and Noack ultimately achieved was an exhibition fashioned in a relatively subjective and also authoritarian manner, which had nothing whatever to do with being rooted in Kassel.
livedocumentation: You have also looked into the effects of the documenta on the local economy and tourism in Kassel. What did you come up with?"

(CCB) was supposed to be to criticize anthropocentric world-views and to extend cultural agency to scientists, activists, animals, plants and inanimate objects, but paradoxically dOCUMENTA (13) was in many ways characterized by features that (once again) placed authorship at the centre. Its predecessor, the documenta 12 (2007), had turned attention away from the artists as subjects and from the contexts of production—partly by withholding contextualizing information and staging the exhibition in a pointedly partisan way—, and focussed instead on the context of reception, the aesthetic nature of exhibits, the effects of the manner of display and the experiences of visitors. The d(13), on the other hand, granted artists the central role in the exhibition. The approach taken by the d12 of making the exhibition reflect on itself, symbolized by the mirrored entrance hall, was once again replaced at the d(13) by the White Cube model."[248] This constantly demonstrated primacy of art was a message reinforced in many ways: thus, for instance the educational staff were given the job title of "art project attendant," not art educator or mediator, and in the address CCB gave shortly before the opening, they are very clearly denied any opportunity to define their own position.

In interviews, CCB often staged herself as a warm-hearted, welcoming hostess, and explicitly opposed the theoreticisation of art, of displays, of indicatory gestures and current political issues. Some quotations: "Art seems to be in danger of being talked to death."[249] She criticized an "excess of art criticism and theory,"[250] because "often these texts are not discussing the artworks themselves but curatorial positions in contemporary art, thereby becoming a meta-artistic discourse."[251]

In several texts, Nanne Buurman examines "how the power inherent in the right to determine the mode of presentation became invisible (once again) as a result of protestations of innocence made through verbal rhetoric or the rhetoric of display. Consequently, the political nature of exhibiting (von Bismarck 2008) —that is, the power of the display (Staniszewski 1998) with its implicit ability to place visitors and exhibits in constellations and hierarchies (Beck 2007)—was largely omitted as a subject of critical discussion."[252]

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248 ——— Nanne Buurman, "Angels in the White Cube? Rhetoriken kuratorischer Unschuld bei der dOCUMENTA (13)," *FKW // Zeitschrift für Geschlechterforschung und visuelle Kultur* 58 (April 2015): 63-74.

249 ——— Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, "The dance was very frenetic, lively, rattling, clanging, rolling, contorted, and lasted for a long time," in *The Book of Books*, vol. 1 (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 38.

250 ——— Ibid.

251 ——— Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, "Introduction: Notes on Perceptual Thinking and Its Possibilities Today," in *The Book of Books*, 650.

252 ——— Buurman, "Angels in the White Cube?" Also, see Nanne Buurman, "Hosting Significant Others: Autobiographies as Exhibitions of Co-Au-

On many levels, CCB followed traditional concepts of femininity; she presented herself as a self-effacing hostess who always gives precedence to her guests. The discourse she conducted is reminiscent less of a position informed by theory than of a drawing-room chat:

> **Christov-Bakargiev:** [...] The philosopher Martin Heidegger said that we know we have to die, but the other animals do not know it. But how does he know that? The twenty-first century is the century of great discoveries – for example, we are only just discovering the language of crows. It is mad to persist in thinking about the other animals in the way you do. Birds form flocks in the sky and fly thousands of miles and communicate with each other. So there are forms of telepathy and a language of animals.
> *Süddeutsche Zeitung* **(Kia Vahland):** And you claim to understand animals and plants?
> **Christov-Bakargiev:** In a true democracy, in my view, everyone is allowed a voice. The question is not whether we give dogs or strawberries the right to vote, but how a strawberry can assert its political intention. My aim is not to protect animals and plants but to emancipate them. At one time, it used to be said that we had universal suffrage, and yet women did not have the vote. Why did no one see the contradiction there? If the citizen-subject was construed as being only male, then certainly there was universal suffrage.
> **SZ:** Why should dogs be able to vote, like women?
> **Christov-Bakargiev:** Why not? Does the world belong less to dogs than to women?
> **SZ:** Do you see no fundamental difference between a woman and a dog?
> **Christov-Bakargiev:** Absolutely not! There is no basic difference between women and dogs or between men and dogs. Or between dogs and the atoms that make up my bracelet. I think everything has its own culture. The cultural product of the tomato plant is the tomato.[253]

The interviewer herself, faced with this random mixture of wild speculations about emancipation, women, animals, agency, and voting rights, seems to be somewhat at a loss for words. These statements could not be

thority," in *Hosting Relations in Exhibitions*, eds. Beatrice von Bismarck et al. (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016).

253 ——— Kia Vahland, "Documenta-Leiterin Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev: Über die politische Intention der Erdbeere," interview, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 8 June 2012, accessed 14 December 2016, http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/documenta-leiterin-carolyn-christov-bakargiev-ueber-die-politische-intention-der-erdbeere-1.1370514.

further removed from Catherine David's call for a critical engagement with the political, social, economic, and cultural questions of the globalised present-day world, for a "manifestation culturelle" that would, "in various different ways, facilitate access to an understanding of the state of the world"—explicitly refusing to pander to a "society of spectacle."[254] Yet, in the contemporary debate, there are many lines of enquiry that explore such questions on a firmer theoretical basis (the Anthropocene,[255] animism,[256] etc.). From a research point of view, it would be interesting to compare a work shown at *dX*, *Ein Haus für Schweine und Menschen* (A House for Pigs and People), a collaboration between Carsten Höller and Rosemarie Trockel, with a work from the *dOCUMENTA (13)* by Pierre Huyghe, *Untilled, 2011– 12, Alive entities and inanimate things, made and not made. Dimensions and duration variable*, and also the *Dog Run*.

However, talk of hospitality is omnipresent: much space is given to networks and friendships, especially in *The Logbook*. This "curating as care," "curatorial practice as a network," to sum up in a nutshell the unspoken idea underlying these offerings, raises a number of problems.

"Curating as care" combines concepts of traditional femininity with concepts of non-material work in a post-Fordist society. Under the cloak of a curatorial non-concept that would give priority to the artistic works, a kind of Facebook persona of the female curator as a networker is celebrated even in the documenta catalogue (*The Logbook*), as Nanne Buurman has shown in a detailed analysis.[257] CCB with artist A and artist B, with her fam-

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254 ——————— See documenta X website: https://www.documenta.de/en/retrospective/documenta_x.

255 ——————— Campus 2014: The Anthropocene Issue, Anthropocene Curriculum, 14–22 November 2014: "The Anthropocene is based on a changing earth system as a complex system. We can also regard the Campus as a complex system. I think we should allow the participants enough freedom to self-organize, because that's what a complex system does". Workshops, publications, video recordings, etc., Katrin Klingan, Ashkan Sepahvand, Christoph Rosol, Bernd M. Scherer, eds., *Textures of the Anthropocene: Grain Vapor Ray* (Berlin: Revolver, 2014).

256 ——————— Anselm Franke (curator), "Animismus" (Animism), Haus der Kulturen der Welt. "How do we distinguish things from beings? The exhibition *Animismus* examines the way we draw the boundaries between life and non-life on the basis of aesthetic symptoms. The scientific positivism of the modern era was based on a categorical division between nature and culture, between a subjective and an objective world. Animism has become the alternative to that view of ourselves. That is the starting-point for this exhibition. With works by around thirty international artists, curator Anselm Franke transforms the Haus der Kulturen der Welt into a self-reflexive anthropological museum of the modern age. Friday. 16 March – Sunday, 6 May 2012."

257 ——————— For a detailed discussion, also see Nanne Buurman, "CCB with…: Displaying Curatorial Relationality in dOCUMENTA (13)'s The Logbook," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 5, no. 1 (February 2016): 76-99.

ily, travelling, eating—any kind of power relationship vanishes in this cosy setting. Buurman speaks of a bio-politicisation of curatorial performance: "What are the (bio)political implications of Christov-Bakargiev's presentation of herself as a dialogic, caring, enthusiastically committed round-the-clock networker in a context where flexible project-based labour systems, team-working, multi-tasking, flat management and full personal identification with one's work have become hegemonic ideals?"[258] Buurman argues that the comprehensive displaying of the processes of social communication, which were shown, very fully and right at the start, along with the relatively conventional presentations of art—this parading of a network of important individuals—is an affirmative reference to an area of economics. In today's globalised world of work, non-material work, and work with an emotional component are no longer marginal but may be regarded as being firmly established, in the finance industry, in management. Today's argument in relation to "curating as care," as put forward by Helena Reckitt,[259] is based on the neglected part of the general conditions of production, the unpaid reproductive sector. Here, the demand to clearly include the "care" part of curatorial actions stems from an original feminist demand to remunerate this unpaid sector. However, this does not mean to simply perform care, but to put this part up for debate. Elke Krasny also locates the question of care in a political context, here the general environmental pollution and the ecological crisis of the Anthropocene/Capitalocene.[260]

As I and others have argued on more than one occasion, precisely this promise of a kind of authorship that is networked, mobile, and international turns the position of the curator into a paradigmatic performance of the new post-Fordist model of work. However, one frequently notices how work is subsumed under the name of an author, and CCB even presented herself as in some measure a co-author when she instigated particular artworks—see *The Logbook*. A further example is that Chus Martínez repeatedly appeared as in some way a co-curator, yet did not explicitly hold that position; sometimes Martínez was allowed to show how, as a person involved in art education—sorry, as an "art project atten-

258 ———— Ibid., 79.

259 ———— Helena Reckitt, Diana Baker Smith, Cinzia Cremona, Giulia Damiani, Lina Džuverović, Lucia Farinati, Sabrina Fuller, Rose Gibbs, Laura Guy, Félicie Kertudo, Gabby Moser, Sara Paiola, Irene Revell, Patricia Sequeira Brás, Amy Tobin, and Ehryn Torrell, "Transmitting Feminisms," in *Metabolic Rifts Reader*, eds. Sofia Lemos and Alexandra Balona (Berlin; Lisbon: Atlas Projectos, 2019), 143-162.

260 ———— See, for example, Elke Krasny in conversation with Melis Uğurlu, "On Care As Practice," published by the Turkish Pavilion of the Architecture Biennale in Venice, 2021, see https://pavilionofturkey21.iksv.org/en/conversations/on-care-as-practice-a-conversation-with-elke-krasny

dant"—one may wear the scarf that identifies the wearer as an educator.[261] On the *d13* website, numerous individuals were listed, including Chus Martínez as a department head, agent, and member of the core group; eight other people were described as agents of the core group; ten more were only agents; there were three personal assistants to CCB, eleven advisors, Dr Christine Litz as project manager, a large number of curatorial assistants, a fairly large group of people responsible for dealing with the press, and then again a head of "Vielleicht Vermittlung und Andere Programme" (Maybe Education and Public Programs)—Julia Moritz. (Detailed research is needed to examine these very complex internal relationships.)[262]

The figure to whom CCB referred as an authority to justify herself was— amazingly, considering that she described herself as a feminist—Harald Szeemann. Honi soit qui mal y pense. (See *The Logbook*.) The fact that the hierarchy is obscure does not cause it to disappear but makes everything all the more impenetrable and nebulous. In *The Logbook*, she staged her relationship with Szeemann and his partner as an act of consecration, as indirectly conferring authority on her. She positioned herself in relation to an absent, great Other, one might say, and despite all the parading of a variety of personal relationships and a rather naively presented account of complex issues, she was clearly engaging in a power strategy when she announced to Rein Wolfs—as he himself told me—that she would under no circumstances show any artist whose work he had previously exhibited in the Fridericianum.

CCB's idea of her documenta non-concept was presented in condensed form in the so-called *Brain*, which Hanno Rauterberg described as follows in *Die Zeit*:

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261 ——— See http://d13.documenta.de/de/#/research/research/view/a-lesson-in-the-possibilities-of-a-scarf-or-how-to-be-an-art-project-attendant, accessed 30 September 2016.

262 ——— Julia Moritz in an e-mail to Dorothee Richter of 3 October 2016:
dear dorothee,
yes that's how it was – surreal administration and deliberate confusion as a concept :)
chus was co-director alongside ccb, of everything, and called this "head of department" despite it embracing different areas, deliberately absurd then there were, as always, the four departments: communication, publication, education and exhibition, and I headed the education department, with the flowery title of director of Vielleicht Vermittlung und Andere Programme (Maybe Education and Public Programs), though we "real" heads of departments were happy to forgo that bureaucratic addition
hope this helps ...
best, julia

There are the pastose pictures of vases by the painter Giorgio Morandi, in gold frames. There are stone figures, the Bactrian Princesses, 4,000 years old, from what is now northern Afghanistan. There is also a postcard-sized metal panel with knobs, a switch devised by the computer pioneer Konrad Zuse. And so it goes merrily on, a whole collection of fragile, damaged old things, and as if that were not enough – and lest we should get bored with this exercise in disconnected thinking – *he* is there too: Adolf Hitler, both as a photograph and in the form of a fluffy bath towel with the embroidered initials AH. Right next to it is a perfume bottle that once belonged to Eva Braun. You would only have to open the glass case to be able to smell what Hitler smelled.

Someone who did precisely this was the photographer Lee Miller, who came to Germany in the 1940s as a war reporter: she did not do it by opening a glass case, she penetrated the Führer's Munich apartment, had a good look round and finally had a bath; it was the night before Hitler killed himself. Miller photographed herself like that, sitting in the bathtub. That is how we see her now, in the *Brain*.[263]

I cannot enter into all the interrelationships or narratives suggested by the objects that were put on show here. But Miller's photographs, occupying this position—the central position in the exhibition's central building—are fraught with meaning. Miller's photographs demystify: they show a very commonplace bathroom, and clearly a bathroom that was easy to commandeer; it is bourgeois and very ordinary. Hitler's portrait, in a small format, stands on the rim of the bath, propped against the wall, and a typical, unremarkable small sculpture stands on a table on the right. Miller's appropriation of the bathroom has something anarchical about it; her boots and clothes have been carelessly thrown down, and the floor in front of the bathtub is dirty. The manner of the appropriation is undramatic. But the photographs are shown together with the towel with the initials AH and the perfume bottle, and the demystification is in danger of being turned into its opposite. Is this supposed to show me banality, the banality of evil? But what does this signify in the context of the placing of pictures, old statues, stones, and digital replicas of them, all on the same level? In CCB's text *On the Destruction of Art – Conflict and Art, or Trauma and the Art of Healing*, even the title is a jumble of disparate things. She did give a brief analysis of Miller's photograph, but she did not explain the precise curatorial idea—what exactly the combination of different objects and images and the arrangement of them in the room was supposed to

263 ———— Hanno Rauterberg, "Lost in Kassel," *DIE ZEIT*, 6 June 2012, accessed 30 September 2016, http://www.zeit.de/2012/24/Kunst-documenta/seite-2.

suggest in terms of a narrative or evocation.[264] The question she posed in relation to the objects is in fact what I quote here from an interview: "These objects [Eva Braun's perfume bottle and other things] stolen for so many years, are there now. I am always playing games on different levels. And one level is: Would the German government ask for restitution? Because as you know, questions of restitution […] pop up all the time nowadays."[265] Once again, everything is thrown into the great levelling machine and falls at our feet like vomit: the restitution of artworks and objects that are the property of Jews and are to be returned is equated with Hitler's bath towel or thermometer. Personal belongings of Jews murdered in the Shoah, which can be seen in Jewish museums or at Yad Vashem, are equated with bath towels or perfume bottles belonging to some Nazis—the latter I have no wish to remember as people. The critical reassessment of National Socialism has involved, and still involves, understanding it structurally as a social and political system; remembering millions of people who were murdered involves preserving mementos of them, remembering each one individually as a person and telling their personal story. Here, I agree with Hanno Rauterberg (for once), who aptly comments: "Less weight is given to logical thinking, thinking in terms of cause and effect. Two paintings by Dalí are forced into juxtaposition with an experimental apparatus for DNA research, for all the world as though the brave new world of breeding humans were just an innocent matter of aesthetics. One might end up thinking that violence, war or the Holocaust are also somehow simply natural events occurring without a cause. If there are no longer any clearly defined subjects, then there is no one who bears responsibility. Animism is very good at letting everyone off the hook."[266]

I must reiterate that this subject construction ends up in staging the role of a female curator as compatible with conservative connotations, welcoming, naïve, uninformed, not too sharp, taking up power in a hidden way. The discussed gestures position her as a meta-artist, a staging in which the celebrity status as such is one of the most important messages. One could argue that at least partly critical artworks were pacified in their (in some cases) much more radical commentary on contemporary societies. With the invitation of a Black curator, Okwui Enwezor, for *Documenta 11*, and an artist group from Jakarta, ruangrupa, for *documenta fifteen*, it

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264 ———— Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, "On the Destruction of Art – or Conflict and Art, or Trauma and the Art of Healing," in *100 Notes—100 Thoughts*, no. 40 (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 282–92; 286.

265 ———— "In Conversation with Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Tobias Haberl," in *Das Logbuch/The Logbook*, ed. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 288.

266 ———— Rauterberg, "Lost in Kassel."

becomes clear that a reconfiguring of "the Other", of the South and the North is staged; why this is so and what this means exactly will be discussed in the following paragraphs (see chapter 10 Curatorial Commons? A Paradigm Shift).

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Brad Pitt, *dOCUMENTA (13)*, 2012

ruangrupa, *documenta fifteen*, 2022

5. Neo-Colonialism: Peripheries and Centres—Thinking the Contemporary from an Economic Perspective

The abovementioned battleground shows the ideological side of a fight for economic dominance. *Documenta 14* in particular, with its expanded publication part, discussed the relationship between cultural production and economic struggles. With the theoretical framework of *South as a State of Mind*, Quinn Latimer and Adam Szymczyk proposed overcoming the dichotomy of Centre–Periphery. I will try to explain, in the following argument, why I am using it nonetheless as a framework for this discussion of curatorial theory and practice.[267] In the introduction to the fourth issue of *South as a State of Mind*, Latimer and Szymczyk remark: "Over the past year, we have repeatedly found ourselves reaching for books and texts about violence. Perhaps with the urge to understand that which swells like waves around us, threatening to take us under in all its manifold, rising forms: economic violence, linguistic violence, nationalistic violence, environmental violence, gender and racial violence. In this fourth and final issue of the documenta 14 journal *South as a State of Mind*, it seemed necessary to name it, finally, as one of the structuring devices of our world."[268] In the issue of *OnCurating*, titled "Centres/Peripheries—Complex Constellations," we started to think about the structural violence that is embedded in these relations and connections. "Structural violence" is a term coined by Norwegian sociologist, mathematician, and founder of peace and conflict studies Johan Galtung to describe the difference in access to all kinds of possibilities and goods like unpolluted air, clean water, medical service, education, nourishment, transport, etc., for different parts of a population.[269] With this analytical method, the violence that is embedded in structural relations is easily uncovered. So, it becomes obvious that violent relations are manifold and that they cover around the world different societies internally and the relations between them. I must emphasise here (again) that, from a Marxist standpoint, economic relations are fundamental to any cultural manifestation, which are in many ways related to the economic basis. And just as a reminder, what Marx has called superstructure was later discussed using the terms Ideological Superstructures by Louis Althusser and hegemony by Antonio Gramsci. For Adorno, mass media and cultural industry were considered a mass deception, as Gerald Raunig summarises: "The first component of the concept of culture industry, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, is

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267 ——— See also Ronald Kolb, Camille Regli, Dorothee Richter, *Introduction to Centres/Peripheries—Complex Constellations*, *OnCurating* 41 (June 2019), http://www.on-curating.org/issue-41-reader/centres-peripheries-complex-constellations.html#n9.

268 ——— Quinn Latimer and Adam Szymczyk, *South as a State of Mind* 4 (Fall/Winter 2017), accessed 28 May 2019, https://www.documenta14.de/en/south/.

269 ——— Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969).

that it totalizes its audience, exposing this audience to a permanently repeated, yet ever unfulfilled promise: 'The culture industry perpetually cheats its consumers of what it perpetually promises.'[270] However, culture also has the power to show these relations, and to question a given society, which means in this sense also always "the truth" about production, relations of production processes, and economics. Or, in other words, the concept of hegemony makes it thinkable that counter-hegemony is also possible; here, Oliver Marchart's comparison of cultural positions to a battleground with trenches shows the complicated manoeuvres of cultural dominance and cultural subversion.

At the present moment, centres and peripheries have multiplied and with them oppressive and productive relations. Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein's discussion on *Race, Nation, Class, Ambiguous Identities*[271] is still extremely relevant for understanding these constellations, especially the renewed racism that threatens to undermine and overcome (more or less) democratic systems. The concept developed by Wallerstein, the world-eco system, is comprised of the centre, the half periphery, and the periphery. Of course, I cannot summarise Wallerstein's extensive, decades-long work and his series of substantial publications here, but it is necessary to start to think about the relation of any ideological uttering based on complicated economic relations. Liberalism and globally acting capitalism have developed historically in concentric circles including more and more regions (developing and destroying nations along the way). Instead of leading to more equal rights and resources worldwide, they have developed complex systems of suppression. Only through the over-exploitation of the Global South can some of the wage earners of the Global North achieve relative prosperity. But even in the "North," only a few profit from the improvements, while at the same time in the "South" some parts of the population may also benefit. And historically, there have been different centres (with their specific peripheries) that have acted independently for longer periods, like China, for example.

Following Balibar and Wallerstein, the economic circle in a capitalist system develops in phases of expansion, boom, recession, and depression; according to the present state, this system sometimes needs a large workforce, but it also has to get rid of paid workforces all of a sudden—not to mention whole areas of societal production that are not supposed to be paid at all in capitalism like care work (reproductive work), work for the commons, work for NGOs/associations, and so forth. So, on the one hand

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270 ———— Gerald Raunig, "Creative Industries as Mass Deception," *Transversal Texts* (January 2007), accessed 28 May 2019, http://eipcp.net/transversal/0207/raunig/en.

271 ———— Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class, Ambiguous Identities* (London, New York: Verso, 1991).

different groups of the subalterns of the periphery, the poorly paid work-
ers in the capitalist centres and the well-paid workers are differently pro-
nounced and pursue different foci, plus the system of ideologically racist,
sexist, and national divisions helps to keep them in check—and apart,
always being afraid of other groups that could supposedly threaten their
income and make their living conditions worse. Explaining why univer-
salism and racism go so well together, Wallerstein describes the situation
as follows: "A capitalist system that is expanding (which is half the time)
needs all the labour-power it can find, since this labour is producing the
goods through which more capital is produced, realized and accumu-
lated. Ejection out of the system is pointless. But if one wants to maximize
the accumulation of capital, it is necessary simultaneously to minimize
the costs of production (hence the costs of labour-power) and minimize
the costs of political disruption (hence minimize—not eliminate, because
one cannot eliminate—the protest of the labour force.) Racism is the
magic formula that reconciles these objectives."[272]

The systems of racism, sexism, class division, and nationalism establish and
enforce these conditions. One obvious state of the neoliberal situation of
today is that all working conditions (in the centres, the half periphery, and
the periphery) have become more and more unstable and insecure, a situ-
ation I am sure every reader of these lines is sharply aware of. Katja Kobolt
researches the relationship between art and migration, and especially
how "peripheral artists" are presented in the centres.[273] Of course, this
argument can be transferred to curators; that is why curatorial pro-
grammes are situated in these centres. Kobolt states that peripheral art-
ists have to travel to the centre to build an international career, and she
argues that peripheral artists are as a result similar to migrants, as they
have to play a role of mimicry (Homi Bhabha); they and their work has to
be a site of double articulation "belonging to the periphery but acquainted
with and playing by the rules of the centre."[274] Kobolt continues:

> Furthermore, 'artist' and 'migrant', when understood as cultural
> signs, are believed to share a common structure: both are believed to
> be translational and transnational. Both artist (here not only periph-
> eral artist) and migrant embody the capacity of translating personal,
> social, and political experience, and both artist and migrant are

272 ———— Immanuel Wallerstein, "Ideological Tensions of Capitalism," in *Race,
Nation, Class, Ambiguous Identities*, 33.

273 ———— Katja Kobolt, "Art and Migration – The Troubled Relations between the
Centre and the Periphery," in *Living on a Border*, eds. Zdravković, Lana
and Jelisavljević, Nenad (Ljubljana: Kitch – Institute of Art Production,
2008), 13-19. See http://www.kitch.si/livingonaborder/node/41.

274 ———— Ibid.

believed to function in a way which transcends national borders. In the contemporary art system an artist (especially a peripheral artist) who doesn't to a large extent represent qualities of a migrant - heteroglossia, flexibility, mobility, the ability to translate local to global and (important!) nevertheless represent (cultural, ethnic, in some instances also national) difference is not likely to be interesting for the international art market.[275]

Having said that, one could, of course, never claim that art or curating as such would be the means to overcome racism, sexism, class division, and nationalism. On the contrary, othering is still part of the system in more or less subtle way. "Other" artists and curators, those who do not conform to the norm of the white heteronormative male, are then well placed in the niche of art. There, they are sometimes admired like exotic objects. Nevertheless, art and culture have the possibility to produce unseen aspects, to reveal and to comment, and they are able to act to a certain extent as a counter-hegemony or, on the other hand—as Adorno and Horkheimer have unmasked—cultural industry, art, and culture are able to confuse and affectively involve people in false ideas about their conditions. Of course, this is a fragile process, and one has to discuss different aspects of curatorial projects. The very obvious racism of former times has now been replaced by more subtle fixations, as artist and curator and writer Olu Oguibe explains:

> At the turn of the twenty-first century, the struggle that non-Western contemporary artists face on the global stage is not Western resistance to difference, as might have been the case in decades past; their most formidable obstacle is Western obsession with an insistence on difference. As some have already pointed out, it is not that any would want to disavow difference, for we are all different one way or another, after all. The point is that this fact of being ought not constitute the crippling predicament that it does for all who have no definite ancestry in Europe.[276]

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275 ——— Ibid.

276 ——— Olu Oguibe, *The Culture Game* (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), xiv–xv. See also Anthony Downey, "Critical Imperatives: Notes on Contemporary Art Criticism and African Cultural Production," *Wasafiri* 21, no. 1 (March 2006): 39-48, here cited from Leon Wainwright, "Art (School) Education and Art History," in *Beyond Cultural Diversity: The Case for Creativity*, ed. Richard Appignanesi (London: Third Text Publications, 2010) 98, see: https://www.academia.edu/17724209/Wainwright_Leon_2010_Art_school_education_and_art_history_In_Appignanesi_Richard_ed_Beyond_Cultural_Diversity_the_Case_for_Creativity_London_Third_Text_Publications_pp_93_103.

In other words, artists and curators are reduced in an essentialist way to their non-European background or, as Leon Wainwright sees it, an instance in difference, a reductive labelling of a practice. Diversity remains on a superficial level; de-colonising would mean restructuring all parts of an institution, beyond an opportunistic inclusion of artists and curators who are situated as Others. This would have to include other and additional societal groups on the boards, on the staff, as permanent curators, etc.

As there are artists and curators worldwide who are thinking about these complex situations at a time when right-wing propaganda is on the rise, we wanted to show and discuss some of these artistic and curatorial projects here and make readers aware of their shared interests.

This results in a double movement in the process of writing, not only to examine the subject of curating using certain methods of discourse analysis, but also to question certain forms of reflection in terms of their suitability for the investigation and description of ephemeral curatorial practices. For my discussion here, this approach is especially valid because I see curatorial theory as fundamentally intertwined with its practice, and therefore I will also refer to different curatorial projects as knowledge-producing insofar as they interpellate subjects of address. In addition, one cannot mention this often enough in our context, knowledge production is discussed here in the light of discourse formations, as something produced through a series of validation processes, which exist in a network of power relations and their platforms. And most people reading these lines are involved in these processes. The following two examples will show some of the complicated relationships between peripheries and centres.

5.1 Christoph Büchel: *Simply Botiful*, Exposing the Position of Viewers?

This project is remarkable in that it happened in the midst of one of (at that time) most important financial centres of the Western world, the city of London, and that it was enabled and paid for by one of the biggest galleries in the world, Hauser & Wirth. Christoph Büchel tends to produce extremely large environments, which often generate or make visible a societal conflict. Often these installations have a spectacular side. In this installation, *Simply Botiful*, from October 2006 to March 2007, he played on an emotional register, only to then to mock it.[277] The well-to-do audience had to ask for directions through a maze-like section of run-down streets in London's East End to find the utterly inconspicuous entrance to the exhibition. Once inside, visitors stepped into a building that had adopted the look of a hastily abandoned refugee camp or a derelict hotel. Beds were squeezed into the hallway, the rooms showed motorcycles, any form of junk, trash, plastic pieces. This way through (their itinerary) ended on a balcony overlooking a huge warehouse filled with pieces of scrap, haphazardly stacked old refrigerators, and piled up containers, with street noises in the background. This setting was only loosely closed off from the shabby East End streets outside. Other visitors and I paused for a moment, unsure whether this belonged to the production or to the surrounding flea market stalls selling precisely the same kind of discarded objects as those displayed. The open-air space in the backyard was filled with containers and junk. It looked like a waste dump, where the more valuable materials are sorted out and stacked. The containers seemed to be inhabited, others just abandoned, the beds unmade, porn magazines were laying around or were pinned to the walls. However, the space could be entered and "explored," and word spread among visitors that secret passageways and subterranean caves could be discovered. After some searching, we found an entrance: In groups of three, visitors clambered through claustrophobic burrows and excavations to discover a giant earthen mound with a protruding tusk. To get there, one was forced to crawl on hand and knees in the narrow tunnel; no position of a distanced wandering eye was possible. So far so good. Diedrich Diederichsen's dictum, "Participation is the new spectacle," comes to mind.[278]

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[277] ——— Christoph Büchel, *Simply Botiful*, 11 October 2006 – 18 March 2007, Hauser & Wirth Coppermill, London.

[278] ——— Diedrich Diederichsen, *Partizipation ist das neue Spektakel* [Participation is the New Spectacle], unpublished lecture delivered at the MAS Curating, Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK), 2008.

Christoph Büchel, *Simply Botiful*, 11 October 2006 – 18 March 2007,
Hauser & Wirth Coppermill, London

After this somewhat nightmarish and shaky experience, the visitors stepped out of the run-down hotel again, expecting to return to the normality of educated, well-informed bourgeois life, simply counting this as an interesting experience. However, on stepping back out into the shabby East End streets, reality shifted all at once: visitors suddenly saw themselves as intruders in the nightmare of these parallel worlds, of fragmented everyday lives on the edge, through entering an impoverished part of London amid a heart-rending flea market. This induced a breakdown of categories: what was staged and what was real? Which of these worlds was real, and who was taking notice of these laughably styled visitors in these surroundings? Who could step out of the nightmare and who couldn't? The reality of the art audience was both rebuffed and made relative, through an outing into a theatrical world on the one hand, and a real yet alien lifeworld (actually quite similar in appearance) on the other. The juxtaposition challenged the notion of reality and enabled this reality to be seen as a spectacle of structural violence in which the visitor is enclosed and part of seeing himself or herself as part of a privileged group and the surrounding buyers and sellers as underprivileged people with migrant backgrounds.

Some afterthoughts: it is a somehow dramatic situation that this tremendous and frightful, shocking, and eye-opening art installation was paid for by one of the biggest galleries worldwide. In the end, the big galleries are the venues where art is made into profit. And one might suspect that an artistic work like Büchel's is realised more for the reputation of the gallery than the surplus when selling it; one of Büchel's works was actually sold to the Flick Collection. To refresh your memory: there were intense discussions when the Flick Collection was invited to the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum in Berlin by the state authorities. Artists protested that to conserve and maintain such a collection, an enormous amount of tax money would be needed, which, in light of Flick's reluctance to pay into the slave workers fund in Germany (German Forced Labour Compensation Programme), seemed to be problematic.

After months of protests, big posters on lorries that circled the Parliament like "free entrance for slave workers," "tax evaders show your treasures," etc.,[279] and extensive media coverage, Flick at last paid into the fund. Flick actually bought an installation by Christoph Büchel, *Training Ground for Training Ground for Democracy* (2007, dimensions variable). The trash-like installation is described on the museum's website as follows: "To mark 20

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[279] ——— See also detailed descriptions of the media campaign: Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock, "Who Needs Art, We Need Potatoes," in Dorothee Richter, Rein Wolfs, "Institution as Medium. Curating as Institutional Critique? Part 1," *OnCurating* 8 (2014), https://on-curating.org/issue-8-reader/who-needs-art-we-need-potatoes.html#.Yn1BNcZCTkI.

Protest against Flick Collection

years of the Hamburger Bahnhof, which was inaugurated on 1 November 1996 as a further major branch of the Nationalgalerie, Christoph Büchel's installation 'Training Ground for Training Ground for Democracy' is on view in the main hall. The work is part of the generous donations by Friedrich Christian Flick to the Nationalgalerie and is being shown here for the first time since its creation in 2007 at Art Basel Miami Beach."[280] In the following very lively and colourful description by art critic and author Thomas Micchelli,[281] the contradictions (and a legal battle) between Christoph Büchel and the museum can be understood. Under specific circumstances, the project could enfold political effectiveness which it is unable to achieve under others:

> In order to find the installation you must wend your way through the museum's second floor galleries until you reach a barely noticeable stairway at the far end of a darkened room. As you walk down the stairs, all you can see is a corrugated steel wall with rust stains bleeding through its powder-blue paint job, and a bright red exit sign. You think, oh, I'm heading out the fire exit. I'm lost. You're not. The corrugated steel is the back end of one of two shipping containers, one atop the other, that you have to navigate around before you can find the tarps hiding the exhibition from view.
> The tarps are a bright, incongruously cheerful yellow stretched tight across gunmetal-gray stanchions. They don't reach the floor, and they rise only about two feet above eye level, so they don't cover much. You can easily crouch down to slip your head underneath or

280 ——— See website of Hamburger Bahnhof: https://www.smb.museum/en/exhibitions/detail/?tx_smb_pi1%5Bexhibition%5D=1292&cHash=6d-fa843f492bcaa2575a5cd09151abf3, accessed 1 August 2020.

281 ——— Thomas Micchelli, "Christoph Buchel, Training Ground for Democracy: Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, Massachusetts, Exhibition canceled," *The Brooklyn Rail*, September 2007, accessed 1 August 2020, https://brooklynrail.org/2007/09/art-seen/buchel.

peek through the slits between the vinyl sheets. Beyond the passage-way formed by the tarps, the monumental elements of the installa-tion rise all around you, plain as day—the cinderblock walls, the two-story house, the guard tower, the trailers, the carnival ride, all compacted together in a claustrophobic, politically surreal borough of hell, George Orwell by way of David Lynch. The finished version, according to the artist's legal papers as quoted in the *Los Angeles Times*, was to include "role-play for its visitors … in relation to the collective project called 'democracy': training to be an immigrant, training to vote, protest, and revolt … training to be interrogated and detained."

The room was deathly still; there was no role-playing or even the sound of a footfall, and the Sunday afternoon daylight felt much too bright for the assembly's internal gloom. Nevertheless, my teenage son and I, gazing at Büchel's incomplete "compilation of materials," were awestruck. I had read Randy Kennedy's *Times* article and was suitably skeptical of what we might find, half-expecting to dismiss it as hype. But even cloaked and abandoned, the dense physicality of the materials energized the vast space and wielded a startling, oppressive power. I was musing aloud about where Büchel might have hung the airplane (bomb-damaged and burned, as per his specifications), and my son was indiscreetly peering beneath one of the yellow tarps when we got busted. A little man in a Red-Sox-red MASS MoCA baseball cap materialized out of nowhere and barked at us that we couldn't look at what we were looking at. It was under litigation. Shooting deeply suspicious glances at my notebook, he jerked his oversized walkie-talkie in the direction of the room hold-ing *Made at MASS MoCA* and literally escorted us through the yel-low-draped passageway until we got there.

Both my son and I had the same reaction: the inexplicable appear-ance of the guard revealed that we were being heard, watched, soni-cally tracked—who knows?—without our knowledge. We were hus-tled away for a security infraction that consisted of looking at some-thing we weren't supposed to see, that we were supposed to pretend wasn't there. The subliminal dread and paranoia induced by the shrouded installation had burst floridly to life.[282]

The version of the installation shown at Hamburger Bahnhof seems to be strangely tame, even if the accompanying text refers to the political situa-tion:

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[282]   Ibid.

Coinciding with the presidential elections in the USA on 8 November 2016, the installation raises questions about the running and lawfulness of democratic elections and about access to the ballot. Its siting of a polling station in a dystopian kindergarten is part of an interrogation of political, military, legal and cultural scenarios in American society that the artist has been pursuing for many years. The voting booths in the interior of the container, which is surrounded by fencing and fitted with surveillance cameras, make reference to the US election campaign of 2000, from which George W. Bush emerged as President by a very narrow margin [...]."[283]

But, of course, since the political situation referenced was in the past and in another country, the disturbing explosiveness was lost.

Christoph Büchel, *Training Ground for Training Ground for Democracy,* Hamburger Bahnhof – Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart

[283] ——— See https://www.smb.museum/en/exhibitions/detail/die-sammlungen-the-collections-les-collections-christoph-buechel/, accessed 1 June 2021.

5.2 Learning from Dhaka—Thoughts on Neo-Colonial Perspectives

This section is inspired by our research on peripheries and centres. Some of these thoughts were triggered by the invitation to the Dhaka Critical Writing Ensemble, which was organised by Katya Garcia Anton and Antonio Cataldo, as part of the Dhaka Art Summit.[284] The leading question was what contemporary art, with its implicit Western framework, does in a mega city of the Global South. The article was considered controversial by the curators and curatorial assistants of the Dhaka Art Summit. My starting point was my lack of understanding of cultural, political, and social references, in a way I moved through the city like a female Caspar Hauser.

Seeing
The phrase "I know that I know nothing" came to my mind when we all met in Dhaka for the Critical Writing Ensembles.[285] I understood that I had a lot to learn from this wonderful, colourful, crowded city. On my way to the hotel, I saw a lot of people on the streets, all sorts of cars, rickshaws, and businesses. I saw exquisite displays of fruits in pyramid forms. I saw illuminated shops filled with sparkling lamps and lights. I saw graciously written letters, which I could not decipher, contrasted with well-known advertisements. Nice people stared at me. A small young woman who was in charge of cleaning the bathroom of the exhibition spaces wanted to take a photo with me. I felt like a white elephant.
I saw interesting exhibitions in the city, met old friends, and made new ones. As colleagues, we talked a lot about what decolonisation in the arts, in art history, and in curating might be. We saw all sorts of existing power relations, old ones and new ones, local ones and depressingly global ones. I read in the local newspaper about a person who had died of injuries caused by a fire because he had used a small ceresin oven to cook and sell something but had been ordered by a policeman to go away;[286] the police-

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[284] ——— The article was published in a slightly different version: Dorothee Richter, "Learning from Dhaka" in Critical Writing Ensembles (Katya Garcia-Anton with Antonio Cataldo, eds.), Mousse Editor at largelishing: Milan, 2016, 234–247.

[285] ——— I am grateful for the discussion of this text with Rohit Jain, Nkule Mabaso, Adaobi Udobi, Mike Sperlinger, Nabil Ahmed, and Katya Garcia Anton.

[286] ——— To add some more information on LGBT rights in Bangladesh as pro-
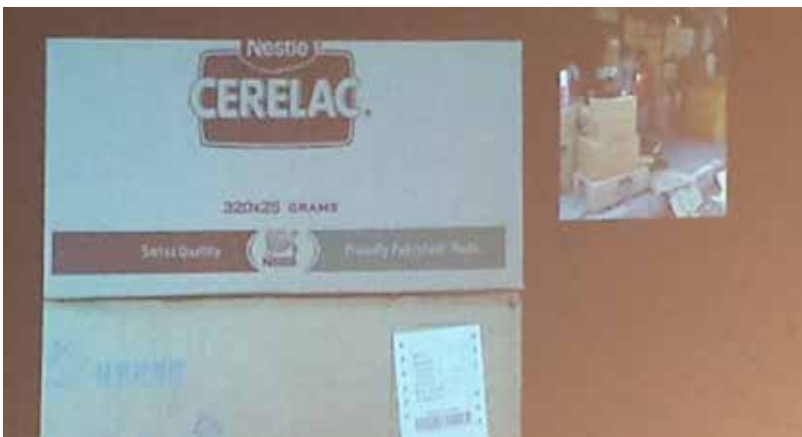
Nestle CERELAC package, "Swiss Quality – Proudly Pakistani Made"

man had kicked the oven, which had caused the ceresin to explode over the man, who later died in hospital. I also heard about the death of a professor, living openly as a homosexual. I was quite insecure about how to write about a society I do not know—simply describing impressions can be totally misleading. As Ananya Roy argues, it is necessary to change and transform the ways in which the cities of the Global South are studied and represented. She describes how the film *Slumdog Millionaire* created a new narrative of a touristic vision of slums, a frozen essentialist image. "*Slumdog Millionaire* can be read as poverty pornography. It can also be read as a metonym, a way of designating the megacity that is Mumbai."[287] She contrasts this narrative with another perspective, following the notion of the subaltern by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, which projects specific agency not connected to a specific identity but to the subaltern as political (and economic) agency: "In my earlier work, I have argued that the study of the twenty-first-century metropolis requires new geographies of theory. Subaltern urbanism is indeed one such approach. It is a vital and even radical challenge to apocalyptic and dystopian narratives of the megacity. However, subaltern urbanism tends to remain bound to the study of spaces of poverty, of essential forms of popular agency, of the hab-

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vided by Wikipedia: not many rights are recognised, but—and this contradicts a strict ordering of binary sexuality in a Western sense—a third sex is officially acknowledged. So, as a preliminary conclusion, it is obvious that the apparatus of sexuality has different layers which are not congruent with a Western binary ordering; quoting from Wikipedia: "In Bangladesh same-sex sexual or romantic activities are not respected, with LGBT people facing discrimination, verbal and physical abuse, and unique legal and social challenges. Same-sex sexual activity, whether in public or private, is illegal and punishable with fines and up to life imprisonment. Consequently, Bangladesh does not recognize a marriage, civil union or domestic partnership between adults of the same sex. [...] In January 2014, Bangladesh's first LGBT magazine was published. The magazine's name is *Roopbaan*, a Bengali folk character who represents the power of love.[15] At the magazine's launch, British High Commissioner Robert Gibson and Barrister Sara Hossain were present to hear the speakers. The magazine is being printed in Bangla and is accepting submissions from volunteers. The editor said the main goal of the magazine is to promote love.
Since 2014, every year at the beginning of the Bengali new year on 14 April a Pride event called Rainbow Rally had been organised in Dhaka. After threats, the 2016 event had to be cancelled. On April 25, 2016 Xulhaz Mannan, one of the founders of *Roopbaan* and organiser of the Rainbow Rally, was killed in his apartment together with a friend.[16]" See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Bangladesh, accessed 23 September 2016.

287 ——— Ananya Roy, "Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35, no. 2 (March 2011): 223-38. I am grateful to Rohit Jain for making me aware of this article.

itus of the dispossessed, of the entrepreneurialism of self-organizing economies. I am interested in a set of theoretical projects that disrupt subaltern urbanism and thus break with ontological and topological understandings of subalternity."[288] For this analysis, I want to refer to a strong argument that was delivered by Johan Hartle in a symposium we organised during Manifesta (and which we used to criticise the naïve notion of 'work' proposed by Manifesta 11 in Zurich):[289] To start from empirical effects means to legitimate social conditions implicitly, and this could be described as a theoretical notion of fetishism, Hartle constituted.[290] And he quotes Bertolt Brecht, who problematised a photographic depiction of social situations of a factory of Krupp Werke. To translate it roughly, Brecht explains that a photograph does not say anything about the instituted factory. The reification of human relations is not shown in this way; it is held back by the image of the factory. The production of "truth" needs something that is built up, something artificial, to reveal the social relationships.

At the Dhaka Art Summit, I saw a video about the living conditions of a neighbourhood that had been re-localised to another site near the Airport of Chittagong. Small naked children were carrying car tyres, not for fun, but to sell them. I saw the exhibition of thirteen artists from Bangladesh, curated by Daniel Baumann.[291] One of them, Rasel Chowdhury, had been awarded the Samdani Art Award: "His body of work deals with unplanned desperate urbanization, the dying River Buriganga, the lost city of Sonargaon, the Mega City of Dhaka, and newly transformed spaces around Bangladesh railroads to explore the change of the environment, unplanned urban structures and new form of landscapes."[292] I saw us—curators, theoreticians, and professors from the US and Europe—the usual suspects at major art events, walking through the overcrowded streets of Dhaka. I saw children sorting rubbish in the streets. I became acutely aware that we are globally connected in economic ways more deeply than I could ever have imagined, and how dependent the economy of the West is on this exploitative relationship.

288 ——— Ibid.

289 ——— See Tanja Trampe, Dorothee Richter, Eleonora Stassi, eds., *Work, Migration, Memes, Personal Geopolitics*, *OnCurating* 30 (June 2016).

290 ——— Johan Hartle, "Arbeit denken, zeigen, abschaffen," Fragen an die Manifesta 11 in Zurich, talk delivered at the Symposium *Work, Migration, Personal Geopolitics*, Zurich University of the Arts, 8 September 2016.

291 ——— At that time, Daniel Baumann was the director of Kunsthalle Zürich; the exhibition and parts of the Dhaka Critical Writing Ensemble were supported by Pro Helvetia.

292 ——— See Afsana Khannom Asha, "Dhaka Art Summit 2016 ends today, in the independent Dhakalive," *The Independent*, 8 February 2016, accessed 21 February 2016, http://www.theindependentbd.com/arcprint/details/33227/2016-02-08.

In the midst of the bunch of writers, artists, and curators, I remembered the feeling Lacan describes when he recognises himself as "being seen" by a box of sardines on a fishing trip. He then suddenly realises that he, when seen from the outside, is somehow weird in the picture, out of place, being a young bourgeois student in the midst of the fishermen on a boat. The gaze captured him. He encountered being a split subject, a subject that is not situated in the central point of a central perspective; instead, he recognises that he is being registered from the outside.[293] This moment of seeing myself in a picture, in a context that I hardly understand, stayed with me. I remember the argument made by Andrea Fraser claiming that the art market is strongest in countries with the biggest gap in income between the super-rich and the very poor. She explores this using the GINI Index, Income Disparity since World War II in many different countries.[294] I wondered what kind of art a society needs when it is struggling to provide basic services to its community, unpolluted air and water, a challenge faced by so many countries around the world within and beyond the Western Hemisphere. I wondered what decolonising art might mean. In what way should art institutions be revisited, reorganised? In what ways could cultural production in different media and with other protocols be developed and shown—and would showing be the format? How could a chain of equivalence be realised, between art and politics, art and social issues?[295] During a bus tour (stuck in traffic for two hours to go 7km), Shukla Sawant asked what would a concept of modernity mean in an Indian context if one took into consideration the Indian tradition of mandalas as an already existing version of abstraction—instead of positioning Western art as the great revelation? I wonder what a show of contemporary art will do in Bangladesh's society of today.

When I was back home, Shukla wrote to me that the university where she works (1,700km and a 2.5-hour flight away from Dhaka, in Delhi, India) is in turmoil: "JNU [Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi] is going through a major crisis, and we have been on protest regarding police action against our students and arrest of the student union leader for organising an event that was deemed 'seditious' by the government. You may have heard of it by now."[296] But (a nine-hour flight away from Delhi and twelve-hour

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293 ——— Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Penguin, 1994).

294 ——— Andrea Fraser, "L'1 %, c'est moi," *Texte zur Kunst* 83 (September 2011): 119.

295 ——— "Chains of equivalence" is a notion put forward by Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau; it means to formulate solidarity for a specific cause. See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (New York: Verso, 1985).

296 ——— Shukla Sawant in an email to Dorothee Richter, February 2016.

flight away from Dhaka) I hadn't heard about it; the information I got, if at all, is vague, so again, I know nothing.

When reading my text, the curatorial assistant of CWE Ruxmini Choudhury disliked that I was mainly pointing out problems and wrote: "In the USA, every six months we hear the news of gun-shooting in schools, we hear of police killing black youth. Just yesterday, I read in an article that Germany has proposed to ban the burka. I read in the news about how a woman was stripped out of her burkini by the French police [...] A few months ago, an Orlando shooter killed 49 people in a gay nightclub. So why highlight the killing of one gay activist? Is it because we are a third world country?" I responded to her that I understood her concerns, but that I was writing against right-wing attitudes and politics in other parts of the world as well, and that we should write against suppression and violence based on so-called "race" issues, on gender-related exclusions and systems wherever we detect them.[297] I confess that to see and write in Dhaka means humbly putting some pieces of a puzzle together and making guesses about relationships and dependencies. This is especially true given that there is today, as Hartle has described, an even greater general crisis of work and the representation and visualisation of work, and therefore of surplus value. Immaterial labour—this important contemporary form of production/consumption worldwide—hides the processes of its formation; it hides the social relations in which it is produced.[298] I am well aware that all glimpses and impressions I have tried to sketch are imbedded in a social hierarchy and global and local social dependencies with great differences in access and power. This is the case, by the way, in Zurich, where the sex workers and Sans Papiers, the artists and cultural producers (whom we interviewed for issue 30 of *OnCurating*) have decidedly different access to health care, education, healthy food, etc., especially in comparison to the white-collar workers in the financial district, even if all of them might be denied the right to vote because they most likely do not have a Swiss passport. In conversations in Zurich while working on the critical issue of *OnCurating*, we argued: "To this day, changes in working processes and migration movements are usually regarded as mutually isolated 'problems'. However, we see the connection between them as a geopolitical reality rooted in political and economic power structures, aspirations to hegemony and the battle for resources, a reality that already began to take shape in the harbingers of neoliberalism. Whereas in the eighteenth century the impoverished working class still found itself directly confronted with a wealthy upper class, today these

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297 ———— See for example: Elke Krasny, Lara Perry, Dorothee Richter, eds., *Curating in Feminist Thought*, *OnCurating* 29 (May 2016).

298 ———— Hartle, "Arbeit denken, zeigen, abschaffen."

lines of conflict traverse the globe horizontally."[299] In this issue, we undertook to enfold notions of "work" and to explore modes of counter-hegemonic actions and cultural production.

As Ananya Roy argues, in megacities like Dhaka, the social fabric of the city could also imply spaces of subaltern urbanism, whose strategies of resistance are not yet defined and would elude simple definitions. As I understand her, spaces of subaltern urbanism would mean developing a utopian horizon.

Writing

Coming to Dhaka as the publisher of *OnCurating*,[300] an independent international journal that focuses on questions around curatorial practice and theory, I was grateful for the opportunity to rethink the options of writing in relation to the arts. I was impressed and overwhelmed by the new approaches to art writing which were presented by my younger colleagues such as Quinn Latimer, Nida Ghouse and Rosalyn D'Mello. When context, personal histories, traces of memory, and cultural inscriptions become a new format for making the personal political, I am all for it. The persistent questions were: What constitutes memory? What constitutes urgency and longing? And what constitutes writing about art?

On the walls of the exhibition he had curated at the Generali Foundation in Vienna, my colleague Helmut Draxler inscribed half ironic slogans that reviewed exhibition history both from a personal perspective and from an engaged political understanding of exhibiting as a formulation in a space of representation. He proposed: "Always historicise, always contextualise and always localise."[301] I felt extremely uneasy with Daniel Baumann's claim that theoretical approaches to art should be avoided, as he stated in a poster at the beginning of the exhibition in Dhaka: "To my surprise, there was no advancing of pretentious discourse of the kind one often meets in similar situations in Europe or North America. No talks about the post-Fordist situation, the need for deconstruction, the era of post-Internet or that thing called Anthropocene—just to name a few."[302] But, I would like to ask, who needs a deconstruction of a certain situation and who doesn't? And—just to be clear about this—there is no way to deal with theory properly; there is an embarking into theory and a lifelong

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299 —————— See editorial notes in *Work, Migration, Memes, Personal Geopolitics*.

300 —————— See: www.on-curating.org.

301 —————— *The Content of Form. The Collection Represented by Helmut Draxler* (2013) [Exhibition], Generali Foundation, Vienna (17 May - 25 August 2013).

302 —————— Daniel Baumann, introduction poster at Dhaka Art Summit, exhibition of Samdani Art Award, February 2016.

obligation to go on reading and discussing, to re-read, to change attitudes, to build up new conglomerations of theory and practices, and to start again. Embarking into theory means that you will never know enough, that you will always remain in the humble situation of a scholar. Dealing with theory means that you will never be satisfied with your practice in any medium whatsoever, an uncanny position one constantly has to negotiate. And in the context of writing about art, I would like to emphasise certain points of departure, relating to issues that other speakers brought up.

I will do this quickly, condensing and describing the particular thoughts that resonated with me in the days in Dhaka. First of all, in writing about unseen exhibitions, Filipa Ramos pointed out a problem that we all—especially researchers and writers on complex arts pieces—have nowadays. It is difficult to define what constructs the memory of an actual artwork or an art exhibition. As a Fluxus researcher I understand this problem. And since the 1960s, this has been the case for most installations and art projects: the projects, the events, the actual encounters are long gone; some relics and some photographs might exist, many artists' descriptions exist, some ephemera exist, posters, invitation cards and a variety of leftovers or scores or weird musical instruments exist, and so on.

I would like to take up an argument from Chapter One about how the discursive formation of art is constituted; it is certainly not a specific object or project, installation or exhibition; often, it is precisely the entire discourse existing in a variety of written, spoken, photographic, object-based media and their institutionalised relations. As argued earlier, this entire media complex is what Roland Barthes described in "Myth Today,"[303] in which the sign systems are connected, creating meaning through their particular constellation. This meaning production is never objective or transhistorical: it operates in a historical moment and environment in a specific way.

And again: this meaning production is most definitely connected to the context into which it is placed. A smashed piano would mean something in 1962 in Germany and something different in 2016 in the same place; any historical and political issue would change the meaning of an artwork or an exhibition. The exhibition and the artwork consist of materiality and of what is considered to be true or false, right or wrong, good art or bad art; it is constituted and consecrated through *discourse*. This discursive formation that we could call art has *very real effects*. The real effects are that some cultural utterances are positioned as "art," while others are not. Some might enter the art market, others are seen to be just "cultural artefacts," just hairstyles, just LP covers, or displays in shops.[304] And from an

303 ———— Barthes, "Myth Today," 109–64.

304 ———— This is why the exhibition by Okwui Enwezor, *The Short Century*, had

historical position, we can simply trace and guess what it might feel like to have an encounter somewhere else and at another time; this must be explored and unfolded.

As asked before: what does it mean to read Indian modernity through a tantric tradition? What does an actual encounter mean in the here and now anyway? "Is it now?" is a consistent, ongoing question in a media-satiated world: is it now that we experience, here, now? Together? I remember the famous image that Freud put forward for the cultural and social traces that are inscribed into our minds subconsciously: he proposed thinking of a *Wunderblock*, a "Mystic Writing Pad," with a sheet of paper and a wax layer, which can be rewritten again and again, but keeps traces of former inscriptions.[305] Analogously, we also keep traces of former acts, and these are part of what we encounter in the now, which means that whatever we conceive as contemporary art might be read differently according to the cultural background into which we are embedded.

Let's get back to art and critical writing about art—which could perhaps happen in digital space but should be reconsidered in order to discuss it locally: art is produced in a complex way through consecration processes, through institutions such as *Kunsthallen*, venues for contemporary art, art academies, art criticism, and through verbal and visual discourses and artefacts. The basic concept of contemporary art is formulated historically through a Western context.

Anyway, to conceive art as a discursive formation, as developed above, I deeply disagree with anybody who claims a universal validity for the arts: "Every empire, however, tells itself and the world that it is unlike all other empires, that its mission is not to plunder and control but to educate and liberate,"[306] as Edward Said has put it.

It is this that Hamid Dabashi expresses vigorously with his outcry, "Fuck

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such a revolutionary impact. It proposes very different kinds of cultural production; not only does it expand the notion of cultural production, but it also calls into question the difference between so-called high and low art, everyday objects and painting, for example. See *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945–1994* (2001-2002) [Exhibition], Museum Villa Stuck, Munich (15 February - 22 April 2001); Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin (18 May - 29 July 2001); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (8 September - 30 December 2001); P.S.1 and Museum of Modern Art, New York (10 February - 5 May 2002).

305 ——— Sigmund Freud, "Ueber den Wunderblock, A Note Upon the 'Mystic Writing-Pad'" (1925), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, Volume XIX*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961).

306 ——— Edward Said, "Blind Imperial Arrogance: Vile Stereotyping of Arabs by the US ensures years of turmoil," *Los Angeles Times*, 20 July 2003.

You Žižek!"[307] He strongly argues against the pretention of an interpretative philosophical supremacy that is often displayed by Western (male) intellectuals—in this case by Žižek, who triggered this debate by his own aggressive wording about a text by Walter Mignolo, who analysed conditions and possibilities of decolonisation. The accusation Dabashi formulates takes aim at the arrogant neglecting of theoreticians on postcolonial questions who actually come from a postcolonial background and whose reference points might not be exclusively informed by the history of Western philosophy. The critique he utters resonates in me from another, feminist perspective: the typical Žižek presentation of a self-centred meta-philosopher and his aggressive conviction of being in the right is problematic; strangely enough, Dabashi answers in a similar tone and vigour, even if his claim might be substantial, he takes over the patriarchal positing of righteous self-importance. Still interested in the notion and possibilities of decolonisation, I turn to Walter Mignolo. Most important in his view is decoloniality's point of origin in the Third World, which connects to "immigrant consciousness" in Western Europe and the US today. "Immigrant consciousness" is located in the routes of dispersion of decolonial and border thinking."[308] He goes on:

> Points of origination and routes of dispersion are key concepts to trace geo-politics of knowing/sensing/believing as well as body-politics of knowing/sensing/understanding. When Frantz Fanon closes his exploration in *Black Skin/White Masks* (1952) with a prayer:
> *Oh my body, make of me always a man who questions!*

And a woman who questions—I take the liberty to add. In this sentence, says Mignolo, Frantz Fanon expressed the basic categories of border epistemology:

> [...] the biographical sensing of the Black body in the Third World, anchoring a politics of knowledge that is both ingrained in the body and in local histories. That is, thinking geo- and body-politically. Now if the point of origination of border thinking/sensing and doing

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307 ———— Rohit Jain brought this interesting text to my attention. Hamid Dabashi, "Fuck you Žižek!," in *Can Non-Europeans Think?* (London: Zed Books, 2015). ZED was a platform for marginalised voices across the globe that was acquired by Bloomsbury; the link to the blog (https://www.zedbooks.net/blog/posts/fuck-you-zizek/) is therefore no longer active.

308 ———— Walter Mignolo, "Geopolitics of Sensing and Knowing: On (De)Coloniality, Border Thinking, and Epistemic Disobedience," September 2011, accessed 31 March 2022, http://eipcp.net/transversal/0112/mignolo/en.

is the Third World, and its routes of dispersion travelled through migrants from the Third to the First World, then border thinking created the conditions to link border epistemology with immigrant consciousness and, consequently, delink from territorial and imperial epistemology grounded on theological (Renaissance) and ecological (Enlightenment) politics of knowledge.[309]

The migration he mentions might mean more and complex forms of going back and forth between countries and continents, forced by and out of free will, in pursuit of work or studies. He describes the situation of the immigrant, and I believe that his proposal for a new understanding of the migrant position may also imply a proposal on how to transfer the idea of decolonising art (institutions):

> Languages that were not apt for rational thinking (either theological or secular) where [sic] considered languages that revealed the inferiority of the human beings speaking them. What could a person that was not born speaking one of the privileged languages and that was not educated in privileged institutions do? Either he or she accepts his or her inferiority or makes an effort to demonstrate that he or she was a human being equal to those who placed him or her as second class. That is, two of the choices are to accept the humiliation of being inferior to those who decided that you are inferior or to assimilate. And to assimilate means that you accepted your inferiority and resigned to playing the game that is not yours, but that has been imposed upon you – or the third option is border thinking and border epistemology.[310]

As I have a German background, it is important to remember that German Jews, who were perfectly assimilated in the 1930s, were not spared at all by the deadly racism of the Nazi regime. Assimilation can be a trap. Mignolo proposes delinking from a dominant narrative as a strategy:

> So once you realize that your inferiority is a fiction created to dominate you, and you do not want to either assimilate or accept in resignation the bad luck of having been born equal to all human beings, but having lost your equality shortly after being born, because of the place you were born, then you delink. Delinking means that you do not accept the options that are available to you.[311]

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309 ——— Ibid.
310 ——— Ibid.
311 ——— Ibid.

Delinking is a concept that resonates a lot with my own experiences being classified as a woman and as being disabled. Analogous to this, delinking from the dominant narrative in art is an important move; it sometimes means turning it around and occupying a derogatory ascription, like being queer, and joining forces with other rejected groupings. One of these strategies might be to take a derogatory notion and put it centre stage—and curating might be the means to do so.

Just to mention it briefly, if there seems to be no alternative to the dominant capitalist system at the moment, there are nevertheless some means of resistance. "So, capital is in fact borderless; that's the problem. On the other hand, capital has to keep borders alive in order for this kind of cross-border trade to happen. So, therefore, the idea of borderlessness has a performative contradiction within it which has to be kept alive,"[312] to quote how Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has formulated this repeatedly performed and acted pressure. Changing the institution from inside has happened in the art field in some respects, as one can read from the *documenta 14* list of contributions and also how Adam Szymczyk handed over responsibilities to queer individuals like Paul B. Preciado, who curated the "Parliament of Bodies" section, and he handed over the curatorship at large to a Black curator, Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung.[313] (And also no wonder that *documenta 14* was heavily attacked by the press and local politicians.)

A conclusion of my above-formulated assumptions would be that art critique is part of a constant reformulating, rereading, and reinterpreting of an artwork: it changes the sense and meaning; it is part of constituting an artwork, together with institutional settings.

Nevertheless, I would totally agree with my younger colleagues that there can be something hidden in an artwork, something that hits you, that strikes and penetrates, that blows your mind, something that shakes your understanding of your own subjectivity. This moment of destabilisation, which is beyond the aesthetic, which is described so artfully by my younger colleagues these days, is the quality of being untamed, of disturbing institutions and conventions—with art, with writing. This is something beyond the register of the symbolic, to use Lacan's notion; it is the touch of the Real, but only if it is moved into the symbolic register can it become political. Then, it can be understood that pollution is due to structural power, as Nabil Ahmed has argued, when it is possible to join forces with political agendas, when we form chains of equivalence with other societal groups.

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312 ———— Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "A Borderless World," University of Arizona, 19 January 2012, accessed 11 March 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3LYRYR_-XA.

313 ———— See https://www.documenta-archiv.de/de/documenta/121/14, accessed 30 January 2021.

So, for me, it is essential to come back again and again in a "repetition compulsion" (*Wiederholungszwang*) to discuss these issues within temporary and local groups and on international platforms, and to reflect it back to what is happening now: what is the political and the social, which interpellations does an artwork or an exhibition produce, which effects does it produce, what does criticality mean in the given moment? And to learn something from a place—whether from Warsaw, Athens, or Dhaka—means one has to learn about the way the money circulates, what this means for art and art production, what layers of culture exist, and what could a critical type of cultural production be. It would mean being curious about what is happening, and how the local production of goods and commodities of all sorts are related to the international market.

In what way is cultural production understood in a context? Is art or cultural production just a commodity, or does it open up new ways of living or thinking, of being a subject or defining community? Which power structure does art production help to establish or de-establish, and which parts of society are uncovered, what kind of transactions and flows of money, what kind of power relations? Learning from Dhaka means discussing hegemonic takeovers in art and culture, it means discussing where Dhaka "Swiss" Design comes from, as mentioned by Sharmini Pereira, and who earns the surplus. Culture is something that happens alongside infrastructures and monetary flows, as commentary, as affirmation, or as opposition. These pathways of discussion and understanding did open up, especially in the critical writing summit, which was central to understanding the context and in questioning paradigms and protocols.

I would like to close with a quotation from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: "What people call transculture is culture as it happens. Culture alive is its own counter-example. Transculturation is not something special and different. It is a moment in a taxonomy of the normality of what is called culture. To assign oneself the special task of cultural translation or plotting cultural translation has therefore to be put within a political context."[314]

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314 ———— Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "More Thoughts on Cultural Translation," April 2008, accessed 30 January 2021, http://translate.eipcp.net/transversal/0608/spivak/en.html.

5.3 New Markets and Forms of Capital in Art and Curating

In the following I would like to explore some notions that underlie the questions of art and the art market, which should be discussed to map the field:

What is contemporary art? How is contemporary art produced? What is a commodity? What are the various forms of capital that play a role in the realm of art? Financial markets and art markets—how are they related? And does art still move us?

What is contemporary art?
I would like to begin with a remark by Pierre Bourdieu, who undertakes a sociological analysis of what "contemporary" means in the realm of art:

> At each moment in time, in any field of struggle whatsoever (the whole social field, field of power, field of cultural production, literary field, etc.), agents and institutions engaged in the game are simultaneously contemporaries and temporally discordant. The *field of the present* is merely another name for the field of struggle (as shown by the fact that an author of the past is present to the exact extent that he is still at stake). Contemporaneity as presence in the same present only exists in practice *in the struggle* that *synchronizes* discordant times or, rather, agents and institutions separated by time and in relation to time.[315]

What does Bourdieu mean by this? Simply put, he is suggesting that yesterday's avant-gardes are today recognized as art and will tomorrow be acknowledged as historically significant or viewed as outmoded. What we perceive as contemporary art is the result of mechanisms of repression, of enforcement strategies on the part of the protagonists (artists, gallery owners, collectors) and institutions such as art academies, galleries, museums, and public and private collections. They emerge through a power-related negotiation process—processes of distinction between societal groups.

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[315] ——— Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford, CA, 1996), 158. Originally published as *Les règles de l'art: Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1992) [Bourdieu's italics; my emphasis].

This "contemporary art" and the new markets associated with it do not simply materialize; they emerge as part of a complex system of relations. Besides, these "waves," as I would provisionally like to call this phenomenon, should not only be conceived of in temporal terms; they should also be thought of as **territorial**, as may doubtless already have occurred to you. The latest art movements generally appear in metropolitan areas relative to a particular historical situation. These art movements develop through various acts of consecration—prizes, critical attention, stipends, exhibitions, reviews, galleries, etc. Thus, there is always a centre, in which the latest art emerges, and peripheries, which lag behind the up-to-date art scene, and in Bourdieu's sociological perspective, it means centre(s) and peripheries, related to social groups and territories. Western Europeans and Americans are so accustomed to this situation that, in general, it is no longer noticed; sadly, now it seems natural that none of the peripheral regions really rise to the standard required by Western ideas of art. Everything outside the Western Hemisphere is seen as "other"—as other subjects—and is then included under the rubric of "otherness" in the Western-oriented art canon, so, as an exception, a group like ruangrupa is invited into the system. In this painting, an "other subject" looks back; the artist reverses the usual direction of vision and satirizes attributions—using the tools wielded by visual arts in the West.

Armando Mariño, *El centinela* (The Sentry), 180 × 220, in *Der globale Komplex*, exh. cat. OK Centrum für Gegenwartskunst, Linz, and Grazer Kunstverein (Linz/Graz, 2002), p 29.

According to the catalogue, in the works of Armando Mariño, a so-called "black troublemaker" disavows the cultural icons of contemporary art [here, Mario Merz]; he displays these works as part of a world structured in the service of power interests in terms of race, class, and gender.[316] Thus, he is not merely an ironic commentator but rather a situational critic, often making use of humour as a tool.

Again, there is clearly a hegemonic aspect in contemporary art or, to put it another way, Western art trains subjects to consent to a Western ideology. Roger Buergel and Stefanie-Vera Kockot have discussed this in detail, using the example of Abstract Expressionism,[317] which was initially met with considerable mistrust on the part of the established cultural and political powers in the USA. However, the perception of Abstract Expressionism has changed over the years—instead of a disorganizing force seen as a threat, critics now emphasize the motif of freedom, a freedom that they are keen to locate in the pictures. Ultimately, Abstract Expressionist images were (and still are) proclaimed as representative of an ideology of freedom, and American taxpayers' money was spent on funding touring exhibitions to present these pictures internationally. In short, contemporary art is based on an agreement that is brokered in particular spatial and temporal contexts. Therefore, it is obviously not by chance that the more easily tradable works of art in all (new and old) art markets in Britain, the US, Brazil, China, and India appear again mostly as paintings. Diedrich Diederichsen argues:

> A highly specific relationship may be said to be exist between those works that are seen to require artistic legitimation—punch lines and Mehrwert [surplus]—and those that are acknowledged as art in the everyday sense of the term, without further discussion. The latter are more numerous. Of course all of the works of this type—the ones that require no justification—are actually justified by other works. [...] They are able to forgo external justifications and thus give off the heavy sent of immanence, in which the business of art is so fond of steeping. It is work of this kind that finance the everyday operations of the art industry. They circulate throughout the world, and images of them fill the catalogues and art magazines. Yet it is only works of the first type—those that are openly in need of legitimation—that keep the discourse alive.[318]

316 ———— *Der globale Komplex*, exh. cat. OK Centrum für Gegenwartskunst, Linz, and Grazer Kunstverein (Linz/Graz, 2002), 29.

317 ———— Roger Buergel, Stefanie-Vera Kockot, eds., *Abstrakter Expressionismus: Konstruktionen ästhetischer Erfahrung* [Abstract expressionism: Constructions of aesthetic experience] (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 2000).

318 ———— Diedrich Diederichsen, *On (Surplus) Value in Art, Reflections 01* (Berlin: Sternberg, 2008), 29-30.

In addition, the works of art of a more traditional, or to use Diederichsen's words, boring appearance are more likely to transport the ideology of a self-sufficient, independent (genius) actor in the field, which forms an analogy to the interdependent entrepreneur, the new figure in emerging economies. The question of what art is should be stated more precisely:

How is art produced?

How does it come about that certain creations are recognized as "art" in the Western sense and enter into the canon, while others do not? Time and place play an important role. These acts of recognition, of consecration, take place in a complex field. If one follows the art eco-system model established by the Arts Council England in 2004, acts of consecration pass through complex interactions involving individual actors and institutions. As Ulf Wuggenig argues: "Due consideration must be given to the fact that the importance of the individual elements varies according to the particular phase the consecration procedures are in and the countries involved. Depending on the country, public and private actors play a more or less critical role." [319]

The Art Eco-System Model
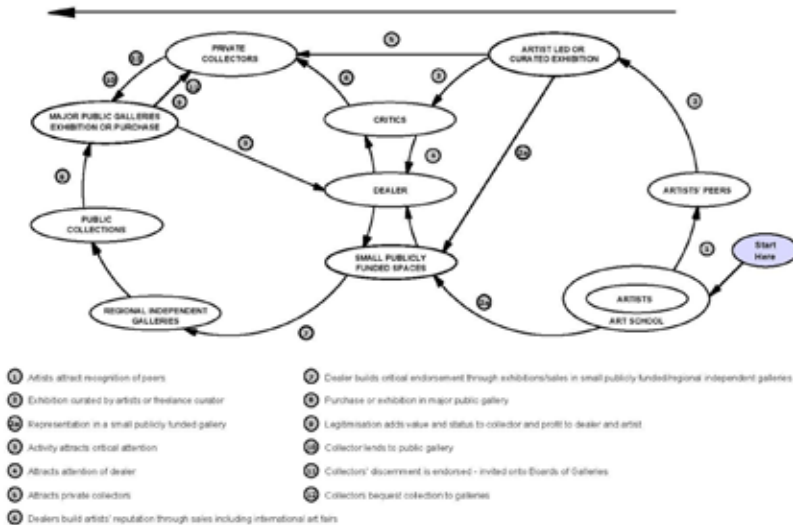
Arts Council

319 ——————   See Ulf Wuggenig and Heike Munder, *Das Kunstfeld: Eine Studie über Akteure und Institutionen der zeitgenössichen Kunst* [The art field: A study of actors and institutions in comtemporary art] (Zurich: JRPRingier, 2012), 95.

This is the sequence proposed by Arts Council England:[320]

1. Artists attract recognition of peers
2. Exhibition curated by artists or freelance curator
2. Representation in a small publicly funded gallery
3. Activity attracts critical attention
4. Attracts attention of dealer
5. Attracts private collectors
6. Dealers build artists' reputation through sales including international art fairs
7. Dealer builds critical endorsement through exhibitions/sales in small publicly funded/regional independent galleries
8. Purchase or exhibition in major public gallery
9. Legitimization adds value and status to collector and profit to dealer and artist
10. Collector lends to public gallery
11. Collectors' discernment is endorsed – invited onto Boards of Galleries
12. Collectors' bequest collection to galleries.

No artistic or curatorial career follows such a direct trajectory; there are forward and backward steps, periods of stagnation and unexpected events. Furthermore, this more rigid scheme proposed by the British Council perhaps even distracts the somehow chaotic production of a name, a label—in other words, a star. The art-star appears through a variety of acknowledgements in smaller circles. "Contemporary art" thus always appears in a discursive space, a space of power relationships, a space of what is and is not allowed, a space of inclusions and exclusions. And contemporary art is a relatively new concept; autonomy, i.e., comparative independence, was inconceivable for a religious or court artist, as Peter Bürger and Terry Eagleton have established.[321] What is interesting in these quasi-autonomous fields of art is, as Pierre Bourdieu maintains, the fact that "this relatively autonomous universe (which is to say, of course, that it is also relatively dependent, notably with respect to the economic field and the polit-

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320 ——— Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, *Taste Buds: How to Cultivate the Art Market* (London: Arts Council England, 2004), 6. See http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/documents/publications/tastebudssummary_php7xDjDe.pdf (accessed 15 August 2013).

321 ——— Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* [Theory of the avant-garde] (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974). Bürger still makes use of a rather inflexible grid as a model; Terry Eagleton clearly states that this quasi-autonomy generated ideological subjects, namely as independently acting operators. Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

ical field) makes a place for an **inverse economy** whose particular logic is based on the very nature of symbolic goods—realities with two aspects, merchandise and signification, with the specifically **symbolic values** and the market values remaining relatively independent of each other."[322] However, this symbolic value is only attained when art is produced without there being any direct interest in exploiting the product. It is just this "purity" in art that constitutes its value, the option of responding independently to social conditions. Here, the **"inverse economy"** means that artworks do not seek to plug themselves directly into the market but strive to create other values, be they defined or indeterminate. Thus, avant-garde art first of all has no apparent interest in the market. The successful exploitation of an overly direct and conspicuous interest in the market would immediately transform the product in question, shifting its status from belonging to an avant-garde that is not fully recognised but full of promise, to being tarred with the brush of belatedness. An art object or artist that misses the boat all but invites ridicule. (This also explains that some of the collectives invited by ruangrupa to *documenta fifteen* operating with the kind of artworks they offered through the lumbung gallery— traditional paintings—in a somewhat belated style, and unsurprisingly their success in the market was quite limited.) The market for cultural goods is, however, very strongly differentiated, and this is further complicated by new markets and new types of products, as we will see later. Oliver Marchart reacts quite critically, for example, to the idea of an artist position: "The way the term 'artistic position' is used in the field of art follows the logic of the market, not the logic of politics. Artists' names are understood as labels in the marketplace for art. The term 'position' is merely a euphemism for this trademark logic. That is what makes it so disagreeable."[323] He sees in the "curatorial function" (different from a self-exploiting fight for a curatorial or artistic name as a trademark) a possibility to take up a position in solidarity with other political forces and organisations. This he sees as an ex/position instead of an ex/hibition.

What is a commodity?

The value of art is essentially rooted in a specific time, a specific place, and a specific non-dependence on having any direct application. It arises from these negotiation processes, but what exactly constitutes use value and exchange value?

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322 ———— Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, 141 [my emphasis].
323 ———— Oliver Marchart, "The Curatorial Function -Organising the Ex/Position," *OnCurating* 9: *Curating Critique,* eds. Marianne Eigenheer, Barnaby Drabble, Dorothee Richter (2012), https://www.on-curating.org/issue-9-reader/imprint-1143.html#.ZEFU5MHP30M.

I will focus in particular on an article by Walter Grasskamp which discusses these two terms from the perspective of art.[324] The notion of exchange value and use value goes all the way back to Aristotle and denotes key categories for speaking about the commodification of things; on this, Marx based his economic theory. As Grasskamp remarks: "If the one [the exchange value] makes it possible to look at market conditions regardless of the nature of the goods, the other [the use value] is focused on just these material properties; if the exchange value characterizes the relationship between people negotiating a price, the use value defines the relationship between people and things."[325] The use value appears to be more obvious and is thus often ignored by the political economy. The term exchange value is considerably more charismatic, mysterious, and puzzling. Obviously, in most commodities, we find a mixture. This is taken advantage of in advertising, which enhances a product and its simple use value with glamorous attributions. Grasskamp argues—comparable to Arthur C. Danto and George Dickie—that contemporary art can be seen as the ultimate product and has some similarities to money, while also being endowed with the possibility of speculation: "In the meantime, modern art is seen as a branded product par excellence, and there are indeed many [parameters] for this: on the producer's side, it has high recognition value by virtue of the artist's characteristic style and signature; on the collector's side, it has the prestige value associated with ostentatious ownership; in terms of quality of the object owned, it ultimately has material and cultural durability, which goes along with the expectation of a possible increase in value. Thus it represents an attractive prospect for the consumer and a lucrative investment."[326] The use value of artworks tends towards zero; with contemporary art, moreover, there may not even necessarily be the material durability emphasised by Grasskamp—to take just one example, one need only think of the pieces made by Dieter Roth out of chocolate, which then had to be treated with poisonous gas by collectors and museums in order to preserve them, sometimes against the artist's wishes.[327] Artists thus create products that in any event refrain

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324 ——— Walter Grasskamp, "Das Entgegenkommen der Dinge: Versuch über den Gebrauchswert" [The Accommodation of Things: An Essay on Use Value], in *Konsumglück: Die Wa(h)re Erlösung* [Consumer Happiness: Product Redemption] (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2000), 31–45.

325 ——— Ibid., 32 [translated by the author].

326 ——— Ibid., 119–120 [translated by the author].

327 ——— Apparently, Roth himself wanted them to decay; it is possible that this is handled differently from museum to museum, from collector to collector. "In essence *Chocolate Objects* presents self-portraits that are, like man, literally growing old and decomposing from the moment of creation. After 45 years the pieces are well into the decomposition process, although measures have been taken to prolong the phase of

from looking like products. Grasskamp makes the following ironic remark about this: "The training of the artist as entrepreneur, who must not appear to be a businessperson but can only survive by being one, [takes place at the academy]. [...] An academy is always also a business school in disguise."[328] In other words, artworks contain immaterial value—the various forms of capital involved have been delineated by Pierre Bourdieu. These forms of generating value and these forms of entrepreneurship might be even more noticeably displayed in the figure of the contemporary curator who acts as a mediator between the artist and the institution, in contrast to the "curatorial function" as an ex/position, which would always question the art institution if this were an art academy or an exhibition-producing institution.

What are the various use values and exchange values that play a role in the art world?
Bourdieu extended the concept of capital: instead of simply limiting the term to economic capital, from his perspective, it exists in three different manifestations: economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital.
Economic capital: the creation of value from work and exchange and its representation in money and the accumulation of money.
Cultural capital, which takes three forms:

> **1.** Family-transmitted cultural capital—this refers to one's knowledge of cultural goods and the "habitus" associated with this; habitus means one's behaviours, modes of expression, clothing, and general appearance to the outside world, which displays complex codes. *Cultural capital* is fundamentally associated with the body and requires a process of internalization; personal investment must be made *in teaching and studying—this costs time and is paid for by the investor (or their parents).* The delegation principle is ruled out. Embodied capital is a possession that has become an integral part of

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decay in order to put off their imminent destruction. With time the color and texture of the chocolate pieces has changed noticeably yet not uniformly, bringing out what Roth referred to as the 'blossoming of decay'. In some sculptures the fat in the chocolate has risen to the top giving them an ashen patina, others have deep fissures caused by temperature changes, while others have been perforated by insects. In this effect the pieces can be interpreted as modern symbols of vanitas by referencing the transient nature of life and impending death." See Melissa Sesana, "Dieter Roth: Schokoladen-Objekte," *Reusing Old Graves*, 17 March 2015, http://reusingoldgraves.weebly.com/melissa-sesana/march-17th-2015.

328 ——— Ibid., 117 [translated].

the person and is incorporated into their habitus. This *cannot* be passed on in the short-term unlike money, property, or a title.

2. Objectified cultural capital includes writings, paintings, and sculpture, owned by collectors or simply inherited. However, to enjoy these, one also needs cultural capital. Cultural goods can be acquired materially or symbolically. A symbolic acquisition would be, for example, having power of control or acquiring something on paper. This gives rise to the ambivalent position of managers and of arts administration.

3. Institutionalized cultural capital: a title emphasises the difference between title holders and autodidacts who are under pressure to prove their credentials. Any title yields various profit-making opportunities.

Social capital: Membership of a group (club, degree course, association, family, aristocracy). The amount of social capital that the individual possesses thus depends both on the extent of the network of relationships that he or she can actually mobilize and on the range of (economic, cultural, or symbolic) capital possessed by those with whom they are connected. Relationships require constant cultivation, and the process of mutual appreciation is regularly ratified by the deployment of time and money.[329]

Bourdieu's theoretical exposition is therefore also of particular interest, as it goes beyond a rigid classical way of thinking without smoothing over the conflicts of interest between social groups. In the diagrams he uses, one can see how Bourdieu saw the distribution for France in the 1970s; cultural capital also serves **as a means of distinguishing** oneself from other groups, a way of establishing a line of demarcation. Cultural capital can be turned back into economic capital when, for instance, training to be a designer, artist, curator, or teacher pays for itself. As Diederichsen remarks, the tendencies of hidden agendas differ with the systems:

> Further, in terms of time spent in art school, when considering how the value of artistic production is created, it is normally important to ask who financed the artist's training. In Europe, the answer is still primarily, in full or in part, the state (or, in a populist abbreviation, the taxpayers.) In the United States and other neoliberal areas of the world, financing this general component of labor that is socially necessary for the production of art has become the responsibility of the artist themselves, who take loans to pay their way through school and, as it were, invest the

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329 ——— See also Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson, trans. Richard Nice (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 241–58.

income they will only receive later into their prior education. In this sense, artist are entrepreneurs who pursue their own material interest and later that of others. The alternate model (traditionally followed in Europe) effectively casts artists as civil servants or government employees and hence, at least indirectly, bound to a conception of the common good.[330]

Here again, one could argue that the "social agency" of curating in Europe might be for the most part much more directly connected with taming and administrating than the artistic.

Cultural and social capital should be examined more closely in the particular places that have become **new locations** for the art market. This much can be said: the financially powerful elites in the Arab countries, India, and China use cultural goods as a means of distinction; that is, they want to mark themselves off from other social groups. The art market in China functioned at the beginning as a largely closed market—Chinese artists were bought by Chinese collectors. To break into these closed markets, Art Basel established a presence in Hong Kong. One can take a similar view of the new institutions set up by arts universities and museums in the abovementioned regions. The complex relation between the enjoyment of art and taste in music, clothing, and furniture with social position is commented on by Armando Mariño in this painting:

Detail of an adaptation of *The Death of Marat* by Jacques-Louis David

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330 ———— Diedrich Diederichsen, *On (Surplus) Value in Art, Reflections 01* (Berlin: Sternberg, 2008), 34.

Armando Mariño,
El centinela (The Sentry),
180 × 220, in *Der globale
Komplex,* exh. cat. OK
Centrum für Gegenwartskunst,
Linz, and Grazer Kunstverein
(Linz/Graz, 2002), 29.
An adaptation of *The Death
of Marat* by Jacques-Louis David

Mariño's artistic commentary on the well-known image *The Death of Marat* by Jacques-Louis David puts Western art in a specific setting. It may be interesting to note that while Jacques-Louis David was a Jacobin supporter, one of his most famous paintings was Napoleon on horseback, decidedly political propaganda, which looks surprisingly contemporary in its propagandist appearance. Marat was the publisher the newspaper of *L'Ami du Peuple* (The Friend of the People), and he was stabbed to death in 1793. So, the staging of his heroic life and death that culminates in this (imaginary) image could be seen from other perspectives, as Mariño demonstrates. In real life, one might add, the cleaning person would be a woman. Unsurprisingly, most new painters of the new art market(s) are male—again, a recourse of the artist/genius/entrepreneur narrative pattern. A remarkable artistic-curatorial project was *A Society of Taste* by the artist Andrea Fraser, curated by Helmut Draxler at the Munich Kunstverein in 1993.[331] This controversial exhibition was taken up in the project "Telling Histories" by curators Soren Grammel and Maria Lind, who organised, as an institution-critical curatorial gesture, a talk show with protagonists of these earlier fights in the Kunstverein.[332] This exceptional

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331 ——— See https://www.kunstverein-muenchen.de/en/program/exhibitions/
           past/1993/andrea-fraser.
332 ——— See the description by Søren Grammel, "A Series of Acts and Spaces,"
           OnCurating 8: *Institution as Medium, Curating as Institutional Critique
           Part 1* , eds. Dorothee Richter and Rein Wolfs (2011): 33-38.

project interacted live with the archived memory of the institution in three talk shows and made it possible to understand through this re-enactment the positions of the participating players as part of the situatedness of the participants.

Telling Histories, stage for talk shows with equipment, Kunstverein München, 2003

Still talk show *Eine Gesellschaft des guten Geschmacks,* Andrea Fraser (1993), Kunstverein München, 2003

Financial Markets—Art Markets

There are, however, other hidden agendas that underlie art acquisition, beyond proclivity or personal cachet and the gains that go with it. In *Das Gespenst des Kapitals* (The Spectre of Capital), Joseph Vogl argues that, amazingly, financial markets discursively fabricate the present and future:

> In point of fact, this Nobel Prize-winning transformation [the Black-Scholes formula] of guessing games into the science of finance could amortize the virtuality of uncertain futures and with it the very dimension of time. If—based on the parameters set by normal distributions, mean values, and Gaussian or bell curves— the scatter of future events can be calculated according to the range of variation of past unpredictability, and if future risks behave analogously to existing risks, the business routines of the financial markets will be sustained by the fact that future expectations can be translated into expected futures, and this will lead overall to a more or less reliable homogeneity between the future present and the present future.[333]

What Vogl means is that the premise of speculations that are built on the latest economic theories emanates from a guessing game, and this game only works out if the present merges into the future in an essentially uniform fashion, whereby normal distribution and mean values play a major

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[333] ———— Joseph Vogl, *Das Gespenst des Kapitals* [The Spectre of Capital] (Zurich: Diaphanes, 2010/2011), 109 [translated by the author].

role. But these are completely speculative assumptions, which also lead to bets being placed on losses in the financial market, thus contributing in part to the threat we face of the system collapsing for the time being. Attempts are, in fact, constantly being made to contain an event, or an investment, with a system of reinsurance. However, at some point, the last person in the long line of reinsurers takes a hit, and this sparks a chain reaction—see the financial crisis of 2008, or the crisis that lingers now again at the horizon. As Vogl puts it: "Since neoliberalism created the vision that all events and conditions in the lived-in world could be endued with a market value—in a perfect competitive world, one needs to know nothing more than the price of things—a differentiated, as it were molecular, market can hedge any possible future with securities, options, and derivatives, and guarantee a kind of earthly providence."[334] The market that allegedly balances everything out is ultimately the future security for all games of this kind, with the **minor flaw** that this premise is **not** all that probable, as Vogl points out. The thesis proposed by the equilibrium theory also predicts a reconciliation of nation-states with liberalism—which did not happen, as we know now; at present, we all find ourselves part of a major worldwide experiment which will remain in progress for the foreseeable future.[335] In summary, one can say that the supposedly oh-so-rational world of the economy and economic science is based on rather far-fetched suppositions and hopes that are illusory in the extreme. Viewed in this way—and there are some very rich people who have come to this conclusion—the art market is a relatively safe, crisis-proof, and stable way of accumulating money. In addition, it is not controlled; for example, insider trading is not forbidden, it is encouraged.[336]

Moreover, there are more and more extremely wealthy people. This statistic about high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs), people with investable finance in excess of US$1 million, and the number of ultra-HNWIs with assets of US$30 million has also risen—Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa have remained constant, but a sharp increase has been recorded in North America, Europe, and Asia. Alarmingly, though, at the same time, the income gap has grown dramatically. The artist Andrea Fraser has researched this, as I mentioned before: "Finally, a couple of years ago, a

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334 ———— Ibid., 110 [translated by the author].

335 ———— Ibid., 112.

336 ———— For further reading, see Hito Steyerl, *Duty Free Art, Art in the Age of Planetary Civil War* (London; New York: Verso Books, 2017); Isabelle Graw and Daniel Birnbaum, *Canvases and Careers Today, Criticism and its Markets* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2008); Maria Lind and Olaf Vethuis, *Contemporary Art and Its Commercial Markets* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012); Olaf Velthuis, *Talking Prices: Symbolic Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

group of economists began to look at these comparative indexes not simply for evidence of art's investment value, but for an explanation of its price structure. [They] suspected that equity market returns actually have a direct impact on art prices by increasing the buying power of the wealthy. So they compared art prices to income measures."[337] Subsequently, the academics cited by Fraser found that there was no connection between art-based profits and general income variables (such as GNP). Her findings were shocking: "Art prices do not go up as a society as a whole becomes wealthier, but only when income inequality increases."[338] Thus, the countries experiencing a noticeable art boom are precisely those that show an increase in income disparities: the USA, China, and India. In Europe, there is still direct public arts funding, which gives artists and the intelligentsia far more room to manoeuvre. Yet, overall, Fraser adopts a decidedly downbeat tone when it comes to culture—her suggested solution is to create new art venues that would act autonomously, and for artists, curators, and critics to retreat there and pay no attention to the market. I am not so pessimistic about the state of things and continue to see the opportunity for art to adopt a critical view of things, an anti-hegemonic view, even if there is plenty of evidence that art production is repeatedly being overtaken, mollified, and co-opted by market developments. Bourdieu claims for the intelligentsia something that can also hold true for artists and curators: "The intellectual is constituted as such by intervening in the political field *in the name of autonomy* and of the specific values of a field of cultural production which has attained a high degree of independence with respect to various powers (and this intervention is unlike that of the politician with strong cultural capital, who acts on the basis of a specifically political authority, acquired at the price of a renunciation of an intellectual career and values)."[339]

And Yet It Moves Us. . .

The double role of art as a possible means of criticism and as a tradable luxury item probably cannot be resolved by withdrawing into an autonomous clique. Ultimately, the interesting coteries might be commercially exploited and integrated into the system. So, the not so commercially successful artistic and curatorial projects have my sympathy. As Bourdieu mentions: "The social world is accumulated history," and the social world is also a presence in which we play an active role in creating a collective future.

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[337] ———— Andrea Fraser, "L'1%, c'est moi," *Texte zur Kunst* 83, "The Collectors" (September 2011): 114–27, 119.

[338] ———— Ibid., 119.

[339] ———— Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, 129.

6. CURATING AS MEDIA CONGLOMERATION:
FROM INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE
TO A CURATORIAL CONSTELLATION

In curating, the production of meaning reflects a rather complex combination of already existing and of especially produced cultural productions, it is a combination of artworks, space, display, installation, colours, exhibition architecture, lighting, captions, accompanying texts, press releases, events, and screenings; it is also framed by a specific institution, not only in an architectural sense but also by the institution as programme, as a social space. It is developed over a period of time, in pre-production, a phase of negotiations with different actors inside and outside the institution with its own cultural policies and sponsors.

Additionally, all the actors inside the institution are in a hierarchical configuration—and just to mention it, this is mostly the case in an off-space as well, in which some protagonists have the power to develop the programme and others do not. I would caution against emphasising the imaginary flexibility of one hierarchy over the other. After pre-production, the actual production process sets in, which in bigger institutions and museums is meanwhile often done by external production teams, or sometimes even several production teams for one larger exhibition. I want to emphasise that any curatorial project, be it an exhibition, a film project, film programming, a book, a series of talks, or a symposium, is based on the work of a team. In that light, the idea of the singular authorship of a curator seems like an absurd idea. The following exhibition example shows how, throughout a project, institutional critique highlights certain hidden moments in exhibition-making and relates this to destroying and re-doing space on a more general level, bringing in revolutionary moments.

6.1 Project by Korpys/Löffler and Achim Bitter at Künstlerhaus Bremen

"[T]here is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations. But this does not mean that they are only a reac-

tion or rebound, forming with respect to the basic domination an underside that is in the end always passive, doomed to perpetual defeat."[340]
Situating this potential for resistance on a visual line was my goal as a curator, as it was at the time I was the artistic director of the Künstlerhaus Bremen (1999-2003). Each topic was developed as a series of projects, talks, and publications, and in the following pages I will discuss just a small portion of the programme, to understand curating as institutional critique was my implicit goal and to expose the curatorial constellation.
First of all, I would like to re-introduce False-Hearted Fanny, a character I have borrowed from Emmett Williams, a Fluxus artist whom I respect highly.[341] False-Hearted Fanny will be the one who poses the questions, makes interjections, questions in general a certain depiction of curating, and makes my existence as a fragmentary subject easier in every respect.

False-Hearted Fanny: Since I was borrowed from the play, I may as well bring the opening sentence along: "As the curtain rises, or opens, or whatever the case may be."[342]
Dorothee Richter: You are alluding to the fact that everything we do as actors in the cultural sphere takes place "on stage," as it were, even when representing a particular position in an article.

This place, any place where cultural statements are made, whether in the context of a publication or within a white cube, is a central place of action whose structural composition is very interesting to explore. Elsewhere I have already shown that the roles of the artist and curator, as actors who perform in those sites, overlap. I say this even though I am aware there are differences. These places where art is "put on view," or where art is negotiated, I would like to define them more precisely with the Lacanian concept of the "tableau." This "tableau," a blank surface for projection, takes on an important function in the visual arts, the function of putting on view, but also the role of the opaque surface that conceals relationships. It seems to me that this place has similarities of constitution and structure with a place of intrapersonal development of the sort Lacan describes. And this would show how exactly how interpellation works on the level of the subject.
The project that I would like to discuss was conceived by three artists as a collaborative project, Korpys/Löffler and Achim Bitter (Korpys/Löffler

340 ——— Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction,* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 95–96.

341 ——— Emmett Williams, *My Life in Flux and Vice Versa* (Stuttgart and London: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 1991), 335.

342 ——— Ibid.

always work together as a rule) with False Hearted Fanny.[343] To propose this collaboration and to sketch a topic was my curatorial input. The three artists filled the exhibition space with all sorts of objects they had found in the storage spaces, or even still being used by the art institutions, galleries, and museums of Bremen. These objects included desks, boards, doors, large carpets, and leftovers from installations such as maps, large gray pieces of material, and parts of multiples. Several of the pieces could only be identified upon closer examination, when the surfaces were very distinctive. The installation was divided into two parts, following the pre-existing structure of the space. The partition wall consisted of doors and boards jammed between the floor and ceiling; a passageway remained clear. As with bulky trash items waiting to be hauled away, the dominant colour was light brown. In the back part of the space, the relic was stacked to form a kind of grandstand that one could climb and use as a seat to watch a video being projected on the partition wall. The video consisted of a compilation showing the construction or destruction of strange spaces: the backstage area at a Wagner opera was also shown, along with excerpts of houses being demolished, humorous scenes from Tati films in which the circumstances devolve into a cheerful chaos, extremely violent excerpts from provocative political films of the early 1980s, outdated instruction films for do-it-yourselfers, and absurd scenes from old Soviet space capsules. The film loop lasted four hours, so that viewers had the impression that the individual sequences never repeated, because even the most devoted art public would not stay four hours. The film established connections with the content of the exhibition: the construction and deconstruction of spaces and the concrete possibilities for intervention. Tools were still strewn in the front part of the room, giving the installation the impression of being disorganised and unfinished. This provisional aspect gave the visitors an opportunity to change the situation. The film excerpts also had formal similarities to the situation in the room: they, too, were overwhelmingly a wood-coloured light brown, punctuated by the pink or bright green found in the installation.

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343 ———— This paragraph is a slightly altered outtake from an article that discussed some of the author's curatorial projects: Dorothee Richter, "Confessions," in *The Edge of Everything*, ed. The Banff Centre for the Arts (Banff: Banff Centre Press, 2002).

Video installation by Korpys/Löffler and Achim Bitter, KünstlerHaus Bremen, 2000, installation view. Photo: Joachim Fliegner

On entering the space, the public found itself in a tension-filled situation, as the status of the objects could not be determined immediately. On the one hand, the monumentality of the grandstand-like structure suggested the status of an autonomous sculpture; on the other, the structures in the first part of the room seemed very temporary; moreover, drinks were handed out during the installation, and the sculptural constructions were being used as bars. The video being shown had scenes of detonation and destruction that were so intense and gratifying that the effect was stimulating. The possibility of altering the space oneself hung in the air. The public reacted with reserve at first, almost muted, as is the case at many exhibition openings. Then, within a few seconds, during which a wave of relaxation palpably ran through the room, people began to enter the grandstand and use it as a relaxation area, from which they watched the films while drinking and chatting. The atmosphere changed, became relaxed and stimulated at the same time, and a party-like atmosphere developed. The public was visibly adjusting to the space. This moment of self-empowerment and appropriation was stirring. It happened through a change in the status of the sculpture, which subtly revealed the place to which auratic, autonomous works of art normally banish the viewer. At the same time, the "sculpture" was a feast for the eyes: the delicate shadings of brown, pink, and bright green, the vertical and horizontal rhythm of light and dark lines and planes.

False-Hearted Fanny: Aren't diverse political claims overdone or inappropriate for the visual arts, even when they do function as an installation, event, or object?

Dorothee Richter: From an art historical perspective, it is clear that certain artistic statements are closely related to social protests—I need only mention Fluxus or the Situationists. Interestingly, the actions of the Fluxus artists were familiar to a broad spectrum of the public—in Germany, at least—thanks to outraged reviews in the newspapers. Moreover, philosophical, artistic, and political discourses influence one another. The contemporary visual arts are in some respects an elite area in any case; we have to realise that only about three percent of the population is interested. So, we aren't going to get any large movements started that way. Nevertheless, the visual arts are certainly not without influence on society by way of their influence on other discourses.

There are groups of artists like, for example, *WochenKlausur* (Weekly Exam/Cloister), which tries to intervene directly into societal processes by organising for a period of a few weeks—thanks to conversations with all of the groups involved—for example, a home for drug-addicted women in Zurich, or a bus to address the medical needs of the homeless. But I see

even this kind of artistic action as a symbol or, if you will, one signifier in a chain of signifiers. Over the long term, however, this can influence and revise discourses. It is possible to reclaim for the visual arts what Foucault demanded of philosophy: "[P]hilosophy as activity. The movement by which, not without effort and uncertainty, dreams and illusions, one detaches oneself from what is accepted as true and seeks other rules— that is philosophy. The displacement and transformation of frameworks of thinking, the changing of received values and all the work that has been done to think otherwise, to do something else, to become other than what one is."[344] In this case, I would see the connection to material that has no value; the actual furniture looked like junk. (And here, I see a connection to Fluxus.) So, the question of the value of objects and what is declared to be beautiful occurs at once, but also in an uncanny moment, one would recognise that parts of the junk were recycled from exhibitions of local art institutions. Things that were ennobled before through the way they were shown or part of an installation at a museum or big gallery were now re-used and re-positioned as junk that one could alter and rearrange. This moment created a kind of *jouissance*; it implied actions that are usually forbidden in an art institution context.

Fanny: So, people could actually interfere and rearrange?
Dorothee: Yes, they could and did.
Fanny: But would this gesture of re-using material from other exhibitions not be understandable just for people from the art world? And where is your sympathy for the other ninety-seven percent (of the population that is not interested in contemporary art)?
Dorothee: Touché, a fair enough criticism. The art world is related to a very specific societal group and not all projects will reach a broader audience. And I do not see art as such as being emancipatory, or critical in a political way. Actually, very different and sometimes quite reactionary propositions are made with exhibitions and curatorial projects. So, let us discuss each project in detail and think about what kind of interpellation it produces.

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344 ———— Interview of Michel Foucault by Christian Delacampagne, originally appeared anonymously in *Le Monde,* 6–7 April 1980; translated by Alan Sheridan as "The Masked Philosopher," in Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth,* ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1997), 327.

Video installation by Korpys/Löffler and Achim Bitter, KünstlerHaus Bremen, 2000, installation view. Photo: Joachim Fliegner

6.2 Questioning Art as an Institution

Revisiting and re-imagining the project now, many years later, I still think that it implied a more subtle institutional critique, starting with the moment of disturbance, when visitors were absolutely unsure about if and in what way they were allowed to interfere in the display. This insecurity made the preconditions of exhibition-making, as spaces of control and restricted behaviour, very clear. Visitor subjects got this sudden sense of agency, when they became fully aware of being able to change the not-so-noble, not-so-untouchable "installation." The films, full of surprising notions of space and rough moments of destruction, got one agitated, and again, using the installation as a seating area was not so clear at first sight. All of that got visitors to actually share their experiences, to refer to what they found—from earlier exhibitions in Bremen—and also the strange actions in the films, demolishing houses, and comic DIY scenarios all had a quite anarchic mood, a whiff of revolution hung in the air.

As a curatorial concept, I initiated a series of talks and projects that were loosely connected to a year-long theme, "over high – over (f)low," the background of which was to question the art institution. My goal was to combine more regional positions with international ones, which in no way indicated a hierarchy, as more or less interesting positions; in my

eyes, it was important to enhance a discourse on topics that seemed to be relevant for critique and social change. The formats of talks, symposia, and formulating and designing spaces for an intertwined theory and practice-based programme had as one of its goals the creation of a larger group that was invested in these questions. To understand how one could interfere or disturb the art institution was on the one hand embedded in the programme, and in the artistic practice of the three invited artists on the other.

One of the recurrent topics of that year's programme and of different symposia I curated or co-curated was that art can be characterised as an institution. This notion is consistently in the background of the discussion of art, curating, and critique. In this text, it is partly defined as the modus of existence of art which is identified by Foucault as a discursive formation (in his case generally without a relation to the arts), which means a set of power structures organising a societal area, a discourse, the rituals of inclusion and exclusion, the specific organisation of its societies, the ways of speaking, its truths and falsehoods. Art understood as an institution sheds lights on this very specific system, the representational systems of the arts. This paragraph is also inspired by a talk that was delivered by Johan Hartle, a neo-Marxist and director of the Academy of the Arts in Vienna. His first proposition was: "Art is unavoidably institutional, and its ontological status is contingent on the institutional condition."[345]

The references for this proposition are different approaches on art as an institution since the '60s, when Arthur C. Danto in 1964 puts forward the question, what makes an object a work of art. To answer this question, he created the term "Artworld" to signify a special societal sphere. He defined the artworld as a loose group of people who enter into a discourse that transfers the status of art to things. In his view, a work of art as such only gains access to the art world through an art-theoretical interpretation; for him, art is a thing whose existence depends on theories. An object is granted the status of "work of art" when it embodies meaning as a symbolic form of expression. In contrast to George Dickie,[346] who is often mentioned as the founder of the institutional theory of art, Danto emphatically emphasises that it is only the "institutionalized discourse of reasons" and not an "empowering elite," as understood by Dickie, that gives an object art status. But, of course, in my view, both positions might be true, since a legitimate member of the institutionally constituted art

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345 ——— Johan Hartle in an online talk for a PhD meeting at the Zurich University of the Arts, 2 October 2020.

346 ——— George Dickie, "The New Institutional Theory of Art," in *Proceedings of the 8th Wittgenstein Symposium* 10 (1983), 57-64, 47, see https://cines-contemporaneos.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/new-institutional-theory-of-art-dickie.pdf.

world is whoever has access to the discourse, and this is obviously regulated by class, specific ways of behaviour, and a certain way of speaking—habitus in Bourdieu's terminology.

In this discussion, I see that the critical investigation of art as institution not only happened through artworks, as suggested by Peter Bürger in 1974 in *Theorie der Avantgarde*[347]—in his view through Dadaism and Surrealism—but also on the level of a theoretical understanding what "institution" would mean to begin with. Or, as John Searle asked: "What is the ontology, the mode of existence, of institutional reality?"[348] For Peter Bürger, the institution of art is characterised first and foremost by its relation to society, and, in his view, art has the status of autonomy: it is not dedicated to any direct use and is therefore also of no consequence. Any political impetus would fall into a void. Later on, Rancière will formulate a strong counterpart to this position, as we will see.

For Danto, the question is how does an object—in his example, the Brillo boxes by Warhol—become signified as art, when these objects are physically indistinguishable from other everyday objects? Actually, to my knowledge, they were different, since the Warhol boxes were printed on wood as a first edition, so a slight alienation effect was already present with this version of the boxes, but in later variations they were printed on card boxes. Significant for the art market (and silly enough) now the question is what is original and therefore valuable, and what is not.[349] Institu-

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347 ———— Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde*.

348 ———— John R. Searle, "What is an institution?," *Journal of Institutional Economics* 1, vol. 1 (2005): 1–22, 1, doi:10.1017/S1744137405000020.

349 ———— See https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/kunstmarkt/kommentare-glossen/brillo-boxen-das-sind-nicht-warhols-kisten-1491185.html, translated by the author from Lisa Zeitz, "Das sind nicht Warhols Kisten," *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29 November 2007:
"Prehistory is complex, a confusing concatenation of artistic and curatorial productions. In 1964 in New York, Warhol created his first *Brillo Boxes*, painted wooden boxes based on the red-blue-white design of the cardboard boxes of the soap powder "Brillo". An exhibition of his works in the Moderna Museet in 1968 displayed—with Warhol's consent—hundreds of Brillo boxes made of cardboard: these did not come from Warhol (for reasons of cost), but were delivered directly from the Brillo cardboard box factory. They were not works of art, but rather their models, mere exhibition pieces. At the same time, Warhol probably gave permission in 1968 to have a few Brillo wooden boxes produced in Sweden, but they were not exhibited at the Moderna Museet. Fifteen are real
Contemporary witnesses now speak of some fifteen boxes, which at the time rightly went down in art and auction history as authorised original Andy Warhol *Brillo Boxes* with the designation "Stockholm Type." Some of them have fetched more than $100,000 at auction. The problem now is that the legendary museum director Pontus Hultén

tional critique implies the critique of economic processes; this is then in turn captured and virtually deformed by the economics of the art market. And just as a side note, a more solid reprinted version was used in an exhibition at the Lentos Museum, to be used as a seat.

Anyway, for Danto, contemporary art is not characterised by a self-evident tradition; in his view, artworks are constructed under the specific constrained conditions of the art world, and here is where curating comes in: it is constructed specifically for the act of presenting. In this view, contemporary art only comes into existence by being exhibited. So, one important task of exhibiting is simply to transform the objects or actions into art. Since concept art and Fluxus rely on just very minimal scores or descriptions, a description via a talk delivered in an institution that possesses the institutional power to change anything represented into art would also suffice. So, some actions do today exist just in the form of a narrative, as told in a specific setting. This transformative power is used by artists; a historical example is, of course, Fluxus, whose minimal descriptions of a performative work with a score would open the work to be performed by everybody, anywhere at any time, and for contemporary artists like Tino Sehgal, whose work exists in situations. No images are allowed to be taken of the works; they exist only in a narrative form after their exposure. Even contracts, when Sehgal sells his works, are made only as verbal agreements, but in front of a lawyer as a witness.

In John Searle's remarks on institutions, he first discusses the institution of economy, which is based on a construction, on institutionalised facts: a group of people have agreed on understanding a package of paper as having a certain value. "For economics, the mode of existence of the 'commodities', and the mechanisms of 'disposal' are institutional."[350] Or, for example, a figure in sports that is called "touch back" only makes sense if you are familiar with the rules of the game. So, in his view, it was overlooked that **language** as such also implies a social contract from the very

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later falsely claimed that around a hundred wooden boxes were produced and exhibited in Sweden in 1968, which Warhol then left to him. In fact, Hultén's 105 boxes were not produced in Malmö until 1990 for an exhibition in St Petersburg. By this time, Warhol had already been dead for three years.

Lars Byström, chief curator at the Moderna Museet, has examined not only the six museum-owned *Brillo Boxes* but also three privately owned Swedish boxes, two of which were made in Stockholm in 1968: their pressboard was first primed and sanded down, then white oil paint was applied with a brush. The structure of the copies from 1990, on the other hand, reveals that the paint was applied directly to the pressboard with a painter's roller without primer—in addition, it is not oil paint but acrylic paint."

350 ———— Searle, "What is an institution?"

start. Searle argues: "But of course if you presuppose language, you have already presupposed institutions. It is, for example, a stunning fact about the Social Contract theorists that they take for granted that people speak a language and then ask how these people might form a social contract. But it is implicit in the theory of speech acts that, if you have a community of people talking to each other, performing speech acts, you already have a social contract. […]. Instead of presupposing language and analyzing institutions, we have to analyze the role of language in the constitution of institutions."[351]

He also distinguishes facts like given objects—rocks, for example—from institutional facts:

> As a preliminary formulation, we can state our conclusions so far as follows: an institutional fact is any fact that has the logical structure *X counts as Y in C*, where the *Y* term assigns a status function and (with few exceptions) the status function carries a deontology. An institution is any system of constitutive rules of the form X counts as Y in C. Once an institution becomes established, it then provides a structure within which one can create institutional facts.[352]

To establish a certain logical structure under which X (Brillo Box) counts as Y (art object) in a specific context (art world), it also needs a shared intentionality of a specific group. To agree on a certain set of rules (via language or as language) also a collective intentionality is needed. "Collective intentionality covers not only collective intentions but also such other forms of intentionality as collective beliefs and collective desires,"[353] as he states. A social fact is different to facts that are hard facts; they exist without an agreement of any sort is then any fact that is involving the collective intentionality of two or more agents. An argument by Andrea Fraser sounds similar:

> Art is not art because it is signed by an artist or shown in a museum or any other 'institutional' site. Art is art when it exists for discourses and practices that recognize it as art, value and evaluate it as art, and consume it as art, whether as object, gesture, representation, or only idea. The institution of art is not something external to any work of art but the irreducible condition of its existence as art. No matter how public in placement, immaterial, transitory, relational, everyday, or even invisible, what is announced and perceived as art is always already institutionalized, simply because it exists within

351 ——— Ibid.
352 ——— Ibid.
353 ——— Ibid.

the perception of participants in the field of art as art, a perception not necessarily aesthetic but fundamentally social in its determination.[354]

For the existence of an institution, where collective intentionality is crucial, Searle sees the possibility of cooperative behaviour as a specificity of humankind; the individual action becomes part of a collective action, a collective intentionality: "Collective intentionality covers not only collective intentions but also such other forms of intentionality as collective beliefs and collective desires."[355]

In Johan Hartle's view, this second proposition is the acceptance of all the institutional settings a serious problem: "The mere production and presentation of works of art is fetishistically repeating and legitimating their institutional conditions (and the larger societal surroundings inscribed into them)."[356] In our case, this means accelerated capitalism with neoliberal working conditions, within a system of structural violence. And again, Andrea Fraser's critique is quite near to this: "We also reproduce the mythologies of volunteerist freedom and creative omnipotence that have made art and artists such attractive emblems for neoliberalism's entrepreneurial 'ownership-society' optimism. That such optimism has found perfect artistic expressions in neo-Fluxus practices like relational aesthetics, which are now in perpetual vogue, demonstrated the degree to which what Bürger called the avant-garde's aim to integrate 'art into life praxis' has evolved into a highly ideological form of escapism."[357]

Therefore, a highly important consideration for artistic and curatorial work would be that a curatorial project should not be a replacement, a pseudo political articulation, which would just result in another form of fetishisation. So, of course, as discussed before, feminist curating and decolonising curating would go beyond only a feminist topic or a decolonial topic; other paradigms have to change as well. Let us return to Foucault's explanation of the notion of the discursive formation or apparatus (*dispositif*): "What I am trying to establish under this title [*dispositif*] is first of all a decidedly heterogeneous ensemble that includes discourses, institutions, architectural facilities, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral or philanthropic doctrines, in short: the said as well as the unsaid. So much for the

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354 ——— Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to the Institution of Critique," *Artforum* (September 2005): 281.

355 ——— Searle, "What is an institution?"

356 ——— Johan Hartle, in his talk at the PhD meeting in Zurich, September 2020.

357 ——— Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to the Institution of Critique," 283.

elements of the *dispositif*. The *dispositif* itself is the net that can be woven between these elements."[358] Ergo, for a feminist programme, it is not enough to choose a feminist topic; it would also mean thinking about working conditions, about architectural facilities in exhibition spaces/ offices, about the different committees and bodies inside the institution. So, for example, Stella Rollig discussed that in her role as director of the Lentos Art Museum and as director of the Belvedere in Vienna, she succeeded in changing internal paradigms, which meant not just including feminist topics, but also more democratic decision-making processes and a shift in policies in collecting as well as in hiring. Another example might be Maria Lind, who, during her time as director of the Münchner Kunstverein, changed the location of the office to the general entrance area on the ground level, so every visitor could speak directly with the curators. She also invited young co-curators to create the programme together. And with the concept of "Sputniks," she invited a range of collaborators, artists, theoreticians, and filmmakers to contribute in a manner that was not determined in advance; this could be an article, an exhibition, a project involving members of the artist association, a film, a newspaper, and so forth. Also, to decolonise an art institution as Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung did with Savvy Contemporary in Berlin, he meandered between curating and publishing, which provided space for the development of a discursive formation on different levels and, of course, most importantly, he invited young co-curators in different roles. Even if these positions are not paid at the same rate as one could find money only through project-based applications, it offers the participating young professionals possibilities.

What we see here emerging is a concept of a curatorial constellation, which is based on the concept of a discursive formation, with its open framework—in relation to Peter Bürger's more deterministic view—of the institution of art. It would also mean, as I am trying to develop, focusing

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358 ——— Translated by the author from the following quote: "Was ich unter diesem Titel [Dispositiv] festzumachen versuche, ist erstens ein entschieden heterogenes Ensemble, das Diskurse, Institutionen, architekturale Einrichtungen, reglementierende Entscheidungen, Gesetze, administrative Maßnahmen, wissenschaftliche Aussagen, philosophische, moralische oder philanthropische Lehrsätze, kurz: Gesagtes ebenso wohl wie Ungesagtes umfaßt. Soweit die Elemente des Dispositivs. Das Dispositiv selbst ist das Netz, das zwischen diesen Elementen geknüpft werden kann." Michel Foucault, "Ein Spiel um die Psychoanalyse. Ein Gespräch mit Angehörigen des Département de Psychanalyse, Paris VIII in Vincennes," in M. Foucault, *Dispositive der Macht. Über Sexualität, Wissen und Wahrheit, Archiv und Archäologie,*trans. Jutta Kranz, Hans-Joachim Metzger, Ulrich Raulff, Walter Seitter, and E. Wehr (Berlin: Merve 1978), 118–175, 119 et seq.

on the display spaces as well as the administrative spaces, the cleaning staff as well as the guards or the curators, the hierarchies, the academies, the tourist industry, as well as the nation-building within a museum, the dependencies on cultural policies, on the budget, on production, on the context of the cultural sphere. To zoom into the institution especially means, of course, the hierarchies inside the institution, the behavioural patterns, the ways of speaking and writing. For Andrea Fraser, this situation demands: "It is not a question of inside and outside […]. It's not a question of being against the institution: We are the institution. It's a question of what kind of institution we are, what kind of values we institutionalize, what forms of practice we reward, and what kinds of rewards we aspire to. Because the institution of art is internalized, embodied, and performed by individuals, these are the questions that institutional critique demands we ask, above all, of ourselves."[359] An important consideration is that if we embody the institution, then we can also performatively change the institution; from this perspective, social change is initiated from within the system, which means that there is a right life in the wrong one. In the abovementioned project, the behavioural patterns of the visitor-subjects were challenged (between visitor and agent), the status of the objects (a scaffolding, an arena, or a sculpture) became unclear, and also the topic shown in the four-hour film radiated insecurity and destruction, the opposite of the closed image of the Lacanian mirror stage, if one would like to put it that way. The cooperation of the two artist positions, Korpys/Löffler with Achim Bitter also worked perfectly, as Bitter's extreme disturbance of given spaces and their conception enforced the more laid-back irony of the position of Korpys/Löffler. In the early work of Korpys/Löffler in particular, they managed to propose a slightly demythologising attitude towards socio-political ideas about certain shared memories. One of which was the slightly paranoid reference in the public discussion towards the Red Army Faction. For the left in Germany, members of the RAF were seen as half-admired and half-loathed revolutionaries; for the conservatives, they were the ultimate destroyers of any bourgeois democratic society. In their project "conspiratorial apartment," Korpys/Löffler mercilessly destroyed any mythology around the legendary RAF.[360] In the course of the investigation into a bank robbery by the RAF in Bremen in 1977, the police came across a one-room flat on the 14th floor of a Hanover high-rise building used by the conspirators. The traces, as well as

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[359] Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to the Institution of Critique," 283.

[360] I follow the description by Roland Nachtigäller, in *Korpys/Löffler: Organisation* (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2006), from this digital source: http://www.design-in-human.de/exhibition/loeffler.html, accessed 31 January 2021.

numerous currency bands, indicated that it had obviously served as a hiding place and overnight accommodation. A cashier from the bank in question was also driven to Hanover to identify the bands. Based on four BKA photos of the flat in question, Korpys/Löffler arranged an interview with this bank employee, in the course of which they had him describe the robbery itself, the on-site visit in Hanover, and the later identification of a detainee in Hamburg. From this material, they reconstructed the furnishings of the hiding apartment as accurately as possible with the help of design and product catalogues from the 1970s as part of a book project in 1998. In drawings rich in detail and with explanatory captions, a coherent living space concept emerged from the mixture of the verifiable, the imagined, and the remembered (from Korpys's and Löffler's own childhood rooms), which, among other things, exposes the roots of today's fast furnishers such as IKEA in the emerging need of the 1970s generation for a pragmatic, mobile interior design.

They then commissioned an interior design firm in Bremen to design a contemporary concept for a hiding place for conspirators based on their analyses, which was equally close to everyday furnishings and popular design. Based on the drafts supplied, they finally set up a flat interior in a photo studio, professionally lit it and meticulously recorded the subsequent destruction process with the camera.

Three years after this differentiated appropriation of history, Korpys/Löffler take up the theme once again; this time, the conspirators' room on the 14th floor of the high-rise building in Hanover is reconstructed as a film set, three-dimensionally and at the original scale, and supplemented by a television on which a series of copied Super 8 films that were made in Markus Löffler's school days in a film club are shown: compatriot scenes with original Wehrmacht weapons, lots of ketchup, and shot in the wasteland of an old gravel pit. But of course, this latter addition which I mistrust; this is a revamp, but on an emotional level. It speaks about violence on a personal level instead of on the social, structural, political level, and it also loses the sarcastic distance seen in the version in which the banality of the flat is shown.

In Korpys/Löffler's work think it is a very interesting move to play with the representational mode of a film, which showed different historical situations of destruction in relation to a materialisation in a space. In the cooperation with Achim Bitter the confusion of the status of objects was added, especially as they were recognisable as part of former exhibition projects in the art institutions of the city of Bremen. Seeing the project as part of a curatorial constellation, it shows the different level of entanglement with socio-political contexts and historical questions, which I see as the most difficult and most interesting moments of curatorial and artistic work.

6.3 Analysing the Media Conglomeration—Further Thoughts on Curatorial Constellations

From the previous chapter, we carry with us the realisation that the institutional framing and the mode of representation of each curatorial and artistic project already organises the setting and the paradigms of art. To analyse these differentiated media conglomerations and their (antagonistic) ideological implications, we should take into consideration Ronald Barthes' elegant theory of myth today,[361] which imposes itself somehow urgently into the discussion on such matters as exhibition-making and curating. To follow the way in which any uttering will become constative and even more so, create reality, one has to refer to John L. Austin's speech act theory,[362] which was applied to the arts by Dorothea von Hantelmann,[363] even if she restricts her discussion to the field of art and primarily researches how the sphere of the arts or, using Peter Bürger's terminology, "the institution of art" is challenged and broadened. From my perspective, the research into how this field influences not only the specific sub-category of society, the arts, but through all different forms of distribution of the accompanying visual and verbal discourse (TV, newspaper articles on exhibitions, etc.), we have to take into consideration that all these forms influence the ideological sphere.

With the notion of "constellation," Walter Benjamin described a poetic image for a complex thought structure, which he compared with a zodiacal constellation that only gains significance through the particular constellation in which it shows specific relations between the works of art, materiality, and ideas, in relation to the human observer: "Ideas relate to things as constellations relate to stars. [...] Ideas are eternal constellations, and by grasping the elements as points in such constellations, phenomena are both divided and saved."[364]

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361 ——— Roland Barthes, "Myth Today," in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972).

362 ——— John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

363 ——— Dorothea von Hantelmann, *How to Do Things with Art* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2010).

364 ——— Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, 7 Vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972-1989), Vol. I, 215.
"Die Ideen verhalten sich zu den Dingen wie die Sternbilder zu den

Based on this, Adorno uses the term "constellation" to detect, in a certain way, what must escape the simple notion in philosophy, in his terminology, of the non-identical. This non-identical of a notion, a theoretical concept is circled with a multiplicity of terms, in order to let something appear, which remains not directly expressible.[365] Through a careful circular movement around the central notion, through a constellation of notions, it can be hoped that an object "pops open like the locks of well-kept cash boxes: not by a single key or a single number but a combination of numbers."[366] This could lead to a successful constellation, which makes a moment of understanding or of flashes of the illumination of "truth" possible.[367] As the process is thought to be embedded in a historical moment, it also proposes the possibility of a continuing re-configuration. The analogy to curatorial practice is obvious, as here, too, a variety of artefacts, formats, and practices revolve around a common thematic field, possibly enabling a fuller understanding. In terms of curatorial practice and the field of art in general, what I find missing in this concept is the reference to economics, to the economics of the art field, to the economics of institutions, and to the economic basis of the respective society. I see curating not so much as a philosophical enterprise, but rather in the context of political theory, even if the concept of the constellation can help to better relate certain aspects of curating to each other. The efficacy of a curatorial constellation is given here by a historical socio-political framework, how and if an interpellation becomes effective, and how it can have social or, in other words, a biopolitical impact would have to be explained less through the constellation as such, but from the readability at a certain historical moment.

Sternen. [...] Die Ideen sind ewige Konstellationen und indem die Elemente als Punkte in derartigen Konstellationen erfasst werden, sind die Phänomene aufgeteilt und gerettet zugleich." Translation by the author.

365 ———— See Katharina Eberlein-Braun, *Erkenntnis und Interpretation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 32; and Helga Gripp, *Theodor W. Adorno. Erkenntnisdimensionen negativer Dialektik* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1986).

366 ———— Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik in Negative Dialektik. Jargon der Eigentlichkeit* (GS6) (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 166. Translation by the author.

367 ———— See also Theodor W. Adorno, *Über die Sprache des Philosophen*, in *Philosophische Frühschriften* (GS1) (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 341.

6.3.1 Revisiting Display: Display and Backstage—Beyond the Project

To discuss in which ways curatorial projects are positioned in relation to real politics, one has to consider in what ways curatorial and artistic projects interpellate their respective viewers. In what follows, I use the terms "display" and "backstage" to somewhat loosely describe a particular relationship within the activity commonly referred to as "exhibiting," which is said to hold the promise of disclosing "knowledge" hitherto concealed. (Here again, I only use the word "knowledge" in quotations marks, as it is questionable what this pledge actually means.) This relationship, which affects all cultural and visual offerings, contains a voyeuristic perspective that foreshadows and discloses, conceals and detracts, thus keeping a yearning for images alive.[368]

The term "display" is fairly recent in the context of exhibitions in German-speaking countries, first emerging about ten to twenty years ago; in the American context, the term has been used at least since the 1980s in the context of exhibitions.[369] Its range of meaning encompasses presentation display, display and packaging, advertising and computer display, and refers to new economies and new conceptions of (re)presentation oriented towards a specific "surface," specifically a "user interface." In German, "display" refers (as a borrowed English expression) literally to a screen and to the visual presentation of factual matter. Its horizon of meaning indicates the primacy of the surface over a complicated, difficult, and incomprehensible background.[370] The term "backstage" thus attempts to grasp those parts of an exhibition apparatus that satisfy—within a specific display—our desire to see and know more within a short space of time. What part of an exhibition is peddled as the hitherto unseen? For that matter, what part of the exhibition apparatus remains hidden from view? The term "backstage" thus by all means implies that exhibitions are part of the culture industry, where it also operates as a metaphor of desire; only access to the backstage dissolves the distance to the imagined star. What are the effects of these backstage moments, especially when they address viewers-as-subjects? Which movement or impetus initiates such moments? Since I am especially interested in the relationship between display and backstage (that is, the relationship between the displayed and the allegedly hitherto never displayed, the effectively concealed) in contemporary art exhibitions, I will first situate my reflections within history.

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368 ——— This paragraph is based on an article that was published in different forms, both in German and English.

369 ——— I am indebted to the proofreader and researcher Stephanie Carwin for this hint.

370 ——— See Michael Barchet, Donata Koch-Haag, et. al., eds., *Ausstellen. Der Raum der Oberfläche* (Weimar: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 2003).

Mary Anne Staniszewski is considered one of the principal precursors of a critical inquiry into exhibition display. Based on a discussion of exhibitions held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA), her study, *The Power of Display*, reveals a series of paradigmatic exhibition designs and their transformations over time.[371] Staniszewski concludes that in the first decades of the period investigated (1929 to 1970), there was a remarkable cross-section of different exhibition displays, which subsequently became more or less indistinguishable, conventional forms of exhibition.

I will first consider the various kinds of exhibitions that came into existence, in order to thereafter discuss contemporary exhibitions on the basis of the insights gained. My reading of Staniszewski leads me to conclude that three normative kinds of exhibition developed over time: first, the propagandist, emotional exhibition; secondly, the ennobling, elevating art exhibition; and thirdly, or put briefly, the pedagogical, animating design exhibition. For the moment, I refer to the fourth category, the experimental exhibition, useless as a mass media exhibition, as a "self-critical" exhibition.

Bayer, *Bauhaus 1919-1938*, Exhibition at MoMA, Herbert Bayer looking through a hole in the wall.

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[371] Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (London and Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998).

Staniszewski attributes the normative development of exhibitions to the circumstance that the conventions of museum presentation only arose together with the development of the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA). As institutional practices stabilised, curators, designers, and architects began to develop their professional parameters. From 1953 on, moreover, a permanent exhibition was mounted at MoMA, and exhibition standards thus became determined for a longer period of time. This, however, was not the only factor that led to standardisation. Experimental designs, such as Herbert Bayer's *Bauhaus* exhibition, were heavily criticised for their inaccessible and disturbing visual language. Bayer's unusual instances of staging exhibits contravened viewing habits and the demand for easily digestible representation.

He subsequently revised his hypotheses on exhibition-making, and mounted *Road to Victory* (1942), a show of American propaganda photographs, along the lines of the new criteria. Comparable to the later *The Family of Man*, it marked a new form of the propagandist exhibition (**type 1**). *The Family of Man* propagated a patriarchal concept of the nuclear family as a universal model. Using a simple language, the exhibition played on the emotional register and established a connection with visitors, who could see themselves as part of a large family (of the patriarchal male?). Thus, the exhibition displayed a global family, without, however, touching upon prevailing economic or political conditions. It suggested that human affinity arises from experiencing similar emotions, utterly irrespective of economic circumstances. *The Family of Man* travelled the world for years, with the implicit remit to convey democratic values, a Western conception of freedom, equality, and fraternity as constitutional principles, and of the nuclear family as the cell of society. It situated the audience as a single, unified international audience, whose implicit structure was the nuclear family.

The Family of Man, exhibition view

Exhibitions are meant to be readable and acceptable. MoMA's exhibition policy thus appealed increasingly to a certain kind of visitor, that is to say, at the same way of **addressing** and **creating** such a visitor. It was paradigmatic for "successful" MoMA exhibitions to create spaces that enhanced the sense of the viewer's autonomy, especially in art and design exhibitions, as Staniszewski argues (**type 2**). It is important to realise that among all imaginable kinds of possible presentation modes, it was precisely those that emerged as ritualised forms that made one forget their ideological character, thus preventing viewers from recognising their own voyeuristic perspective. Staniszewski observes that this mode of presentation enhances the autonomy of the object and the viewer's notion of autonomy through their one-on-one confrontation and through situations providing a general overview.[372]

Good Design, exhibition view

While design exhibitions (**type 3**) take up the ennobling gestures of art exhibitions, their modes of presentation relate to viewers' everyday environment. Good design was readily displayed in stylish living rooms or in spaces intimating sales settings, thereby subtly implying a pedagogy of consumption and gender roles. Besides these three well-known kinds of exhibitions (which obviously also exist in blended or hybrid forms), early experimental exhibition concepts and exhibition designs (**type 4**) to this day present new formats and ideas, which are currently the subject of

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[372]   Ibid., 292-293.

inquiry and reappraisal in art installations as well. The reason for this might be that it is precisely those kinds of exhibitions and designs that have not enjoyed mainstream success that today provide us with material to reconsider presentation modes and thus to discuss the conception of display not only in terms of surface but also as a visual proposal. Seen thus, exhibitions proving more difficult to read, and moreover dealing explicitly with viewer positions, represent a fourth category; they include, among others, Kiesler's and Barr's experimental exhibition designs, where the viewer's position is taken into account in a visually recognisable manner.

Types of Exhibitions in Contemporary Art

Recently, artists have once again begun to present extremely emotional scenes, thus referring back to the first kind of exhibition. In 2008, such exhibitions included Christoph Schlingensief's at the Zürich Migros Museum[373] and Kai Althoff's at the Kunsthalle Zürich.[374] Both exhibitions consisted of a multi-layered, multiply connoted conglomeration of artefacts, materials, and media. Althoff in particular works with references to images disseminated by the media. The press release for Althoff's exhibition determines a specific way of reading the exhibition: "Narrative elements shape his work and make a personal, direct and inescapable demand on the viewer's involvement. The artist's place of presentation for his works is never a white cube, but always an all-encompassing locality that Kai Althoff has transformed into an area for a 'private' experience of his works composed of everyday materials: carpeting, wall hangings, draperies, partitions, atmospheric coloring, smells and intimacies. It is as if we were suddenly granted access to the long locked chamber of an individual obsession."[375]

Althoff's installation is situated as the turning inside out of one or several pathologised subjects. Nightmarish scenes, sexual "perversions," and childlike assertions find visual expression in an exuberant overall design that envelops the visitor, namely the hell of private life. Thus, a central mechanism of contemporary culture is translated into art, specifically the displaying of intimate relations and a kind of intense exhibitionism, as well as the viewer's vampiric ravenousness for the details and images of celebrity life. The hidden and intimate part of a personality reveals itself to us,

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373 ———— Christoph Schlingensief, *Querverstümmelung*, 3 November – 3 February 2008; Migros Museum, Zurich.

374 ———— Kai Althoff, *Ich meine es auf jeden Fall schlecht mit Ihnen*, 10 November 2007 – 13 January 2008, Kunsthalle Zürich.

375 ———— Press release of Kunsthalle Zürich for the Kai Althoff Exhibition, see https://www.kunsthallezurich.ch/en/ausstellungen/683-kai-althoff, accessed 1 May 2022.

and the display seeks to make public a persona's "backstage." The exhibition's backstage—that is to say, the doors, offices, rear stairs, storage rooms, and political dependencies and subtexts—are, however, denied all the more persistently, for everything must be subjected to the staging of an overwhelming machinery of impressions from which the visitor cannot escape. The exhibition thus becomes a total-environment experience space, and this "matrix" both encompasses and appropriates visitors. The press release for the Althoff exhibition makes it clear that these scenarios, and their visual and scenic opulence, are nevertheless concerned with political constellations: "Kai Althoff's works revolve around fantastical, mythological and dream-like scenarios on the forms that friendship and sex relations take, the integration into dubious social groups such as religions, 'Burschenschaften' (fraternities), political radicalism, the bourgeoisie or subcultures."

In a press conference, Schlingensief also made a political reference when he observed that he considered his art to be a reaction to his family's entanglement with the Nazi regime. But are we as viewers thus not drawn into political reflections situated only within the personal sphere? And does this not lead us into an impasse which excludes political action? Which spheres of action are thus opened up?

Christoph Schlingensief, *Querverstümmelung*, 3 November – 3 February 2008, Migros Museum, Zurich.

Rereading Art as a Frame of Reference

A particular display, however, can also serve to radically question the frame of reference—not only beyond but also within the art system: the Lentos Art Museum in Linz, for instance, mounted a spectacular inaugural exhibition when Stella Rollig took office as its new director. The British artist Darren Almond laid out a large-scale itinerary through a sequence of video projections featuring excerpts from the deserted interiors of Linz prison.[376] To enter the exhibition, visitors had to cross a threshold comprising an oversized digital clock with a precise indication of the local time. Entering through this uncanny gate, one was surrounded with large screens of floors and rooms that showed the local Linz prison. Thus, the prison space became mapped onto the exhibition space, in which the uncomfortable sensation arose that otherwise strictly separate social spheres could be related. Both sanctioned social behaviour and the contingency of one upon the other abruptly imposed itself—both localities now seemed to be sites serving a (political) function. The passage of time, made evident by the digital indication of local time, involved museum visitors in the sense of the simultaneous elapsing of both their own real time—and lifetime—and that of the prison inmates. Not only did this unsettle and "arrest" visitors, but so did the knowledge that one of the projections was not a canned video but a streaming video broadcast along with ambient noise straight from Linz prison. What kind of paradigms of viewing did this fluster? In terms of fundamental viewing habits and experience, the projections initially seemed to recall television formats and to superficially resemble "boring" documentary images.

The French film and media theorist Christian Metz claims that cinematographic projection amounts to a paradigmatic instance of cultural production in our society: "It has very often, and quite rightly, been said that the cinema is a technique of the imaginary. On the other hand, this technique is characteristic of a historical period (that of capitalism) and of a particular state of society, so-called industrial civilisation."[377] For Metz, the foremost quality of the cinema is the construction of a fictional narrative, drawing on the primary imaginary of photography and phonography. The viewer, however, is intricately imbricated with the fictional nature of this projection. For Metz, moreover, the cinematic imaginary is complexly intertwined with the imaginary in a Lacanian sense, as an intrapersonal psychic institution. For Lacan, while the imaginary and

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376 ——— Darren Almond, *Live Sentence*. 14 May – 27 September 2004, Lentos Art Museum, Linz.

377 ——— Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 3-4.

Darren Almond, *Live Sentence*, 14 May – 27 September 2004,
Lentos Art Museum, Linz.

symbolic are opposed, they are nevertheless constantly embroiled; the imaginary arises as a secondary narcissism in the mirror stage. The mirror stage denotes the fundamental deception of the self in the constitution of the subject and represents the durable mark of the mirror. The subject therefrom infers the deception of a self-contained person, lying outside him- or herself as it were, which alienates human beings in their own reflection. In the long term, it makes them, as Metz observes, "the double of [their] double,"[378] through their involvement in the process of projecting an imaginary personality onto an imaginary "screen." What this process also involves is subliminal adherence to the exclusive relation to the mother (which affirms the mirror image), and thus to desire as a pure effect of lack. All this, Metz further observes, is "undoubtedly reactivated by the play of that *other* mirror, the cinema screen."[379]

In this manner, ordinary film scenes affirm the imaginary components existing in the viewer's psychic topography. Cinema narratives are pervaded by social and cultural codes at the same time, thus establishing manifold relations between the "cinematographic apparatus" and the symbolic, and they establish the narcissistic self again and again.

Visitors walking through the Linz exhibition were not confronted with a particularly cinema-specific narrative totality, driven by a storyline and characters. On the contrary, Darren Almond's show presented a fragmented narrative, consisting mostly of long and one-dimensional shots, and an extremely slow sequence of cuts. Such a scheme in itself breaks customary viewing habits, since the film-specific imaginary unity is questioned from the outset. As visitors, we wander through the installation in search of the familiarly patterned cinematographic apparatus, since this holds in store multiple affirmations and pacifications. While we begin by looking for familiar characters to grant us a comfortable sense of recognition, instead we behold empty spaces, and only excerpts thereof, and hear unspecific sounds (is that perhaps a door banging?). Owing to the scopic drive, a voyeuristic perspective is part of all cultural and visual offerings. And yet the cinematic situation involves a particular viewing technique. For Metz, the cinema additionally involves the hidden spectator, who experiences the projection as a double distancing, since a film is produced at other sites, i.e., the shooting locations and the editing bay, in addition to the already removed site of projection. Unlike the theatre, the cinema reaffirms the viewing subject's voyeuristic stance. While cinema spectators assume the actors' implicit agreement, they are also certain that the lack (in a Lacanian sense) will be maintained, which in turns motivates and spurs on their desire. "For the voyeurism of the spectator," Metz asserts:

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378 ——— Ibid., 14.
379 ——— Ibid.

There is no need for him to be seen (it is dark in the cinema, and the visible is limited entirely to the screen). One doesn't need a knowing object, or rather, no object that wants to know, no object-subject that shares the activity of the partial instinct with the spectators. It is enough, and it must be like this—and this is just as much a specific path of gratification—that the actor should behave as though he were not seen (and therefore as though that he did not see his voyeur); it must have be that he goes about his ordinary activities and continues to exist, just as the story of the film intends him to continues his antics in a closed space, while he is particularly keen to ignore the glass rectangle fitted into one of the walls and that he lives in a kind of aquarium, which simply saves a bit more on its ,windows' than real aquariums (precisely this restraint has its share in the scopic game.[380]

Darren Almond's installation questions all these mechanisms: the narrative is split, the actor's object-subject relation is absent, and the actor's consent is denied. Since one of the screens contains streaming video, the assurance provided by a canned image is also absent; on the contrary, live projection foregrounds the viewer's vampiric voyeurism. What unsettles viewers even more is that they have no knowledge about which of the projections is the live stream. The awareness that one of the projections is broadcast live from the prison at once reveals the inappropriateness of the "secret" observation—the projection looks back at the viewers, as it were. Viewers see themselves "from the outside"; moreover, they find themselves in a strange situation, namely as observers of other people's misery, whose lives are contained in a state institution, just as the art museum also functions as a state institution. The installation was powerful enough to induce viewers to reflect on their own positioning in a social construction. Not all visitors appreciated this, however, and the reactions of the local press and politicians made perfectly clear that the message had indeed been understood.

The Linz exhibition offered a view of the backstage, locating the invisible part of an art exhibition not in personal history but in a social narrative, of which we are a part. It thus situated us not as vampires of other people's emotions but thrust us into the scenario. Almond's exhibition made it clear that we are not only observers but also participants, thus reordering the relationship between display and backstage.

As the very different exhibition projects *Simply Botiful* and *Live Sentence* show, exhibition displays are currently being actively employed to reverse the line of view. The backstage, poverty-stricken Londoners and the Linz

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380 ——————— Ibid., 76-77 and 96.

prison inmates are all looking backwards, in that the exhibition visitors recognise themselves as specks in the staged tableau. Bourgeois exhibition-goers become visible as part of a social staging and a social contract. As visitors and viewers, they experience a phase of uncertainty, which can, however, afford them new insights, beyond a voyeuristic dispositif.

6.3.2 Discussing Exhibitions: Between the Space of Appearance and the Space of Surveillance

In the following, I would like to present some theoretical approaches that negotiate the complexity of exhibition-making and "giving to see"[381] from a historically oriented pictorial science. Anna Schober thus immediately refers to a historically situational context of the exhibition, which goes far beyond the rather scattered essays oriented to individual exhibition projects, like in recently published anthologies.

In the essay, which translates to "A Piece of Non-Time in Time, Historical Exhibitions as Forums of the Public,"[382] Anna Schober, on the other hand, opens her argumentation with a term by Hannah Arendt, the "public space of appearance."[383] Arendt used it to refer to spaces in which we could find qualities that connect and separate us. Anna Schober asks, "What role do aesthetics, historical objects and the staging of history play in maintaining a specific political life?" For this argument, we have to understand what is meant by the "space of appearance" and if the exhibition space is able to provide such a setting. To understand a possible relationship or contradiction between a space of appearance (Arendt) and a space of surveillance (Foucault), I will rely on the discussion of these notions and their connotations by Xavier Marquez.[384] In his view, both Arendt and Foucault developed different but complementary theories about visibility and power. In an Arendtian "space of appearance," the common visibility of actors generates power, which is understood as the potential for collective action; in a Foucauldian "space of surveillance,"

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381 ———— "Giving to see" is here used in a Lacanian sense: the subject answers to be seen with different versions of her- or himself that are projected on the screen. A version of her- or himself is "given to be seen."

382 ———— Anna Schober, "Ein Stück Nicht-Zeit in der Zeit – Historische Ausstellungen als Foren von Öffentlichkeit," accessed 7 February 2002, http://www.eforum-zeitgeschichte.at/2_01a2.html. The title is roughly translated by the author.

383 ———— See Hannah Arendt, "Geistige Tätigkeiten in einer Welt der Erscheinungen," in *Vom Leben des Geistes. Das Denken. Das Wollen* (Munich: Piper, 1998), esp. 75 et seq.

384 ———— Xavier Marquez, "Spaces of Appearances and Spaces of Surveillance," *Polity* 44, no. 1, Confronting the Past (January 2012): 6-31.

visibility facilitates control and normalisation.[385] They are both concerned with similar problems regarding the relationship between power, visibility, and what constitutes 'identity,' or subjectivity. And as Marquez states: "These two types of spaces represent poles in a spectrum of possibilities for the settings where selves and subjects are partially constituted by the ways in which they become visible. A space of appearance is a setting where individuality emerges from self-disclosure among equals; a space of surveillance is a setting where an individual's identity is produced through specialized techniques of surveillance and punishment."[386] Already in these first sentences of discussing the problem, one can see that the idea of a possibility of equality for all speakers' positions is based on an ideal situation, which one might describe as a utopian situation. Arendt also differentiates between a political space and a social space; equality is something that is a precondition for political space, a space of appearance.[387] In this ideal situation, the people who have come together could

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385 ——— Ibid., 6.

386 ——— Ibid., 7.

387 ——— See also the discussion around the enforcement of desegregation in "Little Rock" in the 2007 paper by Vikki Bell, "Chapter Four Appearance: Thinking Difference in the Political Realm with Hannah Arendt," Goldsmiths Research Online, accessed 14 November 2019, https://research.gold.ac.uk/82/2/Soc-Bell-Feminist_Imagination-2000_GRO.pdf: "Equality, as she [Arendt] suggests in *The Origins*, should not be thought as a social concept, because it is a political one." I agree with Vikki Bell when she comes to the following conclusion: "It is as if the possibility of appearance in Arendt's thinking requires a disembodied participation; in part this is as a result of Arendt's privileging of speech as the modality of appearance whereby an actor 'identifies himself' […]. Bodily difference is positioned as an obstruction to participation as equal citizens in the public realm. As I have argued above, this might be an accurate description of the political situation in the South (and elsewhere), but Arendt seems to elevate the argument away from description and onto a level of analyses which is highly problematic. Arendt's theories posit a world in which social discrimination takes place, allowing a social plurality that somehow benefits the political realm, but her argument is that such discrimination cannot be allowed to structure that realm. Forms of free association, however, frequently have a relationship to forms of exclusion and political discrimination; the idea that spontaneous social discrimination has an innocence that is unrelated to forms of political discrimination is a utopian aspiration in Arendt's vision of an ideal political world. She writes as though this ideal situation were already the case, such that, and here I agree with the arguments put forward by James Bohman (1996), she denies the way in which there is unequal access to the 'space of appearance' within which political decisions are taken. Moreover, the ability to challenge those decisions, or avoid their implications, means that the concept of political equality is assumed rather than its failure critiqued by Arendt," 18.

make claims together; they could act collectively, using Marchart's term. In terms of exhibition-making, this might be translated into proposing situations, in which an equal speaker position is installed, as an ideal occurrence even if this moment is of course also an illusion. This could not happen only on the level of content, of course. The provided situation, which would in Arendt's view always have an unpredictable outcome, could simulate a moment of equal power and therefore question existing power relations. Based on this notion of space of appearance, one might imagine exhibitions that try on the one hand to provide a space of representation to groups of people or specific issues, which are not yet seen or heard enough, and it could also be a catalyst for meetings of groups and people who would usually not speak eye-to-eye. But as mentioned above, it would also make other interventions in the institution necessary, interventions into a conventional display, into the institution as an apparatus. A Foucauldian view on exhibition-making is provided by Tony Bennett, who also describes the moment of instituting class-related behavioural patterns of the self-controlled citizen. Maybe it is one of the underlying spasms of contemporary exhibition-making that both possibilities are present in this cultural format.

Anna Schober's perspective on exhibiting is situated within a historical understanding of contexts. Each exhibition updates and negotiates the view of historical and social contexts: "The great significance with which the invention of tradition is charged today in the Western postmodern world results from a comprehensive shift and transformation that begins in modernity. For this change, which we call 'modernity', involves the emergence of a new form of being in the world, characterized by an irreparable chasm between the past and the future, a chasm in which questions of meaning press our being, but also represent moments of possibility."[388] According to her, this permanent re-invention of history happens in a mass society in which the small social units of villages and families as well as the big religions are beginning to break away, and other ways were needed to connect a considerable number of people with each other through other cultural channels, exhibitions, and reports about them might be one of these channels.[389]

Schober rejects the main paradigm of the exhibition space, that of the empty, transparent, universal, and neutral space, because precisely the idea of such an emptiness and such an everywhere and nowhere is still the cornerstone of a Western, Eurocentric knowledge structure and is closely connected with the illusion of perfect knowledge and knowledge

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388 ———— Hannah Arendt, Walter Benjamin, and Bertolt Brecht, *Zwei Essays* (Munich: Piper, 1971), 49 et seq., quoted from Schober, "Ein Stück Nicht-Zeit in der Zeit." Translation by the author.

389 ———— Schober, "Ein Stück Nicht-Zeit in der Zeit."

of the other, with the lifting of individual knowledge out of the masses of those to be taught and with the implementation of certain hierarchical forms of gaze.[390] Schober describes the inscribed structure of colonial relations in this way and connects it with the class character of the exhibition space. She sees both exhibitions and museums as spaces that have always been socially manufactured.[391] Social exclusions and inclusions are thus continuously produced and stabilised. In these social spaces, admiration and slander circulate, also by confronting each other with different logics, such as science, art, historiography, memory, and individual recollections. Schober identifies museums and exhibition spaces as elements of a broad network of relationships; they are subject to "invisible" censorship, Schober here referring to Michel de Certeau, who coined the term "censorship of place."[392]

Comparable to Foucault's concept of a discursive formation and, of course, feminist criticism of exclusionary procedures, legitimacy is represented in these places of representation, visibility is made possible or rendered impossible, or in Hannah Arendt's terminology, a space of appearance can emerge or, of course, it could be denied, when inequality is the main factor in a public (or curatorial) situation. The foundation of a curatorial constellation is in principle unequal, as the curator, the artist, and the institutional context preformulate a hierarchy in the curatorial project; therefore, in order to provide a space for a more equal encounter, it has to be carefully designed: what kind of setting would make an exchange possible? One possibility is to show the inequalities on which the institution is based:

> History is therefore an operation that is related to certain places, or "laboratories", to a collective analytical procedure and to collective forms of staging. History is thus part of the reality it explores. Exhibitions are linked to the laboratory of science, museums or art as well as to places of politics and economy. However, and this is important to note, this does not say anything about what is produced in a history book or in an exhibition—the relationship to the laboratory does not represent a hierarchical relationship of dependence.[393]

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390 ——— Ibid.

391 ——— See "social space": Henri Lefèbvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991 (1974)). See Irit Rogoff, "Deep Space," in *Projektionen. Rassismus und Sexismus in der Visuellen Kultur*, ed. Annegret Friedrich (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 1997), esp. 53 et seq.

392 ——— See Michel de Certeau, *Das Schreiben der Geschichte*, trans. Sylvia M. Schomburg-Scherff (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus Verlag, 1991).

393 ——— Schober, "Ein Stück Nicht-Zeit in der Zeit."

A very interesting example is which way the Van Abbemuseum, under the curatorship of Charles Esche and Galit Eilat, made the colonial structure visible. It exposed the reality of the women working in tobacco factories and plantations; it is on this colonial past on which the museum is based.

Screenshot from a talk (May 2021) by Charles Esche showing the basis on the Van Abbemuseum's wealth

To come back to the notion of a space of surveillance, here, visibility is not merely an occurrence but a means of control that is instituted. The institution that Foucault presents as a role model is the surveillance in prisons, sketched by Bentham, but he also draws links towards other institutions like schools and their system of punishment and the army, as mentioned before. But when Marquez argues[394] that the observed may, in turn, escape by developing counter-techniques of invisibility, I think he misses the point. It is not the actual moment of being seen (nor the evasion) that is crucial, but the process in which the subject conceives him/herself as being seen. And as mentioned before, this introverted projection is what Foucault brings together with the scopic regime of modernity, the biopolitical phenomena, when the institution of control manifests itself as part of this newly formed subjectivity. A biopolitical relevance is achieved when it is not just one entity to be addressed but many.

Here, Foucault develops an understanding of subjectivity which is similar to the notion of interpellation by Althusser.[395] The imagined or actual moment of being seen and addressed becomes part of forming subjectiv-

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[394] Marquez, "Spaces of Appearances and Spaces of Surveillance," 23.

[395] See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971).

ity. One can easily understand how and why mass and social media, no matter the actual device on which it is delivered, can have such a biopolitical effect. Returning to the exhibition space, the paradigmatic moment of being on display, being seen from all sides, being rendered singular, does indeed preconfigure a correlation besides the already mentioned exclusions by Tony Bennett when he discusses the ostensibly equal position of viewers:

> It is, however, around that phrase "at least in principle" that the key issues lie. For in practice, of course, the space of representation shaped into being by the public museum was hijacked by all sorts of particular social ideologies: it was sexist in the gendered patterns of its exclusions, racist in its assignation of the aboriginal populations of conquered territories to the lowest rungs of human evolution, and bourgeois in the respect that it was clearly articulated to bourgeois rhetorics of progress.[396]

So, one could conclude that the exhibition space might have the possibility of offering a space of appearance if the ideological paradigms of inequality which underly its constitution are changed as well, and this also openly.[397]

6.3.3 Project: Games.Fights.Videos—with Diane Nerven, Hito Steyerl, Oliver Ressler, Josh On, Alaska, Summer Camp Project, Bremer Flüchtlingsinitiative, Anti Rassismus Büro, Künstlerhaus Bremen

Dorothee: How to do things with art and curating? What means and projects can be used to question the physical, aesthetic, social, and political functions of the exhibition space? How can this "machinery to impress someone" be used to situate the gallery and project space as a specific location within a city, as a specific position within the art establishment, and to speak from this location?
Fanny: Let's speak about visible effects in real space. There is a kind of tactics of mirroring. The exhibition space might look very nice, but backstage there are spaces that can be filthy and in complete disorder (cellars, storage areas). This always seems strange to me. The opacity not only extends to the real space, but it also extends to the exhibition policies and power

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396 ———— Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 97.
397 ———— Schober again relates her argument to Hannah Arendt: Kimberley Curtis, *Our Sense of the Real: Aesthetic Experience and Arendtian Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 20 et seq.

Games, Fights, Videos,
Kuenstlerhaus Bremen,
2002, curated by
D. Richter

relationships. In the end, it all comes down to who decides what to buy, who cleans the toilets, who decides the budget, and so on.

Dorothee: Ha ha…

False-Hearted Fanny: Yes, I recall a story the Guerrilla Girls recounted about an art dealer: "Pat Hearn, a trendy art dealer, approached us a few years back and asked if we were interested in doing an installation for her gallery. We kicked the idea around but were pretty much split on the issue of participating in a commercial system that is discriminating to the extreme. It seemed like sleeping with the enemy. So we made her an offer she had to refuse. We proposed a show about the situation of women and artists of color in her gallery. She would have to open her books so we could compare their sales prices. We promised not to mention names, just gender and race. 'How interesting, how radical,' she cooed. 'Let me think about it and get right back to you.' We never heard from her again.—Gertrude Stein."[398] (The Guerrilla Girls always choose the names of famous women in art history if they appear in a conversation or comment on something). Sometimes the will to make things public will only go so far.

Dorothee: Let's talk about the project "Games.Fights.Videos" from May 2002, which I curated for the Künstlerhaus Bremen. The idea was to have a special inventory of political approaches in the visual arts and to review them critically. The project in the Künstlerhaus sought to allow encounters without levelling out the fundamental differences between artistic and political-activist action. The project sought to endure the tension and confront the existing artistic and activist approaches with all their ambivalence. Artist videos were shown as well as information material from local groups that are directly activist—in the care of prisoners, with femi-

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398 ———— Guerrilla Girls, *Confessions of the Guerrilla Girls* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1995), 22.

nist actions, or with activities in which politics is carried out via the means of culture (newspapers, websites, videos).

Fanny: I remember it was one of the most well-attended projects at the KH, and the public was really diverse. The political groups had a big table in the middle of the room where their material was presented; the more artistic projects were shown on monitors along the walls. And two of the videos were additionally screened on a big screen later, which again made it necessary to reorganise the space with chairs. The two videos were *Normalität 10* by Hito Steyerl and *This is what democracy looks like!* by Oliver Ressler. We could speak about the exhibition design later…

Dorothee: Let's start with these videos and the artistic contributions. The interesting thing was that the assignment was arbitrary in terms of being more cultural or more political[399]—especially since the political groups also made videos about certain actions, organised symposia, etc. But to insist on the difference is also productive.

Games, Fights, Videos, 2002

Normalität 10: Hito Steyerl (DE), 1999/2000, 32 min., Beta SP. The destruction of Jewish graves; the march of neo-Nazis in front of the Brandenburg Gate; the media discussion of antisemitic acts of violence: in short documentary episodes on everyday political life in Germany and Austria, filmmaker Steyerl not only poses the question of the current "normality" of such events, but also of the conditions of filmic reflection.

This is what democracy looks like!: Oliver Ressler (AT), 2002, 38 min., video. The video deals with events surrounding a demonstration on 1 July 2001 against the World Economic Forum, a private lobby association of big business that met in Salzburg. In order to ensure the orderly course of

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[399] The German texts of the short self-descriptions translated by the author with the help of translation software DeepL.

economic globalisation, the WEF conference venue in the centre of Salzburg was closed off, and all demonstrations except a standing demonstration at the station forecourt were banned. During an unauthorised demonstration in Salzburg, 919 demonstrators were surrounded by police and held for over seven hours. Talks on the events in Salzburg were held with six demonstrators, and original recordings were made.

Die Rote Zora: Oliver Ressler (AT), 2000, 28 min., video, German/English. Red Zora is a militant women's group that committed more than 20 attacks and various other violations in Germany in the 1980s. Nuclear, genetic, and reproductive technology were fought, and the targets were corporations, such as Bayer, Schering, and Siemens, research institutes, and the property of "representatives of the patriarchal order" (RZ 1983). It was a principle not to injure people in the process. The central element of the video *Die Rote Zora* is an interview conducted with Corinna Kawaters in the summer of 2000. Kawaters is the only Red Zora woman convicted by a court of "membership in a terrorist organisation" (§129a). Another interview was held with the social scientist Erika Feyerabend, who, like the other members of the Essen Gene Archive, was caught in the maelstrom of police investigations against Red Zora at the end of the 1980s.

Games, Fights, Videos, 2002

In the Blood: Diane Nerven (US), 2000, 30:35 min., video, colour, stereo: The film was made before and during the artist's DAAD scholarship. "*In the Blood* is an experimental documentary about American Jewish attitudes towards Germans and the role the Holocaust plays in shaping Jewish identity. This layered collage combines appropriated images, original footage, sampled sounds, and fragments of audio conversations to examine perceptions and representations of Germany, cultural identity, and collective memory." The film makes us aware of the links between anti-Semitism and xenophobia in German society.

"**kanalB** sees itself as a left-wing radical trash video magazine that appears on VHS tapes and on the Internet. It is intended to replace conventional television. kanalB publishes short films, gema-free music videos and all kinds of crazy no-budget anarcho-entertainment. (Gema The abbreviation GEMA stands for "Society for Musical Performing and Mechanical Reproduction Rights". GEMA is a collecting society within the meaning of the Wahrnehmungsgesetz (German Performing Rights Act) and plays a fiduciary intermediary role: it administers the copyrights that its members, the music authors, have assigned to it and makes them available to the music user in return for remuneration.) Any public event in which music is played has to play a certain amount to GEMA.) For important events, such as the EU summit in Laeken or the G8 in Genoa, there are kanalB specials in which the New International Extra-Parliamentary Opposition and rioting police officers are portrayed."[400]

www.theyrule.net **www.theyrule.net** by Josh On: The website shown at this year's Whitney Biennial reveals the relationships of the powerful class in the USA. For example, party donations from senior managers of the most powerful companies are listed, as well as the entanglement of supervisory board positions. They Rule is a starting point for research about powerful individuals and corporations.

http://citycrimecontrol.net[401]: **City.crime.control (c3)** has been working since 1999 as a project workgroup on the topics of public/private space, urban research, and urban intervention. The starting point of the critical examination is subcultural self-understanding and experimentation with different forms of mediation and action."

And now to the groups that understand themselves as mainly political, Alaska was very active for some years; they also organised a mixture of films and talks along the notion of science fiction, which in a rather joyful way explored the notion of utopia. The other groups mostly dealt with refugees and their rights; it was astonishing that the groups did usually not work together. So, the project at the KH brought them together; it is of course not clear if this in any way helped them to work together more closely. As some of them also organised evenings during the exhibition, my impression was that the groups kept mostly to themselves, but people from the cultural scene did show up in small numbers to these events. To have a long-lasting effect, this project should have been repeated.

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400 ———— KanalB ran until 2015.

401 ———— City Crime Control's website is still online; the last contribution dates from 2010.

Anti-Rassismus-Büro Bremen (Anti-Racism Office): "The Anti-Rassis-mus-Büro Bremen (Anti-Racism Office) was founded in 1991 as a protest against the new Foreigners Act and goes back to a history of internation-alist and anti-fascist work, including at the Third World House. The work of the Anti-Racism Office is based on three main pillars: consulting and research; solidarity and action; public relations and printing. The advi-sory activity is less under the sign of social work appeasement and indi-vidualisation of conflicts; also, the work of the authorities is mimicked, and their inactivity is not downplayed. Instead, the intention is to help refugees gain rights and to make it more difficult for the authorities to prey upon the ignorance of those affected. The counselling is intended as a sign of solidarity, mutual help, and white responsibility for racism against the background of our relative privileges." www.is-bremen.de/arab

ALASKA: "Alaska is a group and a magazine that sees itself as 'interna-tionalist, feminist, left-wing, different' and has not only declared war on worldwide exploitation, but also on traditionalism and humorless seri-ousness of the left. The activities of Alaska include political events and campaigns, book projects and videos, seminars and congresses such as the 'Out of This World—Science Fiction, Politics, Utopia'. The meetings of the Rosa Luxemburg Club Bremen also take place in the Alaska Salon." http://www.outofthisworld.de/alaska

Internationaler Menschenrechtsverein: "The International Human Rights Association Bremen e.V. IMRV was founded in 1996 by refugees. Since then, the association has been working as a self-help organisation for refugees, for the preservation of human rights, both in Germany and in the individual countries of origin. The greatest threat for refugees is deportation to countries where torture and violent oppression of the peo-ple are a means to implement policies, e.g., Peru, Turkey, Syria, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Congo-Zaire, Togo, Iran, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Therefore, IMRV's most important task is to prevent deportations through cam-paigns. The IMRV Bremen is also one of the initiators of the 'Caravan for the Rights of Refugees and Migrants' in 1998, a journey of refugees to 44 cities with events, street theatre, and demonstrations. A new caravan is currently being prepared." www.humanrights.de

Crossover Summer Camp Project: "The Crossover Project assumes that all relations of power and domination are closely intertwined. For this reason, the initiators make nation, patriarchy, capitalism, heterosexism, anti-Semitism, and racism, among others, their intertwining themes. The aim is to open up new perspectives of resistance. In January 2002, the Crossover Conference was organized in Bremen; some of the debates

begun there will be continued at a meeting in Berlin in April. The 'Crossover Summer Camp' is planned for August. The aim is to bring people from different political directions together, to find interfaces, to create new alliances, to work on forms of intervention and thus new impulses for a radical, emancipatory, libertarian, left-wing, anti-racist, feminist... political practice." http://summercamp.squat.net[402]

Bremer Flüchtlingsinitiative: "The Refugee Initiative Bremen e.V. has existed since 1994. The Refugee Initiative is primarily a counselling centre. The initiative supports migrants and refugees in dealing with authorities. In addition to foreigner and asylum procedural law issues, social security law problems are also at the forefront of the work. Public relations work and political actions which expose and report racist everyday life as well as discriminatory procedures of the authorities are not mutually exclusive but are indispensable components."

Fanny: Returning to the display...
Dorothee: The display could have been better, and here I think the different zones worked very well, but the colours were a bit strange, as we did not have the money to invite someone to work in the actual setting, so I chose the colours. Even so, our budget was so restricted that we could not afford to buy more paint. We had 5,000 Euros for each exhibition project. So, yes, this was far from perfect.
Fanny: You worked with the political groups to present their material in a more structured way, and you also put the materials into folders, to create a kind of order for the table.
Dorothee: I guess I would do that again; it was surprising how little they their informational material was ordered or in a form that could be presented. It was obviously not just important for the political, activist work. But we see now how disturbingly important a visual side is for presenting political goals. Some activist groups today are very well aware of this, partly in reaction to the contemporary right-wing takeover of a populist fake news in the public sphere. See, for example the organisation of raves against the right in Berlin in 2018, called Reclaim your Club; they worked very consciously with visual material, flyers, music, and style. In 2002, it was just one small moment in which to think about representation together. For the political activist groups, it was a kind of acknowledgement to give them a representational space to show what they do, then and there in Bremen, with this entrance to so-called high culture. For Oliver Ressler as an artist, it was a way of working he is used to; for years now, he has been working very closely with activist groups and produces one film project after another. He is a primary motor for integrating or smuggling straightforward political topics into high culture. For both the artists and the

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[402] ———— The website exists, but the last events are from August 2002.

activists, the projects had the valuable momentum of them recognising that they are not working in isolation, a chain of equivalence. A chain of equivalence is what Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau proposed in their theoretical outlines towards achieving a radical democracy. It means that very different groups should be able to work together for a particular political goal. For example, Christian groups, cultural workers, and all sorts of left-wing groups have formed literal chains of people holding candles from one city to another to protest attacks on asylum seekers.[403] Looking back now, I strongly think that a more continuous working relationship with political groups is extremely important, such as, for example, some of the curators of the Shedhalle in Zurich, who were very dedicated to this kind of work. Here, I would like to mention—in addition to the early Shedhalle curators like Ursula Biemann and Marion von Osten—Katherina Morawek in particular, who worked closely with activists and also tried out new forms to reach a broader and more diverse public, like the humour festival "Laugh Up! Stand Up! at Shedhalle in 2016.

On the other side, at least the Shedhalle has a decent budget, and the curator or curatorial team is appointed for several years, which was not the case at the Künstlerhaus Bremen at that time. I had to reapply each year with a programme at the association of artists, and the budget, not to mention my honorarium, was extremely limited. I decided nevertheless to accept these precarious working conditions, as it was more important to develop a position as a young curator (and at that time mother of two). This is, of course, an institutional precondition that does not allow for working with a more stable perspective.

Hito Steyerl, Künstlerhaus Bremen, 2000, Photo: Frank Pusch

403 ——— Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony And Socialist Strategy: Towards A Radical Democratic Politics*, (London, New York: Verso, Radical Thinkers), 2014.

6.3.4 Project: Jeanne van Heeswijk + Musicians from Bremen: *Krach schlagen / Make a Racket*.

Krach schlagen / Make a racket, art project by Jeanne van Heeswijk, Künstlerhaus Bremen, 2000 (meeting of the musicians). Photo: Frank Pusch.

Dorothee: In order to break things up a little bit in my role as curator, I have held theory-related events in the gallery's office or invited artists who have a studio in the Künstlerhaus Bremen (where I was curator) to design furniture for events. Such things are, of course, approaches that contain some degree of failure. Even with the international artists I invite, I prefer projects that are very experimental and that play with levels of visibility.

For example, the artist Jeanne van Heeswijk initiated a project in which all sorts of musicians from Bremen were invited to bring their pieces by the Künstlerhaus or to record them there. Then, on a certain day, there was a little buffet table and an opportunity to meet informally in the Künstlerhaus, exclusively for the participating musicians (the first level of public exposure). In the end, forty works were performed; in one case, we supported the production of a piece. There were classical works, a hip-hop song, a Turkish group, jazz, a reading, and a song from a musical.

A CD was produced that has the individual works as well as a superimposition of all the pieces (the second level of public exposure).

For the "exhibition," the gallery space was filled with the mix of the pieces (the third level of public exposure).

The CD and the sound installation tried to be a kind of historical cross-section of the sounds that were produced on a certain day in a certain city. The project also referred to the Grimm Brothers' fairytale "The Bremen Town Musicians," which tells the tale of four old, useless animals who sing together to drive robbers out of a house, which they then take over for

Krach schlagen / Make a racket, art project by Jeanne van Heeswijk, Künstlerhaus Bremen, 2000 (meeting of the musicians). Photos: Joachim Fliegner, Frank Pusch.

themselves. In a metaphorical sense, Jeanne van Heeswijk wanted to claim for art the status of something that was purposeless and without any entertainment value or event culture, and also something without any claim to social utility. The resulting noise of the installation—and it was really very loud—emptied the room at first. I ask the reader to imagine an absolutely ear-splitting noise. This project was part of that year's programme, called *Urban Neighbourhoods,* which included both art projects and lectures. The focus was on including concrete (i.e., historical) contexts of the specific site, because I suspect that "urbanism" is a metaphor that is often used to cast a veil over things and strip them of their history.

False-Hearted Fanny: "Il n'y a pas de hors texte."[404]

Dorothee Richter: Right, there is no outside-text, nothing outside of the discourse. And I do not wish to construct a contrary position to this statement, but it seems important for me to take a particular position within the discourse. I am referring to Derrida's concept of the text: "What I call text is practically everything. It is everything—that is, there is a text as soon as there is a trace, a differential reference from one trace to the other [...]. [T]he text is not, therefore, limited to the written, to that which is called writing as opposed to speech. The speech is a text, the gesture is a text, the reality is a text in this new sense."[405] But precisely for that reason, it is not a matter of indifference which position I take as a curator or artist; it always has political implications. Therefore, I have never seen it as my task to present positions of individual artists. This is done extensively elsewhere, and it is closely related to the notion of the artist as genius. I'm very sceptical about that notion, because I see the production of art as a product of a discourse. For these reasons, I have frequently worked together with other curators or been heavily involved in exchanges with them (such Ulrike Kremeier, Eva Schmidt, Barnaby Drabble, Nina Möntmann, and Stella Rollig). By doing so, I am attempting to keep the discursive aspect of the work open, even toward the outside, and to enter into the process myself, to question my own positions.

False-Hearted Fanny: All these well-intentioned political ambitions in the contemporary visual arts seem rather suspect to me. It sounds as if it paints too rosy a picture. "We are all ridiculously kind people," as Dostoyevsky had his Hippolyte say.[406]

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404 ——— Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1976), 158.

405 ——— Excerpt from a conversation between Jacques Derrida and Peter Engelmann, cited in Peter Engelmann, "Jacques Derridas Randgänge der Philosophie," in *Semiotica Austriaca*, ed. Jeff Bernard (Vienna: ÖGS, 1987), 107 et seq.

406 ——— Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot*, trans. Henry and Olga Carlisle (New York: Signet, 1969), 306.

From today's perspective, the one-year programme *Urban Neighbourhoods* included a variety of diverse projects, talks, and performance; for example, a talk by Gregory Sholette provided perspective and actions by six New York art collectives: ABC No Rio, Bullet Space, Godzilla, Guerrilla Girls, REPOhistory, and World War III Illustrated. Embodying the cultural activism that emerged from the Lower East Side in the early 1980s, these six organisations consisted of more than 100 members. They still accentuate the need for a socially engaged and multiculturally oriented art practice, as well as a democratic, discursive, urban space in which public debate and dissent can take place. So, what happened in the Künstlerhaus could be perceived as embedded in a bigger, ongoing movement. The whole setting was rather open and sometimes often also based on certain coincidences, as the critical art scene was less of a critical mass than in major cities such as New York or the always lively and very politicised artistic movements in Berlin.

Jeanne's work was starting to be acknowledged at that time. She was engaging in sometimes extremely large and energising projects, always incorporating a large number of people into them, and also handing them over after some time. Very well-known is her work for the Liverpool Biennial or her project for the Philadelphia Art Museum, *Philadelphia Assembled*, where she worked under the chapters "Rise, Claim, Root, Care, Move" with local communities for two years, identifying local needs, co-organising groups and activities and presenting temporary results in the museum.[407] Therefore, the representational space was hijacked by groups, who are usually under-represented in an art museum. This occupation of a representational space changed the inscription into the cultural memory. Yet, it was not only the representation and organisation of a project that was totally changed, but even the café and what was offered there was re-organised. The topics of futures, land sovereignty, economic sovereignty, reconstructions, and sanctuary provided a framework for the continuous activities of working groups, of which some still exist. The project is described on the website:

> Philadelphia Assembled is an expansive project that tells a story of radical community building and active resistance through the personal and collective narratives that make up Philadelphia's changing urban fabric. These narratives will be explored through a collaborative effort between the Philadelphia Museum of Art and a team of individuals, collectives, and organizations as they experiment with multiple methodologies for amplifying and connecting relationships

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407 ———— Jeanne van Heeswijk, *Philadelphia Assembled*, see some of the rich material on the website http://phlassembled.net/, accessed 1 June 2021.

in Philadelphia's transforming landscape. Challenging, inspiring, and as big as the city, Philadelphia Assembled asks: how can we collectively shape our futures? Structure: Initiated by artist Jeanne van Heeswijk, together with a collaborative team of artists, makers, storytellers, gardeners, healers, activists, Museum staff and community members, Philadelphia Assembled explores social issues that resonate in "The City of Brotherly Love and Sisterly Affection."[408]

The website still works as a platform to organise meetings and actions. Certainly, this project, like other socially engaged art projects, can be countered with the fact that social tasks are taken on that should actually fall under the remit of the city, and that this kind of intervention may only last for a very limited period of time. Nevertheless, I am convinced that this kind of project can change the self-conception of a community and therefore contributes to a longer-term change. It makes it possible to imagine how a museum could be radically conceived for the local people.

Public Faculty Zurich, 2013, Jeanne Heeswijk and students of the MAS in Curating. *Public Faculties* are small scale events with which Jeanne van Heeswijk is putting questions to the local passers-by in the public space, here about the Swiss notion of protection.

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408 ———— Ibid.

7. CURATING FOR THE NOW: RETHINKING CURATING FROM A FEMINIST AND COMMUNAL PERSPECTIVE > BETWEEN DISOBEDIENCE AND NEOLIBERAL (FETISHIZED) PRACTICE

In this chapter, I want to focus on the position we could take up now, in this historical moment that might be characterised as accelerated capitalism and as an increase of threatening/paranoid conditions. Paranoid insofar as people feel threatened, somewhat rightly, but they might rely on unrealistic phantasmatic causes to explain the dramatic situation. The understanding of curating under these preconditions means sharpening the tools, discussing the notion of curating and the curatorial, and considering the preconditions of the artistic and curatorial field, as well as well as projecting new possibilities for the future. What do the parts of curating discussed so far mean for a future-oriented approach? In what way do we have to rethink curating?

This area is complicated by some of the observations made by Nancy Fraser.[409] Fraser sees a dangerous combination of an inclusive representation that nevertheless leads into a progressive neoliberal situation; this kind of governmental ideology would be represented by the Democrats under Obama, for example. The conservative option would be an exclusive representation, or in other words, white supremacy as presented by Donald Trump, which, of course, will carry out accelerated neoliberal capitalism. The third possibility, in her view—and here, curating could play a role—is the inclusive, diverse representation that aims towards a "populist," anti-neoliberal economy. I believe she uses "populist" to avoid using a notion like "socialist" because of the latter's negative connotation in the US, but according to her explanation, this is what she is speaking about. Let us just call this possibility "the redistribution of wealth." One of the struggles around the redistribution of wealth is gender-related inequality, which is also a struggle in the field of representation, of which curating is a part. In the following example, the connection between right-wing political forces and an anti-feminist position is exemplified.

409 ———   Nancy Fraser, *The Old Is Dying and the New Cannot Be Born: From Progressive Neoliberalism to Trump and Beyond* (London, New York: Verso, 2019).

7.1 Feminist Perspectives and Antifascist Perspectives as Repetition Compulsion, or Spoiler Alert: Instituting Feminism Will Not Work Without a Fight

Spoiler alert: instituting feminism will not work without a fight, without a struggle spanning years. Even the basics required for a feminist institution in major museums are in no way implemented. With basics, I mean diversity, an equal representation of female/male artists, and an adequate representation of artists of colour and those with migrant backgrounds. It is surprising how little has changed in many institutions in Europe.

Let me remind you of the thesis recently put forward by Johan Hartle: "Art is unavoidably institutional, and its ontological status is contingent on the institutional condition."[410] What he is referring to in this proposition are the different approaches to art as an institution since the '60s; thus in 1964, Arthur C. Danto poses the question: what makes an object a work of art? To answer this question, he creates the term "Artworld" to signify a special social sphere. He defines the artworld as a "loose network of people" who enter into a "discourse of reasons" that confers the status of art to things. In Danto's view, a work of art as such only gains access to the artworld through an art-theoretical interpretation; for him, art is a thing whose existence depends on theories. An object is granted the status of "work of art" when it embodies meaning as a symbolic form of expression. In contrast to George Dickie,[411] who is often mentioned as the founder of the institutional theory of art, Danto emphatically emphasises that it is only the "institutionalized discourse of reasons" and not an "empowering elite" as understood by Dickie that gives an object art status. But, of course, here might be the critical moment: who is allowed to define, and

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[410] ——— Johan Hartle, Talk at the PhD in Practice in Curating Programme, Zurich, September 2020.

[411] ——— George Dickie, "The New Institutional Theory of Art," in *Proceedings of the 8th Wittgenstein Symposium* 10 (1983), 57-64, reprinted in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition, An Anthology*, 2nd edition, eds. Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2019).

under which circumstances, what is understood as art? This is a battle-ground. Just to give one example from my own context in Zurich:

On Instagram, an *Anonyma* (anonymous woman), "Hulda Zwingli," shares information and thoughts about the major museum in Zurich:

> Hulda is in the mood for vulgar expletives. She reads in the @tage-sanzeiger the announcement of the highlights of the semi-private Kunsthaus Zürich for the opening year of the new building, where three private collections are under contract for twenty years, where the works of female artists* can be counted on one hand. @swis-sinfo.ch had raised figures which show a very one-sided situation, and the Tagesanzeiger also discussed the strong gender imbalance in a broad debate in which Pipilotti Rist and @tobler_andreas spoke out in favour of a quota. The new programme therefore seems like a slap in the face, with millions in public money flowing into the build-ing. Are the most expensive institutions also the most interesting, or is this all about potency? In that case, one could just as well drive up in cars with big exhaust pipes or luxury yachts. The informed Zurich public has already seen enough of Richter and Klimt in other museums around the world. And Hodler,[412] who denied women* the ability to make art, is our national artist, according to the Kunsthaus. Hulda doesn't have to pay homage to that either, since there are already enough of his works and a few Baselitzes hanging around the build-ing. This would bring us to the collection, where, with about 95% of the art by men, there would be a great need to catch up. But trophy hunters are obviously not interested in that. Hulda would like to know what our city president says about this at the board meet-

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412 ——— The artist Ferdinand Hodler might not be known in an English-speak-ing context, but he is seen as an important Swiss artist, at least in Swit-zerland. For example, at Fondation Beyerler, they praise him as an art-ist "whose paintings shaped the image and self-image of Switzerland like no other painter, was also one of the most important artists of the transition from the 19th century to modernity." See https://www.fon-dationbeyeler.ch/ausstellungen/vergangene-ausstellungen/ferdi-nand-hodler, accessed 28 March 2021 (translation by the author).

ings. (swissinfo: 2008-2018, 15% female artists in solo exhibitions, Pipilotti Rist was the last in 2016, there were none in 2019, and one will be shown in 2020. Many of the artists exhibited so far are alive and kicking, so no cave painters).[413]

Hulda calls the well-known Kunsthaus "semi-private" because it is actually a museum run by an association, with an enormous public budget, which will now include three additional large collections; already, a large portion of the artefacts are privately owned.

When we speak about instituting, we ask the question, what does an "institution" of art mean? As we already discussed, the critical investigation of art as institution has not only occurred through artworks, as suggested by Peter Bürger in 1974 in the *Theory of the Avant-Garde*[414]—in his view through Dadaism and Surrealism—, but also on the level of a theoretical understanding. As John Searle asks, "What is the ontology, the mode of existence, of institutional reality?"[415] For Peter Bürger, the institution of art is characterised foremost by its relation to society, and in his view art has the status of autonomy—it is not dedicated to any direct usage and is therefore also of no consequence. Any political impetus would be falling into a void. This quasi-autonomous status ("quasi" insofar as there are manifold dependencies and categories which make something into art or not) also helps to whitewash shady money or the reputation of a person or company. The many protests against oil companies such as BP as sponsors have shown that.

Hulda Zwingli—who might represent a collective—has a lot more to say about how money and power are distributed in the Zurich art scene, in which rich collectors play a major role (in a way one could argue that Hulda Zwingli represents an operative, anonymous community). This is an issue for instituting feminism insofar as most private collections follow completely different rules in assembling artworks than a board of curators or a state-funded museum would. Private collections are first of all based on the taste of a single layperson; they are also a financial investment and should at best also generate money. Here, of course, the connection between private collections and their presentation in museums and art institutions is key.[416] Many private collections are dominated by tradi-

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413 ———— For the original text in German, see Hulda Zwingli's Instagram account (@huldazwingli), accessed 17 March 2021 (translation by the author).

414 ———— Peter Buerger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974).

415 ———— John R. Searle, "What is an institution?," *Journal of Institutional Economics* 1, no. 1 (2005):1–22, 1.

416 ———— A relatively drastic example of this was provided by the collector Michael Ringier himself, when he said in an interview that his advisor

tional art genres, such as painting and sculpture, and—surprise, sur-
prise—male artists. In contrast, in public collections, other criteria influ-
ence collecting activity; for example, politically relevant art can be a crite-
rion, or complicated, installation art, or art that complements the collec-
tion holdings in a certain respect (for example, to balance the historical
neglect of female positions). There are many reasons why a collector's
museum is *per se* a problematic construction: a huge amount of public
money is used to maintain private property; the presentation of its works
in a supposedly public museum or art institution will add value to the col-
lection, which will increase with the presentation in a supposedly public
museum; and the museum is basically also very dependent on the good
will of the collector. For example, a collector's museum was founded in
Bremen because this northern German city carries significant debt, so a
collector's museum seemed like an acceptable solution, which, inciden-
tally, has proved very problematic on a number of occasions, exactly
because of the abovementioned reasons.

In Zurich, we have the unusual situation that this extremely wealthy city
is reorganising its largest museum more and more into a collector's
museum: three new collections will be hosted, maintained, and displayed
in a new part of the building—and if this as such would not be enough,
the public funding for visual arts is allocating 80% of its budget to this
arrangement very year. Thanks to Hulda, we can also understand how
cleverly the budget is distributed among subcontractors under the
umbrella of the Kunsthaus.

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and the former director of the Kunsthalle Zurich, Beatrix Ruf, had
received a voluntary gift of one million francs from him out of grati-
tude for her advice. One can only speculate what this means in rela-
tion to the increase in value of the art he acquired, see here: Andreas
Tobler, "Ringier und seine Millionenmacherin, Wie der Schweizer Ver-
leger von einer staatlich subventionierten Lücke profitiert haben kön-
nte," *Tagesanzeiger Sonntagszeitung*, 4 December 2017. Author's trans-
lation of the title: Ringier and His Millionaire Maker: How the Swiss
publisher may have profited from a state-subsidised loophole, https://
www.tagesanzeiger.ch/sonntagszeitung/ringier-und-seine-millionen-
macherin/story/20260324.

It sounds extremely odd and problematic when, in turn, the board of the Kunsthaus publicly negotiates with right-wing politicians about possible exhibitions, as has been published quite unconcernedly; see the conversation between board member Walter B. Kielholz and Mr. Blocher from the SVP (a populist right-wing party).[417] The usual tasks of a museum are

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417 ——— See Aline Wanner and Christina Neuhaus (Interview), NZZ Folio, "Eine Hodler-Ausstellung wäre schon interessant. FDP gegen SVP, Manager gegen Unternehmer, verhinderter Hotelier gegen verhinderten Knecht: Walter Kielholz trifft Christoph Blocher," Sept. 2020 (translation by the author): "A Hodler exhibition would be interesting. FDP versus SVP, manager versus entrepreneur, prevented hotelier versus prevented farmhand: Walter Kielholz meets Christoph Blocher." The interview starts with the following introduction (translation by the author): "They are considered enemies, like alpha dogs who have cultivated their mutual antipathy for decades. Walter Kielholz accused Christoph Blocher of having turned the SVP into a 'right-wing bourgeois fighting party.' Blocher told the *Weltwoche* last year: 'The NZZ is currently the mouthpiece against a self-confident Switzerland. The driving forces are to be found at the epicentre of Credit Suisse and its surroundings.' He was referring to Kielholz. Now, the two gentlemen meet in the panelled committee room of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* for their first double interview. Christoph Blocher has come by train, Walter Kielholz on foot. They talk about the EU, the institutional agreement, their own origins, Migros and ignorant foreign managers. After more than two hours, it becomes clear that the old adversaries have more in common than they would like." And it ends with the following paragraph: "Interviewer: Together with your wife, you were a gallery owner for a short time. Would that tempt you again?
Kielholz: No, I got bored after a year.
Blocher: Art is a point of contact between us.

clearly ignored here, as if money is allowed to do everything, inside and outside a public institution; or should one ask more basically, why is an increasingly private museum financed by public funds at all? In my view, public funding should only be given if the most rudimentary diversity requirements for gender and diversity are met—on all levels of the institution. To comment on this with another post by Hulda:

> Swelling fine language[418] repeatedly distracts Hulda's gaze from the reality of the figures. Today, the outdoor space at the semi-private Kunsthaus Zürich, which receives about 80% of the City of Zurich's budget for art, serves as an illustration. Seven works of art by men exist or are planned for this space, not counting the works by the art prize winner Nägeli. As a big sensation, one work by Pipilotti Rist was installed in 2021; so, according to the calculation, it makes a new 12.5%. "But now a woman's work has just been installed!" Hulda can no longer hear. A work by Kader Attia has just been installed on the square, soon to be followed by a Henry Moore in the new Art Garden, and soon also a work by Olafur Eliasson in the passage, in addition to the existing monument for Ignaz Heim and the works by Auguste Rodin and Marino Marini in front of the old building. Isn't there also a tile wall by Joan Miró in the little garden? And isn't there also something in the bushes at the back of the old building? Please give us some clues! Yes, Hulda knows, Heim and half of Pipilotti Rist's work do not fall within the competence of the 100% male management of the institution, which printed a slogan for women* to endure the historical conditions in the members' magazine, but within that

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Interviewer: You are an art collector, Mr Kielholz is the president of the Zürcher Kunsthausgesellschaft.

Blocher: I don't donate my paintings to the state, nor do I have a foundation.

Kielholz: By the way, the Kunsthaus is private, not state-owned. And it would be interesting to have another big Hodler exhibition.

Blocher: You can count on me for that. I'm generous when it comes to loaning works. You can find my pictures in exhibitions all over the world.

Interviewer: Mr Kielholz, do you have any regrets in life?

Kielholz: Of course, I've made mistakes from time to time; I haven't assessed developments correctly. When you do something, you make mistakes. But if you don't do anything, you don't make any, and yet in the end you're bitter because you always would have known better, it's just that no one was interested. When I was 20, I never dreamed I would have such an interesting life."

418 ——— "Swelling" indicates the name of the person responsible for the press releases at the Kunsthaus, in German: *quellend*, his name is Quellenberg.

of the KiöR (oops "Kunst und Bau"), which is somehow also the city. And the city has a president who has been sitting on the board of the institution for years. Hulda reads homepages, member magazines and slogans in social media carefully, for example, that women can "get a dose of women's power on International Women's Day at the Kunsthaus." Long live the city of Zurich with its equality plan![419]

What is most astonishing under the circumstances is that the largest political party governing Zurich, the SP (a mildly left-wing bourgeois party), which is also the party that nominated the mayor, Corinne Mauch, has gender equality as one of the major goals in their party programme: "The legal and actual equality of all genders is one of the most important concerns of the SP. The party is committed at all levels to self-determination, equal opportunities and against discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation and/or gender identity."[420] Maybe this lofty statement should be applied to how the actual departments implement their policies?

There are many rumours about one collection specifically, the Bührle Collection. Obviously, this has motivated the mayor, together with the director of the cultural department of Zurich, to commission the University of Zurich to research this topic. Thus, a research group around Prof. Dr. Matthieu Leimgruber started a research project on the arms industry, capital, and the Kunsthaus. The result was a publication[421] based on a three-year research project by the University of Zurich. Nearly on the same day of its publication, the director of the cultural department handed in his resignation. The outcome of the research shows the problematic background of the collection. Here is the summary from the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper:

419 ———— Hulda Zwingli's Instagram account (@huldazwingli), last accessed 17 March 2021 (translation by the author).

420 ———— See the brochure with the party's platform, "Die rechtliche und tatsächliche Gleichstellung aller Geschlechter ist eines der wichtigsten Anliegen der SP. Die Partei setzt sich auf allen Ebenen für Selbstbestimmung, Chancengleichheit und gegen Diskriminierungen aufgrund des Geschlechts, der sexuellen Orientierung und/oder der Geschlechtsidentität ein," in *Legislaturziele der SP-Fraktion 2019 bis 2023*, article 17, p. 47.

421 ———— Historisches Seminar – Forschungsstelle für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte Lehrstuhl Prof. Dr. Matthieu Leimgruber, Erich Keller, Mattieu Leimgruber, *Kriegsgeschäfte, Kapital und Kunsthaus, Die Entstehung der Sammlung Bührle im historischen Kontext*, Zurich (2021), 78-79.

When the 206-million-franc Chipperfield extension opens in autumn, the Kunsthaus Zürich hopes that it will finally catapult the museum into the premier league. The visitor magnets in the new exhibition halls will be the showpieces of the "Bührle Collection": Monet, van Gogh, Renoir, Picasso, Cézanne, Modigliani and more. But the 200 or so works of art in the Bührle permanent loan seem overshadowed by the past. There is talk of a "contaminated museum". The collection brings a dark history of persecution, forced labour, forced sales, expropriation and war profiteering onto the museum stage.

The unease is ignited by the biography of the collector and the history of the collection. For Emil Georg Bührle (1890-1956) was not a harmless, art-obsessed cultural citizen who invested almost ten million francs in the Kunsthaus Zürich as early as the post-war period. The University of Zurich (UZH) recently published a historical study *entitled Kriegsgeschäfte, Kapital und Kunsthaus. The Emil Bührle Collection in Historical Context*. It makes clear that Bührle was an unscrupulous armaments industrialist who profited from Nazi rule in several ways: as an arms manufacturer, forced labour profiteer, and art collector.[422]

The research makes clear that the manufacturer helped Germany quietly rearm before the Second World War and that for many years the German army, plus any other country involved in the war, was supplied with weapons. To give an idea of the well-researched sources in the abovementioned study, I will quote here extensively:

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422 ———— Kito Nedo "Museen und NS-Zeit:Verhängnisvolle Verbindungen," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 24 February 2021, accessed 18 March 2021, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/kunst-museen-buehrle-zuerich-raub-kunst-1.5216494 (translation by the author).

Emil Bührle became a sergeant at the beginning of the First World War and then a lieutenant in the 2nd Squadron of the 3rd Baden Dragoon Regiment. He was deployed to the front in France, Galicia, and Romania. After an accidental injury and hospitalization, he was trained on machine guns in June 1916. At the end of the war, Bührle did not enter civilian life, but remained with his unit, which joined General von Roeder's Freiwilliges Landes-Schützen-Korps. This Freikorps was deployed in various places against demonstrations and left-wing uprisings. It is not possible to determine what Bührle's task was in detail on the basis of this regimental memorandum. However, in his 1954 lecture "Vom Werden meiner Sammlung" ("On the Making of My Collection"), Bührle explicitly mentions the "defeat of the communist uprisings." This attitude went down well with the audience in the Cold War era. The fighting against insurgents and the deployment during riots continued until March 1919. Bührle's company was stationed in Berlin, and Bührle was a staff guard and reservist at the headquarters of General von Roeder during the operation. Due to a lack of sources, we do not know what tasks and assignments Bührle was actually entrusted with during this time. It should be noted, however, that Waldemar Pabst, who led the counterrevolutionary Kapp Putsch against the young Weimar Republic in March 1920 together with General Erich Ludendorff and who was subsequently active in right-wing extremist paramilitary organisations in Bavaria and Austria, often stayed in Switzerland. As an employee of the Defence Economics and Armaments Office of the "Third Reich," [Pabst] was often in Switzerland. As Armaments Officer of the "Third Reich" and a confidant of the Rheinmetall-Borsig company, he maintained numerous contacts in Switzerland, especially with the Solothurn arms factory and the WO. Pabst finally settled in Switzerland in August 1943. In September 1944, the Federal Councillor Eduard von Steiger declared Pabst an undesirable person. However, Pabst found the support of influential circles within the arms industry and politics. An acquaintance of Bührle's, Eugen Bircher, division commander and leading member of the right wing of the Peasants', Tradesmen's, and Citizens' Party (today: SVP), played a particularly important role. Apparently, in these circles, Pabst's disreputable past was no reason to refuse him support. Pabst, who continued to be active in radical right-wing circles, remained a resident of Switzerland until 1955. His name even appears in correspondence contained in the archives of the Emil Bührle Collection Foundation: at the beginning of 1954, the Major thanked the Oerlikon industrialist for a New Year's calendar (of the WO?) and referred to the fact that he had been asked by "Geneva"

(i.e., Hispano-Suiza) to establish contacts in the Federal Republic of Germany; finally, he told Bührle about artworks by a Munich gallery owner. This late and isolated correspondence is an indication of the long-standing acquaintance of Pabst and Bührle. It also underscores how the networks of covert German rearmament of the interwar period continued into the Federal Republic.[423]

I am well aware that it is quite unusual to quote at such length, but I want to provide the full texture of the original publication, and as some newspapers have reported on some interventions or negotiations surrounding the report, I wanted to give you an insight into the original research results.[424]

Schema 7. Eine «Musterkarte der politisch-wirtschaftlich-militärischen Machtpositionen», Hochrangige geladene Gäste an Emil Bührles Tisch (19. Oktober 1956)

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423 ——— Erich Keller, Mattieu Leimgruber, *Kriegsgeschäfte, Kapital und Kunsthaus* (translation by the author).

424 ——— Fabian Baumgartner, Marc Tribelhorn, "'Anregungen' und andere Druckversuche: Wie Forschungsarbeiten zum Waffenfabrikanten Bührle beeinflusst werden" ("Suggestions" and other attempts to assert pressure: How research on the arms manufacturer Bührle is influenced), *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 28 August 2020, https://www.nzz.ch/zuerich/waffenhaendler-buehrle-forschungsarbeiten-liefen-aus-dem-ruder-ld.1573137 (translation by the author).

Thus, the basis of one major collection in Zurich lies in the military-industrial complex, founded by an ultra-rich warlord. It makes my heart ache when I think of a man who is making millions and millions, who supplied weapons to Nazi Germany, which was responsible for the torture and death of millions of people, Jews, Roma, Antifascists…My heart aches when I think about Walter Benjamin, as one of many persecuted, who took his own life when he tried unsuccessfully to enter Spain…My heart aches…

This history permeates into the present. The connotation of these men's military alliance is still at play. Some of the historical meetings of the board reflect Switzerland's military industrial complex.

The collection is connected to this heritage, and Hulda's rather mocking remarks reveal an inner truth: that the exclusion of women is inherent to a system in which big money, artwashing, and the military elite unite.

A heroine of the Zurich art scene is the artist Elisabeth Eberle. For years now, she has been counting the numbers of shows by male and female artists, and she confronts responsible curators and art administrators of the city with this imbalance.[425] In an interview I conducted with her, she described how she herself came across this extreme imbalance in numerous awards, scholarships, and grants rather by chance. When she brought it to the attention of the respective administrators, she was dismissively rebuked or told that such enquiries would make her unpopular and could have a negative impact on her artistic career. In the meantime, she began to show her vast archive of gender imbalance as an artwork and to initiate public debates on various platforms. On a very superficial level, the art institutions began to react to the public critique and to change ever so slightly the tone of presentations on their websites and social media. The movement gained momentum, and more and more feminists joined. To show the breadth of those involved, Elisabeth Eberle, together with artist Ursina Roesch and cultural blogger Freya Sutter, launched a postcard campaign to the Kunsthaus, with each woman protesting the imbalance in her own way. The award-winning journalist Nina Schedlmayer,[426] who enquired at the Kunsthaus, was curtly told that yes, they had received "some" postcards. In the ensuing debate in a local newspaper, the *Tagesanzeiger*, a quota for female artists was demanded.[427] Eberle used the

425 ——————— Dorothee Richter, Interview with Elisabeth Eberle, in *OnCurating* 48: *Zurich Issue: Dark Matter, Grey Zones, Red Light and Bling Bling* (September 2020), last accessed 18 March 2021, https://on-curating.org/issue-48-reader/elisabeth-eberle.html#.YFPM2h0xk34.

426 ——————— Nina Schedlmayer, award-winning art critic, https://artemisia.blog/2019/11/22/einseitig-maennerlast-ig-kaum-kuenstlerinnen-im-kunsthaus-zuerich/.

427 ——————— See Andreas Tobler, "Eine Quote für Kunst von Frauen – subito!," *Tagesanzeiger,* 23 January 2020, accessed 18 March 2021, https://www.tage-

subsequent flood of letters to the editor, often with grotesque and disgusting content, as source material for an artwork: the letters are read out by a monotonous male computer voice, revealing their ridiculous, almost tragically backward-looking attitudes. Ever so slowly, through Elisabeth's relentless exposure of obvious injustices, alongside the sarcastic comments of Hulda Zwingli as a media persona via Instagram, concessions have been made by the art institutions, at least on the surface. I know this will be a long and hard battle that we will not win immediately. But it is more than a fight for numbers. As I have tried to show, it is a long-term fight against patriarchal, sometimes inhuman, backward-looking politics, which are also reflected in image politics. The concentration of white male artists and their products are more than just that, and to think about that on a more theoretical level, I will quickly come back to the deliberations about the institution that I outlined in Chapter 5.2. Danto argues that contemporary art only comes into existence by being exhibited, or in other forms of representation in the art world, I would add. And Searle emphasises the role of language, which already constitutes a social contract: "Instead of presupposing language and analyzing institutions, we have to analyze the role of language in the constitution of institutions."[428] And to reiterate my previous argument, a social fact is different from facts that are hard facts; existing without an agreement of any sort is then any fact that involves the collective intentionality of two or more agents. I follow Andrea Fraser when she argues that art is not art because it is signed by an artist or shown in a museum or any other "institutional" site. Art is art when it exists for discourses and practices that recognise it as art, value and evaluate it as art, and consume it as art, whether as object, gesture, representation, or only idea. What is defined as art is so because it exists within the perception of participants in the field of art as art, a perception not necessarily aesthetic but fundamentally social in its determination.[429]

In conclusion, we, as feminists, disagree on a certain set of rules in the art field. However, this also means that all of us, as participants, as part of the collective will, can be part of a process of institutional transformation. It is clear that we do not simply want inclusion as represented by statistics; we want other forms of art:

> We want art that does not serve the whitewashing of the military industrial complex and the accumulation of capital, but art that

sanzeiger.ch/kultur/kunst/eine-quote-fuer-kunst-von-frauen-subito/story/10261439.

428 ——— Ibid.

429 ——— Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to the Institution of Critique," *Artforum* (September 2005), 281.

propagates social change. We want socially relevant art, we want diversification at all institutional levels, not only of the artworks exhibited, but the audience, the staff, and the board. We also want a form of redistribution of wealth within art. If Angela Dimitrakaki and Nizan Shaked's analysis[430] is correct, and competition and rivalry for the highest price are inscribed in the art system, then at the very least the profits from the great art trade must flow back to a completely different extent. They must be furthermore distributed in ways that recognise historical appropriations and exploitations. The surplus should go back to the great mass of the art scene, to the "dark matter" of the artists, curators, and cultural producers who never earn a high income, but who are eminently important for the emergence of a lively art scene. We would like to see a redistribution of art budgets; private collections should not burden state finances, and art budgets should be allocated under conditions that take race, class, and gender into account.

Images from the Instagram account of Hulda Zwingli

Back to the spoiler alert: these transformations will not happen without a fight; to take up this fight is what instituting feminism means—even as in the meantime a younger female director, Ann Demester, is hired, an outcome of the persistent public discussion. But as explained before, a lot more has to change in an institution to ensure a feminist and inclusive

430 ———— Angela Dimitrakaki and Nizan Shaked, "Feminism, Instituting, and the Politics of Recognition," in *Instituting Feminism*, eds. Helena Reckitt and Dorothee Richter, *OnCurating* 52 (2021).

strategy. And if you and your peers need some encouragement, post your issues on social media and take the book by Helen Lewis in hand, *Difficult Women: A History of Feminism in 11 Fights*,[431] and think about what the 12th should be![432]

7.2 Curating in Times of Crisis— Political Curating as an Urgency or as a Symptom?

I hope that it has become clear from what has been said that critical curating, curating that feels committed to a "coming democracy," is only possible if the cultural producers involved (curators, artists, and others) deal with the respective social and political situation intensively, if they develop an awareness, a deep understanding, if the aim is a redistribution of wealth and the reduction of structural violence. So, from my perspective, curating implies a continuous learning process, and the aspect of knowledge production might include new forms like an intensive moment of being-with, of consciously sharing our recent developments. Also, the fine line between political art and curating as substitute or fetish has to be critically scrutinized. In Nancy Fraser's nomenclature, this would be, for example, the representation of diversity that nonetheless remains based in a neoliberal economy. The theorist Juliane Rebentisch expressed her differentiated criticism of political exhibitions that appear as mere gestures; she sees this, among other things, in the fact that the conflicts of this world are virtually only enumerated. This, she says, means that the bourgeois public can enjoy these conflicts as a romanticized spectacle without having to reflect on their own involvement in any way. Correspondingly, the form of exhibiting is not thematized either: what is exhibited, how, by whom, and for whom, the institution as such, is not chal-

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431 ——— Helen Lewis, *Difficult Women, A History of Feminism in 11 Fights* (London: Penguin Random House, 2020).

432 ——— And for my feminist co-travellers through space and time, Andrea Fraser, Thea Westreich Wagner, and the CCA Wattis Institute, with the support of a group of co-researchers have undertaken a major investigation into museums in the US, which can be used as groundwork: Andrea Fraser, Thea Westreich Wagner, *2016 in Museums, Money, and Politics*, (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 2018).

lenged.[433] From my perspective, the excessive preoccupation with the Middle East conflict clearly has features of a substitution action in the Freudian sense.

For an analysis of the current crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic, Johan Hartle understands the current situation as a specific aesthetico-political constellation with drastic implications—how the crisis changes our perceptive apparatus, our relationship to the world, and with his analysis, the problem of the fetishization in the arts can be discussed.[434] In his view, the crisis is not only a massive crisis in itself in terms of organizing social affairs, but it also deepens several forms of crises: economic crises, political crises, and on top of that, it also somewhat takes away people's capacity to react politically. This dilemma, as Johan Hartle continues, increases the crisis in terms of economic problems, and at the same time it diminishes the capacities to confront the crisis. His argumentation develops the understanding of our current situation in three steps. First, he examines the concept of alienation as developed by Karl Marx; second, he argues the extent to which Georg Lukács' understanding of reification develops this approach; and third, he elaborates Guy Debord's concept of spectacle as its contemporary extension and what follows for our understanding of the contemporary aesthetico- political constellation. I will also add a feminist perspective to his thoughts.

In the following, I roughly rely on Hartle's argument and will discuss later what implication this ultimately has for curating. He develops the argument in a series of thoughts related to alienation. Alienation is here understood as the term that Karl Marx used to describe the specificity of work in capitalism.

As Hartle explains, the contemplative form of objectivity supports a suggestion that restores and maintains the social order itself. What we find in Marx's *Capital* of 1867, as Hartle argues, is the idea that in and through commodity exchange, by being market agents and exchanging commodities, we are secretly also reproducing these conditions without thinking about it, without knowing. In the fetishism chapter, chapter one of *Capital*, it is said that we keep reproducing social conditions even if we might simply be market agents. We reproduce all implications of a market society: the increasing social inequality and reproduction of social inequality

433 ———— Juliane Rebentisch, "Ausstellungen des Politischen in der Kunst" (Exhibitions of the Political in Art), Mosse Lecture, 13 June 2019, translation by the author, accessed 1 August 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4Uaz20QDdM.

434 ———— Johan Hartle, "Corona/Spectacle," Online talk in the MAS in Curating Programme, Zurich University of the Arts, 2 October 2020, see www.curating.org.

that are implied in the very act of market exchange.

Marx's argument is in some way quite obvious, as Hartle lays out: by exchanging commodities, we reproduce the idea of the exchange of equivalence. This is problematic because there's one commodity that is worth more than it costs, and that is the commodity of labour power. One can buy labour power for its "fair price; the fair price is the cost of reproduction—historically, not going to the producer of new bodies and of care work directly, as this would be women's work, as we have discussed previously. Labour power is capable of producing worth that is more than what it costs; this is the so-called surplus. By buying labour power and having the labourer produce, the buyer or capitalist gets richer, although he pays the labourer fairly. That is implied in the very act of commodity exchange, because it's implied in the principle of the exchange of equivalence, which is in short Marx's concept of fetishism. As I argued earlier, the situation of being under a double structure of oppression for women means that she is also responsible for the unpaid reproduction of the work force, and this situation of dependency also diminishes the possibility that workers will protest against their conditions.

This thought on alienation was further exemplified, as Hartle points out, when the most renowned Marxist cultural critic Georg Lukács wrote *History and Class Consciousness* in 1923. In this book, he develops this idea further and stops speaking about fetishism; he now speaks about reification. Reification means turning social relations or processes into things. This concept implies that something is turned into a thing that shouldn't normally be treated as a thing. (In German, this sounds even clearer, because it is called *Objektifizierung*). Hartle emphasises that one could say that Marx's understanding of commodity fetishism already implies such a dynamic of turning social relations into things because in the act of exchanging commodities or in the act of thinking that there's a necessary value to an object and that this commodity has a monetary value. From a feminist perspective, it also means that the relations in the family become objectified, especially as the economic side of a union becomes more and more romanticised, typical for ideology, so that a narrative or myth in a Barthesian sense confuses the clear vision of what is what. This makes the economic aspects invisible but no less pressing. What Lukács basically says is that, under capitalist circumstances, more often than not we tend to take processes and relations as what they are not, namely **as things**. They are being reified, and as Hartle concludes, we do so **by acting as individual commodity processors, meaning, we act as individual market agents rather than seeing ourselves as the collective producers of our own lives.**

This means in Hartle's perspective that we are these individual commodity processors who exchange individual commodities—labour power, for example, or whatever we have to sell. But this is a misconception, because the way in which we perceive the world from this angle leads to the misunderstanding that we are confronted with individual objects that we are exchanging, that we are individual agents rather than seeing the whole social reality as a process and as a set of relations that we are part of and that we might collectively change. The general understanding is that relations and processes, or society as a whole, now appear to us fragmented, as a set of individual objects and a set of individual agents. This implies that in the neoliberal economy we have this sense of fragmentation and isolation, of being individual market agents, and we have this refined reality of tons and millions of objects in front of us that all seem to restore and contain social reality as an objective fact. When Lukács calls this "reification," he means that the world appears to us as if it was a set of things rather than a set of forces, relations, and dynamics that we ourselves could change. And by being confronted with such a thing as "objective reality," we end up in a "contemplative relationship" with the world: our impression is that we can no longer change this reality; we can only look at it from a certain distanced contemplative point of view.

And this is precisely what Guy Debord develops further in his *Society of the Spectacle* in 1967. Debord also speaks of a world that appears as objectified—but his point is slightly different: we can only approach the objectified reality with which we are contemplatively confronted as passive consumers. The idea of consumption is increased because the world now reduplicates itself in a world of images, in a world of representations.

And the third step then by Debord is the society of the spectacle: the situation gets even worse with the reduplication of the world on the level of commercial images and an overall general representation on the level of commodified imagery. Through a feminist lens, this also means that the female body is turned into a commodity and as an aid to sell products. As argued previously in the structure of the visual regime, the position of the subject is connoted with a male identity and the position of the object with a female identity. The violent reactions to performances by neo-avant-garde artists like Carolee Schneemann in the '70s show how much she broke with the laws of representation when she acted as a female subjectivity who also plays around with the abject status related to female-connoted bodies. As Klaus Theweleit examines in *Männerphantasien* (Male Fantasies), based on Freikorps literature from the interwar years of 1918 to 1923, the fear of the soldierly man is linked to the fear of an (inner) total loss of form, which he seeks to master by means of solid

body armour.[435] Fear scenarios are projected onto obscure "red masses." Hence, the extreme violence by fascists. Everything that seemed indefinable, mixed, formless, gets caught in the maelstrom of this defence, as Theweleit analyses. Fear and aggression thus shift to all positions imagined as threatening: everything foreign/formless along race, class, and gender is thus fought with relentless rage. In his book, Theweleit elaborates, as a central motif of fascist gender relations, the active protection of the soldierly male body against the female body, which is perceived as threatening. Of course, this structure did not disappear after WWII, as one can see by the harsh reaction to female/feminist artistic authorship. But just as Carolee Schneemann interfered with the usual regime of representations in a radical way, right-wing ideologies can also hijack cultural production, in the past and in the present.

To develop an active relationship towards society as a curator, artist, or art educator, and to develop an understanding of ideology—a false idea about material infrastructures including economic relations and power structures—it is important to leave a passive attitude to the world behind; it is necessary to develop agency. I will elaborate on this in the next paragraph.

7.3 Guesthouse to the Bear: Curating—The Politics of Knowledge Production, Curating and the Commons

When I was asked to deliver a concept for Museum Baerengasse/Gasthaus zum Baeren by the city of Zurich, I saw the opportunity to work in a very experimental, communal way with students of the Postgraduate Programme in Curating in conjunction with the online journal *OnCurating* (www.on-curating.org). As we later found out, we also manoeuvred ourselves into a trap in the sense that the university did not see any means of funding this undertaking, and on the other hand we were practically banned from all other funding bodies precisely because we are a part of the university, a dilemma that has persisted. For extremely experimental

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[435]   Klaus Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*, (Berlin: Stroemfeld Roter Stern, 1977).

endeavours of the kind we developed into, there simply were no funding bodies in Switzerland. The Postgraduate Programme in Curating was also situated in the Continuing Education department, which meant we were not supported by the general state funds that come from the education department, so the programme had to rely entirely on student fees. I think the following quote from the undercommons shows aspects of working in a university clearly: "After all, the subversive intellectual came under false pretenses, with bad documents, out of love. Her labor is as necessary as it is unwelcome. The university needs what she bears but cannot bear what she brings."[436] Of course, I am not implying that I could assume a Black position, like Harney and Moton, but I can relate to the underlying current coming from a feminist as well as antifascist background.

Despite these drawbacks, we were quite sure that the endeavour could create something new, something important for the Zurich scene, challenging for students, and also important for international outreach. The drive and urgency I felt was related to what Jacques Derrida once formulated for a "university without conditions," a model he positioned against contemporary universities that work hand in hand with industries, be it in connection with technical innovations or, I take the liberty to add, anything that might be called creative industries. Derrida makes the following demand: "Consequence of this thesis: such an unconditional resistance could oppose the university to a great number of powers, for example to state powers (and thus to the power of the nation-state and to its phantasm of indivisible sovereignty, which indicates how the university might be in advance not just cosmopolitan, but universal, extending beyond worldwide citizenship and the nation-state in general), to economic powers (to co- operations and to national and international capital), to the powers of the media, ideological, religious, and cultural powers, and so forth—in short, to all the powers that limit democracy to come."[437] However, curating always remains in an ambivalent relationship to the art market, that is, to the post-Fordist capitalist system, as Rebentisch has noted.[438] The system of legitimation that defines art as art in an institutional sense has also entered into the consultation of contemporary collections. In order to find a way between neoliberal adaptation and

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436 ———— Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (London: Minor Compositions, 2013), 26.

437 ———— Jacques Derrida, "The Future of the Profession or the University without Condition (thanks to the 'Humanities', What Could Take Place Tomorrow)," in *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tom Cohen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 26.

438 ———— See Rebentisch, "Ausstellungen des Politischen in der Kunst." Rebentisch also suspects certain forms of political art to be fetishes, to be mere images of a political gesture but not to connect in any way to political movements—in other words, to aestheticise conflict.

the abandonment of this system—the "I prefer not to"[439]—via a critical attitude towards the system, it is necessary to permanently question and examine the preconditions and conditions (authorship, attributions, subject construction, hierarchies, de-materialization of the art object, the economic foundations, distribution), as well as, generally speaking, the inclusions and exclusions of this current system in relation to the economic foundation.

7.3.1 A Democracy to Come

A "democracy to come," an expression by Derrida, is a promising horizon for any programme. To explain the concept, I would like to lay out different trajectories: on the one hand, a short description of the formats I had in mind and, on the other hand, a reflection on pedagogical elements as understood from the perspective of the theory of ideological state apparatuses developed by Louis Althusser, which in my understanding could be re-interpreted in a differentiated way using Lacanian concepts of the screen/tableau. Both of these trajectories are intrinsically intertwined with a specific approach in actual encounters. This inclination can be seen in the light of Derrida's demand for a "university without conditions," which also demands a very specific position on the part of the professor. For Derrida, the word "profess," with its Latin origin, means to declare openly, to declare publicly: "The declaration of the one who professes is a performative declaration in some way. It pledges like an act of sworn faith, an oath, a testimony, a manifestation, an attestation, or a promise, a commitment. To profess is to make a pledge while committing to one's responsibility. To make profession is to declare out loud what one is, what one believes, what one wants to be, while asking another to take one's word

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[439] "I prefer not to" is related to Herman Melville's novel on Bartleby, an employee who repeatedly refuses to serve, then later refuses to eat and dies. This has been re-read since the Occupy movement as a way of refusal in late capitalism. Issue 40 of *OnCurating*, "We Would Prefer Not To," edited by Steven Henry Madoff and Brian Kuan Wood, discusses this in relation to curating. It "takes political resistance and sanctuary as its subject, with Herman Melville's nineteenth-century literary avatar Bartleby—famous for his refrain 'I would prefer not to'—as its tutelary spirit. Forms of civil disobedience and tricksterism are coterminous agents in artistic and curatorial practices, both historical and contemporary. How to subvert and subvene, how to recast structural mechanisms of suppression and oppression, how to avoid, deny, magnify, spatially disjoint, and refute (earnestly, comically)? By what means can we, as cultural producers, refuse, while fostering a discourse of reparation?" See https://www.on-curating.org/issue-40.html#.YfrSDMYxnkI.

and believe this declaration."[440] In this sense, I wanted to make my own deeply held interest in arts and democracy become part of the undertakings at Museum Baerengasse/Gasthaus zum Baeren, but also my deeply held interest in the potential of all students as a group, and of each student as an individual entity with his or her knowledge, history, and abilities. With a strong emphasis on what can be achieved in the present, the philosopher Isabell Lorey implies that we come into the world as precarious, care-giving, non-autonomous bodies. The relation of being-with is that of dependency: we are always dependent on others, at every stage of life, and sometimes we are aware of it and sometimes less so. We can't turn off the fact that we get sick, that we have accidents, that we die. For Lorey, the observation that we are and remain precarious is a basic premise of human existence. This insight also informs her view of humans as social beings; we are not without relationships of care. We are not without connection to others. We do not live autonomously. Here Nancy's "being-with" becomes rather down to earth. However, Lorey complains, all consequences of this are shunted off into a sphere of the social defined as "female."[441] For her, it is the argument for rejecting representational democracy and seeing a political articulation better realised through protest movements. In my view, the institutions of representational democracies, especially the split of power, is valuable, as long as the systems do not become rigid, but are instead able to react like a breathing body to demands and articulations through a variety of bodies of civil society. For art and curating, this means that the attainment of the utopic can happen in the present, without losing the utopian character, but it also has to relate to the material context in the here and now.

In my own curatorial projects, I have long been interested in experimenting with new formats that exhibit a strange tendency to shift from being an office to being a studio, an exhibition space, a project space, a gathering space, or a bar—not as an objective in itself, but in order to question the use of the spaces of representation again and again and to circumvent the fixation on a permanent, universalistic white cube. The modern basement of Museum Baerengasse/Gasthaus zum Baeren, with its relatively large spaces, could be used as a walk-in cinema where short films could be shown in a loop, so visitors could just drop in for a while and leave again. It would also work as a dance floor, as we later discovered. But to explain this, I must introduce the situation at Museum Baerengasse/Gasthaus zum Baeren. When we moved in, it was a strange postmodern building which actually consisted of two buildings that had been moved there from across the street, a distance of about seventy metres. The two medi-

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440 ——————— Derrida, "The Future of the Profession," 31–32.

441 ——————— See Isabell Lorey, *Demokratie im Präsens: Eine Theorie der politischen Gegenwart*, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Wissenschaft, 2020).

eval buildings were moved because the Bank UBS had sought to erect a huge administrative complex. (Switzerland!) They were placed side by side and connected with a modern staircase and a lift—a strange agglomeration of modern and old spaces, or, in short: absolutely postmodern. So, the rooms were actually relatively small and also had an intense language of their own, with wooden panelling and with mouldings on the ceiling. There were also huge old ovens still installed in it, left over from a time when the building served as a museum of medieval life, a branch of the Landesmuseum (meaning the picturesque ovens were dysfunctional). Not at all a white cube—and, admittedly, extremely difficult—and interesting—to work with from a curatorial perspective.

The rooms were narrow and also often too small for our growing public when we had discussions, talks, or screenings. Before we used the space, the Museum Baerengasse had presented contemporary art exhibitions, and for about two years it also hosted the Kunsthalle Zurich. However, the rooms also made it possible for large and small projects, seminars, and performances to find their respective space. As I write this text, I notice that I have changed from the first-person singular to the first-person plural. It was my plan from the beginning to make this place available to many. I worked closely with Mirjam Bayerdörfer and with the extended circle of students and young curators. We also invited colleagues to do events and exhibitions. However, this way of working was based on theoretical considerations, and every single, larger project for which we created a conceptual framework also had the claim of letting a great number of actors have a voice within this framework. Each project was intended to be multi-authored.

Thus, some of the features of the space did bring with them the typical exclusion scenarios of a museum, which invites mainly the white middle class, but without the typical interpellation of a subject that commands a central perspective overview and is also always on display, which, as Tony Bennett has argued in detail, creates a subject that installs the perspective of being seen inside as part of the addressed subjects and develops all the habitual self-control of a bourgeois citizen.[442] Actually, the Museum Baerengasse's spaces had a tendency to hide people; one always had difficulties meeting in the labyrinthine spaces. But the exclusion was a precondition to which were added, in our case, the preconditions of a university setting—which is unquestionably another scenario of exclusion.

To explain the specific pedagogical understanding that informed our programme, I have always thought that notions of radical democratic pedagogy are interesting and valuable in many ways. Here, I refer to Mary Drinkwater's discerning research on pedagogical approaches to which I

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442 —————— Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum, History, Theory, Politics* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995).

can relate because I undertook my education at the University of Bremen, a university which was founded after the events of '68 in a revolutionary spirit, offering a wide range of courses in humanist psychology and political science. Drinkwater bases her research into radical educational policy argumentation on John Dewey and Paolo Freire, and she is moreover interested in the agency that could be achieved in a political sense.[443] She explains what radical educational policy could be and what methods should be used:

> Traditional, rational or managerial policy development approaches are generally linear, staged and state controlled or state centred. A radical policy approach, in contrast, recognizes both the complexity and the value of having a broad and diverse group of stakeholders or policy actors acting at many different levels. The use of the metaphor of a policy web (Goldberg, 2006; Joshee, 2008) helps to understand how the policy process is shaped by circulating discourses. Using this metaphor, policy is designed as an ensemble of multiple discourses that interact in a complex web of relationships that enable or constrains social relations. It is a fluid arrangement of discourses existing at a given moment in time, emerging out of the struggle between multiple discourses from multiple voices in a given context.[444]

Here, I was also reminded of the concepts of solidarity and strategy that Oliver Marchart formulated, as described above. The complex web of relations, with its economic undercurrent, has to be enacted with the ideas of solidarity and strategy in mind, to avoid the neoliberal tendency of today's cultural discourse. One of the aims was to give agency to each of the students, artists, performers, and theorists involved.

For the Postgraduate Programme in Curating, the idea of a complex and diverse group corresponded first of all to the actual students' group, because the students are already working in different fields of art and culture. As previously mentioned, the programme resides in the department

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[443] John Dewey, "Experience and Education," Kappa Delta Pi Lecture Series, 1938; Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998); Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970); D. Fuller, K. Fitzgerald, and J. S. Lee, "The Case of Multiple Measures," *Association for Supervision, Curriculum Development* (Winter 2008), 52.

[444] Mary Drinkwater, "Radical Educational Policy: Critical democratic pedagogy and the reinfusion of the arts in secondary schools, art and education," accessed 5 April 2015, http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/radical-educational-policy-critical-democratic-pedagogy-and-the-reinfusion-of-the-arts-in-secondary-schools/.

of continuing education, which means that we have had gallerists, a film festival director, a performance festival director, a literature festival director, people who work in art institutions as producers or in art education, and sometimes students with a background in film and often in art history, art, and design. Some of them have been working in the arts for years, and others come straight from a BA study programme. We also have students with extremely different cultural backgrounds: about one third are Swiss, but others come from Italy, France, Austria, Cuba, Brazil, Canada, the US, the UK, the UAE, Romania, Serbia, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Lebanon, and Israel. On a second level, the students should be able to apply the idea of diverse groups of stakeholders to the actual working situation of a curator. A curator is always involved in negotiations with artists, production groups, stakeholders in the arts, cultural policy, and the broader society. So, the actual formulation of a position in the programme should later be transferrable to other challenges. For the programme and our situation at the Museum Baerengasse/Gasthaus zum Baeren, it is important to keep in mind the "metaphor of a policy web" and, as Drinkwater claims, "using this metaphor, policy is designed as an ensemble of multiple discourses that interact in a complex web of relationships that enable or constrains social relations."[445] From my perspective, what was most significant was that the people doing things there were able to perceive themselves as an interest-led group, as members of a group who were joint producers of this place and this programme—a group of people with agency.

The concept of a fluid arrangement of discourses existing at a given moment in time appeals to me as a way of sketching our situation as a programme at the Museum Baerengasse. It takes into consideration that the ideas and contributions by students as well as those by me and other lecturers in the programme formulated the events we developed. On the other hand, the actual power structures are not ignored, but the usual total hierarchised control of a programme was explicitly given up. For this reason, for the multiplicity of contributions in the form of screenings, talks, and exhibitions, some of the projects were developed on the basis of concepts presented by me and other lecturers, sometimes developed for participating students, and others were developed by students and the programme assistant, Mirjam Bayerdörfer. She became more and more important in developing the curatorial displays for our "shared projects." Different stages of professionalisation and specific cultural knowledge were thus clearly reflected in the programme. Given the diverse backgrounds and work experience of the participants, this did not imply a hierarchy of professionalisation, with lecturers at the top, assistants in the

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445 ———— Ibid.

middle, and students at the bottom, but that a multiplicity of abilities and professional qualifications were in play: there were a lot of people with very different skills and experience involved, whether in exhibition production, short films, working with young students, collecting, programming music events, programming performance, philosophy, etc. In any case, the different areas of knowledge were something we welcomed wholeheartedly because I believe that a university setting must allow for experiments, failures, fissures, even confusion, and should provide a setting for long-term engagement and project work, and that the latter should emerge out of the struggle between multiple discourses from multiple voices in a given context. Also, other experiments that open up exhibition spaces to a range of social groups and neighbours, like Alistair Hudson,[446] for example. So, my goal was not to have a perfect programme, but to have an imperfect platform for experiments, yet with a specific direction. Taking into consideration that a space such as a university is structured hierarchically, quite in keeping with Johan Galtung's concept of "structural violence," a multiplicity of concepts of subjectivity and creativity were at stake and acknowledged.[447] For everyone involved, the experience was that we acted as a group and not as "individual commodity processors," or as competing future players in the art market; we tried to establish an understanding of working together as collective producers of our own lives. The heading for all the projects, "Curate Your Context!," was meant to indicate the direction we wanted to go.

The projects we developed also scrutinised the situation in which we were positioned in the Museum/Guesthouse.

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446 ——— As Director of the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA), Alistair Hudson developed a concept around a "useful museum."

447 ——— Johan Galtung, *Strukturelle Gewalt: Beiträge zur Friedens- und Konfliktforschung* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1975).

7.3.2 Is it (Y)ours?[448]

Is it (Y)ours?, curated by Damian Jurt, Patrick Mueller and I, asks who owns the public space and extends this question to a multitude of different contexts, pointing out similarities and differences. "Who owns the public space? How can we formulate in it claims and contradictions? How do alternative utopias develop? And how to transform communities, strategic alliances and movements? How do artists formulate claims to participation? And how do artists intervene in Cape Town, Hong Kong, Bern, Zurich, Berlin, Cairo?"[449]

For the exhibition, we (as a study programme) collaborated with Christian Falsnaes to produce a video on site at the Museum Baerengasse with the whole student group. In the first part, we acted with him as a choir in a strange musical, and in the second part, we interacted in a performance in which we cut all of his clothes off his body while talking about art, re-enactment, gender, and vulnerability. In the first part, Christian acted like a motivational coach, encouraging us to do group hugs and dance freely, or dance by imitating him. This was a subtle critique of working in a project-oriented, neoliberal world, in which the employees are happy to work, and some kinds of spectacle can also be considered work—in relation to "influencers" who produce videos to advertise certain products. We acted according to the orders, but also in an ironic way, as these kinds of normative orders are also a joke in the supposedly free art world. In addition, the actions took place in the city centre of Zurich, and any highly expressive behaviour is a violation of the unspoken codes of conduct in Zurich. On the streets, any highly emotional outbreak or even talking loudly or emotionally is seen as weird behaviour. If there is a place where a citizen controls herself or himself, it is in Switzerland. And, by the way, as Katharina Moraweck (director of the Shedhalle in Zurich, 2014-2017) also mentions in our video interview with her that one-quarter of the people living and working in Switzerland are not allowed to vote, including migrants, *Sans Papiers*, third-generation immigrants, expats in the finance business, as well as a high percentage of staff in universities and hospitals. The video was then shown as part of the exhibition *Is it (Y)ours?*, as was the frame with the remnants of Christian's clothes, which we had put together during the performance. It was something very special that the

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448 ——— *Is it (Y)ours?*, Museum Baerengasse, Gasthaus zum Baeren, Zurich (13 March–5 April 2014), curated by Damian Jurt, Dorothee Richter, and Hong Kong Inserts by Patrick Mueller. Artists: Fabian Chiquet, Clément Cogitore, Ellen Pau, Cai Fei, Christian Falsnaes, Tang Kwok Hin, Marianne Halter/Mario Marchisella, MAP Office, Cédric Maridet, Anne-Julie Raccoursier, RELAX.

449 ——— Ibid.

Is it (Y)ours?, Curators: Damian Jurt, Dorothee Richter, Patrick Mueller, Artist: Christian Falsnaes, Screening of *Opening*

Is it (Y)ours?, Artists: MAP Office

Is it (Y)ours?, Artists: Marianne Halter / Mario Marchisella

Christian Falsnaes, *Opening*, 2013, film stills

participants, students, an artist, and I became part of the artwork, in which we acted also in a rather funny and uncanny way. We, as part of the performance, became involved in this immediate way, which allowed the whole group to be part of the outcome, but not just as an emotional event, but as a critical event, in which questions were raised during the production and included in the narration of the video. We spoke, for example, about Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* and what difference it makes to perform this on a male or a female body. The way in which the rather different cultural backgrounds of the students played a role was also interesting; of course, students from countries where nudity is strictly forbidden in public or in films and publications also felt more violated by the increasing nakedness of the performer Christian. All these contradictions became part of the video, as did filming as a part of cultural production with mobile phones, undertaken by the students during and after the performance. And again, here, some of the specificity of the context came into the piece, but the group of students also created the experience to be part of a project, to be co-authors. "I need you for this video," Christian Falsnaes addresses them in the video: "Without you there is no video."

The project was then shown as part of the greater exhibition, which was the first major project at the Museum Baerengasse/Gasthaus zum Baeren. The Video and Workshop by Falsnaes gave the students of the pro-

gramme a very special entrance into the exhibition, which was based mainly on video work and on video work with sound. This was also due to the fact that the rooms were very small and low and tended to overpower very subtle works with their medieval atmosphere. The works on show projected urban situations from a variety of contexts onto our particular precarious location in the heart of the financial district.

7.3.3. Curating and Pedagogy as Interpellation
Based on the Mirror Stage

To return to the concept of ideological state apparatuses: Louis Althusser argues that every cultural production situates and, in a sense, produces a subject through interpellations.[450] As some may recall, we made this claim also for the subject of an exhibition, which is also the addressee of interpellations—the subject is, in a sense, produced by the exhibition, as Wolfgang Kemp diagnosed for some paintings in the space of the political.[451] Some contemporary theoreticians consider the notion of interpellation too reductionist. Especially cultural studies have taken into consideration the possibilities of talking back, accepting or refusing a proposed ideological layout. However, I think this may work on a much deeper level of address and intersubjectivity. Jacques Lacan developed the metaphor of a screen or tableau on which a subject projects multiple "answers" or reactions to the interpellations reaching it from the outside. In the Lacanian conception, a subject is on the one hand already spoken, which means it is placed in a signifying or symbolic chain. A subject is inscribed into this line of descendance before its birth and after its death, and this unconsciously influences its development and positioning.[452] In this sense, a subject is not at all autonomous.

The ideal of an autonomous subjectivity is based on an illusion, which is developed during the mirror stage. In the mirror stage, an imaginary whole subject is constructed, but this subjectivity must be acknowledged from the outside. The small child sees itself as a whole image and reacts jubilantly. For Lacan, this is the fundamental structure of subjectivity, which is obviously based on a misconception, because the moment of validation is eluded as well as the actual extreme dependency on other human beings. This is the basis of the imaginary register. To see oneself as the central point of the central perspective is illusionary in the sense that that the other—or, more specifically, an imagined perspective of the

450 ———— Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses."

451 ———— Wolfgang Kemp, *Der Betrachter ist im Bild, Kunstwissenschaft und Rezeptionsästhetik,* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1992).

452 ———— See Dylan Evans, *Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1998), 187.

other—is sketched by Lacan as another triangle, reversing and overlapping the imaginary triangle of the central perspective. In this construction, the subject starts to project itself onto the imagined position in favour of the person who sees the subject. It multiplies different projections of its image (illusionary subjectivity) onto this screen/tableau. To connect this scheme to Althusser's more rigid model, a subject permanently projects its own subjectivity in relation to an imagined other onto a tableau, where it is seen by the other. In this model, subjectivity is produced in an ongoing process of interpellations and projections and is in no way fixed and in no way autonomous. This is also why a teacher–student relationship is extremely important, taking into consideration the power relationship Althusser implied in his example of someone being addressed by a policeman. For me, this scenario is the reason why the actual interaction with students (and in a different way with publics) is of enormous importance; in the actual encounter, something is able to happen: the recognition of the other. The vis-à-vis can be recognised as one with situated knowledge in an ongoing process and therefore as an agent. This happens in direct contact, but also in the way one interacts in a group situation, in the way one discusses reading, in that each group member is involved in decision processes.

7.3.2 Being a Schoolmaster—With and Against Rancière

Nevertheless, from my perspective, the fact that the actual hierarchy of the teacher-student relationship permits a moment of equality and acknowledgement in the event of interaction is highly contradictory.[453] This would relativize Jacques Rancière's notion of equality, he defines equality as being in fundamental opposition to the police order, the limiting power structure of a society. The police order is unable to "respond to the moment of equality of speaking bodies."[454] For Rancière, equality is produced in a process, in an open set of practices. He thus draws two conclusions: "First, equality is not a state, not a goal that an action may seek to achieve. It is a premise that an action sets out to verify. Second, this set of practices has no particular name. Equality has no visibility of its own. Its premise must be understood in the practices that articulate it, and be extricated from its implicitness."[455] I see this as a precondition for an educational (and a curatorial) encounter.

453 ———— I am not deeply familiar with Maud Manoni's pedagogical concepts, which she derived from Lacanian theory.

454 ———— Jacques Rancière, "Gibt es eine politische Philosophie?," in *Politik der Wahrheit*, eds. Alain Badiou and Jacques Rancière, trans. Rado Riha (Vienna: Turia & Kant, 1997), 64–93. Available online at http://www.episteme.de/htmls/Ranciere-politische-Philosophie.html, accessed 6 November 2011, 4.

455 ———— Ibid., 5.

Rancière's important deliberations on the ignorant schoolmaster argues in favour of equal intelligence as a precondition for education.[456] Nevertheless, already the term "schoolmaster" alone implies a hierarchy. In these processes, the contradiction is preconditioned. Rancière tries to argue using the underlying—but wilfully ignored—concepts formulated by Pierre Bourdieu, which let his arguments often vibrate in an empty, ahistorical space. Elke Bippus identifies another problem in Rancière's theoretical outline: when he speaks about the distribution or redistribution of the sensible, without the sociological perspective, the theoretical approach becomes vague.[457]

Having said that, the position of setting curating in the context of a university has to be scrutinized from all angles, for example, from the position of the not-so-innocent schoolmaster. So, from my perspective, a teacher has to be aware of his/her responsibility; s/he should sense the need to become acquainted with the specific subjective entities, the cultural backgrounds, the skills and abilities, the trajectories and goals of each student. As described by Derrida, a teacher has to do this on the basis of his/her own positioning, his/her own sense of urgent necessity, or in other words, to make his/her political position known. What is more, a teacher has to take the risk of having an uncontrollable moment of encounter, an encounter in which equality in the sense of being of absolute equally valuable is the precondition. This moment could be described as re-cognition, which I strongly believe holds the potential for change. At the same time, curating (and other forms of cultural production) offers the potential to transform an urgency or, in the Lacanian sense, the wish for the "object petit a," which is best described as a lack, a wanting, a longing. To transfer this longing into some sort of a signifying chain would be what could happen individualised through the "talking cure" as well as by producing culture and art, as a collective effort, and therefore by curating. This again shows how much curating and curatorial training are linked here: Nora Sternfeld has used the term "post-representational curating" for curating in which the end product is not so much a completed display but a process. The focus here is not on the "installation of valuable objects and the presentation of objective values," but "on the creation of spaces of possibility, [...] unexpected encounters and changing confrontations, in which the unplannable appears more important than precise hanging

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456 ———— Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* trans. Kristin Ross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), from the original book in French, *Le Maître ignorant. Cinq leçons sur l'émancipation intellectuelle*, published in 1987.

457 ———— Elke Bippus, "Strategien des Nicht*Sagbaren / Nicht*Sichtbaren. Überlegungen zum Dispositiv der Ästhetik," in *Dispositiv-Erkundungen / Exploring Dispositifs*, ed. Birte Kleine-Benne (Berlin: Logos Verlag, 2021), 57-79 (translated by the author).

plans. Exhibitions thus become spaces for action."[458] This has consequences for the concept of education. From such a perspective, education is not defined as "information, awareness-raising and education" or from the affirmation of completed narratives, but according to an ongoing negotiation and action. This, of course, should be backed by extensive theory reading and discussion, in order to offer a way out of what Johan Hartle describes, namely that advanced capitalism isolates and leads to a contemplative attitude towards the world: this way out is to put collective actions into the world, against a backdrop of reflection from one's own positionality and understanding of the social and political contexts. This is developed against Rancière insofar as the ignorant schoolmaster becomes a clearly positioned schoolmaster in a process of shared authorship. Her/his relation as a schoolmaster towards the institution stays necessarily ambiguous.

7.3.5 Unsettling the Setting: Playing, Plying, Squatting, Operating, Owning, Occupying—or rather?

The second shared exhibition *Unsettling the Setting: Playing, Plying, Squatting // Operating, Owning, Occupying—or rather?*[459] was curated by Mirjam Bayerdörfer[460] and me.[461] We asked artists, theorists, and curators to provide a concept for our somehow uncanny situation at Gasthaus zum Baeren/Museum Baerengasse. Quoting from parts of the concept: "Around the Paradeplatz in Zurich, money does not grow on trees but instead is buried in the ground. What for? What does it do there? The Museum Baerengasse is located 200m from Paradeplatz. For whom? What does it do there?" Our aim was to explore the situation of our project at that loca-

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458 ——————— Nora Sternfeld, "Im post-repraesentativen Museum," in *Ausstellen und Vermitteln im Museum der Gegenwart*, eds. Carmen Mörsch, Angeli Sachs, Thomas Sieber (Bielefeld: transcript, 2017), 189 (translation by the author).

459 ——————— *Unsettling the Setting: Playing, Plying, Squatting, Operating, Owning, Occupying–––or rather?* Museum Baerengasse, Gasthaus zum Baeren, Zurich (Oct. – Nov. 2014), curated by Mirjam Bayerdörfer and Dorothee Richter. Artists: Alain Jenzer, Allan Siegel, Alex Meszmer and Reto Müller, André Bideau, Byung Chul Kim, Brigitte Dätwyler, Dimitrina Sevova, Emilie Guenat, Florence Jung, Johanna Bruckner, Karen Geyer, Lena Lieselotte Schuster, Lucie Kolb and Gabriel Flückiger, Mariann Oppliger and Sophie Hofer, Matthias Megyeri, Michael Hiltbrunner, Riikka Tauriainen, Romy Rüegger, Szuper Gallery, Tom Menzi and Stefan Wagner, and Triin Tamm.

460 ——————— Mirjam Bayerdörfer was an assistant to the programme at that time and later became interim curatorial director at the Shedhalle in Zurich in 2019.

461 ——————— *Unsettling the Setting. Playing, Plying, Squatting // Operating, Owning, Occupying–––or rather?*

Unsettling the Setting: Playing, Plying, Squatting, Operating, Owning, Occupying–––or rather? Museum Baerengasse, Gasthaus zum Baeren, Zurich (Oct. – Nov. 2014), curated by Mirjam Bayerdörfer and Dorothee Richter.

Discussion initiated by Tom Menzi and Stefan Wagner in *Unsettling the Setting,* Museum Baerengasse, Gasthaus zum Baeren, Zurich

Building an exhibition display with Urs Egg

tion, and we understood this as a starting point for discussions with the students and the public. In this multifaceted way, the invited artists (and curators) reflected on the specific situation of money, economic power, cultural capital, activism, and the dramatically underfinanced situation of the Zurich art scene; for this situation, we asked the participating artists for concepts:

> 21 artists present proposals and conceptual sketches concerned with the question of how to deal with the Museum Baerengasse (currently: Gasthaus zum Baeren). The exhibited concepts react in a sketch-like way to the situation—the building itself; it's usage and its surroundings. The proposals range from concrete to absurd, from hypothetical to practical reasoning. The concepts draw on different media conglomerates and logics. For one month, the exhibition is holding onto the question ('raising the question' or 'asking': How can we make sense of this place?
> What does it mean to work and/ or live within heart of the financial district? Where and in what kinds of formats does art happen in this area? How is art contributing to the social structures of this part of the city? What does it mean to run an exhibition space in this area without any budget? How could one use art to re-read a heritage-protected museum building located in the middle of the financial district? The questions are not limited to the literal context of Baerengasse and the city of Zurich. They rather deal with the fundamental conditions of work, art, money, capital, city and space.[462]

We organised different talks, roundtables, and discussions, and the students were involved in the entire discursive programme. The discussion about this specific urban situation, the financial sector in Zurich, and in what way art and curating is used or misused or could make new proposals started to get discussed throughout the whole art scene. Maybe the underlining thought was that we do not have a chance, but we use it. The development showed (of course) that we were partly naïve, in our expectations for the venue: our university came to the conclusion that we did not represent the institution according to their self-concept (sic), and the cultural department of the city was disappointed by that move. We did it without means and, of course, without being paid for a fifteen-month programme, which was nevertheless exciting, since it showed our capacity to build a programme, to start a discourse that had not been heard before in this city, and this was rewarded with intensive interest from the young Zurich art scene. After this period, the city of Zurich's parliament decided to give the space to the Volkshochschule and a café.

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462 ———— Quote from the exhibition concept.

7.4. From Situated Knowledges to Kinship

As mentioned at the beginning of this book, the term "situated knowledges" was coined by Donna Haraway, and it is a central topic in her concept of feminist objectivity. In her much-cited essay, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,"[463] Haraway assumes that all scientific knowledge is fundamentally conditional. For this reason, the concept of "situated knowledge" incorporates the social location and contextual advantages of the researcher into the research process.[464] Furthermore, the embedding in a scientific field and possible blind spots are analysed. Against an assumption of an apparently neutral and unmediated knowledge of the Western idea of science and its representation through experimental visualization techniques, Haraway develops her concept of embodied knowledge by drawing on a description of the eye and "vision" (in the broad real and metaphorical sense). There is no such thing as unconditional observation, she argues, because every "acquisition of knowledge" takes place in a dynamic "apparatus of bodily production."[465]

Haraway therefore urges recognition of an embodied objectivity and thus for knowledge located—i.e., situated—in a certain time, person, or group of persons. Situated knowledge is never universal, but rather contains excerpts and different perspectives that can change in time and context. Only by negotiating the different positions and partial perspectives, by the stuttering and the irritations that arise from this, does more adequate knowledge become possible. This seems to us to be a particularly valuable approach in collaborative processes that bring together different cultures and different political situations. Haraway retains the concept of the entity in many areas because she is concerned with understanding the situated and embodied power of actors in networks. This clear understanding of agency also positions her theoretical approach in opposition to some understanding of the Actor-Network Theory and New Materialism.

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463 ——— Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 1988): 575-599, 591.
464 ——— Sigrid Schmitz, "Cyborgs, situiertes Wissen und das Chthulucene," accessed 1 August 2020, https://www.soziopolis.de/erinnern/klassiker/artikel/cyborgs-situiertes-wissen-und-das-chthulucene/.
465 ——— Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 591.

According to Haraway, situated knowledge forms the basis for political action. The inevitable involvement of scientists in the "apparatuses of bodily production" always requires them to accept and reflect on their own responsibility. Haraway already explains this in the "Cyborg Manifesto": "Taking responsibility for the social relations of science and technology means refusing an anti-science metaphysics, a demonology of technology, and so means embracing the skillful task of reconstructing the boundaries of daily life, in partial connection with others, in communication with all of our parts."[466] This thought is again claimed as a feminist perspective by Lauren Fournier, who developed the understanding of autotheory as a feminist practice. She argues: "I suggest that autotheory can be approached as a practice that artists, writers, critics, curators, activists, and others tend toward as a way of coming to terms with "theory"—whether as the "master discourse(s)" of theory and philosophy, to take the words of Luce Irigaray, or as the work of making theories—in relation to their experiential, affective lives and embodied, relational practices as human beings in the world."[467] I understand Isabell Lorey's theoretical reflections on a presentist democracy as an attempt to inscribe these forms of bodily knowledge and care work into the political.

Bonaventura de Sousa Santos comes to a compatible conclusion in *Epistemologies of the South*: he sees the problem of global economic inequality as based on the Western understanding of science and law, and therefore the fight for global social justice must primarily be a fight for global cognitive justice. This is first and foremost a matter of sovereignty of interpretation. These structures arise from abyssal thinking deeply rooted in Western modernity, which must be countered with an alternative, rebellious, popular cosmopolitanism based on equality and the recognition of difference.[468]

In her later writings, Haraway establishes a concept of kinship that is not based on biological heritability, but on the inseparability of human-animal-plant-technology in secular networks. In her contribution, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin," she calls for a responsible "kinship" relationship to become the basis of political activist strategies in times of current crises such as climate change, pollution, migration, exploitation, and postcolonial oppression: "Making

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466 ——— Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 149–181, 181.

467 ——— Lauren Fournier, *Autotheory as a Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism* (Cambridge; London: MIT Press, 2021).

468 ——— Bonaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (Boulder: Paradigm, 2014).

kin and making kind (as category, care, relatives without ties by birth, lateral relatives, lots of other echoes) stretch the imagination and can change the story."[469] If we remember that the claim of the universality of the arts is a notion that is deeply embedded in a historical development of Western modern art, the idea of a deep and respectful interest for other contexts would be a step toward a new form of curatorial kinship. In my understanding, curatorial kinship can be developed towards a spatial concept of curatorial commons, and as an extremely diversified commons according to the notion of kinship as introduced by Haraway. Part of this would be common knowledge as a slow, specific, limited, and bodily process. Through this understanding of a shared platform into which knowledge is submitted and can be retrieved by many others, we developed the web platform *OnCurating.org* after the travelling archive *Curating Degree Zero Archive*. The content is open-access, but the magazines and books can also be purchased as print-on-demand. From our point of view, it is also a political decision to keep access as open and free as possible for as long as possible. These deliberations inspired us (Ronald Kolb and myself) to mix talks with screenings and performative parts in symposia, and workshops. At the conference "De-Colonising Art Institutions," the Roma Jam Session art Kollektiv inspired everyone present to perform a detox dance in the Kunstmuseum Basel, which it was much in need of. In all the different symposia and workshops in the format of *Curating on the Move*, we implemented new experimental formats and integrated artists and theoreticians from the specific contexts.[470]

7.4.1 How We Live Now—Art System, Work Flow, and Creative Industries

The video *How We Live Now—Art System, Work Flow, and Creative Industries* was filmed at Gasthaus zum Baeren/Museum Baerengasse. For this project, we worked together with the fine art students from the University of Lucerne. We read and discussed Michel Foucault's concept of the gaze regimes of modernity, based on the Panopticon sketched by English philosopher and social theorist Jeremy Bentham. The panopticon shows that the most effective control of behaviour is instituted when a guard is situated in a tower in the middle of the building and the inmates do not know when they are actually being watched and when they are not. That means that they are motivated to act as though they are being watched at all times. Thus, they are effectively compelled to regulate their own behaviour.

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469 ———— Donna Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin," *Environmental Humanities* 6 (2015): 159–165, 161.

470 ———— For more information on *Curating on the Move*, see www.curating.org.

Decolonizing Art Institutions, Kunstmuseum Basel, 2017,
with a detox dance by Roma Jam Session art Kollektiv

Michel Foucault takes this concept as the metaphor of modern disciplinary societies, and their function to establish power.[471] The Panopticon creates a consciousness of permanent visibility as a form of power, where no bars, chains, or heavy locks are necessary for domination. The function of control is internalized. The citizen controls himself/herself. With digital media as an instrument to film and record daily life, this mode of projecting an ideal self to the outside has increased rapidly.

We cross-read that with the promise of contemporary cultural work and its neoliberal outlines: you are free, but, by the way, also without social security. The text of the film is based on written stories provided by students; they were transformed by the author Renata Burckhardt into short scenes. The stories linked the recent event of the disappearance of forty students in Mexico to the difficulties encountered when migration authorities doubted that foreign gallery staff could not be replaced by Swiss citizens, to the difficulties caused by the existence of real and fake addresses in Switzerland. So here was the situated knowledge on which the scenes of the film were based. The actual scenes were transformed by the writer Renata Burckhardt into a screenplay. None of it was that predictable. Different people filmed. The film was co-edited by Ronald Kolb and me. In the end, we used most of the moments around the performed scenes, the breaks in which people shared a cigarette. The text is then voiced over the filmed material by a male and a female, and at some points the spoken text and the performed text overlap. This highlighted the artificial moment of the filmed material, a mega V effect, if one could put it like that. The whole writing process that spoke about individual experience and theoretical texts already had this great effect for the students in terms of understanding the relationship between theory and personal living conditions and vice versa. In addition, the problematic conditions in some of the countries, problems with migration, and the aspiration and compulsion to play according to the rules of the Western art field became topics. Again, agency was spread throughout the film, and according to this, the film can be shown or "used" by all participants.

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471 ———   Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, ed. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).

How We Live Now—Art System, Work Flow, and Creative Industries, 2015, film production

7.5 The Subject(s) of Curating

Felix Ensslin undertook to situate curating in a psychoanalytical Lacanian reading at the symposium "Curating: Glittering Myth, Revolutionary Force, Social Symptom?," in which he set forth in detail pre-figurative structures of curatorial practice and, more specifically, of curating in the university context.[472] The notion "subject" is associated in English on the one hand with subjectivity, and on the other hand with the notion of a specific topic. Thus, the word "subject" in Ensslin's title is left to shift ambiguously back and forth. We are left to consider the influence a subject has on a subject in both directions, without falling into the "trap" of Actor-Network Theory, or New Materialism which projects the capacity to act onto things. In contrast with this, an understanding of curating inspired by a gender-critical reading, in which the relationship between the subject and the institution is at stake, would justify the attacks on the master discourse of curating from a feminist position. (Hence, we offered anti-master classes as a summer school with Raques Media Collective, Bernard Stiegler and Alfredo Jaar.)

In Ensslin's concept, all empirical tools of curating as specific activities—installing exhibitions, art-historical knowledge, institutional management, organisation of networks, connoisseurship, tools of mediation, judging, fundraising, and so on—i.e., all the activities curating is usually associated with—are considered something that comes along with the job. A show is produced because you feel the urgency to make something materialise, to put something on view, to implement a discourse (as a subject, not as a "thing"). But, of course, curating shifts between naming a conflict and taming a conflict. This is, in Ensslin's understanding, a complex situation interpreted with Lacan as inscribing a subject into an existing institution, which means to subsume him/her under the law of the father. Curating would therefore always shift between these poles. In my view, an understanding of shared interests, of context, of one's own positioning, and of agency is crucial in a curatorial education. Here again, agency is understood as being part of producing our life together.

The art academy of the present is based on different models which are all to an extent also present in the contemporary situation. To quote Thierry de Duve, these models could be categorised as the academy model, the

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472 ———— See the video of the talk by Felix Ensslin, "The Subject of Curating" at the symposium *Curating: Glittering Myth, Revolutionary Force, Social Symptom?*, Zurich University of the Arts, 2014, accessed 1 March 2015, http://www.curating.org/index.php/talks/glittering-myths-felix-ensslin.

Bauhaus model, and the contemporary model. All of them have different preconceptions of the subject and of creativity. Very briefly, the academy upholds the idea of the artist as a genius who is supposed to be an inspiration for his students; they are supposed to follow his example and learn his techniques through imitation. The students are organised as a group of followers, but they can also compete, initially for his recognition and later for public recognition; on the other hand, the alumni of this specific group would also later promote each other. (The gender aspect in this father-son scenario is very clear and does not require further discussion here). The concept of the Bauhaus, which was the leading model only very briefly between the two World Wars but still has a lot of influence today, changed the ideology of the genius at work. The new ideology was that of creativity and of intensive work based on industrial production and an interest in new materials. The idea was of a twofold education combining aspects of art and aspects of engineering. In many respects, this concept bore resemblance to industrial production and to an intense ideology of work, but it also entails democracy on the horizon, as the new materials should make better living conditions for larger populations achievable.

The concept referred to by Stuart Bailey[473] as "contemporary" is based on the idea of developing an approach that makes it necessary to engage in reading and discussing viewpoints. This practice is based on working together and not on developing singular authorship (a common misunderstanding), and in this context to deconstruct the means questioning many existing paradigms and formats. What is also important here is the necessity of developing an idea about one's own situation, one's own position, as part of a specific context at the university, in the arts, and in society as a whole. Students should come out of their education self-empowered; thus, the teachers can do no more than serve as examples; they cannot prescribe courses of action or give orders.

One of the inspiring examples curated by Anne Koskiluoma and Tanja Trampe, at the Gasthaus zum Baeren was *What's Cooking? A Re-Arrangement*. They based their project on considerations by Markus Steinweg: "To change from one order to another, one must pass through disorder. There is no smooth transition, just as there is no chaos as such."[474] If Steinweg here uses an emphatic concept of knowledge that pushes the limits of the knowable, then an excess has taken place in the realisation of the project in which the participating artists as well as audience members have actu-

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473 ——— Stuart Bailey, "Towards a Critical Faculty. A short reader concerned with art/design education compiled by Stuart Bailey for the Academic Workshop at Parsons School of Design, The New School, New York, Winter 2006/7, see https://readings.design/PDF/01_criticalfaculty.pdf.

474 ——— Marcus Steinweg, *Philosophie der Ueberstuerzung* (Berlin: Merve Verlag, 2013) (translation by the author).

ally gone through a common process. This project indicated how much the local art scene had until then lacked a place of a different kind of production, a discourse, a place of assembly. *What's Cooking?* featured twelve artistic positions from the fine arts, art theory, and curating as well as transdisciplinary interventions that bear interactive, relational, and participative characteristics and engage in active documentary strategies. The approximately fifty-hour continuous gathering called for simultaneous production, documentation, and presentation in order to broaden the dimensions that allow us to reflect actively on presence, simultaneity, and our individual involvement.

The curators described *What's Cooking?* as an experiment with alternative curatorial orders that broke new ground through the continuous formation of new collaborations which deployed perpetual processes of rearrangement fuelled by gestures of precipitancy, transgression, and exaggeration.[475]

7.5.1 Involvement Requires Perception: Eleven Ways to Get Involved in Art and Social Space

The third large shared project, *Involvement Requires Perception*,[476] invited eleven artist-run spaces to present one work (which could also be a social sculpture) and one manifesto each. Here, we, as well as students, proposed and then worked with each art space. This project handed over the actual curatorial tasks and negotiations to the students, and as a result it was extremely productive. It showed very divergent approaches to art and social space and provided scope for negotiations and discussions. The invited off-spaces came from Japan, Italy, all over Switzerland, Mexico, and Germany, according to the background or country of origin of the students: the participating project spaces included:

100plus (Zurich, CH), bblackboxx (Basel, CH), CENTER (Berlin, D), DIENSTGEBÄUDE (Zurich, CH), eggn'spoon (Zurich, CH), Gasconade (Milan, I), HACIENDA (Zurich, CH), LULU (Mexico City, MEX), Raum (Bern, CH),

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475 ———— *What's Cooking? A Re-Arrangement*, curated by Anne Koskiluoma and Tanja Trampe with Kathrin Böhm, Ludovica Carbotta, Corner College, Brett Davidson, Fucking Good Art, Monica Germann & Daniel Lorenzi, Milenko Lazić, Jso Maeder, Doris Prlić/Marlies Stöger/André Tschinder, Marinella Senatore, Francisca Silva, and Marcus Steinweg. Side Dishes: DIY around-the-clock kitchen, cheap beer, retiring installation, DIY Fanzine copy shop, poster edition by Monica Germann and Daniel Lorenzi. Museum Baerengasse/Gasthaus zum Baeren, Zurich, October 2014.

476 ———— *Involvement Requires Perception: Eleven Ways to Get Involved with Art and Social Space*, concept by Mirjam Bayerdörfer and Dorothee Richter, Museum Baerengasse/Gasthaus zum Baeren, Zurich, March 2015.

What's Cooking? A Re-Arrangement, 10 October – 12 October 2014, Gasthaus zum Bären/Museum Bärengasse, Zürich. A 50 hours nonstop gathering, initiated and curated by Anne Koskiluoma & Tanja Trampe

SALTS (Basel, CH), and VACANT (Tokyo, JP). The authorship and respon-sibility then became a task of the whole group, so the list of curators is therefore quite long: Mona Liem Adinegoro, Tenzing Barshee, Mariana Bonilla, Frédéric Bron, Francesca Brusa, Cindy Hertach, Milena Isler, Raphael Karrer, Nadine Lopez, Giulia Magnani, Alejandro Mondria, Cord-elia Oppliger, Atalja Reichlin, Carolin Reichmann, Anja Soldat, Eleonora Stassi, Franziska Stern-Preisig, Makiko Takahashi, and again the concept was sketched by Mirjam Bayerdörfer and me, like a score, and the stu-dents proposed and contacted all the venues. This is a way of working with a group of curatorial agents that I continued later on, using an extremely open format, which makes it possible to have a multiplicity of voices coming together, murmuring, discussing, fighting, and laughing. I would compare this outline of a concept that is to be filled and co-au-thored with a Fluxus Score. The interpretation of a score can evoke extremely different outcomes. This makes then common usage of the space possible. Our concept read: "By reversing the evocative slogan of artist Antoni Muntadas, Perception Requires Involvement, the exhibition title aims to allude to the close relation of social awareness, knowledge production and image circulation. The intention is to show various ways by which the discussion of topics relevant for today's society is translated into the sphere of contemporary art and back."

Each curatorial initiative was given one of the eleven rooms at the Gast-haus zum Baeren. Each of them elaborated their approach in dialogue with an artwork. The term "artwork" is understood in a broad sense, stretching from objects to social sculptures and other experimental for-mats. All eleven participants were self-organised and as part of the exhibi-tion were asked to provide an insight on how they run. In my view, it is very important to see students as agents involved in the discourse, to hand over possibilities, space, time, and equipment, not just as a student's work but as a shared achievement. This process aimed to reverse the usual idea of education by understanding each participant as an agent with a specific political agenda. Here again, a programme of talks and dis-cussions evolved over the course of the project.

These three programmatic exhibitions can be understood as the back-bone of the project, a form of self-reflection and a means of asking ques-tions about the social, architectural, and political situation and how to deal with it. Within this context, we provided space and opportunities (although very little money) to complete projects with or without our advice. In between, we had a series of smaller exhibitions, performances, lectures, dinners, screenings, and talks. The process to decide on what was being shown was about enabling, not about selecting, as a general approach. After some months, the potential showed and we started to have this special manifestation of a new discursive, artistic, and curatorial

Exhibition views, *Involvement Requires Perception: Eleven Ways to Get Involved with Art and Social Space*, March 2015.

hub, which changed the idea about art in the local scene and also earned some recognition in the form of a growing public. Often, the speakers invited by institutions with a budget ended up in our more or less chaotic framework. The loose thinking for the projects was "Curate Your Context," the request to think about your context and to initiate a programme that would reflect aspects of specific contexts. The programme was moreover accompanied by a series of talks reflecting on curating and cultural practices. As you can see from the intense and diverse programme, students of all backgrounds took advantage of the opportunity and created shows, performances, discussions, music, book launches, etc. Curating the space became a collective effort. As Oliver Marchart states: "Politics is always a collective enterprise, and a political way of curating should therefore also be collective."[477] The actual curatorial authorship shifted between different protagonists, students, curatorial groups, befriended lecturers, our own professors, and those of other institutions, and us, as head and assistant of the programme. This concept functioned based on an existing hierarchy, since we, as the main "contractor" for the city, would also have the last word about the events, but on the other hand it also went way beyond any conventional curatorial setting, in which the restrictions of what is worthy and what is not worthy of entering the space of representation is a strictly hierarchical affair. Of course, our profound questions did not really make us popular in the municipality, and the space was taken out of our hands again after fourteen months.

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477 ———   Oliver Marchart, *HEGEMONY MACHINES, documenta X to fifteen and the Politics of Biennalization*, eds. OnCurating, Dorothee Richter, Marius Babias, and NBK (Zurich, Berlin: OnCurating, 2022), 55.

"Alienation, the Social Individual, and Communism. Marx in the 21st Century,"
Talk by Roberto Nigro in *Unsettling the Setting*, Museum Baerengasse,
Gasthaus zum Baeren, Zurich

Symposium, *Third, fourth and fifth spaces: Curatorial practices in new public and social (digital) spaces,* Migros Museum 2013, curated by Dorothee Richter and Christoph Schenker, with Marie Luise Angerer, Oliver Marchart, Sepake Angiama, Michael Birchall, Virginie Bobin, Florian Dombois, Marc Herbst, Roberto Jacoby, Jepchumba, Dominique Lämmli, Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez, Kristina Lee Podesva, Dorothee Richter, Alun Rowlands, Sigrid Schade, Christoph Schenker, Michael Schwab, Silvia Simoncelli, Ashok Sukumaran, Caleb Waldorf, Aaajiao (XU Wenkai)

8 CURATORIAL KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION UNDER DIGITAL CONDITIONS

8.1 Curating, Art, and the Historicity of the Human Senses

As Karl Marx once titled "Die Historizität der menschlichen Sinne"[478] (the historicity of the human senses), the human senses are historically, if not determined, then at least developed in close relationship with the materiality of a society; this simply means that the human imagination evolved as soon as optical devices opened up new ways of seeing. This is going beyond the well-known material bases and the superstructure of ideology. It means that literally the human constitution, the senses, the bodily functions, the possibilities to transfer any input from outside is developed in close entanglement with the material, mechanical, and now digital possibilities. This needs to be known, and it needs to be taken into consideration on a profound level when one speaks about art and curating, or if one speaks about any visual material nowadays. The changes of all human conceptions are severe. In the above theoretical sketch, we tried to show that visual input or other material related to the imaginary order is installed directly in a human entity; also, it constructs all forms of community. To put it simply but poignantly: imaginary visual material produces human entities; it produces subjects and communities. This is important to keep in mind when we try to understand in what profound way all material changes, and especially digital media, have transformed societies, relations, communities, and subjects.

In an article on the post-media condition, Peter Weibel argues that the essential successes of the new technical media, video, and computers, like the old technical media, photography and film, are not only that they initiated new art movements and created new art media, new forms of expression, but also that they had a decisive effect on historical media such as painting and sculpture. He believes that with the experience of the new media, we take a different look at the old media. With the practices of the new technical media, we re-evaluate the practices of the old non-technical media. In his perspective, one could even go so far as to say that the real success of the new media is to have developed new art forms and art possibilities, but their real success is to have made the old art media newly accessible to us and, above all, to have kept them alive by forcing them to make drastic changes.[479]

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[478]   Karl Marx, "Historizität der menschlichen Sinne," cited in Günter Helmes and Werner Köster, *Texte zur Medientheorie* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2002), 102.

[479]   See Peter Weibel, "Die postmediale Kondition," in *Die Medien der*

According to Weibel, the introduction of photography already led to the very mediality of painting and the materiality of the medium being questioned: in photography, the true-to-life representation, and in painting, for example, the dripping, trickling, blurring of colour, the reference to the concrete frame, etc. "All of art practice keeps to the script of the media," he therefore concludes.[480]

> "The art of technical media, i.e., art which has been produced with the aid of a device, constitutes the core of our media experience. This media experience has become the norm for all aesthetic experience. Hence, in art, there is no longer anything beyond the media."[481]

In order to understand the enormous upheavals that digital media have brought with them, we are currently confronted with very different approaches. I would like to mention here only briefly: the simulacrum, variations on affect theory, theories of media labour/affective labour, the accumulation of this labour, and its value creation. In my opinion, however, these approaches only cover partial aspects and sometimes bring them into questionable contexts. For example, in the case of affect theory, cause and effect are strangely reversed; in other words, a symptom is problematically offered as a possible solution.

A concise historical overview of the changes in the experience of time and space, and the concomitant change in the position of images, is provided by Peter Weibel in his lecture—and I translate the title here— "The History of Placelessness and the Emergence of a Remote Society."[482] I draw on Peter Weibel here because as a media artist, as a media theorist, as curator of Ars Elektronika, and as director of the Centre for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, he has always understood how to take a decidedly context-oriented standpoint and to place work with media in a historical context. His work, regardless of genre, is always interest-driven. Some of his work as a performance artist, like *Die Mappe der Hundigkeit* together with Valie Export, can be seen clearly as a feminist work, even if in later years the negotiation of rights on their shared projects might have been difficult.

Kunst, die Kunst der Medien, eds. Gerhard Johann Lischka, Peter Weibel (Bern: Benteli, 2004), 207. English version: Peter Weibel, "The Post-Media Condition," *Mute*, 19 March 2012, accessed 13 April 2022, https://www.metamute.org/editorial/lab/post-media-condition.

480 ——— Weibel, "The Post-Media Condition."

481 ——— Ibid.

482 ——— Peter Weibel, "Die Geschichte der Ortlosigkeit und die Entstehung der Ferngesellschaften," Talk in the series The Iconic Turn, Felix Burda Memorial Lectures, published on YouTube on 23 August 2012, accessed 6 January 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lIpNA-DoqYM.

At the beginning of the lecture, Weibel eloquently illustrates with quotes from Stefan Zweig that there was once a world without haste, without cars, planes, and trains. Every new experience was bound to the movement of the body through time and space. The first phase of an astonishing acceleration began with the Industrial Revolution, steam engines, and the steam railway, which could transport entire collectives and goods. The second phase began with individual mobility with the car; with physical mobility, the acceleration of time set in, and this led to the dissolution of distances. The experience of the annihilation of space by the railway was described as early as around 1840; Turner and Heine serve Weibel as literary and pictorial contemporary witnesses, respectively; they traced in their respective media the dislocation, which was perceived as shocking. Turner's painting *Rain, Steam and Speed* (1840) was described by a critic as evoking notions of speed, of increased mobility—the rain virtually wanting to spill out of the painting, the viewer seeming in danger. Acceleration, according to Weibel, kills time and kills place. This placelessness, which began with the Industrial Revolution, also took hold of images. The transformation of the historical experience of time is perceived as the annihilation of space. Weibel refers to the next phase of telecommunications, i.e., the telephone, telegraph, and radio, as virtual mobility. The body no longer moves; it receives motionless messages from afar. This brings about a whole new form of social communication.

Through television, the distant world surges into one's own living room; any landscape between the destinations is annihilated. Pictures, too, were originally bound to a place; as cave paintings or frescoes, they were firmly attached to the ground. Panel paintings were already much more mobile, but printing techniques also made images reproducible. The logic of distribution changed fundamentally as a result; it changed from a near society to a far and scattered society. In the latter, only the eye and ear were addressed. Walter Benjamin also notes the change in the way the senses were addressed.[483] In medieval modes of presentation, there was no ban on touching at the market, for example, in the sense that objects were touched, smelled, and pressed.

As is well known, Walter Grasskamp also emphasises this reduction of sensual perception since modernism; in relation to the exhibition space,

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[483] See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968 [1935]).
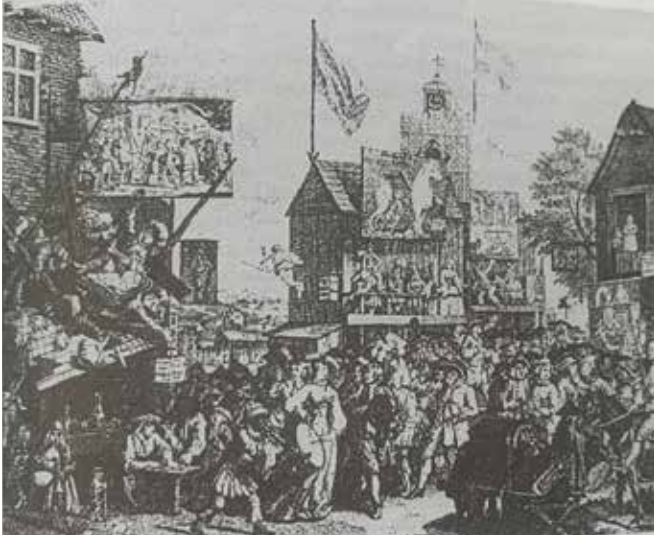
Medieval marketplace

Grasskamp speaks of a wandering pair of eyes. The aura of artworks is described by Benjamin: a distance, however close it may be, is reversed into the opposite; the mass-produced, multiplied images convey a proximity, however distant they may be, while blazing images into the living room, but also onto all other means of communication. The distributed, multiplied images simulate, as Weibel puts it, spooky distant images. The image, once again accelerated by quantum information technology, attains an unprecedented power in which it firstly loses its historical character, as art images are displaced by images of science, losing their pictorial character; and secondly, they become epistemic things: still object and already drawing, still drawing and already object. (In medical terms, one can speak of preparations).

As described, the development goes from physical mobility to the immaterial overcoming of space and time to virtual mobility, and he describes below what this also means for the constitution of bodies. A classical experience of space and time has been dissolved; the classical sensation of duration and distance had been defined by bodily experiences—an equivalence to this exists in the measure of space, this is derived from the stars, from the anthropomorphic measure. This measure is no longer correct, the measure derived from the body (foot and cubit) is decoupled, space and time now depend on the speed of the mobile. This is reflected in art. In Giorgio de Chirico's *The Pain of Departure*, the natural scaling and the perspective are suspended. The disappearance of space occurs through acceleration. The 20th century invades the microcosm: the cells

and the atoms. Simultaneity causes an implosion of perspective. And, following Weibel's examples, the degradation of perspective ends with Kazimir Malevich.

In the context of curatorial practice, it is essential to discuss this radical upheaval of the epistemic arrangement of body/image/technology and the associated re-situating of subjects and communities. This involves a dissociation of sensual impressions from the body; it is a new form of alienation. From this perspective, too, the traditional mere hanging, the mere stringing together of individual images in a room seems like an almost touchingly retrograde act. However, this gesture of pointing is also a statement, an attempt to insist on a world of irreducible distances and ancient media. Connected to this is also the obvious effect of seeing "artworks" primarily as commodities that are and remain transportable and tangible. This conservative, if you will, way of hanging, usually accompanied by a backward-looking concept of art, is still a widespread curatorial act today. But we must also take into account the possibilities and problematic effects of the digital on cultural techniques such as curating.

8.2 A Short History of Curating the Digital

In addition to the abovementioned historical overview, despite how incredibly young digital media in fact are, they have nevertheless upended all aspects of our daily life—all infrastructure, all ways of communication, all production processes. It is more than obvious that these profound changes and turmoil, with their material infrastructures, their image production, their ideological constructions, and their acceleration, have changed and influenced all ways of living, of being, and of being-with, from dating to voting, to the exchange of goods and money. Literally everything is now influenced through the digital space, and what is more, it is all processed through algorithms, which, of course, have racist, gender-specific, class-related, and national undercurrents. Just to cite one example: on dating platforms, people are suggested to those who resemble them in income, "race," and other issues, so these tools help to sustain classes, or even breeding specific classes, "races," and so on. Here we are, still astonished, fighting for an awakening, as we try to grasp what all of this means, and we try to react, to comment on, and to respond with our activist, artistic, and/or curatorial means.

When I started to write this chapter, I wanted to briefly present and discuss exhibitions that have dealt with digital media and therefore reflected and (re)presented outlooks on digital media and its connotation. These exhibitions function as nodes in the discourse on the digital and its contexts. During the writing process, I became more and more uneasy; did this kind of overview not claim to formulate an approved history of digital art? And did it not—and, of course, this did not come as a surprise—show a severely male-dominated area? In summarising the exhibitions and projects that one finds when researching digital art, one reproduces mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. I recognised during my research that feminist approaches to digital media in particular are more or less neglected in the official history of digital media, existing instead in twilight zones, which are much harder to (un)cover.

So, when I tell here the his-story of exhibition-making concerned with the digital, I want you to be aware of the hidden parts—they are there, but partly not available. Especially if one concentrates on the nodes in the discourse, i.e., the big exhibitions. Please keep this in mind.

Nevertheless, I want to briefly discuss exhibitions (and a few artistic projects) that have dealt with digital media and have therefore reflected and (re)presented outlooks on digital media and its connotation.[484] I have tried to weave more neglected positions into this mainstream narrative, to make you aware that there is more behind the official reading. I will briefly mention, as most literature does, that at the beginning of the 1950s, a group of scientists and engineers who had worked for the US Navy during WWII on code-breaking, a division known as the Communications Supplementary Activity – Washington (CSAW), founded ERA, the so-called Engineering Research Associates, who developed numerical computers and memory systems.[485] (As ERA was founded in the context of the still-male army at this time, it might also explain the absence of women in the early stages.) Another boost for the development of digital systems was a meeting of IBM users, which developed into the still-existing platform SHARE Inc., a volunteer-run user group for IBM mainframe computers that was founded in 1955 by Los Angeles-area users of IBM 701 computers.[486]

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[484] I have relied on some important sources that I would like to generally acknowledge: Mark Tribe and Reena Jana, eds., "Art in the Age of Digital Distribution," in *New Media Art* (London: Taschen, 2006), 6–25; Oliver Grau, "New Media Art—Art History," *Oxford Bibliographies* (2016), accessed 13 February 2020, https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920105/obo-9780199920105-0082.xml; http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/.

[485] Tribe and Jana, eds., "Art in the Age of Digital Distribution," 6–25.

[486] Ibid.

The bullet points of a public appearance in the arts are named by Mark Tribe and Jana Reena, such as the Computer Music Performance at MoMA in 1954 by founders of the Computer Music Center at the Columbia University, ASCII American Standard Code for Information Interchange in 1963, and the influential publication by Marshall McLuhan: *Understanding Media*.[487]

Around these special, representational, and widely acknowledged events (which I will describe in the following pages), many more artists experimented with electronic media, especially at the intersection of visual arts and music. As Dieter Daniels has researched, artists in the context of the Dortmunder Music days especially integrated TV and the manipulation of TV early on in their work; the "first" one (if we want to follow this art-historical convention) was, as presented by Dieter Daniels, Nam June Paik.[488] Daniels "curated" the scientific platform of the ZKM, Centre for Art and Media Karlsruhe, whose archived remnants you can find under www.medienkunstnetz.de. This resource has not been developed further, but it is still valuable.[489]

As a mass medium that influences big crowds, television became part of daily life in the US and in Europe in the '40s and '50s, respectively. Under the subtitle, "A medium without art," Daniels pointed out: "Television is the most efficient reproduction and distribution medium in human history, but it can scarcely be said to have come up with anything in the last half century that could be called an art form unique to that medium. The high-low distinction never took hold here in the way that it did in film. There is no form of high television culture that could be seen as a lasting cultural asset to be preserved for future generations. The only exception is the music clip, which has emerged since the 1980s. Selected examples of this form have attracted accolades in the context of art and become part of museum collections."[490]

As Daniels explains, in Europe and in the US, radio and television developed differently; in the US, the commercial stations funded by advertising held the field, but in Europe the state was in charge of the programming for a long time, implying lofty cultural aims as well as political influence. Political parties and groups were involved in the decision-making for the programming. "In the USA, the average family in the 1960s was already watching about five hours of television per day. There was also a choice of

487 ———— Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (Oxon: Routledge, 1964).

488 ———— Dieter Daniels, "Television—Art or Anti-art? Conflict and cooperation between the avant-garde and the mass media in the 1960s and 1970s," accessed 21 May 2018, http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/overview_of_media_art/massmedia/.

489 ———— Daniels practically manages to write this article without naming any female artists.

490 ———— Daniels, "Television—Art or Anti-art?"

over ten channels according to region. They broadcast round the clock, increasingly in color from 1957. Until 1963, viewers in Germany were offered only one black-and-white channel, in the evenings only. Even so, it can be assumed that from 1965, with currently ten million television sets and statistically 2.5 viewers each, 'television is already reaching the whole German nation.'[491] Early critics of TV as a mass medium and as a cultural industry were, of course, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, after having emigrated to the US and then returning to Germany as faculty members of the so-called Frankfurt School. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, cultural industry (or mass culture) creates a situation when culture becomes a commodity for the masses. The recipients degenerate into passive consumers, and the ideology conveyed by cultural presentations supports existing relations of domination. Cultural-industrial products support existing gender relations, racist discrimination, class divisions, and nationalist ideas. In late capitalism, one would have to add neoliberal working conditions, which are made palatable to us through cultural industry.[492] Cultural industry has to be separated from critical cultural production, which might show/transfer truth; this truth would always embody an awareness of the conditions of production.

Today, one can read that Marshall McLuhan had already foreseen major changes with his dictum, "The medium is the message"; one can only shudder when the introduction of the book reads: "*Understanding Media* was written twenty years before the PC revolution and thirty years before the rise of the Internet. Yet McLuhan's insights into our engagement with a variety of media led to a complete rethinking of our entire society. He believed that the message of electronic media foretold the end of humanity as it was known."[493] But one is also reminded on the forceful answer by Paul Beynon-Davies, "Communication. The medium is not the message,"[494]

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491 ——— Ibid.

492 ——— Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, "Kulturindustrie. Aufklärung als Massenbetrug," in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (New York: Social Studies Association, 1944).

493 ——— See https://www.amazon.de/Understanding-Media-Routledge-Classics-Paperback/dp/0415253977/ref=sr_1_5?ie=UTF8&qid=1525189968&sr=8-5&keywords=marshall+mcluhan, accessed 1 May 2018.

494 ——— Paul Beynon-Davies, "Communication, the medium is not the message," in *Significance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 58-76. The abstract of the paper states the following:
"In the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan famously coined the phrase, *the medium is the message* (McLuhan, 1994). By this he meant that communication media rather than the content of messages conveyed should be the focus of study. This influential statement has acquired something of the status of an aphorism: a universal statement of truth. But in our terms it makes a fundamental mistake: that of treating

or the article by Daniel Pinheiro, "The medium is NOT the message!" which accompanied an exhibition in Portugal in 2017.[495]

One could argue that digital media can be used for war and for medical purposes alike, or for showing something as truthful as possible or as misleading information to influence political decisions; therefore, it is clear on the one hand that the medium and the message are definitely not the same, and that the content, of course, matters enormously. McLuhan also understood media in a very broad sense, but nevertheless his dictum has a rather interesting side to it. When McLuhan tried to demonstrate that media affects society in an extreme way, he pointed to the light bulb as an example. A light bulb does not have content in the way that a newspaper has articles or a television has programmes, yet it is a medium that has a social effect; that is, a light bulb enables people to create spaces during night time that would otherwise be hidden in darkness, or to work at times when this had been impossible before. He describes the light bulb as a medium without any content. As a conclusion, he states that, "A light bulb creates an environment by its mere presence."[496] In my perspective, media changes the material base of a society (one can work and produce day and night, for example), but it does not say anything about in what way "race," class, and gender are repositioned by this change.

Today, about 51% of the world's population uses the Internet; in Germany, about 88%; in Spain, about 82%; in Switzerland, about 87%; the highest percentage is in Iceland, 100%; and, of course, countries where people fight for their basic needs have the lowest percentage, like, for example, Eritrea at 1.1%, or Burundi at 1.5%.[497] Even so, access to digital media through mobile phones has increased enormously, especially in the countries where only a few households have access to wireless networks.

Bernard Stiegler proclaims that digital media have caused a global hallucination. What has been proven essential is Bernard Stiegler's argument that the influence of our constant connectedness to digital devices and

knowledge of communication media as equivalent to a complete understanding of communication. This chapter begins the process of explaining why communication is much more than media or channels of communication."

495 ———— Daniel Pinheiro, "The Medium is NOT the Message," 2017, see https://www.academia.edu/35264801/The_Medium_is_NOT_the_Message_Daniel_Pinheiro_2017_?auto=download, "This text was presented in the context of the exhibition *The Medium is Not the Message* (Maus Hábitos, Porto, Portugal); The exhibition took place between November 18th and December 10th, 2017. [...]. Curated by José Alberto Gomes and André Covas."

496 ———— McLuhan, *Understanding Media.*

497 ———— See http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users-by-country/, accessed 1 November 2018.

digital spaces has profoundly changed the formation of our subjectivity and communities, and that in 2020, when this chapter was written, it is obvious that the bourgeois subject with a central perspective and a sense of autonomy as his or her foundation is not applicable on a one-to-one basis today.[498] The influences on subjectivity might be today manifold, through the constant connection to digital media. The keyword that is used is the networked subject. This is a simplified version of the actor network theory, which tends to ignore the question of power and structural violence.

To repeat McLuhan's vision: "The tendency of electric media is to create a kind of organic interdependence among all the institutions of society, emphasizing de Chardin's view that the discovery of electromagnetism is to be regarded as 'a prodigious biological event'."[499] Indeed, it has a biological dimension in the way the production of everyday life and the production of subjectivity has changed.

New experiments with all sorts of media came up in the late '50s and early '60s, if one thinks about the early experiments around the John Cage classes. One such happening took place at Gallery Parnass, in which Nam June Paik and Charlotte Moorman showed their experiments with electronic devices and a cello. As you clearly see in the image, here they questioned notions of sexuality, high and low culture, sound, etc.[500] They worked together for some years, but as it happens, the more well-known partner of the duo became Nam June Paik. Charlotte Moorman was even later arrested in New York on charges of pornography for her performances.[501]

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498 ———— Bernard Stiegler, *Von der Biopolitik zur Psychomacht, Logik der Sorge 1.2.* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009).

499 ———— McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 269.

500 ———— Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik, "24-hour Happening," Galerie Parnasse, See http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/24-h-happening/. "Charlotte Moorman and 'Robot K-456' accompany Nam June Paik on a European tour. Both perform Paik's musical pieces (albeit in somewhat different ways), but their contribution to the '24-hour Happening' is a joint effort. Charlotte Moorman plays the cello in her famous see-through plastic dress, occasionally diving into a barrel of water and then continuing, dripping wet, to play her instrument, or rides around on Paik's back. According to Paik, however, there were interruptions due to human frailties: 'Charlotte and I wanted to play a piece by John Cage, but shortly before we were due to begin, Charlotte fell into a sleep from which she was reluctant to awake, no matter how much I shouted and shook her. At my wit's end, I pretended to sleep while playing La Monte Young's piano pieces. Charlotte woke up at 2 in the morning, and they tell me she delivered a wonderful performance.'"

501 ———— Nam June Paik, "As Boring As Possible." See http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/so-langweilig/. "Paik and Moorman staged a number of joint performances in the

The introduction of the first portable, easy-to-use camera was used by Nam June Paik in 1967. As it is said, Paik used it during the visit of the Pope, but, of course, not to film the Pope but to film scenes from everyday life happening in the meantime on the streets of NY. (The film as such is lost.)

Charlotte Moorman, Nam June Paik, *24 Stunden Happening*, 1967

Part of this big group of experimental artists was also Carolee Schneemann. As the stills from her film *Fuses* from 1965. *Fuses* is a self-shot silent film of collaged and painted sequences of lovemaking between Schneemann and her then partner, composer James Tenney, observed by the cat, Kitch. Like so many female artists of her time, she used new technologies to question the relationship between private space and public space, thereby criticising gender relations and normative behaviour. Even if the big events got more attention, the film and then video also provided a new playground (and battleground for that matter) for testing roles and patterns. To summarize the development, here are some of the major works, technological advances, and events:

– 1965 Paik, Nam June; Moorman, Charlotte, "24 Stunden Happening"
– 1965 Carolee Schneemann, *Fuses*
– 1966 E.A.T. Experiments in Art and Technology
– 1967 First transportable video camera by Sony, PortaPak
– 1968 *Cybernetic Serendipity* at ICA London
– 1970 *Software* at Jewish Museum NY

course of a European tour in 1965-1966. No objections were voiced in Europe to the best-known of these pieces, Paik's 'Opera sextronique' in which Moorman discarded an item of clothing after each movement. In New York, however, it led to the arrest and subsequent trial of both artists in 1967."

– 1971 Floppy disk by IBM
– 1972 Atari video game company

One of the major shows about electronic and digital devices and performances was conceived in 1966, initiated by Robert Rauschenberg and Billy Klüver, and it was held at the 69th Regiment Armory: "9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering."

Carolee Schneemann, *Fuses*,
film stills, 1965

The participants consisted of ten artists and some thirty engineers creating a blend of avant-garde theatre, dance, and new technologies. "9 Evenings" was the first large-scale collaboration between artists and engineers and scientists. The two groups worked together for ten months to develop technical equipment and systems that were used as an integral part of the artists' performances.
And *medienkunstnetz* describes the events as follows:

> The main technical element of the performances was the electronic modulation system TEEM, composed of portable, electronic units which functioned without cables by remote control. Cage used this system to activate and deactivate loud speakers that consistently reacted to movement by way of photo-cells. For not always being technically and artistically successful, these performances exhausted for the first time the full range of the live-aspect of electronics, taking advantage of its artistic potential in all of its diversity. Seen in that light, the '9 Evenings' rank among the milestones of media art, even though today only a few filmed documents bear witness to the event.

Medienkunstnetz mentions the following artists: John Cage, Lucinda Childs, Öyvind Fahlström, Alex Hay, Deborah Hay, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer, Robert Rauschenberg, David Tudor, and Robert Whitman.[502] Wikipedia also mentions Merce Cunningham. And with further readings of descriptions and reports, one stumbles upon other names. Notable engineers involved include Bela Julesz, Billy Klüver, Max Mathews, John Pierce, Manfred Schroeder, and Fred Waldhauer.[503]

Entrance, "9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering," 1966

Closed-circuit television and television projection were used, a fibre-optic camera picked up objects in a performer's pocket; an infrared television camera captured action in total darkness; a Doppler sonar device translated movement into sound; and portable wireless transmitters and amplifiers transmitted speech and body sounds to Armory loudspeakers. It is said that the art community in New York became involved in helping with "9 Evenings," as fellow artists, dancers, musicians, and performers volunteered their time to help set up and troubleshoot, and then appeared in the performances. A high-powered but slightly distorted publicity campaign resulted in more than 1,500 people attending the performances each night, many of them astonished by the avant-garde performances they saw. It is clear that this event also demonstrated a great enthusiastic reaction to all the possibilities of digital media. The underlying creative concept combines a strong belief in technology with geniality. The figure of the male white artist is enhanced with that of the almost all-powerful engineer. The visitors were involved because they were moving through the middle of the action; the framing of a traditional exhibition with

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502 ———— "9 Evenings." See http://www.medienkunstnetz.de.
503 ———— See http://cyberneticserendipity.net/.

"9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering," Robert Whitman,
Two Holes of Water, 1966

immobilised objects and controlled visitor-subjects was surpassed by this
project, one could argue. This exhibition tried to reflect the major changes
in society that started at that time, in the '70s, and involved all parts of
daily life and all forms of culture. As Felix Stalder has put it:

> It is more than half a century since Marshall McLuhan announced
> the end of the Modern era, a cultural epoch that he called the Guten-
> berg Galaxy in honor of the print medium by which it was so influ-
> enced. What was once just an abstract speculation of media theory,
> however, now describes the concrete reality of our everyday life.
> What's more, we have moved well past McLuhan's diagnosis: the ero-
> sion of old cultural forms, institutions, and certainties is not some-
> thing we affirm but new ones have already formed whose contours
> are easy to identify not only in niche sectors but in the mainstream.
> [...] This enormous proliferation of cultural possibilities is an expres-
> sion of what I will refer to below as the digital condition.[504]

In this sense, the exhibitions and projects represent a rupture in the
understanding of the human as the body in the hegemonic space of art as
a part of an electronic environment, an involuntary participant, and the
digital space could be seen as something interacting with the human
body, where it became difficult to decide what became the cause and
what became the effect.
The next appearance of E.A.T. – Experiments in Art and Technology by Billy
Klüver and Robert Rauschenberg launched after they had collaborated on
many previous projects, and it was a major exhibition in a museum: the

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504 ———— Felix Stalder, *The Digital Condition* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), 2-3.

1968 *Some More Beginnings* at the Brooklyn Museum presented a large number of innovative technical, electronic, and other media projects, but looked quite tame in the photos, with wooden floors and white walls. The ferocity and unfamiliarity of an old army hall was tamed using the framework of the bourgeois museum.

"9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering," 1966

In 1968, *Cybernetic Serendipity* at the ICA London was curated by Jasia Reichardt,[505] and I quote here from the press release:

> Cybernetics—derives from the Greek "kybernetes" meaning "steersman"; our word «governor» comes from the Latin version of the same word. [...]
> A cybernetic device responds to stimulus from outside and in turn affects external environment, like a thermostat which responds to the coldness of a room by switching on the heating and thereby altering the temperature. This process is called feedback. Exhibits in the show are either produced with a cybernetic device (computer) or are cybernetic devices in themselves. They react to something in the environment, either human or machine, and in response produce either sound, light or movement.[506]

There is still a website where you can see some of the works, and unlike the presentation of the short films online, where you get the feeling of playfulness and being immersed—the images of the exhibition present a surprisingly conventional exhibition design. This gesture of ennobling

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505 ——— *Cybernetic Serendipity*, ICA London, 2 August to 20 October 1968.
506 ——— Press release for *Cybernetic Serendipity* at the ICA London, 2 August to 20 October 1968.
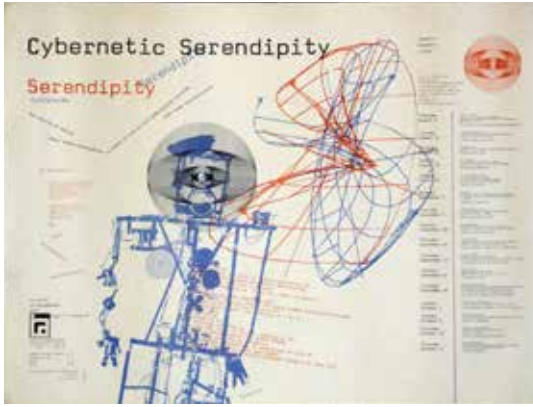
Cybernetic Serendipity, ICA London, 1968.

started a new phase in the exhibition history of new media, as it clearly tried to reconcile the displays that were used in modernity with the somehow strange and dangerous immersive new formats provided by new media. When a new genre or medium is introduced into the canon, it is a customary gesture to present the new medium in the same manner high art was presented previously to claim it as high art as well. The list of artists is exclusively male (as far as I see), and again, the short announcement of the curator is rather enthusiastic about this new world of technology. The ideological narrative equates enthusiastically human entities with machines. The problem with this kind of narrative is that is blurs where the possibility to act is located. The exhibition design that positions items in the same way as paintings usually transmits the pretension of increasing the value and status of new media art and therefore the digital sphere. From the '70s onwards, one could understand that the critical usage of digital media was happening not at representational exhibitions and projects, but in content-driven circles. *Not for Sale: Feminism and Art in the USA during the 1970s* is a film essay by Laura Cottingham that is based on material found in feminist archives and shows how much the feminist

movement was invested in video for recording and re-viewing as a tool of consciousness-raising and of subverting and re-formulating behavioural patterns. These films circulated in women's groups with decidedly feminist agendas, and since some artists were acknowledged in the official art world, Cottingham shows that the experimental formats and critical content were based on shared, multi-authored experimental feminist meetings. In Cottingham's own words:

> The participants in the Feminist Art Movement arrived from different artistic and educational backgrounds. Some wanted to transform traditional European-derivative media, such as painting and sculpture, with feminist awareness; others, most notably the African American artists, sought to introduce non-European aesthetics and values into the American visual vocabulary. Still others eschewed object-making altogether in favor of performative strategies, championed video as the new frontier of artistic democracy, called for an elimination of the division between craft and fine art, united the aims of artistic freedom with those of political activism, or set forth an aesthetics based in an understanding of introducing female experience and female-coded labor, the female body, women's history, and individual autobiography as the foundations for a feminist art. Although the parameters of the Feminist Art Movement can be charted according to specific historical determinants such as exhibitions, meetings, individual productions, letters, publications and other documents, the Movement was first and foremost far from a unified front. The disagreements between its participants—some of which are overtly presented in *Not For Sale*, while others must be inferred by the viewer--are as crucial to its definition as the consensus that inspired and sustained it across ideological ruptures, personal frustrations, and a general lack of access to significant economic or institutional resources. Participants in the Feminist Art Movement of the 1970s were motivated to transform the underlying tenants of fine art—including the production, critical evaluation, exhibition, distribution, and historical maintenance of art—beyond terms dictated by sexism. The challenge they offered has yet to be met.[507]

On the side of mass-oriented media events, the pavilion at the Expo in Osaka was another attention-drawing activity by E.A.T. in 1970. As Randall Packer enthusiastically describes: "The 'Pepsi Pavilion' was first an experiment in collaboration and interaction between the artists and the

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[507] Laura Cottingham, *Not For Sale: Feminism and Art in the USA during the 1970s*, a video essay, 1998, cited in Apex Art, accessed 1 June 2019, https://apexart.org/exhibitions/cottingham.php.
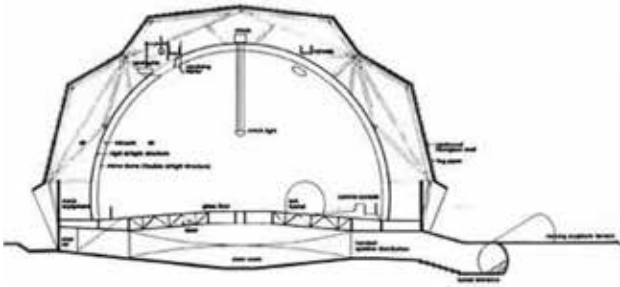
Pepsi Pavillon, E.A.T., 1970.

engineers, exploring systems of feedback between aesthetic and technical choices, and the humanization of technological systems."[508] The Pavilion's interior dome—immersing viewers in real three-dimensional images generated by mirror reflections as well as spatialised electronic music— invited the spectator to individually and collectively participate in the experience rather than view the work as a fixed narrative of pre-programmed events: "The Pavilion gave visitors the liberty of shaping their own reality from the materials, processes, and structures set in motion by its creators."[509]

Subjects are immersed in an environment, losing a clear distinction between space, sound, and time. The effect is a hallucinatory moment. The gaze regime changes here obviously from the central perspective to a

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[508] Randall Packer, "The Pepsi Pavilion: Laboratory for Social Experimentation," in *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary after Film*, eds. Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel (London and Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 145, cited in http://www.mediaartnet.org/works/pepsi-pavillon/images/15/, accessed 1 November 2018.

[509] Ibid.

hallucinatory scopic regime.[510] The subject is displaced from the position of the controlling overview and is now caught in confusing images and sounds. One can see it as melancholy anticipation that this immersion took place under the auspices of a large-scale gigantic advertisement. "The spherical mirror in the Pepsi Pavilion, showing the real image of the floor and the visitors hanging upside down in space over their heads. This optical effect resembles that of a hologram. Because of the size of the mirror, a spectator looking at the real image of a person could walk around that image and see it from all sides. The effect was spectacular."[511]

The following provide a rough sketch of the development in art, technology, and literature:

– 1970s feminist movements in the US experiment with video
– 1974 Nam June Paik coins the notion "Information Superhighway"
– 1977 Apple II and Tandy TRS 80
– 1979 First Ars Electroni in Linz, Austria
– 1981 MS-DOS
– 1983 MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) presented at fair for North American Music Manufacturers
– 1984 The notion of "Cyberspace" was coined in a novel by William Gibson
– 1985 "A Cyborg Manifesto" by Donna Haraway

In 1974, Nam June Paik coined the notion "Information Superhighway." As technology rapidly moved towards personal computers, the desire to name these new phenomena grew. One can imagine the speed at which the technical side developed when one sees the old machinery at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View in Silicon Valley.

In 1979, the first Ars Electronica was held in Linz. This festival went far beyond mere representation; aesthetic and social aspects of the new technology were discussed in workshops and talks. Digital space specialists, artists, curators, and scientists took advantage of this exchange platform, which remains an important venue for the gathering to this day with 100,000 festival visitors. As you see in the ironic self-representation image, it also hosts an extensive archive of talks and workshops.[512] So, the festival seemed to be the more appropriate format for the new technology.

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510 ——— Martin Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity, in Vision and Visuality, ed. Hal Forster (New York: New Press, 1999).

511 ——— See http://www.mediaartnet.org/works/pepsi-pavillon/images/15/, accessed 1 November 2018.

512 ——— ARS ELECTRONICA ARCHIVE – PICTURES, http://archive.aec.at/pic/, accessed 1 November 2018.
The Pic Archive contains an extensive collection of pictures of Festival, Prix, Center, Futurelab and Export. A selected collection can also be found on Flickr (Ars Electronica Stream). Older pictures are from a now obsolete version of a custom-made image filing system that has been migrated to the new structure.

Ars Electronica, 1979, image from the website

And while techniques of electronic music and synthesisers (as they were then called) were developed and changed the music business profoundly in the long run, this brave new world was reflected in literature as well. William Gibson invented the notions of *Cyberspace, Matrix, Cyberpunk*, and the *World Wide Web*, and he also uncannily anticipated a dark, rather brutal future for the USA, held together by corporate conglomerates, oligarchs, the military, the drug trade, and computer games.[513]

Donna Haraway emphasised the more positive aspects of digital and electronic devices when she published "A Cyborg Manifesto" in 1985. In her writing, the concept of the cyborg is a rejection of rigid boundaries, notably those separating of "human" from "animal," and "human" from "machine." She writes as follows: "The cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family, this time without the oedipal project. The cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust."[514] The Manifesto opened new ways of criticising and rethinking traditional notions of gender, and it rejected any form of fixed identity or binary constellation; it proposed instead coalition through affinity. Haraway uses the metaphor of a cyborg to urge feminists to move beyond the limitations of gender and politics; the Manifesto is considered an extremely important contribution to the discussion of feminist posthumanist theory.[515] These movements spread and grew in quasi-underground circles, coming to the surface in publications and existing in email lists, in series of semi-public meetings, and in discussion groups.

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513 ———— See the interview by Jochen Wegner with William Gibson, "Ich hoffe, wir sind nicht in negative Utopien gefangen," *Zeit Magazin*, 12 January 2017, https://www.zeit.de/zeit-magazin/leben/2017-01/william-gibson-science-fiction-neuromancer-cyberspace-futurist/komplettansicht.

514 ———— See Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Cyborg_Manifesto, accessed 1 November 2018.

515 ———— Ibid.

In 1985, Jean-François Lyotard curated, with Thierry Chaput, the exhibition *Les Immatériaux* at the Centre Pompidou, Paris. He worked with a medium that was basically unknown to him, but he used this strangeness to question philosophy as an activity at the same time: "Can we philosophize in the direction of the general public without betraying thought? And try to reach this public knowing they are not philosophers, but supposing that they are sensitive to the same questions that philosophers are also attempting to formulate?"[516]

The idea for the exhibition design was that the exhibition in its display should resemble philosophy as a complex way of thinking. In the following, I refer to Antonia Wunderlich's publication: "Der Philosoph als Kurator" (The Philosopher as Curator).

Les Immatériaux, Centre Pompidou, 1985, installation view

Wunderlich describes *Les Immatériaux* as a major event in French cultural life: it occupied the entire fifth floor of the museum (3,000 square metres), took two years to plan, and was the most expensive exhibition staged by the Pompidou up until that time. Visitors to the galleries were required to wear headphones that picked up different radio frequencies as they navigated a labyrinthine maze of grey metal mesh screens, such that each visual display was paired with an audio text, from Antonin Artaud and Frank Kafka to Paul Virilio, advertising jingles, and noise. Following her intensive research, the space was loosely divided into five possible paths or zones (subdivided into no less than sixty-one sites). Concluding from the complex floor plan, visitors could not possibly get an overview; they had to find their way through a labyrinth with dead ends and variations.

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[516] "Les Immatériaux: Un entretien avec Jean-François Lyotard," *CNAC Magazine* 26 (March 1985): 16 (translated here by Stephanie Carwin).
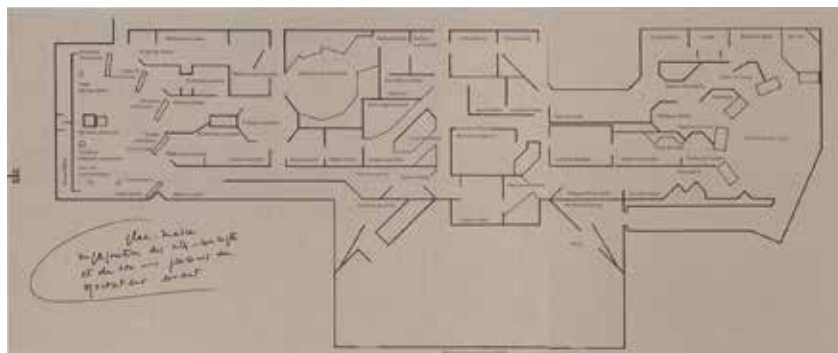
Les Immatériaux, Centre Pompidou, 1985, floor plan

A total of 61 stations were structured by 30 infrared transmission zones for the headphone programme and five paths running through the entire space, so that the entire exhibition consisted of several interwoven semantic bundles. Those who allowed themselves to be discouraged by this complexity—and this indeed happened to many visitors, as the entries in the guest book and a large number of critical reviews show—left the Centre Pompidou disappointed or annoyed. In Wunderlich's understanding, it was precisely the immense physical, sensual, and intellectual challenge that lay in this complexity that was a central moment in Lyotard's conception. By means of a kind of constructive overload, he wanted to convey to the visitors an impression of their near future in a digitalised, de- and immaterialised world. As Wunderlich surmises, *Les Immatériaux* was intended to make it perceptible that everyday life would change radically and showed this in such disparate themes as nutrition and aromas, fashion and gender, architecture and photography, the stock market and the automobile industry. From our contemporary point of view, this proved to be true; all spheres of life have been profoundly affected and changed in the meantime. Felix Stalder has pointed out three major trajectories in this cultural and societal change: referentiality, communality, and algorithmicity.[517] We will come back to this later.

Lyotard diagnosed this experience in an album that functioned as one of the three parts of the catalogue as a model for the future: "The visitor strolls around in a rhizome in which no thread of knowledge appears, but generalized interactions, deposition processes in which man is nothing more than an interface knot."[518]

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[517] ——— Stalder, *The Digital Condition*.

[518] ——— Jean-François Lyotard, *Les Immatériaux, Album* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1985), cited in Antonia Wunderlich, "Les Immatériaux von Jean-François Lyotard. Der Philosoph als Kurator," *Artnet*, 20 November 2007.

In this new model, the basic idea is therefore that philosophy should be taken into consideration, as important paradigms of modernity have to be given up—for example, the sovereign subject as author. One could connect this concept with the referentiality that is discussed by Stalder. One of the profound changes through digital media is referentiality: everything turns into something one could quote; the difference between the original and the copy has vanished. Consequently, Lyotard developed together with the exhibition architect media clusters in space with as much complexity as possible, created through a multitude of images and viewpoints and the semi-transparent division of spaces. Important for the exhibition design was the idea of a semantic openness.[519]

Andrea Wunderlich comes to the conclusion that in *Les Immatériaux*, Lyotard overlooked an important aspect of this didactic mastery: dialogue. For only dialogue enables the master to adapt to the pupil as well as the pupil, to reassure himself and to protect himself from a complexity that oppresses him. By confronting the visitors of *Les Immatériaux* with the greatest possible complexity, Lyotard denied them the medial form of conversation, and through the headphones even made conversations between each other impossible. In this way, she argues, *Les Immatériaux* became rather hermetic. Another reading of the setting and display would be that, in fact, Lyotard, with this authoritarian gesture, showed the effect of the Internet, a device that ties you in an affective entanglement but at the same time condemns its subject to a specific form of isolation. Therefore, *Les Immatériaux* unwittingly anticipated the social isolation that is part of so-called networked subjectivity, and the hidden structure of a connected and at the same time isolated world.

Not directly connected to digital media, but as a theoretical exploration that is based indirectly in the possibility the net provides, Judith Butler published *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* in 1990. Like other feminists, such as Sigrid Schade and Silke Wenk, Butler discussed gender through a Lacanian perspective. In this view, gender is something that is implemented in the construction of subjectivity via language (the semiotic register). The development of subjectivity is moreover founded in an imaginary wholeness, in the mirror stage. Gender in particular is reaffirmed through a constant re-performance. This theoretical understanding also opened up a counterhegemonic re-reading and re-performing of gender. The now thinkable possibility to change binary gender codes, to invent or rediscover gender in multiplied digital versions of the self, and new possibilities through medicine allowed that major change.

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[519] "Les Immatériaux: A Conversation with Jean-François Lyotard, with Bernard Blistène," *Flash Art* 121 (March 1985).

– 1990 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*
– 1991 Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*
–1991 Judy Wajcman, *Feminism Confronts Technology*
– 1991 VNS Matrix, *A Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century*
= the clitoris is the direct line to the matrix
– 1994 Old Boys Network, as one of the loosely formed feminist groups that criticised and used digital media

documenta X, Peter Kobler, 1997

documenta X, Hybrid Work Space, 1997

As has often been noted, *documenta X*, curated by Catherine David, represented a breach with the past on many levels, which I would like to characterise briefly, even if the different levels deserve a lengthier and more detailed comparative analysis.[520] The changed interpretation of what is to be understood by contemporary art was noticeable at the very entrance to the documenta-Halle. Peter Friedl left his mark on this documenta,

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[520] ——— For a most interesting discussion of *documenta X*, *documenta11*, and *documenta 12*, see Oliver Marchart, *Hegemonie im Kunstfeld, Die documenta-Ausstellungen dX, D11, d12 und die Politik der Bienalisierung*, ed. Marius Babias, n.b.k. (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2008). As a shared effort of OnCurating.org and the nbk Berlin, we published an extended version in English: Oliver Marchart, *Hegemony Machines, documenta X to fifteen and the Politics of Biennalization* (Zurich, Berlin: OnCurating, 2022).

declaring the hall, in neon letters, to be a CINEMA. This in itself indicates that the status of the "exhibition" had become uncertain, as had the status of the visitors as subjects.

On the level of the display, the emphasis was no longer entirely on individual pictorial works; instead, the visitor was enveloped in whole "environments." So, the status of the work was no longer that of a classic, autonomous work of art: it might, for example, be a landscape created out of photo wallpaper, with the appearance of having been digitally produced, by Peter Kogler. This, too, situates the visitors: it appeals to them as subjects operating in the digital age, being in the matrix, so to speak.

In the central area of the documenta-Halle, the curator dispensed with works of art altogether and set up a bookshop designed by Vito Acconci and a discussion area designed by Franz West. By doing this, David positioned art as part of a social and political discourse that included cultural and art studies. Overall, this pointedly demonstrated the nature of contemporary art as a complex discourse made up of a variety of subject matters, concepts, commentaries, and political contexts.

It is notable that Catherine David appointed Simon Lamunière as curator of the website and facilitated the creation of a *Hybrid WorkSpace*. The *Hybrid WorkSpace* was above all a largely uncontrolled space, which is hard to imagine when you think of previous and subsequent battles over access to the documenta exhibition space.[521] The *Hybrid WorkSpace* was initiated by Catherine David, Klaus Biesenbach, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Nancy Spector, but organised and curated in a way by an entire group: Eike Becker, Geert Lovink/Pit Schultz, Micz Flor, Thorsten Schilling, Heike Foell, Thomax Kaulmann, Moniteurs; the group was given the use of a five-room apartment where they could invite guests, plus a permanent space at documenta, with the possibility of making radio broadcasts, communicating with the outside world, and establishing contacts with web initiatives and making them accessible.

It was "the summer of content," as one of the organisers mentioned. The furniture was moveable, and workshops and discussions happened, and visitors could encounter the materiality of the digital works. This marks the moment when the digital condition became an ongoing topic in contemporary exhibitions, and the networks, mailing lists, and other formations became visible for one moment in a representational context. In 1991, the Australian group VNS Matrix (Josephine Starrs, Julianne Pierce, Francesca da Rimini, and Virginia Barratt) formulated a provocative manifesto: "The clitoris is the direct line to the matrix," and in Europe, Old Boys Network, a group of feminist cultural producers, organised the first of a "Cyberfeminist International" series at the *Hybrid WorkSpace* of documen-

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521 ——— See the website for *documenta X*: https://www.documenta.de/en/retrospective/documenta_x.

ta.[522] Julianne Pierce is the connecting link between the two groups. One of the founders of Old Boys Network, Cornelia Sollfrank, has recently published *Beautiful Warriors: Techno-Feminist Practice in the 21st Century*.[523]

Since *documenta X*, new centres for art and media have been established. These venues and festivals present and produce digital media projects and fuel the discussion around the influences this radical change in infrastructure has had on our living conditions. European institutions that deal with digital media have nevertheless extremely divergent positions, from an affirmative idea, that proposes spectacular events to critical propositions, and building of a researcher community: Barbican Centre, performing arts centre in London (founded in 1982) http://vimeo.com/99732888; ZKM Zentrum für Kunst und Medien Karlsruhe (founded in 1989) http://zkm.de/themen; Ars Electronica in Linz (Ars Electronica Center founded in 1996) http://www.aec.at/news/; FACT Liverpool (founded in 2003) https://www.fact.co.uk/; HeK Basel (founded in 2011) https://www.hek.ch/.
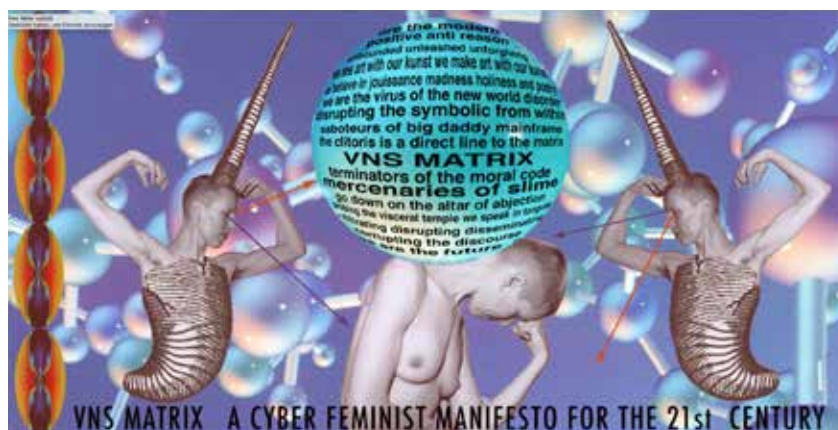
VNS Matrix, *A Cyber Feminist Manifesto for the 21st Century, 1991*

522 ——— See https://www.obn.org/obn_pro/fs_obn_pro.html.

523 ——— Cornelia Sollfrank, *The Beautiful Warriors, Technofeminist Practice in the 21st Century* (Brooklyn, NY: AUTONOMEDIA, 2019), brings together seven current technofeminist positions from art and activism. In very different ways, they expand the cyberfeminist approaches of the 1990s and thus react to new forms of discrimination and exploitation. Gender politics are negotiated with reference to technology, and questions of technology are combined with questions of ecology and economy. Those taking different positions around this new techno-ecofeminism see their practice as an invitation to continue their social and aesthetic interventions.
Book contributions by Christina Grammatikopoulou, Isabel de Sena, Femke Snelting, Cornelia Sollfrank, Spideralex, Sophie Toupin, hvale vale, and Yvonne Volkart.

we are the modern cunt
positive anti reason
unbounded unleashed unforgiving
we see art with our cunt we make art with our cunt
we believe in jouissance madness holiness and poetry
we are the virus of the new world disorder
rupturing the symbolic from within
saboteurs of big daddy mainframe
the clitoris is a direct line to the matrix
VNS MATRIX
terminators of the moral code
mercenaries of slime
go down on the altar of abjection
probing the visceral temple we speak in tongues
infiltrating disrupting disseminating
corrupting the discourse
we are the future cunt

VNS Matrix

As mentioned in the beginning, Bernard Stiegler's argument has been proven essential; the influence of our constant connectedness to digital devices and digital spaces has profoundly changed the formation of our subjectivity and of communities, connected but isolated and politically impotent, one could argue. Felix Stalder reflects critically on the current situation: "Apparently many people consider it normal to be excluded from decisions that affect broad and significant areas of their life. The post-democracy of social mass media, which has deeply permeated the constitution of everyday life and the constitution of subjects, is underpinned by the ever-advancing post-democracy of politics. It changes the expectations that citizens have for democratic institutions, and it makes their increasing erosion seem expected and normal to broad strata of society."[524] Insofar as algorithmicity is one of the three characteristics of the digital, it observes and guides civil society in a profound and deeply problematic way.

William Gibson's statement, "The future is already here—it's just not evenly distributed,"[525] becomes true when Trump supporter and Silicon Valley billionaire Peter Thiel tries to prolong his life through blood exchange with younger individuals.

Nevertheless, Stalder foresees other possible developments through communal formations.[526] What he proposes is a reclaiming of the communal ways of a shared economy, which includes non-hierarchical decision-mak-

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524 ———— Stalder, *The Digital Condition*, 146-147.
525 ———— William Gibson, quoted in *The Economist*, 4 December 2003.
526 ———— Stalder, *The Digital Condition*, 152 et seq.

ing and acting beyond market values. However, Stalder points out the precarity of these future possibilities:

> For now, the digital condition has given rise to two highly divergent political tendencies. The tendency toward 'post-democracy' is essentially leading to an authoritarian society. Although this society may admittedly contain a high degree of cultural diversity, and although its citizens are able to (or have to) lead their lives in a self-responsible manner, they are no longer able to exert any influence over the political and economic structures in which their lives are unfolding. On the basis of data-intensive and comprehensive surveillance, these structures are instead shaped disproportionally by an influential few. The resulting imbalance of power had been growing steadily, as has income inequality. In contrast to this, the tendency toward commons is leading to a renewal of democracy, based on institutions that exist outside of the market and the state. At its core of this movement involves a new combination of economic, social and (ever-more pressing)) ecological dimensions of everyday life on the basis of data-intensive participatory processes.[527]

In the arts, these conditions are met with different practices, for example, those of Trevor Paglen. He is currently exploring the material side of digital media: the big cables that cross oceans and satellites that function as surveillance apparatuses. What he wants from art is to see the historical moment in which we are living. He points out how digital media can be used as weapon in cold wars, and he has found out about secret units of the American military. As he shows the hidden (by the military), extremely substantial materiality of the digital, he also shows the power struggles between states, companies, and economic powers. In his presentations, which can be all followed through his website, he also shows the maps of these enormous cables under the ocean. So, he proposes a counterhegemonic strategy to the unseen mapping of the world via data. Rudolf Frieling has pointed out the connection between mapping and power: "From the outset, maps have surveyed and inscribed territories in order to take possession of them, to occupy and colonize them. So historically speaking a map was not just a cognitive instrument but primarily an instrument in the competition for economic advantage and power."[528]

Other artists use infrastructures and skills in a nearly curatorial way, such as Miranda July and Harrell Fletcher with "Learning to Love You More" (Yuri Ono designed and managed the website). They used scores and the

527 ——— Ibid., 174.
528 ——— Rudolf Frieling, "Mapping and Text," Editorial, accessed 1 May 2019, http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/mapping_and_text/.

unlimited possibility of taking part in a shared project to propagate a more communal understanding of culture. "From 2002 to its close in 2009, over 8000 people participated in the project."[529] Of course, this does not replace political movements towards the commons, but these projects help to establish the idea of shared experiences, shared interests, a shared cultural space, and shared politics across nations. An important point in this project is the online/offline connection; the website functions as a hub, and this hub is used to exchange documentation of the real events that are proposed, but which can be interpreted in a very different way by each participant. One of our own curatorial projects also opens up to participating and including new audiences and new ideas; see *Small Projects for Coming Communities*.[530] Even if these kinds of projects are relatively small and do not at the moment play a role in a political struggle, they might help to lay a foundation for understanding new forms of communality, where the visual and the political will stay in a close relationship. These kind of more complex structures or research projects on the commons like "Creating Commons"[531] might provide a connection to political struggles under the motto of Fridays For Future[532] or Extinction Rebellion.[533]

529 ——— See http://www.learningtoloveyoumore.com/.

530 ——— See https://www.comingcommunities.org/. See also chapter 8.6.2.

531 ——— See http://creatingcommons.zhdk.ch/.
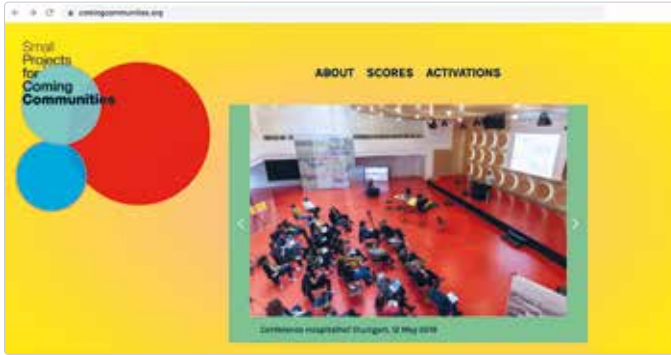
532 ——— See https://fridaysforfuture.de/.

533 ——— See https://rebellion.earth/.

Small Project for Coming Communities, concept by Dorothee Richter and Ronald Kolb, 2019, ongoing, Stuttgart, Zurich, Tel Aviv

8.3 Digital Media and Communities

In the following, Lars Gertenbach and I discuss the obsession in contemporary philosophical discourse with the notion of (im)possible communities. We tried to cross-read these changing ideas with the historical political situation on the one hand and with communities produced by media on the other. Accordingly, I would agree that our whole perception of "reality" of the contemporary has become increasingly mediated and changed through digital media, which influences all sorts of art. Undoubtedly, this profoundly changes and will change any action that is called curating as well. Not only that, like all other activities and productions nowadays, curating is mediated, communicated, produced by and through digital media, but beyond this, curating is also a specific field of representation, where these changes are anticipated and commented on, and it is a specific arena where debates and fights about these rapid and enormously influential ideological and material changes are taking place. To understand the fields "politics of display, politics of sites, politics of transfer and translation"[534] in relation to curating, we must explore how

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534 ——— The Institute Cultural Studies in the Arts and the head of the institute, Sigrid Schade, have articulated these topics:
"1. Politics of Display: The 'staging of self' and the meanings of such display and performance are central to understanding today's multimedia system. ICS research projects in this focal area address the manifold forms of representation and participation, as well as the effects of cultural, ethnic, social, and gender differences within artistic and design practices and techniques. Our research explores exhibition strategies, display strategies in advertising and cultural institutions, media constructions of information, visualisation practices in the arts, science, and daily life, and the development of visual apparatuses and digitised processes of representation. Projects examine the interactions between art and non-art, high and low art, and design practices in various areas of society.
2. Politics of Site: Projects in this core area explore the sites of design and artistic interventions. This includes the functions of institutionalised sites (museums, public space, television), the effects of architectural concepts, urban planning, and geopolitics (boundary-drawing), migration streams, the effects of globalisation, and tourism. Project topics include: the meanings of material and immaterial sites of production and interaction; regional, national, and international distinctions (for instance, centre versus periphery); the inclusion and exclusion of minorities; signs and products; the shift of public and private spheres from a historical, structural, and aesthetic perspective.
3. Politics of Transfer and Translation: Questions concerning transfer

ideas of communities and stagings of subjectivity have changed and how they are interrelated with new media. It is important to see this discussion embedded into profound political changes as well, especially the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989, which was the most significant sign of a soft-power revolution which occurred in the Eastern Bloc, associated with a liberalisation—and capitalisation of the Eastern Bloc and the erosion of political power in the pro-Soviet governments in nearby Poland and Hungary. Neither the East nor the West stayed what they were before these events. Any utopian idea of a real socialist system as an in-between stage towards communism had to be re-evaluated by the left in Western systems, which is the background of the upcoming discussions in the humanities. With today's developments in the Russian attack on Ukraine, one can identify the post-Soviet area as soon leaping into a kleptocracy in which former state apparatuses (secret services) work hand in hand with the new political class. The pro-nationalist propaganda still hides the desire for power and the enrichment of a small group. The war against Ukraine might be an attempt to stabilise the internal frictions.

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and translation arise from the shifts in meanings in a world characterised by the accelerated circulation of signs and by cultural differences. Projects in this core area explore the routes and detours of transfer and translation between artistic genres, texts and images, languages, media, and cultures. Communication streams are shaped by different translation speeds, conscious and unconscious citation, cross-fading and forgetting. Our research considers the circulation and production of signs in different contexts of institutional memory, as well as the visual, linguistic, media, and cultural skills needed for twenty-first century art and design. Switzerland is an ideal platform for investigating the 'multilingualism' of today's world."

8.4 The Imaginary and the Community: Deliberations Following the Deconstructivist Challenge of the Thinking of Community (by Lars Gertenbach and Dorothee Richter)

Even after the waning of the debates on communitarianism and liberalism as conducted intensively above all in the political sciences and political philosophy, discussion about community in general is evidently not diminishing.[535] To a certain extent, however, the geographical coordinates of the discussions, and with them the philosophical orientation as a whole, have changed. Whereas the debate between the communitarianists and the liberals—which revolved to equal degrees around the ontological issue of the priority of individual or community as well as around normative matters and political partisanship[536]—exhibited a strong U.S.-American orientation both from the socio-philosophical viewpoint and in terms of the history of political ideas, the focus of the present discussions has tended to shift to France, or to stances bearing an affinity to French philosophy. Here, a major role has been played by endeavours to deconstruct the concept of community, taking as their point of departure a discussion

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[535] Lars Gertenbach, Dorothee Richter, "The Imaginary and the Community: Deliberations Following the Deconstructivist Challenge of the Thinking of Community," in Ballet: Szuper Gallery, eds. Susanne Clausen, Pavlo Kerestey (Zurich: OnCurating Publishing, 2014), 125–137. This chapter was translated from the German by Judith Rosenthal. First published: Lars Gertenbach and Dorothee Richter, "Das Imaginäre und die Gemeinschaft Überlegungen im Anschluss an die dekonstruktivistische Herausforderung des Gemeinschaftsdenkens," in Mit-Sein: Gemeinschaft – ontologische und politische Perspektivierungen, eds. Elke Bippus, Jörg Huber, and Dorothee Richter (Zurich; New York: Edition Voldemeer/Springer, 2010).

[536] Charles Taylor, "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate," in *Debates in Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Anthology*, eds. Derek Matravers and Jonathan E. Pike (New York: Routledge, 2003), in association with the Open University.

between Jean-Luc Nancy[537] and Maurice Blanchot[538] and then continuing beyond the borders of France in Italian-speaking regions as well, above all by Giorgio Agamben[539] and Roberto Esposito.[540] Since the translation of *Être Singulier Pluriel* [541]—Nancy's chief thematic work—, if not before, discussions on the concept of community have also resumed in German-speaking regions, if under a different pretext and with other connotations. Beyond the limits of this field, however, a further, more recent, thread of discussion can also be discerned, likewise zeroing in on the phenomena of community. In particular, the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, for example, has contributed to linking the debate on community with psychoanalytical and cultural-theoretical deliberations, and has attempted to describe the characteristics of community-building anew on the basis of a constitutive element of the imaginary or phantasmatic.[542]

In light of this possible new orientation for theoretical research on concepts of community, the following discussion will revolve around linking these cultural-theoretical/psychoanalytical deliberations on the role of the imaginary in the building of community with the philosophical-ontological viewpoints hitherto discussed concurrently, at best, with the for-

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537 ——— Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Compearance: From the Existence of 'Communism' to the Community of 'Existence,'" trans. Tracy B. Strong, *Political Theory* 20, no. 3 (August 1992): 371–98; Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); Jean-Luc Nancy, *La communauté affrontée* (Paris: Galilée, 2001); Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Confronted Community," trans. Amanda Macdonald, *Postcolonial Studies* 6, no 1 (2003): 32.

538 ——— Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, trans. Pierre Joris (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1988).

539 ——— Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

540 ——— Roberto Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

541 ——— Nancy*, Being Singular Plural.*

542 ——— In contrast to the authors who can be assigned to the deconstructivist field in the broadest sense (Nancy, Blanchot, Esposito, Agamben), **Žižek**'s deliberations have never been published in a monograph but are scattered among various texts. The motifs of his argumentation are most clearly conveyed in two essays: see Slavoj Žižek, "Enjoy Your Nation as Yourself!," in *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*, eds. Les Back and John Solomos (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 594–606; Slavoj **Žižek, "Beyond Discourse Analysis**," in *Interrogating the Real*, eds. Rex Butler and Scott Stephens (London: Continuum, 2005), 249–61.

mer. This interlinking endeavour is informed not only by the conviction that the two discussion threads essentially overlap for the most part with regard to the problems of classical community thought, but also, and above all, by the attempt to use this circumstance as a steppingstone for pointing out a number of conceptual and political problems in Nancy's line of reasoning and, where possible, to fill in the gaps. By doing so, our intent is to pick up the thread of discussions rooted in the idea of a non-realisable form, "inoperative" (Nancy) community—an idea that, according to its own self-definition, points to a concept of community above and beyond finalisation gestures towards the outside and homogenisation within. In this sense, the concern is with a clarification of the theoretical debate on the one hand, and political deliberations that might emerge from this discussion on the other.

Before we continue, however, let us point out two problems or gaps in Nancy's stance, which in the following paragraph will not only form a vanishing point of our critique, but are also of key significance for the idea of linkage with positions on the imaginary. Within this approach, we can discern, on the one hand, a certain sociological blindness, since neither are phenomena of specific community-building considered (and accordingly no differences between various forms and intensities of community can be taken into account), nor is particular emphasis placed on a historical perspective, which is indispensable for an empirically oriented theory of community. Yet, since this is a gap that is hardly surprising in view of the effort to found a new "prima philosophia"[543] on the basis of the concept of community, we will direct our attention to a different point. Of greater relevance for the following argumentation is the gap regarding the question of political practice. Even if Nancy consistently stresses that the deconstructive demand for community takes place per se on the political terrain—for example, when in the preface to the English edition of *La communauté désœuvrée* he refers to the political as the place "where community as such is brought into play"[544]; with regard to concrete political practice, the question nevertheless arises as to whether that the political element is repressed so strongly behind the philosophical-ontological that it can virtually no longer be made discernible.

In addition to this double vanishing point, the following text—which is primarily dialogical in nature—also reflects a double research interest: on the one hand, that of a sociological and political inquiry into contemporary concepts of community, and on the other hand a rereading of Lacan and Foucault from a feminist perspective, in which, roughly speaking, the concern is with the analysis of power and its practices, for example, discourse societies and the regime of visibility. Against this background, the

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543 ——— Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*.
544 ——— Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, xxxvii.

text is divided into four sections in which different accentuations come to bear. In order to have the two paradigms confront one another, we will begin by sketching the debate on the sharing of the imaginary in communities before exploring Nancy's position in greater depth. Here, we will first investigate its basic programmatic and philosophical orientation, on the basis of which we will then focus on the question in relation to the element of the political. Following a number of diagnostic allusions to the currency of the imaginary in constructions of community, the discussion will end with a summary.

8.4.1 On the Sharing of the Imaginary in Communities

All communities are imaginarily constituted. They not only have to be experienceable as communities and have an external boundary at their disposal—the factor that constitutes them as individual communities to begin with; they also require an idea (by no means always a conscious and reflected one) of themselves, an idea of their unity or common feature(s), quasi pictorially constituted and also embodied in practices. The design of community is necessarily dependent on this anchor point if it wants to be conceived and lived—if it wants to be efficacious and relevant. Within this context, the imaginary element is not to be understood as a contingent supplement; on the contrary, it is a constituent component of community. What is more, it is by no means situated solely in the imagination of the individuals, but in the practices and utterances of community that continually generate and continue the idea of community (and are responsible for making the community seem attractive to the subjects in the first place). Here, the imaginary is thus the opposite of an illusion. It is the prerequisite and foundation of the community construction—not the reflection on it *a posteriori*.

These preliminary remarks are important in order to liberate the deliberations on the imagination of community from their apparent triviality, and to stake out a number of paths on which these deliberations can be carried further. In the following, we would like to identify a number of aspects and thus also to clarify why theoretical reflection on community—in addition to the careful preoccupation with the historical semantics and forms of expression in which the concept is embedded in society—must be carried out to a very decisive degree by way of the imaginary element. We will begin with several idiosyncrasies in the debate on community; from there, we will go on to stake out the place of the imaginary, and finally we will identify a number of problems with which a discussion on community is confronted.

Since the modern age, if not before, the debate over community has been permeated by a peculiar ambivalence: community can be thought of

simultaneously as the redemptive and peaceful alternative to alienated modern society and as its totalitarian duplicate. Since the days when, in the nineteenth century, community managed to establish itself as an antithesis to society (at least in German-speaking regions), and up to the very present, interpretational patterns of this kind have been embedded in the semantics which pervade everyday discourses. Community is considered a form of reconciliation; it promises a means of overcoming the contingent forms of modern collaboration and communication.[545] Since the advent of the modern age at the latest, the semantics of community has accordingly been dominated by the naively pious imagery of safety, warmth, and sympathy. This seems all the more surprising if we consider that, again and again, its manifestations are indubitably concatenated with mechanisms of violence and exclusion. Communities have a standardising mechanism; they function as discourses of closure towards the outside and harmonisation within—a harmonisation that can, however, have a violent or compulsory nature. This double animosity, which already strikes a balance in Romanticism, is one idiosyncratic component of the modern discourse on community.[546]

This aspect holds a certain fascination when it comes to the interpretation of community phenomena; conceptually, however, it is at the same time extremely difficult to nail down. After all, it interweaves two elements: the attractiveness of the concept of community with regard to the disquiet associated with modernity, and the peculiar inner logic of communities, which sometimes transforms the need for harmony, unambiguousness, and belonging into violent excesses. The reason for this double status lies in the element of the imaginary, i.e., precisely in the realm where communities—over and above pure imagination—take effect through their practices (whether positive in the sense of safety and the stabilisation of personal identity, or negative in the sense of extreme acts of violence and exclusion).

An emphasis of the aspect of the imagination of community is found—though rarely in systematic form—in the works of numerous authors. In addition to Benedict Anderson's study on the invention of nation,[547] which, for example, identifies the factors necessary for the production of

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545 ——— Society's way of dealing with contingency therefore presumably plays a decisive role in the ever-historical drama of the idea of community. At least at first sight, social practices that are open to contingency appear to be less prone to regressive community-affirming ideas. See in general Michael Makropoulos: *Modernität und Kontingenz* (Munich: Fink, 1997).

546 ——— For an in-depth discussion, see Lars Gertenbach, Henning Laux, Hartmut Rosa, and David Strecker, *Theorien der Gemeinschaft zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 2010).

547 ——— Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1991).

an imaginability of (national) community above and beyond face-to-face interaction, it is above all protagonists of psychoanalytical theories who play a central role. At the same time, Durkheim had already emphasised that mechanisms of projection, transference and misjudgement hold key significance in the process of community-building.[548] It is the culturally and theoretically oriented psychoanalytical deliberations, however, as encountered, for example, in Slavoj Žižek or Cornelius Castoriadis,[549] which supply the decisive theoretical link for such matters. Here, the imaginary is the prerequisite and basic component of sociality per se. The application of psychoanalytical concepts to society in general may be fraught with problems[550]; in a number of respects, however, it is instructive. What appears particularly interesting to us here is the element of identification with the community, since the components of the imaginary play a decisive role for the question relating to the individual's bond with the community. For example, there is a desire for community that far exceeds the scope of mere affiliations with groups. In this context, what already applied to the ego can initially also be assumed for phenomena of community: the individual's reference to society is constituted in the process of identification with the imagined other. Freud already discussed this idea in connection with mass phenomena, viewing the latter from the perspective of the obliteration of the self and the replacement of the ideal of self with the communal "we" (or the leader and speaks of the "libidinous constitution of a mass."[551] What is more, in addition to the individual's affective and passionate bond to the community, the violence occasionally arising from communities can also be attributed to an imaginary or phantasmatic scenario.

If we follow Lacan,[552] for example, in proceeding on the assumption that

548 ——— Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (New York: Free Press, 1968).

549 ——— Also see Philipp Sarasin: "Die Wirklichkeit der Fiktion. Zum Konzept der 'imagined communities,'" in *Geschichtswissenschaft und Diskursanalyse* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 150–76. Even if Castoriadis is not discussed in the present text, his theory of the imaginary offers a promising point of departure for the questions raised here. Unfortunately, he has not published any work related to the concept of community to date. On Castoriadis in general and his theory of the imaginary, see Lars Gertenbach, "Cornelius Castoriadis. Gesellschaftliche Praxis und radikale Imagination," in *Kultur. Theorien der Gegenwart*, 2nd updated and expanded edition, ed. Stephan Moebius (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011).

550 ——— See, for example, Marcus Emmerich, *Jenseits von Individuum und Gesellschaft. Zur Problematik einer psychoanalytischen Theorie der Sozialität* (Giessen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2007).

551 ——— Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1989).

552 ——— See Jacques Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," (1960), in *Écrits: A Selection*,

identity is constituted imaginarily, we emphasise above all that the conception of identity as unity is part of the imaginary, i.e., it necessarily remains within its bounds. This aspect of unity is an illusion which belies the factual dissonance and heterogeneity. One insight often drawn from this consists in a rejection or critical interrogation of the kind taken into account, for example, by feminist art scholarship—which applies equally, or more, to semantics of communal unity. The fact that communities are imaginarily constituted also means that they appear complete and unified only in the imaginary mode. The conception of their wholeness cannot leave the sphere of the imago, a circumstance with which two decisive consequences are related. On the one hand, this conception thus conceals actual differences and heterogeneities within the group; what is more, however, it also conceals the fact that the rift between "reality" and the imaginary as such is structurally irrevocable. Complete identification of the kind promised by the imaginary cannot be achieved, and the unity/identity of the community must thus remain fiction and is not applicable to reality. What comes about instead is an element of alienation and "non-correspondence with one's own reality."[553] The imaginary thus possesses a paradoxical structure: on the one hand, it is the production site of alienation/misrecognition; on the other hand, it is also the instance which negates such alienation in favour of a fictional unity, providing the driver and motive for its denial—such as the desire to become one or to merge as posited *against* alienation.

This hiatus or gap, as Lacan calls it, between the imaginary and symbolic (classification in symbolic orders) on the one hand, and reality (schism, separation, death) on the other, is constitutive. Yet, since the imaginary promises to close and negate the abyss, a scenario emerges by which the desire for identification and community can ultimately lead to the excesses of community (exclusion, violence) to the same degree as its jubilatory

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trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock Publications, 1980); Jacques Lacan, "The Line and the Light," in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London; New York: Karnac, 1977); Jacques Lacan, "Of the Gaze as Object Petit a" (1981), in *Erratum of The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Toronto: Parasitic Ventures Press, 2011), 42 et seq.
Jacques Lacan, "What is a Picture?" in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*.

553 ——— Already Freud had a similar aspect in mind when he positioned the "ego" as a precarious and exceedingly vulnerable intermediary function between the unconscious, the drives, the ego ideal, and the environment. Lacan, in his conception of a subject constitution indebted to breaks, aligns himself closely with Freud. This is discussed in detail in, for example, Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London and New York: Verso, 1986).

moments (inebriation, ecstasy, celebration).[554] By mediating between the projected community scenario and individual desire, the imaginary thus holds key significance with regard to the exclusion mechanisms and violence scenarios that arise from communities, phenomena which cannot be understood without such a concept. An approach proceeding on these assumptions is based on a decisive shift in perspective: rather than ascribing something real to the projection of community, the (allegedly) real is conceived of as a projection of the communal imaginary.[555]

Only then does it become evident that, for example, communities again and again perceive their existence as being threatened. Žižek suspects that the reason for this may have something to do with what Lacan calls enjoyment (French: *jouissance*): a kind of painful pleasure inherent in all concepts of community and manifest particularly in their egocentrism and ego-intoxication. This serves to explain not only the specific coherence of communities or the sometimes passionate support for other, fellow members, but also the voluntary subjugation—particularly virulent in nationalism—of the self to the project of the community, even to the point of self-sacrifice. To ensure this enjoyment, communities create something like a "communal thing,"[556] which not only encompasses common symbols but also functions as a placeholder and representative of the communal. This "thing" is seen as that which secures the enjoyment of the communal identification and is thus—for example, in the projections of nationalists—regarded as constantly threatened (above all from the outside). Paradoxically, this is accordingly conceived as "something inaccessible to the other yet at the same time threatened by him."[557] The conception of threat must therefore not be misunderstood as a real scenario, since this logic is not triggered by the immediate social reality but rather by projection mechanisms and by phantasmatic exaggerations on the part of the imaginary. Relating the excesses of community to its imaginary structure also reveals that such phenomena cannot be sufficiently explained by functionalist or rationalist concepts alone. What Žižek emphasizes generally with regard to identity formation can thus also undoubtedly be observed with regard to communal identities. It is "not the external enemy that prevents me from attaining my identity with myself, but that identity is always already blocked within itself, marked by an impossibility, and the external enemy is merely that little piece, that last remain-

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554 ——— Precisely that circumstance, however, makes it problematic to separate these two elements from one another, in view of the fact that violence and exclusion can be ecstatically celebrated and go hand in hand with a jubilatory affirmation by the community.

555 ——— Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

556 ——— Žižek, "Enjoy Your Nation as Yourself!"

557 ——— Ibid.

der of reality onto which we 'project' or 'externalize' this intrinsic, imma-
nent impossibility."[558] If we relate the community's excesses to such an
imaginary community structure, we ultimately also realize that function-
alist or rationalist concepts reach their limits here, since they alone do
not suffice to explain the dynamic that lies within such excesses.[559]
Ultimately, this also means that any politics *in the name of community* is
problematic not only because differences are ignored and boundaries
totalised, but above all because the idea of realisation already misrecog-
nises its core and permanently defers its failure.[560] Yet, we have thus come
across two points central to Jean-Luc Nancy's line of reasoning: the impos-
sibility of identifying and representing community, and the question as to
a different politics of community capable—to the extent possible—of cop-
ing with this problem.

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558 ——— Žižek, "Beyond Discourse Analysis."

559 ——— See Wolfgang Essbach, "Gemeinschaft – Rassismus – Biopolitik," in
Das Fremde – Der Gast, ed. Wolfgang Pircher (Vienna: Turia & Kant,
1993), 17–35.
From a similar perspective, Klaus Theweleit applied this psychoanalyt-
ically motivated approach to the soldierly (German) men and their
conceptions of the "Red Mass," in the process elaborating in all depth
and clarity on the fact that the projection of internal conflicts between
drives, unconscious material, and the ego ideal is deferred to the imag-
ined other to rescue the threatened ego. The underlying paranoid
tenor of this relationship has its roots precisely in the supposed threat
scenario. (Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies* (Cambridge: Polity Press,
1987–1989)).

560 ——— Joseph Vogl, "Einleitung," in *Gemeinschaften. Positionen zu einer Philo-
sophie des Politischen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), 7–27.
At the same time, the question may well arise here as to which factors
are specifically responsible for the fact that the communal imaginary
can, in a concrete situation, take on forms and intensities which can
become prone to real violence and the open exclusion of others. Even
if the discussion of the imaginary element of communities might ini-
tially appear capable of providing possible answers here, since it
endeavours to explain the affective and phantasmatic structure of the
desire for community, at the same time it also creates doubts as to the
extent to which these questions can at all be answered. A theoretical
recipe or a way in which communities could be carefully categorised
with regard to this point (or even divided into good and bad) hardly
appears sensible, since it would necessarily be forced to suppress the
non-rational and affective elements of communal relationships or,
alternatively, reduce them to rational or functional explanations—an
undertaking which is hardly convincing in light of the significance of
the imaginary.

8.4.2 Vanishing Points of a Deconstruction of Community

Another means of the realignment of the community debate taking into consideration the problems identified here can be found in deconstructivist positions. The authors subsumed under this heading, first and foremost Jean-Luc Nancy, play a special role within the community debate because—in contrast, for example, to communitarian positions—they acknowledge this highly ambivalent and structurally seemingly irrevocable dimension of community as a fundamental problem, and treat it as an essential aspect in their reflection on this concept. What is more, of all the deconstructivist approaches, Nancy's offers what is perhaps the most fundamental proposal for a reformulation of the concept of community. Even if he does not discuss the problems of the thinking of community on the basis of the imaginary but depends primarily on recourse to ontological leitmotifs, the general thrust is similar on a number of key points. On the one hand, the concern here is also with a questioning of the classical concept of community on the basis of a critique of identity logic, origin metaphors, and visions of perfection.[561] On the other hand, this critique also comes down to a different politics of community which nevertheless does not dispense with taking community seriously as a political demand, and which accordingly endeavours to reformulate it as a radical democratic project. Nevertheless, owing to a number of fundamental theoretical decisions, this political element is somewhat neglected in Nancy's argumentation, as will be discussed in the following pages in somewhat greater depth. The combination of this line of discussion with the discourse about the imaginary thus pursues two aims: on the one hand, within the debate about the imaginary of community, a shift of emphasis to a community concept that is as non-identitary as possible, and on the other hand an enhancement of the deconstructivist position to include the element of political conflict and difference. The general vanishing line of such an undertaking (even if it can only be touched on within the framework of this text) accordingly consists in taking the critique of the classical concept of community—encountered to equal degrees in the cultural-theoretical-psychoanalytical debate and in deconstructivist positions—as a point of departure for the formulation of a different politics of community. To the extent possible, the latter should moreover be capable of leaving the ambiguities and problems of the demand for community behind, but without lapsing into an apolitical attitude as a result. Against the background of the observations on the imaginary, the concern will accordingly be with radicalising Nancy's approach beyond its own limitations. For however prominent his critique of identity topoi, Nancy himself clings to a line of tradition which usually tends to foreground the unifying

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561 ———   For a more detailed discussion, see Gertenbach et al., *Theorien der Gemeinschaft zur Einführung*, 158 et seq.

and connective as opposed to the conflict-fraught and antagonistic.[562] This accentuation appears particularly questionable because Nancy's argumentation targets precisely the difference between the heterogeneity within the communal and the standardised conceptions of concrete communities.

Let us begin, however, with the foundations of Nancy's argumentation. His discussion of "being-with" is founded on the distinction—introduced by Heidegger—between the ontological and the ontic.[563] Nancy endeavours to show that, even beyond the boundaries of a concrete (ontic) community, on the more fundamental ontological level we are granted a "being-with" that exists not only "beneath" all respective communities, but also even before we are subjects. To circumvent the usual juxtaposition between the individual and the communal, as well as classical concepts of identity and subject, Nancy reverts to the "singular/plural" dichotomy that, in his view, expresses more clearly that these two terms have to be thought of as interlinked. When, in his work *Being Singular Plural*, he accordingly attempts to develop "being-with" as a fundamental prerequisite of existence, this accordingly implies "that the singularity of each is indissociable from its being-with-many and *because*, in general, a singularity is indissociable from a plurality."[564] This concept also exhibits astonishing resemblance to Lacan's category of the symbolic.

Against this background, Nancy's approach insists on the development of an ontology of "being-with," which has far-reaching consequences for every conception of community: "In my view, the first requirement is to view the traditional conception of the 'communal' and the 'community' with reservation. On this basis we can begin to understand that the 'being-in-the-community' is not communal being, and that it is to be analyzed differently, for example as 'being-together' or 'being-with.'"[565] Nancy's concept of community thus occupies a different level, so that from now on community refers to something that "will always have gone before any singular or generic existence."[566]

Nevertheless, he is not concerned solely with proving that there is a common "with" associated with every existence. In the reformulation of the communal existence, he makes an effort to shift the excessive—a conse-

562 ——— Oliver Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

563 ——— Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996).

564 ——— Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 32.

565 ——— See Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*.

566 ——— Nancy, "The Confronted Community," 32.

quence of the communal identity concept already discussed above in conjunction with the imaginary—to an element of the ecstatic.[567] That implies that not the community itself is subject to a potentially excessive process of closure ("potentially" excessive because it can never succeed, or only imaginarily), but the community is to be conceived in such a way that it always rises above itself and is never closed (Greek: ***ékstasis***: "to step out of oneself"). His efforts to deconstruct the idea of community can accordingly be understood as an endeavour that recognises the abovementioned problem in the classical concept of community and takes this problem as its central point of intervention. He thus aims at a cleansing of the community concept of all connotations of identity logic and fatality, but without relinquishing the concept itself as a political demand. The aim of this process is to shift the debate deconstructively to a different concept of community located as far beyond the "dialectic of origin and realization, of loss and rediscovery, of being diverted and then of returning"[568] as possible.

Taking these fundamental deliberations as a point of departure, Nancy develops the demand for a recognition of difference and a self-encounter that—analogous to the antecedence of the ontological—plays out in categories beyond the concept of subject.[569] He would accordingly like to understand communities as number—in contrast to concepts of mass, crowd or class, which in his opinion are pervaded by ideological concepts: "The various fascisms had been operations carried out on the 'masses', whilst the various communisms had been carried out on 'classes', one and all assigned to the house-arrest of historical mission.."[570] A decisive figure for the development of this concept of community is the term "inoperativity" ("*désœuvrement*"), borrowed from Blanchot.[571] Blanchot used this term in the sense of interruption, non-consummation, and intentionlessness: no project follows from the discussion; a community is not objectifiable and not institutable. Nancy applies this to the concept of community in the sense that this fundamental (i.e., ontological) community cannot be realised—or put into operation—on the social and political (i.e., ontic) level. It remains unimplementable in the sense that it cannot be realized

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567 ———— Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*.
568 ———— Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*.
569 ———— In Nancy's words: "To look squarely at a gaping chasm and to confront oneself with an intense gaze are not without grounds for comparison, if the other's gaze never opens upon anything but the unfathomable: upon absolute strangeness, upon a truth which cannot be verified but which must nevertheless be clung to." Nancy, "The Confronted Community," 25.
570 ———— Ibid., 28.
571 ———— Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*.

or represented.[572] This, however, brings about a shift in the question of politics:

> The main issue is how politics is to be conceived as a non-totality, and that means other than as a subordination to existence as a whole. Between the ontology of the being-with and politics, there must be no constitutive connection, and no connection of expression. In other words, politics must not give expression to the totality of the being-with. If, on the other hand, the being of the being-with is fundamentally a plural (singular existences and singular orders, arts, bodies, thoughts…), then politics must be that which guarantees justice in the plurality and the diversity, but must not be a suspension of the being-with.[573]

Mirrored in the element of the imaginary, the aim implied here can by all means be understood as the aim to conceive communities as something other than identical, homogenizing, and connective entities. And even if this reveals itself to be an "infinite task,"[574] the deconstruction of the concept of community is in any case more than a permanent reference to the problematic dimensions of communal constructions. It is simultaneously an attempt to create other communities, and to achieve a radical reinterpretation of the idea of community, and thus also of the imaginary of the community itself. Precisely in this regard, the efforts towards a deconstruction of the concept of community exceed the scope of psychoanalytical descriptions of the imaginary scenario.

8.4.3 In Search of a Politics of the "Inoperative Community"

Even if this train of thought reveals the general thrust of Nancy's position, on the political level the question as to how this gap between the ontology of the "being-with" and the actual political institution is to be dealt with remains unanswered. Because however convincing it is to negate the direct connection between the ontological and political level, it remains unclear what the concern of politics is, above and beyond the recognition of this gap. If politics stops at the insistence on the gap, Nancy's argumentation reaffirms a position (if unintentionally) which emphasises that no solidified structure, no installation of hierarchies can be a radically politi-

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572 ——— Nancy, "The Confronted Community."
573 ——— Jean Luc Nancy, *Die undarstellbare Gemeinschaft,* (Stuttgart, 1988) p. 52 and see Jean-Luc Nancy, "Mit-Sinn," in Elke Bippus, Jörg Huber, Dorothee Richter (eds.), *'Mit-Sein'- Gemeinschaft, ontologische und politische Perspektivierungen* (Zurich: Edition Voldemeer, 2010), 21-32.
574 ——— Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, 35.

cal act. In the final analysis, however, an endeavour of this kind foregoes specific political demands—on the one hand by elevating already the mere deconstruction of conceptions of unity to the status of radically political act and "unheard demand,"[575] and on the other hand, in the (genuinely Heideggerian) gesture of the "always already," by exhausting itself in pointing to the antecedence and irreducibility of the "being-with," i.e., the ontological level. This project thus has the problem—in a certain sense a conceptually intended problem—of being non-realisable, or of withdrawing to what is ultimately a philosophical position that confines itself to pointing out the impossibility of the representation of the ontological in the ontic.[576]

However, drawing on the Althusserian approach—which does not necessarily have to be read as in a reductive manner, as is often the case—the political dimension can be reintroduced in a different way. Ideological state apparatuses play a role in the creation and consolidation of systems of government, but the ideological sphere can also be used against existing systems of government.[577] This is a circumstance of great significance for all entities, fragmented subjects, or singularities within these systems. In other words, to use Foucauldian terminology, power is thus reversible, influenceable.[578] The concept of "interpellation," which theorizes that subjects are brought forth by being addressed, can be counter-checked with Lacan. It is thus presumably no coincidence that the mirror situation which, as discussed by Althusser, constitutes subjects is reminiscent of the Lacanian conception of a mirror stage, the moment in which the basic structure of a uniform—though only imaginarily complete—subject emerges. The subject is accordingly always a divided one—indicated by Lacan in his post-1957 writings by the S with a bar through it.[579] Subjectivisation, which can take place only in the symbolic order, creates a subjugation to its own order and divides the subject, which can only attain the capacity to act as a "subject" (in the sense of a being in a state of being

575 ———— Ibid.

576 ———— Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought.*

577 ———— Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses."

578 ———— Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 95: "Hence there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellion, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations. But this does not mean that they are only a reaction or rebound, forming with respect to the basic domination an underside that is in the end always passive, doomed to perpetual defeat."

579 ———— See, for example, Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious."

subjected). The subject is thus already "spoken" before birth, since it is necessarily born into a historical, class-specific, familial place. An embedding in any form of commonwealth is thus, comparable to Nancy, an inseparable component of being, since "being-with" and "being" are inseparable. Lacan conceives of this in a sense as divided, i.e., as being located in symbolic systems (the symbolic) and, on the other hand, as phantasmatically unified in the pictorial-imaginary (the imaginary). In the Lacanian and Althusserian conception, however, it is possible for the subject to answer to being addressed (interpellations). Seen in this light, the subject is capable of action, but only in the universality-claiming dimension ultimately decontextualised by Nancy. The split subject, whose being cannot be separated from its "being-with," is conceived of as radically historical. Not only is it capable of acting, but its action, as an influence on the symbolic, is moreover unavoidable.

With this reference to Althusser and Lacan, it can accordingly be shown that the demand for a complete withdrawal from politics is ultimately a certain form of a politics of non-intervention. As a claim for an emancipatory project, the mere demand to allow differences to exist side by side, together, thus proves to be a utopia which also cannot be attained as an inoperative project. In keeping with Lacan, but also Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, it can therefore be maintained that political identities are always constructed on the basis of complex discursive practices.[580] When Mouffe and Laclau break with the essentialist conception of the subject, they do not claim that social movements discover an idea—an inequality, for instance—that was always there, but that they create the terrain of this equality, and equality as such. They thus depart from exclusively representational theories of human equality and insist on the performative dimension that represents the prerequisite for equality. To form equivalence chains would therefore mean creating equality in action as a continuing process. In an interview, Mouffe/Laclau argue: "But in that case, the logic of equality cannot be a logic of homogenization. It has to be a logic of what we call 'equivalence', because in a relation of equivalence, you are not simply discovering identity, you are discovering something which is identical within the realm of differences. This alludes to a much more subtle form of political logic."[581]

This brief recourse to Althusser, Lacan, and Laclau/Mouffe can also serve to connect the discussion of the ontological level encountered in Nancy with issues of political practice that go beyond the limits of the deconstructive gesture alone. The discussion of the irrevocable "being-with" and

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580 ———— "Hegemony and Socialism: An Interview with Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau," *Palinurus* 14 (April 2007), accessed 22 November 2013, http://anselmocarranco.tripod.com/id68.html.

581 ———— Ibid.

the structure of the singular-plural can accordingly be conveyed more clearly in a political or, as defined by Lacan, ethical dimension than is already the case in Nancy. Or, conceptually speaking, even the ontological level on which, for Nancy, the "being-with" is located as a fundamental fact of existence per se, cannot be cleansed of political (or, in the Laclau/ Mouffian sense: discursive) meaning or social power relationships. Seen from this perspective, the question of power relationships within and outside the community, in the "being-with," would have to come into view on the ontological level in order to allow philosophy to become political.

8.4.4 Media Images of the Community—Deliberations on a Diagnosis of the Times

It is no coincidence that the preoccupation with the imaginary element of community proves so productive. For not only have the digital communication media vastly accelerated the flow of capital, but communication itself has shifted into a new projective-imaginary mode. Already more than a decade ago, the film and media theorist Christian Metz argued that cinematographic projection represents a virtually paradigmatic cultural production for our society. Yet, his assertion is all the more applicable today, in light of the computer, which—with its projection surface, the computer screen—has become the leading medium. Since Metz based his deliberations on a concept of the imaginary indebted to psychoanalysis, his work offers a means of drawing a connection to the deliberations on the imaginary aspect of community discussed above. With regard to the paradigmatic character of the cinematographic projection, Metz comments as follows: "It has very often, and rightly, been said that the cinema is a technique of the imaginary. A technique, on the other hand, which is peculiar to a historical epoch (that of capitalism) and a state of society, so-called industrial civilization."[582] He considers cinema's foremost quality to be in the construction of a fictional narrative based on the antecedent techniques of photography and phonography. All the more inevitably does Metz's observation come to bear in the post-industrial communication society. Metz sees the viewers as being complexly involved in the fictional aspect of this projection; he sees a link between the filmic imaginary and the imaginary in the Lacanian sense of an intrapersonal psychic institution. Here, the double construction of the Lacanian conception is particularly interesting: if on the one hand we recognise the "being-with" of existence as something interwoven with the symbolic, as a positioning of the subject (prior to the subject)—undertaken with words and gestures—in an order, and on the other hand recognise in the subjectivisa-

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582 ——— Christian Metz, *The* Imaginary *Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the* Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 3.

tion a share of phantasmatic or imaginary projection (as a result of the mirror stage), then, within the context of a diagnosis of the times, the cultural-historically heightened importance of the element of the projection can be applied to community formations. From this point of view, we are, with Nancy, fascinated by the imaginary because individual and collective identities are invoked more and more comprehensively by pictorial projections, whereas the localisation through institutions, on the contrary, may possibly be on the decline.[583] We thus arrive at the preliminary supposition that community-building originates more significantly in the pictorial-imaginary mode, and less in allocations within established institutions and their symbolic systems.

To follow Metz's line of reasoning, what is special about media projection is that the subjectivisations thus mediated succumb to a deception that points to a different person. The subjectivisation now tends to shift from an initially disparate constitution of the subject to a form of secondary narcissism of one's own mirror image, to a mirror that is to a greater degree allocentric, projective. In the long run, according to Metz, these changes turn the human being into "the double of his double."[584] Within this context, the identitary offer is always a linking of language and image, whereby the pictorial message, however, is particularly suited to functioning as an imaginary foil. If the speculation of the increasing media construction of communality is correct, community's mode of construction shifts in a sense. To an ever-greater degree, communities are shaped by media-based pictorial languages which convey collective identities by way of intrapersonal processes.

Ordinary film scenarios thus confirm and reinforce the imaginary component in the viewer's psychic topography. At the same time, the narratives conveyed by the media are imbued with social and cultural codes, and the projective apparatus is thus multiply linked with the formation of imaginary communities which—literally and figuratively—function projectively to adjust and normalise. Since Merz made his observation, this process has been extremely intensified in view of the fact that, with the development of telecommunications and Internet media, concrete and invisible spaces have begun to interpenetrate in a hitherto unknown manner.[585]

Prospects: One aim of this argumentation has been to reveal the traces of a hitherto only timidly endeavoured link between the discussion of the imaginary aspect of communities and deconstructivist positions. Even if

583 ———— Renata Salecl, *(Per)versions of Love and Hate* (London: Verso, 1998).

584 ———— Ibid., 4.

585 ———— Viktor Kittlausz, "Urbane(s) Fragen, Auf der Suche nach den Medien des Städtischen," in *Urbanographien, Stadtforschung in Kunst, Architektur und Theorie*, eds. Elke Krasny and Irene Nierhaus (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2008), 193–203.

the two lines of reasoning originate in different theoretical traditions, similar approaches to community can nevertheless be discerned—similar in the sense that they are initially both interested in similar problems related to the classical concepts of community. Even if no special role is assigned to the psychoanalytical perspective in Nancy's observations, that perspective may prove helpful for clarifying certain motives for the rejection of the assumptions of the thinking about community based in identitary logic. In addition to a number of philosophical and conceptual affinities, there is moreover a structural resemblance with regard to the thrust of the critique, since both can be understood as rejections of concepts of community based on identitary logic and fixated on unity. They each thus ultimately emphasise that an emancipatory politics—to the extent that it can at all have recourse to the category of community—cannot but accept the above-identified hiatus between the unitary imagination and its impossible realisation, or between the "being-with" and a de facto politics of community, and to recognise the heterogeneity of the participants in the community as an irrevocable fact of a political practice.

The advantage of psychoanalytical positions clearly lies in their empiricism. For in contrast to deconstructivist approaches, they are fundamentally interested in finding an explanation for what mechanisms are equally responsible for the "collective effervescence" (Durkheim) of community life and for its violent excesses, two aspects which Nancy—despite a similar rejection of identitarily closed concepts of community—strangely neglects to take into consideration. A sociological perspective that is nevertheless interested in actual phenomena and in the community's forms of articulation can hardly overlook these aspects. At the same time, however, these positions prove to reach certain limits with regard to the question as to a different politics of community. The reason for that lies in the fact that psychoanalytical and cultural-theoretical positions generally proceed on the assumption of the inevitability of this (identitary-)logical construction and occasionally emphasise that the structure of this deficiency is constitutive for the formation of identity (both individual and collective) and cannot be overcome. This is thus precisely the point of departure for a dialogue with deconstructivist positions, a dialogue that picks up the thread of their efforts to redefine the concept of community, in order at least to air the possibility of developing a different concept less strongly indebted to identitary logic. This possibility would arise precisely because of the fact that here, in contrast to the arguments revolving around the imaginary, there would be more insistence on adhering to the idea of community as a political project.

The critical examination of Nancy nevertheless shows that, within its own approach, this demand for a different concept of community excludes a concept of the political that tends to be more problematic, because it is apolitical, and that forces the political aspect into the background in favour of the ontological. To the extent that this conclusion is not a necessary consequence of the rejection of the classical concept of community, however, but arises from the problematic reduction of Nancy's argument to ontological issues, an alternative presents itself, as proposed here on the basis of the example of Laclau and Mouffe, i.e., of a position founded in discourse theory and arguing from a historical perspective. Rather than exhausting itself in the mere deconstructivist gesture of pointing out the inadequacies of the political demands and overemphasising the gap between ontology and the ontic, the task must consist of taking the connections between ontology and politics into account in the sense of a "historical ontology" (Foucault) on the one hand, rather than conceiving of them as two separate spheres, and in articulating political demands for equality and community in a form less beholden to identitary logic on the other hand. Recognition of the abovementioned gap, however—i.e., that much will presumably have become clear from the two theoretical positions—must be a constitutive element of a possible emancipatory politics. This demand—a recognition of this gap, or even in this case a staging—must be transferred to curating, and any curatorial project also has to be questioned about the subjects it proposes and about the communities it evokes.

As a preliminary conclusion, we can therefore establish that a hitherto non-existent digital dimension of interaction and the imagination with its corresponding imaginary registers evoke "new" communities and reorganises "old" ones. The project screen and its pictorial production are becoming increasingly separate. (Urban) spaces, imaginary, social and political spaces are accordingly being influenced to an ever greater degree by spatially remote efficacies that—in the places where they bring about consequences—are neither tangible nor require legitimation. An emancipatory project would thus be to re-expose these contexts, hierarchies, and interests, and to identify the imaginary basis for the evocation of communities and to reject it in its identitarian consequences.

8.5 The Pandemic and Digitalisation

In the meantime, we will have to take digitalisation into consideration; after the pandemic, it will be a necessary tool. Besides the impact of increasing isolation and nevertheless creating new communities, the digital space might also become a public space under some preconditions. This is why I initiated the online journal *OnCurating*, which often publishes with other institutions and study programmes. Derrida describes this aspect in relation to university education as follows:

> One of the mutations that affect the place and nature of university *travail* is today a certain delocalizing virtualization of space of communication, discussion, publication, archivization. It is not the virtualization that is absolutely novel in its structure, for as soon as there is a trace, there is also some virtualization; it is the 'abc' of deconstruction. What is new, quantitatively, is the acceleration of the rhythm, the extent and powers of capitalization of such virtuality. Hence the necessity to rethink the concepts of the possible and the impossible. This new technical 'stage' of virtualization (computerization, digitalization, virtually immediate worldwide-ization of readability, tele-work, and so forth) destabilizes, as we well know, the university habitat. It upsets the university's topology, disturbs everything that organizes the places defining it, namely, the territory of its fields and its disciplinary frontiers as well as its places of discussion, its field of battle, its Kampfplatz, its theoretical battlefield – and the communitary structure of its 'campus'.[586]

Partly unwillingly, we were pushed into this new topology of the university, but we wanted to use it—despite its isolating tendency as a public and social space. And we wanted to make our endeavours and shared efforts available to a larger public, a public space that is, as stated by Derrida, a field of competition, a struggle for visibility, but on the other hand also a democratic tool that opens up to people from far away, insofar as we also see this shared platform as an act of resistance to the capitalisation of knowledge. As stated by Peter Weibel,[587] digital media change any notion of distance. They also change our senses, our human condition as such. For us, the students and lecturers of the programme, the online journal www.on-curating.org holds the promise of being not just a sec-

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586 ———— Derrida, "The Future of the Profession," 31.
587 ———— Peter Weibel, Talk for the Burda Foundation.

ond-rate consumer of thoughts, but of producing knowledge about curating alongside temporary projects in space. On the level of thinking about the distribution of knowledge, this is another self-empowerment opportunity for students and alumni to materialize their research and questions and to reach out.

Now, during/after the pandemic, the overall presence of digital media has been overwhelming in all contexts, but this has also a major influence on how we understand the world and under which new regime we are living. This will be analysed by Johan Hartle below and discussed in what way curating could react to these forms of objectivity as an aesthetic and an un-aesthetic political order.

8.6 Digital Media as the Connecting Machine: Ready to Print and Small Projects for Coming Communities

8.6.1 Ready to Print

The possibility of creating other forms of communities and other forms of "exhibitions" were something we explored together with students and invited lecturers and artists in different projects. With the project "Ready to Print," we used the OnCurating platform as a way to expand possible exhibitions: "Ready to Print" was a project conceived as an innovative format. We asked thirteen artists with differing backgrounds and formal interests to produce PDF editions. Each of them produced a work consisting of 16 A4 pages of paper, which in most cases were assembled to form a single two-dimensional work in A0 format. These contemporary editions are downloadable as PDFs on the internet from the 10th issue of *OnCurating* at on-curating.org.[588] The artists were **Beni Bischof, Birgit Brenner, Dani Gal, Guerrilla Girls, Clare Kenny, Daniel Knorr, Lucie Kolb, Monochrom, Felipe Mujica, Fabio Marco Pirovino, Ana Roldán, Shirana Shahbazi, and Riikka Tauriainen**. In the curatorial group were Milena Brendle, Chantal Bron, Melanie Büchel, Jeannine Herrmann, Amber Hickey, Sonja Hug, Garance Massart-Blum, Candida Pestana, Corinne Rinaldis, Dimitrina Sevova, Lindsey Sharman, and Catrina Sonderegger.

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[588] ——— See https://on-curating.org/issue-10.html#.YuEKpcZCTkI.

Ready to Print, OnCurating Issue 10, 2011–2012, White Space, Zurich, Kunststiftung Baden Württemberg, Centre for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv, International Centre of Graphic Arts (MGLC), Ljubljana, www.on-curating.org/issue-10.html

The editions are still available to everyone in the world who has a computer, a printer, paper, and glue at his or her disposal. In all of these projects and forerunners, the public's stance on artistic/curatorial work has played a decisive role. The users/curators also interacted with the "artworks." The latter were used in ways that were different from what was suggested by the respective instructions. The A4 sheets were assembled in a completely different arrangement or thrown in the air, which in turn created completely different meanings. The public is empowered on a symbolic level; it has the opportunity to respond. This freedom remains symbolic, however, in the sense that the public has to have initial access to contemporary art, a circumstance which naturally produces numerous exclusions. What is more, in a certain sense the opportunity for self-empowerment had to be staged or pre-arranged. The project was presented, for example, at the White Space Zürich, the Kunststiftung Baden-Württemberg Stuttgart, the Pro qm bookshop in Berlin, the International Museum of Graphic Arts (MGLC) in Ljubljana, Slovenia, the Zurich University of

the Arts, and the Center for Contemporary Art Tel Aviv. When the "installation photos" were sent to us by e-mail, we were able to draw conclusions about the locations the works had been sent back from in some cases; where we know those locations, they are included in the picture caption. The first phase of the project was usually announced with Print It, the second with Share It. The possibility to interact and to send back the chosen presentation in all the different contexts was specifically used by the network of friends of the artists and curators; nevertheless, the project did symbolically reverse the (problematic) curatorial authority.

8.6.2 Small Projects for Coming Communities

Another project we initiated was "Small Projects for Coming Communities." When a chairperson of cultural programme by a church in Stuttgart asked about us about a concept for a project, we decided to open up the possibility of proposing and implementing projects, and one of the important inspirations for this was "Learning to Love You More" by Miranda July and Harrell Fletcher.[589] In their project, activities could be proposed as well as photos of actions and—perhaps not so surprisingly—some of these proposals and their implementation were within the wider context of religious congregations.

We planned to have a variety of longer and shorter events and wanted to combine these with theoretical input in the form of lectures at least in the first iteration, having Grant Kester, Jeanne van Heeswijk, Bill Dietz, Tine de Moor, Sabih Ahmed, Elke Krasny, and Katalin Erdodi there with contributions. Discoteca Flaming Star gave an overnight performance, and a variety of local and international artists proposed scores, which were then carried out by the audience and the curatorial group. We also made the scores available through a display; the artists were Chloë Bass, Neue Dringlichkeit, Tilman Kugler, San Keller, Johanna Bruckner, Michael Leung, Kacey Wong, Belle Phromchanya, Meitong Chen & Claudia Baena, Hidden Institute, Anastasia Chaguidouline, Eriko Miyata, Ishita Chakraborty, Pongpan Suriyapat, Domenico Roberti, Jan Sandberg, Gozde Filinta, Bill Dietz, Discoteca Flaming Star, Eva Dörr, and additional works by Bill Dietz, Florian Model, Sabrina Karl, Anike Joyce Sadiq, Andreina Isea, Axel Crettenand, and FOA-FLUX with Gian Martins and Nina Shapiro.[590] The group that acted as authors were actually put together from students and artists (at that point, it became difficult to maintain the difference between curating and artistic intervention). The project outline of

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589 ——— See http://learningtoloveyoumore.com/.

590 ——— See *Small Projects for Coming Communities*, accessed 1 August 2021, https://www.comingcommunities.org/en/display-en/exhibitions/hospitalhof-2/.

the project was initiated by me and Ronald Kolb. Of course, for this project as well as for "Learning to Love You More," one could agree with the sharp analysis by Juliane Rebentisch,[591] who asks, following Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann, why the bourgeois world needs political art so much, and perhaps the proximity to the two Christian churches substantiates this suspicion that political art mainly serves as a lubricant for the art business. On the other hand, we offered a substantially different access to the project, leaving the sanctioned white cube behind and also radically opening up authorship. The project consists of extremely different scores, and some of them offered the possibility of rethinking the contemporary moment towards a future that is based on a collective production of that future, just as Johan Hartle has articulated a political understanding of a solidary power to act together, to produce our lived society together. One of these scores is by Neue Dringlichkeit (New Urgency), "Future Storytelling."[592] In it, you are asked to imagine yourself in fifty years, when all problems of contemporary societies are solved, and you look back together with the other participants and remember how you managed to get there together. This allowed enjoyable strategies to be formulated, strategies that released completely unusual thoughts. It also helped formulate these strategies as a group; one no longer understood oneself as the isolated, controlled subject, without any influence on the current situation. The scores are available through the website, so one can activate them *in situ* or in a digital version; the last spatial iteration of the project happened at Studio Banks, a short-lived residency in Tel Aviv, where this score in particular was greeted with enthusiasm and jokes. Shortly after this, the lockdown set in, and we were in full pandemic mode. But we used the score in different workshop sessions—for example, at a workshop for the Taipei Biennale.

The workshop "Curating on the Move" used different scores to connect with the diverse group of participants (students and audience). We again were engaged to install a social space which enabled all participants to get to know each other, to connect to extremely different contexts. The score "Animal on Your Way" provided very surprising insights into the actual living environment of the participants.[593] The score "Residual Walk" was proposed by an anonymous group from Hong Kong; it asks you to take pictures of something that has vanished. In the workshop on Zoom,

591 ——— Juliane Rebentisch, *Ausstellungen des Politischen in der Kunst* (Mosse Lecture, 13 June 2019), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4U-az20QDdM .

592 ——— See https://www.comingcommunities.org/en/scores/scores-navigation/future-storytelling-exercise/, accessed 1 August 2021.

593 ——— See https://www.comingcommunities.org/en/scores/scores-navigation/animals-on-your-way/, accessed 1 August 2021.

Small Project for Coming Communities, concept by Dorothee Richter and Ronald Kolb, 2019, ongoing, Taipei Biennale (online), Tel Aviv, Zurich

the group involved all participants in a conversation about their specific picture; someone from California provided an image of a piece of wood that vanished in a blaze of fire; a mural from Berlin in the middle of the pandemic said in Latin: *Non mortem timemus, sed cogitationem mortis* (It is not death we fear but the thought of it. -Seneca); from Hong Kong, many images appeared that showed how the authorities ordered to have any commentary painted over in the streets. The participants then spoke about the specific contexts in which they found themselves.[594] Of course, this is not enough to form a group that would interfere in an activist—curatorial—artistic way in "real politics," but it makes this conceivable, and it connects all participants in a much more intense way. In one edition, an anonymous group then provided a live workshop in which this was discussed and developed into a zine with a lovely online exchange. During this frightening pandemic, it made an exchange about personal situations and living conditions possible, and it enabled keeping up a social space as a precondition for a political intervention.

8.7 Covid-19 and the Form of Objectivity as an Aesthetic and an Un-Aesthetic Political Order

Above, I summarised Johan Hartle's talk on alienation and reification and reread it through a feminist lens. In the second part of the talk, held during the pandemic, Hartle discussed the question of the form of objectivity as an aesthetic or un-aesthetic political order which also tends to produce conspiracy theories. Therefore, he sees this as an aesthetic and un-aesthetic order. Un-aesthetic means that it's not perceptible because of the dynamics of the invisible. Some social dynamics tend to produce conspiracies and conspiracy theories. Hartle notes that during the Covid-19 crisis, we are having increased massive forms of irrational political behaviour that is very forcefully articulating itself in terms of conspiracy theories. In his talk, he tried to lay out some of the reasons for this against the background of the idea of spectacle.

As discussed before, Hartle understands certain dynamics of this crisis as a form of spectacle, particularly the social and discursive dynamics of isolation, which are in Debord's perspective the key elements of a society of

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[594] ——— See https://www.comingcommunities.org/en/scores/scores-navigation/residual-walk/, accessed 1 August 2021.

the spectacle in that it isolates and atomizes people. Instead of being a fluid and dynamic collective, people are communicating in a digital form. And as Debord formulates: "THE WHOLE LIFE of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation."[595] And at the same time, the spectacle is a world-wide phenomenon: "THE CONCEPT OF the spectacle brings together and explains a wide range of apparently disparate phenomena. Diversities and contrasts among such phenomena are the appearances of the spectacle—the appearances of a social organization of appearances that needs to be grasped in its general truth. Understood on its own terms, the spectacle proclaims the predominance of appearances and asserts that all human life, which is to say all social life, is mere appearance. But any critique capable of apprehending the spectacle's essential character must expose it as a visible negation of life—and as a negation of life that has invented a visual form for itself."[596] I mentioned briefly that emotions of fear and guilt are projected on women and on subjects identified as being "other," non-white, non-heteronormative subjects. Different forms of ideological state apparatuses (to use Althusser's term) are in a constant exchange, affirming or contradicting each other.

During the Covid-19 crisis, as Hartle relates his thoughts to the current situation, we have exaggerated state power, as well as augmenting our already existing isolation. This relationship between state power and isolation is interesting because it's characteristic for late-capitalist contemporary societies. He develops some thoughts on the respective digital form of objectivity—a form of objectivity in terms of the way in which the world appears to us and the way in which it is mediated—and, of course, curating can be understood as mediation ideas relating to subjectivity around the world. He also believes that this has very much to do with the structure of spectacle, because the spectacle is an objectified form of mediation; it's a form of mediation that has acquired a specific form of social reality or social materiality. This has very much been in the digital realm during the pandemic; in Hartle's view, this is quite telling and probably also dangerous in some respects.

As a conclusion to his argument, he points out that Covid-19 is not just an epidemiological fact; Covid-19 is also a form of social exchange or social non-exchange. Such an exchange can be treated as a psychological fact—what it does to the mental situation of people or, as one derives from the history of morals, how it changes the ethics of society, or how it becomes an aesthetic fact as an element of aesthetics. He mentions Georg Simmel

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595 ———— Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York, Zone Books, 1995), Kindle.

596 ———— Ibid.

in order to argue that organising our social affairs differently through money puts a certain layer of distance between people, because now there are forms of mediation between people that did not exist before that are rearranging the relationships of distance and proximity between people. Therefore, it reorganises the aesthetic relationship of the way people behave towards objects. And, as I paraphrase Hartle's line of thought, the fact that people protect themselves from infecting each other is by no means solely an epidemiological fact or a question of maintaining social order; it also affects the state of social aggregation in a variety of ways. This is for him obvious because the density of social affairs has been rearranged, as we no longer meet at the same level in big rooms with hundreds or thousands of people. It is a different form of arranging social affairs. The state of social aggregation has changed. The new Covid-19 situation leads to a great number of direct aesthetic forms of practices; it will lead and has already led to various new forms of aesthetic processing. The pandemic, with all of its side effects, touches on a variety of issues and questions that overlap with the sphere of aesthetics—questions of perception, spatial design, social interaction, and forms of life. For Hartle, the two aspects of aesthetics and politics overlap profoundly; therefore, he will choose the notion of the aesthetic co-political, and he sets out to reflect upon forms of objectivity and the ways in which the world appears to us. This is also the line of argument that was developed by Lars Gertenbach and me to understand the development of a digital public space.

The fact that two people exchange their products is by no means simply an economic fact, and Covid-19 is not only an epidemiological fact; it's an aesthetic fact as well. However, the situation of Covid-19 is then an un-aesthetic one, one that is not perceptible; we don't see the virus, but we're being told what the effects of it are by people whom we trust (more or less). It's important that the virus is invisible, and its carriers cannot be identified with the naked eye—this creates a situation of universal suspicion. The hidden meaning of the pandemic lies beneath the visible surface, as every person in the supermarket or in the seminar room could become a super-carrier of the dangerous virus. The virus could hide in any person's breath at any time, and we wouldn't be able to see it without means of detection. So, Hartle believes that this dynamic of suspicion—we do not know, we cannot see, we have no guarantee—is of some cultural and theoretical relevance for understanding the increasing collective inclination towards conspiracy theories that strongly articulate themselves on the streets and on the internet.

This means that Covid-19 increases the instances of a merely contemplative, meaning passive, relationship to the social reality in which we live. The coronavirus could be anywhere, in anyone, and there are no more innocent situations, which means that our social reality and everyday

lives become increasingly hermeneutic: we don't know, so we need to interpret; we don't see, so we need to interpret. At this point, Hartle also introduces contemporary art by bringing Marcel Duchamp's readymade bottle-dryer into the discussion, arguing that it is more than a bottle-dryer in that it is the bearer of potential viral meaning. He sees a parallel in the time of Covid-19, where everything potentially has another meaning. In addition to this aesthetic of the invisible, the Covid-19 crisis on the screens is combined with the scientific technical aesthetics of statistics—with the expert's way of speaking and microscopic perspective perception. The expert and the scientist are the opponents of the democratic mass, and the scientific images are being translated into an "objective reality" to which we can merely obey. The social reality, which is installed by image-mediated expert language, cannot be changed by ourselves. This leads to massive fragmentation based on suspicion. To justify this, Hartle quotes a famous sentence from Guy Debord's book on the society of the spectacle: "The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images."[597] Paradigmatic of this structure would be understanding reality TV shows as a substitute for affective engagements with real people; instead, the viewer/voyeur is in a parasitic way taking part in the affective drama presented. This is a new level of alienation. Among other problems, these formats tend to re-establish traditional gender roles.

As an exit strategy out of this net of affective entanglement, Hartle refers to cultural theorist Fredric Jameson, with the statement that if we want to be political agents, if we want to have any capacity to interact with the world around us, we need to have a certain understanding of the structural coherence of what surrounds us, and we need to relate to the way in which social reality is organised. And this is the reason why one reads theory in curatorial programmes if we want to see ourselves as mediators of social reality. Of course, in Hartle's view, this is the social totality of capitalism, because, from a Marxist point of view, capitalism is not just a single-issue problem related to the distribution of wealth, but it's also an attempt to describe the way in which society is organised as a whole.

The problem with conspiracy theories is that they are driven by a desire to be political, and this desire is constantly undermined. The specific form of "objectivity" that has increased has not been constructed by the Covid-19 situation, but it has been extremely intensified as a fragmented, suspicious, objectified reality that is represented in expert images.

Another aspect of the influence of social media and our continued connectedness through social media is in the way that social media fragments reality even further, since actually none of us sees the same mes-

597 ———— Ibid.

sages (because everything you see is customised to your surfing and purchasing history), and every bit we observe on our screens is us actually being observed at the same time. The only reason we are constantly being fed with information in images is to increase the time we spend in front of the screen, which then increases advertising, thereby increasing the revenue of the companies.

Therefore, the influence of social media increases this circular movement because there is no longer a shared reality, even in the contemplative form. Hartle sees the digital form of objectivity as a form of objectivity that is highly reified or fragmented, atomized, and delusional in an extreme sense. Michel Foucault outlined modern enlightened society as a vast prison system whose order was based on the arrangement of isolated individuals. The Panopticon was described as the ability to establish oneself as a subject in a small, separate but uniform cell. The idea is that you internalize social power because you consider yourself as being constantly observed. In the middle, you have this watchtower from where you can look into every single cell, a thought image for this very logic of self-disciplined, internalizing power to become a decent social subject, a well-functioning subject. Foucault is constantly playing with the idea that becoming a subject means becoming someone who's subjected to power: separate but uniform cells to undermine the threat of punishment through self-discipline. According to Foucault, modernity, with its liberal ideas of individuality and personal responsibility, is based on this structure. This wasn't a happy story that he was telling. It was not the grand narrative of modern liberal individualism where we all realise our individual rights to pursue happiness, to develop, or to fully unfold our individual potentials—these ideas are shown as pure ideology in the model of the Panopticon.

Hartle's conclusion is then that modern society had never before come as close to the Panopticon model as during the Covid-19 situation: we're constantly observed by cameras, we're constantly trying to behave in front of cameras as isolated individual agents of communication. The Covid measures are an immense social experiment that, especially with regard to internal and external borders, is concerned with nothing less than questions of legitimate and illegitimate ways of life.

What we now find is an interesting pairing. The coupling of authoritarianism and individualism is perhaps not only absurd, but also has a political side: fragmentation also means that a political will cannot be negotiated and expressed as it had been before in a discursive public space, like a demonstration in the street. Therefore, Hartle argues, authoritarianism and individualism might not merely be opposites but rather two sides of the same coin.

Hartle sees a structural relationship between the communication media

of digital culture and the culture of isolation. Communication media are materialisations of social interaction but not as neutral forms. They organise us in a materialised form in specific ways, and through the materialisation of these communication media, social media have materialised forms of separation because they organise us as individual, competitively communicating social agents behind individualized screens. I will only briefly mention that the reality of Covid again brought disadvantages for women (subjects connoted as female), since they were still responsible for care work; it was also mainly their task to take care of the children who could not go to school, do housework, and, of course, also work to earn money. So, Covid-19 is real, but it produces ideology: it increases certain forms of social incapacity and social impotence. The inability to deal with political circumstances is an ideology itself because the way in which it promotes social situations and the ways in which it is inscribed into organising social affairs is a confirmation of a highly problematic structure that market societies and capitalist societies produce regardless. Thus, the question is which social form(s) of objectivity and which aesthetic regimes or aesthetic practices do we need to conceive and create to counter the downward spiral of the Covid-19 crisis in order to regain aspects and elements of the political, of collectivity, and of social goods that are now being destroyed or diminished at the same time that our capacities to restore them are being diminished as well. This might also make understandable where the longing for collective art forms in art and curating comes from. I will come back to problems of collectivity as a performative act later.

With this theorisation, Hartle delineates more precisely the boundary between art that becomes a fetish—when images of starvation or images of demonstrations are reified, made into objects—and art in which one can assume a politicisation of the participants. The latter must necessarily reflect on where the participants themselves are located, in the discourse of art, with the doctrines of their respective societies, in a group constellation. It is also a matter of recognising oneself as an isolated, disempowered subject that is pushed into a pure consumer position. (These are demands that were obsiously neglected by ruangrupa, as we will discuss later in this paper.) It is important to recognise where one is privileged and where and in what way subjugated. This kind of art would eventually carry over into real political action and connect and ally itself with social movements. And this art and curating would not stop in any way on the level of the pure image; a back and forth between theory and practice, between reflection and self-reflection would be necessary. Hence, the platform *OnCurating* developed into an important tool of reflection on political questions in relation to representation; it made it possible to meander between doing (curating, organising) and reflecting as a shared process.

To translate these delineations into concrete working conditions with students, and to find a way to address the students' situation of being isolated and feeling threatened in 2020 and 2021, we invited the choreographer Be van Vark to work with students in online Zoom sessions. The participants expressed their feelings of isolation and of being on view all the time, and then the subtle notion of constructing a community together through moments in which the participants reacted to one another, repeating their gestures, arose. Some echoed each other, others explored their respective spaces with their bodies, moving together and moving alone. And humour was involved, which opened a shared space of temporary relief but also the possibility of moving together—as well as the limitations of the digital realm.

Be van Vark, workshop for the exhibition "Are we all here? Exploring Embodied Virtuality Today" with MAS students, exhibtion view and film still, OnCurating Project Space, Zurich, 2021

9. CURATING FOR THE NOW? RETHINKING COLLECTIVE CURATING AND ITS PROBLEMS

9.1 Towards A Feminist Commons

When I was asked to write about my own series of feminist projects, I felt some hesitation to do so. Not without reason, I had to invent "False Hearted Fanny"[598] to announce myself as a split subject and as a part of a group: feminist, white, brought up in a Western context, fiercely anti-fascist... And as "False Hearted Fanny" indicates, not only was my heart a bit faultily constructed, not only that, but I was also interested in my Fanny and not really finding a pre-existing way to enact her in our society. Not only was my heart false, but obviously my sexual organs were somehow not right, and they were not there just for pleasure; instead, they seemed to make some people frightened. The different me-s encountered a broad palette of oppressions and submissions. "I just wanted to a be a printer," the Fluxus artist Alison Knowles once mentioned in a conversation we had; "I just wanted to be a subject," I thought, and it was exactly what was not at stake.

Therefore, to speak about my feminist curatorial work means to speak as part of a group, of feminists, of anti-fascists, of being anti-antisemitic, of course, of being sexually adventurous, of being a single parent, of being slightly disabled. I see myself, to a certain extent, as the intersection of these discourses and attributions. So, please consider these different trajectories in the background of the "I" that False Hearted Fanny and I use.

So, "I" will speak about the first series of exhibitions and projects "I" did, the "Research on Housewifery Art" at the Gallery in the Tower, Schlachthof Cultural Centre (1992-93)[599]; later, I curated a project called "Female Coalities" that took place at Lichthaus, a space we occupied for some years, as well as the City Gallery, Thealit, a feminist meeting space, the gal-

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598 ──────── I stumbled upon the name "False Hearted Fanny" in a score by the Fluxus artist Emmett Williams, and I recognized in a flash that I always felt "false hearted," having been born with a slight misconstruction of my cardiac valve. Fanny, as a British slang term for vagina, and as a very impudent and unconventional, sexually curious person also struck me as right. "We are all sluts," as we hear in Kristy Harper, Samirah Raheem, "My Body: My Future." False Hearted Fanny wanted to interfere, especially when I was asked to write or talk about feminism; she wanted to free me of the restrictions and codes of academia and the limitations of someone employed by an institution. In talks, she sometimes appears in slides, wild and lusty looking, and she might also ask the public how they feel as the white middle-class below there.

599 ──────── I was the head of the gallery there from 1992 to 1994 with two major projects, "Research in Housewifery Art" and "Exile and Mainstream."

Research on Housewifery Art,
Gallery in the Tower, Schlachthof
Cultural Centre, Bremen, 1992,
artists: Irmgard Dahms, Marikke
Heinz-Hoek, Isolde Loock, and
Edith Pundt

Female Coalities, Lichthaus,
Bremen, 1996,
artist: Alison Knowles

Materials, Künstlerhaus
Bremen, 1999, alongside a sympo-
sium on feminst positions in
 contemporary art

lery Cornelius Hertz (1996), and the archive on feminist practices called "Materials" at Künstlerhaus Bremen (1999), which was developed as a counterpart of a feminist conference.[600] Together with then co-PhD students Sigrid Adorf and Kathrin Heinz, we organised a series of discussions and talks called "Im (Be)Griff des Bildes"(In the Grip/Notion of the Image) at the Künstlerhaus Bremen. Developed in parallel with some publications, and a further series of symposia, the search for feminist collective approaches to curating continued and still continues to inform my work as a feminist educator and curator in the programmes around curating which "I" established at the Zurich University of the Arts.

My understanding of curatorial and pedagogical practice is based on the feminist Marxist approaches developed by Silvia Federici, in particular her book *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, which deals with primitive accumulation and the exploitation of female and colonised bodies.[601] Federici's concept of reproductive work includes not only traditional domestic work, but also agricultural subsistence farming, health care, education, knowledge about reproduction (birth and abortion), sex work, and other forms of work that are required to sustain societies as well as individuals.[602] In other words, work that is not just shared work but is based on common possessions, like pastures for the cattle, houses for baking, and also storage for preserved food, for example. The organisation of this work is based on a completely different understanding of ownership than we have today in capitalist societies.

Federici argues against Marx's thesis of original accumulation as a "natural" precondition for the development of capitalism, opposing it with the argument that the division between the production of goods and labour was essential, that the production of goods was recognised, but that every reproduction of labour was deprived of a direct material value. Typical of capitalism is the appropriation of the added value of all collective labour and collective property; only in this way, according to Federici, was it possible to accumulate capital on this scale. The persecution of witches and the enslaving of people were the most extreme forms of enforcing the capitalist usage of work and communally owned things.

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[600] I was artistic director of the Künstlerhaus Bremen from 1999 until 2003. The archive was a follow-up of a symposium at the residency, "Die Höge," a residency for female artists, curators, musicians, and performers.

[601] Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Original Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004).

[602] There exists a sheer endless list of interpretations what the "commons" might mean; see the summary by Lauren Berlant, "The Commons: Infrastructures for Troubling Times," in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 34, no. 3 (2016): 393–419. In my perspective, the commons are based on economy.

So, I believe that her theses mean that, conversely, curating and education from a feminist perspective have to do with the commons, with the value of collective action and shared representational space. If one takes the value of collective work seriously, as working toward and for the feminist queer, othered, and commons, this has severe impacts on curating and on pedagogy as a feminist mode of production.

9.1.1 Research on Housewifery Art

As mentioned before, my own involvement with "thinking about exhibitions"[603] or, in my case, "thinking about curating" emerged with the first series of exhibitions I curated at a cultural and social centre in Bremen, West Germany, around the reunification in 1990. This first project as a young curator was called "Research on Housewifery Art." As an open call, "I" distributed a paper that mixed typed paragraphs with crossed out words and handwritten remarks, already visually introducing another form of knowledge production. "I" circled this in the local female artists association, after being appointed as a curator of the gallery space of a social centre. So, the project was and was not about housewifery, and it was and was not research; it used the contradictory notions to provoke a gap in which we could then operate. In retrospect, I could identify the research as situated knowledges, reread with artistic means. The series developed over one year, and not surprisingly the participating artists often worked together in groups. The exhibitions extended into a silkscreen magazine and other publications as well.

The first exhibition was a project based on the shared working process of four artists in their 50s: Irmgard Dahms, Marikke Heinz-Hoek, Isolde Loock, and Edith Pundt. Via fax, they sent remarks, images, photos, and quotes about housewifery to each other every day for about two months. This material was then copied four times, and bound as four books exactly the same size. These were placed in a rather conceptual arrangement: each book was presented on one desk with a chair and a lamp. This very cool way to present the identical books was in sharp contrast to the subjective and intimate content. Also, the authorship of the four artists remained hidden—they authored the whole outcome together. This project was expanded by the four artists two years later in a publication: *Fragenkatalog. 38 Fragen – 152 Antworten. Fortführung einer Feldforschung* (Questionnaire. 38 Questions – 152 Answers. Continuation of a Field Research Project). The thirty-eight questions are quotations from the book *Recherches sur la sexualité*, twelve conversations of Surrealists about sexuality from

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603 ———— Here, I refer to another anthology: Bruce W. Ferguson, Reesa Greenberg, Sandy Nairne, eds., *Thinking About Exhibitions* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 1996).

1928 to 1932. They re-used these questions. Again, they authored the book together. From the slightly jumbled combination of questions and answers, one could eventually guess which questions and which answers went together, but this was also blurred.

"Research in Housewifery Art" was in a way also a reaction to my own living conditions, as I was a single mother, and at that time when I started my studies in 1984, there was **not one** female professor in the department—which meant, for example, that if childcare did not work out for the day, the male professor might kick you out of the seminar if you came with a small child, which did happen to me at least once. After this, I stayed at home if for whatever reason the childcare arrangements failed. Together with other single mothers, we tried to situate our motherhood otherwise. So, in my role as curator, I was acting as a conscious part of a group of single mothers; we jokingly called ourselves "militant mothers." When my older daughter was born in 1982, the youth welfare office automatically became the guardian of the child, and one had to apply to get the guardianship back of one's child—one of the many ways in which the degradation of women is expressed or, one could argue, one of the many facets of the envy of reproduction and other kinds of knowledges of which one is suspected.

Federici herself engaged in the fight for wages for housework and for reproductive work in the '70s. She argues that the moment one demands wages for work that is connoted with being female, the relations change dramatically. Basically, this rejects the naturalisation of this kind of work[604]:

> WfH [wages for housework] was a revolutionary perspective not only because it exposed the root cause of "women's oppression" in a capitalist society but because it unmasked the main mechanisms by which capitalism has maintained its power and kept the working class divided. These are the devaluation of entire spheres of human activity, beginning with the activities catering to the reproduction of human life, and the ability to use the wage to extract work also from a large population of workers who appear to be outside the wage relation: slaves, colonial subjects, prisoners, housewives, and students. [...] Finally, we also saw WfH as revolutionary because it put an end to the naturalization of housework, dispelling the myth that it is "women's labor"; [...]. We also demanded wages for housework not from the husbands but from the state as the representative of collective capital—the real "Man" profiting from this work.[605]

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[604] Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero, Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*, chapter on Wages against Housework (1975) (Autonomedia, Brooklyn, NY, 2012), 15-22.

[605] Ibid., 8-9.

For me as a student and then young curator, it became clear that in the superficially and pretentiously free art world, a lot of things were forbidden—for example, referring to anything so unfashionable, so uncool as daily life, the most devalued topic; the cool boys of the art field were out to be extreme and not care about others, as the myth around artistic genius implied. A word that was not to be mentioned at all was "housewifery." Even if I was probably not fully aware of the implications of the extent to which social reproduction is dismissed and detested in our society, I wanted to create a more communal approach as a curatorial concept and therefore expanded the topic to a series of exhibitions and talks over one year. I also invited 10% male connoted artists as well, which reflected in reverse the percentage in which women were represented in contemporary art at that time.

Nancy Fraser has in the meantime theorised about the area of housewifery in her article, "Contradictions of Capital and Care."[606] She takes up where Federici left off and analyses the development of care work in contradiction to paid work as a worker or employee in capitalist societies. Her claim is "that every form of capitalist society harbours a deep-seated social-reproductive 'crisis tendency' or contradiction: on the one hand, social reproduction is a condition of possibility for sustained capital accumulation; on the other, capitalism's orientation to unlimited accumulation tends to destabilize the very processes of social reproduction on which it relies. This social-reproductive contradiction of capitalism lies at the root of the so-called crisis of care."[607] In other words, care work and reproductive work are becoming more and more precarious, and this undermines the foundation of neoliberal capitalism. So, in the mock title of the project, "housewifery" claimed to be centre stage, but raising children was not only for the Fluxus artists something they would hide when a collector or curator came by, as Alison Knowles told me, but, up to this day, artists who are also mothers are subject of discrimination.[608] Fraser describes the current situation as follows: "From at least the industrial era, however, capitalist societies have separated the work of social reproduction from that of economic production. Associating the first with women and the second with men, they have remunerated 'reproductive' activities in the coin of 'love' and 'virtue', while compensating 'productive

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606 ——— Nancy Fraser, "Contradictions of Capital and Care," *New Left Review* 100 (July-Aug 2016): 99-117.

607 ——— Ibid., 100.

608 ——— See, for example, Daniel Gerwin, "The Myth About Having Children as an Artist. Curators, residency directors, gallerists, art professors, and other artists all gravitate to the word 'distraction' when talking about artists having kids," in *Hyperallergic*, accessed 1 October 2021, https://hyperallergic.com/681300/the-myth-about-having-children-as-an-artist/?fbclid=IwAR1sq.

work' in that of money. In this way, capitalist societies created an institutional basis for new, modern forms of women's subordination. Splitting off reproductive labour from the larger universe of human activities, in which women's work previously held a recognized place, they relegated it to a newly institutionalized 'domestic sphere' where its social importance was obscured."[609] Nanne Buurman researches the way in which care is naturalised and still positioned to hide production processes as a hidden message in curatorial practice. She criticises the curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev for having brought back to the foreground with her curatorial performance precisely those role attributions that are connoted as female. As an "angel in the white cube," she thus obscures the real power relations; femininity is written into curating as hospitality and restraint. CCB's references, however, which are visually documented with photos, are specifically the grand male curators like, for example, very prominently Harald Szeemann, who is shown as the guarantor of her quality.[610]

9.1.2 Today: Feminisation of Poverty

As argued in the beginning of this publication, in the German-speaking world, a feminisation of poverty is an ongoing process in the recent neoliberal working conditions. Under the telling subtitle, the "Feminisation of Poverty," Elena Bütow explains: "Poverty is not a phenomenon that affects only a few, but an expression of modern German social conditions. Certain groups of the population are unable to achieve a standard of living that is considered 'normal'. One group affected by poverty is mainly single women. Not all women are poor. But for all women in Germany, the existing structures and conditions mean that they are exposed to an increased risk of poverty simply because they are women. There is hardly a greater risk of poverty in Germany than raising a child as a single woman. Forty percent of all single women in Germany live on unemployment benefit II (ALGII)."[611] And as I was also in this situation, I can certify that getting unemployment benefits or social security money also means being under constant scrutiny. "Despite Article 3(2) of our Basic Law, in which the state undertakes to promote real gender equality and eliminate discrimi-

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609 —————— Fraser, "Contradictions of Capital and Care," 102.

610 —————— See Nanne Buurman, "Angels in the White Cube? Rhetorics of Curatorial Innocence at dOCUMENTA (13)," in *OnCurating* 29: *Curating in Feminist Thought*, eds. Elke Krasny, Lara Perry, Dorothee Richter (2016): 146-160.

611 —————— See Elena Bütow, "Die Armut ist weiblich. Armut von alleinerziehenden Frauen in Deutschland, Feminisierung der Armut" [Poverty is female. Poverty among single mothers in Germany, Feminisation of poverty], accessed 10 November 2020, https://wirfrauen.de/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/wf_2010-03_extra.pdf; the author's translation.

nation on grounds of gender, women in Germany in particular live in precarious situations."[612] Bütow emphatically exclaims that women's poverty represents social inequality in Germany. Poverty in Germany is female! Even if, since the 1970s, single parents have been regarded and taken into account from a social science perspective as an alternative family structure, and the proportion of single mothers throughout Germany has risen dramatically in recent years, the economics behind this widespread model has not changed much. Bütow sees the living situation of single mothers as particularly stressful because they experience a double disadvantage, since single mothers have to fulfil the role of caregiver and educator of their children and breadwinner on their own.[613] To raise a child up until the time of university education is estimated to cost about 125,000 Euros in Germany, which even for a couple is not easy to take on. Despite these problematic economic conditions, I personally experienced life as single mother as also entailing much more freedom than a nuclear family structure, and especially as more relatable to working in the arts field.

In the field of art and curating, one often stays in very precarious work situations for years, and, even if one has either become a successful curator, artist, or professor, to raise children will mean, in a female biography, that you lose many years for each child. This again means a lower pension, less time to put out important publications and artistic or curatorial work, especially since the pension age is fixed in many European countries and not related to personal situation or ability.

9.1.3 Feminist Curating as a Situated Practice

To understand one's own position as a position (as a woman, as a feminist, as a mother…) in the social field, it is necessary to make visible that there are many others in a comparable position, and instead of being competitive, as the laws of the art field imply, it is worthy to act in solidarity. My next big feminist project was called "Female Coalities," and it took place at the Lichthaus Bremen (a beautiful run-down space, the former headquarters of a shipyard—which we occupied for five years until it was handed over to a businessman), the city gallery, the private gallery Cornelius Hertz, and the feminist cultural centre thealit. "Female Coalities" consisted of talks, performances, a "dinner in four colours," and exhibitions. Artists and contributors were Valie Export, Alison Knowles, Eva Meyer, Marion von Osten, Isolde Loock, and many more. I wanted to invite positions from a variety of backgrounds, career stages, ages, and also different groups—for example, the group around the Frauenkulturhaus thealit was more intellectual and artistic; the lesbian sadomasochistic performance in the city gallery provoked a cultural clash between the peer group of the

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612 ———— Ibid.
613 ———— Ibid.

performers and the usual visitors, and the more video-based artworks implicitly showed that women in particular were using new genres in the beginning of the appearance of this new media.

For my own approach, I think of my position as coming from situated knowledges. This also implies coming not from a single position but from being embedded, from being a body. The exclusion and degradation of many experiences that we as young women and mothers had at that time is vividly and surprisingly contemporary described by Donna Haraway. She sketches this as part of a fight in the academic world and the experiences she and other women had then, but it can be translated into the art world in many respects: "We have used a lot of toxic ink and trees processed into paper decrying what *they* have meant and how it hurts *us*. The imagined 'they' constitute a kind of invisible–conspiracy of masculinist scientists and philosophers replete with grants and laboratories. The imagined 'we' are the embodied others, who are not allowed not to have a body, a finite point of view, and so an inevitably disqualifying and polluting bias in any discussion of consequences outside our own little circles [...]."[614] She insists on formulating our respective knowledge as situated in the body, in history. This therefore involves our respective finitude. And everything changes a lot if one has temporality and mortality as a perspective that matters.

As Haraway had anticipated, still prevalent in contemporary critical discussions on art and curating today, male authors effectively quote other male authors excessively. The perspective of someone who is identified (rather than who identifies) with being female, she does not really exist in the discourse, she is missing, or she is seen in her struggle laid out like "on the table with self-induced multiple personality disorder."[615]

9.1.4 Multiple Personality Disorder

As we are feminists who reject to the conventional order of the world, often accused of having multiple personality disorder, I wanted at least to make sure that we are many. I understand Haraway's claim to rethink materiality and bodily being-in-the-world under these preconditions: "Feminists don't need a doctrine of objectivity that promises transcendence [...]. We don't want a theory of innocent powers to represent the world, where language and bodies both fall into the bliss of organic symbiosis. We don't want to theorize the world, much less act within it, in terms of Global Systems, but we do need an earthwide network of connections, including the ability partially to translate knowledges among very different—and power differentiated—communities."[616]

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614 ———— Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 575.
615 ———— Ibid., 578.
616 ———— Ibid., 579-580.

Therefore, when I was asked to curate a symposium of feminist positions in contemporary art by the residency for female artists, I added something else. To the symposium "Dialogues and Debates, Feminist Positions in Contemporary Arts," I invited Elke Krystufek, the Guerrilla Girls, Lisette Smits, Sigrid Schade, Ute Meta Bauer, Christine and Irene Hohenbüchler, Beatrice von Bismarck, Isolde Loock, Rineke Dijkstra, Eija Liisa Ahtila, Ruth Noack, Ursula Biemann, and Old Boys Network. The additional project was an archive as an exhibition on more materials of artists, theorists, and curators with a feminist background on the basis of proposals by the invited speakers, with the dry title "Materials" at Künstlerhaus Bremen. The speakers could propose as many positions as they wished, and the library provided DVDs, CDs, writings, catalogues, and papers. Thus, the actual curating as a selection process was done by a group and, again, also showed a group of related interests; the usage of the "archive/library" happened in spontaneous discussions as well as very concentrated readings and copying of materials during the duration of the archive. The interest of the public was intense, and, of course, the "exhibition" opening also gave everyone the possibility to chat with all of the speakers. Therefore, conventional hierarchies were reversed, and the interest in feminism was "shown" as a shared interest of a specific group, relevant for a much bigger crowd. To my own surprise, we encountered an extremely large and diverse public. To a certain extent, the project implicated the aspect of working together collectively while maintaining diversity at the same time. It also showed that it was based on a shared effort to enlarge the group of feminist cultural producers and to put them centre stage.

9.1.5 Political Perspectives:
Feminism Cannot Be Thought of Without a Collective Intentionality

Therefore, curating has a biopolitical aspect, especially as it operates in the representational sphere. "Biopolitical" is here understood via Foucault as the moment in which a society at large is influenced, the moment the effects of an interpellation have multiplied. Likewise, the wish to expand curating to broader and more collaborative action is now spreading, and it brings art education and exhibition-making rather close together. Nada Rosa Schroer[617] summarises different contributions when she mentions that this new understanding highlights a shift in orientation from product to process. The focus here is not on the already finished exhibition display and its closed narratives. Instead, the aim is a practice that, in

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[617] See Nada Rosa Schroer, "Curating (in) the classroom. Kuratieren als Arts Education in Transition?" in *Zeitschrift Kunst Medien Bildung*, 15 July 2021, http://zkmb.de/curating-in-the-classroom-kuratieren-als-arts-education-in-transition/.

a praxeological sense, is oriented towards the collective process and collective action. Curatorial practice as an activity emphasising process and negotiation leaves classical exhibition-making behind.

As mentioned before, Nora Sternfeld has coined the term "post-representational curating." Her focus here is not on the installation of valuable objects and the presentation of objective values but on the creation of spaces of possibility, unexpected encounters, and changing confrontations in which the unplannable appears more important than plans for hanging artworks. Exhibitions thus become spaces for action in her view.[618]

Feminist curating could go even one step further, insofar as the collective aspect is claimed as a feminist position, considering the historical development described by Federici. From my perspective, feminist curating means showing curating as a discourse and as a mode of production that challenges and changes institutions. This was the case with the abovementioned project of an expanded and accessible archive as exhibition, *Materials* (see p. 8), but it was even much more so the case in later projects with students.

As mentioned in Johan Hartle's understanding, the acceptance of all the institutional settings constitutes a serious problem: "The mere production and presentation of works of art is fetishistically repeating and legitimating their institutional conditions (and the larger societal surroundings inscribed into them)."[619] For a feminist understanding of curation, this means that we will not repeat the conventional exhibition formats and conventional institutional settings. For the existence of an institution, a collective intentionality is crucial; therefore, we might change conditions, step by step, enlarging our influence. Evoking what has already been mentioned previously by John Searle, "Collective intentionality covers not only collective intentions but also such other forms of intentionality as collective beliefs and collective desires."[620] Feminist intentionality would demand equal pay, equal opportunities, non-hierarchical forms of collective organisations, including topics that would be of importance from a feminist perspective. Feminist intentionality would therefore reject accelerated capitalism with its neoliberal working conditions and its system of structural violence. From a feminist perspective, I think this means challenging (art) institutions on all levels, the hierarchal bodies of the institution, their ways of speaking, the decision-making processes, authorship, distribution, and reception.

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618 ——— See Nora Sternfeld, "What Comes After The Show? On Postrepresentational Curating," in *OnCurating Issue 14: From the World of Art Archive,* eds. Saša Nabergoj and Dorothee Richter (2012): 21–24.

619 ——— Johan Hartle, in his talk at the PhD meeting in Zurich, September 2020.

620 ——— John R. Searle, "What is an Institution?"

9.2 What Does This Mean for Future Curatorial Work and Education?

These considerations also give rise to certain attitudes towards students: in the concrete everyday encounter with students, this always means an encounter based on radical equality as a prerequisite for every encounter in order to recognise the other person as an entity, as someone to be with in his or her full rights and abilities. For this reason, any "pedagogy" can only consist of proposing some ideas or suggestions and giving the other(s) the opportunity to take on space, a position, and responsibility. In this way, an understanding of political work as an act of solidarity and strategy is created and, last but not least, everyone enjoys this kind of focused collaboration. So, we did work in the *Gasthaus zum Baeren* as a group of lecturers and students that not only everyone could propose, be part of the discussion, and produce projects, exhibitions, talks, and screenings, but we also encouraged and initiated projects that radically re-read the situation there and then. This created a buzzing atmosphere where, for example, after a talk by Elke Krasny on *The International Dinner Party* by Suzanne Lacy,[621] a spontaneous dinner was organised as a reaction. The contested representational space was not so much contested and exclusive, but a space used/curated by an active community. We tried to show our weird variety of projects in a publication, but the most important thing was the lived communal experience, that a space must not be monopolised but radically shared, that one must not be competitive but supportive to create something buzzing, electrifying, stimulating.

One of our shared projects (shared with students and lecturers) in the Programme in Curating was "Queering the Exhibition." I proposed a rough sketch: the project should happen parallel to "Zurich Moves," a week-long series of performances featuring Zurich's LGBTQ community, curated by Marc Streit.[622] Another proposal was to concentrate on projections, as a

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621 ——— See also Elke Krasny, *Archive, Care, and Conversation: Suzanne Lacy's International Dinner Party in Feminist Curatorial Thought* (Zurich: OnCurating.org, 2019), https://www.on-curating.org/book/archive-care-and-conversation.html#.YaaIRsYxnkI.

622 ——— Marc Streit, alumni of the Postgraduate Programme in Curating, www.curating.org, was the curator of the 2018 edition, see: https://www.

parallel to the projection and ordering of gender roles, but, of course, these early ideas were also challenged by the group. In the end, the curatorial group—Damian Christinger, Kristina Grigorjeva, Christine Kaiser, Ronald Kolb, Ella Krivanek, Marco Meuli, Camille Regli, Oliver Rico, Elena Setzer, and myself—all proposed artists and discussed them in detail; ultimately, we came to agree on the following list, and we invited work by Hana Earles, Maëlle Gross, Anna Linder, Nunzio Madden, OMSK Social Club PUNK IS DADA, Pil & Galia Kollectiv, Marilou Poncin, Tabita Rezaire, Roee Rosen, Scagliola & Meier, Nicolaas Schmidt, and Bo Zheng. At least one person in the curatorial group had special knowledge of the work and presented it to the others; incidentally, at that time in 2018, neither Roee Rosen nor Bo Zheng nor Tabita Rezaire were as well known. Also, we had long discussions about the display, and in the end the group came up with moveable screens. Visitors had to move the screens to see either one or two projections fully, or the setting would make it possible to see distorted parts of the projections. The films were then also partly projected onto the opposite buildings, which happened to motivate new visitors to come in. As the introductory text to the exhibition explained, "Taking queer practices and theories as a point of departure, 'Queering the Exhibition' suggests both a conceptually and formally polyphonous environment of 12 video artworks by several artists. Against naturalized, binary subject constructions this group show puts ambiguity, fluidity and layering at the forefront to enhance multiple levels of subjectivity. By challenging its format, the exhibition invites the visitor to perpetually reconfigure the offered narratives."[623] To offer the possibility of encountering an artistic work in its entirety and undisturbed, we also set up a workstation where one could choose one video at a time. So, for me, the experience of our working together revealed that we as a group took curating very seriously, in researching and discussing artistic positions, through reading and discussing texts, and through the slow decision-making process. Also, it made very clear how the way of showing work adds layers of meaning. And each member of the group encountered how much we all benefit from the knowledge of others. One "effect" was that each of the students would understand how important s/he is for the development of the project, how much agency s/he actually has, how important communication is eye-to-eye. Similar to the collaboration with the *OnCurating* journal, the

zurichmoves.com/zurich-moves-2018, accessed 1 August 2021; you will also find an interview led by two current students, Abongile Gwele and Patrycja Wojciechowska, with Marc, see: https://www.on-curating.org/issue-48-reader/marc-streit.html#.YRrJzB1CTkI, accessed 1 August 2021.

623 ——— See the website of the OnCurating Project Space: https://oncurating-space.org/queering-the-exhibition/, accessed 1 August 2021.

Queering the Exhibition, March 2018, in collaboration with *zürich moves!*

OnCurating Project Space offers students the possibility of not only being consumers or interpreters of existing texts, but of also taking part in the actual development of the curatorial discourse; it is a collective learning environment characterised by transdisciplinary approaches, as well as postdisciplinary and postcolonial perspectives on transnational and international issues. Again, similar to the open curatorial studio Gasthaus zum Baeren (the former Museum Baerengasse), the projects come from diverse group projects, young curators, and artists from different cultural backgrounds working in a diversity of genres.[624]

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624 ———— See Dorothee Richter, Open Curating Studio: Gasthaus zum Baeren/ Museum Baerengasse, Zurich, 2014, https://www.on-curating.org/ book/open-curating-studio-gasthaus-zum-baeren-museum-baeren- gasse.html#.YaaI1MYxnkI. In the fifteen months of exhibitions, events, talks, and screenings, the following artists, curators, and theoreticians participated: !Mediengruppe Bitnik /100plus / Abu , Alaa / Afsar, Habib / Ahmed, Haseeb / Asal , Habib / Ayala, Paloma / Bachmann, Nicole / Baden, Sebastian / Bal , Mieke / Williams Gamaker, Michelle / Baldini , Nadja / Baltensperger+Siepert / Barshee, Tenzing / Bartl-Frank, Margit / Basting, Barbara / Bayerdörfer, Mirjam / Bblackboxx no border academy / Bideau, André / Biedlingmaier , Lisa / Biniashvili, Nino / Birchall, Michael G. / Bjørn, Katja / Bleta, Jahaj / Böhm, Kathrin / Bolli, Julia / Bonilla Rojas, Mariana / Bornefeld, Julia / Bosshart, Oli- via / Brand, Annemarie / Bredahl Duel, Christina / Brodbeck, Benja- min / Bron, Frédéric / Bruckner, Johanna / Brusa, Francesca / Bucher, Annemarie / Buck, Vera / Bühler, Sandra / Bühler, Angelika / Burck- hardt, Renata / Burki, Marianne / Canciani, John / Capetillo, Henrik / Carbotta, Ludovica / Carrascosa, Francisco Paco / Casser, Anja / CEN- TER / Cheng Mei Lun, Cherry / Chernikova, Marina / Chiquet, Fabian / Chun Fung, Lee / Chutiwongpeti , Sarawut / Coelho, Marina / Cogi- tore, Clément / Converso, Silvia / Coosemans, Charlotte / Copa & Sor- des, / Corner College, / Dätwyler, Brigitte / Davidson, Brett / de La Tour du Pin, Clémence / Dechmann, Nele / Decocoon / Demirel, Sirin Bahar / DIENSTGEBÄUDE / Dominguez Velasco, Adriana / Dusseiller, Marc / Ebli, Gabor / Egg, Urs / eggn'spoon, / Eichelmann, Faiers & Rust, / Eisenlohr, Klaus W./ Eisenring, Felicia / Erdede, Nistiman / Erny, Rahel / Falsnaes, Christian / Farnsworth, Brandon / Fech, Anna / Fei, Cai / Flückiger, Gabriel / Fojtu, Nicolas / Fossum, Magnhild / Fou- che , Pierre / Frenkel, Vera / Fucking Good Art / Fuentes, Daniela / Funder, Søren Thilo / Fung, Lee Chun / Gamboa, Jeymer / Ganahl , Rainer / Gao, Lukka Shiyu / Gao, Shiyu / Gasconade / Gasser , Mathis / Gebhard Fink, Sabine / Gehrig, Reina / Germann & Daniel Lorenzi , Monica / Geyer, Karen / Gläss, Katja / Glöde, Marc / Gomez Della Valle, Ximena / Gommel, Robin / Grab, Simon / Grzinic, Marina / Gue- nat, Emilie / Guez , Dor / Guggenbichler, Maria / Guillemet, Colin / Gygax, Raphael / Habicher, Elena / HACIENDA, / Halter, Marianne / Marchisella, Mario / Handschin, Denis / Heeswijk, Jeanne van / Her- tach, Cindy / Herzig, Lucas / Hiltbrunner, Michael / Hofer, Sophie / Horodi Sharon/ Kammerer, Cheb / Huber, Beat / huber.huber / Isler,

So, the agency a participant/student might encounter, together with the collective processes of decision-making, and the precondition of equality would be part of proposing and producing hitherto subjugated knowledges, which can be articulated in a political sense as a movement or go hand in hand with a social movement.

This is not about practising collaborative action as another skill to be demonstrated as a future competitive curator; this is about substantive elective affinities and common interests based on understanding one's position in the social and political context, including one's position in relation to art as an institution.

Milena / Jensen , Linda / Jenzer, Alain / Josuran, Agnes / Jung, Florence / Jurt, Damian / Kapur, Jyoti / Karrer, Raphael / Keller, San / Kim, Byung Chul / Knörle, Merly / Kolb , Lucie / Kolb, Ronald / Koskiluoma, Anne / Krämer, Nuria / Krasny, Elke / Kreuzer, Lukas / Kull, Gabriele / Kullander-Östling, Aron / Kurzmeyer, Karin / Kwok Hin, Tang / La Captaine / Lämmli , Dominique / Langer, Axel / Lasikowski, Kate / Latzel, Marc / Lazic, Milenko / Liem , Mona / Lopez, Nadine / Lorenzi, Daniel / LULU / Mabaso, Nkule / Maeder , Jso / Magnani, Giulia / MALMZEIT, / MAP Office, / Marbot , Barbara / Marcus , Shahar / Maridet, Cédric / Marti, Daniel / Megyeri, Matthias / Menzi , Tom / Meszmer, Alex / Minder, Maya / Mistry, Jyoti / Mondria, Alejandro / Movahedi, Mahroo / Müller, Patrick / Müller, Reto / Müller, Pablo Nasevska, Sonja / Neumann, DJs Paul / Ngcobo, Gabi / Niemann, Rayelle / Nigro, Roberto / Nittve, Lars / Nocon, Patricia / Obrist, Hans Ulrich / Okrasko, Anna / Oppliger , Mariann / Oppliger, Cordelia / Osman , Ashraf / Paranada, John Kenneth / Patiño Miranda, Katherine / Patterson, Ben / Pau, Ellen / Pei-Wen, Liu / Petrovic, Jelena / Pin, Paula / Pistoletto, Michelangelo / Prlić/ Marlies Stöger/André Tschinder, Doris / Pugholm, Niels / Raccoursier, Anne-Julie / Raum No / Rechsteiner, Monika / Reichlin, Atalja / Reichmann, Carolin / RELAX / Renard, Antoine / Ressler, Oliver / Richter, Dorothee / Rubi, Anna / Rubino, Mimmo / Rüegger, Romy / Ruffo, Nico / Russo, Keren / Rydvald, Natascha Thiara / SALTS / Schade, Sigrid / Scheerer, Laura / Scheller, Jörg / Schenker , Christoph / Schindler, Greta / Schnyder, Jonas / Schuster, Lena Lieselotte / Schweiker, Rosalie/ Senatore, Marinella / Sevova, Dimitrina / Sichani, Mahroo Movahedi / Siegel, Allan / Sieverding , Pola / Silva, Francisca / Simoncelli, Silvia / Skov, Mette / so+ba , / Soldat, Anja / Speranz, Carlo / Stassi, Eleonora / Steiner, Gaby / Steinweg , Marcus / Stern Preisig, Franziska / Streit, Marc / Strüngmann, Agustina / Szuper Gallery / Takahashi, Makiko / Tamm, Triin / Tang, Frank / Tati, Meir / Tauriainen, Riikka / Trampe, Tanja / Trevor, Tom / Trzaska, Anna / Tsz Hei, Ami Tsang / Tunakan, Yavuz / Udondian, Victoria / VACANT / Varadinis, Mirjam / Vardar, Gul / Vincenzo, Valerio / Vorster, Alfred / Wagner, Stefan / Wandelt , Tim / Willimann, André / Winter, Georg / Wyss, Beat / Yakerson, Dina / Yatziv, Amir / Yin, Harry Leung Ho / Yiu, Kai / You , Kai / Zaidman, Gili / ZWEIKOMMASIEBEN.

One of the projects in this line of thought was "How We Live Now," inspired by the reading of Foucault's text on the Panopticon which in modernity is turned into the moment when a subject considers himself (or herself) as being watched by authorities and therefore embeds ways of behaving and seeing oneself. We also read Gerald Raunig and others who have reflected on neoliberal living conditions. The students started to write their own texts in which they reflected on their situations as artists and as curators through exercises in creative writing. These texts by the students were then re-written by the author Renata Burkhard into scenes, and these were then performed by the students in different roles. For this project, we worked together with the Master of Fine Arts of the University of Lucerne. The rehearsals were filmed by a lecturer and students, and the filmic material was later edited. In the end, the visual material we used was obtained through the more informal scenes, and two different voice-overs (male and female) read the scenes, described by the students. In certain places, the voiceover and that was spoken in the try-outs overlapped with the same texts. Therefore, the precarious work conditions of artists and curators emerged, the different problems if one originates from Mexico or from Switzerland, problems with the migration status, and, of course, the financial situation for each of the students.

In a university context, and in nearly all art institutional situations, a more or less strict hierarchy is the conventional order. In the curatorial realm, this is, for example, connected to the ownership of the curatorial project and curatorial authorship. Blurring the boundaries of who is allowed to use time and space—the representational space (and under what conditions)—was one of the goals I shared with other lecturers and students; a classical hierarchy was at least often questioned. The approach by Federici shows the material side of feminist commons as a missing link that should be projected onto institutional work, and therefore also part of an emancipatory pedagogy. Angela Dimitrakaki argues, however, that there is a danger here that instead of forcing structural changes politically, communal practices are used as a fix for societal grievances.[625] As I mentioned earlier, the university did not support the whole intense project, and so maybe we stole time and the possibility of inviting guest speakers from the university, as suggested by Fred Moten and Stefano Harney in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*.[626] At least the situation did demonstrate the rather complex and contradictory relationship of an

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[625]   See Angela Dimitrakaki, "Art, instituting, feminism and the common/s: Thoughts on interventions in the new 'New Europe,'" draft copy of chapter for Suzana Milevska and Alenka Gregoric, eds., *Inside Out: Critical Artistic Discourses Concerning Institutions* (Ljubljana: Ljubljana City Art Gallery, 2016).

[626]   Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*.

institution to any approach leaning toward radical democracy, feminist knowledge, and critical race studies. The question is, did the university also steal from us? In certain respects, I think this was exactly the case, as the university I worked at changed slowly from a more critical institution into a neoliberal administrative knowledge factory, strongly regulated, which was very oriented toward the promotion of Swiss design. In the programmes I was initiating and continuously developing in cooperation with other lecturers and the knowledgeable students, our approaches became well known, and we were invited to collaborate with biennials, museums, and foundations. Even if we were developing the programmes in an ongoing struggle with the institution, we were unwittingly contrib-uting to its international reputation—through a great deal of unpaid work.

10 CURATORIAL COMMONS ?
A PARADIGM SHIFT

10.1 The Future of The Commons— Theoretical Perspectives

Usually, the understanding of the role of a curator is still based on a universal claim of a singular entity. To redefine the role from a concept of individuality to a situation in which all participants are involved in curating means discussing a cascade of different parameters, to find out if a "curatorial commons" can exist and under which preconditions. As curating is subject to certain constraints, such as the project-based organisation of work related to neoliberal economic conditions, for example, the differentiation between a curatorial gesture that exploits others and an actual shared common space is crucial. George Caffentzis addresses precisely this fine line in his essay, "The Future of 'The Commons': Neoliberalism's 'Plan B' or the Original Disaccumulation of Capital?,"[627] which can be transferred to curating: "In other words, the commons brings together pre- and post-capitalist forms of social coordination in a sort of time warp that evades the totalitarian logic of neoliberalism."[628] His aim is to discuss the political implications of a distinction between two kinds of commons: (1) pro-capitalist commons that are compatible with and potentiate capitalist accumulation, and (2) anti-capitalist commons that are antagonistic to and subversive of capitalist accumulation.[629]

In the case of curating, one must always be aware that curating happens under special conditions: curating takes place as part of the representational space, and it therefore develops a biopolitical power, an emanation of specific concepts for a worldview for a bigger part of society. What happens in the curatorial sphere might present a specific problem, a specific solution, or a specific concept of the relationship between subjects and communities. Dagmar Pelger, Anita Kaspar, and Jörg Stollmann discuss contemporary approaches to the commons in relation to the spatial aspect.[630] I think this is particularly interesting for curating because, here, analogously to the medieval sharing of resources—for example, a shared pasture—a certain place can become a common good. How close this is to curating is proved by the concept of the rice barn proposed by ruan-

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627 ———— See George Caffentzis, "The Future of 'The Commons': Neoliberalism's 'Plan B' or the Original Disaccumulation of Capital?," *New Formations* 69 (Summer 2010): 23-41.

628 ———— Ibid., 24.

629 ———— Ibid., 25.

630 ———— See Dagmar Pelger, Anita Kaspar, and Jörg Stollmann, *Spatial Commons: Urban Open Spaces As A Resource* (Berlin: Universitätsverlag der TU Berlin, 2021).

grupa for *documenta fifteen*. For Pelger, Kaspar, and Stollmann and their perspective of the spatial commons, sharing of natural and cultural resources should serve a community's wellbeing as a precondition, as opposed to the surplus being consumed by just a few, or a company: "This is because the question of resource availability always extends to the question of the place where such resources are available, or are made available for the community—and therefore to the question of a community's spatial organization."[631] This means that the ones who benefit exclude others, who do not benefit. For curating, it also has to be acknowledged who the benefactor of shared goods/places/spaces is and in what way. To clarify this further: "The term *Allmende* ('common land' or 'commons' in English usage) describes shared ownership stake in a resource. This shared ownership establishes a 'third space' between public resource space, which is potentially freely available, and the privatized space used by individuals or corporations. The common goods extracted from or created within this resource space can be both material and immaterial, and therefore this third space can be either physical or virtual."[632]

For curating, it is precisely this node of spatial, digital, and representational space for the commons that is intriguing. This could also explain why there has been such an interest in collectives in the curatorial field in recent years, compelled, as I argued earlier, by the accelerated alienation caused by the pandemic. Inviting ruangrupa to be the curators of documenta shows that a communal usage of this representational space might be possible, and it also multiplies the principle of sharing and of authorship. Curatorial authorship is here shared with lumbung members and other associated groups and "compost bins." Implicitly, this proposes another way of being in the world, sharing resources, sharing space, and sharing knowledge—a positioning at the edge of the Anthropocene/Capitalocene seems to be of utter urgency for the state of the planet, hence for (wo)mankind.

Pelger, Kaspar, and Stollmann give an overview of the commons discourse in an attempt to reach a better understanding of the principle of the commons, to reveal certain spatial criteria, and to counteract appropriations of the concept.[633] One of the criteria that emerged was that commons are never absolutely fixed: "Commons are being described, on the basis of their historical development, as highly complex and contradictory systems of organization that never actually disappear, but must always be fought over afresh."[634] This implies an ongoing negotiation, as well as an open-access resource space and a self-organised commoner community.

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631 ——— Ibid., 2.
632 ——— Ibid.
633 ——— Ibid., 5.
634 ——— Ibid., 8.

Perhaps a self-explanatory point would be the shared use of the yield—which could be in the curatorial field a visual outcome (such as photographic or film-based documentation) as well as cultural capital, if one uses the term coined by Bourdieu.[635] Another interesting point made here is that the owner (if not owned by the community) doesn't necessarily need to have given permission to use the resource—which also might entail some reference to the art field in which visual material is sampled and reused, but within the constraints of rights of images, which are often held by major museums or institutions. This important claim to ignore what is thought of as ownership has many implications; it also makes me think about the paradigmatic phrase "to steal from the university" as proposed in the Undercommons.[636] The university is here understood as the institution of knowledge production, similar to the art institution as another facet of knowledge production—this would imply a more radical understanding that would entail an illegal conversion of property and knowledge, in contrast to the normative ideas presented by Elinor Ostrom. I will discuss later the way in which ruangrupa was very successful in their method of using the institution and at the same time rejecting the institution of documenta.

Ostrom expands—and narrows—the definition of the commons by including a set of elemental principles.[637] These principles call for, among other things, resources to be handled more responsibly and thus by necessity with more regulation—by the commoners themselves. Caffentzis understands Ostrom's standpoint as the major theory of a capitalist understanding of the commons. He criticises Ostrom's endeavour to show how a perfectly "rational economic" agent who is an "appropriator" of a common pool resource can decide on the basis of cost-benefit analysis that s/he is better off with a change of rules that regulates the resource through a common property regime instead of either privatising or shifting the problem of allocation to the government.[638] Again, we encounter

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635 ———— See Piere Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993).

636 ———— Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*.

637 ———— See Elinor Ostrom, "Reformulating the Commons" in *Protecting the Commons: A Framework for Resource Management in the Americas*, eds. Joanna Burger et al. (Washington, D.C.: The Island Press, 2001), 23-28; Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Elinor Ostrom, Roy Gardner, and James Walker, *Rules, Games, and Common-Pool Resources* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994).

638 ———— Caffentzis, "The Future of 'The Commons,'" 24. "Indeed, many of the examples of commons Ostrom and her co-workers use are integral parts of the capitalist system, from the lobster fishers of Maine to the farmers using irrigation systems in India to the real estate developers who are commonly appropriating the ground water of Southern Cali-

the fine line which separates the benefit for the many from the benefit for the few. Commons can therefore become, instead of shared social capital, the surplus of a social position of a specific small group, as the historian Peter Linebaugh argues.[639] Linebaugh compares medieval primitive accumulation with the waves of privatisation in neoliberal economic systems by identifying an ongoing, continuous process of accumulation. In the arts, of course, the art market is in place and will also buy and sell some of the communal outcomes of mega-exhibitions like documenta. In the case of *documenta fifteen*, this was conducted directly through the Lumbung Gallery, which generally followed the roles of trading like a gallery, with the exception that a part of the revenue would go to the group.[640] So, we should be aware of this; to a certain degree, working in the arts, we are all complicit.

Similar to Silvia Federici, Linebaugh sees the accumulation as continually being produced up to today and a correlated process of new commons, which are threatened in turn by further appropriation. And as summarised by Pelger, Kaspar, and Stollmann, "He describes this dynamic as the action-bound nature of commons, using the phrase 'no commons without commoning,' thus expanding the traditional concept of commons by including the act of **commoning**—in other words, the coordinated social process that first creates the commons and then preserves it."[641] "The real problem here, it seems to me, is not the commons per se. It is the failure of individualized private property rights to fulfill our common interests in the way they are supposed to do,"[642] David Harvey argues, clearly refuting Garret Hardin's ridiculous thesis of the tragedy of the commons. Hardin assumes an inevitable failure of the commons, because the commons would always be exploited and thus exhausted by a few. At the very least, his position makes it clear that rules are absolutely necessary, such as for

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fornia. There is no conflict in this understanding of these kinds of commons with the smooth functioning of the "market." A study of the "design principles illustrated by long-enduring CPR [Common Property Resource] institutions" that Ostrom has used from the beginning of her studies of the commons to the present certainly do not show that there is any necessary conflict with capitalism." p. 30.

[639] Peter Linebaugh, and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); Peter Linebaugh, *The Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

[640] Read more about this system in an interview conducted by the author with Martin Heller in the soon upcoming issue of OnCurating on funding.

[641] Pelger, Kaspar, and Stollmann, *Spatial Commons*, 9.

[642] See David Harvey, "The Future of the Commons," in *Radical History Review* 1 (Winter 2011): 101-108.

the use of water and air, and the environment in general, in order to prevent this. Hardin thus unconsciously describes the actual state of affairs in hyper-capitalism that one has to consciously counteract to have common goods as legally common.

Connecting this back to the earlier discussion about Silvia Federici's arguments on reproductive work, Federici not only identifies reproductive work as the necessary but unpaid work for any wage-earning labour, but she further argues that this kind of work is constantly fuelling the process of reproducing the workforce and therefore (unwittingly) the capitalist system. And historically speaking, the suppression of women and the persecution of communal female forms and knowledges through witch hunts and the enslavement of colonised subjects played a major role in forcefully capitalising on work, knowledge, and (wo)manpower.

Under what conditions can curating offer a practice based in the commons? It is already clear that one has to differentiate between the representational dimension of curating and an actually shared process of curating (commoning) and a shared outcome. So, for example, it is possible for a single curator to initiate a project that invites a diverse group of (local and international) people to produce art and knowledge in art institutions? This would mean that the artistic and cultural authorship is expanded compared to the usual situation of a curator and invited artists who are going through a system of evaluations by an agreed-upon process (the art academy, juries, exhibitions, prizes, etc.), but what would it mean to take commoning further?

On the other hand, if the whole curatorial process can be considered a shared project, in which different groups and diverse subjects come together and contribute to a process that might end in a curatorial event, then social demands might also resonate in this project, but not by fixing these social and political problems and related demands, but in negotiating them. To return to some of the abovementioned categories, it would mean that the group, or the individuals and groups coming together, would abide by certain agreements and decision-making processes, and it would mean that the outcome is owned by all who contribute—for example, the cultural capital gained, the right to use or refer to a project as author, possibly also an agreed equal payment. The exhibition space, or even the exhibition institution, would be (temporarily) appropriated by a commoner community. This implies an ongoing process of commoning, in shared platforms of discussions and decision-making. One could claim that an institution for a huge project like *Philadelphia Assembled*,[643] the previously mentioned project (see Chapter 5) initiated by Jeanne van Heeswijk and commissioned by and paid for by the Philadelphia Museum of

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643 ———— See http://phlassembled.net/, accessed 1 December 2021.

Art, expanded the range of authors and subjects of curating, and of topics of socio-political relevance. The project redistributed the outcome to a large public, related to the groups of the active participants. Van Heeswijk reached out to existing communities and initiated groups with topics (developed by the groups) such as "Futures, Reconstructions, Sovereignty, Sanctuary, Movement." The groups worked together for three years and developed knowledges, produced art, produced cultural memories, produced shelters, and, as a formal outcome, also displayed the project throughout the museum, including re-organising the café with food connected to the different topics and areas of heritage.[644] The outreach left out the usual bourgeois group of informed citizens. In an interview, van Heeswijk describes what this working process meant for the subject position:

> I don't think a person needs to change. This fundamental understanding, based on Maria Garces' text on letting go of your subject position—to understand that, in my opinion, you are in a world in which there are many subject positions at this moment. And there is also a lot of systematic oppression. So, in order to imagine a possibility of being together otherwise, we need to be able to let go of our own understanding of what it is that creates relationality. [...] This idea of letting go of one's own subjectivity is also thinking in line with Hannah Arendt, when she talks of the battlefields of publicness, in which we as persona also have to place ourselves in this public space, in relation to each other, and in that relationship creates that in-between space in which we can operate civic resistance or civic imaginaries. If you think about it like that, then the concern is not only on how do we in one way become a public persona, but also how do we put our subject position at risk in public in order to create new forms of togetherness? This is a fundamental question. At the same time, it's a question of who can afford that. If we then think on a larger scale, there are bodies that cannot afford that risk, that their subject position has been denied forever. How can we create spaces where people can slowly figure that out?[645]

As I understand van Heeswijk here, she refers to the identity politics which might be important for an oppressed group for a certain time in order to be recognised as a group demanding equal rights or demanding

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644 ———— See interview with Jeanne van Heeswijk, led by Ronny Koren, in *OnCurating* 43: *Revisiting Black Mountain: Cross-Disciplinary Experiments and Their Potential for Democratization*, eds. Dorothee Richter, Ronald Kolb (December 2019), https://on-curating.org/issue-43-reader/jeanne-van-heeswijk.html#.YcoX78YxlsE.

645 ———— Ibid.

reparation—and a safe space would open up the opportunity to go beyond the identitarian thinking. In terms of the economic base, every individual involved in the process of *Philadelphia Assembled* was paid the exact same amount: $18/hour.

10.2 *documenta fifteen*

The most prominent example of a collective in a curatorial process would be ruangrupa, where we have seen situated knowledges come together analogous to what Donna Haraway has proposed as new forms of knowledge production outside the patriarchal god view of the Western tradition, the central perspective, and the "autonomous" subject. When I read the essay "From the Margins" by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, I became interested not only in the specific situated knowledges she describes, but also in strategies of resistance. Tsing identifies other forms of knowledge used by the Meratus people and their shamanic female leader Uma Adang.[646] But these forms of knowledge production then culminate in other subtle forms of resistance to a colonial and military power. She uses the term "margins" to signify "an analytic placement that makes evident both the constraining, oppressive quality of cultural exclusion and creative potential of rearticulating, enlivening, and rearranging the very social categories that peripheralize a group's existence."[647] The group she encounters on her anthropological travels is based in Indonesia, thus close to the region where ruangrupa members come from. Tsing is critical of the moral dichotomies of scholarly debates that create local and global and "the Other," and she asks: "Are notions of *culture* and *identity* a Eurocentric imposition of disciplinary logic and status difference?"[648] Tony Bennett has argued that precisely these categories were installed with exhibitions as way of educating a larger public. He claims that, in the popular world exhibitions and fairs, especially with the innovation at "the Centennial Exhibition held at Philadelphia in 1876, these pavilions were typically zoned into racial groups: the Latin, Teutonic, Anglo-Saxon, American, and Oriental being the most favoured classifications, with black peoples and the aboriginal populations of conquered territories denied any space

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[646] Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, "From the Margins," *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3, "Further Inflections: Toward Ethnographies of the Future" (August 1994): 279-297.
[647] Ibid., 279.
[648] Ibid., 280.

of their own, being represented as subordinate adjuncts to the imperial displays of the major powers. The effect of these developments was to transfer the rhetoric of progress from the relations between stages of production to the relations between races and nations by superimposing the associations of the former on to the latter."[649] When Bennett points out that, according to the supposed inferiority of certain groups, representations of the latter were "reduced to displays of 'primitive' handicrafts and the like, they were represented as cultures without momentum except for that benignly bestowed on them from without through the improving mission of the imperialist powers."[650] This mechanism sounds familiar to any feminist scholar, as this is the exact same strategy for degrading female connotated cultural production. What especially interests me in Anna Tsing's research is that she discusses the counter-hegemonic methods now used by the Meratus people, and by the female leaders of the group in particular. I want to compare these strategies to the way ruangrupa[651] worked with documenta as an institution (in addition to the abovementioned concepts of the commons), and in retrospect one can understand how ruangrupa prevented the managing director from interfering even when the antisemitic allegations were already justified. It must be made clear, however, that the managing director herself was not willing to limit curatorial autonomy in any way. She acted from a paradigm that was outdated in this case, despite the fact that this paradigm of autonomy was negated by ruangrupa itself.

10.2.1 Ruangrupa—Between Joyful Resistance and Strategic Movements

Anna Tsing identifies strategies used by the Meratus people to simultaneously reject and embrace categories that are externally imposed. I summarise the strategies she mentions: 1) feigning compliance to orders; 2) using other parameters and showing the contrast and gap created by other (imposed) value systems; 3) being self-consciously unusual; 4) using parody and exaggeration; 5) contradicting assumptions about gender, "fiddl[ing] with gender expectations and male privileges on every level of otherness"; 6) using the power of imaginary narratives; 7) proclaiming equality as a given and downplaying differences; 8) ignoring boundaries and intermingling rather than demonstrating difference. As argued above, I take the liberty to mirror and project these strategies of resistance onto

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649 ——— Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*.
650 ——— Ibid.
651 ——— ruangrupa members: Reza Afisina, Indra Ameng, Farid Rakun, Daniella Fitria Praptono, Iswanto Hartono, Ajeng Nurul Aini, Julia Sarisetiati, and Mirwan Andan.

the way in which ruangrupa dealt with the major Western institution, documenta. Of course, for some of these strategies, one could also argue along the lines of Roland Barthes when he suggests how to deal with a "myth," that is, a message loaded with an intentional ideology. Exaggeration is one of the strategies he proposes. I do not claim that anti-hegemonic strategies are the same in different contexts (like the Meratus strategies versus a Western context or, on the other hand, the strategies of commoning in medieval female knowledge production versus a contemporary practice), but I hope that some strategies are interesting, transferable, and useful for other contexts. One can argue that their relation to the institution of documenta is to steal from the institution, which has its justification. The flip side of ruangrupa having prevented processes installed in a democratic multivocal civil society was that there was no possibility of entering into a dialogue (neither from the inside nor from the outside); one has to imagine that their strategies were acquired through years spent living under a dictatorship.

We were introduced to ruangrupa (Farid Rakun) by then PhD student Antonio Cataldo, now director of the Fotogalleriet in Oslo. From our conversations with ruangrupa that began in 2019, we came to understand that, as a group, ruangrupa functions through a continued exchange. ("We" here means the PhD group and students from the MAS in Curating, both diverse groups with different cultural backgrounds but a shared discourse, which evidently should not imply that we are ever of the same opinion.) In Jakarta, the actual group meets every day in "hangouts" (*nongkrong*), an open get-together; they discuss each point and come to a shared conclusion—a clearly continuous form of commoning. Being responsible for documenta, which needs at least three to four years of preparation, they agreed to send two members with their families to Kassel, Reza Afisina and Iswanto Hartono. Nevertheless, the group met once a day at least five days a week in organised live online hangouts, via digital tools. Many members of this core group met at the art academy during the time of dictatorship of Suharto; they would have not been able to speak too directly about politics and structural violence. From our manifold conversations with different group members, we understood that through this situation they developed a strong sense of belonging.[652] The

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[652] ———— See Wikipedia: "As president, Sukarno moved Indonesia from democracy towards authoritarianism and maintained power by balancing the opposing forces of the military, political Islam, and the increasingly powerful Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI). Tensions between the military and the PKI culminated in an attempted coup in 1965. The army, led by Major General Suharto, countered by instigating a violent anti-communist purge that killed between 500,000 and one million people. The PKI was blamed for the coup and effectively destroyed. Suharto capitalised on Sukarno's weakened position, and following a

What does it mean to deal with the unknowns? discussion by farid rakun (ruangrupa), Antonio Cataldo, 4 October, 2019, Zurich
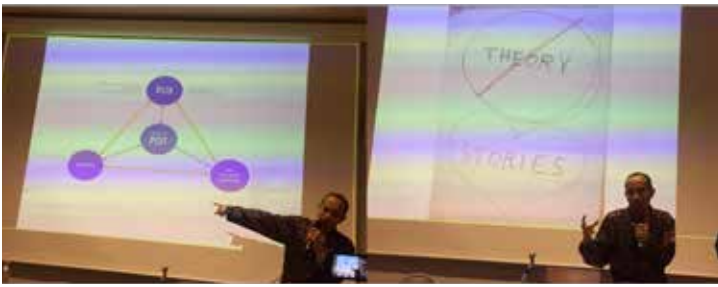
Talk by farid rakun, "Curate Your Context: Methods on and of Curating," symposium with PhD in Practice in Curating, Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA), Paris, 2019

Excursion to ruruhaus with MAS Curating, Kassel, 2022

core group is clearly male-dominated. The educational part of ruangrupa, called Gudskul, was founded and is primarily run by a female member. When we asked in a workshop in Zurich about this gender gap, Mirwan Andan and Reza Afisina answered that they especially invited collectives who understand themselves as feminist collectives to become lumbung members, and the OFF-Biennale (Budapest, Hungary) and Trampoline House (Copenhagen, Denmark) certainly have a strong feminist agenda. ruangrupa's concept explicitly includes a shared economy, which is related to a historical Indonesian way of storing and sharing goods in a rice barn (*lumbung*); this rice then forms the staple food of the respective village community. This evocation of a former agricultural society is surprising, if one takes into consideration that nowadays Jakarta is a megacity; the metropolitan area had an estimated population of 35 million as of 2021, making it the largest urban area in Indonesia and the second-largest in the world (after Tokyo).[653] Here, the ecological problems are even more pressing than in smaller conurbations: "Jakarta's primary challenges include rapid urban growth, ecological breakdown, gridlocked traffic, congestion, and flooding. Jakarta is sinking up to 17cm (6.7 inches) per year, which, coupled with the rising of sea levels, has made the city more prone to flooding. It is one of the fastest-sinking capitals in the world."[654] Is this reconnection to traditional peasant society thus romanticising, and is it a kind of self-othering? This doubt is also uttered by the art historian Elly Kent, who sees the way that the Indonesian art scene developed collectives that inscribed themselves in cultural activities as a broader movement in the arts.[655] In many respects, the avant-garde movements like Dada and Surrealism in the '20s and '30s of the last century, as well as the neo-avant-gardes like Fluxus and the Situationists in the '50s and '60s,

drawn-out power play with Sukarno, Suharto was appointed president in March 1968. His "New Order" administration, supported by the United States, encouraged foreign direct investment, which was a crucial factor in the subsequent three decades of substantial economic growth.

Indonesia was the country hardest hit by the 1997 Asian financial crisis. It brought out popular discontent with the New Order's corruption and suppression of political opposition and ultimately ended Suharto's presidency. In 1999, East Timor seceded from Indonesia, following its 1975 invasion by Indonesia and a 25-year occupation marked by international condemnation of human rights abuses." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesia, accessed 1 December 2021.

653 ——— See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jakarta.

654 ——— Ibid.

655 ——— Elly Kent, "The History of Conscious Collectivity Behind Ruangrupa," *OnCurating* 54: *documenta fifteen – Aspects of Commoning in Curatorial and Artistic Practices*, eds. Ronald Kolb and Dorothee Richter (November 2022).

experimented with this form of institutional critique as well; they tried to overthrow the isolation of the art object enveloped in disinterested pleasure, and they aspired to overthrow the autonomous sphere of the arts, where anything could happen but without any consequences. They wanted to merge art and life, and what is more, to influence life: to become political. The critique of institutions did not just aim at the art institution, but at societal institutions, what would be called by Lacan as the "Big Other." One needs to clearly understand that *documenta fifteen* is on the one hand situated in this art historical trajectory. Similar to Fluxus, for example, they also tried to reach out to the masses and overcome the arts as an elitist cultural product. The production processes of Fluxus events, editions, and films were multi-authorial, but Fluxus artist Maciunas held a single proto-curatorial position as chairperson; with ruangrupa, the central position was held by a collective, but some of the artworks appeared to be rather traditional—hence, the saleability via the Lumbung Gallery. ruangrupa also brought their specific cultural background from Indonesia with them, on a surface level through specific wording, but maybe more as very specific forms of resistance.

When we look into this using the strategies developed by Anna Tsing, one could easily state that the first one, "feigning compliance to orders," is a position of resistance that ruangrupa uses: in Indonesia during the dictatorship, it was very difficult to oppose the system directly. This would have been extremely dangerous. Many members of ruangrupa met during their time at university, which is also a highly politicised and hegemonic space, as we discussed previously. Nevertheless, the art university provides some space to act out in dissent, hidden under the guise of "art"—art being positioned as the Other of society, as being situated in an autonomous sphere. This *joyful militancy*[656] was transferred to documenta insofar as they used "other parameters and the contrast and gap created by other (imposed) value systems" with the proposal of *lumbung*. Here, it seems that the art world is more open to accept a system that sounds unfamiliar, a poetic term, than the straightforward demand for new forms of common goods. The downside was that different ways of communicating could also make negotiations impossible—which, of course, might be an effect ruangrupa did welcome. Undeniably, for the pressing issues that came up—antisemitic images and proximity to the BDS movement—an open public discussion – and an open internal discussion - was also hindered.

I think that ruangrupa manage Tsing's third strategy, being self-consciously unusual, very well: every conversation we had with them was extremely polite and agreeable; the only thing that could not be deduced

656 ———— See Carla Bergman and Nick Montgomery, *Joyful Militancy: Building Thriving Resistance in Toxic Times* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017).

from the amiable conversations was a clear agreement. In my estimation, this works very well as an indirect means of power. In all questions, ruangrupa ultimately remained the decision-maker; due to the lack of clear agreements, nothing was delegated. This kept all cooperation partners in a constant state of tension, making any planning very difficult or even impossible. We dealt with this sort of situation within the framework of the "Composting Knowledge" collaboration, in which selected art academies and exhibition venues were invited by ruangrupa part of the art education department. In these circumstances, we decided at a certain point to simply start our activities in Zurich, about 100 days before the official start of *documenta fifteen* in Kassel. The idea of "composting," a topic proposed by ruangrupa for this part of the art education program, was included to distribute ways of working together on "composting knowledge" for the main operational field of different partners in this network.[657] In this way, we organised a rather independent series of events at the OnCurating Project Space in Zurich. Parts of the project—including the compostable "furniture" by Stirnimann-Stojanovic—we later brought over to Kassel for the spaces used by the compost group. In this setting, back in Kassel, we included a video in which we critiqued the antisemitism that also clearly became part of *documenta fifteen*.[658]

In my perspective, this nature metaphor of "composting," however, can prove to be a double-edged sword and backfire as a naturalising narrative if the topic remains a festival of feel-good ecological contributions. Meta-

COMPOST exhibition with "furniture" by Stirnimann-Stojanovic, Kassel, Hafnerstraße, 2022

657 ———— The main organisers of this part were Yuki Imamura and Giulia Rossini, together with Reza Afisina and Iswanto Hartono from ruangrupa.
658 ———— Here, it can at least be said that we were not prevented from showing this video; however, it was unclear at times whether the rooms even remained open the whole time due to a lack of money. This again shows that new forms of art education did not have a prominent place in ruangrupa's concepts.

Events within the exhibition project *COMPOST* at OnCurating Project Space, Zurich 2022, with fffff collective, Salo & Lucianne, Eco-Greenhouse with Avital Geva and Nivi Alroy and with David Zabel
All artists and curators, see: https://oncurating-space.org/compost-schedule/

phors like ecosystem and composting can be easily connected with exist-
ing structures in colonial discourse; the equation of the wild, other, or
unknown subject with nature metaphors occupies a prominent space in
the hegemonic justification of postcolonial power structures. I also
believe that our wild programming of events at the OnCurating Project
Space in Zurich in line with the concept of "composting knowledge" was
ultimately infected by a certain arbitrariness, which one could see in the
documenta generally. Usually, we try to accompany projects with inten-
sive research and reading; however, being very unclear about what was
supposed to happen, this important preparation was not as intensive as
one could have wished. Our main literature did speak about aspects of the
commons, but the ecological topic was not prepared in depth and worked
through. Again, we introduced the concept to be developed with young
curators and aspiring curators, who proposed and invited artists, activ-
ists, and ecological experiments, which included karaoke sessions and
DJane sets. We took up the themes of documenta, but more as a chain of
associations, and then transformed them into an artistic event series.

For our second format, "Commoning Curatorial and Artistic Education," a
fourteen-day summer school, we were able to carry it out because this
time we chose to have direct communication with documenta's art educa-
tion department, and the programme "CAMP, notes on education."[659] In a
way, it is a bit embarrassing to admit this, because one could say that we
basically relied on the existing power structures of the documenta institu-
tion. One must also take into account that the administrative apparatus
has also been deliberately reinforced since *documenta 14*. For whatever
reason, Adam Szymczyk came under such harsh criticism, not least by the
local politicians, that the conclusion was that the artistic direction should
be limited in its power. My conclusion is that Szymczyk and the curatorial
team must have got something right, since the political problems of Kas-
sel were somehow tackled, most importantly by Forensic Architecture.[660]
Forensic Architecture's piece conducted architectural forensic research
on the murder of Hali Yozgat:

> The Society of Friends of Halit is presenting documentation of their
> investigation, research and activism into the murder of twenty-one-
> year-old Halit Yozgat on 6 April 2006 in a family-operated internet
> cafe in Kassel, Germany. Halit became the ninth victim in a string of
> racially motivated murders of immigrants conducted by the Nation-
> alsozialistischer Untergrund (NSU, or National Socialist Under-
> ground). A Hessian secret service agent, Andreas Temme, was pres-

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659 ——— See https://camp-notesoneducation.de/.
660 ——— See https://forensic-architecture.org/programme/
events/77sqm_926min-at-documenta-14.

ent during Halit's murder but claimed that he neither heard the gunshots, noticed the sharp smell of gunpowder, nor saw Halit's body behind the counter when he left. The Society of Friends of Halit situates the shots that killed Halit Yozgat within a long history of racist violence that is deeply rooted in German society. We use the term "NSU Complex" to describe this combination of neo-Nazi terror and institutional and structural racism.[661]

Sadly, this has proven to be true once again, as a politically motivated murder took place in Kassel in 2019: right-wing extremist Stephan Ernst murdered the Regierungspräsident [district president] Walter Lübcke.[662] Walter Lübcke, himself being a member of the Christian Democratic Union party, uttered publicly that refugees have a guaranteed right in the German Constitution to obtain a residence permit and that everyone who was not okay with this could also leave (Germany, he meant). Thinking about the powerful right-wing groups in and around Kassel, we proposed (in vain) to ruangrupa that they work with the artist Chris Alton, who developed an effective response to right-wing public gatherings and marches, with the format English Disco Lovers, EDL—the same abbreviation as the English Defence League. The English Disco Lovers call people to action: they organise spontaneous queer disco sessions on the street opposite these marches and gatherings. This had, at least in the UK, a very lasting effect of resisting with joyful militancy until there were more hits online for the English Disco Lovers than for the English Defence League. The film that shows the project briefly also explains disco as a queer cultural activity. This musical genre was a successor movement to jazz, which

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661 —————— See the talk at Parliament of Bodies programme: https://forensic-architecture.org/programme/events/77sqm_926min-at-documenta-14.

662 —————— See https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mordfall_Walter_L%C3%BCbcke (translation by the author): "The murder of Walter Lübcke took place on 1 June 2019 in Istha: Hessian right-wing extremist Stephan Ernst killed Kassel District President Walter Lübcke (CDU) in front of his home with a revolver shot to the head from close range.
Ernst was arrested on 15 June 2019 as an urgent suspect and was convicted by DNA traces on the victim's shirt and the murder weapon. He later recanted his first confession and presented his aide Markus H. the executing perpetrator. In his criminal trial, however, he confessed that he himself was the shooter; H. had been present.
On 28 January 2021, the Higher Regional Court of Frankfurt am Main sentenced Ernst to life imprisonment and found that out of his "fundamental racist, völkisch-national attitude" he had increasingly projected his hatred of foreigners onto Lübcke and finally shot him in order to punish him for his stance on refugee policy and to dissuade others from a "policy of cosmopolitanism." H. received a suspended sentence of 18 months for violating the weapons law.

was banned by the Nazis, with both music genres suggesting freedom beyond racist or gender-oriented limitations.[663]

Chris Alton, *English Disco Lovers (EDL)* 2012–15, HD video with sound, 14 minutes 18 seconds, 2019

In accordance with the minimising of the power of the curatorial director-ship of *documenta fifteen*, the Advisory Board, which selected the ruan-grupa collective, was supposed to act in an ongoing advisory capacity in principle. One could see this as one of the precautions of the local politi-cians.[664] However, this did not happen, either because the Advisory Board itself had no interest in doing so (and considered it paternalistic) or because ruangrupa successfully fended it off with their polite and ulti-mately confusing communication. This way of communicating, one could safely state, was sometimes at the edge of using parody and exaggeration. The people leading university programmes and research projects who

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663 ——— See Chris Alton's website: https://chrisalton.com/English-Disco-Lovers-EDL-2012-15 .

664 ——— The Advisory Board is composed of the following members: Frances Morris, Amar Kanwar, Philippe Pirotte, Elvira Dyangani Ose, Ute Meta Bauer, Jochen Volz, Charles Esche, and Gabi Ngcobo. The website states the function of the Board as advising in development, and the board members are clearly presented showing their present position: Ute Meta Bauer, Gründungsdirektorin des NTU Centre for Contempo-rary Art Singapore; Charles Esche, Director of the Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven; Amar Kanwar, artist and filmmaker, New Delhi; Frances Morris, Director of Tate Modern, London; Gabi Ngcobo, Curator of the 10th Berlin Biennale, 2018; Elvira Dyangani Ose, Director of the Show-room, London; Philippe Pirotte, Professor at the Staatliche Hoch-schule für Bildende Künste – Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main; Jochen Volz, Director of the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, see https://documenta-fifteen.de/documenta-kommission/.

were asked to contribute to mediating *documenta fifteen*, either by ruan-grupa members, curatorial assistants, or the official art education depart-ment (we were involved in both categories), often felt overwhelmed by the great impact of this exhibition, and also caught up in the impossibility of establishing clear communication about dates, locations, and budgets—perhaps until we started to self-organise with 100 days of composting knowledge—before the official start of documenta. Later, "bad curating" was claimed by Gregory Sholette as a resistance technique. But I argue that it was not necessarily a dissemination of power; everything was therefore concentrated in the centre, which was ruangrupa. Of course, being asked to work with documenta means an important acknowledge-ment—an acknowledgement of work which is often not recognised or appreciated by the institution where one is situated. Academia is a slip-pery slope, and the working conditions have deteriorated greatly in the recent years of neoliberalism. Lecturers or professors who dare to be involved in unusual projects and take up decidedly left-leaning positions are often situated at the edge of the institution. Or, to rely on the Under-commons by Fred Moten and Stefano Harney: "After all, the subversive intellectual came under false pretenses, with bad documents, out of love. Her labor is as necessary as it is unwelcome. The university needs what she bears but cannot bear what she brings."[665] Therefore the acknowl-edgement of a certain way to work (like our experiments with common-ing) by ruangrupa was important, especially as this is often denied in Uni-versity surroundings. So, our invitation to documenta turned out to be honourable, but ultimately unpaid—and then less honourable, when the first clearly antisemitic tropes were discovered, which also left us shocked and confused.

The fifth point proposed by Anna Tsing is "fiddling with gender expecta-tions and male privileges on every level of otherness." As mentioned, I did not experience this as something ruangrupa was especially engaged with. As for the sixth point, "using the power of imaginary narrative," ruangrupa certainly uses imaginary narratives; the notion of a pre-industrial sharing community sets into motion a special field of connotations. In addition, the notions of care and healing have a certain chain of associations. Nev-ertheless, I wonder how easily this could be recuperated. I fear that this could also lead into progressive neoliberalism, which, as Nancy Fraser has developed, ends in the recognition of difference but without any further possibilities concerning the distribution of wealth.[666] Or, could this turn out to be the left-wing populism that Fraser fantasises about? How to reach the masses, who obviously vote in so many countries against their

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665 ——————   Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 26.
666 ——————   Fraser, *The Old Is Dying and the New Cannot Be Born.*

interests, is a question that the left has been dealing with in increasing despair.

A possible redistribution of wealth was at least performed and enacted by ruangrupa, as they split up the sum allotted for the exhibition to all the different lumbung members equally. The art education section, on the other hand, was not taken into account from an economic perspective. In the theory-practice relationship, art education was not seriously taken into consideration from the artistic director's perspective. There was a clear concentration on the exhibitions and events put together by lumbung members. The money for lumbung members might have also had the double effect of stabilising the collectives in their respective cultural and political contexts. Another clever and effective move was to use the homeless magazine *Asphalt* to announce the artist list, and to use it as a publication platform. This meant a tremendous increase in attention for this magazine; it also meant an unprecedented financial gain. This gesture turned out to be sustainable when ruangrupa used this magazine as a publishing platform several times. Rancière's much-invoked "distribution of the sensible" has here been transformed into a tangible redistribution. One could claim that the two categories, "proclaiming equality as a given and downplaying differences" and "ignoring boundaries and intermingling rather than demonstrating difference," were performed to a new degree in the art field. This intervention not only points out the class-specificity of visual art, but it also mocks and relativises it. ruangrupa has used strategies to evade the implicit power of documenta as an institution; they have thus also expanded the canon. In many respects, ruangrupa has managed to use new and unconventional methods to install other power structures, other channels of distribution, new forms of distribution, and a commoning of resources, as well as a commoning of outcomes, or "harvest" in their nomenclature. And they might have proposed a new way of reaching the masses, as high and low culture were now merged into one another, like a Fluxus dream.

10.2.2 Left-Wing Populist Propaganda or Vulgar Ideology?

Of course, this possibility to influence "the masses" comes with a lot of responsibility, which in one way might be used in the sense of proposing and producing commons and in other ways might be rather problematic: there remains the question of antisemitism at *documenta fifteen*. I do not count myself among the anti-Germans, as I reject any oversimplification; nevertheless, I consider the exclusion of Jewish Israeli artists to be hurtful and problematic (in contrast to artists with an Israeli passport who want

to go under the label of Palestinian.)[667] This exhibition is additionally framed by its historic constellations in Germany; it is implicitly framed by the most horrible, unprecedented genocide of deviant-positioned subjects, mainly Jews, Roma, queers, and political enemies of the Nazi regime. Like in many areas, a certain continuity of fascistic personages is evidenced in the early editions of documenta, as Nanne Buurman has researched.[668] A continuity of right-wing positions is still lurking underground, ready to rise to the surface as violence towards subjects identified as migrants or as violence towards democratic politicians or as violence against Jews. Crimes motivated by antisemitism dramatically increased in the years before *documenta fifteen*.[669] To show something here, in Kassel, Germany, always means having a stance in relation to the crime against humanity, the Holocaust.

So, if *documenta fifteen* only invites artists with an Israeli passport, who claim to be registered as Palestinian (and who do not live in the autonomous Palestinian regions for good reasons), and if *documenta fifteen* does not invite Israeli artists who would be understood as Jewish, then I consider this to be not just problematic, I see this as a clearly antisemitic position; it is a BDS position, but it went unacknowledged. To understand the problems of the spontaneous ideology of the art field and its antisemitic tendencies, I recommend Oliver Marchart's publication on hegemony machines, which has recently been published by OnCurating.org in the book section.[670] Some of the spontaneous ideology Marchart analyses

667 ———— Surprisingly little is known about Israeli society—for example, that Arab/Palestinian Israelis are represented in the Knesset, that some Arab Palestinian Israelis join the Israeli army, and that there are many internal problems in the self-governed regions, ruled by Arab Palestinians, Fatah, or Hamas. For example, no elections have been held since 2006. In contrast, Israel is after all a democracy, in many aspects a problematic one, as most other democracies are. So, the Palestinians with Israeli passports have chosen to live in Israel, use the education system there and the relative freedom of speech there.

668 ———— Nanne Buurman, "The Exhibition as a Washing Machine: Some Notes on Historiography, Contemporaneity, and (Self-)Purification in documenta's Early Editions," *OnCurating* 54: *Commoning Curatorial and Artistic Practice*, eds. Ronald Kolb and Dorothee Richter (2022).

669 ———— An intensive research project published by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Unabhängiger Expertenkreis Antisemitismus, *Antisemitismus in Deutschland—aktuelle Entwicklungen* (Independent Group of Experts on Antisemitism, *Antisemitism in Germany—Current Developments)*, conclusions in English begin on page 274. http://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/themen/heimat-integration/expertenkreis-antisemitismus/expertenbericht-antisemitismus-in-deutschland.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=7.
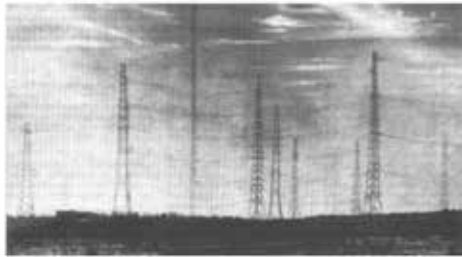
670 ———— Marchart, *HEGEMONY MACHINES*.

Tokyo Show Reels by Subversive Film, shown in an installation at Hübner Areal and in the cinema programme
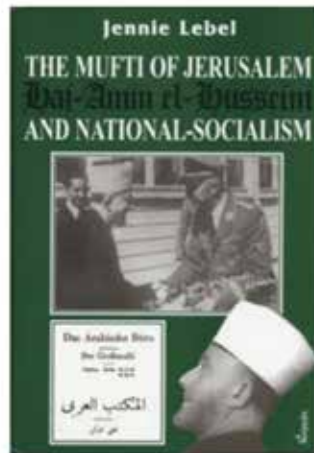

Transmission masts near Zeesen, Berlin in 1934, used to send antisemitic propaganda in Arabic, later destroyed by the Russian army

Jennie Lebel, *The Mufti of Jerusalem and National-Socialsim,* book cover

in his book has this tendency of a vulgar positioning because the prejudgments are based on a shattering lack of knowledge about the Middle East and its history, beginning with a lack of knowledge of which region was called "Palestine" at the time of the Balfour Declaration. Or who the colonial power in the region was and if Jewish people there were, along with the Arab population, subject to oppression (by the British colonisers). By contrast, in this vulgar ideology, for example, the Jews emigrating to Israel/Palestine are considered the colonisers, ignoring the fact that a colony needs a motherland from where it colonises, as well as the fact that there have been Jews living in that area for thousands of years. Today, the population of Israel is extremely diverse, Arab Israelis (Palestinians with an Israeli passport), Jewish Israelis (with a background of more than 100 countries from where they were exiled), Christian Israelis, and so on. Representatives of the Arab Israelis are in the Knesset, act as judges and so forth, and the Jewish Israeli population consists mainly of Mizrahi, many of them coming from Arab countries, where they were forced to leave. The historical constellations are also often ignored by the European/Western pseudo left-wing, which also ignores the close collaboration of the Palestinian Arab leadership with the Nazi regime: the mufti personally intervened to hinder 3,000 Jewish children from leaving for Palestine, who then died in concentration camps. He additionally helped to install a gigantic radio transmitter that was directed towards the Arab countries. Today, the Palestinian administration of both Gaza Strip and the West Bank can hardly be called democratic, as the elections have been suspended for a long time; Hamas and Fatah act often as competitors, and the Palestinian administrations have their problems—for example, femicides and murders of homosexual people also sadly happen in high numbers in Gaza.

These regimes are legitimised by some pseudo left-wing groups in the West as well as the Palestinian slogans of a Palestine between the river (Jordan) and the sea, which obviously does not acknowledge Israel's right to exist. This ideology (I think it is even difficult to name it a position) is also unaware of the camps in Jordan and Lebanon, in which Palestinians have been forced to live for decades, and they are not allowed to integrate into the culturally close societies. The misery of Palestinians is fixed in this way. The BDS movement started out being supported by some left-wing Israelis as well, to enforce the rights of Palestinians in the occupied and self-administered regions, but over time the boycott of Israeli artists and cultural producers has increasingly become an instrument through which to exclude Jewish Israelis from participating in international events and exhibitions. Of course, it also prevents any cooperation between Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian artists. The BDS movement is now de facto excluding Jewish artists, and this in my view is therefore clearly antisemitic, which is never okay, but it is even more shocking when this exclusion manifests itself in Germany.

10.2.3 Détournements

Our involvement with *documenta fifteen* culminated in the summer school "Commoning Curatorial and Artistic Education."[671] We proposed a workshop in which the participating students and lecturers prepared workshops for each other; additionally, we invited speakers who presented projects and thoughts around commons and commoning: Hammad Nasar, David Behar Perahia and Dan Farberoff, Jennifer Deger (FERAL ATLAS), Sandy Hsiu-chih Lo and Hongjohn Lin in conversations with lumbung members, Gilly Karjevski (Floating University), Philip Horst & Matthias Einhoff (ZKU, Center for Art and Urbanistics), Speculations on Funding (as a Day-long Symposium), Bassam El Baroni, Avi Feldman, Ariane Sutthavong and Lara van Meeteren (Inappropriate BOOK CLUB, Bangkok 2021), Jeanne van Heeswijk (on *Philadelphia Assembled*), Dagmar Pelger and Jörg Stollmann, Public Movement (Dana Yahalomi), and Oliver Marchart. We deliberately invited Jewish Israelis (and at least no one hindered us from doing so) and ended the summer school with Oliver Marchart's book launch, with a very critical review of the antisemitic and anti-Israel attitudes at different documenta editions. The allegation of a secret BDS and antisemitic position by ruangrupa was discussed on many occasions in the

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671 ——— Shared campus, art education documenta and OnCurating, Partners: City University of Hong Kong/School of Creative Media, Hong Kong Baptist University, Kyoto Seika University, LASALLE College of the Arts (Singapore), Taipei National University of the Arts, University of the Arts London, Zurich University of the Arts, University of Reading. Summer School and Public Talk series, **Commoning Curatorial and Artistic Education**, 23 June – 7 July 2022, at CAMP notes on education, *documenta fifteen*, Kassel. The two-week summer school "Commoning Curatorial and Artistic Education," as part of *documenta fifteen*'s educational format CAMP notes on education, sets up experiential workshop formats, reading and discussions, performances, exercises with and in the city, "diversity dinners," and a variety of events in connection with *documenta fifteen*. Participants were asked to propose a three-hour workshop to co-teach and teach each other by sharing and discussing their situated experiences of practice and theory in an open and trustworthy way, true to the motto of this summer school, "Commoning starts here."
Concerning the commoning aspect of this summer school, we considered theoretical approaches like that of the feminist thinker Silvia Federici. She identified commons as the shared goods and knowledges of deviant groups. A renewed thinking about the commons is linked to movements of self-organisation and resistance and is now inspiring, as we see with ruangrupa, different cultural, artistic, and curatorial events. Can the art field introduce, together with activist movements, the projection of living together in a communal way, sharing resources and knowledges? Or as ruangrupa would pose the question: how to compost knowledge together and make it fruitful for a multiplicity of partial practices and for a multitude?

Summer School "Commoning Curatorial and Artistic Education,"
with workshops and talks, at *CAMP notes on education*, *documenta fifteen*, Kassel

summer school; the atmosphere had touches of hysteria, as the managerial head, Sabine Schormann, lacked the ability to bring diverse sensibilities and positions together at one table. Art educators were obviously overwhelmed, as well as finding themselves in a rather difficult position, and some internal fights happened within this group. Artists also felt threatened by right-wing individuals and local people reacting to queer or foreign outfits, and by a general neglect of their needs. (Some artists did not want to have their space guarded by the police and would have preferred antifa. The problem is that antifa is, of course, also divided in relation to issues around Palestine/Israel and generally leans more towards anarchism, which means that yet again a mediation between the artists and German entities was missing, which should have come from the core team of documenta under the head management). Of course, the problems were evident if one thinks about the different collectives bringing with them a multitude of artists, which cannot be handled in the same way as a conventional curatorial project. In a way, ruangrupa actually did not curate the show; obligations and decisions were handed over to the invited lumbung members or, as in the case of our other affiliation, to the compost group in general. "The art of being not curated so much," as one slogan says, definitely came true. Many different international and local collectives did indeed run the show, but on the other hand some basic rules that needed to be established for commoning were completely lacking.

10.2.4 Reactions

Actually, ruangrupa did try in different ways to react to the antisemitism claim. For example, and probably not registered in art historical or curatorial circles, David Zabel (associated with ruangrupa, Kassel-based) and Reza Afisina (ruangrupa) organised a football game between an Israeli second division club and a Kassel-based club. On a local TV station, a report was recorded and sent. Perhaps this is a good example of strange double messaging and contradictory twisted arguments: the German trainer of the club emphasised that nobody in Kassel was in any way antisemitic, therefore not implicating either the population or *documenta fifteen*—which in itself was an interesting equalising and reminds us of the artwork by Martin Kippenberger from 1988: *Ich kann beim besten Willen kein Hakenkreuz entdecken* (I can't for any reason detect a swastika). Kippenberger points to the inability of the population to face crimes against humanity as a source of guilt and a legacy of the German people, not as individual guilt but guilt as a society which has formed the blueprint for an authoritarian character (as coined by the Frankfurt School of Social Research) capable of running

an industrial killing machine.[672] The short reportage on the football game culminates in the awkward scene when the German trainer hands over an antique coffee set to the Israeli trainer, saying that he wants to return something that Jewish fellow citizens had given to his wife's grandparents (or great-grandparents) before their deportation. He had always wanted to give this back and would now take this opportunity. The Israeli coach pats his German counterpart reassuringly on the shoulder but does not comment in the report. The players are then also seen standing around at documenta, and the voiceover informs us that a visit to the nearby concentration camp was also part of the programme, but whether this was the case for all the players remains open.

Needless to say, a friendly football match cannot cancel out the omission of Jewish Israelis from one of the most important exhibitions in Europe, especially since, in reference to the "no antisemitism whatsoever" remark, violence against Jews in Germany has dramatically increased in recent years. It is dangerous to walk around with a kippah in Berlin. So, to legitimise an anti-Israeli position does something in this situation.

To come back to the arts, Nora Sternfeld has argued: "We know what being stuck in capitalism means; cynicism, art as branding, and fine artistic practice as a form of entrepreneurship. We know that our survival depends to a certain extent in its affirmation, we know it and do it with every line, with every click, but we want to insist and persist with imagining other possible structures for education and for technology."[673] In this respect, curating as a meaning-producing machine is also bound not only in many different ways to the art market, but also to the market of ideas; therefore, it is so dangerous to visually propose antisemitism. It spreads, like Umberto Eco shows in his 2010 book *The Prague Cemetery*,[674] in which he describes the genesis of antisemitic conspiracy theories, like the "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" in frightening and disturbing detail. Oliver Marchart sees extreme criticism of Israel as a metonymic shift of antisemitism from the imagined "Jew" to the imagined reality of Israel on a global level. Framed by Germany's past, it is particularly necessary and inevitable to critique the antisemitic incidents at documenta.

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672 ——— Erich Fromm coined the notion of the "authoritarian character"; he was part of the Institut für Sozialforschung (Institute of Social Research) which was led by Max Horkheimer.

673 ——— Grégoire Rousseau and Nora Sternfeld, "Educating the Commons and Commoning Education: Thinking Radical Education with Radical Technology," in *Post-Digital, Post-Internet Art and Education: The Future is All-Over*, eds. Kevin Tavin, Gila Kolb, and Juuso Tervo (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

674 ——— Umberto Eco, *The Prague Cemetery*, trans. Richard Dixon (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010).

Sadly, the whole complex of antisemitism and extreme criticism of Israel has obscured documenta's paradigmatic shift from a show of individual artistic works to a show of collective artistic and curatorial projects. Collectivity alone is not enough; it must be clear what political goals collectives are working for. In a certain way, however, the incidents also give credence to the scepticism about communities formulated by Jean-Luc Nancy, Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, or Maurice Blanchot, in which their ambivalent understanding finds expression in formulations like "community without community," or the "unavowable," the "inoperative," or "coming community."[675] Community as such can lead to propagandistic, unexamined, sweeping statements. It can also lead to harsh exclusions. As cultural producers, we must always critically examine this and mistrust the ideology hidden in claims of community.

10.3 A Short Conclusion on Curatorial Knowledge Production as Ideology

I see curatorial knowledge production as a space for the negotiation of social, political, cultural, and economic conflicts, which understands curating as agency from which new constellations emerge.

This involves a critical review of contemporary curatorial practices and theories and a critical reflection on the rise of a so-called curatorial class. By engaging with these trajectories, the conditions and the foundations of knowledge production in the curatorial field become the subject of critical research leading to their re-positioning. Futurist curating, "curating for the not now," will therefore remain a movement of searching, a movement that takes up social questions and puts them up for discussion in the present, a movement that involves further segments of the population, a research movement that experiments with new forms of economy and social life, with collectivity, with the expansion of gender ascriptions, with decentring the West. Perhaps the problems described above have also shown the importance of reading curation against itself, that is, having it permeate on a theoretical level and rewriting parts of its paradigms. The theoretical grounding translates into practice and vice versa—a the-

675 ——————— See also *OnCurating* 7: *Being With, Ontological and Political Perspectives,* eds. Elke Bippus, Jörg Huber, and Dorothee Richter (2011).

ory of a practice and a practice of a theory—and this is necessary in order to understand and to undertake a politics of display, a politics of site, a politics of transfer and translation, and a politics of knowledge production in a relevant and conscious way. In such a way, curating will be a history of the present, as well as a presence of the future.

The journey of this book began with some rebellious moves conceived in the underfinanced off-spaces and small institutions of Europe. It concludes with the arrival of collective curating and the inclusion of non-white artists and publics and experimental formats at major institutions like documenta. Gregory Sholette accurately titled an article "A short and incomplete history of 'bad' curating as collective resistance,"[676] just as I tried to analyse more in detail above, where ruangrupa used different techniques to withdraw from the governmental aspect of the institution. But this also led to a situation in which a crude ideology could take over. Sholette sees the antisemitism as just one or two chance discovered caricatures—collateral damage. In his eyes, the real threat to Western ideology—why neo-bourgeois commentators were so enraged—was that Western paradigms like the individual, autonomy, male genius, and the art object were dismissed. For me, this is, of course, not the problem; indeed, it was quite the reverse. The problem is that the space of negotiation was actually not there, and in this way *documenta fifteen* was quite reactionary.

There is another reactionary move in this exclusion of Jewish artists, which has not yet been broadly discussed: in some ways, *documenta fifteen* was closely related to *documenta 1* in 1955. Just recently, an exhibition at the Historical Museum in Berlin documented that half of the initiators and members of the organisational team of the first documenta were either a member of the Nazi party, a member of the SA, or a member of the SS. Other than Arnold Bode, Werner Haftmann was documenta's most important founding figure. He was a member of the NSDAP from 1937 and still wanted by Italian authorities as a war criminal in 1946; beginning in 1955, he played a decisive role in deciding who was shown at the documenta—and who was not. He uttered this short-sighted, historically inaccurate sentence as late as 1986: "The artist was [...] born as the existential anti-fascist [...] more than the racially persecuted, [...] more than the politically persecuted." Walter Grasskamp has already mentioned that there were very few Jewish artists represented in the first issues of documenta, this is now underscored by the aforementioned recent Berlin

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676 ———— Gregory Sholette, "A short and incomplete history of 'bad' curating as collective resistance", in Art Agenda Reports, *e-flux*, 21 September 2022, https://www.art-agenda.com/criticism/491800/a-short-and-incomplete-history-of-bad-curating-as-collective-resistance .

exhibition *documenta. Politik und Kunst*.[677] One example: the name Rudolf Levy appears on an early invitation list for documenta 1955; later, however, it is dropped. (Levy was even a neighbour of Haftmann's in Florence).[678] Today, hardly anyone knows him anymore, while Emil Nolde, who was shown several times in Kassel, became famous—not least because of his repeated representation at documenta. Nolde's position was recently shown as fascist, as an example for the whitewashing done by Haftmann, who helped Nolde be conceived as being persecuted, despite Nolde's attempts to be of service to the Nazi regime and despite him being fiercely antisemitic.

Nora Sternfeld, who has held the documenta professorship, explains that the real scandal is that documenta has not faced its Nazi history. And the renewed scandal is that this has not been worked through and that neither ruangrupa nor the managing director had positioned themselves in relation to this past. This is all the more astonishing given that Ayşe Güleç was even part of the side programme of the abovementioned exhibition, her role meandering between the organisational level of documenta and being part of the artistic team. So, why was this new knowledge not carried back to ruangrupa? Or why was this ignored? The perpetuated official narrative instituted by the first three editions of documenta was that, in Kassel, "real" modernity was being shown, which should prove that Germans had overcome Nazi ideology with the international style of abstraction, as I argued previously. However, this modernity was constructed on the basis of excluding Jews. With this trick, the concept of "misappropriated art" which was coined in the catalogue of *documenta 1*, so-called persecuted art, was thus in retrospect Aryanised through documenta, as Sternfeld explains—a clear distortion of the victim-perpetrator positions. Jewish artistic positions were extremely marginalised, which means that we learnt through this historiography the racist (*völkische*) underlying message: Haftmann claimed that there were no relevant German-Jewish artists, and therefore the misappropriated, persecuted, murdered Jewish artists were erased from the historiography. We have a first incidence of exclusion of Jewish artists (not acknowledged, of course) in *documenta 1*. This was also intended make forgotten the deeds and the guilt of those involved in the murder of the persecuted. It is proven that Haftmann himself was involved in the conviction of partisans in Italy. The second severe incidence of exclusion has now happened in 2022.

[677] See *documenta. Politik und Kunst*, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, 18 June 2021 to 9 January 2022.

[678] See website of the programme accompanying the exhibition: https://www.dhm.de/veranstaltung/die-ermordeten-und-die-verdraengten-die-documenta-und-der-ns/

This edition of documenta made clear that any form of community can forcefully enact inclusions and exclusions if the internal conflicts and those in a specific context do not find platforms and spaces to be negotiated, which is what happened at *documenta fifteen*. The process of installing these platforms was actively undermined by ruangrupa; they demanded support from the artists for the unacknowledged BDS politics. It was an important gesture by Hito Steyerl to withdraw her work, because ruangrupa presented the participants with an impossible choice. Jörg Heiser pointed out in a radio feature that it is dangerous to separate the battles against antisemitism and neocolonial engagement, especially since the right-wing white supremacists don't do so.[679] In Halle, a white supremacist tried to kill Jews in a synagogue; when he failed to get in through the massive, barricaded door, he first shot a woman outside and then individuals he considered marked as otherwise "different," namely people with a migratory background.[680] According to Patrick Gensing in the *Tagesschau* (daily news), in the livestream of this crime, the shooter, Balliet, denied the Holocaust and claimed feminism led to fewer births, leading to mass immigration; he blamed "the Jew" for those issues.[681] I know, this crazy sequence would sound ridiculous, even funny, if it wasn't so deadly serious.

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[679] ——— Jörg Heiser in conversation with Mahret Kupka, see https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/documenta-112.html.

[680] ——— See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halle_synagogue_shooting: "The Halle synagogue shooting occurred on 9 October 2019 in Halle, Saxony-Anhalt, Germany, and continued in nearby Landsberg. […] After unsuccessfully trying to enter the synagogue in Halle during the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur, the attacker, later identified as 27-year-old Stephan Balliet, fatally shot two people nearby and later injured two others. […]
Federal investigators called the attack far-right and antisemitic terrorism. The federal Public Prosecutor General took over the investigation and declared it to be a 'violation of Germany's internal security.' Balliet, a German neo-Nazi from Saxony-Anhalt, was charged with two counts of murder and seven counts of attempted murder. […]
On 10 November 2019, Balliet confessed to the charges before an investigative judge at the Federal Court of Justice. On 21 December 2020, he was sentenced to life imprisonment with subsequent preventive detention."

[681] ——— See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halle_synagogue_shooting#cite_note-54.

As I had predicted in an interview,[682] a large part of the international curatorial scene continues to enjoy a pseudo-revolutionary attitude and pats each other on the back in a nice old boys' network formation. Funnily (or not so funnily) enough, someone sent me a picture in which Charles Esche,[683] ruangrupa members, Philippe Pirotte, and Bart De Baere, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp, are literally hugging. Welcome to the new patriarchy. Pirotte suggests that the real goal of the critique of antisemitism is to discredit collective structures and the non-profit approach. I would argue inversely that the idea of commons was stuck in the performative mode; commons structures have to be taken seriously and to be instituted by commoning, and disputing rules, conditions, and content should be discussed by all participants. One could argue that what was proposed with this documenta was a new male-dominated form of governmentality, and it is not by chance that many artists complained about not being treated well and not having been looked after—was this curating without care? The desire to close the wound in the subconscious, that is, to make the Shoah finally disappear into nothingness, is overwhelming. The historian Dan Diner notes the negative relationship between Germans and Jews, whose self-image each tries to come to terms with in light of the unimaginable events: "Beyond the murder of Jews, Auschwitz was a practical refutation of Western civilization. In the face of a purposeless extermination for the sake of extermination, the purpose-rational consciousness bounces off such an unimaginable

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682 ——— See interview conducted by Tibor Pesza with Dorothee Richter, "'Antisemitismus auf drei Ebenen' Expertin: Boykottbewegung wirkt rassistisch ausschließend," *Die Hessische/Niedersächsische Allgemeine (HNA)*, 13 September 2022; the interview was republished in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* under the title "Dorothee Richter widerspricht Pirotte – 'Das Modell Documenta wird modifiziert werden müssen,'" *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 15 September 2022, https://www.fr.de/kultur/gesellschaft/documenta-antisemitismus-dorothee-richter-widerspricht-philippe-pirotte-interview-91788410.html.

683 ——— The Advisory Board/Appointment committee was composed of the following members: Frances Morris, Amar Kanwar, Philippe Pirotte, Elvira Dyangani Ose, Ute Meta Bauer, Jochen Volz, Charles Esche, and Gabi Ngcobo. The website states the function of the Board as advising in development, and the board members are clearly presented showing their present positions: Ute Meta Bauer, founding director of the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore; Charles Esche, Director of the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; Amar Kanwar, artist and filmmaker, New Delhi; Frances Morris, Director of Tate Modern, London; Gabi Ngcobo, Curator of the 10th Berlin Biennale, 2018; Elvira Dyangani Ose, Director of the Showroom, London; Philippe Pirotte, Professor at the Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste – Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main; Jochen Volz, Director of the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo; see https://documenta-fifteen.de/documenta-kommission/.

act. Such action cannot be integrated into the mind determined by secular forms of thinking—or it shatters." This mechanism is what Lacan would have called the register of the Real, insofar as the Real is not to be integrated; it stays as a continuous thread for the psyche, for the psyche to be overwhelmed by the trauma and to disintegrate. Dan Diner compares the attempt to confront this horrible void: "A comprehension of Auschwitz in view of Auschwitz is comparable to the attempt to stare open-eyed into the sun. The victim, the human being, equipped with defense mechanisms protecting him and turned toward life and survival, had to evade this horrifying reality."[684] Some (his)-stories of those involved, including the board who invited ruangrupa, may explain this further. The other hegemonic move is legitimizing Boycott and Sanctions against Israel further, and instituting this approach as being part of a general left-wing agenda—which in my view is a dramatic misconception of the actual situation. As documenta produces cultural capital for the participants, and the art field no longer has long-term contracts, a "pseudo-radical" position, or an ideological attitude, might bring benefits for those in constant need of a new job. This is the obtaining of distinction for some which I mentioned in the beginning.

So, conversely, my demand for curating, curating which understands curating as a politics of display, a politics of site, a politics of transfer and translation, and a politics of knowledge production is to scrutinise the interpellations of curating both theoretically and practically.

It means looking into subjectivities/communities that are proposed, it means looking into the material infrastructures, the institutions, and the media conglomerations of curating, and it means being responsible for the production of meaning through curating and being accountable for the ideology that is produced. And, of course, it means being aware that we are producing the world collectively.

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684 ———— Dan Diner, "Negative Symbiose. Deutsche und Juden nach Auschwitz," *Ist der Nationalsozialismus Geschichte?*, ed. Dan Diner (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1987), n.p. (Translation by the author).

10.4 This Is (Not) an Exhibition

One of the latest projects initiated by the OnCurating Project Space is *#Reclaim Cultural Surplus*. It was a pop-up protest together with "FATart, creating feminist solidarity in art and curating,"[685] reclaiming cultural surplus, which means reclaiming economic surplus for initiatives and off-spaces and reclaiming gender-, class-, and "race"-related diversity in the local art scene.[686]

You will not find a homogeneous art scene in Zurich.[687] Even within off-spaces and project spaces, there are huge differences: some are quite in line within distinctive fine arts procedures and operate structurally close to galleries, while others are more in favour of discourse and are built around an artist community and special shared interests. And then others are more culturally driven or closer to entertainment and partying. They differ immensely in scale, infrastructure, personnel, and ambition.

And they all have their own agendas; at the same time, they (mostly all) compete for the same funding from the city, the canton, and other private supporters. And the funding—despite what one might assume after hearing "Zurich" and "Switzerland"—is not an easy task for the independent art scene.

For a rather small but rich city like Zurich, with a population of 400,000 residents, one can find a large, vibrant art scene with over forty officially registered project spaces, and art initiatives and over twenty-five other projects without a regular space.[688] Those who are part of this independent scene often know each other well; some projects collaborate in specific instances, enriching the cultural life of Zurich tremendously. Yet, all of them compete for a very small contemporary art budget, which has stagnated for years. And then there are the big institutions, like Kunsthaus, Kunsthalle, and Haus Konstruktiv, which are extremely well funded. Of course, the overall cultural sector is, in comparison with other city departments, not overfunded at all, especially if one takes into consideration that the creative industry—which profits from the independent and wild open art scene indirectly—is an enormously important business sector in Switzerland.

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685 ——— See https://www.fatart.ch/, accessed 1 August 2021.

686 ——— Johanna Oksala, "Sexual Experience: Foucault, Phenomenology, and Feminist Theory," *Hypatia* 26, no. 1 (2011): 207–223.

687 ——— This chapter is based on the editorial for *OnCurating* 48: *Zurich Issue: Dark Matter, Grey Zones, Red Light and Bling Bling*, which I wrote together with Ronald Kolb.

688 ——— See http://www.artspaceguide.ch/.

We would also like to think about the situation from a more theoretical perspective: the notion of "dark matter" was applied to the arts by Gregory Sholette, who laments that a vast majority of artists are ignored by critics and that this broader creative culture feeds the mainstream with new forms and styles that can be commodified and used to sustain the few artists admitted into the elite. Sholette writes: "In brief, artistic dark matter refers to the marginalised and systematically underdeveloped aggregate of creative productivity that nonetheless reproduces the material and symbolic economy of high art."[689]

This dark matter resembles the usual inquiry into the professional lives of art school graduates ten years after their diploma. As we all know, only a small percentage (2-4%) of fine arts students "make" a career in the art market, while others work in the cultural field as practitioners, or in education, or leave the field altogether. Yet, although not recognised in a broader sense by the institutional art field, this "artistic dark matter" provides "essential energy and ideas to the broader art world discourse and practice."[690]

In Zurich, and with Art Basel close by, the extremes of contemporary art come together pretty visibly, and in close proximity: on one side, the high art products of the art fair, which are often still painting and sculpture, through conservative consumer decisions, and on the other side, the lively scene of off-spaces, curators, and artists working for very little money. Thus, at a glance, one could state that the comment from Sholette is especially true here. The clash is there, even if having a precarious status is relative in Switzerland, since most people have some sort of social security and most have health insurance; nonetheless, the support of art is clearly dedicated to the big institutions. The numerous, lively, buzzing off-spaces are surprisingly underfunded in comparison to other cities with a busy cultural scene. This situation is paired with the presence of influential collectors, like Maja Hoffmann and Michael Ringier, and let us not forget one of the biggest galleries worldwide: Hauser & Wirth, with many additional international venues in Hong Kong, London, Los Angeles, New York (22nd Street), New York (69th Street), Somerset, St. Moritz, Gstaad, Southampton, Menorca, and so many others that it is easy to lose track... What Sholette claims is that the unpaid work of artists (and curators, if we may say so) are in the end producing a surplus that ends up exclusively in the high art market with billions of dollars in revenue circulating in art

689 ———— Yan Su and Gregory Sholette, "From an Imaginary Interview with Gregory Sholette," *OnCurating* 41: *Centres/Peripheries—Complex Constellations*, eds. Ronald Kolb, Camille Regli, Dorothee Richter (June 2019), accessed 14 August 2020, https://www.on-curating.org/issue-41-reader/ from-an-imaginary-interview-with-gregory-sholette.html.

690 ———— Ibid.

#ReclaimCulturalSurplus, exhibition and demonstration, Zurich, March 2021

fairs and big galleries. Art workers are therefore deprived of a surplus they are working for. As Sholette explains, "One of the key questions raised in my book *Dark Matter*,[691] therefore, is not only what this glut of artistic creativity consists of—after all, artists have regrettably constituted an unregulated, overeducated, and spectacularly over-productive labour force for decades—but instead what function does this seeming surplus play in the production of art world values estimated by some in the billions of dollars in sales. Is it a lightless backdrop to starry careers, a shadowy other realm over which the bright and articulate signal of success and value is superimposed?"[692]

One of our findings is that the labour conditions in Switzerland, with its restrictive migration policies, vast international finance business, and large service industry, provides enough work to somehow earn a living— some jobs are, of course, precarious, and some quite shady—while working in the arts. The shady work ends up in its worst form in the red-light district, which was expelled from the inner city of Zurich to the outskirts. The venues for off-spaces therefore tend to be in less glamorous places, often in close proximity to Zurich's former red-light district and party scene. Another aspect can be found in the grey zones of the art scene, with unpaid work, or tax-free work, or the "illegal" work that the Sans-Papiers are left to do (of course, if you are fighting for a basic existence, art plays no role).[693]

The borders between shady and illegal work are fluid. On another level, artists and curators have shady jobs, as these cover up for their unpaid jobs in the arts, since the smaller spaces are dramatically underfunded.

To make contemporary art more popular and more accessible for more than the happy few showing up to the big exhibition venues (actually, the venues were extremely crowded during openings before Covid-19), the city of Zurich invited Manifesta, the large-scale, travelling European exhibition, in a brave attempt to bring more attention to contemporary art (perhaps also in the hope that this might change the funding situation in the long run). And this was a success; contemporary art was out there— literally out on Lake Zurich—younger and older enthusiasts were floating through the city and the venues (and sometimes searched for the venues). Despite a rather conservative understanding of the work at play in the Manifesta concept for Zurich, which we tried to recontextualise with our conference and *OnCurating* issue "Work, Migration, Memes, Personal

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691 ———— Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 2010).

692 ———— Su and Sholette, "From an Imaginary Interview with Gregory Sholette."

693 ———— You can find more about this in *OnCurating* 30: *Work, Migration, Memes, Personal Geopolitics*, eds. Dorothee Richter, Tanja Trampe, and Eleonora Stassi (May 2016).

Geopolitics," all in all Manifesta did generate attention for contemporary art—and it was there, present in the city with a floating platform, therefore establishing a link to everyday uses of the arts.

For questions about the remuneration and value of artistic work, Marina Vishmidt's contributions in "The Aesthetic Subject and the Politics of Speculative Labor" are insightful thoughts that are still relevant and exciting. It starts where the discussion of *Dark Matter* ends. As Vishmidt explains, "The rationale of this text is to outline the connection between the contradictions of the social development of artistic labour in capitalism and the formation of the aesthetic subject in modernity as the displacement of labour from the category of art, bringing it into closer affiliation with the speculative forms of capital valorisation."[694] These considerations seem to apply perfectly to Zurich: the capitalist accumulation of surplus from the arts, dealing with high-priced art, underfunded free artistic and curatorial work, and that what Mariana Vishmidt analyses as new formations of subjectivity that are enabled and that enable the economic system of neoliberalism. In her article, Vishmidt lays out the foundation of modernity, which was to separate artistic work from other forms of work. Already Terry Eagleton argues that there is an ideological parallel between the autonomy of the arts, with the free genius artist and the entrepreneur, who also has to act autonomously.[695] Or in Vishmidt's words: "The autonomy of art arises with the autonomy of capital as a central phenomenon of modern experience."[696] Art is positioned as the opposite of monotonous work, of real subsumption, the real subordination of any work under the capitalist order. Art is now concerned with generating an aesthetic judgment, and the labour of art is projecting some "speculative" modes of accumulation. In other words, art again seems to strangely mirror the speculative mode of hyper-capitalism of the neoliberal system in which we are now living. The uncanny moment occurs when artistic work becomes more and more immaterial or more and more "speculative," as a logical development of the separation of handicraft and artistic work in a contemporary understanding. (Something that is lamented from different sides: on the one hand, from the perspective of a conservative understanding of art that still sees the classical genres at the centre, and on the other hand, from the side of new directions, such as New Materialism, one could argue.) In a way, this speculative, immaterial aspect of contempo-

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694 ——— Marina Vishmidt, "The Aesthetic Subject and the Politics of Speculative Labor," see *OnCurating* 48: *Zurich Issue, Dark Matter, Grey Zones, Red Light and Bling Bling* (September 2020): 66-79.

695 ——— See Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (New York: Wiley, 1990).

696 ——— Vishmidt, "The Aesthetic Subject and the Politics of Speculative Labor," 68.

rary art and curating comes close to the extremely speculative financial businesses and their agents. Therefore, artistic and curatorial subjectivities present a proposal for managerial subjectivities needed in hyper-capitalism, except, of course, for the remuneration.

To return to the demands for better payment in the arts, Vishmidt argues that the fight for wages for art also resembles the fights for remuneration for reproductive work in the household that was/is unseen, unpaid, but necessary to uphold the system. She mentions many paradoxes raised by the redefinition of artistic production as wage-labour (however the wage is calculated): "One of these could be that the practice of social work, and the practice of social relations, which produces the artist as an independent type of 'non-professional' professional, cannot be reconciled with a simple agreement that art can be valued according to the same standards as all other types of work, especially if capitalist work in its entirety is made precarious, contingent and self-realizing for everyone according to the classically reactionary model of the autonomous (starving) artist,"[697] i.e., becomes neoliberal.

Of course, Switzerland, and Zurich in particular, operates within a profound neoliberal system: especially in the arts, short-term project work is common, though compared to other European countries the living expenses are exorbitantly high. Employment contracts are easy to cancel, parental leaves are short, and there is no job security whatsoever for disabled individuals. Of course, on the other hand, there are also very low taxes, but who will benefit from them? The political system is built on a concordance system, which means, often in the parliaments, one has to come to an agreement with everyone, also with the extreme right-wing parties. And speaking about right-wing parties and cultural knowledge, just back in July 2020, the SVP put out a poster for the "Restriction Initiative" (*Begrenzungsinitiative*)—an initiative against immigration—which somehow managed to bring together the anger over the increase of concrete building with an image of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin—apparently unwittingly.[698] Well, we think this should be

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697 ——— Ibid.

698 ——— Fabian Baumgartner, "Die Werbung der SVP mit Holocaust-Mahnmal ist geschmacklos und geschichtsvergessen," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 24 July 2020, https:// www.nzz.ch/zuerich/svp-zuerich-wirbt-mit-holocaust-mahnmal-das-ist-geschmack- los-ld.1568094. Unfortunately, the article is behind a pay wall; here are some of the headlines (translated from German): "SVP: A poster in the "damaged brain" category | *NZZ*, 19 August 2019 [...] The visual language of the current poster is tasteless and without a doubt historically charged. Those who portray their political opponents as vermin [...]."; "SVP Zurich advertises with Holocaust Memorial: It's in bad taste" | NZZ, 24 July 2020: "The Zurich SVP goes on a vote-catching campaign with the Berlin Holocaust Memo-

general knowledge for anybody in Europe, especially for anyone with public responsibility. Any change in cultural policies must also be negotiated with the far right, and one must know that the far right was one of the first and one of the most aggressive political parties in Europe (nowadays, this has spread like a disease—for example, the populist parties in Hungary and Poland are very strong today). About 30% of the population of Zurich do not hold a Swiss passport, many of them working in finance, medicine/pharmaceuticals, service industries, and creative industries, (and, of course, the sex industry), but these people do not have the right to vote. It is still a very long and complicated procedure to become Swiss; knowledge of Swiss culture and politics is required. (Unfortunately, one cannot lose one's citizenship because one does not possess basic cultural knowledge—just to make a point.)

In her article, Vishmidt pins down the basic difference between "regular" work and artistic work, which she sees in the fact that art is not under the rule and ordering of real subsumption—and therefore cannot be subsumed under a comparable general demand for wages. Real subsumption means that capital gradually transforms all social relations and modes of labour until they become thoroughly imbued with the nature and requirements of capital, and the labour process is really subsumed under capital.[699] This means that the real subsumption of the labour process occurs once every aspect of the latter has been subordinated to capitalist production.[700]

And it is precisely at this point that the parallel with work done for wages ends, as Vishmidt argues with an example: "It is no longer self-evident that the type of artwork Darboven was doing—obsessive and repetitive, logically motivated hand-writing—can or should be deemed tantamount to manual labour in its usefulness, just because so much wage-labour looks and acts like Darboven's (though perhaps not as much as Bartleby's the scrivener's would) and has no pretence to either diligence, duty or social utility."[701]

Even if Darboven's monotonous work looks like administrative work devoid of meaning, it is still something else: Darboven's work is presented as part of high culture, and it shows that these devoid-of-meaning work contexts exist. It also shows the beauty of monotony, and therefore it always has a representative, ideological function. Another important dif-

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rial. By accident, the party claims. This is embarrassing."

699 —— See https://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/s/u.htm.

700 —— See "What is to be Done under Real Subsumption?" workshop and meeting, 28-30 November 2014, accessed August 17, 2020, http://www.mattin.org/essays/what.html.

701 —— Vishmidt, "The Aesthetic Subject and the Politics of Speculative Labor," 70.

ference is that Darboven herself decided on this work and could leave it again at any time, and a further, not insignificant aspect is that she was one of the few who was ultimately well paid.

Further on, Vishmidt sees that a deeper structural problem of art as institution is the fact that a simplistic wage model would not work. Paraphrasing Vishmidt here, she speaks about W.A.G.E., which proposes certification or a voluntary code of best practices to which art institutions can submit in order to clarify their commitment to pay cultural producers appropriately. She sees several problems with this: first, that an unregulated market such as the sphere of art production and mediation is not self-regulating voluntarily, and second, that art institutions operate in a capitalist social space whose iron law states that the rewards of the powerful few are at the expense of the weak many—a structural fact that is not amenable to moral pressure. The professionals on the lowest rungs of the ladder are unpaid, allowing institutions to operate with inadequate budgets; artists do not receive fees, so there is more money to pay salaries to administrators, or, especially in the American market, to collect donations from rich donors. If, almost entirely, it is a characteristic feature of art production that it is not organised by the same structures as other types of work and not subject to the same standards (for example, it is not subject to total subordination), then it is difficult to see how the demand for equal pay can play more than a metaphorical role in pointing out certain social injustices of this kind within the institution of art.[702]

Additionally, may we add, a wage model applying to all art institutions—without taking into account the infrastructure and means of said institution—will most likely mean fewer projects for less well-funded institutions, or even closures in the end. And where does the economic offset end? Hypothetically speaking, are off-spaces also in favour of asking for an honorarium from artists or speakers if they offer their curatorial work? The purely economic wage-labour model leaves out where the capitalisation of the artwork happens: it happens at the art fairs, at the powerful galleries, at the big auction houses. It also leaves out how to think about inequalities of race, class, and gender, of structural and intersectional violence, which also works on the basis of inclusions and exclusions. Furthermore, Vishmidt critiques seeing the modernists' desire for the fusion of art and life as being achieved even if this only happens in the sphere of representation: "This move to pseudo-equalising artistic labour can mean that the real class divisions that underpin the maintenance of regimes of paid and unpaid labour, mental and manual labour, art work and 'shit work,' are obscured."[703]

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702 ———— Ibid., 70.
703 ———— Ibid., 71.

The demand that would make more sense is to ask for a better funded art scene overall, giving the usually lively and creative art scene the recognition and appreciation it deserves, and that is oftentimes crucial for a cohesive city and its politics. In the logic of earlier workers' demand for higher wages, one should see this struggle for more support of the art field as a shared fight of a societal group. The art scene in that regard should be understood as a social grouping, not just as individuals with individual contracts. Here, one could ask for redistributions on a bigger scale, coming from parts of the revenue that are generated in the high-priced business of art, from the public tourist departments (that often advertise using arts and creativity) and other sources of redistribution of surplus (there are many).

Nevertheless, art—meaning art production, curating, writing about art, and all transdisciplinary forms—presents a paradoxical situation, in its representational capacity and in its ideological power: art is able to generate resistance to the existing system, yet this resistance can only happen when any direct pay-out is ignored—as an opposition to the great leveller (in the sense of completely interchangeable) that is the monetary economy. It is a strength in the Fluxus approach, for example, to give a shit about the art market. Even if art will always remain in this contradictory relationship with the market, even if in retrospect the ideological critical art actions, like Fluxus pieces, might end up in the high-priced art market, even then it has an ideological function. Art always interprets the world in which we live, it always comments; art makes proposals for being in the world.

So, to ask for other forms of valorisation, it must be a structural protest, not a protest that remains at the level of individualised honoraria; it can only be a demand for a transfer of the surplus from the art market, when other forms of suppression are also taken into account, to understand social inequality from a much more radical perspective. And here, art might be of assistance; art might be an ideological machine, a thriving force. This is also an argument by Vishmidt: "It is the distorted and attenuated form of art's autonomy as a *speculative intransigence to the existing*, including work, that can be the source of its political powers. And yet, identifying with work, especially with the disregarded and disposable subjects of that work, can indeed be the first step for such a politics of artistic inquiry and making, since capitalist work is structurally the antithesis of capitalist art, even if practically they sit on the same continuum."[704]

To formulate a political position towards this end, to demand money for the off-spaces and projects, we answered with political means: as a public demonstration before the newly established building for the Kunsthaus.

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[704] ——— Ibid., 77.

In Zurich, most of the cultural department's budget and focus is going into this museum, which features problematic private collections.[705] Certain members of the curatorial team, Ana Vujic and Anna Konstantinova, organised meme workshops and printmaking workshops for the protest march; others became social media experts. The catalogue of demands came together via a questionnaire that we sent to all off-spaces, and the artists, curators, and other cultural producers were addressed by an open call. Many of the used posters, stickers, and T-shirts were put on display at the OnCurating Project Space thereafter.[706] This meandering between aesthetic and curatorial practice, theory and action means making visible and interrupting these relations between representation and action: ergo, this is (not) an exhibition!

#ReclaimCulturalSurplus Manifesto

We call on international and local cultural practitioners to join the protests! Art is an important regulator in civil society! Art is systemically relevant!

It has been quiet in the Zurich art scene for too long, considering that the numerous initiatives, projects, and off-spaces of Zurich's cultural workers, artists, and curators are dramatically underfunded. Exactly what Gregory Sholette describes with the term "dark matter" has occurred: the artists and cultural workers all contribute to the fact that there is an attractive cultural scene in Zurich. Yet only a few profit from the lively scene: the tourism industry, some large galleries, and Art Basel, as well as individual artists whose work occasionally garners high prices. But it is only through the work and commitment of the many that this "dark matter," the diverse art scene, exists. We therefore want these profits to flow back into the entire diverse scene, in the form of generous project funding and fees for artists,

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705 ———— See Dorothee Richter, "Spoiler Alert: Instituting Feminism Will Not Work Without a Fight," in *OnCurating* 52: *Instituting Feminism*, eds. Helena Reckitt and Dorothee Richter (November 2021).

706 ———— See OnCurating Project Space, #Reclaim Cultural Surplus, Protest March, 8 March 2021, Exhibition 8-18 March 2021, https://oncurating-space.org/, participants: Chris Alton, Ilona Balaga, Studio Bhoan, Colletiva, Elisabeth Eberle & Ruth Righetti, Talya Shalit & Deborah Fischer, Mark Damon Harvey, Manù Hophan, Irene Maag, Naomi Middelmann, RJSaK, Ursina Gabriela Roesch, Allan Siegel, Ana Vujic, Augustina Zeya, Hulda Zwingli, and others.

curators, and cultural workers, as well as adequate and sufficient funding for off-spaces and initiatives.

> – We want the art department to finally follow its own guidelines!
> – We want a diverse cultural scene. We want diversity, not merely as lip service, but implemented at all levels!
> – We want experimental art. We want art that goes hand in hand with social movements!
> – We want more funding for women artists and curators!
> – We want to flip the current financing formula: new 80% for the independent scene, with the remaining 20% to be shared between Kunsthaus and one or two other institutions.
> – We want a detailed report on the current financials and those administrating!
> – We want diversity in all institutions, not only for artists and artists of colour, but also with respect to the curators, executive boards, and exhibition programmes.
> – We also demand a concrete plan describing how these goals can be achieved!

In addition to the anonymous artists/activists, the following artists were part of the protest march and "exhibition": Chris Alton, Ilona Balaga, Studio Bhoan, Colletiva, Elisabeth Eberle & Ruth Righetti, Talya Shalit & Deborah Fischer, Mark Damon Harvey, Manù Hophan, Irene Maag, Naomi Middelmann, RJSaK, Ursina Gabriela Roesch, Allan Siegel, Ana Vujic, Augustina Zeya, and Hulda Zwingli.

False Hearted Fanny and I, we imagine curating as a demonstration and as part of political activism. We imagine this new spirit in curating as a workshop, as a process with different parts developing over a period of time, with a collective and in a communal space, using screenings, the digital space, performances, talks, discussions, and processual exhibitions. We imagine the curatorial space as a contact zone.[707] We understand the curatorial as a multi-authored approach to the production of meaning that is intrinsically linked to transformations of contemporary societies, the reorganisation of labour, cultural policies, politics of inclusion/exclusion, and issues posed by points of intersection. Curating is (not) an exhibition.

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[707] ——— James Clifford, "Museums as Contact Zones", in Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

#ReclaimCulturalSurplus, demonstration, Zurich, March 2021

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Dorothee Richter's argument understands curating or the curatorial not as a philosophical concept but as a practice that is deeply involved in the politics of display, politics of site, politics of transfer and translation, and regimes of visibility. It is based on a concept of critical research that takes as its starting point the investigation of what is often the overly simplistic understanding of the curator as a new agent in the fields of art and culture. Richter understands the curatorial as a multi-authored approach to the production of meaning, which is intrinsically linked to transformations of contemporary societies, the reorganisation of labour, cultural policies, politics of inclusion/exclusion, and issues posed by points of intersection. Curatorial practice and theory have been developed in the context of cultural analysis, theories of power, and theories of communities based on feminist, queer, postcolonial, ecological, post-Marxist and other political and emancipatory positions. Many of these positions emerge out of political struggles or social movements. Ideally, curatorial knowledge production can be seen as a space for the negotiation of social, political, cultural, and economic conflicts. It understands curating as agency from which new constellations emerge. These could be represented in the format of an exhibition but equally in other forms of meaning production through a context-related media conglomeration, which involves a critical review of contemporary curatorial practices and theories. By engaging with these trajectories, the conditions and the foundations of knowledge production in the curatorial field become the subject of critical research leading to their re-positioning.

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