THE EXHIBITIONIST
NO. 10 / JOURNAL ON EXHIBITION MAKING / OCTOBER 2014

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Cindy Sherman
Untitled (Secretary), 1978/1993
Sepia-toned photograph

Dedicated to the memory of
Jan Hoet (1936–2014)

OVERTURE

✸

Jens Hoffmann, Julian Myers-Szupinska, and Lumi Tan

A half-century after the emergence of the curator in the contemporary sense, and 27 years after the founding of the first study of curatorship at École du Magasin in Grenoble, France, misgivings remain about the curatorial role. On the one hand, curators are faulted for being mere facilitators and cultural managers whose intrusion into the essential components of exhibition making—art, artists, publics, and counterpublics—is unnecessary, even unwelcome. (Our cover depicts Cindy Sherman at Artists Space in the 1970s, posing cheerfully as this sort of worker bee.) On the other, curators are accused of usurping artists' rightful share of self-determination and interjecting a distracting performance of their own authorship into the happy and transparent relationship between art and people. These complaints cast curators as megalomaniacs or middlemen, lackeys or celebrities, exhibition makers or exhibitionists. Taken together, these anti-curatorial postures produce an odd double picture of a figure that in one gesture arrogates and abolishes their own position.

The Exhibitionist offers a pointed retort to this contradictory caricature—even as its title riffs mischievously on the latter critique. To wit, in **Curators' Favorites**, curators elaborate on an exhibition that has had an impact on their thinking; in each we find meditations on exhibitions' forms of incorporation and exclusion, at a distance from the charges of curatorial narcissism and self-abnegation. In these pages, Wassan Al-Khudhairi traces the history of the 1994 exhibition *Forces of Change: Artists in the Arab World* and draws a line of influence between its argument—that there is indeed a rich culture of contemporary art in the Arab world—and her role in founding Mathaf, the first museum of modern art in Qatar. Matthias Muehling explores a more disconcerting inheritance from *Degenerate Art* (1937). Describing that exhibition as a systematic attempt to humiliate and exterminate artworks and people, but that nevertheless introduced techniques that influence curatorial practice today, he calls on curators to consider critically the troubling history of their exhibitionary formats. Dominic Willsdon surveys *Playgrounds: Reinventing the Square* (2014), which drives him to challenge museums' dreams of openness, play, and publicness.

Other essays reflect on exhibitions with explicit political aims. In **Rigorous Research**, Prem Krishnamurthy recovers the practice of the East German designer Klaus Wittkugel, who put advanced exhibition design to work for a Stalinist ideology in the 1950s but is today largely forgotten. Krishnamurthy celebrates the designer's ability "to create a complete world, to immerse, to beguile, and to convince." In **Back in the Day**, Geir Haraldseth inspects the ambitions of *Poetry Must Be Made By All! Transform the World!*, organized by Ronald Hunt at the Moderna Museet in 1969. By opening the museum to contemporary political speech and

struggle, Hunt's exhibition was a model of political commitment that Haraldseth argues must be retrieved from the dustbin of history.

Six x Six particularizes an ever-expanding and diffuse horizon of contemporary art by grounding this proliferation in particular voices and attitudes. In this issue, curators Zoe Butt, Nazli Gürlek, Daniel Muzyczuk, Remco de Blaaij, Patrick D. Flores, and Nicolaus Schafhausen enumerate personally influential shows, and in the process tweak the canon of exhibitions now coming into view.

Assessments contends for the first time with a solo exhibition, Philippe Parreno's 2013 retrospective at the Palais de Tokyo, *Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World*. Parreno's orchestration of music, cinema, technology, institution, and audience challenged our writers—Florence Ostende, Pierre-François Galpin, Anne Dressen, and Liam Gillick—to question the proper format of the critical review. While Ostende and Galpin attend carefully to the show's dramaturgy, Dressen triangulates among it and two other exhibitions, and Gillick produces a deadpan, technical walkthrough.

This issue marks the passing of the Belgian curator Jan Hoet (1936–2014) by republishing in **Missing in Action** his 1989 conversation "L'exposition imaginaire—Contradiction in terms?" Hoet argues against the very premise of an ideal or imagined exhibition, contending that an exhibition is a meeting between the curator's ambitions, the material particularities of works of art, and their real-world scenes of display. The thread of imagination continues in **Rear Mirror**, where Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy describes how her concepts for the Mercosul Biennial unraveled and took new shapes during the biennial's elaboration—reminding us that ideation, however strong, is bound to be revised in practice. Anne Ellegood and Johanna Burton reflect on their exhibition *Take It or Leave It*, which looked at appropriation and institutional critique since the 1970s, and discuss their careful negotiation of the limits of historical surveys.

In **Attitude**, Martin Waldmeier deliberates the independent curator's fraught navigation of the art world's propositional economy. And here, finally, we find some indication of the perplexing double figure from which this **Overture** began. Required by an increasingly neoliberalized economy of labor to constantly and confidently propose projects, curators must embody an inflated fantasy of themselves—to "be what capital wants." The narcissist is, Waldmeier makes clear, an excellent proposal writer, even as he or she is plagued by the anxieties of the unstable worker: the "aleatory character of a situation daily put into question."[1] That is, until they get the job—and the work of reckoning with reality begins.

Notes

1. Francis Ewald, interview with Jacques Rancière, "Quest-ce que la classe ouvrière?" *Magazine littéraire* 175 (July–August 1981): 64, quoted in Rancière, *Proletarian Nights: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth-Century France,* trans. John Drury (New York: Verso, 2012): xxvii.

CURATORS' FAVORITES

Playgrounds: Reinventing the Square installation view, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 2014

ARCHITECTURE VERSUS THE KIDS

Dominic Willsdon

At the time of writing, *Playgrounds: Reinventing the Square* is still up at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid. I saw it a few weeks ago. Unlike some of the "Curators' Favorites" discussed in these pages, this is neither a memory freshly dug up, nor one cherished over the years. It is not yet a show that has influenced anything I've tried to think about or to do; there has been no time for that. But I feel that, more or less unknowingly, I have looked forward to this exhibition all my working life.

It included examples of things I have thought a lot—maybe too much—about: Cedric Price's proposals for the architecture of popular creativity, Archigram's tacit pedagogy, the landscapes of Italian Neorealism, the place of Alexander Kluge in public-sphere theory, and, remembering my college days, the ways in which class and leisure figure in the "painting of modern life." Fernand Léger's painting *Les Loisirs-Hommage à Louis David* of 1948–49 was the exhibition's emblem for this sort of figuring of modern life. Much of the included photography, such as Weegee's *Evening Crowd at Coney Island, Brooklyn* (1940), had this task in mind as well. *Playgrounds* also addressed artists that have bothered me for a long time, like L. S. Lowry, whose *Britain at Play* (1943) might be seen (along with those other images from the 1940s) as inhabiting and marking out the interval, in the West, between two regimes of leisure. Or the obdurate Peter Watkins, whose 2000 film *La Commune (Paris 1971)* opened the show.

Among these historical touchstones, *Playgrounds* included recent images and texts that assess the political valence of temporary, festive, mass occupations of urban spaces in recent years: the *Disobedience Archive,* an ongoing archival project curated by Mario Scotini; the work of Oliver Ressler; and *Desire Will Leave the House and Take to the Streets* (1999), a film by Margit Czenki (of the collective Park Fiction) on the anti-gentrification riots in Hamburg in the 1990s. The spaces of public protest—including Tahrir Square, Gezi Park, Puerta del Sol, Zuccotti Park, and Frank Ogawa Plaza, along with allied spaces

of the past, present, and future—were, collectively, the "square" of the exhibition's subtitle. *Playgrounds* was a space in which I found I could organize, synthesize, and supplement some concerns, intellectual and personal, that have been with me for the longest time, with struggles over the nature of public space happening in the present.

In viewing the exhibition, however, this was not at the front of my mind. Instead, I found myself thinking about Colin Ward's 1978 book *The Child in the City.* Ward wrote on urban education from an anarchist perspective; his 1973 book *Streetwork: The Exploding School* is a landmark of this sort of radical thinking about education outside of school buildings. *The Child in the City* is one of the books I've kept closest to me over the last 20 years or so. Ostensibly a study of the practices of childhood in cities, it describes the playful ways in which children use urban spaces, and the forms of being-together that emerge. It is not only about built space, but also about the immaterial enclosures that determine a child's space of opportunity. Ward makes this clear in the final chapter, "In the Sandbox of the City," which begins by quoting the urban policy expert George Sternlieb:

> A sandbox is a place where adults park their children in order to converse, play, or work with a minimum of interference. . . . There is some reward for the children in all this. The sandbox is given to them as their own turf. Occasionally, fresh sand or toys are put in the sandbox, along with the implicit admonition that these things are furnished to minimize the levels of noise and nuisance. If the children do become noisy and distract their parents, fresh toys may be brought. If the occupants of the sandbox choose up sides and start bashing each other over the head, the adults will come running, smack the juniors more or less indiscriminately, calm things down, and then, perhaps in an act of semicontrition, bring fresh sand and fresh toys, pat the occupants of the sandbox on the head, and disappear once again into their adult involvements and pursuits.[1]

Ultimately, *The Child in the City* is a book about authority and the law, alongside education—fundamentally about how the law and pedagogy, along with play, shape the expression of consciousness.

Included in the book are photographs by Ann Golzen, of a similar genre to ones included in the exhibition by Helen Levitt, of children at play in city streets, experimenting with found objects—in some sense evincing the children's activity as a sort of collective street schooling. Is this play as excess or expenditure, or already play-as-learning? It could be both. What it is *not* is Sternleib's circumscribed sandbox; this play precedes or exceeds the parceling of the city into designated zones for labor and leisure, education and entertainment, children and adults.

Of course, the formalized, designed playground, as a work of architecture and a dedicated space and structure for supervised play, exercise, and socialization, played an important role in *Playgrounds.* The exhibition included designs for sanctioned playgrounds and play structures: formally beautiful ones by Isamu Noguchi (*Contoured Playground* [1941]) and Aldo van Eyck (in the form of photographs from his archive spanning the 1940s to the 1960s) as well as open-ended alternatives, for instance Carl Theodor

Helen Levitt
Children Playing with a Picture Frame, New York, ca. 1940
Gelatin silver print

Sørensen's "junk playgrounds" of the 1930s. But such sanctioned works of design were not central to the exhibition. They were a starting point from which to explore the unboxed playground that the city may or may not be, for the infantilized.

At its horizons, I mean to say, *The Child in the City* is not even about children, or not children alone. The book's concern is the regulation of public space, the management of experience, and the scope of possibility within or outside of these social structures. Likewise *Playgrounds* approached the conditions lived by adults by way of those of children. Ward and *Playgrounds* make a similar contention: that we are all—or, let's say, 99 percent of us—in the sandbox, and the sandbox is not the beach erupting between the paving stones (to evoke a central image of the strikes and riots that took place in Paris in 1968).

Playgrounds might be seen as responding to the resistances of 2011, then, as *The Child in the City* responded to the struggles of 1968. Both return to history, and to the thickness of the everyday. To Ward's investigation, *Playgrounds* adds a line of play-thinking that runs out of Surrealism and, at the same time, Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (1938). Both lines of thinking happily bypass the notorious abstractions of Jürgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), the habitual resort in the worlds of art and theory when thinking about the condition of the political public sphere. I don't recall a discussion of play in Habermas—I don't think there is one. To build a study of public space on the anarchist sociology of Ward and on Huizinga's notion of the play-element of culture, rather than on Habermas, provides new avenues of thought—perhaps only a step away from the play-element of politics.

In *Playgrounds,* I found myself thinking too about the museum's claims to publicness, and its transformations of the older form of the square. The contemporary museum often fancies itself a public space. Museums ally themselves with public squares—think about how the Centre Pompidou sponsors, architecturally, the plaza in front of it, as a substitute for the old Les Halles neighborhood. Then there is the dream that the museum incorporates the public square: Once I was standing in the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern in London when a flash mob descended, lay down together so as to spell "BUSH GO HOME" in the mirrored ceiling of Olafur Eliasson's *The Weather Project,* and then dispersed. It was 2004.

above: Francesc Català-Roca
Solar con juegos (Games in an Empty Lot), ca. 1950
Selenium-toned gelatin silver print on paper

Louis Sciarli
Le Corbusier. Marseille: Unité d'habitation, École Maternelle (Housing Unit, Nursery School), 1945
Photograph

For my part, I have valued the word "public"—quite as much as "education," and more, for sure, than "curator"—in the titles of the two museum jobs I've had. I have harbored an ambition to realize museum spaces (including the extramural spaces that museums can support) as, in their primary function, contributions to the biodiversity of public experience, the experience

of one another as a public, or, better, a counter-public (in a sense inherited from Oskar Negt and Kluge, among others). But these dreams and claims are complicated by the capture of museums by the space and time of leisure. Leisure delaminates the cultural public sphere from the political public sphere—which might make my ambition somewhat vestigial, if not hopeless.

The irony of this is that no two other spheres, in modern times, have been charged with so much social hope as education and architecture, of which the museum is one paradigmatic meeting. By considering education and architecture as *institutional* structures—for this ends up being one of *Playgrounds'* core concerns—the exhibition is an account of that hope, in late modernity, leaking away from buildings and schools. By tracking that hope's fragile reemergence into new claims on the public square, and new horizons of public encounter, the Reina Sofía may be addressing what it is to be "public" at a deeper, more tortuous level than any other large modern art museum today. That makes it the best model I know for what such institutions can be, or become.

Notes

1. The passage was originally published in George Sternleib, "The City as Sandbox," *Public Interest* 25 (fall 1971): 17–18.

Forces of Change installation view, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington DC, 1994, showing works by Houria Niati and Huguette Caland

FORCEFUL CHANGE

Wassan Al-Khudhairi

When I saw *Forces of Change: Artists of the Arab World* in Atlanta, I was not yet 15 years old—too young, perhaps, to examine the exhibition and its works critically. But the connection I made with it as a teenager has stayed with me well into my own career. Curated by the Palestinian American art historian and curator Salwa Mikdadi and organized by the International Council for Women in the Arts (ICWA), *Forces of Change* presented 160 works of art across various mediums by 70 female artists from 15 countries in the Arab world.[1] It was the first exhibition of this scale focusing on contemporary art from the Arab world to take place in the United States, where registrations of the long history of that art had previously tended to take a one-dimensional, exoticizing tone, and in which Arab women figured primarily in travelers' accounts of harems. Appearing in the aftermath of the first Gulf War, in a moment of heightened negativity toward the Arab world, *Forces of Change* was a rich and pointed corrective to these stereotypes.

The show was the result of extensive research. Having moved to the U.S. from Beirut in the early 1970s, Mikdadi was regularly asked by American colleagues to organize exhibitions of

traditional Arab art—in particular weaving, embroidery, and costumes—but in 1985 she began gathering information on the production of contemporary art in the region, beginning with her own experience of the rich, cosmopolitan culture of Beirut in the 1960s and 1970s, before Lebanon's civil war. Between 1987 and 1993, she traveled across Algeria, Kuwait, Palestine, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Syria, while her interest in artists of the diaspora took her to Paris, London, and across the U.S. Largely self-funded, she visited and interviewed more than a hundred artists and met with arts organizers and museums, building for herself a full picture of each country's art scene.

After initially failing to garner financial support from Arab American organizations, Mikdadi, with her colleagues Etel Adnan, Laura Nader, and Lola Grace, founded the ICWA in 1989 to pursue an exhibition from this research.[2] The same year, she approached Wilhelmina Cole Holladay, who had founded the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington DC, with a proposal for *Forces of Change.* Given its commitment to presenting and preserving art by artists who were otherwise unacknowledged, supporting *Forces of Change* was directly in line with the museum's ambitions. In 1991, after consideration by the NMWA exhibition committee, the museum accepted the project with the understanding that Mikdadi would be responsible for raising the funds for it.

This presented Mikdadi with a major challenge, since at the time it was far easier to find funding for exhibitions about ancient Egypt or Mesopotamia than for shows of contemporary art from those places. Support would come from a wide range of sources. An honorary board headed by Queen Noor of Jordan included the writer Naguib Mahfouz, the literary theorist Edward Said, and the actress Faten Hamama. Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said of Oman provided a major donation. Mikdadi's sisters provided funds. Wijdan Ali, an artist and the founder of the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, paid for crating and shipping works. And the radio personality and DJ Casey Kasem (whose parents were Lebanese Druze immigrants to Detroit) narrated a video to accompany the exhibition. America's invasion of Iraq in 1990 brought progress to a standstill for almost a year and caused the Arab League to withdraw promised funding; nevertheless, progress resumed in 1991 and the exhibition was finally realized almost a decade after Mikdadi began.

Forces of Change opened in 1994 at the National Museum for Women in the Arts in Washington DC, and subsequently traveled to venues of different sizes and scales in several cities across the U.S., including Chicago, Miami, Atlanta, and San Francisco, each coordinating local funds and support.[3] An extensive catalogue containing essays by Mikdadi, Nader, Adnan, and Ali, as well as biographies for each artist, was published to accompany the exhibition.

Forces of Change articulated four themes but did not group the works strictly by theme. The first, "Forces of Change," was concerned with civil war, conflict, human rights, and the environment, which manifested differently in the work of each artist—for example Laila al-Shawa, a Palestinian artist who imposes geometric shapes onto silkscreened photographs of graffiti on the walls of Gaza. "Present Reflections" considered artists interpreting Modernist trends and creating a language of their own: for example, looking to Surrealism, the paintings of Baya Mahieddine, a self-taught artist from Algeria, which combine the colors and forms of Arab-Berber-Andalusian culture with Islamic ornamentation, paganism, and mysticism. "Rhythms of the Past" examined the influence of history and the past on contemporary production. One artist emblematic of this thread was Effat Nagui, the first woman whose work was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in Cairo, whose paintings, inspired by ancient cultures of northern Africa, combine Coptic parchment, crocodile skin, and images of Nubian architecture. Finally, "Image and Word" combined linguistic meaning with visualized images of language, in particular the fluid forms of Arabic calligraphy. Madiha Umar, for example, was the first artist to use the Arabic letter in abstract form in the 1940s, and established the Hurufiyah movement.

Other key artists in *Forces of Change* were Mona Saudi, Tahia Halim, Suad al-Attar, Fahrelnissa Zeid, and Gazbia Sirry. Although the majority were unknown in the United States at the time, several have recently come to more prominence. Etel Adnan had a retrospective of her work at the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts in 2013, and was included in the 2014 Whitney Biennial. Saloua Raouda Choucair was featured

Forces of Change installation view, Bedford Gallery, Walnut Creek, California, 1995, showing work by Laila al-Shawa

Forces of Change installation view, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington DC, 1994, showing work by Huguette Caland

in a solo exhibition at Tate Modern last year, and Huguette Caland has a show opening at Lombard Freid Gallery in New York in fall 2014. Mona Hatoum, by contrast, was the most established among the group at the time, and before *Forces of Change* was already showing her work at the Museum of Modern Art and Grey Art Gallery in New York. Inasmuch as the exhibition's goals were to generate interest and scholarship in the U.S. around contemporary art from the Arab world, and to provide a platform for Arab artists to show their work in a new context, one can see that, in several cases at least, it was successful.

Forces of Change was also part of a substantial wave of exhibitions organized by non-Western or diasporic curators in those years, challenging the contemporary art world, then still focused on Western "centers," to think about multiple global centers of production and the exchange among them—a process that, over the last 20 years, has steadily gained momentum.[4] At the same time, the 1990s was a time when the contemporary art world was particularly concerned, in some corners at least, with notions of identity politics—how artistic form could be bound in complex ways to national or ethnic belonging, or gender. *Forces of Change* embraced these categories, if somewhat strategically, even as the art itself often evinced a sort of cross-cultural hybridity of identity, and the plasticity of encultured and engendered forms.

At the time I was unable to digest fully Mikdadi's intention to establish a discourse for Arab artists. But when I reflect back on my work founding Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Qatar, I realize that I was driven by the same desire to create a platform for historicizing the work of Arab artists. Perhaps the lesson of *Forces of Change,* for me, was simply that there is contemporary art production in the Arab world. And each time I revisit the catalogue and think about the exhibition, I challenge myself to push beyond established conventions of representation, and to be unafraid to experiment with new ways of approaching curatorial practice.

Notes

1. Salwa Mikdadi was using her former name, Salwa Mikdadi Nashashibi, during the production of the exhibition.

2. After *Forces of Change,* ICWA expanded its focus to include projects not limited to women artists and changed its name to Cultural and Visual Arts Resources. That version of the organization folded in 2009.

3. The venues were the Chicago Cultural Center (1994), Wolfson Gallery and Central Gallery, Miami (1995), Atlanta Contemporary Art Center (1995), and Bedford Gallery, Walnut Creek, California (1995).

4. About 10 years after *Forces of Change,* a few exhibitions featuring artists from the Arab world were mounted in the U.S. In 2006 the Museum of Modern Art in New York presented *Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking,* an exhibition that described itself as bringing together contemporary artists that have relocated from the "Islamic" world to the West, and that used the artists' origin as the defining factor of their work. The approach was problematic because it defined the region as "Islamic," a term that is not representative, and caused the works to be read primarily through the lens of religion. *Tarjama/ Translation: Contemporary Art from the Middle East, Central Asia, and Their Diasporas* at the Queens Museum of Art in 2009 was organized by ArteEast, suggesting a "wider" perspective on the region. And in summer 2014, *Here and Elsewhere* opened at the New Museum in New York, bringing together contemporary artists from the Arab world around ideas of history, conflict, and identity.

Visitor in front of James Ensor's *The Death and the Masks,* 1897, at *Entartete Kunst. Bildersturm vor 25 Jahren* (Degenerate Art: Iconoclasm 25 Years Ago), Haus der Kunst, Munich, 1962

NOT MY FAVORITE

Matthias Muehling

The call to write about one's "curator's favorite" demands (and has triggered, for me and for past invited writers for this section) much introspection. To undertake this kind of writing reminds me that curatorial practice is a conscious and reflective process—and that some questions can hardly be answered with an exhibition.

In this context, my text is as strategic as it is emotional. I'd like to speak about the 1937 exhibition *Degenerate Art.*[1] This exhibition, which confiscated and vilified Modernist art, originated in Munich, the city where I live and work today, then toured until 1941 throughout what was then the German Reich. Various exhibitions inside and outside Germany have researched, reconstructed, commented on, and dealt with this event. But I, as a German, would like to discuss it with an international audience. It was a misanthropic project that developed its efficacy through precisely that quality—inhuman-ness—and thus while it can hardly be described as a "favorite," it is nevertheless an exhibition that belongs to the history of exhibition making. Its repercussions still resonate.

I am a German curator. German curators work and are recognized internationally, and I think that we have a good reputation. But we are also aware that our socialization in Germany has shaped our perspective of history in general and exhibition making in particular. The country in which I grew up, in which I have always lived and worked, is, as a state, the legal successor of Nazi Germany. It is a country in which the monstrous crimes of a dictatorship—perhaps more than any other event in history—have permanently altered its citizens' perspective on being human. The ideology of the Nazi regime penetrated all aspects of society, including art. *Degenerate Art* was one of the greatest successes of Nazi propaganda: More than an exhibition, it was a systematic program intended to humiliate and exterminate artworks and people. Germany is therefore also a country that stands (historically) for the misuse of curatorial power. And this terrible fact has absolutely shaped how German curators have chosen to work; the strong commitment in Germany to institutional critique is surely an echo of this historic situation.

Since the founding of the German Federal Republic, museum directors have grappled with Modernism; in many ways their acquisitions, exhibitions, and scholarly activities have been dedicated to Modernism's rehabilitation. A scholarly engagement with Modernism is not an option, but rather an obligation, for a German curator. For we must understand that there has been a particularly painful experience with "degenerate art." Historical sources provide clear evidence that the majority of the visitors to the 1937 exhibition agreed with the denigration of Mod-

ernism, and loved the exhibition.[2] Nazi propaganda had invoked something that was already latent in many people's minds. There was a broad consensus regarding the rejection of Modernism and the pathologizing of artists, as there were many who enthusiastically followed the National Socialist ideology. And this mentality didn't automatically disappear once the war was over. Therefore, it was always clear to exhibition makers in West Germany that the defense of art was a task commensurate with the defense of human dignity. I feel this even today as I walk through the collections of the Lenbachhaus in Munich and reflect on the fate of the works, the artists, the curators, and the collectors. I know about the inconsistencies in their résumés. I don't see Modernist masterpieces simply as "beautiful," as many visitors do. Rather, I see them as political images with something to say and defend that extends far beyond the art world.

Bruce Altshuler's 2008 book *Salon to Biennial: Exhibitions That Made Art History, 1863–1959* contains an entry for *Degenerate Art*. Which I think is appropriate, because the history of exhibition making can't be a purely positive story in which only "good" projects are assigned a place. Misanthropic efforts that have nonetheless significantly influenced history must figure in, as well. The exhibition was in fact the first extremely successful "blockbuster exhibition" that forced a large group of artworks to conform to one oversimplified theme: namely, Modernism as the history of the decadence (*Verfallsgeschichte*) of "Jewish cultural Bolshevism." The exhibition had a very long running time—from 1937 to 1941—and traveled to many venues. Altogether, some 3.2 million people visited the show, two million of them in Munich. Arguably this makes *Degenerate Art* the most successful art exhibition ever.

If you compare those attendance numbers with the most popular art exhibitions up to that point, the dimensions of *Degenerate Art*'s success become evident: The Armory Show in 1913, which marked the advent of modernity in the United States and which was considered the Big Bang event of the art world by its contemporaries, was widely discussed in New York, then by visitors to its subsequent venues in Chicago and Boston. A total of 200,000 visitors saw it. In his recent book *Blockbuster: Revision of an Exhibition Format*, Stefan Lüddemann has suggested how to define a blockbuster exhibition.[3] His criteria include an attendance of more than 200,000 and the involvement of a main sponsor coordinating all marketing activities. His prototype is the 2004 exhibition *The MoMa in Berlin* at Berlin's National Gallery. At 1.2 million visitors, it was perhaps one of the most successful art exhibitions ever; but compared to *Degenerate Art,* it was practically a flop.[4] Other international mega events such as the last Documenta, with 860,000 visitors, or the 2013 Venice Biennale, with approximately 500,000 visitors, were distinctly less well attended.

Interestingly, until now, no one has ventured to connect in detail the propagandistic success of *Degenerate Art* with its curatorial strategies. The organizers of the exhibition consisted of

left: Visitors in front of Ernst Barlach's *Reading Monks,* 1897, at *Entartete Kunst. Bildersturm vor 25 Jahren* (Degenerate Art: Iconoclasm 25 Years Ago), Haus der Kunst, Munich, 1962

Visitor in front of Wilhelm Lehmbruck's *Kneeling Woman,* 1911, at *Entartete Kunst. Bildersturm vor 25 Jahren* (Degenerate Art: Iconoclasm 25 Years Ago), Haus der Kunst, Munich, 1962

what we would nowadays call an artistic director and a curatorial team. The mastermind was Reich Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels, who formulated the ideas and principles on which the exhibition was founded. He was backed by a team that included the artist Adolf Ziegler; Otto Kummer, the personnel officer from the Reich's ministry of education; Klaus Graf von Baudissin, the director of the Folkwang Museum in Essen (who had contributed to exhibitions and acquisitions of Modern art in his previous function as curator at the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart during the 1920s); Hans Schweitzer, a poster designer, named the Reich's commissioner for artistic design; and SS member Wolfgang Willrich, an artist and publicist whose pamphlets on National Socialist art theory were so fanatical that even Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS, had asked him to cool it a bit. This was the curatorial team, traveling together, making appointments in various German museums holding collections of Modern art. The choice of works for the exhibition usually meant their confiscation.

Goebbels had originally conceived *Degenerate Art* as a side event to accompany a main event, the so-called *Great German Art Exhibition.* That exhibition's venue was the House of German Art, renamed Haus der Kunst—house of art—after the war; the artworks included were considered the highest achievements of German art. Even though the exhibition of approved works only included a certain amount of obvious Nazi propaganda, it all suggested a value system that reflected the worldview of the National Socialist regime. A large percentage of the works were landscapes and genre paintings. Adolf Hitler himself became involved in the selection and bought several hundred objects for it each year. *Degenerate Art* took place in the Hofgartenarkaden, a less symbolic space, and opened a day after the opening of *The Great German Art Exhibition*. Yet compared to *Degenerate Art*, the exhibition of approved works was only a moderate success: A modest 600,000 visitors saw it during its running time of several years.

What was it that made *Degenerate Art* so extremely successful? What desires did it fulfill? Which curatorial strategies were put into place, and how was the public addressed? What were its marketing and PR strategies? The Nazi propaganda machinery, which was in total control of the German media in a way even the biggest capitalist conglomerate can't buy today, certainly played a role. But this alone doesn't explain it all. We curators have to admit that *Degenerate Art* introduced and refined techniques that continue to influence curatorial practice today: a theoretical framework, a catchy title, guidance systems for large numbers of visitors, quoting artists and theorists to thematically link groups of works, offering comparative and contrastive hangings. These techniques continue to be applied in various museums around the world. With the exhibition *Degenerate Art* and its affirmative counterpart, *The Great German Art Exhibition*, we must recognize that a certain history of exhibitions, and their careful, dramaturgical guiding of visitors, reached an inglorious climax.

Postwar German exhibitions, of which Documenta is only the most famous example, have attempted to educate and enlighten through the promotion of advanced avant-garde art while simultaneously appealing to a broad public. And though the values, artworks, and rhetoric are opposed to those of *Degenerate Art,* the master formula is—disconcertingly—the same. At Lenbachhaus, for example, like at almost any museum, we frequently grapple with how much paratext art will tolerate: audio guides, short descriptions of artworks, introductory panels, accompanying films, et cetera. The question is: What should we do with this history, which is our history, and this realization?

Translated from German by Jesi Khadivi and Kathleen Reinhardt—Textual Bikini

Notes

1. Among the plentiful literature about the exhibition, I recommend the following exhibition catalogue to the interested reader: *Degenerate Art: The Attack on Modern Art in Nazi Germany, 1937,* Olaf Peters, ed. (New York: Prestel, 2014). One can also watch Benjamin H. D. Buchloh on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_4wRiZRi3k.

2. Mario-Andreas von Lüttichau, "'Deutsche Kunst' und 'Entartete Kunst': Die Müchner Ausstellungen 1937" in *Die "Kunststadt" München 1937—Nationalsozialismus und "Entartetet Kunst,"* Peter-Klaus Schuster, ed. (Munich: Prestel, 1988): 83–118.

3. Stefan Lüddemann, *Blockbuster: Besichtigung eines Ausstellungsformats* (Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2011).

4. Usually, only non-art exhibitions reach audiences above the million marker. For instance the world exhibition in Paris in 1889 had 32.3 million visitors, and Gunther von Hagens's *Body Worlds* exhibitions, featuring plastinated bodies, over the course of several years have reached an astonishing 37-plus million visitors.

Poesi måste göras av alla! Förändra världen! (Poetry Must Be Made By All! Transform the World!) installation view, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 1969

BACK IN THE DAY

✸

THE LOST TRIBES OF THE MODERNA: A DISCORD FROM 1969

Geir Haraldseth

The 2013 reinstallation of Harald Szeemann's 1969 exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* at the Fondazione Prada in Venice ignited an interest in the exhibition history of that moment, but its ostentatious visibility and gargantuan catalogue served, as spectacles will, to conceal some other things.[1] *Op Losse Schroeven,* curated by Wim Beeren for the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, Lucy Lippard's so-called "numbers" exhibitions,[2] and *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials,* curated by James Monte and Marcia Tucker for the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, all in 1969 as well, could make a similar claim to radicality of form, and each dealt equally well with the changes taking place in art at the time, shifting the focus from the autonomous art object to artistic processes and alternative distribution systems. Those who romanticize the formal radicality of *When Attitudes Become Form* might also ignore the real-world politics of the era: local histories of student riots and political upheaval, and a more general narrative of war, postcolonial struggle, and movements demanding civil rights. Indeed, such a political horizon was largely absent from all of the exhibitions mentioned thus far.

Thus, I would like to submit for serious reconsideration the 1969 exhibition *Poesi måste göras av alla! Förändra världen!* (Poetry Must Be Made By All! Transform the World!), not just for its subject matter—which drew parallels between art and these terminal manifestations of political struggle—but also for its form. Appearing at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm from November 15, 1969, to January 18, 1970, the exhibition was conceived by Ronald Hunt, a librarian at the department of fine art at Newcastle University in England. The director of the Moderna Museet, Pontus Hultén, himself a major figure in European exhibitions at the time, had seen earlier curatorial projects by Hunt and asked him to present a show on Constructivist theater and film.[3] Hunt suggested instead continuing what he had begun in his

1. The reinstallation was curated by Germano Celant in dialogue with Thomas Demand and Rem Koolhaas.

2. The first iteration took place in Seattle in 1969, and traveled until 1974 to different cities around the world in different iterations.

3. Ronald Hunt, "*Icteric* and *Poetry must be made by all / Transform the World:* A note on a lost and suppressed avant-garde and exhibition," Art and Education Papers (August 3, 2010), http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/icteric-and-poetry-must-be-made-by-all-transform-the-world-a-note-on-a-lost-and-suppressed-avant-garde-and-exhibition/.

Poesi måste göras av alla! Förändra världen! (Poetry Must Be Made By All! Transform the World!) installation view, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 1969

ambitious exhibition *Descent Into the Street*, which had appeared at Newcastle University's Physics Building in 1966 and at Arts Centre in Bristol in 1967, which was an eclectic take on the state of art during the first half of the 20th century, including practices such as Maoist calisthenics.

Poetry Must Be Made By All! presented five historical periods when art played a substantial role in shaping or commenting on society, especially in times of social unrest. It consisted mostly of documentary photographs mounted on aluminum boards, texts to accompany the photographs, reconstructions of certain artifacts, and a few artworks, either from the Moderna Museet or on loan from other museums, all in a single gallery. This room, however, was only one part of the exhibition; the commissioners, who included Hultén's assistant, Katja Waldén, conceived of the project as having five parts. In addition to the photos, texts, and objects, there was a bookstore and café, situated in the middle of the exhibition space; a packed program of meetings, events, and film screenings; a printed catalogue; and a so-called "fourth wall": a single white wall in the exhibition space where visitors could hang whatever writings, drawings, or other material they wanted, as well as have public discussions. Borrowed from theater, the term "fourth wall" suggests not only an awareness of the audience, but a desire to disrupt the viewer's passivity, inspiring him or her to activate and engage.

These different aspects, and in particular the fourth wall and the extensive educational programming, are exemplary of the type of exhibitions

that were being developed at the Moderna Museet under the directorship of Hultén, who had been associated with the museum since its foundation in 1958 and became its director in 1960. The exhibition and educational programming were testament to Hultén's desire for the institution to function both within and outside traditional museological expectations. Not all the programming at the Moderna was as experimental; for example, the exhibition presented simultaneously with *Poetry Must Be Made By All!* was a more conservative show of recent acquisitions. But there were many experiments with reaching new audiences in new ways, for instance the ambitious large-scale installation *SHE—A Cathedral* (1966) by Niki de Saint Phalle, Jean Tinguely, and Per Olof Ultvedt, and Palle Nielsen's playful 1968 exhibition *Modellen,* which included a playroom for children.

The title's phrases—"Poetry must be made by all!" and "Transform the world!"—were borrowed from writings by the Uruguayan-French poet Comte de Lautréamont and the German political philosopher Karl Marx, respectively. This unlikely combination signaled the exhibition's intent: to examine art's role in transforming social and political realities. The five historical periods that Hunt selected for the gallery section were the Iatmul people in Papua New Guinea (primitive art); Soviet art between 1917 and 1925; Dada in Paris; Surrealist utopias; and graffiti from the riots in Paris in May 1968. The photographic section consisted of 24 large aluminum panels (each about 10 feet tall and four feet wide) with 230 enlarged photographs distributed unevenly among the five periods. The Soviet section took up 15 panels, Surrealism five, Paris graffiti two. Primitivism and Dada each had only a single panel.

Reconstructions were made of some of the iconic works by these avant-gardes, produced either in the Moderna Museet workshops or by Hunt with students from Newcastle University. These included a reconstruction of Vladimir Tatlin's model for his (unbuilt) *Monument to the Third International* (1919–20) and his constructivist glider *Letatlin* (1932) as well as Nikolai Suetin's design for the coffin of the Suprematist painter Kazimir Malevich (1935). (Two of these reconstructions had been produced for Moderna's 1968 retrospective of Tatlin, in which Hunt had also been involved).[4]

The section on culture in primitive society seemed to be a framing device for Hunt, pointing to an instance where the idea of art differs radically from that prevalent in Western art history. The Iatmul people (an ethnic group comprising some two dozen autonomous villages) represented for Hunt a classless society; their rituals and rites of passage are described humorously and harmoniously in the catalogue.[5] After this brief prelude, the exhibition turned definitively to the 20th century, moving through the permutations of the avant-garde (some of whom had been inspired by fragmentary encounters with tribal objects in their moment). The most recent section, on the May

4. Correspondence retrieved at the Moderna Museet archive, August 10, 2005.

5. Hunt cites as his source Gregory Bateson's article "Social Structure of the Iatmul People of the Sepik River," *Oceania* 2, no. 3 (1932).

Poesi måste göras av alla! Förändra världen! (Poetry Must Be Made By All! Transform the World!) installation view, Kunstverein München, Munich, 1970

revolts in Paris, which had taken place just a year before, emblematized the worldwide strikes and riots at the end of the 1960s, and, by extension, the leftist ideals of the time.

Today, the five sections can be critiqued from many vantage points and might seem strange, even at odds with one another. But even if they were hardly a cogent historical argument, I'd like to consider them as an indication of the types of thinking with which the Moderna aimed to be associated. And let us not forget that Sweden, a neutral country during World War II, had by the 1960s become a burgeoning socialist welfare state with an increasing number of immigrants, as well as entrenched class divisions. In his essay on *SHE—A Cathedral*, which had appeared two years earlier, the curator Benoît Antille notes that "Hultén's politics of inclusiveness was consistent with the Swedish welfare state, which sought to eliminate the class distinctions that had segmented Swedish society for generations."[6] Even though some of the examples on display in the exhibition were militant and radical, the museum sought to include, rather than to revolt, and art was seen as a means to integrate and to level any form of disparity, whether monetary, social, or racial.

Hunt also programmed three films to play continuously in a separate room in the museum for the entire run of the exhibition: Luis Buñuel's *L'Age d'Or* (The Golden Age, 1930), Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), and selected scenes from *Monkey Business* (1931) by the Marx Brothers. (Each was represented in respective sections of the photo exhibition as well.) Interestingly, the Marx Brothers were the only Americans represented in Hunt's ex-

6. Benoît Antille, "*HON—en katedral*: Behind Pontus Hultén's Theatre of Inclusiveness," *Afterall* 32 (spring 2013): 72–81.

hibition—perhaps an indication of his feelings about American culture and politics.

The program was extended with several events coordinated by Pär Stolpe, a young curator hired by Hultén that same year, whose work on the *Filialen* project at the Moderna would continue the institution's interest in counterculture and education through the early 1970s. Stolpe's programs for *Poetry Must Be Made By All!* received substantial attention in the press and stirred continued interest in the exhibition. A representative of the American Black Panther Party held a talk at the museum, which ended with a party and a concert. A meeting was held in conjunction with a Swedish workers' strike; the museum was mutually perceived as a neutral setting for it, and space there was offered to both parties (workers and owners) to meet and deliberate. An "immigrants' night" was staged, too, intended to provide a social occasion outside the purview of Swedish bureaucracy. All of this is to say: The museum was willing to take part in, and to produce, social change, not just exhibit it. The Moderna Museet posited itself as an open space that changed depending on its contents—an impression mitigated by the fact that each event relied on an invitation from the museum, and was therefore filtered through the institution's own purview and politics.

Given the exhibition's aspirations, there was tremendous activity from its inception to ensure that it could travel easily—indeed, the aluminum display panels were specifically chosen to reduce production costs and to make shipping, traveling, installation, and deinstallation easier. Katja Waldén spent

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much time trying to sell the exhibition to other venues around the world, while Hultén's strong network ensured its consideration within continental Europe. While it was still taking form, the organizers secured the cooperation of Withers Swan, a public relations agency in New York, to find collaborators in the United States. Although venues were pursued as far away as South America, it would in the end travel only in Europe and North America.

Of all its appearances, the most notorious and most commented upon was at the Kunstverein München. The exhibition retained its five elements, with the catalogue acquiring a German-language insert, but the "fourth wall" took on a charged and controversial life. In Stockholm this element of the exhibition had largely pointed beyond Sweden to Cuba, China, or Oakland, California, whereas in Munich, students from the Akademie der Bildenden Künste München brought the debates much closer to home. Their school had been closed in 1968 because of student protests, and so they used the exhibition as an opportunity to carry on their struggle in public view, painting slogans and going so far as to equate the local Ministry of Culture with the Nazis, which provoked the offended Ministry to threaten to withdraw funding from the Kunstverein. As a result, the members of the Kunstverein decided in an emergency meeting to close the exhibition prematurely, against the wishes of Hultén and Reiner Kallhardt, the director of the Kunstverein. In the end, Kallhardt was forced to resign and the Ministry completely withdrew its support.[7]

After the dramatic stop in Munich, the exhibition continued to travel: to Düsseldorf, Vancouver, and finally the Rhode Island School of Design in 1971. Information on its appearance at these first two venues is limited, but it seems that the exhibition had dwindled both in size (some of the loans did not travel past Munich) and importance. By the time it reached RISD, the materials were showing serious wear, the labels and photographs peeling away. The final stop was therefore canceled, and the panels remained in storage at RISD until they were destroyed in 1982.

These humble endings have perhaps come to overshadow the achievements of the exhibition itself. The debacle in Munich indicates the difficulties of staging political protest in public art institutions, as well as how allowing for "open participation" might expose institutions to a clash of interests (students, director, board members, cultural ministers) that threaten the very future of the institution itself. Similarly, the eventual relegation of the exhibition's inexpensive "non-art" materials to the garbage heap speaks to a different set of institutional deficiencies, which privilege "real art" over the sort of aesthetic-political investigation that *Poetry Must Be Made By All!* aimed to catalyze. What was meant to be a breakthrough ended up instead as blinkered postscript to the 1960s—an era of revolution and personal transformation that would seem a distant memory just a decade later.

Today, the conventions of exhibitions and museums seem ever more set

7. Walter Grasskamp, "Rivals and Partners: The Art Association and the Art Academy in Munich," http://www.kunstverein-muenchen.de. Additional information is in the Kunstverein München's own *Telling History: An Archive and Three Case Studies* (2003).

in stone. The radical gestures of Hunt, Hultén, and Waldén are nowhere to be seen.[8] The art object seems more dominant than ever, more and more bound to objecthood and the dictates of the art market. In this compromised context, the recent returns to 1969, such as the one at Fondazione Prada, are necessarily limited in scope. Szeemann, like the artists of his generation, is on his way to canonization, whereas exhibitions such as *Poetry Must Be Made By All!* are becoming the detritus of history. But from this heap of trash we can still recover important documents and methods that resist fetishization—that contemporary curating can utilize in order to comment upon and criticize the world we are living in.

8. Even though the exhibition has been referenced in works of art by Christopher Williams and Liam Gillick, as well as in a recent exhibition at the Luma Foundation by 89plus, co-curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Simon Castets, and Kenneth Goldsmith, little attention has been paid to its actual content and form.

Joseph Beuys
Wirtschatwerte (Economic Values), 1980
Various implements and foodstuffs from East Germany, metal shelving, and solid plaster beam
Installation at the Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent

MISSING IN ACTION

✸

L'EXPOSITION IMAGINAIRE—CONTRADICTION IN TERMS?

Jan Hoet
Introduced by Chelsea Haines

By all accounts, Jan Hoet (1936–2014) cut a dashing figure. He is remembered by many as an archetype of the generation of peripatetic, charismatic, independent, mostly male curators who came to prominence in the 1980s. He was a vanguard exhibition maker; the founding director (in 1975) of the Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, or S.M.A.K., in Ghent, Belgium; and an amateur boxer once voted among Belgium's top 10 sexiest citizens.

Hoet is probably best known today as the curator of the watershed exhibition *Chambres d'amis*. A citywide exhibition in Ghent in 1986, *Chambres d'amis* relinquished the white cube and invited approximately 50 American and European artists to exhibit their work in the homes of local residents. The result was a novel visitor experience that pushed exhibition making beyond the constraints of traditional museum presentation formats and into engagement with the outside world.

Hoet's own words, however, often indicate a more cautious perspective on the role of the curator than his reputation as a rule breaker may suggest. In commemoration of his life and work, *The Exhibitionist* republishes a rare interview with Hoet that offers insight into his singular thinking on art, artists, and the world of curating.

"L'Exposition imaginaire—Contradiction in terms?" was conducted with Hoet in 1989 for *L'exposition imaginaire: The Art of Exhibiting in the Eighties*, an end-of-decade compendium edited by Werner Hofmann, who was then the director of the Kunsthalle Hamburg. Hoet—along with several other art-world luminaries, including Jean-Christophe Ammann, E. H. Gombrich, and Marcia Tucker—was invited to present a proposal for an imaginary exhibition on any subject, in any location. Hoet's rejection of this proposition reveals an astute sensitivity to both the work of art and the context in which it is exhibited. He argues that the idea of an "imaginary exhibition" is a non sequitur: It forces an exhibition's concept to originate from spontaneity rather than serious study, and, moreover, no exhibition can be properly conceived without careful consideration of material realities such as space, time, and ongoing interactions and engagements with artists.

What follows from this starting point is a frank conversation on topics ranging from the disputed authorial role of the curator to differing methods of display for historical and contemporary works to Hoet's thoughts on curating the then-upcoming *Documenta IX* in 1992. Hoet also discusses his practice in relation to his colleagues, comparing the formalist methodology of Rudi Fuchs and the synthetic, thematic approach of Harald Szeemann, and placing his own practice in the middle of this curatorial spectrum.

Much of the conversation also focuses on Hoet's relationship with artists. Neither an artist nor a critic himself, Hoet finds an apt metaphor for his curatorial role in the figure of the young boy in Gustave Courbet's *The Painter's Studio* (1855). Like the boy in the painting, Hoet believes that his role as a curator is to stand alongside the artist and endeavor to understand the process behind the work. As Hoet notes, the boy "sees not only the world that the artist is painting, but the artist himself." The goal of the curator, then, is to bear witness to the creative process in way that is both open-ended and non-prescriptive. And, once the work is made, to sit with the artist and contemplate its meaning.

L'EXPOSITION IMAGINAIRE — CONTRADICTION IN TERMS?

What is your reaction to our letter inviting you to make an imaginary exhibition?

An exhibition based on an idea, a concept, or a problem (something more than a one-man show or a survey of a generation of artists) is often prompted by a spontaneous moment, never by an in-depth study. Study always follows a spontaneous moment. Your question forces the organizer to choose a moment. That's no way to make an exhibition.

A second problem is the qualification "imaginary." You can only make an exhibition when you are practically certain how it's going to look. In other words, you take a work of art and you put it in a specific place. These concrete items, the work of art and the place, are integral aspects of making an exhibition.

We took Courbet's painting L'Atelier du Peintre *as a source of inspiration and a lead. What do you think of this painting?*

It has always been a very important work to me. I have often envisaged it as a model for a view of a period, a view of the world. It is an all-embracing painting, in which different worlds maintain plastic equilibrium. However, the drawback to placing it in a book in a dialogue with other works is that it remains abstract. If a Courbet came into this museum, the first question would be where to hang it. I would try to give the masterpiece a central position, for that is the basic idea. Other works have to be placed in the same context without becoming didactic. An exhibition of pretty pictures would be detrimental to Courbet's work. In my opinion, the best thing would be to invite a few artists involved with the same problem to do something based on the Courbet, or to confront it and engage in dialogue with it. But they'd have to do it. I can't. An artist, on the other hand, will take a long look at Courbet's painting and do something with it from the perspective of his own work. A good artist seeks confrontation with works of art from the past in his quest for continuity in quality.

Whenever [Joseph] Beuys came here, he would walk all round the classical department of the museum. Now and then he would walk up to a work to which he felt particularly attracted, a work that was not an art historical cliché, saying that he would have painted the other works brown: "Vie! schöner, alles braun malen!" He didn't really mean it, though.

Does that mean that you would never take historical works as the point of departure for an exhibition? Not even if you were asked to indicate historical continuity in a way that would show where art is now?

Although a director could make such an exhibition, it would never be a really powerful one. What Szeemann did in *A-Historical Soundings* with the collection [at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, in 1988] had extremely strong points. At any rate it was one of the finest exhibitions he has made in recent years. But it was dominated by an aesthetic so perfect that it sapped the works' strength.

During *Chambres d'amis* I did something similar at the Musée des Beaux Arts by confronting Luciano Fabro's *Bacinelle* [The Table, 1975] with old art. On a previous occasion I

brought together [René] Magritte's *Le Balcon de Manet* [1950], [Marcel] Broodthaers's mirror, [Gilbert] Zorio's triangular sculpture, and a "Braunkreuz" piece by Beuys. A risky way of combining aesthetic form-elements, however.

When Beuys was here in 1980, he placed *Wirtschaftswerte* [Economic Values, 1980] among old works of art in the smallest room of the museum. He insisted on its staying there. There are strong links between Beuys's parcels and the Old Masters. All have patina; the parcels possess the same emollient quality that one experiences when looking at an old painting. It was of course a harsh confrontation for the general public. To Beuys, however, it was a trenchant answer to the "museum" concept and the "art/life" problem. It is exactly as Mario Merz puts it: "A table has to become a sculpture and a sculpture has to become a table." You have to keep faith with such an arrangement. After all, an artist's installation is often irreversible. My own arrangements of the collection always differ.

I need to change things because I soon get dissatisfied with the result. [. . .] To my mind, the director of a museum of old art tends to feel he has no power over the work of art. To the director of a modern art museum, on the other hand, power is the name of the game, even if he does not intend it to be. It also has something to do with the exploratory character of contemporary art. Conservation is a far more important issue in museums of old art. The director has to prevent it from being moved and touched. By having power over a work of art I mean placing it in such a way as to invest it with new strength, ignoring its recoverability. Power has been wielded over Courbet's *Atelier,* too, but in the wrong manner. The way it hangs today in the kitschy environment of the Musée d'Orsay is terrible. Its former place in the Louvre was much better. Despite its surroundings it is still a masterpiece, of course, but a disrespectful presentation does disservice to a masterpiece.

In your opinion, then, does a work of art call for movement, or, indeed, manipulation?

When I visit the Louvre I expect to see the *Mona Lisa* and the other Italian paintings in their proper place. Modern art is a tricky business, though. When you present a number of works in relation to one another, the moment comes when you observe that they are "arrangements," which makes you want to do something else with them. In the old days paintings were separated, diverting attention from extraneous things. There was no problem in their juxtaposition, because they all had their own place. Contemporary art demands physical space: It is made to operate in space. If you manipulate (and you invariably do, because there's no other option), you get "arrangements." Really, every sculptural work needs its own room. That would be the best solution. [. . .]

Do you want to keep things open so as to approach the work of art in different ways? Is this influenced by the fact that this makes it easier for the public to find the way in art?

What attracts the public has always been a problem. One group says: "The work of art is hermetic. You must change nothing; you must not try to meet the public halfway." That is Rudi Fuchs's approach. Another group says: "The public is the main thing." This is often the case with Harald Szeemann's theme exhibitions. Fuchs and Szeemann are two opposite poles, which I have always wanted to reconcile.

The work of art is indeed hermetic, but it is incomprehensible if you don't incorporate some form of communication. You can only connect the two poles by maintaining a rigorous attitude toward the work of art while rendering it communicable. That is what I tried to do with *Chambres d'amis,* and again now with *Open Mind (Closed Circuits)* [Museum of Contemporary Art, Ghent, 1989]. The work of art is not the only thing in action in a space; so is the public. The beholder moves around, he looks, recoils, becomes aggressive, or falls silent. In my opinion it is possible to base one's choice of art on such action. Courbet's painting is action. Beuys's *Wirtschaftswerte* is action. Both are works that react to their own period (as well as

to the past) and to their place in the world.

Within the complexity of time, they can create unity. In both works there is dialogue: Beuys establishes a relationship by placing the racks opposite old paintings, while Courbet creates a dialogue between the artist and the model, the different social classes and the art-lovers on either side. [. . .]

Can you, in your position as an exhibition maker, imagine yourself in Courbet's studio?

Yes, I have to be in the artist's studio.

Would you take up a position some distance away from Courbet, like Baudelaire in the sidelines, for instance, or close to Courbet, in the middle?

Baudelaire was a writer, a critic. That is a different position. Our admiration for the artist means we must get as close to him as we can.

Where would you stand? In what position? Behind the artist, next to him, or in front of him?

I would stand where the little boy is, and try to make myself just as small. The boy is the real visitor in the painting. That is the mentality that we should all have when we look at a work of art. That child knows nothing of art, but he is open to the world that is assuming form in front of his eyes. He sees not only the world that the artist is painting, but the artist himself. When the artist has finished, he will go and stand behind the boy, and the two of them will look at the work together. [. . .]

But the artist and the exhibition maker may not change places, may they?

No, that is dangerous. The exhibition maker must not be confused with the artist. The exhibition maker must take care what he does. He must assemble the right combination, say more about art than about the person who made it or assembled it.

If you confront the best works of Beuys, [Pablo] Picasso, and [Anselm] Kiefer with Courbet's, the organizer will recede into the background. He will have set something in motion without desecrating the works. If he hangs a poor work next to a Courbet, he will create the impression that he is manipulating, trying to evaluate. If superior works are juxtaposed, the resulting strong tension will dispel any thoughts of didacticism. The art is all there is.

The exhibition maker may not crowd out the artist, but these days people only talk about exhibitions in a tone of: "Have you seen Jan Hoet's latest show?"

Let me quote an extreme example. When it became known that I was going to organize the next Documenta in Kassel, I was featured in flattering front-page articles and photographs in the leading newspapers of Flanders. At the same time, an article appeared that referred to Beuys as a "charlatan." I immediately wrote to the paper in question, saying how shocked I was to see Beuys, to whom I owe my reputation as "Jan Hoet," described in such terms.

In general, though, you are right. People talk about a Rudi Fuchs exhibition, a Harald Szeemann exhibition, a Jan Hoet exhibition. It's all very flattering. We're all vain, aren't we? And when you realize that people have got a lot out of your exhibition, you may become even more conceited, but you're gratified all the same. After all, isn't that what you did it for? You need art, but you need people as well. [. . .]

How are you tackling the Documenta?

Hitherto, most Documentas have presented a choice not only of artists but of works, as well. This time the artist will make the exhibits in situ. I will have chosen nothing but the artist. I think this is important, because I have observed that when an artist makes works on the spot, in a museum or elsewhere, they are much stronger and righter than when an exhibition maker presents them. You can try to place them somewhere else, but even under the most advantageous circumstances the work will never have the strength of the place for which the artist originally made it. That is because the artist has a comprehensive view of it. We don't, because our attention is focused too much on the exhibit, the space, the visitors, or ourselves. The artist is concerned with far more complex matters.

You are undermining the superstar status traditionally enjoyed by the director of the Documenta, aren't you?

Absolutely, and quite deliberately. The crux is the work of art, and the visitor. The best Documenta would be one that allowed people to forget the artist and director. One must obliterate oneself, as it were. That is why I want to see the work of art realized by the artist. I want the power of the works of art to be paramount, dispelling the doubts that followed the last Documenta.

In point there are many artists you can't exhibit. I have a good alibi, because I could say, and would have to say, "I like your work, but it doesn't fit in with the concept."

You have always felt it vital to broach the "museum" concept. You did so with Chambres d'amis *and again with* Open Mind (Closed Circuits). *Where does that urge come from?*

Before *Chambres d'amis,* nobody queried the role of "the museum." Everybody accepted the museum, no longer fought against it, no longer sought other solutions. *Chambres d'amis* thus satisfied an urgent need at the time, for all sorts of articles on the museum appeared in its wake. Even if some of them were against *Chambres d'amis,* it did set something in motion. People started thinking about what a museum really is again. *Chambres d'amis* has made me more rigorous. A striking aspect was that many artists resorted to anecdotes. It worked on location, but it wouldn't in a museum. A museum immediately bristles, as if to say: "Hey, man, you can't do that with me!" And so I am now reacting against *Chambres d'amis,* at the risk of producing something too rigorous and abstract next time. I am indeed obsessed with the perpetual examination of the museum's role. Perhaps it is due to the fact that my father was a collector, and that despite our closeness we were nearly always in conflict. I just couldn't understand why he declined to make the slightest effort to convince people of art. [. . .]

You often speak ambiguously about the museum, calling it a necessary haven for art on the one hand, while frequently dissociating yourself from it.

I once said I'm like a dog in a kennel, who now and then manages to slip the leash for a couple of days, but always comes back home. I still feel that way. [. . .]

ATTITUDE

✸

"I PROPOSE, THEREFORE I AM": NOTES ON THE ART WORLD'S PROPOSAL ECONOMY

Martin Waldmeier

My desktop is home to a folder called "proposals." In it, several dozen Word documents of a few pages each live an obscure life. Some of them have long been forgotten. Others raise a mixed set of feelings: nostalgia, vexed pride, embarrassment, even outright anxiety. It goes without saying (to my fellow curators, anyway) that a good number of these proposals never made it anywhere, and probably never will. In retrospect, their ambitions were too airy, their ideas too vague, their language too repetitive.

For so-called emerging curators today, there's hardly an activity more familiar and yet more shrouded in mystery than the recurrent gesture of *proposing.* A quick look at professional platforms such as e-flux or Call for Curators creates the illusion that the worlds of art, research, and education are universes of wondrous opportunity. At the same time, they are sites of mind-boggling competition, where an emerging class of displaced, polyglot, mobile, and, often, privileged protagonists from around the world speak an increasingly homogenous discursive language, perpetually surpassing each other. Nothing symbolizes this better than the proliferation of the format of the proposal. Not only does this phenomenon speak volumes about the ongoing transformation of the activity of curating, but it also testifies to the enduring attraction between curating and the economic conditions of post-Fordist capitalism and neoliberalism.

Recurring calls for cuts, privatization, increased efficiency, and greater

accountability have forced cultural and educational institutions and their protagonists to orient themselves toward a globalized marketplace, and in the process, to reinvent the ways they work. As a consequence, they have increasingly come to resemble that very marketplace. One defining characteristic of that change is the almost universal embrace of competition as an organizing principle. In this context, the seemingly trivial gesture of making a proposition—writing a proposal, pitching an idea—increasingly defines the roles of curators, administrators, educators, researchers, and other protagonists of art institutions and other similar organizations.

My assertion is that in the act of proposing, we recognize ourselves as neoliberal "entrepreneurs of the self," a term used by Michel Foucault to describe a model of selfhood that aspires to "being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings."[1] We take our ideas—that is, the product of our human capital put to work—to the marketplace in exchange for reward and self-appreciation. But what does the proliferation of the gesture of proposing tell us about the transformation of institutions, and, moreover, the transformation of curating? What are the rules and implications of following the lead of opportunity, and what does proposing reveal about the complex psychology and economy of the individual as an entrepreneur of the self?

Competition in the art world is, of course, not a new phenomenon. Ever since the rise of the public art exhibition in the 17th and 18th centuries, competition has been a defining feature in the relation between artists, institutions, critics, and the public. The first exhibition at the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture in Paris in 1663 was widely criticized by artists who opposed its "mercantile" character; this step simultaneously marked the gradual but irreversible freeing of art from the commissioners on which it had depended so far: royal courts and churches.[2] In the mid-19th century, artists such as Courbet operated as full-fledged creative entrepreneurs, simultaneously acting as producers, documentarists, and salesmen of their own work and spectacularly soliciting the attention of the public. While it is impossible not to oversimplify the complex history of art's economy here, I would argue that recent developments signify less a change in the entrepreneurial role of the cultural producer, and rather a transformation of art's underlying infrastructures and institutions, and a growing similitude between the economy of cultural production and the mainstream economy of post-Fordist capitalism.

Neoliberalism is easily traced back to postwar ideologues such as Friedrich Hayek: Cut back spending, increase efficiency, minimize bureaucracy, privatize, and—as the highest dogma of all—replace *planning* with *competition* in order to produce growth.[3] Ultimately, the neoliberal state was supposed to be one that is, in all its aspects and interventions, governed by the forces of the market.[4]

Translated into the governance of cultural institutions, these ideas are

1. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College De France, 1978–1979* (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 226.

2. Oskar Bätschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: The Conflict Between Market and Self-Expression* (Cologne: DuMont, 1997).

3. See Friedrich von Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944): 105–22.

4. Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics,* 116.

immediately visible in hiring policies. Huge museums with assets worth billions rely on volunteers for educational programs, citing a lack of funds. Curators and project coordinators are hired on junk contracts, ready to be laid off at any time. Commercial galleries outsource work from permanent employees to project-based temporary collaborators. In higher education, tenured professors are replaced by a workforce of "flexible" adjuncts.

Simultaneously, a new generation of cultural institutions and infrastructures has developed that not only fully embraces the logic of global mobility and circulation, but pushes aside more traditional art institutions, with their expensive personnel, administration, storage, and conservation costs. This is the success story of biennials, art fairs, festivals, and other "platforms" led by small, agile, mobile production units. They promise to produce greater and more focused attention and attract massive audiences, and are held in high esteem by private or corporate sponsors who recognize the advertising exposure and cost-benefit ratios. Governments also appreciate them, for purposes ranging from location marketing to urban revitalization to self-representation—or simply for overcoming the costly routine of "having to fill the space" again and again, as the director of BAK, basis voor actuele kunst in Utrecht, Maria Hlavajova, recently put it.

What these new temporary and mobile infrastructures have in common is a structural flexibility that permits them to reshape, reinvent, and regroup in response to changing conditions, including the changing forces of supply and demand. With minimal bureaucratic clutter, they thrive on an outsourcing model in which available resources are constantly and dynamically matched with an ever-changing set of collaborators working on a project-specific basis. In its dialogue with the public, the institution or organization is often engaged in a critical, progressive, ethical discourse, while its structure is simultaneously complicit with the dogmas of neoliberalism. There are exceptions, of course, and the promise of art continues to be its ability to produce alternative spaces and modes of engagement, particularly at its real or assumed margins. Everywhere else, in its old and new centers, this institution increasingly appears to be the only option—the only possible, "reasonable," fundable model.

At the surface, this global scene of cultural production appears to be the best of all worlds: diverse, innovative, dynamic, international. A place of unique encounters, progressive values, openness, informality, community, and abundant opportunity. But, speaking in Marxist terms, isn't the rhetoric of opportunity simply the preferred way of addressing labor power from the vantage point of capital? Isn't "opportunity" an essential term of the neoliberal vocabulary that suggests that the worker no longer does the employer a favor by offering his or her labor power, but that, rather, the employer does the worker a favor?

For curators, compensation, social security, and other benefits are frequently replaced by the promise of being allowed to do something unique

and special, something one can personally identify with. Occasionally the rhetoric of opportunity is deployed to create the semblance of institutional openness and community-mindedness, while masking a lack of actual transparency and accountability. The rhetoric recodes exploitative or semi-exploitative work conditions as worthwhile, fun, and rewarding steps toward the greater goals of self-realization and self-promotion. Whereas in liberal capitalism, "opportunity" signaled the possibility to make great profits, in neoliberal post-Fordist capitalism, "opportunity" promises an entirely different kind of reward: the opportunity to be someone, to do something that matters, to do something one can believe in.

In following the rhetoric of opportunity, the emerging curator, artist, or researcher today also acts like a model neoliberal subject, "privatizing" work to the degree that the individual is no longer distinguishable from it. The activity of proposing perfectly symbolizes this. Preparing a proposal is almost always a private matter, taking place outside the workplace and without the benefits that come with it. Further, as an act that is anterior to paid work, proposing usually draws from private means, resources, and networks. And the risk of failure is carried entirely by the individual.

It is not surprising, therefore, that creative communities have been trying to raise awareness about this condition on social networks and elsewhere, calling for the recognition of proposals as work, which, so they hope, would place the spotlight on the social and ethical responsibilities of the institutions that solicit them. But these entirely understandable demands don't address the underlying post-Fordist shift that has gradually eradicated the boundaries between work and life. In such an economy, the proposal is no longer just an unpaid, precarious, inevitable prelude to paid work. Rather, it becomes the work.

Proposing is an intimate business. We would rather not count the hours spent drafting proposals, or speak to our friends or colleagues too openly about our precarious proposal-writing behavior. They might feel sorry for us. Or, worse, we might discover that we have been competing against them all along. But proposing is an intimate affair in other ways, too. It makes us reveal our human capital—that is, our stock of knowledge, cognitive abilities, habits, social skills, and personal attributes—and expose it to the judgment and the valuation power of the marketplace. And it forces us, each time anew, to be naive, idealistic, courageous, and bold. To overcome our fears of rejection, to be vulnerable. As opposed to the liberal subject, which strives for satisfaction by maximizing profit, the neoliberal subject strives for self-appreciation in the arena of competition.

Consequently, the stakes of failure are different. With each rejection, the neoliberal marketplace speaks to the subject: *Get more experience. Work harder. Study more. Be more convincing. Invest in yourself. Get a coach. Ask for less. Try something else.* The neoliberal subject is vulnerable: His or her self-appreciation depends

on the ability to attract investment. Otherwise, the psychological power of rejection acts as a disciplinary force: the production of shame and the devaluation of the self. The marketplace is therefore not a neutral space of competition among individuals offering "disinterested" goods, but the very place of the formation of neoliberal selfhood, including its impressive range of pathologies.

One figure particularly thrives in the immaterial economy of post-Fordist capitalism: the narcissist. The political economist Earl Gammon makes the argument that the excessive vulnerability of the neoliberal subject seeks compensation in a sort of "fantasy of autonomy" in which the subject projects him- or herself as the perfectly successful, fulfilled, autonomous subject that capital wants.[5] Simply put, the production of narcissistic subjects is an integral pathology of the human condition of neoliberalism. A society where the value of the self is generated in the marketplace creates a "mass neurosis" that is "obstructing identification with others, and manifests itself in a dispassionate social destructiveness."[6]

The narcissist is, however, an excellent proposal writer. Making a successful proposition is often aided by displaying "narcissistic" attributes: above all, one's willingness to show that one is worthy of receiving investment, that one has something to say, that one is deserving of recognition. Whereas the neoliberal subject is riddled with doubt, uncertainty, and fear of rejection, the pathological narcissist is less troubled by these constraints.

The notion of narcissism also highlights another interesting aspect about the gesture of proposing: its performativity. As I suggested earlier, the gesture of proposing could be thought of as a set of protocols and practices whose purpose, within an economy of post-Fordist capitalism, is to match resources with ideas, capital with labor power, investors with investees. But what is it that capital "wants"?

In his book *A Grammar of the Multitude,* the Italian philosopher Paolo Virno introduces the term "virtuosity" to highlight what he sees as one of the defining attributes of the post-Fordist cultural entrepreneur. The latter must possess "the special capabilities of a performing artist," that is, persuasiveness, authority, authenticity, and the ability to captivate. Success and reward belong to the individual who is simultaneously "a skilled dancer, a persuasive speaker, a teacher who is never boring, and a priest who delivers a fascinating sermon."[7] These performative skills convince the investor that the work will be profitable and delivered as expected. After all, it is the nature of proposing to project a future outcome that does not yet exist, and therefore requires a relationship of mutual trust between the investor and the investee. It is also precisely this purpose that Virno identifies as political: In politics, he points out, these very same techniques serve the purpose of "conquering and maintaining power."[8]

Virno suggests that virtuosity is entangled with a politics of address, in

5. Earl Gammon, "The Psycho- and Sociogenesis of Neoliberalism," *Critical Sociology* 39, no. 4 (July 2013): 511–28.

6. Ibid.

7. Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude,* Semiotext(e) (2004): 52.

8. Ibid., 57.

that it not only requires awareness of the audience, but also entails a specific mode of speaking that strives to communicate with the audience in its own discursive language. Curators and academics navigating the international funding landscape well know that foundations, state institutions, journals, and academic departments speak different discursive and theoretical languages, at times seriously hampering the migration of ideas from one field to another without proper "translation." Facing the growing multitude of institutional discourses and the rapidly shifting geographies of cultural and knowledge production, it appears that translation is becoming an increasingly important skill. In economic terms, virtuosity might then also be understood as the ability to translate, again and again, into the ever-changing languages of capital.

Virno points out that virtuosity must also be thought of as "an activity without an end product," that is, "an activity which finds its own fulfillment in itself."[9] We now know that making propositions, writing proposals, is to deploy virtuosity to an economic effect. But is there fulfillment in making propositions? Is there pleasure in writing proposals? Is there hope in sending off yet another submission? As neoliberal individuals, we know there is no alternative. To write yet another proposal is to stay afloat. *This time we're smarter. We've worked harder. We've studied more. We've taken a coach. We asked for less. We changed our place. We propose, therefore we are.*

9. Ibid.

ASSESSMENTS

✸

PHILIPPE PARRENO'S ANYWHERE, ANYWHERE OUT OF THE WORLD

ONE BRAIN CANNOT TAKE IT ALL

Florence Ostende

Philippe Parreno's exhibition *Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World* (2013) at the Palais de Tokyo was conceived as a score orchestrated by Igor Stravinsky's composition for the ballet *Petrushka* (1910–11). Toward the end of the building's parcours, Parreno built a space he called the control room, in which the computers commanding every work and event in the exhibition were visible. The room was open, like the beating heart of an engine, but you could not walk in. In countless articles and interviews, as well as in the catalogue, Parreno described the exhibition as a gigantic automaton obeying a time code whose metronome was *Petrushka.* Standing in the foreground of the control room, a Disklavier piano played Mikhail Rudy's version of Stravinsky's ballet. This leading instrument was connected to the machines on display, and was responsible for turning the sequences of the exhibition on and off according to a precise timeline.

Given those parameters, it might appear difficult to understand why Parreno also insisted on defining the exhibition score as a non-authoritarian operation in which the public was the main character. With a central unit based on a leading chorus, it seems there wouldn't be much room left for chance or improvised gestures capable of challenging the ruling eye of the machine. I would like to embrace this paradox, however, and argue that the organizational structure of the exhibition was not as pyramidal as it seemed.[1] The sequences were much more complex than a vertical hierarchy operated by a single artificial brain. Inspired by the "scripted spaces" of Baroque architecture,[2] Parreno staged a vast quantity of stimuli to attract the visitor from one space to another. The set designer Randall Peacock worked with him on transforming the whole building into a metaphorical city with its own streets, alleys, gardens, movie theaters, and libraries.

According to Peacock, the authority of *Petrushka* is misleading.[3] The exhibition did not solely react to the puppet or the puppeteer; it actually followed a multilayered score. Some components performed their own choreography, which impacted the behavior of neighboring objects without necessarily responding to the overarching ballet. The exhibition was often compared to a Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, an interpretation that was misleading, despite the fact the software in the control room used the same technology as in the World Cup or the Olympic games.[4] Although visitors were aware that everything was controlled by a leading score, I would like to emphasize that they were constantly reminded of the fragmented nature of their experience. Everything lay in the timeline elaborated by Parreno with the sound engineer Nicolas Becker. When I asked co-curator Mouna Mekouar to draw out this timeline on paper, we ended up an hour later with countless drawings, each multilayered and punctuated by myriad impromptu events.

While the exhibition score remained based on *Petrushka*, the overarching timeline used as a framework the duration of the 90-minute documentary *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait* (2006), a "portrait" of a single soccer match focusing on Zinedine Zidane, directed by Parreno with Douglas Gordon, screened on 17 panels downstairs. At the beginning and during each break in the game, the four-minute video *No More Reality* (1991) would suddenly start to play, both on the panels (instead of *Zidane*) and also on the gigantic LED screen *TV Channel* (2013) near the entrance. The screams of kids protesting "No-more re-a-li-ty !" would take over the Palais like a bug in the timeline. Although *No More Reality* was programmed in the loop of films on *TV Channel*, it also acted as a spontaneous punctuation mark that obeyed the score of Zidane's game. "All those elements were orchestrated so the spectator could never get used to any comfortable situation," Mekouar explained.[5] In the same way, an old phone ringing every once in a while in the control room did not seem to make any sense. In fact, three phones dispersed in the building were synchronized to the one ringing in the film *Marilyn* (2012), whose screening time was dictated by the appearance of the ballerina in *Petrushka*'s score.

The timeline of *Zidane* coincidentally allowed for *Petrushka* to be repeated three times with a different time code. The *56 Flickering Lights* (2013), the hanging marquees of *Danny La Rue* (2013), and the *Automated Doors* (2013) followed the movement of *Petrushka* but with a varying tempo. The slow rhythm of the doors allowed the sounds recorded live by three microphones located in the street to penetrate the exhibition space. The piano in the control room played the entire score of the ballet, while another three pianos elsewhere in the exhibition played only fragments. The first piano[6] was programmed according to the neighboring films screened on *TV Channel*, and its location was meant to draw the visitor farther into the space. As soon as it stopped, another piano in the following room would take over, while its score also depended on the ceiling lights turning on and off for the (ongoing) work *Fade to Black.* The wall behind this piano, as well as in other locations, would tremble when the sound in the film *C.H.Z. (Continuously Habitable Zones)* (2011), recorded by seismographic and geodesic devices deep in the Earth, reached its climax.

The architecture trembled like a living organism. The screening of *C.H.Z.*

(Continuously Habitable Zones) was not connected to *Petrushka* but to a live webcam in Portugal revealing, in real time, between two loops, the ongoing organic life of the black garden recorded in the film. The script of the puppet and puppeteer was frequently overruled by human contingencies. The film *Anywhere Out of the World* (2000) was looped manually, as it relied on Tino Sehgal's child performance *Annlee* (2011). In the room dedicated to the reenactment of John Cage and Merce Cunningham's exhibition at Margarete Roeder Gallery in 2002, drawings by Cage were replaced by Cunningham's over the duration of the show. The rotating selection of drawings resulted from Cage's chance operation performed by a staff member of the Palais, playing dice. Parreno decided to use the holes left on the wall by the hanging of previous rotating drawings by filling them with colored pigment. A random score of the ghost display gradually emerged.

Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World functioned like a soccer game in which the ball does not always return to the center of the field, but rather keeps moving from where it was last. The objects on display were like props: Their role was to make the ball bounce between each player. The misleading "vertical" structure of the exhibition script could not reach its aim without the "horizontal" trajectory of the public moving through the space. Parreno said: "I am working on a new kind of exhibition ritual that tries to escape the 19th-century tradition of spectacle based on individual liberalism, meaning you decide on your own what you want to see. The dramaturgy I'm trying to build rests on an intersubjective pattern. You need the other members of the audience to be able to see, as much as you need the objects on view. The relationship with objects is as important as the relationships amongst subjects."[7] Described by the artist as a Duchampian bachelor machine,[8] the central brain of the control room orchestrated the structure of a timeline disrupted by a ripple effect between bodies and objects. In this fragmented world of echoes, a bachelor machine cannot function without another bachelor machine.

The authority of the control room was undeniable, but its exhibitionary apparatus demonstrated that the exhibition had no intention of restoring the utopian dream of a reunified totality through an emancipating form of spectacle. The key to the project was the ability of dramaturgy to be *reprogrammed* through bugs, disruptions, fragmented scenarios, human contingencies, and outside phenomena leaking in. There was no way to escape the control room, but it was possible to reprogram its structure—a structure that triggered interactions between objects and subjects and impacted your own agency in turn. The sum was not greater than the parts because the sum was impossible to compute, at least for a single human brain.

Notes

1. I would like to warmly thank Philippe Parreno and exhibition co-curator Mouna Mekouar for giving me their time so generously.

2. The term "scripted space" is used by Philippe Parreno in reference to Norman N. Klein's book *The Vatican to Vegas: A History of Special Effects* (New York: New Press, 2003) in Philippe Parreno and Carlos Basualdo, "Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World: A Conversation" in *Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World* (London: Koenig Books and Paris: Palais de Tokyo, 2014): 25.

3. "Discernible in every room of the Palais de Tokyo, *Petrushka* is, according to Peacock, 'a red herring in some ways, in that it's not an overarching narrative for the exhibition' but more a conductor of its parts, choreographing movement through the Palais," says Chloe Hodge in "Challenging Signifiers," *Aesthetica Magazine* (December 2013).

4. Parreno's exhibition used show control systems such as DMX Controller and the D-Mitri audio platform. See Florence Ostende, "Show Control: Parreno Expose," *20/27* no. 3 (2009).

5. Interview with co-curator Mouna Mekouar, July 3, 2014, Paris.

6. The first piano was Liam Gillick's *Factories in the Snow* (2007).

7. Interview with Philippe Parreno, July 2, 2014, Paris.

8. Philippe Parreno and Carlos Basualdo, "Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World: A Conversation," 31.

PARIS SPLEEN

Pierre-François Galpin

Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World was Philippe Parreno's spectacular retrospective exhibition held at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris in fall 2013. Borrowed from Charles Baudelaire's 1869 poem "N'importe où hors du monde" ("Anywhere Out of the World"), the title reflected a common feeling of displacement, emblematic of a generation of conceptual artists whose works embody an ambient melancholia—a "spleen," as Baudelaire put it. The poem resonates with Parreno's exhibition and works, which transcribe this attitude through a wide variety of figures, metaphors, and symbols. As it was imagined by Parreno's exhibition, the figure of the romantic poet in the mid-19th century is something like the figure of the contemporary artist: an inspired soul who orchestrates our society's anxieties and nostalgia.

For this retrospective, Parreno was afforded the entire Palais de Tokyo. Against the convention of such retrospectives, which are typically monographic, the artist invited other artists of his generation—Liam Gillick, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Douglas Gordon, Pierre Huyghe, and Tino Sehgal—to contribute their own works,

or ones created collaboratively with Parreno. Taken together, the spectacular video structures, performances, light and sound installations, and sculptures followed the title's reference, and embodied a romantic, early Modern look, full of symbols, dark images, voices, and a fascination with ghosts and machines. In the cold and haunted concrete spaces of the Palais de Tokyo, Parreno's "spleen" took the shape of silhouettes and echoes, as if from a different dimension or century: out of our world.

As with many of Parreno's exhibitions, it was cadenced by sound: in this case, Igor Stravinsky's ballet score *Petrushka* (1910–11), which was played by automated pianos. *Petrushka* is the story of a doll given life by its creator; at the end of the ballet, he dies and haunts his maker from the afterlife. The character Annlee is Parreno's own Petrushka: a manga character, a young girl, whose rights Parreno and Pierre Huyghe purchased in 1999 from a Japanese studio, and who has been the subject of numerous projects since then. In this exhibition, Annlee was both virtual and real. Parreno and Huyghe's video work featuring her character, *Anywhere Out of the World* (2000), was shown in an underground amphitheater, while Tino Sehgal's *Annlee* (2011) presented a young actress playing Annlee talking morosely to the public about meeting the artists, and her wish to be part of the human world.

Other characters haunted Parreno's works, especially in the unforgettable videos, inspired by celebrities and sports icons as artifacts of 20th-century mass culture. Some were literally phantoms back from the dead, for instance Marilyn Monroe, whose voice and handwriting appear in the film *Marilyn* (2012), shot at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York. The doomed actress is resurrected with the help of technology: In a too-perfect computer-generated simulation of her voice, "Marilyn" describes her hotel room while a robot's hand writes a letter, mimicking her handwriting. In the lowest level of the Palais de Tokyo, a room was dedicated to Parreno's 2006 collaboration with Douglas Gordon, *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait*. From the perspective of 17 different cameras, the film depicts the French-Algerian soccer player Zinedine Zidane over the course of a single match. Unlike Marilyn, Zidane is still very much alive, but the moving images present him as a ghost—the idea of a star-athlete. Though the events are recent, the soccer player seems part of a glorious past—a simulacrum haunting our screens and nurturing our fantasies.

Across the different media there was a thematic consistency. The artist has attributed part of his inspiration to the concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, an idea first elaborated by the German Romantic composer Richard Wagner to describe an aggregate or synthetic artwork that embraces many forms of art at once (visual, poetic, musical, dramatic) and an immersive aesthetic. For visitors, the experience was indeed total. *Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World* was for Parreno an artwork in itself. While walking through the rooms of the show, I found myself submerged in a variety of sounds (*Petrushka*'s score on pianos, but also mechanical sounds), images (on screens, in frames, in shadows), and words (written on changeable digital labels, the *Flickering Labels* [2013], or spoken by machines), all corresponding in concert.

If the exhibition presented a synthesis of the arts, it also afforded a compelling sort of synesthesia (another idea explored by Baudelaire, referring to correspondences among different human senses).[1] Parreno probably did not plan the diverse scents in the Palais—the humid concrete, the warm scent of video projectors, or the freezing air of the winter—but in the process of viewing, all one's senses became alert, and correspondences emerged between the darkness of the space, the sensation of the Palais's basement, the haunting sounds of machines, the moving images of technological toys. Experienced together in the senses and in the mind, the effect was an apocalyptic vision of a mechanical and cold parallel world. Parreno also evoked "a Kafkaesque dimension in this exhibition, some kind of paranoid logic" when referring to the way he organized the show.[2]

Indeed, such careful and immersive scenography requires rules and structure. The exhibition was organized with maximum precision and according to a very specific path. Played on four pianos across the exhibition's itinerary, *Petrushka*'s score regulated the rhythm of the video screenings, and the 16 sculptures of the installation *Danny La Rue* (2013). This coordination extended to the viewers, too. I felt both puzzled and amazed by my own unplanned movements, which nevertheless accorded to those of everyone around me, as if we knew, or had been instructed, how to move through the wide yet enclosed spaces.

Curating your own retrospective is like reviving or revivifying your past, in ghost form: past artworks and past collaborations, as well as unrealized projects. Parreno's evolving installation *Fade to Black*, a collection of phosphorescent posters depicting his unfinished projects, hung on a white wall; to be visible, the posters must be exposed to light, but then they gradually lose their luminosity. These works hint at a mixed nostalgia for what could have happened, with an appealingly honest acceptance of what has not. Parreno's invective, then, is different from Baudelaire's. His emotional attachment to his works, the importance of dialogue with fellow artists, and the consent to be haunted by the past and to feel apprehensions of the future allowed for a different sort of distemper. Parreno invited visitors and artists to let ghosts haunt our existence, rather than restlessly hunting for a way to escape (or negate) the world. While

the total spectacle astonished, a deep loneliness persisted throughout—even, paradoxically, as viewers were surrounded by (a lot of) other people. Perhaps that is one way to apprehend the 21st century's version of Baudelaire's spleen.

Notes

1. Charles Baudelaire, "Correspondances" ("Correspondences") in *Les Fleurs du Mal,* trans. Richard Howard (Boston: David R. Godine, 1982): 15. (First published in French in 1857.)

2. Céline Piettre, "Philippe Parreno's New Megashow Fills the Palais de Tokyo," *Blouin Art Info* (October 26, 2013), fr.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/975112/philippe-parreno-je-cherche-a-mettre-en-scene-le-regard.

MÉNAGE À TROIS

Anne Dressen

Exhibitions are often appreciated following a strategy of separation: one review or assessment accords to one show. Even when parallel exhibitions offer an excuse to review two at once, perhaps in order to address a common theme, it is still rarely acknowledged how each one inflects the other. But in the logic of experience, a viewer will often apprehend exhibitions simultaneously, blurred or faded together in their mind.

Such was the case in Paris in the winter of 2013–14, when two major Parisian art institutions decided around the same time to organize mid-career shows of major figures from the same generation of French artists: Pierre Huyghe (at the Centre Georges Pompidou) and Philippe Parreno (at the Palais de Tokyo). Very close since the 1990s, the two artists share many ideas about art and exhibitions, as well as similar references to architecture, music, and cinema. But juxtaposed, made into opposites by the coincidence of their exhibitions, they never seemed more different.

And then there was a third exhibition that comprised part of this somewhat-accidental ensemble—the stranger in this imposed ménage à trois. This was the exhibition *Decorum*, which I curated at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris. It was intrusive because of its subject (carpets and tapestries made by artists) and its genre (a group exhibition, as opposed to solo retrospectives). But perhaps imagining the three together, in relationship, as if in the haze of experience, will help in moving beyond the limited face-off between the two artists.

For example, there's no doubt Parreno's exhibition would have looked less austere, cold, and sinister if the warm, colorful, and hairy *Decorum* had not been next door. And Parreno's show might have appeared less futuristic and indifferent to context—he had redesigned the whole museography of the Palais—had Huyghe's exhibition not been so anchored in the archaeology of the Pompidou (recycling walls from the previous exhibition, a retrospective of Mike Kelley, and digging into the layers of paint on the wall, while adding black ice and pink sand.) Huyghe's exhibition would have seemed less full, messy, and hippie-ish if Parreno's had been more generous or dense. And *Decorum* might have been perceived as more conceptual had Parreno's show not seemed so brainy.

These comparisons are potentially endless, if rather superficial. Perhaps, rather than engaging in shallow binaries, recombining is the more interesting strategy. It might sound crazy, but *Petrushka*—the 1910–11 ballet scored by the composer Igor Stravinsky, which Parreno actually used in his show as an orchestrating maneuver—could be the key, with the three exhibitions embodying the ballet's puppet love triangle: Petrushka as Parreno, the Moor as Huyghe, and the Ballerina as *Decorum,* restaging the classical trio of Pierrot, Harlequin, and Columbina.

Huyghe's show was celebrated as a self-generating, chaotic, and vibrant ecosystem: full of works and people (performers and the public), but also animals (bees, a spider, a dog) and plants. The exhibition was open to the outside: Everything that is usually forbidden or denied in a white-cube space was now admitted in, as a revival of institutional critique's gesture reintroducing "life" into the museum. One of his films also showed a couple engaged in explicit sex in the now-closed Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires.

Tactile and optical (and therefore "haptic," to quote Alois Riegl), *Decorum* was perceived as a seductive and reassuring survey of hand-woven pieces, which modernist taboos regarding "craftiness," femininity, and functionality had previously dismissed as low or secondary forms—as a sort of "furniture music," nevertheless celebrated by certain avant-gardists such as Erik Satie. These gestures (from the Arts and Crafts Movement of the 19th century to the New Tapestry movement of the 1960s to contemporary neo-craft) can be understood, at least partially, as a reaction to an increasingly dematerialized, sped-up, masculine, technological world.

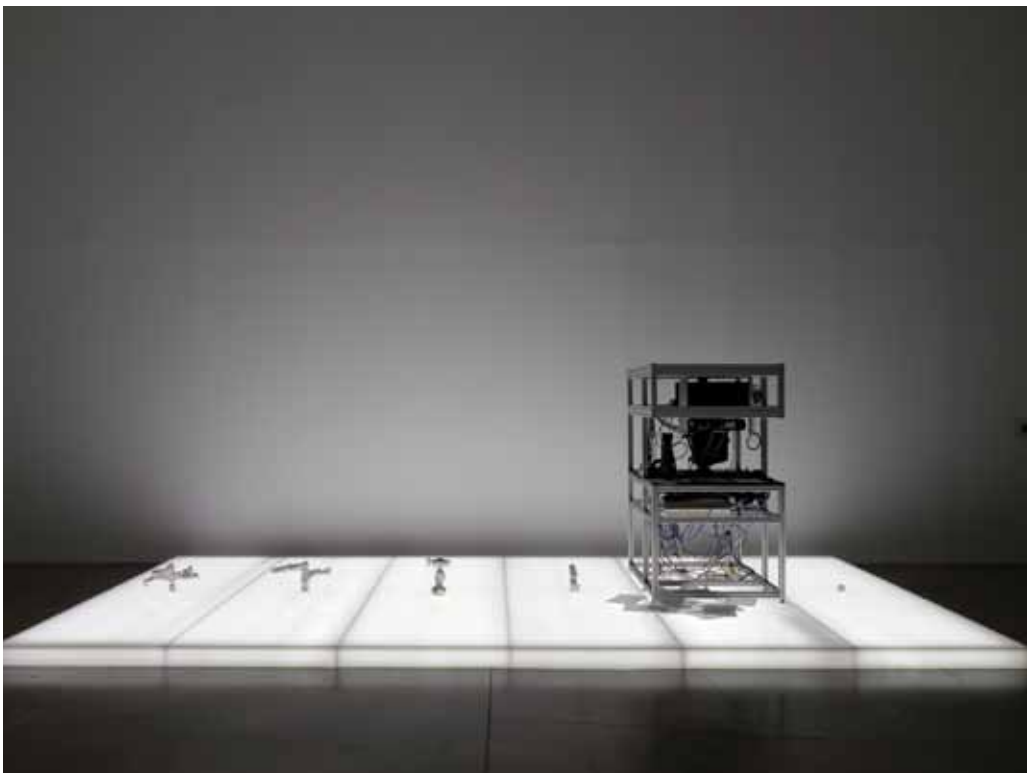
By comparison, Parreno's exhibition appeared as a strictly black-and-white mechanical ballet of automatic pianos, doors, lights, and robots. Visitors sometimes felt lost in an immense field of snow and baroque technology. One could feel (and yet not see) that a brain (following the musical movements of *Petrushka*) was controlling the whole show, as the ventriloquist operates his puppet.

But, much like any misleading trompe l'oeil, things are more complex than they appear. And, as in any carnival, the whole equilibrium reverses into something else. The exhibitions shared

Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World installation view, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2013, showing Liam Gillick's *Factories in the Snow*, 2007

Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World installation view, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2013, showing Philippe Parreno's *Automated Doors*, 2013

Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World installation view, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2013, showing Philippe Parreno's *La Banque d'accueil* (Information Desk), 2013



Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World installation view, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2013, showing Philippe Parreno's *ModifiedDynamicPrimitivesforJoiningMovementSequences,* 2013

Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World installation view, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2013, showing Philippe Parreno's *How Can We Know the Dancer from the Dance?,* 2012

Philippe Parreno's *Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World*

Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World installation view, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2013, showing Philippe Parreno's *Fade to Black*, 2013, and *Modified Dynamic Primitives for Joining Movement Sequences*, 2013

Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World installation view, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2013, showing Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's *La Bibliothèque clandestine* (Secret Library), 2013

Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World installation view, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2013, showing a detail of Philippe Parreno's *Danny La Rue,* 2013

Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World installation view, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2013, showing Philippe Parreno's *TV Channel*, 2013

Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World installation view, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2013, showing Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno's *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait*, 2006

a critical reflection on the exhibition format, questioning a certain fantasy of modern linearity or transparency, and, like the customized scenography of Marc Camille Chaimowicz in *Decorum*, a focus on decor that was openly manipulative in nature.

A further look at each exhibition makes this common reflection more evident. Parreno's first piece, the large-screen *TV Channel* (2013), showed films such as *No More Reality* (1991); the closer one came to the display, the more abstract it became, revealing the LED diodes that comprised the picture. Likewise, Marilyn Monroe was unveiled, in *Marilyn* (2012), as a synthetic voice and robotic hand. Parreno's famous digital labels were present, too, but more as literary escapes, as was the mysterious handmade Christmas ornament used as an imaginary doorknob. Mute and blank cinematic marquees presented the machinery of advertisement, revealing rather than celebrating their manipulations. Less nihilistic than was intended by Charles Baudelaire (from whom the show's title was borrowed), *Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World* urged us to get out of "here": the Hollywood realm, or the individualistic art world, in favor of productive artistic collaborations and relations.

Decorum presented a decor that was more tactile and interactive, but no less technological. Mixed together with traditional tapestries were readymades by Franz West and John Armleder, and prototypes for industrial manufacture by Anni Albers and others. Pae White's digitally woven smoke tapestry *Berlin B* (2012) recalled the jacquard loom as an ancestor of the computer.

Huyghe's exhibition worked (he argued) without visitors, in a kind of indifference to the public. It is true that his introductory performance, *Name Announcer* (2011)—a prompter announcing, in a high-flown tone, each visitor's name—is a super-relational piece that ends up almost anti-relational (and which could comfort the potential detractors of Relational Aesthetics). And the LED book-masks worn by some of his performers could indeed serve as a sort of visual allegory for Facebook: They are quasi-objects (to paraphrase the philosopher Michel Serres) that paradoxically create more distance than links between people. Included in the exhibition was one of Elmyr de Hory's fascinating fakes from Huyghe's personal collection, suggesting that Hugyhe works somehow undercover.

While Parreno's exhibition evoked melancholy, sacrifice, and death, Huyghe reclaimed the idea of "compost." These may be coded responses to the institutional pseudo-necessity for retrospectives, similar in kind to Maurizio Cattelan hanging himself at the Guggenheim in his 2011 retrospective, or melancholic "ghosts" recalling Rirkrit Tiravanija's works in *Tomorrow Is Another Fine Day* (at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris in 2005). *Decorum* intended, by comparison, a more straightforward circumvention of the limitations and clichés of its subject medium through total immersion and inclusion.

In the end, I cannot help picturing the exhibitions together: footprints on Chaimowicz's runner carpet from Huyghe's dog, or the black handprints on Huyghe's walls as belonging to possibly frustrated visitors. Meanwhile, the soul of Parreno's exhibition seems very much uncannily alive—as with Petrushka, whose laughter from beyond the grave is heard onstage at the end of the ballet. In Parreno's exhibition, more than the two others, appearances were strikingly misleading.

HOW-TO

Liam Gillick

A few days before the opening of Philippe's exhibition, I went to Paris and spent some time wandering the Palais de Tokyo with him. I took hundreds of photographs while watching the final processes and mechanisms falling into place. I didn't go back for the opening. A couple of people I know quite well, and trust for their thoughtful and at times cynical approach to art and its potential, reported that as they left the exhibition they realized that they had been crying but couldn't tell when the tears had started to roll. Others spoke of feeling confused, lost, or even manipulated.

Despite the tears, in terms of published criticism, it seems that some of the responses to the exhibition involve a misreading of Nicolas Bourriaud's 1998 book Relational Aesthetics. *There was never a point when Philippe was making work that matches misrepresentations of that book as a guide for simple-minded engagements and exchanges with "the public." Philippe always produced scenarios and mise-en-scènes that were indifferent to the viewers' actions, without lacking interest in what might transpire. He has never been involved in participatory practice in any recent understanding of the term. Other responses seem to get lost in a form of conceptual poetics where sublime sensations originate from an ecstasy of emotechnology. Both of these readings are lacking. Philippe's work originates in cinema and philosophy. It has always been engaged with the creation of a film in real time and has implications for those who would mix up art and aesthetics. This is conscious and deliberate.*

What is lacking in most accounts—and permits them to remain polemical or compliant—is the lack of a decent report on what was actually in the Palais de Tokyo and in what order it might have been experienced. So, in an attempt to aid the reading of both extremes, I provide—from firsthand experience and access to the various computer animations used to plan the exhibition—a simple "how-to." Obviously conscious of the proliferation of the video game "walkthrough," I have chosen to adopt the functional and unedifying language of that utilitarian genre. I also want to acknowledge the existence of a scale model of the original exhibition Primary Structures *within the recent Jewish Museum exhibition* Other

Primary Structures—*and how useful and previously lacking such basic information has been.*

The text, with its appropriation of "technical" writing, somewhat privileges my awareness of Philippe's recent re-readings of Jean-François Lyotard. It is written from the perspective of someone whose own work was placed within the building and reworked to form the "score" for the exhibition, and who has worked with the artist on and off for 20 years.

Approaching the main entrance to a vast building on L'avenue du Président-Wilson, a structure resembling a cinema marquee may be seen cantilevered above the building's large front door. The marquee is constructed from thick, clear Plexiglas. Plexiglas chains angle up to the facade and are anchored to the exterior wall.

Entering the building, a lobby contains a large, white, illuminated panel. The panel carries information and creates silhouettes of those working behind a long desk. Visitors are also silhouetted when they stand in front of the bright white light.

Turning left, toward a large ground-floor space, flickering wall sconces have been designed and placed on each column. There are illuminated information panels, as well, in some other parts of the building. Looking down toward a window that opens out toward stairs leading toward the River Seine, further sconces may be seen on columns that separate double doors and high windows.

Turning back and heading straight down a long room, a screen may be seen showing a film of children protesting against reality. Approaching the screen, the image breaks down into a series of isolated LED lights. Continuing on and then turning to the right, a piano sits on top of a set of wide stairs. Sometimes it plays music by itself, and at other times further pianos may be heard playing automatically in the distance. Artificial snow falls from a snow machine on top of this first piano.

Moving to the right of the piano and through a doorway, a bookshelf forms a door to the left, while straight ahead, a machine standing on an illuminated base reproduces handwriting and is surrounded by finished notes and letters. On the walls to the right, a series of prints are fixed at various heights; their phosphorescent images are revealed when the lights go out. Turning left, the bookshelf doorway rotates on its center axis in order to provide entry to a room full of images on the walls. Turning around and moving back out, it is possible to turn left and walk onward through the room toward a stairwell. Entering the stairwell, a second piano may be seen through a glass window. This room may not be entered; it contains equipment that controls the synchronized components of the various pianos, et cetera.

Turning left and walking away from the piano and control equipment, a staircase illuminated by more flickering wall sconces is discovered. Descending the staircase and passing a large window with the sound of rain but no rain visible, a big, dark room is reached that is full of many hanging objects in the form of various cinema marquees. The marquees provide the illumination, and the walls are black.

Continuing through the room of marquees, an open space is reached with a slightly raised, circular platform in the center. The sound of feet moving can be heard from the platform while a section of curved wall slowly moves around it. Past the platform is another darkened room: Here, a film of a hotel room in New York is projected onto a translucent screen. The film is high quality. The sound is deadened by a large pile of artificial snow heaped behind the projection.

Returning back into the space with the platform and revolving wall and walking in the opposite direction, another piano appears through a square cutout in a white wall. Jogging to the left and moving forward, there is a high, expansive space that has windows running down the entire wall and curving away from the river. Within this room, the sounds of the city may be heard. A set of free-standing automatic sliding doors are in the center of the room. Sometimes the doors open and close.

Turning back once more toward the platform and rotating wall, it is possible to approach the main staircase leading back up to the ground floor. Before reaching the staircase, it is possible to turn right into a smaller space where a high-quality film of a black garden is being projected. Within this space, a short, wide, carpeted staircase is a place to sit.

On returning to the platform and the rotating wall once more, it is necessary to reorient and head off in a new direction to the left. In this direction a modest theater space may be found. In this room an animated film of a young woman is being projected. Turning out of this room and backtracking a little reveals a new set of spiraling metal stairs. Descending the stairs, a vast, low, unfinished, darkened room is reached. Inside this room, many screens and projectors are hanging from the ceiling. An entire soccer game is being shown from the perspective of multiple synchronized cameras.

Leaving this room through the same door used to gain entrance, it is possible to ascend the spiral staircase again and either return to the main entrance or revisit the exhibition—in or out of order.

Liam Gillick's work *Factories in the Snow Factories in the Snow (Anywhere, Anywhere Out of the World)* (2013, collection of Philippe Parreno) comprised the first piano component of the exhibition. Other artists involved included Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Douglas Gordon, and Tino Sehgal.

RIGOROUS RESEARCH

✸

SELLING SOCIALISM: KLAUS WITTKUGEL'S EXHIBITION DESIGN IN THE 1950s

Prem Krishnamurthy

For the artists of the 20th-century European avant-garde, exhibition design played a crucial role. The Soviet architect, artist, and designer El Lissitzky was the pioneer, shaping innovations in two-dimensional abstraction (particularly the decisive forms of Suprematism and Constructivism) into sophisticated spatial rhetoric.[1] Through immersive, dynamic designs for the Soviet Union at international press, photography, hygiene, and trade fairs from 1928 to 1930, he put the radical forms of his comrades to work for political ends. During this brief period, Lissitzky redefined the propaganda exhibition—which began with the industrial and consumer displays of 19th-century World Expositions—as a revolutionary new mode of mass communication.

Militarismus ohne Maske (Militarism Without Masks) installation view, Bahnhof Friedrichstrasse, Berlin, 1957, showing a louvered display wall with three mechanically moving states. The first image is a collage of West German politicians and industrialists juxtaposed with Nazi officials, members of the Krupp family, and other Nazi sympathizers. The ghostly torso of Adolf Hitler looms over them. These figures float above a landscape of gold coins on which coiled serpents recline.

Others soon adapted his innovations as a new language of exhibitions, which would serve equally well the otherwise divergent political aims of Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and wartime America.[2] Although developed as tools for Communist ideology, such formal methods of photomontage, spatial immersion, and advanced exhibition display became pliable vehicles for varied agendas. These exhibitions frequently relied on modes of commercial

display—unsurprising, since many figures of the early Soviet avant-garde also created advertising as part of the revolutionary experiment. After World War II, the relationship between radical form and commercial technique became even more pronounced. The economic recovery of Western Europe and the start of the Cold War witnessed the rise of exhibition design as a crucial tool for mass advertising. From the standardized trade fair booth to ongoing programs of traveling cultural and political exhibitions, innovative exhibition displays undergirded foreign policy goals.[3] In England, continental Europe, and the United States, practical manuals for the effective design of exhibitions codified the techniques of prewar experiments into a functional and professional grammar to sell objects and ideas.[4]

A related transformation of Lissitzky's work occurred in Socialist East Germany, where the Soviet designer was lionized as the "untiring protagonist for . . . the spirit and the cultural-political aims of the great Socialist October Revolution."[5] The late 1940s and the 1950s represented a tumultuous period in Eastern Europe. In these years, Josef Stalin systematically remade the government and economy of the nations under his influence as identical models of Soviet society, through the installation of Kremlin-directed Socialist regimes, rapid industrialization, the dismantling of small businesses, and land collectivization.[6] During this transition, it became even more imperative that the East German regime put on a good show to convince its people of the positive value of the new order.

This is the context in which the designer Klaus Wittkugel (1910–1985) rose to prominence. Beginning his career as an apprentice at a 1920s Hamburg fashion shop, where it was his task to arrange display windows, by the early 1950s Wittkugel led the design of international trade fair presentations and internal propaganda exhibitions for the German Democratic Republic (GDR). His approach to constructing large-scale, immersive showpieces built upon Lissitzky's groundwork. On the surface, Wittkugel's exhibitions appeared to continue the Soviet optimism of the 1920s. On closer examination, however, these later exhibitions emerge as a significant repurposing of early Modernist ideas to suit a markedly different historical moment and political purpose.

Today, Wittkugel's exhibitions represent a blind spot within the established histories of 20th-century exhibition design. The near-invisibility of Wittkugel's work within established canons of design may lie not in its methods or significance, which are as innovative as those of his peers, but rather in the very fact that it served to sell East German and Soviet agendas—ideologies that are largely erased from dominant accounts of postwar Modernism. By wearing their ideologies on their sleeve, these Socialist showcases allow for an open analysis of goals and methodologies as well as future comparison with more extensively documented Western exhibitions of the period.

Introducing the design strategies and approaches of Wittkugel's two most significant exhibitions from the 1950s, this essay situates both in their political context, and within a larger examination of how such self-reflexive and formal innovations—despite their historical baggage—may continue to inform contemporary practice.

Early Graphic Design Work and Exhibitions

Beginning in the late 1940s, Wittkugel established a striking, modern look for key products of GDR cultural export—with the Modernist hallmarks of asymmetrical composition, bold typography, the use of photomontage, self-reflexive visual gestures, and the choice of abstraction over realistic representation.[7] His wide-ranging work moved fluidly from posters to book covers for key works of Socialist literature, film, and avant-garde theater, as well as later signage and identity programs for architectural icons of East Berlin, including Café Moskau, Kino International, and the Palast der Republik.

At the same time, Wittkugel's temporary exhibitions, which he designed and in some cases organized, focused upon the general East German populace. While serving as head designer for the GDR's Office of Information, Wittkugel directed *Qualität* (Quality, 1950), an exhibition emphasizing the high production standards of East German manufacturing and consumer goods. On the other hand, the exhibition *Bach in seiner Zeit* (Bach in His Time, Leipzig, 1950, and Berlin, 1952) allowed Wittkugel to hone his formal and spatial approach to historical objects—including original documents, artworks, and musical instruments—within a modularly constructed traveling exhibition devoted to Johann Sebastian Bach's life and work.[8]

These early exhibitions led to *Unser Fünfjahrplan* (Our Five-Year Plan, 1951), which presented the successes and goals of the Stalinist Two- and Five-Year economic plans to a broad public. Given the shortage of available spaces for large-scale temporary displays in war-damaged Berlin,[9] the exhibition was staged at the Museum für Naturkunde (Natural History Museum). *Our Five-Year Plan* proved a costly endeavor, with a budget of 960,000 DM.[10] This figure—for an exhibition intended to be on view only six weeks—evidences the project's importance to the aims of the nascent East German state, which was faced with an uncertain political and economic future. Such investment paid off: The exhibition boasted more than 350,000 visitors even before its run was extended, with queues of visitors willing to wait in the winter cold in order to catch a glimpse of the show.[11]

Unser Fünfjahrplan (Our Five-Year Plan) installation view, Natural History Museum, Berlin, 1951, showing the "Industrialization of Agriculture" display, with a mural painting by Bert Heller

Our Five-Year Plan combined the didactic and the demonstrative, presenting documentary information while invoking a sense of participation in the process of rebuilding East Germany after the war. Economic statistics mingled with motivational statements; tilted architectural models suggested the massive scale of future factory complexes. Individual rooms focused on specific topics such as child care, education, and Soviet agricultural teachings, while elegant vitrines showcased new books and publications of Socialist literature.[12] Socialist Realist murals showed a towering group of workers unfolding plans that would determine their collective future.[13] On the other hand, valuable consumer wares—music boxes, radios, waffle irons, sewing machines, handheld cameras, teakettles, and so on—were staged as playful tableaux in standing vitrines.[14] Evoking shop windows, these displays were intended to provoke wonder and desire in their proletarian audience, for whom such goods were mostly out of reach in a moment when even meat, fat, and sugar continued to be rationed.[15] *Our Five-Year Plan* functioned as an interior World's Fair pavilion, selling the full range of East German life, knowledge, and economy to its own citizens.[16]

Unser Fünfjahrplan (Our Five-Year Plan) installation view, Natural History Museum, Berlin, 1951, showing a display about the successes of the first two-year plan

From a contemporary perspective, *Our Five-Year Plan* is striking not only for its design, but also for including performative and participatory elements that emphasize the labor of its own production. Contemporary reports marveled at a functioning printing press within the exhibition, which produced take-away brochures for each visitor. In another room, workers gave live demonstrations of advanced weaving techniques on an industrial textile machine.[17] The new technology and its accompanying labor were on view for admiration and emulation. This approach followed closely the model of early World Exposition demonstrations of heavy machinery, which had proved extremely popular with the general public and commentators.[18] By the 1950s, such performative displays were a common and effective means of selling goods in Western European trade fairs.[19] In the context of a general-audience Socialist exhibition, the focus shifted away from marketing new technology to selling the idea of collective labor toward achieving the GDR's industrial production quotas.[20]

The last room of the exhibition featured the "Wall of Approval," a growing installation to which visitors could contribute—albeit within a circumscribed framework. Printed in the form of bricks, paper handbills affirmed, "I will work for the fulfillment of our Five-Year Plan, the great plan for freedom." Each visitor was encouraged to sign an individual "brick" with their name; two "bricklayers" on scaffolding then wheat-pasted these paper

"bricks" together to build a "wall" in the form of a white dove. According to exhibition descriptions, so many people took part that the wall expanded onto the street, well past its allotted space.[21] Although newspapers reported thousands of participants, including Chinese, Korean, West Berliner, and West German signatories,[22] the primary audience of the exhibition was always East German citizens themselves. The visitor was asked to engage not only as a consumer of the exhibition's content, but also as an active participant and worker in the Socialist project.

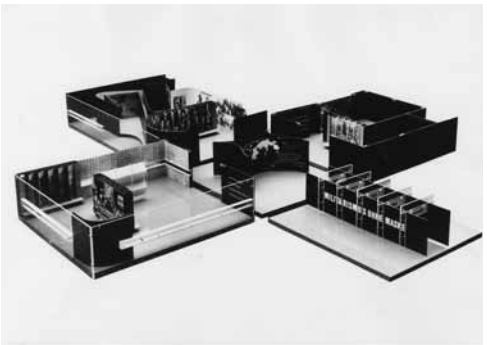
Earlier exhibitions, including Lissitzsky's Soviet Pavilion at the International Press Exhibition in Cologne in 1928 (widely known as *Pressa*) and Herbert Bayer's *Road to Victory* (Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1942), used dramatic staging of the visitor's choreography to create a sense of active involvement in the propagandistic aims of the exhibition.[23] Wittkugel's approach went one step further: It asked that viewers physically contribute to the installation and its spectacle.

Despite the exhibition's popular success, this proved to be a bittersweet moment for Wittkugel. Shortly after the exhibition opened, his poster design for the show, which adapted the visual language of the early avant-garde into a striking image of marching numerical years, was publicly criticized in the party organ *Neues Deutschland* as "Formalist," a denunciation following the Stalinist aesthetic line.[24] After the exhibition closed, a special commission of the Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus censured Wittkugel, with the conclusion that "his loyalty to the party is still very weak."[25] Wittkugel's written apology states, "I know that it is extremely important today [that I make time to train myself politically and theoretically in Communism], especially for my career."[26]

The following years witnessed a subtle change in Wittkugel's graphic design work, away from "formal," or abstract, solutions and toward a greater incorporation of figurative and human elements. Wittkugel's commissions from both the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED) and the party organ, *Neues Deutschland*, increased in the mid-1950s; his appointment as a full professor at the Kunsthochschule Berlin (now Weissensee Kunsthochschule Berlin) in 1952 signaled his heightened status as a designer. With the death of Stalin in 1953 and Khrushchev's subsequent denunciation of the Stalinist purges, the aesthetic regime in the GDR seemed to relax—while at the same time the political climate and economic competition between East and West Germany grew more heated.

Militarism Without Masks

Militarismus ohne Maske (Militarism Without Masks), which opened on June 7, 1957, represents Wittkugel's crowning achievement as an exhibition maker.



Model of the 1957 exhibition *Militarismus ohne Maske* (Militarism Without Masks) reconstructed in the late 1970s by Hannelore Lehmann and Günter Petzold

It combined the approaches and techniques of his earlier exhibitions into a total spectacle that was simultaneously factual and propagandistic. Working with a team of students from the Kunsthochschule Berlin, Wittkugel organized, conceptualized, and implemented the entire exhibition.[27] Staged on the border of East and West Berlin near the Friedrichstrasse train station, *Militarism Without Masks* was aimed at denizens of both city sectors (the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 would later prohibit such free movement and dual address). Yet the exhibition's content, revealed only over the course of a complete walkthrough, belied its partisan aim of excoriating West German industrialists and politicians. In contrast to earlier works, it eschewed an open-ended and inclusive display in favor of a precise, accumulative, and all-encompassing ideological argument.[28]

Charting the development of the military-industrial complex in Germany from 1870 through 1957, the running narrative coupled the commercial and financial growth of the Krupp family, who had manufactured munitions for the German state, with the tragic history of the "Krausens," a fictional working-class family that loses successive children in Germany's wars. These "historical" family stories complemented an explicitly interpretive strand that conjoined the horrors of World War II with West German warmongering.

The strong fusion of form and content in *Militarism Without Masks* emerged from its unified conception. Writing years later about the exhibition design, Wittkugel explained his core strategy:

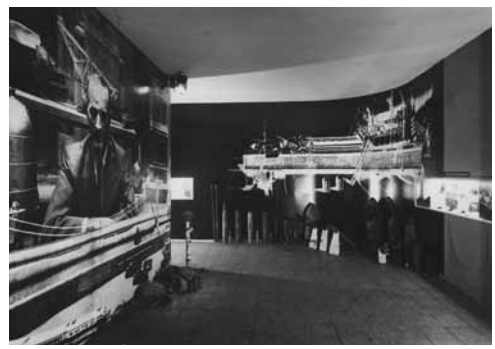
> The sequence and ordering of the exhibition elements is so determined, so that everything can be taken in—and most importantly—can be read, without slowing down your steps through the individual things. In this manner, one is in the flow, one takes in everything, [one] is captured by the atmosphere and is pulled along from document to document, from one kinetic three-sided curtain wall to another, from large-format photos and montages, short original film scenes, and audio recordings with the lying phrases of Hitler and Goebbels. The documentation is intentionally not "designed." Image and text documents were placed in an indirectly lit built-in vitrine row without any disturbing additional pieces.
> [. . .]
> Through this form, it was possible for the first time to show the horror of World War II unsparingly, yet so that it could be understood intelligibly and not only function in an emotionally terrifying way.[29]

As laid out above, the exhibition design strategy was complex and multitiered. Wittkugel recognized that the most effective way to convert skeptics was through an exhibition of "facts" in the form of "neutral" documents—an approach that built on his experience with historical materials in *Bach in His Time*—which were editorialized by their spatial montage with other, more po-

lemical, visual and multimedia elements. Modeled on the structure of a documentary film, the exhibition made an unfolding, room-to-room case, rather than overwhelming the viewer through immediate and complete immersion in its contents.

At the same time, like a shop window, the exhibition had to be seductive from the start. This corresponds with the British-Russian architect and designer Misha Black's injunction to the designers of propaganda exhibitions (in his 1950 book *Exhibition Design*): "The arrangement of sections must be such as to provide, at the entrance, sufficient excitement to arouse the visitor to a pitch of interest which will carry him through the exhibition on a sustained wave of attention."[30] The push and pull of these two poles determined the form and rhythm.

Militarism Without Masks began with a dramatic entrance that juxtaposed the bombastic, the poetic, and the polemical: a floor-to-ceiling photo mural of a nuclear explosion, a quotation by Bertolt Brecht on the self-destruction of Carthage, and a strong anti-military statement by Günther Kunert (who wrote all of the "poetic" wall texts in the exhibition): "If Germany wants to live, then militarism must die."[31] Branching off from this first, central room, three rooms were dedicated to different time periods of recent German history. Each room combined diverse images and objects, ranging from manipulated documentary photographs—"enlarged, reduced, added to, ordered together, juxtaposed, cut apart, put back together with other pieces, or placed as details beside large panoramas"[32]—to "straight" documents, physical objects (such as a soldier's helmet, a gravestone cross, artillery shells, and other war materials), and collections of other original materials, including death notices of soldiers culled from World War II newspapers. Consistent typographic treatments and custom-designed exhibition display pieces unified these disparate contents. Functioning like modern bus shelter advertisements, mechanical wall units cycled between three sequential states: the suffering of the Krausen family, the profits of the Krupp family, and a poetic summary by Kunert. Alternating dark and light spaces heightened the sense of a driving narrative.



Militarismus ohne Maske (Militarism Without Masks) installation view, Bahnhof Friedrichstrasse, Berlin, 1957, showing a large-format reproduction from an English newspaper of Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach in his study, juxtaposed with the helmets of fallen World War II soldiers and a makeshift battlefield grave. Opposite, a display of military armaments. The vitrines contain small-format photographs and captions of the Krupp and Krause family histories.

Dramatic multimedia elements such as antiwar film montages and aural "paintings"—featuring recorded sounds of cannons, gunfire, and battling troops from the different wars of 1870–71, 1914–18, and 1939–45—were calculated to trigger heightened psychological responses.[33] Further display strategies and details—such as graphics and messaging on the ceiling, large-

scale backlit typography, angled object labels, and recessed wall-vitrines inset into larger image walls—demonstrated Wittkugel's command of advanced display techniques.[34]

The visual rhetoric of *Militarism Without Masks* became increasingly virulent over the course of the exhibition. For example, one recurring motif featured the silhouetted heads of West German industrialists and politicians who enjoyed prominent careers in the postwar period despite their complicity with the Nazi regime.[35] Introduced in the last section of the first room, each "talking head" was presented in an "objective" manner: on a white background, flanked by texts contrasting their activities in 1945 with their current fortunes in 1957. The second room opened with a large photomontage of these same figures: shown from the chest up, hovering over a pile of gold coins and coiled serpents, with the spectral body of Adolf Hitler floating in their midst. The final montage of this room presented Hitler standing in full military garb next to the head of West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, who was collaged onto a second Hitler torso. The continuation of the wall featured the faces of the same group of West Germans, each grafted onto an identical Hitler body—an unmistakable visual indictment.[36] Evoking John Heartfield's early photomontages, this strong graphic statement and its repetition took on a nearly meme-like quality in its persistence to persuade.

Militarismus ohne Maske (Militarism Without Masks) installation view, Bahnhof Friedrichstrasse, Berlin, 1957, showing West German politicians and industrialists, juxtaposing their wartime activities with present-day status. Opposite, a wall of death announcements from World War II German newspapers. Above, vitrine with original photographic materials.

One of the exhibition's most arresting displays was a floor-to-ceiling, dramatically curved, panoramic photograph of West Berlin's major shopping district, the Kurfürstendamm. Buildings, storefronts, and commercial signage emerged in ground-up perspective—an illusionistic and immersive simulacrum of Berlin's other side. The viewpoint was low, as if one were standing in the middle of the street; the uncanny scene was absent of people. Instead of a traditional semicircular panorama, this display was presented on two straight walls joined at a curved corner, which accentuated the image's disorienting perspective. In the center of the installation, an actual newspaper kiosk stood stocked with German newspapers from both the World War II

Militarismus ohne Maske (Militarism Without Masks) installation view, Bahnhof Friedrichstrasse, Berlin, 1957, showing the large-format Kurfürstendamm panorama and newspaper kiosk, with inset vitrines of original materials. The central ceiling graphic says, "Approximately 80 agent centers in West Berlin," while other circles list the names of different anti-Soviet and anti–East German groups centered in the western part of the city.

era and the day of the exhibition opening, all brandishing militaristic titles and headlines. This insertion collapsed the wartime period with the current moment through an act of spatial and temporal collage. As Hermann Exner has commented, the dramatic scene of the panorama—with the bombed-out spire of West Berlin's Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in the background—transformed itself into a present-day, postapocalyptic vision of capitalist ruin.[37]

Several months after *Militarism Without Masks* closed, an exhibition in West Berlin employed a similar motif to different ends. *America Builds,* designed by Peter Blake (former curator of architecture and design at New York's Museum of Modern Art), opened at the Marshall House, Berlin, in September 1957. Organized by the United States Information Agency, the exhibition "featured full-scale, impeccably detailed mock-ups of the facades of some of the most noteworthy modern skyscrapers in the United States.… [The exhibition and its contents were] a deliberate and provocative contrast to the centrally controlled and ideologically dominated work being done in the eastern part of the city."[38] Like *Militarism Without Masks, America Builds* also featured a large-scale, curved panorama of an unpeopled landscape, but this photograph was of New York's skyscrapers. According to Blake, "A replica of the New York skyline and of the facades (in actual size) of a new type of city attempt to create the illusion that the visitor is actually among buildings instead of looking at pictures and models."[39] The mood and viewpoint of this American fantasy were radically different from its East German counterpart. The high, triumphal perspective emphasized New York as a marketplace of towering skyscrapers; the panorama offered a view of technological and economic progress as experienced by the very few at the top. How different from the street-level vantage point of Wittkugel's panorama, which positioned its viewer as a pedestrian in West Berlin who is confronted by the alarming conjunction of commerce and emptiness.

Reflections

In contrast with the Party's reception of his work on *Our Five-Year Plan,* Wittkugel received the GDR's National Prize, third class, for organizing and designing *Militarism Without Masks.* It was a watershed moment in his career. The exhibition was also symptomatic of larger changes that were occurring within the East German state. Largely abandoning the optimistic rhetoric and political idealism of the immediate postwar era, the GDR shifted to a harsh critique of the West German government as a gambit to retain its fleeing populace. Within the specific context of Wittkugel's oeuvre, *Militarism Without Masks* signaled a move away from inclusive and participatory gestures, toward a narrower and more controlled approach focused on convincing visitors through spectacular means. Unlike in early avant-garde ideological exhibi-

tions, the aim was no longer to "activate" viewers. Instead, they were corralled through a space; bombarded with objects, sounds, and images; and treated as docile consumers within an overwhelmingly persuasive environment.

The self-reflexive coda to *Militarism Without Masks* appeared in the exhibition *Klaus Wittkugel: Plakat, Buch, Ausstellung, Packung, Marke* (Posters, Books, Exhibitions, Packaging, Logos) in Berlin in 1961. This major retrospective included the entire range of graphic work by Wittkugel, as well as a selection of his exhibition designs, presented within the exhibition. An entire room was devoted to *Militarism Without Masks.* Photographic documentation of the 1957 exhibition dangled below a suspended grid. Hung at right angles, the boards' display implied a virtual room. Behind these images, the cinematic installation of the Kurfürstendamm—the most ambitious display in the original exhibition—stood reproduced at 1:1 scale. However, instead of a seamless, curved photographic reproduction as in the original, this time the panoramic backdrop was divided into panels; the modular grid-based display system ostensibly would allow for easy transport to the exhibition's other venues. Making a return appearance, the newspaper kiosk stood on a raised stage floor, which turned the entire reproduced display from a space to be entered into an object to be observed from a distance.[40]

Klaus Wittkugel: Plakat, Buch, Ausstellung, Packung, Marke (Posters, Books, Exhibitions, Packaging, Logos) installation view, Pavilion der Kunst, Berlin, 1961, showing the 1:1 reconstruction of the 1957 Kurfürstendamm installation from *Militarismus ohne Maske* (Militarism Without Masks) in panelized form. The newspaper kiosk is also represented here. Installation views of the original exhibition are mounted on boards and hung from the ceiling.

The logic of the immersive, total spectacle collided here with the idea of the exhibition's reproduction as a formal work, generating an exhibition within an exhibition that was diminished by its own desire for ubiquity and innovation. Significantly, the reproduced installation—ostensibly the one that Wittkugel was most proud of as a *designer*—was the most evocative and symbolic of the original exhibition, rather than a re-creation of the more plainly ideological and polemical displays.

Yet history plays its own tricks, even conspiring to shift the meaning and content of an exhibition while it still stands. Wittkugel's retrospective was on view from July 7 until August 26, 1961, in East Berlin. During the evening of August 13, 1961, the East German authorities began to erect the Berlin Wall. Euphemistically dubbed the "Anti-Fascist Protection Wall" by its creators, it was designed to prevent East Germans from escaping to the West—the very opposite of *Our Five-Year Plan*'s "Wall of Approval." In the midst of its exhibition run, Wittkugel's *mise en abyme* of West Berlin's premier shopping district suddenly and inadvertently began to represent something dangerously off-limits and inaccessible to the majority of the East German citizenry. A double separation had occurred.

Exhibition design, particularly in its more commercial or applied forms, is often maligned for catering to desire: as a means to close the gap between audience and object, or as a way of selling through display. However, as Brian O'Doherty's *Inside the White Cube* essays demonstrated almost 40 years ago, there is no neutral condition of exhibition; the white cube space cloaks its own market ideology and value proposition.[41] Wittkugel's major exhibition design work, particularly *Militarism Without Masks,* occupies the opposite end of this spectrum: the creation of spaces and experiences with clear ideological aims and transparent methods. Nevertheless, to a contemporary viewer, both devices appear dangerously charged. One sells an idea through the total mobilization of image, document, object, media, and display, and the other sells an object (or an idea) through the persuasive authority of a pristine and "undesigned" gallery presentation. The power of exhibition design—to create a complete world, to immerse, to beguile, and to convince—is one that is valued not only within advanced retail operations and repressive states, but also by many contemporary artists.[42] For exhibition makers and artists, especially those aspiring to challenge contemporary market constructs, counterexamples such as Wittkugel may serve as significant historical figures of both instruction and dissuasion.

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All translations are by the author unless noted otherwise.

Notes

1. "1926. My most important work as an artist began: the design of exhibitions." El Lissitzky, *Proun und Wolkenbügel* (Dresden: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1977): 115, cited in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "From Faktura to Factography" *October* 30 (fall 1984): 102.

2. For further reading, see Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998) and Ulrich Pohlmann, "El Lissitzky's Exhibition Designs: The Influence of His Work in Germany, Italy, and the United States, 1923–1943" in Margaret Tupitsyn, *El Lissitzky: Beyond the Abstract Cabinet: Photography, Design, Collaboration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999): 52–64.

3. Jack Masey and Conway Lloyd Morgan, *Cold War Confrontations: U.S. Exhibitions and Their Role in the Cultural Cold War* (Baden, Germany: Lars Müller, 2008).

4. Examples of such postwar manuals include Misha Black, *Exhibition Design* (London: The Architectural Press, 1950); Richard P. Lohse, *Neue Ausstellungsgestaltung = Nouvelles conceptions de l'exposition, New Design in Exhibitions* (Zurich: Verlag für Architektur, 1953); and George Nelson, *Display* (New York: Interiors Library, 1953).

5. Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, ed., *El Lissitzky: Maler, Architekt, Typograf, Fotograf* (Dresden, Germany: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1967), inside front book jacket. It is interesting to note that this, the major monograph on Lissitzky's life's work and still a primary reference work, first appeared in East Germany, under the same imprint as Klaus Wittkugel's monograph a decade later.

6. Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005): 167–73.

7. Wittkugel was fluent in both the idiom of the Modernist avant-garde and current "Western" design and advertising techniques. Axel Bertram, his student at the Kunsthochschule Berlin in the early 1950s, remembers him showing their class the work of the American corporate designer Paul Rand and El Lissitzky. Author interview with Axel Bertram, Berlin, November 23, 2009.

8. Heinz Wolf, *Klaus Wittkugel* (Dresden, Germany: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1964): 8.

9. Bundesarchiv NY 4182 / 1030 (Nachlass Walter Ulbricht).

10. Bundesarchiv DC 20-I/3 32, page 110.

11. "350 000 sahen 'Unser Fünfjahrplan,'" *Berliner Zeitung* (February 22, 1951): 6.

12. Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Klaus-Wittkugel-Archiv, Mappe "Fotos 14."

13. Erhard Frommhold, *Klaus Wittkugel: Fotografie Gebrauchsgrafik Plakat Ausstellung Zeichen* (Dresden, Germany: VEB Verlag der Kunst, 1979): 181.

14. Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Klaus-Wittkugel-Archiv, Mappe "Fotos 14."

15. Mike Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic 1945–199*0 (Essex, England: Pearson, 2000): 55.

16. The East German cultural scholar Ina Merkel has astutely observed, "It is wrong to say that socialist advertising was not competitive; yet its aim was not the hocking of brands or products but rather the legitimacy of the 'people's economy' itself." Ina Merkel, "Alternative Rationalities: Strange Dreams, Absurd Utopias" in *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008): 334.

17. "Ein Plan für uns," *Nacht-Express. Die illustrierte Abendzeitung* (January 9, 1951): 2.

18. Anna Jackson, *Expo: International Expositions 1851–2010* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2008): 92.

19. Misha Black, *Exhibition Design* (London: The Architectural Press, 1950): 11–12.

20. Ironically, this very focus on performative labor was suggested by a wall-size quotation of Josef Stalin at the exhibition entrance: "One must finally understand that, of all the valuable forms of capital there are in the world, the most valuable and decisive capital are people themselves." Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Klaus-Wittkugel-Archiv, Mappe "Fotos 14."

21. Hermann Exner, in *Klaus Wittkugel: Plakat, Buch, Ausstellung, Packung, Marke* (Berlin: VBKD, 1961): 10.

22. St., "'Bitte, nehmen Sie auch meinen Baustein!' Ueberraschung in der Fünfjahresplan-Ausstellung / Tausende errichten eine Friedenswand," *Nacht-Express. Die illustrierte Abendzeitung* (January 18, 1951): 6.

23. Ulrich Pohlmann in Tupitsyn, 64.

24. Prem Krishnamurthy, "The People's Representation: On Staged Graphics in Klaus Wittkugel's Work," *The Highlights* no. XV (2011), http://thehighlights.org/wp/the-peoples-representation#the-peoples-representation.

25. Bundesarchiv DY30-IV2-11-v-4357. 21.

26. Bundesarchiv DY30-IV2-11-v-4357. 20.

27. The students included Margret Arnold, Karl-Heinz Bobbe, Manfred Brückels, Dietrich Dorfstecher, Ingrid Schuppan, and Wolfgang Simon. Frommhold, 263.

28. "In and through this exhibition, Klaus Wittkugel becomes a radical photomonteur. . . . The exhibition itself is a total montage." Frommhold, 176.

29. Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Klaus-Wittkugel-Archiv, Nr. 12.

30. Black, 31.

31. Frommhold, 161.

32. Frommhold, 176.

33. Peter Günther, "Militarismus ohne Maske" in *Neue Werbung* 10 (1957): 8–10, cited in Frommhold, 160.

34. Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Klaus-Wittkugel-Archiv, Mappe "Militarismus ohne Maske."

35. This criticism was far from groundless: Major figures in Konrad Adenaur's BDR government, such as Hans Globke, as well as West German industrialists such as Friedrich Flick (both of whom were featured in this part of the exhibition) did achieve material and political influence in the postwar period despite their wartime activities. At the same time, though, the exhibition was one-sided in that it did not mention the comparable complicity of East German politicians in the totalitarian Nazi regime. See also Judt, 59–61.

36. Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Klaus-Wittkugel-Archiv, Mappe "Militarismus ohne Maske."

37. Hermann Exner, "Dramatiker der Bildsprache," *Sonntag* (February 19, 1961): 8.

38. Jack Masey and Conway Lloyd Morgan, *Cold War Confrontations* (Baden, Germany: Lars Müller, 2008): 98.

39. Franck Klaus, *Exhibitions: A Survey of International Designs* (New York: Praeger, 1961): 130.

40. Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Klaus-Wittkugel-Archiv, Mappe "Fotos 16."

41. Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (San Francisco: Lapis Press, 1976).

42. Thomas Hirschhorn comes to mind as an artist with means that are related to Wittkugel's, though they are put to different ends. Not insignificantly, Hirschhorn was a graphic designer in the political collective Grapus before turning to art.

SIX x SIX

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ZOE BUTT

NAZLI GÜRLEK

DANIEL MUZYCZUK

REMCO DE BLAAIJ

PATRICK D. FLORES

NICOLAUS SCHAFHAUSEN

ZOE BUTT

Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions
1996
Curated by Apinan Poshyananda, organized by the Asia Society, New York
Asia Society, New York; Grey Art Gallery of New York University; and Queens Museum of Art, New York
(traveled to Canada, Thailand, and Australia)

When I was a student of art history in the mid-1990s in Australia (majoring in postcolonial Asian studies), written resources in English on contemporary Asian art were hard to come by. This exhibition and its catalogue, therefore, were of central importance to me, and remain a significant educational tool for the field. The show included 70 works by 27 artists, including Bhupen Khakhar (India), G. Ravinder Reddy (India), Dadang Christanto (Indonesia), Chatchai Puipia (Thailand), Choi Jeong-Hwa (South Korea), and FX Harsono (Indonesia), and the book contained critical writings by leading thinkers such as Geeta Kapur, Marian Pastor Roces, Thomas McEvilley, and Vishakha Desai, most of whom were based in the region. The exhibition discussed artistic production not according to ideas of nationhood, but instead as a set of relationships linked by tensions between cultural traditions, a concept still relevant to many curatorial summaries of "Asia" today. The curator, Apinan Poshyananda, clearly stated that the project did not aim to present a conclusive summary of the "Asian" region, but rather aspired to serve as an introduction to its diversity for predominantly North American audiences. What was particularly compelling about the scholarship was its attempt to unravel how Euro-American curators were attempting to engage global aesthetics, and its commitment to embracing alternative methods of assessing works of art.

NAZLI GÜRLEK

Simply Botiful
2006
Hauser & Wirth Coppermill, London

Situated in a disused copper factory on a back street of London's Brick Lane, Christoph Büchel's immersive installation *Simply Botiful* was epic in scale and conceptual density. The huge building was staged as a cheap hotel or temporary lodging, with rooms decorated as an archeologist's study, a psychoanalyst's office, and a prostitute's home. Corridors lined with crash pads led to a vast warehouse full of worn-out refrigerators, televisions, radios, and other electronic devices. Diverse cultural contexts were juxtaposed with more political details—a pile of *sajjadas,* for instance, or copies of Adolf Hitler's 1925 book *Mein Kampf* translated into Arabic—which provoked an overall sense of perplexity, even as the smells and sounds were palpably real. The smell of beer and a stereo playing heavy-metal music elicited an uncanny yet exciting sense of voyeurism, as if the residents of these spaces might reappear at any instant. The overall installation, with all those unmade beds, empty pizza cartons, rusted machinery, messy bathrooms, and pornographic centerfolds, felt uncanny, at moments even violent, like a place of authority and misery, both a command center and an asylum, reminiscent of Alice's rabbit hole or Charlie Kaufman's psychologically unsettling film sets. To what end all those overlapping layers of reality? Whether it was a dystopian vision of the near future, an archeological study of the present, or a dig into the subconscious, I am still not sure. But it stuck with me, provoking more questions than any kind of certainty.

Çaylak Sokak **(Çaylak Street)**
1986
Maçka Sanat Galerisi, Istanbul

DANIEL MUZYCZUK

"Awake Are Only the Spirits": On Ghosts and Their Media
2009
Curated by Inke Arns and Thibaut de Ruyter
Hartware MedienKunstVerein, Dortmund, Germany

"Awake Are Only the Spirits" took as its subject the paranormal: ghosts, spirits, and communication from beyond the grave. The starting point was a collection of audiotape recordings made by the Swedish painter and filmmaker Friedrich Jürgenson of Electronic Voice Phenomena—fragmentary vocal sounds discovered in recordings of white noise playing on a radio receiver—which Jürgenson interpreted as the voice of his deceased mother. The curators, Arns and de Ruyter, then traced other artists' fascination with breakthroughs from the beyond through the works of Susan Hiller, Chris Marker, Suzanne Treister, Carl Michael von Hausswolff, and Erik Bünger, among others. Taking a cue from its subject—straightforward recordings into which half-intelligible signals from unknown, possibly supernatural entities erupt—the exhibition worked at two levels. In one sense it was just a typical group show, united by a thematic concern. But the exhibition's narrative suggested another layer, arcane and subject to interpretation, beneath. It used ghost stories to lure the public into visiting an art institution, giving the curators a chance to speak about art on a more profound level. The metaphor was hidden in the noise aesthetics where a certain message was potentially concealed. Visitors became researchers, unfolding the mysteries of art's essential "undefinability."

Dark Monarch: Magic and Modernity in British Art
2009
Curated by Martin Clark,

REMCO DE BLAAIJ

Friedl Dicker-Brandeis: Life, Art, Teaching
2001
Curated by Elena Makarova
Bauhaus-Archiv Museum of Design, Berlin

In 2001 I visited the Bauhaus Archiv as a student with my architect friends. I knew very little then about the impact of the Bauhaus on the 20th century. I was particularly impressed by a show around the work of Frederika "Friedl" Dicker-Brandeis, a former Bauhaus student and teacher who left in 1923. As she herself did not survive the World War II concentration camps (she died in 1944 in Auschwitz; her husband survived) the exhibition showed 300 drawings by her students, mainly children who took drawing lessons in the "model ghetto" at Terezín where she established an art school in 1943. It was amazing to see the circumstances under which Brandeis had operated, first in the Nazi model ghetto and later in the camp, training thousands of children to sustain some sort of hope through artistic expression. It showed the entanglement between politics and children's education, as well as the difficulty of smuggling in both materials and ideas. Although the scattered drawings, which were displayed as if in a classroom, felt less important than Brandeis's ambition to instill spiritual creativity in the children, the works spoke to a core experience of art for me—a human experience—even if one does not know what such an experience entails, or what defines "being human." This exhibition has stayed with me to this day, not so much because of how it looked or the specific works in it, but because of the human experience that it was able to bring across.

Hito Steyerl
2014
Curated by Annie Fletcher

PATRICK D. FLORES

Towards a Mystical Reality: A Documentation of Jointly Initiated Experiences
1974
Curated by Redza Piyadasa and Suleiman Esa
Sudut Penulis, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Towards a Mystical Reality was cast by its artist-curators as a "documentation" of everyday objects, isolated as "experiences" to be intuited intellectually and phenomenologically. These experiences included half-empty Coca-Cola bottles, a creased raincoat, a potted plant, a birdcage, a pile of human hair, and a series of happenstances articulated in a poetic vein via enigmatic phrases such as "an empty canvas on which many shadows have already fallen." The artists seemed keen on exploring the relationships between object, space, and time beyond the philosophical ambit of Cartesian rationality. The project was significant for mediating a moment of conceptualism in a postcolonial site and attempting to foreground an epistemological break from what Piyadasa and Esa called in their essay-manifesto "Western reality." This had profound implications in light of the contentious predicaments brought about by the demands of identity in Malaysia at that time, and the promise of the mystical as a conception of reality elsewhere.

Piglas: Art at the Crossroads
1986
Cultural Center of the Philippines, Manila

NICOLAUS SCHAFHAUSEN

8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art
2014
Curated by Juan A. Gaitán
Berlin

This year's Berlin Biennale put its focus on artists and their new productions, and was somehow very silent. Silence didn't have a negative connotation in this case; it instead encouraged the visitor to look more closely and come to grips with the works. In particular I found the works by Saâdane Afif, Olaf Nicolai, and Rosa Barba most memorable. Afif's new installation *Là-bas* (Over There, 2014) deals with notions of "here" and "there." Nicolai's in-situ work *Szondi/Eden* (2014) relocated the floor decoration of a now-defunct East Berlin shopping mall to the entrance of the Museen Dahlem, one of the four biennial sites. Barba, in her 35-millimeter film *Subconscious Society* (2014), documents the beauty of the tides on the coast of Kent, England; it introduces the story of the Albert Hall in Manchester, a building rich with tradition that, before it stood empty for many years, was a theater, a cinema, and a parliament building. I worked with the curator, Juán A. Gaitan, for a long time at Witte de With in Rotterdam, and I find his approach very appealing: He puts the artists center stage, sets a soft framework, and observes the process in which the artists develop their projects. This is how the best works come about.

ZOE BUTT

Cities on the Move: Contemporary Asian Art on the Turn of the 21st Century
1997
Curated by Hou Hanru and Hans Ulrich Obrist
Exhibited in Austria, France, the United States, Denmark, Britain, Thailand, and Finland (1997–2000), and the French Pavilion at the 1999 Venice Biennale

This exhibition was a striking contrast to *Traditions/Tensions* in that it reflected the dynamism of change that continues to spread across the rapidly developing urban communities of "Asia." Working with architects (for example Rem Koolhaas) and artists in often-makeshift gallery spaces, the curators presented work that was equally transient, ephemeral, and virtual. Whereas *Traditions/Tensions* highlighted the cultural traditions that persist in contemporary practice, Hou and Obrist focused on the emerging voices of the region, often highlighting the role of the Asian diaspora in invigorating local art practices. This was an exhibition that sought to question the basis of "modernism" in Asia, arguing for a multitude of differing "modernisms" responding to repressive regimes of imperialism and colonialism, while also re-determining historical consciousness through the disenfranchisements of globalizing capitalism. In focusing on the idea of the city, this exhibition sought to challenge the construct of the "nation," considering the population of urban centers as in some sense "post-national." This contention drew on histories of migration, historical trade routes, cultural ritual, and linguistic dominance rather than national sovereignty and national "schools." *Cities on the Move* was, too, one of the first exhibitions to showcase contemporary Asian art to European audiences, and it is considered by many of its artists to have been one of the most significant platforms in the development of their careers.

NAZLI GÜRLEK

Opened in 1976, Maçka Sanat Galerisi has been a crucial intellectual hub in Istanbul for almost 40 years. It has introduced to the Turkish public the most radical tendencies in art, including important new work in painting and sculpture, Postminimalism, Conceptual art, and institutional critique, and it has transformed the course of local art production completely. In this impressive history, Sarkis's 1986 solo show *Çaylak Sokak* (Çaylak Street) stands out for its innovative employment of the mystical quality of objects of personal significance, and for combining personal memories with a collective social history. The artist's first show back in Istanbul after he relocated to Paris in 1964, it was a series of installations of found and readymade objects, including a shoemaker's stall, a lamp radio, a bathtub, a bird trinket, a minimalist metal construction, a metal street sign, audio recordings of Soviet director Andrei Tarkovsky's 1983 film *Nostalgia,* and some paintings. All of these objects bore autobiographical details, and the installation as a whole originated from his family home in the eponymous Çaylak Street in Istanbul's Talimhane district, which was once largely populated by families of Armenian origin. After its appearance at Maçka, the piece traveled to the Centre Pompidou in Paris in 1989 to be included on a railed platform in the landmark exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre.* In 2002, Sarkis reinstalled the exhibition permanently in his parents' now-empty apartment on Çaylak Street, thereby bringing it back home again. This return symbolizes an act of resistance—of the best kind—against social displacement.

Lighter
2008
Curated by Dr. Joachim Jäger
Hamburger Bahnhof—Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin

This solo exhibition brought together more than 200 works by Wolfgang Tillmans from 1986 to 2008, among them pivotal

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Michael Bracewell, and Alun Rowlands
Tate St. Ives, England

This is not the first (and of course it won't be the last) attempt to undermine a certain notion of Modernism that is connected with rationalism. The setting of the exhibition was drawn from the scandalous 1962 novel *Dark Monarch* by the artist and writer Sven Berlin. Berlin had lived in an artists' colony in St. Ives in the 1940s, and his novel presents a mythologized version of that Cornish town and artistic community. In the show, this narrative served to unfold conflicts and undercurrents within the history of 20th-century British Modernism. Gloomy paintings of Cornwall's landscape by Paul Nash, Graham Sutherland, or John Piper became suddenly "testimonies" of the occultist Aleister Crowley's brief habitation of the region. The exhibition supplemented these historical works with pieces by contemporary artists such as Goshka Maçuga and Jeremy Millar, who also work on the narrow border between the rational and the mythical. In curatorial terms, the success of *Dark Monarch* could be described as an attempt to vivify works dormant in museum repositories, thus presenting a good example of a strategy of reactivating or reframing an institution's collection, and using marginal works to disrupt stabilized narratives of art's history. Moreover, by connecting the Cornish landscape and geology to mythology, the exhibition emphasized the qualities that made it the ideal habitat for the discourse of speculative realism, represented by the journal *Collapse* (2006–), to develop. The art institution was surrounded by graveyard and seashore, and a story that has not yet been told.

Populista
2011–ongoing
Curated by Michał Libera
Bôłt Records, Warsaw, Poland

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Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, the Netherlands

Hito Steyerl's mid-career retrospective was one of the highlights of this year. More than an overview of key works by the German artist and writer, it was designed in collaboration with the architects at Markus Miessen's studio and focused on the concept of circulation. Weirdly enough, the result did not place Steyerl's work in any chronological or philosophical logic. To quote the title of her 2013 video, "how not to be seen" is one of her central credos, which the artist addresses imperfectly, inasmuch as she is at the same time committed to bringing novel historical connections into view. Indeed, every material is shown to have a history and a source, from the recordings she borrows from the web to the ingenious tracking of the fabrication and recycling of aluminum (which moves far beyond the thin metal's material form) to the historical connections between the battlefield and the museum. In a show that was exactly not a retrospective, and that emphasized an ongoing incompleteness, Steyerl's works nevertheless felt close and intimate, going well beyond the usual forms of self-reflective critique. Through this closeness, I ultimately grasped the complex liquidity in which her work takes place.

100 Notes—100 Thoughts
2013
Commissioned by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, edited by Bettina Funcke
***dOCUMENTA (13)*, Kassel, Germany**

100 Notes—100 Thoughts was not technically an exhibition—it was a series of 100 "notebooks" produced in advance of *dOCUMENTA (13)*—but it is nonetheless worth considering this massive undertaking as an exhibition. Conceptualized as

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The cultural policy of the Philippines during the reign of Ferdinand Marcos (from 1965 to 1986) was shaped by First Lady Imelda Marcos, who centralized the programs at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, a structure that stood on land reclaimed from Manila Bay. When the Marcos regime was deposed in 1986, artists who'd felt shut out of the system stormed the gates, so to speak, to put up their own exhibition, which, according to one of the curators of the institution, was ultimately impossible to curate. (Such impossibility was interesting, given the control exercised by Imelda's lieutenants.) This exhibition certainly represented the opposite pole, a sort of art potluck, to which anyone who claimed to have made an artwork about the state of the nation, or who claimed to be an artist, was invited to submit a work. In the exhibition's catalogue, the critic Alice Guillermo tried to articulate the possibilities of art after Marcos: "A new phenomenon is taking place: Instead of art running away from history to seek a mythical realm, a no-man's-land where neither time nor country matters, present art is now running to capture history, which in recent times has been exceedingly fluid. Most artists are now out entrapping bright luminous moments, insights, from the quicksilver flux of lived history." This gathering of the multitude, as it were, was surely instructive. How much democratic space does art need to more urgently represent the world?

***Seni Rupa Baru* (New Visual Art)**
1975
Taman Ismail Marzkuki, Jakarta, Indonesia

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I See a Face. Do You See a Face.
2014
Curated by Barbara Rüdiger
mumok, Vienna

Flaka Haliti's exhibition at mumok (Vienna's museum of modern art) was a surprise from a young artist recently graduated from art school. Five fake concrete pillars stood in the exhibition space, blocking both the view and the path. Ten photographic works hung on the walls, showing various cloud formations in a radiant blue sky. Just as in our childhood days, when we imagined we saw an animal or a face in every passing cloud, Haliti had drawn a face in each cloud—faces that are grim, devious, wise, funny, or sad. The confrontation between the massive concrete pillars (modeled on the UN barrier walls in Kosovo) and the lightness of the cloud photographs pointed to a situation somewhere between freedom, isolation, and captivity. In the video work *I Miss You, I Miss You, 'Till I Don't Miss You Anymore* (2014), Haliti has collected love letters from all over the world, displaying them as if on a computer so that we see each word being typed, phrases written and then deleted. The letters express the first feelings of a burgeoning love, erotic moments, and also loss and parting. Haliti's works are delicate, almost invisible interventions, with an apparent lightness that transforms into poignant emotionality.

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APT 2002: Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art
2002
Curated by Maud Page and Suhanya Raffel
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia

This exhibition opened with a commissioned performance by Pasifika Divas: a group of Maori, Pakeha, and Pacific Islander artists and performers taking the practice of body adornment and music to another level of sophistication and complexity. It was the largest crowd I had ever seen gathered for a contemporary art event in Australia. This ambitious exhibition was spearheaded by Suhanya Raffel, then the head of Asian and Pacific Art at Queensland Art Gallery. It challenged the presumed timeline and form of contemporary art development across the region, demonstrating that many seminal players were not merely influenced by Western art, but critical and equal contributors to its discourses. With carefully considered displays of multiple works spanning the breadth of their respective practices, pioneers such as Lee Ufan (Korea/Japan), Yayoi Kusama (Japan), Nam June Paik (South Korea), and Montien Boonma (Thailand) were the anchors of the show. Their work led audiences to understand relations between Asian and Western artistic concepts of chance (for instance the Fluxus movement and the contributions of Nam June Paik), the challenge to Western Modernism by the Mono-ha (School of Things) movement and Lee Ufan, and the melding of Buddhist thought with references to Arte Povera (Montien Boonma), to name but a few. Within a triennial platform, this exhibition challenged, in visual form, the stereotype that contemporary Asian art has come into its own only since the 1990s. With works on loan from as early as 1960 (the painting *Pacific Ocean* by Yayoi Kusama), *APT 2002* reaffirmed Queensland Art Gallery's commendable policy of reappraising what

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pieces such as Tillmans's early photocopy works (1988–90), the artist's installation for the Turner Prize in 2000, and bountiful numbers of his photographs: portraits, images of youth culture, still lifes, urban views, and landscapes. Present too were abstract works, produced directly in the darkroom. A separate room presented the elaborate table installation *Truth Study Center* (2005–7), a massive archive of images, advertisements, and news reports on political events taken from a variety of print sources, providing a compelling look into the photographer's process and fascinations. Club culture, fashion, personal life, and artistic career swam into contact with exploding vehicles and global war. Copies of photographs previously published in *i-D*—Tillmans's favorite outlet since the mid-1980s—were shown alongside images intended for gallery exhibitions, rendering the distinctions between these different channels of image consumption totally obsolete. Exhibitionary arrangement stood out as a major concern. Pictures were mounted on walls and tables in a casual—or, rather, intuitive—fashion: some small, some monumental, high on the wall or low, isolated or in groups. Most exciting, though, was the exhibition's basic argument, which linked Tillmans's life and concerns to the history of the photographic medium itself, and to the surprising and diverse possibilities of light's impressions on paper. Knowingly toggling between figure and abstraction, casualness and intuition, curled-up pants and crumpled paper sheets, Tillmans allowed us to see that what really matters is the eye that perceives.

Neoplastic Room. Open Composition
2013
Curated by Jarosław Suchan
Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź, Poland

The story of the *Neoplastic Room* at the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, Poland, is bound

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A record label commissioning radical interpretations of avant-garde music, Populista is an example of "curating in the most exploded sense," to alter an expression coined by Dexter Sinister. Michał Libera's initial idea was to explore the territory of interpretation, misinterpretation, and fidelity in contemporary music, asking questions about authenticity and copying, being obedient to instructions, and mishearing them on purpose and by lapse. Populista's commissions have included Rinus van Alebeek's rerecording of Luc Ferrari's *Cycle des Souvenirs* (1995–2000), a composition based on field recordings, at the composer's house, incorporating the sounds of everyday life; or Jean-Louis Costes's adapted reading of the Marquis de Sade's 1787 novel *Justine.* The project is also about economy—of finances and of action—compressing a charged idea into the smallest possible unit of time. (And this, in turn, is what it has in common with both noise and pop music; the label's reference to "populism" is not wholly ironic.) By offering musicians and composers a small "space" between creative confinement and liberation, Libera acts as a curator does. Even if this project is strictly musical, the logic has much in common with that of exhibitions.

Headless: From the Public Record
2009
Curated by Mats Stjernstedt and Helena Holmberg
Index, Stockholm

I admire projects that are much larger than any exhibition, but involve exhibitions as a necessity: The exhibition grows directly from the project itself, but is not able to provide all the data needed to fully understand it. *Headless: From the Public Record*, for example, built upon a project begun in 2007 by the collaborative team of Simon Goldin and Jakob Senneby,

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a "mental workshop," these publications are perhaps more compelling than the exhibition that resulted from them. The exhibition argued for an embrace not only of art but also of other fields of inquiry, a move that has never been alien to artistic work, and the preliminary notebooks provide insight into the diverse influences of the contributors. Inherently fragmented in nature, the notebooks cross topics and disciplines naturally, without the burden of self-conscious argumentation. Mariam and Ashraf Ghani's is particularly notable. The authors produced an alternative lexicon on Afghanistan, one of the regions of interest for the main show; it is an imaginative confluence of professional and personal perspectives around the struggles of Afghan culture and approaches, in turn, a different vision of the Western world. These are serious matters, but the authors treat them with humor as well, an often-undervalued notion in times of conflict. It was exactly this feeling that was missing in the exhibition. The notebooks provide a concentrated, serious, humoristic, speculative, and unfinished approach to artistic practice. Where the exhibition failed, the notebooks manage to think elastically about disciplines within and outside art, reaching out to provide the best of ontological and scientific thought as well as the poetic memory we could call imagination.

Cristo Salvador Galería
2014
Organized by Jazmín Valdés, Otari Oliva, Julio C. Llópis, and Marcel Márquez
Havana, Cuba

When I visited Cristo Salvador, an apartment gallery in the Vedado district of Havana, it seemed to be questioning whether it should continue exhibiting art at all or focus instead on other approaches. Until then, it had shown many younger Cuban artists, such as the graffiti artist El Sexto, a

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In 1974, as a challenge against the authority of art institutions in Indonesia, a coterie of young artists organized the protest Desember Hitam (Black December) and wrote a manifesto that sharply critiqued the norms and criteria underlying the validation of modern and current art. They were specifically responding to the Indonesian Paintings Biennale and its orthodox selection criteria. In 1975, some of these artists and other peers put together this exhibition. It formed the nucleus of what would later be called the Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia (Indonesian New Art Movement), which was mainly galvanized through this exhibition, in which artists presented works that were "highly unconventional and went beyond paint and canvas."[1] The jury of the 1974 exhibition had regarded the challenge by the artists as a reflection of negative foreign influence. In this rupture in the Indonesian art world, incipient expressions of modernist critique would surface, and so insinuate a possible "contemporaneity" through installation, activism, and explorations of the *sanggar,* or workshop, model in a constellation of art networks and communities across Southeast Asia.

First Asia-Pacific Triennial
1993
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia

In 1993, Queensland Art Gallery convened a triennial that gathered contemporary art from a geography specified as "Asia-Pacific." This proposition of a locus was salient, but with it came the problematics of a biennial procedure contingent on a re-

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Hreinn Friðfinnsson and Bruce McLean
2014
Curated by Krist Gruijthuijsen
Grazer Kunstverein, Austria

For this exhibition, Krist Gruijthuijsen paired works by Hreinn Friðfinnsson and Bruce McLean, two conceptual artists who work in a similar fashion and are of the same generation, but had never met before this occasion. In Graz, their works entered into symbiotic confrontations. Friðfinnsson's *Pair* (2004), a shoe and a mirror image of the shoe, appeared alongside McLean's photo series *Pose Work for Plinths* (1971), in which he comically attempts to present his body as an art object. Both artists examine ideas such as the body, sculpture, and nature in their work. This concise exhibition was augmented by the permanent programs *The Peacock*, *Ständig ausgestellt* (Permanently on Display), and *The Members Library,* situated in the entrance area that visitors crossed before entering the temporary show. In *The Peacock*, works by Nina Beier, Ian Wilson, Jason Dodge, Jennifer Tee, and others comprise an ongoing, accumulative group show that constantly questions forms of presentation and also looks into the history of the Grazer Kunstverein itself. For instance, Will Stuart (a collaboration between Will Holder and Stuart Bailey) is presenting a replica of *Struttura per parlare in piedi* (Structure for Talking While Standing, 2012),

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"contemporary" means to contemporary Asian art.

Impossible Is Nothing
2008
Long March Space, Beijing

This solo exhibition by Xu Zhen (who now calls himself MadeIn Company) was a socially subversive project. One of the two new interactive installations it presented, a reenactment of Kevin Carter's Pulitzer Prize–winning photograph of the Sudanese famine of 1993, caused an explosive controversy among China's art blog sites. To make the performative piece *Starving of Sudan* (2008), Xu Zhen filled the gallery with dirt, hay, and dying shrubbery, and situated a near-naked toddler (of Nigerian descent, from a family who had migrated to Guangzhou) in front of a black vulture, which nodded strangely in the child's direction. Soon a flood of images of the unabashed child, snapped by eager spectators, appeared on Chinese social media. Intended to last a month, by the second week the performance had divided the staff of Long March: Some were worried about the child's welfare during a winter freeze in Beijing, and questions were raised around the child's "employment," suggesting that the mother had exploited him for financial compensation. The exhibition revealed a thread of arrogance in the Chinese art world concerning issues of race, class, and gender, and challenged both artist and institution to consider the ethics of labor in the production and display of art—matters complicated further by the fact that China's wealth is heavily invested across African nations.

Interwoven Globe: The Worldwide Textile Trade, 1500–1800
2013
Curated by Amelia Peck
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

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to the tumultuous and changing attitudes toward the legacy of Constructivist art in that country. On the occasion of the museum's move into the former palace of the industrialist Maurycy Poznański in 1946, the museum's director, Marian Minich, invited the Constructivist painter Władysław Strzemiński to design an exhibition space devoted to the display of the pioneering collection of international avant-gardist works gathered in the 1930s on the initiative of his collective grupa "a.r." This innovative room-scale abstraction immediately became the museum's centerpiece—until it was dismantled in 1950, following the artistic agenda of then-dominant Social Realism. Rebuilt in 1960 by the artist's student Bolesław Utkin (Strzemiński died in 1952), the room remains in place today even though most of the collection was later moved to a new location, called ms^2, several blocks away. Rather than move Strzemiński's work, which had been designed specifically for its architectural situation, the museum, under the direction of Jarosław Suchan, commissioned new works by contemporary artists. These included Monika Sosnowska, Jarosław Fliciński, Nairy Baghramian, Magdalena Fernandez Arriaga, Liam Gillick, and the Twożywo Group, each of whom reflected, sometimes rather irreverently, on the legacy of the Constructivist avant-garde. Exhibited alongside historic works by Katarzyna Kobro, Theo van Doesburg, Georges Vantongerloo, and Henryk Berlewi, the contemporary works interrogate issues inherent to Strzemiński's design—for instance Unism, his theory of the unity of object and space—and reinterpret them from a contemporary viewpoint. *Open Composition* doesn't shy away from important questions about tradition, history, and cultural heritage in the production and display of art—a gesture worth treasuring from an institution devoted to the conservation and study of the Eastern European avant-garde.

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connecting the French polymath Georges Bataille's notion of the *acèphale* with secret societies and the idea of "offshoring" in the moves of capital under neoliberal rule. Expanding and growing over the course of several exhibitions, the project eventually resulted in the ghostwritten criminal novel *Looking for Headless,* which involves the two artists as characters in a plot related to art—a narrative recursion that questions authorship and narrative structure in the construction of artists' identities, and that, in summary form at least, suggests the most complex piece of art work ever made. But to get back to the show itself: Along with the release of new chapters of the novel, the strategy was strikingly simple. The opening night presented a talk by the artists inside a setting designed by Anna Heymowska, and a conversation between the curator Kim Einarsson and the geographer and theorist Angus Cameron. A videorecording of the talks was replayed for the rest of the exhibition. This unassuming gesture pointed outward to all the different matters involved, and served as an introduction to this sprawling conceptual constellation. This was an exhibition as a necessary introduction to an inexhaustible set of ideas.

Mathematical Morphology in Teledetection
2010
Curated by Goldex Poldex
Spółdzielnia Goldex Poldex, Krakow, Poland

The strongest point of this exhibition was the rigorous consistency of its realization of an initial idea—where an exhibition is an instrument to make a point. The Polish video artist Igor Krenz found a scientific book written in Polish titled *Morfologia matematyczna w teledetekcji* (Mathematical Morphology in Teledetection, 2010) and bought a pile of copies. The show then made its task the embodiment,

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tagger regularly subject to governmental crackdown. Run by artists, art historians, and writers, it is a classic artist-run space, but part of a new structure of art within the Caribbean in which questions of how to organize are less straightforward than one might think. Rather than ask the unproductive question of how to get things done under a certain regime, it's more interesting to see how certain basic institutional questions can still be productive, especially when language and local histories don't compute. How to translate between one culture and another? What are the dangers and possibilities of such translation? There is much is to learn from these questions, especially in terms of existentiality and the social context of an institute. In European exhibitions, artistic research as a method and product has swiftly become more visible, or at least a familiar format in the institutional art world. Christo Salvador, by contrast, genuinely struggles with how to go about it, or what that sort of practice means for contemporary artists. It's refreshing to see such initiatives at work (Tania Bruguera's Cátedra Arte de Conducta school is another example, likewise Guatemala's Ciudad de la Imaginación and Proyectos Ultravioleta), taking risks in exposing an insecure position somewhere between educational and presentational spaces across disciplines. Its questioning approach toward this form of practice has a transparent honesty that we see much less in Europe, where it is often negotiated in purely bureaucratic terms.

Bijlmer Spinoza Festival
2009
Curated by Helga Lasschuijt as part of Open Source Amsterdam
Bijlmermeer, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Thomas Hirschhorn's project in the Amsterdam neighborhood of Bijlmer,

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gion. Such a region would be fleshed out thematically in terms of "tradition and change," which in turn intimated more complications and nuances of the contemporary. That "change" was part of the formulation was not at all unusual, given the anticipated iteration of the triennial across time, its "again-ness" guaranteed by the condition of change. It was rather the idea of "tradition" that complicated a project purporting to be contemporary. What is the compelling motivation to invoke tradition within the practice of the contemporary? Is tradition a mediation of locality or regionality? Is the locus of "Asia-Pacific" premised on its being local and regional in relation to its possible negations: the national, the international, the Western, the global? Three years later, the Thai curator and historian Apinan Poshyananda curated an exhibition at the Asia Society in New York with the title *Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions*, the presence of the slash a symptom of the unease of the conjunction that succeeds the term "tradition." And in 2013, the Singapore Biennale replicated the methodology of multiple and collaborative curation of the first APT, conscripting nearly 30 curators, presumably to address the anxieties of representation and regionality.

The 4th Asian Art Show: Realism as an Attitude
1994
Curated by Masahiro Ushiroshoji
Fukuoka Art Museum, Japan

The 4th Asian Art Show sustained the seminal instinct to represent Asian contemporary art broadly and robustly. The curator, the art historian

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a work by Michelangelo Pistoletto that was originally shown at Grazer Kunstverein in 1988. Taken as a whole, it's an interesting program and a well-conceived exhibition.

Blank Archive
2014
Galerija Gregor Podnar, Berlin

As part of Gallery Weekend Berlin, Galerija Gregor Podnar presented this exhibition, an homage to the artist Irma Blank (born in 1934 in Germany, now living in Milan), who has received far too little attention in recent times. Blank works with ink and India ink on paper and has produced a broad graphic and painterly oeuvre spanning more than 40 years. In serial works lasting from the 1960s to present, such as *Eigenschriften*, *Trascrizioni* (Transcripts), *Radical Writings*, *Avant-testo*, *Hyper-Text*, and *Global Writings*, Blank hand-copies texts from newspapers or books in such a way that indecipherable text-based images are created. The words become abstract images, forms and signs that conceal their own origin. In this way, Blank explicitly addresses the problem that occurs in the translation between seeing and reading. Large-format works from her later monochrome blue series *Avant-testo* were shown alongside smaller paper works.

14th International Architecture Exhibition – Venice Biennale
2014

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In the early 1800s, a textile with a *kin sarasa* design (a scrolling vine inset with three alternate flower types, reversed in white against a red dyed background) was produced in the Gujarat region of India for the Japanese market. It is evidence of a centuries-old network of trade that began in the early 15th century, the routes of which were eventually monopolized by the Dutch East India Company. *Interwoven Globe* presented many such pieces—textiles, tapestries, costumes, furniture, paintings, drawings, and religious garments from the 16th to the 19th centuries—demonstrating, with deep historical specificity, the thriving global market for textiles throughout the Global South before European colonization. Visitors learned about the effects of trade, through the transmission of symbols and designs, in a part of the world subsequently dominated by the French, Spanish, British, and Dutch empires. Years of research were invested in this compelling set of histories, which embraced the visual languages of India, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, China, Japan, Latin America, and Ottoman Turkey. The wonder of the show was how these textiles illustrated historical relationships among cultures, and trade between communities of people, before these practices were wiped out by empire. (Today, sadly, we are still facing the ramifications of the constriction of this free-flowing commerce.) By weaving together objects and histories, the exhibition demonstrated the critical value of research in exhibitionary practice, as well as the vital importance of presenting objects in a way that overturns established understandings of relation and influence.

Personal Collection of Đinh Q Lê
2007–ongoing
District 8, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Đinh Q Lê, one of Vietnam's most celebrated contemporary artists and a cofounder of the independent contemporary art space Sàn Art, regularly invites his local community

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One wishes other institutions devoted to Modernist art would be so fearless.

Kilimli Konak
2014
Kilimli Konak Apartment Block, Istanbul

The work of Leyla Gediz tackles the conceptual, artistic, and historical nature of painting and its place in contemporary visual culture. Her most recent exhibition, *Kilimli Konak*, was staged in the living room of her flat in Istanbul's Teşvikiye neighborhood. The centerpiece was a paravent-like construction made of three canvases held together by hinges to form a folding screen. On each canvas were representations, in different colors, of an abstract geometric fresco by the Turkish Modernist painter Ercüment Kalmık (1909–1971); the original is situated at the entrance of the apartment block itself. This reproductive gesture therefore made reference to the specific history of the apartment block, which is known to have been the home of many intellectuals and politicians in Istanbul. Around the paravent were hung two large canvases, each presenting a female figure carrying out physical exercises—the "bridge" and the "bicycle." In a separate corner were two smaller pieces. One represented hairpins, which at first glance seemed scattered haphazardly, but on closer inspection formed the letter A, as in the symbol of anarchy. The other was a work on paper, a "sketch for sleepover" with various "female" hooks such as hangers, pins, and earrings. The confrontation of the modernist fresco with meditations on gendered, private self-care made me think of the ways in which an individual's private being is extended into ideological constructions and vice versa, through daily routine and lived experience. Equally important was the exhibition's location; by turning her living room into an exhibition space, Gediz demonstrated a strong artistic independence from Istanbul's dense

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in the form of sculptures and videos, of the diagrams, graphs, and images in the book. These images, extremely abstract for those not educated to decipher them, were given objective, material reality thanks to artistic practice. The videos were based on blurry images used to make points about teledetection, but their aesthetics had much in common with structural film, as if the scientific world had suddenly became influenced by artists like Paul Sharits or the writings of Gene Youngblood. Based on the book's diagrams, the sculptures were close to the geometrical, minimal, abstract art of the 1960s. Everything made the viewer feel like being in a familiar sort of art show (especially in a time of nostalgic revivals). But Krenz didn't stop at this obvious stage: His pile of copies became "catalogues" that were resold at the exhibition. This operation self-reflexively pointed out the frequent illegibility of art writing and the hermeticism of art itself, as seen from the point of view of outsiders. Moreover, in the version realized at Goldex Poldex, a cooperative, notoriously unpredictable, artist-run space with a focus on DIY, self-financing, and self-curating, it had the best context imaginable. In a space itself committed to simulating speculative manipulations of the art market, and something they call pata-economy, Krenz's work became an investigation into the limits of post-conceptual practice in a moment symbolized by the "Internet of things": objects that are not yet fully realized but that are already possible to imagine. This is a great metaphor for art as such.

Ernste Spiele **(Serious Games)**
2014
Curated by Henriette Huldisch
Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin

This is perhaps not the best Harun Farocki show I ever saw. It is just the latest one. It juxtaposed the German filmmak-

which took place over the course of two months, served as a space for exhibitions, meetings, education, and performances. It was a wonderful opportunity to see a community at work. Within the framework of Hirschhorn's personal addiction to everything related to the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza, it was a rare occasion in which site-specific projects enacted by itinerant artists actually produced an active community that exchanged stories, experiences, ideas, and play. Hirschhorn's installation amid the Bijlmer's mass housing aimed to create a sort of autonomous republic. He worked with local residents to help produce and shape his ideas, distancing himself from the stereotypical motivations of "going into the 'hood.'" At its base stood some essential questions that oscillated between "(over)production" and "presence," marking how an artist's ideas can couple with an unknown community and how one needs to invest time in physical presence in order to make things possible. On the one hand, the notion of overproduction is something to consider in contemporary art, while it speaks as well to how residents of the Bijlmer projects have historically been excluded from many jobs through poor planning and outright racism. (Many of its residents came to the Netherlands from its former colony, Suriname, after that country won its independence in 1975.) On the other hand, the physical presence of Hirschhorn among the residents seems to have been the real productive element. One could see that "presence" was prevailing before "participation" in the positive learning extravaganza of the festival's "Internet corners" and in the young people who attended self-guided art history classes and read philosophy together. Hirschorn himself brought in Spinoza, and, in the process, he learned about the Surinamese poet Trefossa.

and scholar Masahiro Ushiroshoji, claimed that modernity had come to an end, and that realism as an attitude (the theme of the exhibition) had guaranteed its passage. According to him: "The curtain is about to close on Asia's modern age, when learning from the 'West' was insisted upon as an absolute value. In keeping with this, the framework of the 'modern period' of Asian art is also being transcended. The advent of a new kind of realism proclaims the start of a new postmodern in Asia."[2] It is intriguing, this idea of how realism would initiate a break from the modern and herald the contemporary. The history of exhibitions in Fukuoka is an important sequence of vital initiations to define Asian art early on, in the 1980s, and to further expand its sphere from Mongolia to Laos through what has evolved into the Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale.

Telah Terbit* (Out Now): *Southeast Asian Contemporary Art Practices During the 1970s
2006
Curated by Ahmad Mashadi
Singapore Art Museum

Curated by Ahmad Mashadi, the pioneer curator of the Singapore Art Museum, this exhibition opened concurrently with the first Singapore Biennale—the first biennial of its kind in the region. It was an important moment—a kind of synthesis or consolidation of modern art in Southeast Asia through the collection practices and discursive production coordinated by the Singapore Art Museum, which opened in 1996 and, prior to the establishment of the National Gallery Singapore, housed the world's

Curated by Rem Koolhaas
Giardini & Arsenale, Venice

How does the past influence the present? It's this question that distinguishes the 14th Architecture Biennale, *Fundamentals,* from its predecessors. But the inverse idea, "Should the future help the past?" (a question that Liam Gillick posed in 1999) was also visible. The biennial took a critical look at the emancipated architectural tactics of recent decades and confronted these with the general history of architecture, which ostensibly began when people were still heating their homes with open fires. The central pavilion in the Giardini showcased such quotidian architectural elements as collections of staircase models, replicas of doors from around the world, windows in all materials, and even a toilet. The biennial examined how the urban environment is becoming the center of meaning while the rural environment is becoming its opposite—a leisure destination. What does that mean for our future, living together?

We not
2014
Galerie Buchholz, Cologne

Kollaboration und Missbrauch (Collaboration and Abuse), *Wenn das Licht am Ende des Tunnels bloss kein Zug is* (Just as Long as the Light at the End of the Tunnel Isn't a Train), and *Ich finde es komisch, wie ihr miteinander umgeht...* (I Think It's Funny, the Way You Treat Each Other...) (all 2014):

ZOE BUTT

to his home for a meal. His aunt will prepare cuisine from his hometown of Ha Tien while he provides a guided tour of the myriad historical Southeast Asian antiquities that mingle with his own and his contemporaries' artworks. He is an avid collector of ceramic objects from the Tran and Lý Dynasties, bronze musical instruments and funerary items from the Dong Son culture, French/Vietnamese colonial furniture inlaid with mother of pearl, stone Vishnu sculptures, and wooden Buddhist sculptures from the lost kingdom of Funan, their faces eerily smooth and featureless from centuries of natural erosion. These carefully collected objects are of a quality unrivaled elsewhere in the country. Lê's tours are highly informative and often inflected with his own stories of how these objects have influenced his art, or become a part of it. As a regular visitor to Lê's home, I am struck by how his collection of objects, discussed around the invitation to a meal, is so much more compelling than attending an ordinary exhibition. Sadly, there are too few exhibitions curated in Vietnam that apply interpretive analysis to historical or contemporary material; the concept of the curator is a little-understood profession here, and, indeed, not a position you will find in any museum across the country. Here, an "exhibition history" is not of the same shape or form as in Western contexts.

NAZLI GÜRLEK

network of private institutions and commercial galleries.

The 6th Momentum Biennial: Imagine Being Here Now
2011
Curated by Theodor Ringborg
Moss, Norway

The 6th Momentum Biennial was focused, as the press release put it, on the fact that "the complexities of orientating the world depend on factors of memory and imagination that inevitably transpire within time and space." To put it another way, just as we have the ability to imagine being somewhere else entirely, in any other place at any other time, art making could also be a way to reflect upon the present while at the same time projecting imaginary futures; art may be a device allowing us to embrace different temporalities and locations through the mechanism of imagination. And nowhere was this better exemplified than at the Alby Estate, one of the exhibition's venues, where five artists—Jason Dodge, Leif Elggren, Ellie Ga, Rosalind Nashashibi, and Raqs Media Collective—each buried an undisclosed artwork in a time capsule. Registered with the International Time Capsule Society, the time capsules were designated to be unearthed after 50 years, on June 18, 2061. Defying the insistent quality of most exhibitions—"the display of things here and now," in Ringborg's own words,[1] the idea that exhibitions must, by nature, make things visible in a timely way—the project presented a challenge for everyone involved, and proposed an exciting alternative to experiencing art within a system that relies on visibility "here and now." Let us all live long enough to be "there and then," and see the contents of the capsules when they are opened.

Notes

1. Theodor Ringborg, et al., eds. *Imagine Being Here Now: Reader* (Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2011): 30.

DANIEL MUZYCZUK

er's recent work *Serious Games* (2009–10), a four-part video installation concerned with the use of video gaming technology in the combat training of American soldiers, with two of his most indelible earlier works, *Inextinguishable Fire* (1969) and *Interface* (1995). To contextualize an artist's recent practice with emblematic earlier work is a valid but obvious choice, which presumes the internal narrative and self-reflection of the individual producer and practice. What I found striking about this juxtaposition, though, was what it revealed about the self-curating consciousness of this remarkable filmmaker, who always struggled with the specificity of mediums, and shifted his practice into different scenes (from film to gallery) in order to be seen and heard. Both *Inextinguishable Fire* and *Interface* are pieces that bring me inspiration in curating. The former, a critique of America's use of chemical weapons in the Vietnam War, poses questions about art's ability to exert influence on the viewer, to convince; the latter, perhaps less militant, focuses on the nature of editing itself, and how it creates new and explosive juxtapositions of ideas. Farocki's unexpected passing this summer cannot turn his work into the past tense. It remains necessary to consider the possibility of thinking with montage. This is the lesson of Farocki.

REMCO DE BLAAIJ

98weeks
2007–ongoing
Organized by Mirene and Marwa Arsanios
Beirut, Lebanon

Originally intended to run only for 98 weeks as a research project, Mirene and Marwa Arsanios's platform is still in operation today. Organizing modest exhibitions, talks, editions, publications, and residencies, 98weeks has become a stable player in the Beirut art infrastructure. Its 2010 publication *How to make (nice) things happen* offers a history of this infrastructure and provides insight into the conditions under which artists and artist-run spaces have been forced to work during Lebanon's long civil war and continuing troubles. The publication's account is as vital as its approach is modest, and it gives an excellent impression of the vibrant artistic environment in Beirut. I have seen 98weeks transformed into a flower shop, or functioning as a space to meet and socialize. A talk by the Dutch artists Bik Van der Pol was a perfect fit, as they discussed how architecturally absurd ideas can succeed. Together with the communal radio project Our Lines Are Now Open, which operates across the street in an abandoned garage, 98weeks carefully considers what the city of Beirut can and cannot produce. As many artists from many places continue to pass through, the patchwork of this project space, only a few square meters in physical size, is producing a fascinating micro-city in and of itself.

PATRICK D. FLORES

most extensive body of modern and contemporary Southeast Asian art. Juxtaposed with another level of agglomeration—the biennial—the exhibition was able to create a crucial nexus between the new and the now. The period Mashadi selected, the 1970s, was central in the turns of the modern and the contemporary in Southeast Asia, charged by critical mediations of Western art history and the agendas of post-independence nation-states. Mingling paintings, archival materials, installations, and reconstructions of key works of said milieu, the project was able to sketch out the contours of Southeast Asian modernity and its various inclinations outward.

Notes

1. Jim Supangkat, "Indonesia New Art Movement" in *Indonesian Heritage: Visual Art* (Singapore, Archipelago Press, 1998): 100.

2. Masahiro Ushiroshoji, *4th Asian Art Show: Realism as an Attitude* (Fukuoka, Japan: Fukuoka Asian Art Museum 1994): 38.

NICOLAUS SCHAFHAUSEN

These evocative titles are three of the collaborative works made by Cosima von Bonin, Sergej Jensen, and Michael Krebber for *We not.* Like the works made by Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat, these pieces by Bonin, Jensen, and Krebber presented synergies, confrontations, disputes, and friendships. The painting *Collaboration and Abuse,* for instance, shows three painted figures—a woman and two men—sitting and lying naked on a grayish floor. They seem to be spending their time doing nothing. It all comes together, the individual artist's approach standing alongside the uniting ideals of a generation. Does an avant-garde still exist nowadays? Are artist communities stronger? Art is always an experiment.

REAR MIRROR

TOO MUCH, NEVER ENOUGH: *TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT: INSTITUTION, IMAGE, IDEOLOGY*

Johanna Burton and Anne Ellegood

Johanna Burton: Something fundamental to how *Take It or Leave It: Institution, Image, Ideology* came together at the Hammer Museum is how long we worked on it. We decided seven years ago that we wanted to do a show focusing on the strategy of appropriation. In 2009, Douglas Ecklund mounted *The Pictures Generation* show at the Met in New York—an attempt to historicize and enlarge the purview of the 1977 show curated by Douglas Crimp. But it was remarkably dismissive of postmodernism, politics, and feminist theory. We realized that our own decision to focus on "appropriation" rested squarely on our commitment to artists who use the function of borrowing and recasting existing images to critique art and culture.

Over time, we realized that we needed a second term, one that crystallized the strand of appropriation we wanted to highlight. That term, which intersected like a Venn diagram with appropriation, became "institutional critique." And for us, the space where the two terms intersected was feminism. We didn't want to tell the more familiar story of institutional critique that begins in the 1960s with Michael Asher, Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren, and Hans Haacke. Rather, we hoped to track a parallel moment that highlighted the trajectory of feminist art, calling attention to institutions outside the museum: the family, gender, race, et cetera.

Anne Ellegood: By grounding the exhibition in the early

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At its core, the purpose of an exhibition is to lay the ground, to present select manifestations in the world, and to relate them spatially in one way or another. But the process of being present to a past exhibition is difficult. As I write this, about half a year since the closing of the *9a Bienal do Mercosul | Porto Alegre,* it feels like it happened ages ago—distant, but still ever so ingrained in my muscles. Why such a feeling emerges, I am not certain. My suspicion (probably from having read so much on psychoanalysis) is that there is a tendency to subconsciously-intentionally forget events of a certain intensity. So, this feeling: an experience of positive distantiation. It's a kind of suspension mechanism to avoid falling into conclusions, or wallowing in nostalgia. It could be a state of emotional openness, maybe of logical unknowing, or something in between.

From its proposal stage, the biennial set its goals as identifying and repurposing changing belief systems and forms of experimentation in art. Titled *Weather Permitting,* it explored atmospheric disturbances that propel travel and social displacement, technological advancement, and world development. Its public form had three main components: *Portals, Forecasts, and Monotypes,* a group exhibition staged in four different venues as well as outdoor spaces throughout Porto Alegre; *Island Sessions,* an online project involving dozens of authors that entailed monthly field trips to a former prison island; and *Cloud Formations,* a pedagogical initiative

Take It or Leave It: Institution, Image, Ideology installation view, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2014, showing work by Martha Rosler

feminist works of Mary Kelly, Adrian Piper, and Martha Rosler, we were able to trace aspects of institutional critique and feminist history that had been overlooked, and also made visible the embrace of feminism by artists of later generations. Of course the exhibition included works by male and female artists, but one effect of this framing was that the artist list was half women, which is still remarkably rare in exhibitions of contemporary art.

JB: Helen Molesworth's 2012 show *This Will Have Been: Art, Love, and Politics in the 1980s* presented the landscape of the 1980s with specific attention to the Reagan administration, the AIDS crisis, and various critiques of representation. While we were aligned with her interest in politics, we wanted to think very deeply about the evolving practices of artists who lived through the 1980s without rooting them too squarely there. Helen's show might be described as mournful, and beautifully memorializing a moment. I think ours aimed to be more future-oriented, even if it was also historical in scope.

AE: Yes, I think our show asked questions about how appropriation has been assimilated into contemporary practices and how it might remain a critical strategy. And, more generally, whether institutional critique is a viable category for art today. We both believe it is, so it was important to show how these artists are still engaged with that critique, even if their approaches have shifted. So another primary determining factor was to consider artists' practices over time. In most cases, we brought together three or more works. In other cases, we opted for a major commission or a large-scale work. There are always limitations to space and budget that ultimately impact any exhibition, but in some cases, I still wish we could have done more.

JB: We were both heartbroken sometimes when we had to streamline the checklist. How fantastic would it have been to include the entirety of Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* (1973–79), or other important and largely forgotten works by Gretchen Bender? But it would never have been enough. On the one hand, we wanted to present one version of an ongoing history; on the other, we were attempting to destabilize unspoken codes around how historical or thematic group shows function. The curatorial premise meant that these works all pointed beyond themselves to the larger oeuvres and contexts of which they are only a part. There was *so much* work in the galleries, and yet it also felt like we barely scratched the surface. In most group shows, individual works are meant to do huge symbolic lifting, to stand for an entire career or to make an enduring historical point. We wanted the works to operate historically *and* in the present, and between their material specificities and the abstract canon they have come to represent (or aim to overturn).

AE: Because every artist in the exhibition has been engaged with forms of institutional critique throughout their careers, all of their work was potentially relevant. With careers spanning decades, this wealth of choices could become a crisis of opportunity, paralyzing us into indecision. But there were other factors at play that helped us to make our choices. In some cases, there were key works that we felt must be showcased, such as Martha Rosler's *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (1974–75), Adrian Piper's *Cornered* (1988), or Mike Kelley's *Craft Morphology Flow Chart* (1991). At the same time, we wanted to resist a checklist of "greatest hits," or the type

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and series of public programs. *Island Sessions* and *Cloud Formations* began in May 2013, four months before the start of *Portals, Forecasts, and Monotypes,* which took place from September to November 2013.

I was the biennial's artistic director and chief curator, but the project was developed with a curatorial team, including Sarah Demeuse, Mônica Hoff, Raimundas Malašauskas, Daniela Pérez, Julia Rebouças, Bernardo de Souza, and Dominic Willsdon; two other key team members were Luisa Kiefer and Luiza Proença. Each of them worked on different aspects and initiatives within the project. For example, Bernardo and Daniela worked almost exclusively on *Imagination Machines.* While he oversaw the new commissions, she researched historic commissioning programs. During the 18 months that comprised the biennial's planning and execution, I worked hand in hand with two creative, determined, and resourceful people: Patricia Fossati Druck and Germana Konrath, the biennial's president and chief producer, respectively. For some of that time, I lived in Porto Alegre.

Weather Permitting installation view, Museu de Artes do Rio Grande do Sul Ado Malagoli, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2013, showing Tony Smith's *Bat Cave,* 1971/2013

Porto Alegre is the capital of Rio Grande do Sul, the southernmost state in Brazil. Its atmosphere is imbued with a spirit of entrepreneurship, a sense of being grounded and independent. A city with a harbor, Porto Alegre experienced a rise in immigration in the mid-19th century, then again in the early 20th century, from Germany and Italy in particular. By the mid-1990s it had become a major industrial capital in Brazil. And no sooner had the economic treaty of MERCOSUL[1] been settled than a group of local entrepreneurs founded the Fundação Bienal de Artes Visuais do Mercosul. Adopting not the name of a city, but that of a region defined geopolitically through a free-trade agreement, the foundation's aims were to present an art exhibition that would serve as an educational platform, and to position Porto Alegre as a cultural capital of South America's Southern Cone. Yet this aspiration cloaks one of the organization's most meaningful features: that the biennial is made possible primarily by people in Porto Alegre, and that it's an experience offered by and large *for* people in Porto Alegre.[2]

Though there was never any mandate that the biennial must attend explicitly to Mercosul, whether the treaty, the region, the group of companies, or their economic interests, I (like others before me) could not resist the temptation to address it. One of the ways we did so was by launching *Imagination Machines*, a collaborative art commissioning program inspired by the biennial's foundational alliance between economic interests and contemporary art. Referring to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's watershed Art and Technology program, pursued from 1967 to 1971, which staged collaborations between artists and industry, *Imagination Machines* staged new artworks based on collaborations between artists and local companies, industries, universities, and civic organizations. The program also entailed the presentation (and, in one case, a remake) of existing artworks ensuing from collaboration-driven art programs from the 1960s to the present. This assembly would give the audience occasion to contemplate, through art, manifestations of experimentation and collaboration, innovation and invention, indicative of technological developments and, with this, the values given to nature and culture.

Weather Permitting installation view, Memorial do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2013, showing Cinthia Marcelle's *Traveler Swallowed by the Space,* 2013

There would, however, be no autonomous *Imagination Machines* exhibition within the biennial. The scale of certain works inevitably indicated where they would be; other artworks would require

Take It or Leave It: Institution, Image, Ideology installation view, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2014, showing Mike Kelley's *Craft Morphology Flow Chart,* 1991

of objects with which the artists had become primarily associated: Sherrie Levine's appropriated Walker Evans photographs, say, or a Haim Steinbach customized shelf sculpture.

We were also interested in including works that were seminal but had not been seen in many years—such as two works out of Mark Dion's first gallery show with American Fine Arts in 1992—and deliberately chose not to include works that had been shown so frequently that other important pieces had been neglected. Dara Birnbaum's *Technology Tranformation: Wonder Woman* (1978) is a good example here; we opted instead to show her early *Pop–Pop* videos (1980), her installation *PM Magazine* (1982), and a recent video installation called *Arabesque* (2011).

Some artists we invited chose not to participate. We wanted to work directly with the artists and had no desire to go around them—in effect, to force them to participate—so we dropped these from our artist list. But because the exhibition makes a historical argument, certain absences maybe felt like an oversight. Or perhaps just a disappointment. I struggle most with Group Material. Our reasons for not pursuing their inclusion were valid: They disbanded many years ago, and their installations were so context-specific, they cannot actually be re-created. We did explore working with their archive, which is now housed at the Fales Library at New York University, in order to represent them in the exhibition. But we worried that preparing an archival selection without their input would require us to enact the role of the artists.

Take It or Leave It: Institution, Image, Ideology installation view, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2014, showing Mark Dion's *Tar and Feathers,* 1996, and Glenn Ligon's *Rückenfigur,* 2009

JB: Though I share your wish that Group Material had been more visible within the exhibition, my concern was that I've simply not seen a solution that works for presenting their project now. Julie Ault mentioned past instances where contemporary exhibitions tried to fold in aspects of Group Material's presentations and fell flat. What drove their decision to make these materials accessible to researchers was that they should be made available for "future use." It seems to me that the gesture is more about providing a primer for future installations that might *look nothing* like the first iteration. I sometimes think it's hard to grant a beloved project like Group Material the productive obsolescence it deserves. Only then can it really become the limber and reactive resource its members hoped it would be.

AE: Perhaps the place where we took the biggest risks curatorially was the installation. We made a decision early on that we would hang the show densely. Our argument was that this is a group of artists who were very much in dialogue with one another, either literally in terms of collaboration, or discursively through pedagogy, criticism, and curating. Some works, in fact, are direct responses to another artist's work. The idea of an "elegant" installation, in which we accorded each an autonomous space, didn't make any sense to us. We wanted the affinities, the differences, and the tensions to be evident. The tendency over the past several years in exhibition practice—particularly museum practice—has been to provide a great deal of space around artworks. I have often opted for this approach myself, assuming that there is a sort of poetry to a quiet, contemplative hang. *With Take It or*

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climate-controlled spaces, which were not widely available—a fact that was paradoxically fitting, given the biennial's title. Physically, this meant that certain artworks of *Imagination Machines* would need to be exhibited among artworks made in entirely different contexts, created through different processes, and selected according to fundamentally distinct reasoning. Conceptually, it meant that artworks intended to be together—according to the original curatorial framework—would have to be set apart, and the imagined relations between them would become less visible—perhaps imperceptible.[3]

Thus, the biennial's curatorial framework was preserved on paper in the form of the catalogue essay, but the actual exhibition had to be spatially reorganized. However, neither the selection criteria nor the selection of artworks was modified. Instead, the whole project was broken down and reconceived differently with the same parts. In the end, there was no distinction between *Imagination Machines* projects and the other selected artworks, existing and new, with which they shared a space. So, for example, Robert Rauschenberg's monumental sculpture, developed with the aerospace defense company Teledyne as part of the Art and Technology program, shared a space with Lucy Skaer's new project created through *Imagination Machines* with the Brazilian cellulose company Irani, as well as with existing artworks by David Zink Yi, Thiago Rocha Pitta, and Fritzia Irizar, among others. Rather than collaboration or experimentation as such, the new thread between these works became the radical symbolic and material transformations of natural elements through a combination of art, physics, and chemistry.

Weather Permitting, Memorial do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2013, showing Marta Minujín and Daniela Pérez's Ekphrasis performance, 2013

Similarly, works considered under the original rubric of *Imagination Machines* that were conceived as performance, process, or site-specific were presented as part of Ekphrasis, the events program and dedicated gallery space of *Portals, Forecasts, and Monotypes*. Ekphrasis emphasized (reflexive) speaking over direct, visual representation. Rather than presenting documentation under vitrines in the galleries, these live, discursive events would stand in for the work. They would provide a way of, an occasion for, being exposed to it—an attempt to emphasize their distance in time and space, as well as to be in tune with their processual or ephemeral nature.[4] So, for example, you had a poetry reading by Christian Bök or an artist's talk by Grethell Rasúa, both on existing scientific and community-based projects, as well as newly commissioned works for the biennial, for instance a performance of Bik Van der Pol's outdoor musical and a screening of videos by Audrey Cottin.

Ekphrasis presented other challenges: We often had thousands of people visiting the exhibition galleries each day, but little audience for these live events. It seemed as if a whole different curatorial framing or communication strategy was needed, so that the projects presented in these events would be regarded as aesthetic endeavors in themselves, not just as one more public program (of which there were several). This might have happened in the catalogue, again. The initial idea was to regard its traditional checklist in an unconventional way, listing the Ekphrasis schedule among the exhibition artworks, organized alphabetically by artist's name, to give the Ekphrasis projects equal status. But this didn't happen. The catalogue's print deadline arrived, and several of the new artworks were still in process, their details yet unconfirmed. Pressuring the latter would have been more disastrous for the works than letting go of the checklist idea.

Without precise exhibitions or categorical subsets as I had envisioned them, I was haunted by the idea that the biennial wouldn't make sense—that my "points" wouldn't come across. But Raimundas Malašauskas argued that to disregard fixed theses within the exhibition would instead open up, to our surprise and the public's, unintended dialogues and unforeseen relations between time periods, artistic practices, and formal strategies. He was right—or even if he wasn't, he was more sensible than I was, in my fraught desire for curatorial structure. So, again, this feeling: something like the sense of collectedness that's felt after a storm. I suppose that, at times, when thinking through an exhibition abstractly, in head space, desk space, or floor plan, the pressure of communicating the knowledge gained in the curatorial research and planning overshadows the fact that both the artworks and the public are

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Leave It, however, this approach would have been a disservice to the works. We wanted to argue for the value of exhibitions that are meaningfully crowded, tense, and even messy, where the intense dialogue among the various objects is emphasized, and where the argument that artworks are altered by their relationship to another work could be played out.

There were moments where these juxtapositions felt particularly risky—even exhilarating. Placing Glenn Ligon's *Notes on the Margin of the Black Book* (1991–93) on the walls surrounding Paul McCarthy's *Michael Jackson Fucked Up Big Head Big Foot (MJFUBH)* (2010) was one. The contemplative, almost elegiac way in which the Ligon work is typically installed in its own gallery was replaced by a more energetic environment, perhaps even one inscribed with anger, underscoring the ambivalence in the Ligon work, which is too often underplayed. The ease with which the McCarthy work can be read through a lens of sarcasm and caricature was, on the other hand, complicated by the Ligon, which is so obviously and unapologetically engaged in a critical project. We felt the Ligon work created a space that encouraged a slower, more complex viewing of McCarthy's representation of Michael Jackson.

Take It or Leave It: Institution, Image, Ideology installation view, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2014, showing Glenn Ligon's *Notes on the Margin of the Black Book,* 1991–93, and Paul McCarthy's *Michael Jackson Fucked Up Big Head Big Foot (MJFUBH),* 2010

JB: Some areas of the installation worked better than others, but the whole was really interesting. And strange! We agreed that in making a show that so clearly meant to offer a narrative (but not a master narrative, nor one purporting to have the last word), we needed visibly to admit how strong the curatorial frame really was. I think people equate "room to breathe" with some kind of hands-off approach, as though there is less curatorial input and the object is less sullied, the more space it is given. But that's not really any less ideologically inflected than what we did.

AE: The programming that occurred in tandem with the exhibition was equally important, not only for how it allowed us to present ways of working and practices that could not fit into the galleries, but also for how the energy at these events spoke to ideas of community, critical engagement, and the role of the museum as a discursive space.

JB: It's also true that some important works and artists were fundamentally less visible for being solely represented in the public programming. We were sort of stunned to realize that we'd invited Gregg Bordowitz, a truly central figure for our subject, to give the keynote lecture, and yet he was nowhere in the galleries. He told us that he is often asked to function this way, but we both felt disappointed that we had inadvertently relegated him to the role of "writer-thinker-activist" rather than "artist."

That example points to larger questions about what exhibitions are, and how we need to continue to strive to find alternative modes of representation for practices that inherently confound exhibition making, which remains a surprisingly conservative and often old-fashioned format. Though we certainly didn't solve every problem (and, in fact, we created some new ones for ourselves), working together allowed us to challenge our own methodological assumptions. We bring very different skill sets to the table, and yet hold between us an utterly shared set of priorities.

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highly intelligent. The question, perhaps, is one of will: whether the will of the curator matters most, or the will of a gathered set of people and circumstances.

This reminded me of some curatorial basics: that an exhibition's purpose is not only to present select manifestations in the world and relate them spatially, but to comprehend an Other's language and create a message, to consider possibilities yet unexplored. I gathered, too, that the duels of a critical curatorial practice in the field of contemporary art are between "what" the manifestations in the world are (that we present or cast aside) and "why" we exhibit them (or not, in the present), when at times those very "whats" or "whys" are not fully articulated, or are likely to be revised in practice. And so the pivot of these self-reflexive debacles has been on "how" precisely we do this—this thing we know as curating.

Weather Permitting conference at Museu de Artes do Rio Grande do Sul Ado Malagoli, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2013

Notes

1. The Mercado Comum do Sul (MERCOSUL) is to the Southern Cone what the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is up north.

2. To highlight this aspect, one of the first things our edition of the biennial did was put forth a name change, adding "Porto Alegre" to the title. We considered this addition a major amendment, even a significant change in attitude. But it was too nuanced. Whether in speech or in print, only seldom was the name in its new variation ever used by people beyond the press and our editorial teams.

3. The idea of replacing these challenging artworks or project proposals with others, even if created by the same artist, was out of the question by this point, as they had been selected with curatorial precision.

4. There was one exception: I chose to present in the exhibition galleries extensive documentation of *Simultaneidad en simultaneidad* (Simultaneity in Simultaneity, 1966) by Marta Minujín, in addition to a live event with the artist, accompanied by cloud curatorial fellow Daniela Pérez. The exhibition's gambit was to spatialize what had been largely absent during the time of production—namely, collaborative and experimental works by women artists using media and technology during the 1960s. I develop this in my catalogue essay "Weather Permitting" in *9a Bienal do Mercosul | Porto Alegre* (Porto Alegre: Fundação Bienal de Artes Visuais do Mercosul, 2013): 55, 61–63.

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