FIELD

A JOURNAL OF SOCIALLY-ENGAGED ART CRITICISM

3

Winter 2016

FIELD

A JOURNAL OF SOCIALLY-ENGAGED ART CRITICISM

FIELD

A JOURNAL OF SOCIALLY-ENGAGED ART CRITICISM

Issue 3 Contents

FIELD
A JOURNAL OF SOCIALLY-ENGAGED ART CRITICISM

Editorial

Grant Kester

Over the course of the past three issues we've had the opportunity to review quite a large number of submissions. The release of the current issue of *FIELD* provides us with an opportune moment to reflect on some of the tendencies we've observed in critical writing focused on socially engaged art, and to outline some of the insights we've gained in this process. One of the more notable things we've encountered is the difficulty that some writers have in actually talking about specific projects or practices in any detail. In many cases the articles we receive devote the majority of their space to the explication of particular theories which are intended to provide some contextual framing for a given work, even as the presentation of the work itself occupies a relatively small portion of the total text. Moreover, these framing discussions often focus on theoretical positions (the generic virtues of dissensus or agonism are typically invoked) that are sufficiently well established in the field that they don't require an extended recitation. At the same time, it's not uncommon for an essay to provide relatively little materialist context for a given project (for example, some account of the unique field of ideological, social, geographic and political forces with which it contends, its relationship to specific forms of resistance or the permutations of class, race, gender or sexual difference that help situate a given network of social actors). We have also encountered some reluctance to acknowledge points of failure, violations of trust, conceptual or practical discontinuities or

other instances of apparent dysfunction, confusion or incoherence in a given project.

These tendencies, taken in the aggregate, can result in a writing style that is characterized by a significant level of generalization and the absence of any granular detail focused on the practice itself. Some of this can be attributed to the influence of art practice Ph.D. programs which, in many cases, require a mode of writing that is necessarily programmatic and which tends to discourage any form of self-reflection which might create the perception that the project in question (on which the successful completion of the degree hinges) is in some way failed or incomplete, rather than exemplary. It is also due to an over-reliance on theory alone to organize our critical perception of a given work (the grounding of a project in the context of a specific theory being one of the primary discursive mechanisms employed in art practice Ph.D. programs to validate student work as a legitimate form of academic "research"). To the extent that the institutional structures of the doctoral education process have influenced the methodological and stylistic form taken by critical writing on socially engaged art it can be helpful to recognize the particular constraints they exercise. Having said that, the problems I'm identifying here are hardly unique to the field of art history, or doctoral level art education more generally. In fact, we find similar concerns expressed by scholars in fields such as sociology, anthropology, geography and cultural studies.

At the root of many of these issues is the status of "description". Too often we find description treated as the merely incidental process of enumerating the discrete stages or features of a given project, often with the goal of presenting those features as illustrations of a particular theoretical paradigm. It might be useful here to recall the distinction between the hermeneutic process of exegesis, the extraction of meaning "out of" a given text, and eisegesis, or reading "into" a given text. In eisegesis we refer the text back to our own a priori assumptions, rather than allowing the text, in all its complexity, to call those assumptions into question. This problematic can occur just as easily in the case of a writer who

is seeking to critique a given project (which is then treated as the entirely symptomatic expression of some larger, structuring system of power of which it remains unaware) as in the case of a writer seeking to praise it as the unproblematic and direct realization of the artist's originary intention (an approach often associated with the artist's claim that their work produces some tactical disruption of fixed systems of meaning). One must be cautious, of course, with the idea that any interpretation can avoid the projection of the interpreter's values and beliefs. It is also evident that any cultural practice is marked, implicitly or explicitly, by systematic forms of domination. However, in the pursuit of theoretical legitimacy we have also diminished our capacity to be surprised by the exigencies of practice itself (to the extent that it exceeds both the conscious will of the artist and the recuperative powers of the current social order).

All too often we impose onto practice an epistemological unity, coherence and self-evidence that it does not in fact possess. And, as a result, we neglect the unresolved and contingent processes of meaning production and self-transformation that are at the root of socially engaged art. This vestigial positivism is notable, since art history as a discipline is so often concerned with preserving the internal complexities and contradictions of the work of art, and analyzing its manifold points of both integration with, and contestation of, dominant systems of power. Art historians are able to employ the most ingenious interpretive methods to persuade us that Santiago Sierra's installations are politically transgressive, that Manet's bar maid is waging a covert war on capitalist commodification or that *Tilted Arc* was really a subversive critique of the bureaucratization of public space. And yet, this interpretive virtuosity abandons us when we write about socially engaged art, and any given project becomes the unmediated expression of a pre-existing ideological discourse or creative intentionality.

I would encourage writers to think of description not as a process of routine transcription, but rather, as a conceptually generative act. When teaching art criticism in the past I've ask my students to begin by writing at length about a specific project or work, focusing

exclusively on the act of description. They are precluded from citing theories, other works of art, past histories or other causal or contextual factors. Instead, they must attend as closely as possible to what is actually before them; the specific form of reality framed and presented by the work of art. In the course of this exercise I've found that it is often surprisingly difficult for art historians, who are ostensibly trained to closely observe works of art, to actually describe, in detail, what they see: to trust in, and elaborate on, their own perception of a work. If they are able to push through this epistemological resistance, they frequently undergo a kind of cognitive shift, in which those aspects of a work that appeared to be pre-determined by, and easily assimilated to, existing historical and theoretical narratives become difficult, idiosyncratic, unexpected or confusing.

This strangeness, this difficulty, marks the beginning of a more authentic form of interpretation. It is often only *after* recognizing what is unexpected in a given work that one is in a position to determine which theoretical framework is most relevant to its analysis, or even to generate new theoretical insight from it. It is also the case that the act of description, when taken to a sufficient level of intensity, inevitably becomes analytic, as we begin to bundle discrete descriptive observations into a larger hermeneutic apparatus capable of accounting for their aggregate effect. And, finally, this analytic phase leads, in due course, to a set of evaluative judgments about a work. In this manner, through a process of de-familiarizing description, we might begin to develop a more nuanced, critical understanding of practices that we are too often prepared to treat in an entirely deterministic manner. We might also de-instrumentalize the act of criticism itself, and throw it open to the possibilities of experiential and cognitive modes that exceed our current understanding of both the aesthetic and the political.

Our third issue features an essay by sociologist Caroline Lee, one of the leading figures in new critiques of deliberative democracy, reflecting on key points of interconnection, and tension, between participatory art practice and the discourse of professional

"public engagement" in civil society. Here Lee explores the cultural and political ramifications of the broader participatory turn in contemporary social life. This issue also features a new essay by anthropologist George Marcus, a *FIELD* editorial board member, in which he reflects on his experience developing collaborations between artists and anthropologists at the headquarters of the World Trade Organization in Geneva, Switzerland, a project that is symptomatic of an important shift towards collaborative research production in contemporary ethnography more generally. Marcus relates this work to a serial analytic system in ethnographic research that he describes as a form of "second order observation". Philosopher Jason Miller has contributed an illuminating analysis of the problematic adoption of Chantal Mouffe's concept of "antagonism" by contemporary art critics and curators writing on relational or participatory art practices. Drawing on the work of curator Nicholas Bourriaud and art historian Claire Bishop, Miller explores the implicit normative assumptions behind both relational aesthetics and the work of its most famous critic.

Also in this issue, art historian Ruben Yepes examines a complex series of works by Bogata's Mapa Teatro, one of the most important experimental art and theater groups working in Latin America today. As Yepes argues, the *C'undúa* series, produced between 2001 and 2013 with the residents of the Santa Inés neighborhood, proposes a new model of creative agency that seeks to contest the systematic destruction and erasure of a working class community in Bogata. In a second project concerned with issues of gentrification and urban poverty, Cynthia Hammond and Shauna Janssen describe their experiences in the Griffintown neighborhood in Montreal, where they developed their *Points de vue* project in response to the city's call for proposals to renovate the iconic Wellington Tower building. Rather than submitting a design proposal, however, Hammond and Janssen's team proposed a series of public events that would, as they write, "provide the public consultation that the city... appeared to forget". Bo Zheng, our Corresponding Editor for China, has contributed a new interview with Wu Mali, the 'godmother' of

community based art in Taiwan, which has one of the most active socially engaged art scenes in the Chinese speaking world. Mali reflects on her own evolution as an activist artist and more recent attempts to reactivate rural cultural traditions in the face of Taiwan's de-industrializing economy. Finally, this issue features Hammam Aldouri's review of Nato Thompson's new book *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21st Century*. Aldouri examines Thompson's effort to foreground the spatial dimensions of art and social change in his analysis of projects by Paul Chan and Jeremy Deller, arguing that this approach threatens to "strip social change of its temporal" dimension.

Grant Kester is the founding editor of *FIELD* and Professor of Art History in the Visual Arts department at the University of California, San Diego. His publications include *Art, Activism and Oppositionality: Essays from Afterimage* (Duke University Press, 1998), *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (University of California Press, 2004) and *The One and the Many: Agency and Identity in Contemporary Collaborative Art* (Duke University Press. 2011). He has recently completed work on *Collective Situations: Dialogues in Contemporary Latin American Art 1995-2010*, an anthology of writings by art collectives working in Latin America produced in collaboration with Bill Kelley, which is under contract with Duke University Press.

FIELD
A JOURNAL OF SOCIALLY-ENGAGED ART CRITICISM

The Arts and Crafts of Participatory Reforms: How Can Socially Engaged Art and Public Deliberation Inform Each Other?

Caroline W. Lee

> The "arts world" is rarely mentioned in the world of civic engagement. That can and should change. The "arts person" is as narrow and false a conception as is the civic person. Public artists are gaining more experiences in creating the conditions that help nurture and sustain civic dialogue. Organizers of civic dialogue are finding ways to engage large numbers of community members in sustained democratic discussion. We need to find one another—across the nation and in our communities—and work together in more intentional ways. That will weave a lustrous community fabric and bring innumerable benefits to our public life. [Martha McCoy, Executive Director, Study Circles Resource Center (1997: 9)]

Nearly two decades after McCoy's call for greater connections between those in the arts and those working to facilitate public dialogue, there is plenty of evidence that the arts world and the world of civic engagement have embraced each other over the intervening years. At its 2006 conference in San Francisco, the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, the leading professional association for dialogue practitioners, abounded

with sessions led by artists, founders of socially engaged art organizations, and staff from Americans for the Arts. The conference was enlivened by artmaking activities, graphic recording, spoken word and theater performances, an interactive public art project led by an artists' collaborative from New York, and an invocation from a Brazilian drumming group that "performed songs and chants for Elegua, the Ancient African Deity of the Crossroads – the Opener of Dialogue and Communication!" (NCDD 2015). Arts practitioners had in turn embraced the expertise and special skills of professional public engagement consultants. The 2008 National Performing Arts Convention in Denver, a multidisciplinary convening of national service organizations in the nonprofit performing arts, hired AmericaSpeaks, the flagship dialogue and deliberation facilitation organization in the United States, to run a multi-day caucus process and 21st Century Town Hall Meeting for participants to develop their own collective action agenda for the performing arts.

Interchange between practitioners in the two fields is now a longstanding reality in the U.S., with many of the fruits that McCoy anticipated. The fields of scholarship on socially engaged art and deliberative democracy have developed alongside both areas of interest, with a wealth of case studies of successful initiatives, evaluations of impacts, and critical literature on the popularity of arts-based civic initiatives or deliberative democratic reforms in neoliberal times. By comparison with practitioner interactions across the two fields, however, the scholarly literature on arts-based civic dialogue and deliberative democracy have had minimal overlap thus far.

This essay is motivated by a conviction that the literature on democratization trends across *other* institutional fields could benefit from deeper engagement with the literature on socially engaged art, as represented by the critical discourse initiated in *FIELD*, and vice versa. This is not only because art has been actively employed in participation initiatives not directly related to the arts, but also because civic engagement professionals and socially-engaged arts practitioners have themselves embraced each others' efforts over

the last three decades. Drawing on a multi-method ethnography of the development of the public engagement field (Lee 2015), I sketch the evolution of scholarly and practitioner discourse to illustrate the ways in which the arts have been used strategically in civic dialogue and the ways civic dialogue has been incorporated as a goal into arts promotion and programming, while research in both fields has followed parallel, but rarely intersecting paths. Finally, I argue that critics of the new public participation and of socially engaged art should explore together their overlapping concerns regarding the dynamic relationship between participatory reforms and arts initiatives and their multiple, ambiguous outcomes.

Methods and Theoretical Approach

This essay draws on a five-year multi-method, multi-sited ethnography of the public engagement field, including participant observation at a number of public engagement conferences such as the NCDD meeting described in 2006, and as part of a research team on the 2008 National Performing Arts Convention. An in-depth sociological field study was conducted by the author from 2006 through 2010 at sites in major cities in the U.S. and Canada.[1] Extensive participant observation in various training and certification venues and professional conferences and over fifty informal interviews with diverse actors in the field provided perspective on the shared concerns and conflicts of deliberation practitioners regarding professional development and field advancement.[2]

For those unfamiliar with the terminology of public engagement and deliberative democracy, it is useful to begin by better specifying the loose boundaries of the field itself. "Professional public engagement facilitation" is used in this essay to refer to facilitation services aimed at engaging the public and relevant stakeholders with organizations in deeper, more interactive ways than traditional, one-way public outreach and information. The terms "public participation," "civic engagement," "public engagement," and

"public deliberation" are typically used interchangeably to refer to the broad spectrum of reforms aimed at intensifying public engagement and deliberation in governance, and this essay uses all of these terms in order to reflect their overlapping usage by practitioners. Executive director of the Deliberative Democracy Consortium Matt Leighninger notes that: "In common usage, 'deliberation and democratic governance' = active citizenship = deliberative democracy = citizen involvement = citizen-centered work = public engagement = citizen participation = public dialogue = collaborative governance = public deliberation. Different people define these terms in different ways – and in most cases, the meanings are blurry and overlapping" (Leighninger 2009: 5). "Profession" is used to refer specifically to organizations and educational institutions offering training and degree programs, trained practitioners paid for their work in public engagement facilitation, and their professional associations and occupational networks. "Field" refers to professionals, volunteer facilitators, facilitation clients and process sponsors, but also more broadly to the academics, institutes, foundations, and other organizations that share a common language, set of practices, and interest in advancing civic engagement and deliberation.

Half of U.S. professionals in the 2009 practitioner survey described their organizational role as an independent consultant or sole practitioner.[3] These public engagement consultants sell their services to a wide variety of clients for different issues, including local and regional governments and community development corporations, non-profit organizations, businesses, chambers, and industry trade groups. "Clients" with whom practitioners work directly to design processes may actually be separate from the "sponsors" who are underwriting deliberation. Foundations, community development corporations, and individual civic boosters play major roles, but newspapers, television networks, banks and mortgage lenders, utilities, health systems, universities, and residential and commercial developers also sponsor or underwrite public deliberation efforts on a regular basis (Lee 2015a).

Public engagement professionals may combine a variety of deliberative, dialogic, and participatory methods and techniques over the course of a particular project. They might convene a working group of major stakeholders for a series of meetings, produce an interactive website and host a series of online dialogues, or design and host a town hall meeting where participants share ideas in small groups and then vote on the options that have been developed. The responsibilities of the public engagement consultant typically involve all aspects of process design and implementation, including production of informational and marketing materials, stakeholder outreach prior to the process, selection of methods, recruitment of participants and small group facilitators, facilitation of the overall process, continued communication with participants, presentation to the client of process outcomes, and evaluation of process efficacy. Some aspects of these tasks, such as recruitment of underrepresented groups, process branding, and software design, may also be outsourced to subcontractors like opinion research firms and marketing firms for large projects, but most contractors provide the complete range of process design and facilitation services from inception to evaluation, which may last from a few months, in the case of public engagement on pandemic flu planning priorities, to ten years or more in the case of stakeholder collaborations on contaminated sites remediation or natural resource management.

By comparing data from a variety of settings, sources, and perspectives, this type of qualitative research across institutional domains and participant categories "looks to the logics of particular contexts as a way of illuminating complex interrelationships among political, legal, historical, social, economic, and cultural elements" (Scheppele 2004: 390). As such, this research was conducted from the perspective of a comparative historical sociologist interested in the development of the field in the context of concurrent processes of U.S. political development, rather than from the standpoint of advancing deliberation practice or theory (Mutz 2008). The essay is by no means comprehensive in its descriptions of deep, long-term relationships between arts and civic engagement practitioners,

but instead sketches three key moments in the evolution of these relationships, beginning with the promise McCoy foresaw in the 1990s.

Imagining the Potential of Arts and Civic Dialogue in the 1990s

Of course, both public engagement and socially engaged art have long histories in the United States, and plenty of work traces the genealogies of these practices and their changing meanings over time (Gastil and Keith 2005; Jackson 2011; Lippard 1984; Reed 2005; Stimson and Sholette 2006; Thompson 2012; Walker et al. 2015). What was unique in the late 20th century, however, was the professional and formal organization of these fields as arenas for strategic and coordinated action (Fligstein and McAdam 2011; Zald and McCarthy 1980). This "veritable revolution… in the formation of organizations and a 'profession' devoted to the participation of ordinary citizens" produced an extensive "organizational infrastructure for public deliberation" (Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini 2009: 136). The field of professional public engagement was just getting underway in the early 1990s, with the International Association of Public Participation Practitioners (later shortened to IAP2) founded in 1990. The National Coalition on Dialogue and Deliberation was founded later in 2002, as the field began to focus not just on engaging the public but on "dialogue and deliberation"—the value of reason-giving conversations among equals for public problem-solving.

Professional facilitators' increasing focus on collaborative dialogues coincided with a wave of enthusiasm in the academy for "deliberative" democracy, inspired by a number of experiments in consensus-building and collaborative decision-making in environmental planning, community mediation, and alternative dispute resolution in the 1970s and 1980s (Lee 2015). Fatigue with increasingly adversarial techniques of oppositional activism

and partisan posturing in popular media intersected with the interests of new public managers in empowering communities by devolving decision-making to the local level (Handler 1996). Public deliberation, as a new civic form that brings together interest group representatives, activists, and laypersons as equal participants in decision-making sponsored by administrators, foundations, and businesses, also reflects the professionalization of activism, the reframing of corporate citizenship, and the increasing cross-sector collaborations that characterized organizational politics and strategy in this period (Ansell and Gash 2008; Lee, Walker, and McQuarrie 2015; Soule 2009; Zald and McCarthy 1980).

Likewise, a sense of coalescence around the promise of arts-based civic dialogue was also taking place in the 1990s, with greater institutional and professional support than had previously been given to artists advancing performative techniques of audience engagement and activist art in the 1970s and 1980s (Gonzáles and Posner 2006). Just as was the case with civic funders in the dialogue and deliberation field, there was a sense developing among arts funders—some of which, like the Ford Foundation, funded projects in the arts and in public engagement—that civic dialogues were a promising solution in an atmosphere exhausted by the "culture wars" of the 1980s and state-level disinvestment in the arts (Katz 2006; Tepper 2010).

A key moment that crystallized the potential of such dialogues for both the arts and for public engagement were the riots following the acquittal of officers in the Rodney King police brutality case in Los Angeles in 1992. These were the inspiration for Anna Deavere Smith's "Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992," a theater piece incorporating community members' perspectives that gained national acclaim and spawned a number of civic dialogues on its performance in cities around the U.S. Additional tensions following the Simpson trial verdict in 1995 contributed to the founding of the Days of Dialogue organization by LA City Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas. Also in 1995, Carolyn Lukensmeyer founded AmericaSpeaks, following her service in the Clinton administration. In 1997, the

Clinton administration launched Clinton's One America Initiative on Race, initiating multi-city Days of Dialogue and 600 Campus Weeks of Dialogue with the help of public engagement organizations like Martha McCoy's Study Circles Resource Center and the National Days of Dialogue organization. The report on the One America Initiative describes "18,000 people in 36 States, 113 cities, and the District of Columbia" taking part in approximately 1,400 One America Conversations (One America Advisory Board 1998).

Capitalizing on experiments and innovations in both fields throughout the mid-90s, the Ford Foundation and the leading U.S. arts advocacy organization, Americans for the Arts, released a long-awaited report titled "Animating Democracy: The Artistic Imagination as a Force in Civic Dialogue" in 1999. The 138-page report described a multi-year study from 1996-1998 highlighting promising and innovative cases of arts-based civic dialogue across different genres and with all kinds of sponsors—from a Chrysler-sponsored multi-city discussion initiative around the PBS broadcast of "Hoop Dreams," to collaborative, community-centered theater and dance projects initiated by playwrights and artists.

In a context of mounting concerns about public cynicism and apathy in the U.S. and increasing pressure on elite arts institutions to diversify their offerings, the report focused not on the potential of art for critical social commentary or of arts institutions and artists in mobilizing contention and protest, but on the civic productivity of "a vital midrange of activity": "In this work, art consciously incorporates civic dialogue as part of an aesthetic strategy" (Bacon et al. 1999: 30). This explicitly non-partisan activity, with its capacity for activating the dormant creative potential of citizens and audiences, was seen as a promising and civil arena for engagement. Arts-based civic dialogue projects seemed an uncontroversial solution for tackling the most difficult social justice issues.

A closer look at the Animating Democracy Report reveals two important aspects of the development of both fields through interaction and experimentation. First, foundations were central

to encouraging interaction among leaders in both emergent fields (Medvetz 2010).[4] The report included the participation of dialogue and deliberation organization founders such as Martha McCoy of Study Circles Resource Center (now Everyday Democracy), James Fishkin, the inventor of deliberative polling, and the Kettering Foundation, the central research organization in the civic engagement field. The authors even included examples of civic dialogue processes run by professional public engagement organizations that were not specifically related to the arts or arts institutions at all. They also were careful to note that arts-based dialogues could fail to recruit diverse participants, cause controversy, or have minimal impact without the engagement of skilled facilitators with local knowledge and the ability to recruit diverse audiences and manage sustained conversations among people with clashing perspectives.

Second, as an effort to map the field, the report is notable in its inclusive approach to for-profit entities and all kinds of popular arts and media that might conceivably fall under the banner of arts-based civic initiatives. This heterogeneity is typical of emerging fields, and as we will see in the following section, was subject to convergence in the following decade as both fields began to consolidate best practices and exhibited considerable isomorphism in the ways largely nonprofit and elite arts institutions integrated the arts and dialogue into their practices (Mizruchi and Fein 1999).

The report sketched a blueprint for future collaborations, leading to the formal launch of Americans for the Arts' Animating Democracy Initiative in 1999, and concluded that the timing was perfect for such activity:

> In sum, the current moment represents a critical juncture for the arts-based civic dialogue field: There is increasing recognition of the importance of dialogue to democracy; a lively array of artistic activity and aesthetic innovations are nourishing dialogue on a wide range of critical issues; there is growing institutional interest in this arena; and a clearer picture of the accomplishments, promise, and needs of this field and its leaders has begun to

> take shape. Taken together, these trends signal an important opportunity to strengthen and invigorate critical aspects of America's civic and aesthetic life. It is a timely moment to bolster the position of artists, curators, and cultural institutions whose imagination has proved a potent force in animating democracy through the arts and civic dialogue. (Bacon et al. 1999: 64)

As we will see in the next section, as arts-based civic dialogues were further institutionalized and as the arts were incorporated into public deliberation projects in more formulaic ways, both fields saw promising forms of expansion from unlikely places of support. But they also faced new challenges and critiques from those concerned about the ways in which top-down promotion of grassroots citizenship might contribute to reinforcing the power of neoliberal institutions rather than challenging them.

Institutionalizing the Arts and Civic Dialogue in the 2000s: Challenge and Critique

> "Woo-woo," she blurted, matter-of-factly. "Y'know, that touchy-feely arts stuff." She was polite, but matched the sing-songy word with a cringing smile. "We won't have to do that, will we?" [Jon Catherwood-Ginn and Bob Leonard, Animating Democracy trend paper, 2012]

> The aesthetic strategies of the counterculture: the search for authenticity, the ideal of self-management, the anti-hierarchical exigency, are now used in order to promote the conditions required by the current mode of capitalist regulation, replacing the disciplinary framework characteristic of the Fordist period. Nowadays, artistic and cultural production play a central role in the process of capital valorisation and, through 'neo-management', artistic critique has become an important element of capitalist productivity. [Chantal Mouffe, "Art and Democracy," 1998]

In hindsight, the Animating Democracy Report was prescient regarding an explosion of participatory activity in the 21st century. The kinds of participatory reforms that were becoming popular in the arts and civic dialogue in the 1990s diffused quickly across

many institutional fields in the 2000s, with invitations to "Join the conversation!" and "Have your say!" becoming commonplace in corporate workplaces, community organizations, schools, houses of worship, and governments (Lee 2015b). This popularity brought new energy, new resources, and new partners to both fields, enabling further development of professional identities and livelihoods, but also a number of growing pains and other consequences typical of developing fields, including anxieties on the part of both scholars and practitioners about potential cooptation pressures (Hendriks and Carson 2008), and pushback from everyday participants resistant to the "touchy-feely" integration of arts in decision-making and community development processes (Lee 2015a).

Just as "new genre public art" seeks to escape the conventions of public art but nevertheless has a mappable terrain (Lacy 1994), so too have arts-based civic dialogue projects begun to develop genre conventions (Finkelpearl 2013; Helguera 2011; Kester 2015a; 2015b)—among them shared techniques of small group dialogue, audiences accustomed to invitations to participate, and interactive theatrical performances incorporating participation and testimonials from everyday people—the latter particularly ripe for appropriation in commercial marketing given their association with unfiltered authenticity.

As deeper participation was becoming taken for granted in contemporary artmaking, critics interrogated whether it really represented a radical challenge to the status quo. Bishop (2006; 2012) questions the insistent moral boosterism that has accompanied participatory art projects and calls for a systematic reevaluation of the democratic empowerment thought to result. Voeller describes a sleight of hand in the discourses of empathy and community spirit that many processes draw upon, despite their implicit reliance in funding and publicity on development logics focused on the needy:

> That reality is co-constructed through communal participation is typically a jumping off point, even if a tacit one, for artistic endeavors that seek to effect social change and build solidarity.

> However, with varying degrees of intention, such projects operate on the basis of social difference more than commonality. They leverage the privilege of an artist and his or her access to capital of some kind—class, gender or racial privilege; cultural or reputation capital; funding or fundability—to extend resources to a community that does not have access to the same, frequently due to real and persistent inequity. (2015: 277)[5]

Further, critics wondered about the ways in which forms like immersive theater privileged particular kinds of "entrepreneurial participation" and the "valorization of risk, agency, and responsibility" on the part of audience members—making immersive theater "particularly susceptible to co-optation by a neoliberal market given its compatibility with the growing experience industry" (Alston 2013: 128).

Dialogue and deliberation techniques quite intentionally became focused on a limited palette of best practices and core principles in the same period, with practitioners determined to prove to decision-makers and leaders that such practices worked and were worth institutionalizing more deeply in all forms of governance (Glock-Grueneich and Ross 2008; NCDD et al. 2009; Zarek and Herman 2015). Formalized trainings for process design and implementation were offered not only by professional organizations and methods organizations, but also by organizations like the Kettering Foundation's National Issues Forums Moderator Trainings, leading to the consolidation of facilitation principles and techniques.

As such, public deliberative forums using different methods may look superficially heterogeneous, but have predictable formats that are instantly recognizable for veterans—round tables, a visioning exercise to get started, an initial discussion to decide core values and procedures, break out sessions, a return to the large group, "popcorn-style" reports and process summaries, and a reflective finale (Lee 2011). Most public deliberative processes incorporate some combination of hands-on discussion aids such as table facilitators, talking sticks, sketching on butcher block paper,

strategy games, or index card sorting in small group dialogues. For large groups, high- or low-tech tools such as keypad polling, "dot" voting with stickers, or online voting aggregate the results of small group dialogues. Art created by professionals and amateur artmaking are routinely integrated– in invocations using slam poetry and drumming, in graphic recording by visual artists of key phrases and images on large reams of paper, in group drawing exercises using children's art materials–in public engagement processes.

In fact, the power of art, music, and spontaneous transformations has become central to what transpires in facilitated public engagement–in part *because* these processes and their emphases on "getting things done" have become so routine. The integration of art, poetry, and music has come to symbolize the infusion of creativity, critique, and contingency into processes that are otherwise meticulously planned. Having participants themselves use art to express themselves draws on tropes from art therapy, helping participants to connect with and share their own emotions (Roy 2010; Whittier 2009). In line with facilitators' goals of encouraging authentic, human connections and value-oriented communication over position-taking, drawing is intended to tap "inexpressible" feelings and beliefs, forcing participants to use their creative "right brains" instead of their critical "left brains." For instance, Conversation Cafés provide crayons and butcher paper at tables just to get the juices flowing, whereas more intentional exercises use drawing to produce illustrations of a front page of a newspaper in an imagined future. The humble materials used–markers, pipe cleaners, crayons–put participants into a childlike setting of "play" rather than work (See Image 1, a collaborative art project produced from recycled materials by public deliberation practitioners at an NCDD conference). Participants also have the experience of contributing a "piece" of themselves when creating art, reaching a deeper level of engagement than simply listening silently or voicing support for others' views. Posting the art on the walls of meeting rooms provides an opportunity for participants to tour others' self-expression and to feel they have been heard and seen.

A collaborative art project made from recycled materials at an NCDD conference. Photo by author

This sense that art is valuable for the creativity and collaborative innovation it can stimulate is repeatedly invoked as a justification for artful interventions in public engagement. The uses of art in public engagement draw on a particular idea of art as playful and fun, which releases participants from competitive, anxious mindsets and enables them to achieve higher levels of performance, collaboration, and expressive potential as individuals. These elements of individual participation and action are increasingly documented as key to economic accountability and efficiency, because passive consumers are transformed into active citizen collaborators (Lee, Shaffer, McNulty 2013).

Nina Eliasoph describes in her work on Empowerment Projects similarly routine uses of art in public events and fairs intended to "celebrate our diverse, multicultural community" (2011: 206). Diversity fairs "could not celebrate disturbing or puzzling differences,

and frowned upon making distinctions among people anyway," instead convening a jumble of noncontroversial offerings such as food and dance, gospel music, drumming, poetry readings, glitter and glue projects for children, and craft booths—all competing for attention. Similarly, I argue in Lee (2015) that the art used on a routine basis to stimulate or enhance lay participation typically employs a wide range of genres but a small scope of fleeting, individualized actions. Collaborative art projects and group performances in these contexts are oriented to emotion management, individualization of grievances, and temporary, symbolic expressions of group unity in collective art projects where each person contributes a small piece to a larger collage or mosaic. By incorporating art into their dialogues, engagement practitioners celebrate community and contest the rationalizing logics of the market. But they also claim that creative art-making is strategically useful for producing the intended effects of dialogue, improving comprehension of technical topics and producing "results in record time."

These instrumental uses of art can certainly be harnessed to the aims of neoliberal retrenchment (succinctly summed up by one proponent of the cost-savings enabled by deliberation as "pluck[ing] more feathers with less squawking," [Zacharzewski 2010:5]). As deliberation and dialogue were institutionalized, activists and scholarly critics of public engagement initiatives increasingly noted the limitations of the empowerment on offer in participation initiatives in the late 1990s and 2000s. Coming in for particular excitement, and later disappointment, were the Obama Administration's Open Government Initiatives, which called for government to be more participatory, collaborative, and transparent, but focused largely on online feedback tools in practice (Buckley 2010; Konieszka 2010; Wolz 2011). Scholars in Australia, the US, and the UK derided "fake" participation and the ways it might reinforce the power of state and corporate actors by containing critique and protest (Atkinson 1999; Head 2007; Kuran 1998; Leal 2007; Levine 2009; Snider 2010).

Likewise, Kester notes that critics of socially engaged art have linked "local, situational or 'ad hoc' actions… to systematic forms of domination. A typical reproach directed at projects of this nature is that they function as little more than window dressing for a fundamentally corrupt system" (2015b). In an essay on an alternately critical and anodyne 2014 conference on social practice art in Chicago, Voeller describes "the historical dependence of forms of avant-garde art, now including social practice, on a golden umbilical cord of market and institution support" (2015: 279) and the challenge posed in one presentation:

> Daniel Joseph Martinez put his time to the best critical use: he called on the group to stop conflating social practice with doing good and to develop better means of evaluating work under this problematic label. "This is a back alley fight for history," he warned. (278)

Tensions in the "community arts" world described in a 2011 trend report from Animating Democracy include positive economic and developmental outcomes to remediate social problems ("improved economies, academics, and self-esteem; the reduction of violence and recidivism; and an increase in employment and community cohesiveness"), but also a number of failed projects initiated by large investments from foundations and philanthropies that have destabilized and disrupted communities and "damaged" artists (Cleveland 2011: 7). The author warns that a focus on aesthetic value and quality should predominate over instrumental interests: "The most successful programs have been developed by artists making art, not artists doing something else. These artists have created art programs, not therapeutic or remedial programs that use art as a vehicle" (7).

There have been many critiques of projects intended to deepen public and community engagement in the 2000s and 2010s for their failures to mobilize and inability to contest the status quo, both in the arts community and in the public engagement community.[6] Not least, publics accustomed to thin participatory routines may push back, as when arts-based dialogue leaders face

woo-woo moments such as the one that begins this section, or when members of communities see "invitations" to participate as pressuring poor people to self-sacrifice even further (Herbert 2005: 850). Some of the potential for empowerment in these projects is certainly lost as interests in community development and socially engaged art intersect to strengthen institutions and elites rather than communities and to legitimize neoliberal retrenchment.

Contextualizing Critics of the Arts and Civic Dialogue in the 2010s

> While an uncritical vocabulary of 'participation' has proliferated in both cultural and regeneration policy, the actual practice on the ground reveals significant difficulties which have implications for policy goals of community participation and empowerment, and for the community itself. Rather than seeing it as a problem, or something to be removed as soon as possible from the process, contestation and conflict should be recognised as appropriate reflections of community. [Venda Louise Pollock and Joanne Sharp, "Real Participation or the Tyranny of Participatory Practice? Public Art and Community Involvement in the Regeneration of the Raploch, Scotland" (2012: 3063)]

> Even with growing successes in democratic innovation and practice, and with meaningful results from those practices, we haven't even come close to affecting the daily lives of most people… With our democracy in crisis, our field is engaging in more collaborative efforts and in more pointed and urgent conversations about how to have a systemic impact. [Martha McCoy, "The State of the Field in Light of the State of our Democracy: My Democracy Anxiety Closet" (2014: 1)]

As the chorus of criticism has grown louder, a number of scholars have noted that simply analyzing whether dialogue initiatives were "real" or "fake", "worked" or "failed", does not get at the multiple and ambiguous impacts of participation in these projects, nor the fact that mixed outcomes and contention around authenticity have long been the result of participatory reforms (Selznick 1949; Polletta 2015a). Participation has increased at the same time that

social and economic inequality has increased, but the complex relationships between these trends must be examined empirically (Lee et al. 2015). Amidst continuing criticisms of the overinflated hype that has accompanied "The Great Consultation", or the "Age of Engagement" (Martin 2015; Edelman 2010), practitioner attention and some scholars have shifted away from either/or evaluations to consider what meanings are attached to contemporary civic dialogue and socially engaged art initiatives today, and how to confront the unintended consequences of stability and settlement in both fields.

In a 2014 issue of the *Journal of Public Deliberation*, leading practitioners and scholars including McCoy debated the state of the field and possible paths for the future in the face of great progress but also limited impact. In the journal *FIELD* and other academic venues, artists and scholars of socially engaged art (like Pollock and Sharp quoted above) have similarly contemplated a way forward, seeking "to develop a pragmatic analysis that can help us understand how the forms of critical, self-reflective insight that we have come to identify with aesthetic experience can be produced in contexts and through forms of cultural, social or institutional framing, quite different from those we associate with conventional works of art" (Kester 2015a: 4). This section specifies two areas of overlap in these emerging investigations of how to move forward in advancing their respective fields, both within and beyond their current limitations.

Putting short-term or ad hoc projects in longer-term contexts of reception and action

Deliberation expert Patrick Scully describes the limiting nature of the field's emphasis on discrete projects:

> Our field's strong emphasis on temporary public consultations diverts a disproportionate amount of time, intellectual capital, and other resources from efforts to improve the ability of citizens and local communities to have stronger, more active, and direct roles in shaping their collective futures. (2014: 1)

Matt Leighninger, at the time Executive Director of the Deliberative Democracy Consortium, finds that, on the one hand, participants "enjoy" democratic participation and "value these opportunities to be heard" despite the fact that democratic tactics "are rarely sustained or embedded" (2014: 2-3). Deliberation researchers conducting follow-up studies report that participants may evaluate processes positively in the moment, but be frustrated by limited impacts or even forget participating as their busy lives continue. As one participant at the 2008 National Performing Arts Convention reported just a month after the meeting:

> To me, it was an exciting and intellectually stimulating experience. Very intense but valuable. Although when I got home that energy dissipated which I'm sure was true for most. So the challenge is to keep that focus and build on the energy… The dialog needs to continue. It must continue for something to happen… Not that it merited intense journalistic scrutiny but it's almost like it never happened. And to the nation, to individual people – the people we want to bring to the arts – it really didn't.

Similarly, Kester calls in his inaugural editorial for *FIELD* for "a critical analysis that can gauge the long-term effects of socially engaged practices" and, relatedly, "mechanisms to incorporate the insights of participants and collaborators involved in specific projects" (2015a). In two of the socially engaged projects described in the first issue, journal staff had not yet been able to track down participants. Such difficulties promote empathy for the hard work of artists and deliberation facilitators who may be deeply committed to longer-term engagement but hamstrung by conflicts between institutional pressures for short-term accountability and the lived experience of everyday time pressures in participants' lives (Eliasoph 2011).

Better understanding the relationship between local or community-level art projects and dialogue initiatives and systemic, structural change in complex systems

Public engagement scholar Peter Levine argues that "rising signs of oligarchy in the United States" mean "it is time for us to begin to

stir and organize—not for deliberation, but for democracy" (2014: 3), while Patrick Scully sees a central tension in deliberative practice "between reformism and more fundamental, even revolutionary changes to democratic politics" (2014: 1). Leighninger describes how the "lack of a clear vision about the relationship between our work and the political system has dire consequences" (2014: 2).

The public deliberation field has historically had a fraught relationship with activism to redress structural inequalities given deliberative democracy's emphasis on consensus, civility, and non-partisanship (Lee 2015; Whelan 2007), but recently practitioners have called for more intentional linkages between dialogue, action, and even advocacy. Researcher Francesca Polletta explores a number of tensions and claims that "alongside those tensions, however, there are also strong continuities of interest": activism and deliberation may not just be compatible, but "sometimes they may be necessary to each other" (2015b: 240). Kester (2015b: 1-2) similarly argues against simplistic critiques of socially engaged art as inadequate in overthrowing the capitalist system, especially:

> The assumption that any given art project is either radically disruptive or naively ameliorative (trafficking in "good times, affirmative feelings and positive outcomes" as a typical blog posting describes it). This is paired with the failure of many critics to understand that durational art practices, and forms of activism, always move through moments of both provisional consensus or solidarity formation and conflict and disruption.

Instead, Kester proposes, putting socially engaged art projects in their proper context requires grasping "the generative capacity of practice itself—its ability to produce new, counter-normative insights into the constitution of power and subjectivity" (2015b: 2).

In a similar vein, a developing form of scholarship in studies of deliberation seeks to understand participation "in the context of shifting relationships between authority, voice, and inequality in the contemporary era" (Lee 2015b: 272) by "blending micro-level cultural studies of democracy with macro-level political-economic inquiry"—including "objective analysis of the role of organizations

and scholarship itself in promoting the new public participation" (278-279). Baiocchi and Ganuza, for example, trace the diffusion of participatory budgeting in 1,500 cities around the globe, analyzing the precise ways in which "real utopian" social transformation was stripped from the technical implementation of the practice as it traveled—and providing "suggestions for reintroducting empowerment" (2014: 29). At the same time that these studies acknowledge shortcomings and disappointments in public engagement processes, they also welcome "pointed and urgent conversations," awkward moments and tensions as productive sites for exploration and growth.

A Call for Greater Dialogue on the Related Challenges of Public Deliberation and Socially Engaged Art

> Many people who describe themselves as community organizers see our field as simply an alternative form of advocacy – one that emphasizes friendly, urbane conversations and suppresses questions of power. Ironically, when I interviewed leading community organizers, I found they had the same frustrations about the limitations of their work, and the same zeal to transform systems, as I do. (Leighninger 2014: 3)

It is important not to overstate similarities in the ways these two related fields pursue their work. As Kester notes, socially engaged art is distinguished by its "extraordinary geographic scope" and "a common desire to establish new relationships between artistic practice and other fields of knowledge production, from critical pedagogy to participatory design, and from activist ethnography to radical social work" (2015a: 1). By contrast, Leighinger points out that the civic engagement field has struggled to define itself against related practices and has been relatively provincial in its networks: "Participation advocates and practitioners in the Global South, who have pioneered Participatory Budgeting and many other dynamic (and in some cases, sustained) forms of participation, do not sense a similarly democratic energy in the countries of the North – and

many of us in the North do not realize how much we can learn from civic innovations in the South" (2014: 3). Additionally, the uses of arts in the professionally-facilitated dialogues described here frequently emphasize a reductive take on art as a simplistic, largely disposable and instrumental type of "play", while not surprisingly, the art produced by socially engaged artists quite intentionally challenges conventional understandings of aesthetics and audiences. These conflicting approaches should not be overlooked, but as Leighninger notes with respect to community organizers and public engagement professionals, deeper conversations reveal shared frustrations about the limitations of either approach.

It is the purpose of this essay to point out these shared areas of struggle, and perhaps to question presumptions about the assumed compatibility of art and social change (Lee and Long Lingo 2011)—particularly as represented in the dialogue and deliberation world's embrace of particular forms of amateur craft production and participatory performance. This essay is a first effort at tracing moments of overlap or crossed purposes, not to critique the futility of social change efforts, but to encourage both artists and civic engagement practitioners to deepen their engagement with each other and to embrace the difficult conversations that might lead to more productive collaborations and more sustainable social change.

Caroline W. Lee is Associate Professor of Sociology at Lafayette College. Her research explores the intersection of social movements, business, and democracy in American politics. Her book *Do-it-Yourself Democracy: The Rise of the Public Engagement Industry* (2015) studies the public engagement industry in the United States. *Democratizing Inequalities: Dilemmas of the New Public Participation* (2015), an edited volume with collaborators Edward Walker and Michael McQuarrie, explores the challenges of "the new public participation"—the dramatic expansion of democratic practices in organizations—in an era of stark economic inequalities.

Notes

1. See Lee (2015) for more detailed information on methodology and limitations.

2. Analysis of deliberation practitioners' listservs, organization and process websites, blogs, social networking sites, field handbooks, and unique data sources supplements the information gathered through participant observation (Small 2011). Listserv postings were collected, coded by source, and stored in a full-text, searchable database containing over 8,400 documents representing four years of electronic conversations on the field. As a supplement to the fieldwork, informal interviews, and archival research, a non-random online survey of U.S. dialogue and deliberation practitioners (N=345), distributed through over twenty online listservs and web-based community networks in the field, was conducted in September and October 2009 in collaboration with Francesca Polletta of the University of California, Irvine, in order to solicit a broader perspective on the dominant tensions and shared beliefs surfacing in the qualitative research. The survey, whose target population was volunteer and professional deliberation practitioners in the United States, yielded 433 completed responses, 345 of which were from respondents based in the United States. More information on the survey, including demographic information and full results, is available at the public survey results website (http://sites.lafayette.edu/ddps).

3. N=222; see footnote 2 above for more information regarding the survey.

4. This influence went both ways. Sirianni and Friedland's *Civic Innovation in America*, a similar book-length project mapping the civic field of the 1990s, also thanked the Ford Foundation for their support of such efforts, both through their Reinventing Citizenship Project and the program in Media, Arts, and Culture (2001).

5. Eliasoph (2011) describes similar clashes in youth empowerment projects that depended on celebrating community empowerment and volunteerism but also on preventing needy teens from becoming social problems.

6. Similarly impassioned discourse characterizes these parallel critiques. Bishop's provocative 2006 essay in *Artforum* on the "Social Turn" is subheaded "Collaboration and its Discontents" and her 2012 book is titled *Artificial Hells*; a 2014 blog for political sociologists interrogating the empowerment potential of civic initiatives was titled "Participation and Its Discontents" (Baiocchi et al. 2013) and a groundbreaking

volume critiquing regimes of public engagement globally was titled *Participation: The New Tyranny?* (Cooke and Kothari 2001).

References

Alston, Adam. 2013. "Audience Participation and Neoliberal Value: Risk, Agency and Responsibility in Immersive Theatre." *Performance Research* 18: 128-138.

Ansell, Chris, and Alison Gash. 2008. "Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 18:543-571.

Atkinson, Rob. 1999. "Discourses of partnership and empowerment in contemporary British urban regeneration." *Urban Studies* 36: 59–72.

Bacon, Barbara Schaffer, Cheryl Yuen, and Pam Korza. 1999. "Animating Democracy: The Artistic Imagination as a Force in Civic Dialogue." Washington, DC: Americans for the Arts.

Baiocchi, Gianpaolo, Pablo Lapegna, Philip Lewin, and David Smilde. 2013. 'Participation and its Discontents: A Scholarly Forum for Interrogating the Promises and Pitfalls of Political Participation.' http://participationanditsdiscontents.tumblr.com/

Baiocchi, Gianpaolo, and Ernesto Ganuza. 2014. "Participatory Budgeting as if Emancipation Mattered." *Politics & Society* 42: 29-50.

Bishop, Claire. 2012. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. New York: Verso.

_____. 2006. "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents." *Artforum* 44: 178-183.

Black, Laura W., Nancy L. Thomas, and Timothy J. Shaffer. 2014. "The State of Our Field: Introduction to the Special Issue." *Journal of Public Deliberation* 10(1): 1-5. Available at: http://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol10/iss1/art1

Buckley, Stephen. 2010. "OpenGovRadio Today (2/2/10): 'Engagement-Lite' and the OpenGov Dashboard." Blog post: February 2 (http://ustransparency.blogspot.com/2010/02/opengovradio-today-2210-engagement-lite.html).

Catherwood-Ginn, Jon, and Bob Leonard. 2012. "Playing for the Public Good: The Arts in Planning and Government." Animating Democracy/ Americans for the Arts. (http://animatingdemocracy.org/resource/playing-public-good-arts-planning-and-government)

Cleveland, William. 2011. "Arts-based Community Development: Mapping the Terrain." Animating Democracy/Americans for the Arts. (http://animatingdemocracy.org/resource/arts-based-community-development-mapping-terrain)

Cooke, Bill, and Uma Kothari, eds. 2001. *Participation: The New Tyranny?* London: Zed Books.

Davis, Gerald F., and Mayer N. Zald. 2005. "Social Change, Social Theory, and the Convergence of Movements and Organizations." Pp. 335–50 in *Social Movements and Organization Theory*, edited by Gerald F. Davis, Doug McAdam, W. Richard Scott, and Mayer N. Zald. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Duffy, Meghan, Amy Binder, and John Skrentny. 2010. "Elite Status and Social Change: Using Field Analysis to Explain Policy Formation and Implementation." *Social Problems* 57:49-73.

Edelman. 2010. *Public Engagement in the Conversation Age: Vol 2. London: Edelman*. (http://edelmaneditions.com/2010/11/public-engagement-in-the-conversation-age-vol-2/).

Eliasoph, Nina. 2011. *Making Volunteers: Civic Life after Welfare's End*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Finkelpearl, Tom. 2013. *What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Fligstein, Neil, and Doug McAdam. 2011. "Toward a General Theory of Strategic Action Fields." *Sociological Theory* 29:1-26.

Gastil, John, and William M. Keith. 2005. "A Nation that (Sometimes) Likes to Talk: A Brief History of Deliberation in the United States." Pp. 3-19 in *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook*, edited by John Gastil and Peter Levine. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ganuza, Ernesto, and Gianpaolo Baiocchi. 2012. "The Power of Ambiguity: How Participatory Budgeting Travels the Globe." *Journal of Public Deliberation* 8:Article 8.

Glock-Grueneich, Nancy and Sarah Nora Ross. 2008. "Growing the Field: The Institutional, Theoretical, and Conceptual Maturation of 'Public Participation.'" *International Journal of Public Participation* 2:1-32.

Gonzáles, Jennifer, and Adrienne Posner. 2006. "Facture for Change: US Activist Art since 1950." Pp. 212-230 in *A Companion to Contemporary Art Since 1945*, edited by Amelia Jones. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Handler, Joel F. 1996. *Down from Bureaucracy: The Ambiguity of Privatization and Empowerment.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Head, Brian W. 2007. "Community engagement: Participation on whose terms?" *Australian Journal of Political Science* 42: 441–454.

Heierbacher, Sandy. 2015. "NCDD's Year In Numbers infographic is out!" Blog post: January 5 (http://ncdd.org/17127).

_____. 2014. "The Next Generation of Our Work." *Journal of Public Deliberation* 10(1): Article 23. Available at: http://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol10/iss1/art23

Helguera, Pablo. 2011. *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook*. New York: Jorge Pinto Books.

Hendriks, Carolyn M., and Lyn Carson. 2008. "Can the Market Help the Forum? Negotiating the Commercialization of Deliberative Democracy." *Policy Sciences* 41:293-313.

Herbert, Steve. 2005. "The Trapdoor of Community." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95: 850-865.

Jackson, Shannon. 2011. *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics*. New York: Routledge.

Journal of Public Deliberation. 2010. "Aims & Scope." (http://services.bepress.com/jpd/aimsandscope.html).

Katz, Jonathan D. 2006. "'The Senators Were Revolted': Homophobia and the Culture Wars." Pp. 231-248 in *A Companion to Contemporary Art Since 1945*, edited by Amelia Jones. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Kelleher, Christine A., and Susan Webb Yackee. 2008. "A Political Consequence of Contracting: Organized Interests and State Agency Decision Making." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 19:579-602.

Kester, Grant. 2015a. "Editorial." *FIELD* 1: 1-10.

_____. 2015b. "On the Relationship between Theory and Practice in Socially Engaged Art." Posted on "Fertile Ground," at A Blade of Grass (July) http://www.abladeofgrass.org/fertile-ground/between-theory-and-practice/

Koller, Andreas. 2010. "The Public Sphere and Comparative Historical Research." *Social Science History* 34:261-290.

Konieczka, Stephen P. 2010. "Practicing a Participatory Presidency? An Analysis of the Obama Administration's Open Government Dialogue." *International Journal of Public Participation*, 4:43-66.

Kuran, Timur. 1998. "Insincere Deliberation and Democratic Failure." *Critical Review* 12:529-544.

Lacy, Suzanne, ed. 1994. *Mapping The Terrain: New Genre Public Art*. Seattle: Bay Press.

Leal, Pablo Alejandro. 2007. "Participation: The Ascendancy of a Buzzword in the Neo-liberal Era." *Development in Practice* 17: 539 –548.

Lee, Caroline W. 2011. "Five Assumptions Academics Make About Deliberation, and Why They Deserve Rethinking." *Journal of Public Deliberation* 7(1): 1-48.

_____. 2015a. *Do-it-Yourself Democracy: The Rise of the Public Engagement Industry.* Oxford University Press.

_____. 2015b. "Participatory Practices in Organizations." *Sociology Compass* 9: 272-288.

Lee, Caroline W., and Elizabeth Long Lingo. 2011. "The 'Got Art?' Paradox: Questioning the Value of Art in Collective Action." *Poetics* 39: 316-335.

Lee, Caroline W., Kelly McNulty, and Sarah Shaffer. 2015. "Civic-izing Markets: Selling Social Profits in Public Deliberation." Pp. 27-45 in *Democratizing Inequalities: Dilemmas of the New Public Participation,* edited by Lee, McQuarrie, and Walker. New York: NYU Press.

Lee, Caroline W. and Zachary Romano. 2013. "Democracy's New Discipline: Public Deliberation as Organizational Strategy." *Organization Studies* 34: 733-753.

Leighninger, Matt. 2009. "Funding and Fostering Local Democracy: What Philanthropy Should Know about the Emerging Field of Deliberation and Democratic Governance." Denver, CO: Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement.

_____. 2014. "What We're Talking About When We Talk About the 'Civic Field' (And why we should clarify what we mean)." *Journal of Public Deliberation* 10(1): Article 8. (http://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol10/iss1/art8)

Levine, Peter. 2010. "A Map of the Civic Renewal Field." Blog post: October 25 (http://peterlevine.ws/?p=6024).

_____. 2009. "Collaborative Problem-Solving: The Fake Corporate Version." Blog post: January 27 (http://peterlevine.ws/?p=5615).

_____. 2014. "Beyond Deliberation: A Strategy for Civic Renewal," *Journal of Public Deliberation*, Vol. 10: Iss. 1, Article 19. Available at: http://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol10/iss1/art19

Levine, Peter, Fung, Archon, and John Gastil. 2005. "Future Directions for Public Deliberation." *Journal of Public Deliberation* 1: Article 3.

Lippard, L.R., 1984. *Get the Message? A Decade of Art for Social Change*. E.P. Dutton, New York.

Lukensmeyer, Carolyn. 2014. "Key Challenges Facing the Field of Deliberative Democracy." *Journal of Public Deliberation* 10(1): Article 24. Available at: http://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol10/iss1/art24

Martin, Isaac William. 2015. "The Fiscal Sociology of Public Consultation." Pp. 102-124 in Lee, McQuarrie, and Walker (eds.), *Democratizing Inequalities: Dilemmas of the New Public Participation*. New York: NYU Press.

Mathews, David. 2014. "What's Going on Here? Taking Stock of Citizen-Centered Democracy." Pp. 4-7 in *Connections: Taking Stock of the Civic Arena*. Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation.

McCoy, Martha. 1997. "Art for Democracy's Sake." *Public Art Review* 9: 4-9.

_____. 2014. "The State of the Field in Light of the State of our Democracy: My Democracy Anxiety Closet." *Journal of Public Deliberation* 10(1): Article 13. Available at: http://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol10/iss1/art13

Medvetz, Thomas. 2008. "Think Tanks as an Emergent Field." New York: Social Science Research Council.

Mizruchi, Mark S., and Lisa C Fein. 1999. "The Social Construction of Organizational Knowledge: A Study of the Uses of Coercive, Mimetic,

and Normative Isomorphism." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 44:653-83.

Mutz, Diana. 2008. "Is Deliberative Democracy a Falsifiable Theory?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 11:521-38.

National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD). 2015. "The Arts at NCDD Events." Available at: (http://ncdd.org/events/arts).

National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD), the International Association for Public Participaction (IAP2), the Co-Intelligence Institute, and others. 2009. "Core Principles for Public Engagement." (www.ncdd.org/pep/).

O'Leary, Rosemary, and Lisa B. Bingham. 2003. *The Promise and Performance of Environmental Conflict Resolution*. Washington, DC: Resources for the Future.

One America Advisory Board. 1998. "One America in the 21st Century: Forging a New Future." Washington, DC. <http://clinton2.nara.gov/Initiatives/OneAmerica/cevent.html>

Polletta, Francesca. 2015a. "How Participatory Democracy Became White: Culture and Organizational Choice." *FIELD* 1: 215-254.

Polletta, Francesca. 2015b. "Public Deliberation and Political Contention." Pp. 222-243 in Lee, McQuarrie, and Walker (eds.), *Democratizing Inequalities: Dilemmas of the New Public Participation*. New York: NYU Press.

Pollock, Venda Louise, and Joanne Sharp. 2012. "Real Participation or the Tyranny of Participatory Practice? Public Art and Community Involvement in the Regeneration of the Raploch, Scotland." *Urban Studies* 49:3063-3079.

Powell, Walter W., and Paul J. DiMaggio. 1991. "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields." Pp. 63-82 in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis,* edited by W.W. Powell and P.J. DiMaggio. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Reed, T.V. 2005. *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN.

Roy, William G. 2010. *Reds, Whites, and Blues: Social Movements, Folk Music, and Race in the United States*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Selznick, Philip. 1949. *TVA and the Grassroots: A Study in the Sociology of Formal Organization*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Scheppele, Kim Lane. 2004. "Constitutional Ethnography." *Law and Society Review* 38:389-406.

Scully, Patrick L. 2014. "A Path to the Next Form of (Deliberative) Democracy." *Journal of Public Deliberation* 10(1): Article 12. Available at: http://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol10/iss1/art12

Sirianni, Carmen, and Lewis Friedland. 2001. *Civic Innovation in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Small, Mario Luis. 2011. "How to Conduct a Mixed Methods Study: Recent Trends in a Rapidly Growing Literature." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37:57-86.

Snider, J.H. 2010. "Deterring Fake Public Participation." *International Journal of Public Participation* 4:90-102.

Soule, Sarah A. 2009. *Contention and Corporate Social Responsibility*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Stimson, Blake, and Gregory Sholette, eds. 2006. *Collectivism After Modernism: Art and Social Imagination after 1945*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Tepper, Steven. 2010. *Not Here, Not Now, Not That! Protest over Art and Culture in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tepper, S., Gao, Y., 2008. Engaging art: what counts? In: Tepper, S.J., Ivey, B. (Eds.), *Engaging Art: the Next Great Transformation of American Cultural Life*. Taylor & Francis Group, New York, pp.17-48.

Thomas, Nancy L., and Matt Leighninger. 2010. "No Better Time: A 2010 Report on Opportunities and Challenges for Deliberative Democracy." The Deliberative Democracy Consortium and the Democracy Imperative. (www.deliberative-democracy.net).

Thomas, Nancy L. 2014. "Democracy by Design." *Journal of Public Deliberation* 10(1): Article 17. Available at: http://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol10/iss1/art17

Thompson, Nato. 2012. *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011*. Boston: MIT Press.

Voeller, Megan. 2015. "On 'A Lived Practice' Symposium, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Nov. 6-8, 2014." *FIELD* 1: 275-280.

Walker, Edward T., Michael McQuarrie, and Caroline W. Lee. 2015. "Rising Participation and Declining Democracy." Pp. 3-23 in Lee, McQuarrie, and Walker (eds.), *Democratizing Inequalities: Dilemmas of the New Public Participation*. New York: NYU Press.

Walsh, Katherine Cramer. 2007. *Talking about Race: Community Dialogues and the Politics of Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Whelan, James. 2007. "Six Reasons Not to Engage: Compromise, Confrontation and the Commons." COMM-ORG Papers 13. University of Wisconsin. (http://comm-org.wisc.edu/papers2007/ whelan.htm).

Whittier, Nancy. 2009. *The Politics of Child Sexual Abuse: Emotion, Social Movements, and the State*. Oxford University Press, New York.

Williams, Mike. 2004. "Discursive democracy and New Labour: Five ways in which decision-makers manage citizen agendas in public participation initiatives." *Sociological Research Online* 9.

Wolz, Chris. 2011. "Room for Progress in Online Participation for Open Government." Blog post: March 16 (http://www.forumone.com/ blogs/ post/room-progress-online-participation-open-government-tim-bonnemann-sxswi).

Zacharzewski, Anthony. 2010. "Democracy Pays: How Democratic Engagement Can Cut the Cost of Government." Brighton, UK: The Democratic Society and Public-i.

Zald, Mayer N., and John D. McCarthy. 1980. "Social Movement Industries: Competition and Cooperation among Movement Organizations." *Research in Social Movements, Conflict, and Change* 3:1-20.

Zarek, Corinne, and Justin Herman. 2015. "Announcing the U.S. Public Participation Playbook." Office of Science and Technology Policy blog: February 3 (https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/02/03/announcing-us-public-participation-playbook).

FIELD
A JOURNAL OF SOCIALLY-ENGAGED ART CRITICISM

A Chronicle of Art (and Anthropology) at the World Trade Organization… in Five Not-So-Easy Pieces

George E. Marcus

This paper chronicles a collaboration between artists and anthropologists in producing an installation at the headquarters of the World Trade Organization, Geneva, in June 2013. It was an opportunistic 'second act' to a long-term ethnographic research project that preceded it. For anthropology, it constitutes an experiment in 'second-order observation' that involves different senses of being and acting in field research than are present within classic norms of ethnographic method. Though valued marginally, art is a more conventional presence at the WTO than something as exotic as ethnography. Thus the scene was set for a mutually challenging collaboration that is still being explored by its participants beyond the period of intervention and presence in Geneva.

This chronicle describes a 'second act' or afterlife to a long-term collaborative ethnographic research project at the World Trade Organization—sited primarily in Geneva at the Centre William Rappard (CWR) headquarters of the WTO and experimental in its own right—in which I participated. It lasted from 2008 through 2010, was directed by Professor Marc Abeles with generous funding from CNRS (the French national research organization), and was personally invited by WTO Director-General (D-G) Pascal

Lamy. Through my development of a Center for Ethnography at the University of California, Irvine, established in 2005, I had been interested in documenting the increasingly explicit and ambitiously collaborative nature of ethnographic research projects and how these required forms and contexts that posed creative challenges to classic norms of largely individually conceived ethnographic research (see Rabinow et al, 2008; and Marcus 2012, 2013). In this pursuit, I have found various genres of design thinking (see Gunn, Otto, and Smith 2013) and conceptual art (see especially, Bishop 2012, Kester 2011, Papastergiadis 2011, and Schneider and Wright 2013) immensely stimulating.

Having already produced a scenario, in early 2012, for an ethnographically informed art installation (Marcus, n.d.) for a volume entitled *Curatorial Dreams*—inviting contributors to imagine their most creative or ideal art or museum exhibits—I proposed an installation as a 'second act' to the 2008-2010 project to a high

Image 1. Pascal Lamy, Director General of the World Trade Organization until June 2013, and Patron of the Ethnography Project and Its Second Act (image courtesy of George Marcus)

level WTO official with whom we had worked previously, and after checking with Lamy, he agreed with enthusiasm. The exhibit had to occur during Lamy's tenure as D-G, under whose 'license', so to speak, anthropology, as a peculiar but low-key presence, had been allowed to operate within the WTO secretariat for three years. This tenure was coming to a close at the end of June 2013.

The result of producing this project under such pressure (not unusual as I have discovered in the production of highly opportunistic conceptual art projects) has been a messy but invaluable short course of experience for me in what the potential of such projects of collaboration are for contemporary anthropological research that might develop beyond conventionally conceived (and patient) stages of fieldwork toward interventions within or alongside complex organizations, assemblages of institutions, and expert systems.

I have chosen to tell this story compressed in the frame of a simple chronicle, picking and choosing the details that make the methodological import of the project intelligible. As a genre of intervention in contemporary research method evolved within the Malinowskian (or Boasian, or Maussian) organization of ethnographic research, I argue that our project operates at the level of 'second-order observation' (a concept developed by Luhmann late in his career, 1998, and explicitly evoked for contemporary anthropological research by Rabinow, 2003). Second-order observation, in relation to the kind of immersive, cautious participant observation in first-order ethnography, which it succeeds or goes on alongside, requires by its nature, forms and settings that involve explicit scenarios for collective thinking and collaboration (see Kester, 2004, for an account of a line of conceptual art projects based on dialogic mise-en-scenes).[1] I tried to do something like this within the earlier collaborative project at the WTO (with Hadi Deeb, as a 'para-site' conducted with D-G Lamy, see Deeb and Marcus 2011, and Michael Silverstein's witty and penetrating response). This experiment in second-order observation—or an intervention orchestrating displacements in

on-going fieldwork based on local knowledge and competencies incrementally achieved—had interesting developmental potential, but it should have started earlier in the project. It seems to me that the work of designers in their studios alongside and within contexts of social life (Cantarella, Hegel, and Marcus, n.d.) or the inventions of conceptual artists and curators (as installations, performances, or contexts of collective participation) offer in spirit and content better models for interventions than what ethnographers might conceive for themselves in collaborations such as the one that I undertook in 2013 at the WTO under severe time pressure and other constraints. In the frame and limits of an article, my purpose is to give a sense of how this experiment unfolded and the potential for other such interventions and partnerships between art and anthropology (as well as their problems) that it suggests.

The World Trade Organization

The World Trade Organization, before 1995 known as GATT (the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs), and now headquartered in a villa—the Centre William Rappard (hereafter, CWR) on Lac Leman, Geneva—is one of those international organizations created at the end of World War II by the victors (the U.S. and Britain primarily) to provide the means for preventing conflagration on such a scale in the future and to govern the world. This last phrase is the title of an overview by Mark Mazower (2012) of successive efforts in the modern Western world to establish such conditions, from the Congress of Vienna in 1815, following the Napoleonic Wars, to the League of Nations following World War I, to the institutional inventions negotiated at the Bretton-Woods conference following World II and with which we live today. As Mazower explores, these organizations, including the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the WTO, are composed of actors in the nation-state form originated by the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. It is very clear that in the future, the renewal of the international system cannot be based on response to world war (e.g., the

challenge of climate change is a more likely source of potential renewal) nor will states alone (especially Western states) remain the primary international actors. The ending of the Cold War gave the aging post-World War II international system a temporary reprieve from decline, in the vigorous implementation and regulation of a neoliberal 'new world order' through the imposed structural adjustments on the economies of the vastly multiplied nation states (the WTO formed in 1995 from GATT, did its part in setting rules of accession for membership, and has a unique process of 'single undertakings' which binds all member states to agreements).

By the end of the first decade of the new century, the relevance of each of the international organizations is challenged at the very core of its foundational arrangements. The WTO came late to full development as an organization and is perhaps the most specialized and least well known of the post-World War II set. Dominated by

Image 2. Exterior of Centre William Rappard and advertisement of its own Open House following our departure (image courtesy of George Marcus)

the influence of the United States, run administratively with a British accent, it is now composed of 159 state members, most of whom have missions resident in Geneva, very different from the 'club' atmosphere of the 30 or so major states in terms of which it had long been run. Before Director-General Lamy left his position at the end of June 2013, he commissioned an excellent, informative history of the WTO and an assessment of its future (It is readily available on the WTO website in 5 languages, VanGrasstek 2013).

As constituted as an organization, the WTO has many virtues and is near utopic in conception. It concentrates the globe for deliberation and action. It is member- and rule-driven; it is the only international organization that has a mutually binding and functioning dispute settlement process; its bureaucracy, the Secretariat, really does serve, rather than control the membership. Trade, being the obverse, yet kin, of the sort of competition that generates war among states, makes the WTO either at certain moments a cockpit for power politics among major states or, at others, mostly irrelevant. Its sustained ability to regulate trade depends on its capacity to generate new binding agreements among its growing membership. When it does so, or is in the act of doing so, it is a major player in world governance, and leading states participate with motivation in the politics of negotiation; lesser states have voice and participate with cunning and subtlety in the politics. The WTO last achieved this condition in 1995 on the basis of the so-called Uruguay Round, a comprehensive agreement that remains the substance of trade rules in many areas and still defines much of the WTO's work. In 2001, the Doha Round was initiated, as a second major effort at a multilateral order of trade for the WTO that would deal explicitly with questions of development and inequalities among member states.

Repeated efforts to conclude it, especially during the tenure of D-G Pascal Lamy (serving two terms from 2005-2013), have failed—and spectacularly so, through media attention—calling into question the function and effectiveness of the WTO as an organ of world governance. As of June 2013, the Doha Round was largely

in abeyance (though partial aspects of it were achieved to little fanfare at a Bali ministerial meeting in October 2013 under the new Brazilian D-G). In recent years, with its efforts in bilateral and regional partnerships—the ambitious Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and wide-ranging trade negotiations with the European Union—the U.S. clearly has withdrawn its active engagement in the WTO process. Failures in trade diplomacy elsewhere or the rise of other powers in WTO affairs—especially China, admitted after lengthy accession negotiations in 2001, and as yet, reserved in its presence—may re-center truly global movement in the WTO, but there was little sign or hope of this in June when we conducted our 'second act.' [2]

Pascal Lamy's Anthropological Curiosity

Pascal Lamy, a senior French technocrat with previous important high-level positions in the French government and at the European Union, was intellectually committed to advancing multilateral trade during his terms as D-G, which meant on the one hand bringing the Doha Round to a successful conclusion, in which he failed, and on the other, 'nudging' changes by other means and more subtle strategies in a member-run, rule-bound organization in which the Secretariat and the D-G have very few defined prerogatives, little power, and a very conservative tradition of service. Though he did make his interest in and partiality toward anthropology clear (at one point, holding up to us recent essays by Marshall Sahlins as exemplary!), and he respected the earlier work of Marc Abeles, who proposed the original project on the European Union, he never made clear to us what he expected from our work. Perhaps he expected insights about institutional culture that would suggest the kind of subtle organizational changes that might shift the WTO further in the direction of a broad-based, multicultural organization that in fact was becoming (or had already become) truly global and at least more public in the complexity of relations that it concentrated within its rule-bound and functionally narrow professional culture.

Lamy was not an idealist, and we were far from consultants, experts, or policy scholars of trade, of whom there have been many passing through the WTO. Most of these have viewed state structures as the key actors in the international space. Anthropologists come from a tradition of research in non-state societies, and though accustomed to working in modern institutional contexts, they see social and economic relations with a fundamentally different lens than other experts who have consulted at the WTO. Perhaps, this was at the core of anthropology's appeal for Lamy. He seemed to be moving close to recognizing the realities of an alterity driven 'cosmopolitics' that Bruno Latour has defined (2004).

In the beginning, we were an anomaly, however low-profile, and a controversial one at that. It was difficult to explain our presence—anthropology was little understood among diplomats, bureaucrats, lawyers, and economists—and it was used as fuel by Lamy's resident critics who resisted change in the organization, as another of his unwarranted moves to change WTO culture. But as with most fieldwork projects, initial reaction settled down after our entry, and the sustained, low-key presence of first-order participant observation was afforded.

So, Lamy was not our partner (or only a very silent one), and he gave us no charge. Rather he gave us, rather bravely, 'license' to be there, and the gift of access, essential to anthropological research, and then kept his distance (but one of his chief assistants, a diplomat, was a sustained representative, interlocutor, and friend of the project, who ironically advised Lamy against it when it was first proposed). Lamy did not consider himself a special informant of the project, though he seemed to like the counter (WTO) cultural idea of anthropological inquiry in the quiet corridors amid the discrete conversations of the CWR, and he occasionally consulted one or another of us for an interpretation or meaning of a term or detail that seemed more than technical. I think he grew to expect less of the project as its three year term progressed, perhaps partly because his own prospects for success in the Doha Round dimmed early on (during the first year of the project), and we were patiently

going about our business of dwelling without delivering short-term insights or ideas.

Anthropologists at the WTO, 2008-2010

The results of our three-year project are reported in a collective volume, introduced by Marc Abeles and with a brief preface by Lamy, published soon after its conclusion (Abeles 2011). The chapters reflect the very specific intellectual style and interests of each of the ten researchers recruited to the project, with ten distinct cultural/national backgrounds, very different levels and intensities of fieldwork engagement with the WTO, and a diverse range of topics that were individually pursued. The result is a varied, interesting, valuable, but unsynthesized portrait of the WTO in a period of both subtle organizational tweaking and innovation and an uncertain future of increasing engagement with publics inside its processes. The license to do fieldwork, however, did not mean access, understandably, to actual contexts of negotiation. We lacked the drama of field materials that give participant observation its sense of excitement when 'something happens.'

Missions from various countries were visited by different researchers, and there were many interviews with a range of delegates, but the focus of the project, as participant observation, remained largely on the Secretariat and its work. Our individual researchers were coordinated, and there were collective meetings of the team in Paris and Geneva, but the project did not establish a well-defined collaborative structure or forum for itself, sufficient to evolve a distinctive argument from the diverse ethnographies that would assess the present condition and prospects of multilateralism, beyond the original design and GATT culture of the organization. [3] Mastery of the exotic technical language and culture of trade was a very high bar for most of us. So were the rules of discretion—frankness in privacy, but 'not for attribution.' We needed more

lawyer-anthropologists among us, to provide what Annelise Riles has called "collateral knowledge" (Riles 2011).

On one level, this project was a methodological experiment in an international collaborative effort in ethnography, and as such, it produced both valuable lessons and mixed results. None of the researchers continue their active research on the WTO, and only one to my knowledge, Jae Chung, is writing a full account of her work, based on the most prolonged and intensive participant observation—among us, during 2008-2010, as well as follow-up fieldwork that she undertook in conjunction with our 'second act' intervention in June 2013.

Art at the WTO (as the Opportunity for a 'Second Act')

While the presence of anthropologists might have seemed markedly strange and invasive at the WTO, the presence of works of art, which pose an analogous kinship of 'otherness' to the spare and hyper-rational business of trade negotiation, certainly was not. Works of art at the WTO are abundant, in the sculptures of surrounding grounds and integral to the architecture and spaces of the CWR building itself [4], especially with regard to a number of murals on its walls and in stored collections of paintings and objects that the WTO itself has accumulated over the years as gifts and symbolic prestations, as ironic supplements to the 'high rationalist' calculative regulation of modern trade. Art was there at the CWR to be seen as everyone daily passed through and worked in the building—if only they looked with attention! Promoting the mostly ignored but very present art as heritage of the somber building was one of Lamy's concerns and 'countercultural' projects. It was of particular interest and pride to the official, who was the main advisor to the anthropological researchers and our main liaison to Lamy.

Indeed, it was through his enthusiastic supervision and curatorial work that many of the striking murals on the walls of the CWR were restored. This might be interpreted as a subtle commentary

of critique and recognition, since these murals are collectively an homage to labor, collected and created during the long period that the CWR was the headquarters of the International Labor Organization (ILO). When the GATT bureaucracy replaced the ILO in 1977 at the CWR, the then D-G determined that the murals were unsuitable to the new occupants, and all but one were removed or plastered over. Their restoration had been mostly completed before the period of our team research. We thus worked in the presence of these works, in an otherwise spare environment, and several of us in our writings have called attention to them, as have other major commentaries on the WTO (e.g., Mazower 2012; VanGrasstek 2013), noting their irony, and, to us, striking presence.

Both Lamy and the official who was the anthropologists' liaison thus valued some level of artistic expression within the CWR (and its building expansion which did not actually manifest until the period of the team project). I took this mildly countercultural effort inside the WTO as an opportunity to propose a second act return of anthropology, this time through collaboration with artists or curators in an installation. When I proposed the project to our liaison in early 2012—at that stage, as a project involving a collaboration with an ethnographic museum (see below)—he responded with enthusiasm, after checking with Lamy.

The use of artifacts from an ethnographic museum was already a second prototype (see below) for the project, and not the last. Our liaison diplomat (and presumably Lamy) stayed with the project through its three proposed plans. Through a succession of prototypes, I could see the advantage in each of somehow linking a second act, anthropology-through-art intervention to the murals already there—if only by spatial association or by some logic and inspiration of artistic invention. This relation to the exposed ILO murals, direct or indirect, was a component of our thinking through each of the prototypes. The murals were an 'other' hiding in plain sight that defined a context to think through an anthropology-through-art intervention.

Prototypes for a "Second Act" Project of Intervention

There were four conceptions or prototypes of the 'second act' project, of varying development, before we settled on the one that was produced.

The first was an elicited imaginary exercise, written in late 2011, but it defined certain key problems, issues, and desirable conditions for producing an anthropology/art intervention at the CWR. It was the paper that I mentioned earlier—produced for an edited book project, *Curatorial Dreams*—which invited contributors to imagine their ideal museum or art exhibit. Partially out of frustration with the challenges of access in our earlier project and partly from my long existing interest in site-specific art and ethnographic research collaborations, I imagined an installation situation in close spatial relation to existing murals, where those working in the building were used to seeing art in the CWR. The installation would consist of large clear plastic screens, the degrees of transparency of which would be altered without notice at different locations during the at least three-month duration of the project. Behind the screens would be reverse-engineered key public documents of the WTO, altered to earlier draft states—with bracketing, side notes, and other marks of editing—created by the curatorial team. Different documents would be moved about or appear on a random schedule at the various screen sites, and the screens themselves would be moved randomly among sites over the period. Viewers would become "hooked" on following the movements to increase attention. Additionally tapes of barely audible whispering would be played randomly around the sites of installation. Anthropologists who had been at the WTO would be present to register the reactions in corridor talk and casual lunch conversations.

This might have been the ideal project to actually do rather than imagine, but it came too early in the process, and I had no artist collaborators or specific funding for it. Yet it established what I thought were two ideal conditions for the project to keep in mind for later prototypes: the importance of duration (it would simply

take time for anything placed in the CWR atmosphere to gain invested attention) and the use of low-key, minimalist stimulants, without requiring skilled symbolic interpretation in the first encounter and based on representations of standard knowledge forms close to what basic ethnography learns. As it turned out, we followed neither of these conditions, due to the circumstances of scheduling constraint, of changing visions of the project (where the issue of multilateral possibility became more important than transparency), and the specific dynamics of thinking together in creative collaboration with partners.

The second prototype was inspired by my contacts with and interest in innovative curatorial thinking in ethnographic museums, especially by a visit to the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt and in speaking at a conference in Rome on whether and in what senses do ethnographic museums need contemporary ethnographic research. For the Weltkulturen Museum, which had invited artists and craft specialists of various kinds to reside and work creatively with selections from its collections to produce exhibits, I conceived of such a "labor" as a space to prototype an installation at the CWR, which would install there artifacts of traditional, non-state society trade systems, somehow not as the predecessor or heritage of modern trade but in critical and complex dialogue with it. The prototype forged in the Weltkuturen Museum labor would be installed at the CWR in June 2013, and then it would return to Frankfurt as a museum exhibit and a museum-sponsored conference including interested CWR/WTO participants. The development of this proposal lacked funding (e.g., to transport museum artifacts) and sufficient motivation of the Weltkuturen Museum partner. However, it was the first version of the proposal to the WTO, and it did elicit the enthusiasm of our liaison.

The third prototype—or the effort to create one—arose from the serendipity of me finding my first real (but not, alas, final) partners at a conference in the fall of 2012 on "Interventions in Ethnographic Research," organized at the Moesgaard Museum in Aarhus, Denmark, by the anthropologists Rane Willerslev and Lotte Meinert.

Willerslev had recently become head of Cultural Museums in Oslo, Norway, and he had brought curators, museum anthropologists, and exhibition designers to the Intervention conference in Aarhus. The example of Peter Bjerregaard and Alexandra Schussler and their work on Willerslev's research and exhibition plans in Norway caused a shift in my thinking about what might be done at the WTO. They suggested doing something far more interactive and overtly challenging than I thought possible at the WTO. They joined me and Jae Chung in thinking through scenarios and prototypes for the WTO installation. Jae is an anthropologist teaching at a German business university and a former student of the Rice anthropology department, and of the members of the 2008-2010 team, had spent the most continuous time at the CWR and developed the closest relationships with WTO personnel.

The third prototype involved intensive exploratory discussions among Peter, Alexandra, Jae and myself. The four of us visited the WTO in late October 2012 and had encouraging and enthusiastic discussions with our longtime liaison, who, in consultation with Lamy, approved the 'second act'.

Jae and I deferred to the considerable curatorial expertise of Peter and Alexandra. The latter thought through a number of ideas based on their visit and their openness to previous prototypes. Additionally, Alexandra brought in, as possible participants, three colleagues from the Basel School of Design who had experience doing such installation projects in public and private institutions. Our discussions were, for me, heady and very valuable. There were ideas, characteristic of anthropology and museums, to show the deep and sometimes paradoxical role of gift relationships in the constitution of the WTO's work of regulating modern trade. There were different suggestions for relating to the murals—re-covering them, screening them, and substituting different images.

One problem was that nothing of sufficient duration could be done, and many of the suggestions we thought through would involve more interactional dynamics—though key to many projects

of museum exhibit and conceptual art—than our WTO sponsors would permit. In our own interesting discussions under pressure, we were likely pushing limits of what could be done.

The imagining of this third prototype came to a head on a second visit to the WTO in late February 2013, which included Jae, Peter, Alexandra, and two of the three Basel artists (I could not attend because of illness). The final discussions with our sponsor focused on a proposal based on animating the figures in the ILO murals with performance artists and engaging passersby in the CWR in dialogue. I still believe this might have appealed had the proposal been better thought through.

The WTO is a very different kind of environment than museums. Museums play to publics, and the WTO has only been learning to do so in very reserved and uncertain steps. Both are bureaucracies, at base, but the 'game' at the WTO during our time there was being played more earnestly and to higher stakes, especially where it (and other international organizations in its post World War II 'age-grade') had gotten by 2013 in its history.

…Watching this final meeting on Skype, I had a sense of disaster—this is where the second act project would end!

Not so. But before I tell the rest of the story, I want to register a fourth prototype, which was never a real proposal, though it was practically conceivable, and that was my effort to think through something like what Alexandra and the Basel artists had in mind. I discussed it only with Jae. Elements of it were integral to the fifth prototype, and the one that was actually produced with great verve and ingenuity (see below).

The fourth prototype would be the recruitment of mimes who perform daily in the urban public spaces of Geneva (as in many other European cities), and with whom many who walk the streets of Geneva, including trade diplomats and bureaucrats, would be familiar. The idea would have been to find willing candidates among the informal association of street mimes, and to work out a series of symbolic interactions—both scripted and improvised—for them

to perform at various sites and various times during the day at the WTO. Dressed in business attire, perhaps covered in luminous paint, or not so 'marked', and of diverse ethnic background, these pairs or threesomes would mimic behaviorally scenarios of trade of varying complexity. I did not have the contacts in Geneva to actually produce this prototype, but it turned out to constitute an interesting conceptual bridge between the late February animations out of the murals, which were unacceptable, and the improv dance based scores (see below), which became the prototype that we actually produced for the late June intervention at the CWR.

What actually transpired after the late February visit were negotiations with our long-time high official liaison, to end the work on the third prototype for the event and to offer a "Plan B" (actually, by this time it was Plan C!), which would entail quickly starting conversations with other artist friends who were interested in the second act project. The fact that our liaison official (and Lamy) stayed with the project showed admirable faith, curiosity, and a real interest in art as a space of experiment in the WTO. The liaison official had overseen the building of additions to the CWR since 2010, which included a large atrium, a cafeteria, and light passage ways that architecturally welcomed art projects. Along with Lamy's late-term and criticized purchase of a set of stylized global maps, we would be the first experiment, certainly in installation art.

Producing "Trade Is Sublime," March-May, 2013

Jae Chung and I joined Luke Cantarella, who has a background in theater arts and stage design, and his partner Christine Hegel, an anthropologist trained in the arts [5], in working on the rapidly approaching June intervention. I described to them the earlier prototypes, the February CWR meeting, and the transitional mime idea as perhaps a stimulus for them to quickly develop a proposal and a plan for a score for the project. Under time pressure, the discussions among the four of us during March through June were

perhaps the richest and most inspired of the entire project, including the 2008-2010 team ethnography. Luke made a preliminary visit to the CWR in March, to survey the spaces for himself and to meet with our liaison and other WTO staff who would work with us. From this visit, he produced an excellent set of 'fieldnotes' and observations, as good as any I had read from the earlier ethnographic research. Apparently, our liaison official was pleased and had confidence in the feasibility of this version of the project.

Luke and Christine have written a detailed draft of a paper on the concept and writing of the score for the work (Cantarella and Hegel, n.d.), entitled "Trade Is Sublime," and we plan to produce a collaborative piece on the actual production of the score during two days of intensive work in a studio at Pace University in New York City in May 2013 (further information can be viewed at tradeissublime.org; please contact Luke Cantarella for access to the project's scores).

The score consists of three segments, each keyed to brief phrases from official literature such as brochures—by which the WTO presents itself to the public—concerning progress in trade as the following of rules and how the WTO provides a forum for the 'thrashing' out of differences. The modality of the score was improv dance performance within imaginatively designed scenography. Ideally, we would have brought the dancers of the piece to Geneva, for unscheduled live performances at various sites within the CWR over, say, a week's period, followed by periodic wall projections of the score for a longer duration—but the project did not have nearly enough funding to produce our second act at this level, nor enough time, with Lamy's departure defining its outer limit. Instead, the piece, as described, was produced at 'just in time' speed in a studio in lower Manhattan, drawing together remarkable performance and production talent (dancers, music, lighting, video, costuming, editing, stage managing) under the direction of Luke and Christine, with advice from me on how to translate 'inside moves' at the WTO into performance (Jae's presence and advice in situ was missed). [6]

Each segment of the score was edited to about five minutes in duration. The first two segments were performed by improv dancers. The first segment evoked trade under strict rules. The dancers of different ethnicities and gender, dressed in the business attire common at the WTO, organized and passed boxes of various sizes filled with brightly colored sand, representing commodities. The second segment evoked the WTO as a space where differences could be 'thrashed out.' For this, the dancers created complex (what we referred to as) 'amoeba'-like entanglements and then disentanglements. The third segment was absent of persons but displayed an endless succession of boxes of colored sand, moving and bobbing in the flow of the ocean. [7]

Given our inability to bring live performers to Geneva, large-scale projection on the walls at selected sites would have been most effective. But lack of funding and perhaps WTO conservatism

Image 3. Filming of the score of Trade Is Sublime, presented at the WTO in July 2013 (image courtesy of George Marcus)

prohibited this level of spectacle. Instead, the score was projected on three computer screens, enframed in cleverly constructed boxes to resemble the architecture of the CWR.

As it was planned and as it turned out (a brief account to follow), there were, for me, two especially brilliant provocations in Luke and Christine's conception of the project that defined its potential as a second act intervention as well as its continuing potential for circulation in other venues. One was in the titling conception of the score itself and, in particular, what the use of the word 'sublime,' an intentionally odd and contrasting term, might elicit in the context of the spare high rationalism of WTO culture. The most frequent response to our intervention was "Why 'sublime'?" which opened interesting conversations, first, about how to translate the word into several languages and, then, about what relevance it could have for the work of trade regulation. [8] It had the potential to reference both the idealism of multilateralism that Lamy certainly displayed in much of his writing, as well as being a key longstanding goal of the WTO, and current challenges to achieving or even approximating it.

What Christine evoked in this title was our intention to offer a 'proposal,' as she put it, to think of trade as monumental in the way that a number of other past occupants of the CWR had left traces, symbolically and materially, in the building and on its grounds, of their monumentalism. Most notably, we thought of the covered and then uncovered ILO murals that have created a kind of countercultural foothold or presence to which each prototype of the second act project has sought some relation. Exploring the strange titling of the intervention gets to its main challenge and question, in a manner both supportive and ironic. If other human projects and capacities have been monumentalized at the WTO building, why not its major preoccupation, trade itself, and in what manner? This titling alone was a key conversation starter for the intervention—with interesting expressions of reflective puzzlement as well as more subtle responses about what constitutes 'monuments' in the world of calculation and negotiation—a number having to do with the genius of the 'tradecraft' of trade regulation in the forms evolved

for the construction of agreements, in bracketing, in the evolution of the process that produces drafts, etc… in the system of WTO rules. The titling discussions, themselves, elicited an array of reflections on WTO process, making both its ideology and insights into its practice more explicit and specific.

The second provocation is internal to the medium of the score as performed and more a speculative product of my own interpretative insight rather than a response that was actually evoked or provoked by viewings of the score at the CWR in late June (which I discuss in the next section). However, I could register this line of thinking emerging in nightly discussions among ourselves—the project team—and also in rich interviews that Jae conducted, and I attended, in her 'return to the field' that occurred alongside the activity around the installation and is best understood in terms of the advantages that return fieldwork usually offers an ethnographer.

This provocation arises within the specific genre of performance art that we developed for the score: improv dance, with an emphasis, for me, on the concept and practice of 'improvisation.' There was a potential in the appreciation of the dynamic of improvisation as practiced by the performers to reflect on improvisation as a condition and practice within WTO tradecraft, not merely as a recognized but unpredictable and elusive quality of trade relations, but as a dynamic that requires extraordinary discipline and structured preparation. These latter values imbue working theories of tradecraft at the WTO. Improvisation is recognized as part of skill by practitioners, but its systemic role as a dynamic is not understood or articulated. It is perhaps part of the suprarational. Maybe, but its practice and condition are well within the 'scores' that the WTO has very meticulously made for itself. Seeing this in parallel and by analogy in the performance of those trained in improv dance was a potential of the intervention in late June largely not realized in responses by those who viewed the scores over their two weeks of exposure, but it remains a potential for revision in the score and a motivation for its circulation in other related venues.[9]

June 2013 at the Centre William Rappard

We arrived at the WTO during the last three weeks of June to find a quite transformed space from the gloomy enclosed halls of the CWR in which the long-term project had occurred. Lamy had undertaken a major expansion of the older building, as a permanent legacy of his time as D-G, that opened it up and certainly made it more social and welcoming (with a huge white, bright atrium and a large airy cafeteria as center pieces). It was in this transformed space, in which its occupants did not yet seem at home, that we had to negotiate our second act intervention. This was somewhat disorienting to the history of our project.

The prototypes had been imagined mostly with reference to the older, more claustrophobic spaces of the CWR and especially in some relation to the restored murals in the older spaces, but now the space we negotiated for our intervention was in the transitional space between the new cafeteria and the older CWR. It was perhaps an ideal placement to capture the largest daily flow of people through the building, but the visual and spatial relation to the murals and to the old building was lost.[10]

Further, unlike evidence of earlier enthusiasm and involvement by our liaison sponsoring official in responding to the project on our previous visits to the CWR, when the atmosphere at the WTO seemed to be in a more relaxed state, by late June 2013 he was much less attentive and in fact was absent from Geneva during two of the three weeks that the second act intervention was present at the CWR. This had little to do, I think, with judgment of the project, but was an expression of the tense and distracted mood that could be sensed in the halls of the CWR then, in contrast to earlier months. A new D-G had been selected but it was still the interregnum, and during Lamy's final weeks the critical attitude toward him through his term seemed more intense, from those who had been critical before. There were plays for position and power among senior officials during the transition. The future relevance of the WTO itself was more insecure than ever, especially at the then height

of American activity to negotiate the United States' own regional trade agreement in the Pacific (the secretive negotiations around the TPP) and with the European Union. In June, as well, the WTO was distracted by intense planning for its Bali ministerial in October, on which any future for restarting the dormant Doha Round would depend. Finally, based on efforts to relate to a public, the WTO was preparing its own celebratory exhibit of its past to display at an open house for the citizens of Geneva (a periodic event that had been instituted by Lamy), a week or two following our presence. Our installation and the second act ethnographic research around it did not fit into these showcasing plans.

Despite these conditions working against focus and attention to our intervention and in the absence of the ideal duration of a month or two for its presence, our second act registered with many. We had fascinating diverse conversations with both Secretariat members and delegates from the trade missions. What we lacked were forums, occasions of collective discussion that we hoped we could design at the site of display. In the court culture that the WTO is, in the passage way where the installation was situated, we observed others observing others observing the videos. This was interesting. Otherwise, positioned both as curatorial interlocutors at the site of the installation during the two and half weeks of the exhibit and, in parallel, conducting interviews in CWR offices, in cafes, and within various missions that were orchestrated primarily by Jae in the context of return ethnography, we did achieve a rich effect of second-order observation within the project. As its producers, we both collaborated and coordinated among ourselves, making opportunity in the design of the installation and finding it in the serendipity of return fieldwork.[11] This produced a rich stew of material that we are still processing, as our second act dealt with the specific conditions of interregnum and transition that it found in June.

Toward the end of our second act intervention, we concluded with a symbolic and analytic act of prestation to Lamy, who kept his distance during the weeks we were present as he had during the

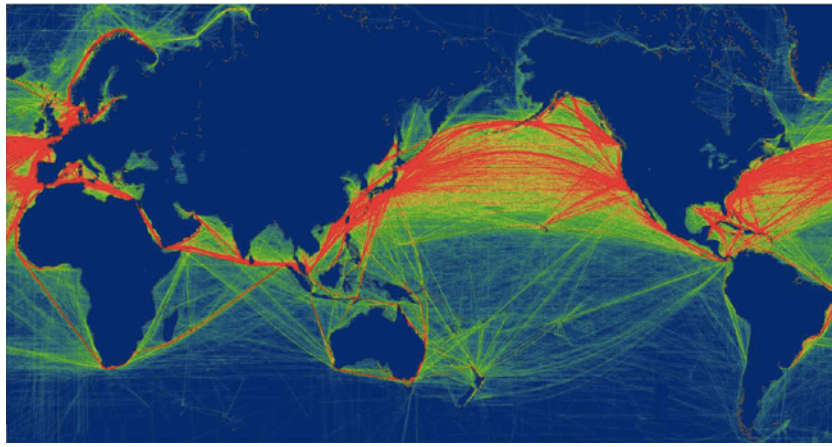

Image 4. GIS Pacific Trade Map, prepared and mounted by ethnographers and artists, based on data for all global shipping over 120 tons for 2010 (Image courtesy of George Marcus)

earlier research period. We produced a co-authored analytic memo, in the WTO communicative style, entitled "a Theory of the WTO Case," which, in about a thousand words, assessed the situation and prospects of multilateralism at the moment of our second act intervention. Lamy responded succinctly and positively, cc'ing it to specific others at the Secretariat whose work at the WTO he most respected and relied on. Soon after, we—of the second act intervention—left, and a week or so after that, Lamy left.

What Becomes of an Intervention When It Is Over?

After our second act, the inclination of the anthropologist is to 'report to the academy': to write an article or even a monograph of argument, analysis, and tentative conclusions; the inclination of the artist (aside from the question of producing a catalog to accompany the project, which we did not) is to find other venues to show the work, to seek other relevant and interesting receptions for it. The CVs of the anthropologist and the artist look very

different.[12] We (as anthropologists and artists) are doing both, but personally, as an anthropologist, having organized and engaged in a complex exercise in 'second-order' observation, I am most excited by the artist's (and, more importantly, the curator's) open-ended inclination to imagine and actually seek an extended network or 'archipelago' of additional receptions and viewings of the work, as shown at the WTO, as produced in studio, and as restrategized for other contexts. The disappointing conditions in June at the CWR for focusing attention on the art as spectacle partly drives this motivation to produce it elsewhere, but, more importantly, reflexive questions about trade today and the 'aesthetics' of its politics were successfully posed in late June at the CWR, such that they require interested commentaries elsewhere as an integral function and component of our project. This impetus to reproduce the intervention is certainly in the spirit of 'multi-sited' ethnographic inquiry (Marcus 1998), though an object or process is not being 'followed' so much as a set of ideas is being explored by designing forums and constituting diverse relevant 'micro-publics' for them as an extension of combined fieldwork/text-making.

At the moment, we are considering additional university, conference, think tank, NGO, online forum, and performative venues for this project, each one conceived curatorially and ethnographically as an intervention and perhaps in the manner of a chain reaction like a 'Rube Goldberg machine' (see the serious intention for this fanciful reference in Rabinow et al 2008, on designs for an anthropology of the contemporary).[13] No doubt this project will eventually 'dock' in some venue or venues, with the authority to confer the status and reputation of research as knowledge among experts (in a journal article like this one or the more definitive monograph that Jae Chung is now writing) or art as 'art,' but, in parallel, those who have produced it at the WTO are enjoying planning its movement as interventions among other venues and micro-publics. This, I would argue, is a specific and characteristic form of fieldwork that projects of second-order observation—which interventions are—encourage.

Interventions thus both close and open doors. Where they move, end, or fade to black is an important condition of their production—an ethnographic 'finding' or result—within the ethos of experiment. We don't exactly know how this experiment will end, and that is enabling and exciting to both the anthropology and the art that composed it. Further probing 'in the field' what anthropological curiosity achieved in a relatively closed space intellectually is what art/anthropology 'intervention' as method affords the ethnography that anthropologists have emblematically embraced, amid contemporary bureaucratic structures and global assemblages.

George E. Marcus is Chancellor's Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Irvine, since 2005—where he helped found the Center for Ethnography—and previously served as Joseph D. Jamail Professor (2001–2006) and chair (1980–2005) in the Department of Anthropology at Rice University, where he taught from 1975 to 2006. Marcus served as the founding editor of *Cultural Anthropology, Journal of the Society for Cultural Anthropology*. His text *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (coedited with James Clifford, 1986) is considered one of the most influential works of contemporary anthropology, marking a shift in its diversity and range of research styles. In the same year, he published *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences* (with Michael M. J. Fischer). He later published a retrospective collection of essays on ethnography, *Ethnography Through Thick and Thin* (1998), which included a number of provocations—multi-sited ethnography, ethnographic complicity, and reflexivity—that would further guide anthropology into the next millennium. Marcus's more recent research has focused on the ethnography of institutions of global power, and how they reach into ordinary, everyday, diverse lives. He has also begun to explore in a sustained way changes in anthropology's signature method and how it might be influenced by experiments in collaboration with designers, artists, and visual media makers. Recent volumes include *Designs for an Anthropology of the Contemporary* (with Paul Rabinow and others), and *Fieldwork Is Not What It Used To Be*

and *Theory Is Much More Than It Used To Be* (co-edited with Dominic Boyer and James Faubion).

Acknowledgements

The Second Act project has been supported by grants from the Center for Ethnography, University of California, Irvine; from UCIRA, University of California Institute for Research in the Arts; as well as by Rane Willerslev's research grant, at one stage. No funding came from the WTO, though some of its staff offered generous assistance and advice in producing the installation on site.

Notes

1. Luhmann's 'second-order observation'—'observing observers observing,' as Rabinow has developed it—places fieldworkers in the most self-reflexive zone of their subjects' thinking and the most aligned with the ethnographer's own classically detached perspective, though immersed. This occurs most often, though not exclusively today, when projects of inquiry are focused on or require the cooperation of experts (see Holmes and Marcus 2005, Holmes 2013, Boyer 2008, and Riles 2011). This is certainly the condition of the WTO project. Nonetheless, the challenge that second-order observation, which assumes 'epistemic partners' in research as well as 'paraethnographic' articulations (Holmes and Marcus 2005) , poses to classic methods of anthropology is more literal forms of collaboration in the production of what is considered 'expert' anthropological knowledge, and the accessibility of these forms as data and concept work, more than just 'technique' or 'method' of fieldwork, but as product or result of research, available to a public of anthropologists and others for reception.

2. A large and varied membership to manage and more NGO activity than ever before, creating a demanding and informed public for WTO tradecraft, have equally challenged the old GATT-minded order in place for trade negotiation. Perhaps the historic signal of an awareness on the part of the Secretariat of a public accountability of the WTO was its shock at the highly organized anti-global protest that turned violent and disrupted a ministerial meeting of the WTO in Seattle in 1999. There have been many such protests outside ministerial meetings and the gates of the CWR in Geneva, but none as massive as the Seattle events. This was before the Doha Round (beginning in 2001) and at the

end of the enthusiastic period of the neoliberal structuring of a 'new world order' following the Cold War and through post-World War II institutions, such as the WTO.

3. None of us, except Abeles, had previous experience in the study of international organizations, although all of us had done ethnographic research in contexts of contemporary political and economic conflict or crisis at varying levels of institutional organization. Only two or three of us sustained a binding and highly motivated fascination with the WTO during the research period. The issue, forms, and contradictions of transparency became perhaps the most interestingly developed anthropological problem addressed by us (notably by Lynda De Matteo). Abeles probed with patient expertise the negotiations on cotton, reflecting well how factors of regional inequalities define neoliberal trade generally. Each component project had its own interest and value. But the collective result remained closely ethnographic and diversely topical. We failed to venture an argument or diagnosis, based on the evidence of ethnography, about the limits and possibilities of multilateral progress, probably the greatest topical stake for the future of the WTO, in which Lamy and his supporters were most vested.

4. The CWR, an Italianate villa, was built between 1923-1926, hosting spaces that could easily have defined a museum or gallery. A number of other mansions on Lac Leman have been so converted. The sculptures on the grounds of CWR are multiple. Inside, the restored murals of the League of Nations and ILO predominate. Lamy supported the restoration of the hidden murals, a production of an attractive pamphlet on the murals, and finally an ambitious, lavish volume on the history of the architecture and art of the CWR (Kuntz and Murray 2011) of which copies were given to the first 'second act' team on its initial visit. In the last months of his term, Lamy purchased some contemporary art—a series of images of global maps, visually bland in my opinion—for the new building additions to the CWR, which seemed largely ignored, characteristically, and he was criticized for the expenditure in corridor talk.

5. I had participated in the conceptual discussions around an earlier installation that Luke and Christine produced called '214 square feet,' created as an installation evoking the cramped quarters of cheap motels in which entire families of the poor live in Newport Beach, California, among the richest cities in the U.S. This installation has continued to circulate with considerable effect in Orange County and beyond since its initial production for a charity event at a yacht club!

6. A weakness of the work perhaps is that because of considerable time constraints, especially regarding the production schedule, the framing and performance of the score were not sufficiently informed by integrating the details of actual WTO culture, which was in the more sustained ethnography (such as Jae's) and, for instance, would have composed the subtleties of document-making behind the screens in the "Curatorial Dreams" prototype outlined previously. The CWR, even in its new, expanded architecture is a space of a varied but restricted public, and this is whom we were trying to address with tweaking by ethnographic subtlety.

7. Another type of projection, aside from, but in relation to, the three segments of the score were the on-site creation of GIS maps of global shipping flows, created by the historian and cartographer Patricia Seed, who observed the project but came to participate in it through her command of technology and map-making skills. Using the most recent WTO data, she created striking visualizations of trade flows, which captured geographically (and geopolitically as well) both micro and macro relations of trade that generated interested discussion during the second act for either not having been noticed, or overlooked, or accenting an issue very alive in ongoing trade negotiation. It was striking to us how little GIS visualization technology was used in research at the WTO, and also when artistically rendered how much ethnographic potential it had for generating conversation. There is a dynamism and institutional specificity to such GIS map art. It would have made also a more lively but similar art legacy for Lamy to have left the WTO than the more static, less noticed (but not uncriticized!) works that he purchased.

8. The 'sublime' was such an interesting trope to pose at the WTO, a center of rational calculation and regulation, because it was so strange a word to be heard there, perhaps ironically, because the WTO is after all a site that summons the world, but to a very cool discipline of reason (despite what is repressed or relegated to literal places of shadow and discretion—but there, philosophy and the sublime are not the subject matter). The sublime evokes greatness or a state of existence beyond all possibility of calculation and measurement, thus leaving opportunity for expressions of social imagination, whether utopic or dystopic (in my view, and others, Immanuel Kant and Edmund Burke have provided the most important foundational thinking on this concept, though there is a perennial and extensive scholarly literature on the sublime). In exploring the strangeness of the word with passers-by, it stimulated immediately 'offbeat' conversations, for whose who entertained them, with an orientation to the WTO and its 'vision' other

than the hyperrational, bureaucratic discourses and the political/personal small talk that dominated corridor office talk (and probably more important negotiation meetings). It did not serve ethnography (which is immersed in small talk) so much as stimulating response at the site of the art installation where the usual mode of attention would be indifference, glancing attention, or noncomprehension.

9. There is indeed a complex practice-oriented ideology or working theory of method and value which those engaged in trade articulate and which our earlier ethnographic work explored. In its articulation, this ideology has much in common with the terms of classic anthropological analyses of exchange relations in non-state societies, for example, with emphases on reciprocity, diluting actual inequalities through the expression and negotiation of values like trust, fairness, discretion, and compensation… and following rules or customs. The equally important and essential role and dynamic of improvisation, and what makes it possible, is less explicitly recognized and discussed in either WTO trade-craft or anthropology.

10. In a sense, then, we were caught in Lamy's changes and perhaps undermined by them. We wanted to operate within the psychological hold of the old (GATT) regime of WTO, which certainly still reigned, but got situated in the new spaces and hopes that produced them, and that proved awkward for our intervention. The WTO might have architecturally made a transition but, in our view, not yet otherwise.

11. In a sense then, the 'public' for this installation was extremely repressed, as a result both of the conditions of distraction at the WTO in late June and the fact that not noticing (or furtive noticing) was the standard orientation to art of those passing through the building. Thus the 'second act' videos and their reception would not at all have satisfied the questions and terms that are at the heart of art critical writing about genres of production of site-specific installation and performance much in common with our own (e.g., Bourriaud, 2002, Bishop 2004, and subsequent debates about 'relational aesthetics'). As noted, in the text, the 'pay-off' of the installation was present, but primarily 'elsewhere' in the ethnographic work of 'return fieldwork' (conducted mainly by Jae Chung and myself) that was going on while the installation was up. Here the installation provided an affordance of discussion, a backdrop or context for discussing with old and new 'informants' a variety of unfinished conversations about the WTO. In this way, it became a tangible asset for second-order observation, the primary mode of the 'second act' project. Reception of the installation was less at the site of its production and more in the atmosphere of re-started conversations, identified with the original period of research.

12. My art and design collaborators on this WTO 'second act' project and I have since worked on other projects and have produced an article that outlines a modality for "Productive Encounters" in ethnographic projects in different stages of development (Cantarella, Hegel, and Marcus, n.d.). We are working toward a short workbook or manual for ethnographers that would make such collaborations attractive, or at least plausible, as a regular aspect of contemporary method. While designers and artists on their own incorporate work that is very much aligned with what ethnographers do, their skills and concerns—their fundamental stakes—and their modes of writing are indeed different (as most clearly articulated in the debates around 'relational aesthetics,' Bourriaud 2002, Bishop 2004, Bishop 2012). With respect for those differences, the project chronicled in this paper and the other collaborative work conceived in the modality of "Productive Encounters" do explicitly give the goals and methods of ethnography priority. We touch upon at every point the concerns of design and art writers, but we do not speak here directly to them, thus leaving space for important future conversations. Ethnographers do not require or expect spectacle or a live present public; their sense of working ethics diverges from that of artists and designers. These and other questions deserve explicit attention once there is more of a history of collaboration such as we are encouraging here (but see the very interesting mix of art ethnographic practice in The Multispecies Salon, Kirksey 2014).

13. The aim is to explore understandings and interpretations that emerged in Geneva recursively in other venues that our intervention suggests might be significant. Of course finding such opportunities and organizing them with curatorial and ethnographic skills are crucial. Luke Cantarella and Christine Hegel have such experience from an earlier project in southern California. I know of other examples in anthropology. What we are doing in terms of design thinking is conducting iterations of a prototype. We are thinking of combined art school/law school (where trade expertise often resides) events in universities (in California, and in New York City) and think tanks and NGOs, as well as online forums (e.g., while the second act was in preparation we, especially Jae Chung and myself, presented a version of it for treatment in the highly innovative, cross-cultural forum, Meridian 180, originated by Annelise Riles and Hiro Miyazaki of Cornell University, which produced very interesting extended discussions that challenged and extended our thinking about the project in formation). We are also thinking of presenting this work in more popular and populist settings as well, like the "Busboys and Poets" café in Washington, D.C., where interesting anthropological

ideas have been forged in a classic 'coffee house'-like venue (here I am thinking of the concept work done in this very café by Dominic Boyer and Alexei Yurchak, on the similarity of forms of parody in late Soviet and current American media; see Boyer and Yurchak 2010) . The point is that there are myriad opportunities for building intervention upon intervention once curatorial and ethnographic ingenuity merge in projects such as the one explored in this paper.

References

Abeles, Marc, editor. 2011. Des anthropologues a l'OMC. Paris: CNRS Press.

Bishop, Claire. 2004. Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics. October 110: 51-79.

Bishop, Claire. 2012. Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship. Verso: London

Bourriaud, Nicholas. 2002. Relational Aesthetics. Dijon: Presses du Reel.

Boyer, Dominic. 2008. Thinking Through the Anthropology of Experts. Anthropology in Action. 15(2): 38-46.

Boyer, Dominic and Alexei Yurchak. 2010. American Stiob: Or, What Late-Socialist Aesthetics of Parody Reveal About Contemporary Political Culture in the West. Cultural Anthropology. 25(2): 179-221.

Cantarella, Luke and Christine Hegel. n.d. Trade Is Sublime: Rethinking the Field Through Multi-Modality, Visual Metaphor, and Circulation. Paper presented at New School conference on "The Troubled Field", April 26, 2014, New York City.

Cantarella, Luke, Christine Hegel and George E. Marcus. n.d. A Week in Pasadena: Collaborations Toward an Art Design Modality for Ethnographic Research. FIELD. Spring 2015.

Deeb, Hadi N. and George E. Marcus. 2011. In the Green Room: An Experiment in Ethnographic Method at the WTO. PoLAR, Political and Legal Anthropology Review. 34(1): 51-76.

Gunn, Wendy, Ton Otto, and Rachel Charlotte Smith, editors. 2013. Design Anthropology: Theory and Practice. London: Bloomsbury.

Holmes, Douglas R. and George E. Marcus. 2005. Cultures of Expertise and the Management of Globalization. In Global Assemblages, edited by Aihwa Ong and Stephen J. Collier. London: Blackwell. Pp. 235-52.

Holmes, Douglas R. 2013. Economy of Words. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kester, Grant. 2004. Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kester, Grant . 2011. The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context. Durham: Duke University Press.

Kirksey, Eben, editor. 2014. The Multispecies Salon. Durham: Duke University Press.

Kuntz, Joelle and Edmundo Murray. 2011. Centre William Rappard: Home of the World Trade Organization. Published by the World trade organization, Geneva.

Latour, Bruno. 2002. Whose Cosmos? Which Cosmopolitics? A Commentary on Ulrich Beck's Peace Proposal. Common Knowledge 10(3): 450-62.

Luhmann, Niklas. 1998. Observations on Modernity. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Marcus, George E. n.d. Making Transparency Visible: Centre William Rappard, World Trade Organization, Geneva. In Curatorial Dreams, edited by S. Butler and E. Lehrer. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press. In Press.

Marcus, George E. 1998. "Ethnography In/Of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography" in Ethnography Through Thick & Thin. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Marcus, George E. 2012. The Legacies of Writing Culture and the Near Future of the Ethnographic Form: A Sketch. Cultural Anthropology. 27(3): 427-45.

Marcus, George E. 2013. Prototyping and Contemporary Anthropological Experiments With Ethnographic Method. Journal of Cultural Economy, 13 December, 2013. 8pp.

Mazower, Mark. 2012. Governing the World: The History of an Idea. New York: the Penguin Press.

Papastergiadis, Nikos. 2011. Cosmopolitanism and Culture. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Rabinow, Paul. 2003. Anthropos Today: Reflections on Modern Equipment. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rabinow, Paul, G. E. Marcus, J. Faubion, and T. Rees. 2008. Designs for an Anthropology of the Contemporary. Durham: Duke University Press.

Riles, Annelise. 2011. Collateral Knowledge: Legal Reasoning in the Global Financial Markets. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schneider, Arnd and Christopher Wright, editors. 2013. Anthropology and Art Practice. London: Bloomsbury.

Van Grasstek, Craig 2013. The History and Future of the World Trade Organization. Published on line by the World Trade Organization, Geneva.

FIELD
A JOURNAL OF SOCIALLY-ENGAGED ART CRITICISM

Points de vue: Agency, Contingency, Community, and the Postindustrial Turn

Cynthia Hammond and Shauna Janssen

This essay considers the role of site-responsive, creative methods in enabling "communities of concern" to form around the cultural landscape of a postindustrial urban site in transition in Montreal, Canada. Communities, according to political theorist Chantal Mouffe, are "held together not by a substantive idea of the common good but by a common bond, a public concern… therefore a community [can exist] without a definite shape or a definite identity."[1] In this essay we ask, how can socially-engaged practices, place-based research, collective action, and creative outcomes be used as methods for generating public dialogue about the urban future of the recent past?[2] We focus on our four-month project of public engagement in a significant, postindustrial district of Montreal: the historic neighbourhood of Griffintown. Like many formerly industrial cities, Montreal is re-imagining its former manufacturing, canal, railway, and working-class districts. The billion-dollar initiative to revitalize Griffintown began in the mid 2000s, after several decades of deliberate depopulation, effected through zoning changes. Starting in 2007, and again in 2010, the neighbourhood was hit with successive waves of demolition and construction. This activity originated in an urban plan remarkably bereft of public amenities, given that the major impetus was to build--and sell--several thousand residential condominiums.

The city's decision to farm out the redevelopment of Griffintown to a developer best known for building mega-malls incurred considerable controversy, particularly because of the lack of public consultation throughout.[3] Despite preservationists, residents, and artists' forceful critique of the destruction of Griffintown's historic fabric,[4] the city has continued to neglect local knowledge, collective memory, and user-group/citizenry in its approach to the district and likewise in its more recent efforts to capitalize on the neighbourhood's heritage.

Our project revolved around a key architectural object within Griffintown: the Wellington tower, an icon of Montreal's industrial zenith. The irregularly-shaped yet elegant modern building was a train switching station from 1943 until its closure in 2000. At the peak of its activities, the tower was a crucial cog in a vast continental network linking the maritime shipping industry and North American railway companies with Montreal's port and the Lachine Canal. Collectively, the railways, canal, and port formed the largest urban industrial landscape in Canada up until the 1950s, with the tower at its centre. After closing, the Wellington tower sat abandoned, quietly providing shelter to the district's homeless for over a decade. This was the same decade in which the redevelopment of Griffintown began. It was in this context, with the first condo owners just starting to move in, that the city of Montreal evicted the squatters from the Wellington tower, barricaded the building, and issued a call for proposals for the tower's retrofit as a "community cultural centre" in autumn 2013.[5]

This call for proposals might appear to be a breath of fresh air in an otherwise troubled atmosphere of negligent urban development practices. Given the much-deplored lack of social amenities in the redevelopment of Griffintown, who could object to the intent to create shared cultural space?

"Points de vue" (points of view) is the name of a collective [6] that emerged in response to the city's call for proposals. As a group, our training, expertise, and professional practices cover art,

Image 1 – The Wellington tower, Griffintown, Montreal, 2014. Photo: S. Janssen

art history, museum education, architecture, design, theatre, and performance studies. In autumn 2013 we co-authored a proposal to the city of Montreal.[7] Our brief did not propose, however, a retrofit design for the building; in fact, we did not propose a vision for a

community cultural centre at all. Instead, we tabled a proposition that we, as artists, would provide the public consultation that the city otherwise appeared to have forgot. Before any redesign could take place, we argued, some key questions needed to be answered. What can "culture" and "community" mean in a neighbourhood like Griffintown? How might the building serve the future residents of Griffintown as an aperture onto its significant past, as well as be a space for the neighbourhood in the future? For reasons we detail below, we believed that meaningful answers could only be arrived at through multiple points of view. Accordingly, the Points de vue collective envisioned a series of thematic, in situ, "urban laboratories," each exploring a different aspect of the tower's history, its heritage, and its surrounding physical, cultural, and biological landscapes. Our goal was to engage as many diverse publics as possible on the question of the tower's future, while providing information about the past and creating opportunities for local knowledge about the tower and its environs to surface.

The city rejected our proposal. The Points de vue project was soon taken up, however, by the Darling Foundry,[8] an international visual arts centre. The Darling Foundry is also located in Griffintown, in a large postindustrial building, one of the few that remain untouched by gentrification. Reimagined as the gallery's public summer programming,[9] our urban laboratories elaborated on four core themes emerging from Griffintown's history, present, and fast-approaching future. These themes emphasized the points of view of different age groups; the point of view of physical accessibility; that of urban archaeology, and that of postindustrial ecology. Whether we were invoking the perspectives of children or those with reduced mobility, whether we invited direct experiential encounters with the vanishing material heritage of the neighbourhood or with its resilient biological diversity, our labs underscored a variety of cultural landscapes in play. We concluded our four-month collaboration with the tower and approximately 100 participants with an exhibition at the Darling Foundry in September 2014, where we also launched a small publication about the project.[10]

The purpose of the exhibition was to share our findings with the city of Montreal, with the architects who would be responsible for the retrofit of the building, with the future community-cultural actors responsible for managing the Wellington tower, and with a broader public that is invested in Montreal's urban future.

In what follows, we introduce the intellectual and physical contexts of our project, paying attention to the politics of deindustrializing Montreal and to the particular case of the Wellington tower. We then summarize how each half-day lab created a sustained (for some participants, cumulative), embodied, and haptic encounter with the tower and its cultural landscapes. We describe how these labs situated our participants within the effects and affects of what we are calling the "postindustrial turn",[11] by which we mean a neighbourhood's dramatic turn from deindustrializing urban landscape to residential, consumer-driven design, or "leisurescape." Our participants could witness, month to month, the rapidity and decisiveness of such a turn for themselves, as the path we would take during one lab would no longer exist a few weeks later. Our essay takes up this collective experience of witnessing in order to explore how Griffintown's transformation was itself fertile ground for nurturing provisional or temporary "communities of concern." We also address how such provisional communities are not conflict-free, nor are such collective projects of creation necessarily harmonious from start to finish. We thus begin, and end, with the concepts of partial perspectives and multiple points of view, as principles that guided not just our project in the summer of 2014, but that guide our critical stance more broadly as artists seeking difference and dissent within the city today, on behalf of the city of tomorrow.

Contingency, partial perspectives, points of view

The concepts of spatial contingency, partial perspectives, and multiple points of view were key to our project with the Wellington tower. Working in what was, in essence, an enormous construction

site meant embracing large-scale, ongoing contingencies. Collaborating with an unpredictable public (we never knew who would join our labs, or what their responses would be) meant another set of contingencies. Our collective valued both.

Jeremy Till observes that in contingent spatial and social conditions (such as the complete overhaul of a historic neighbourhood) creative action cannot necessarily espouse nor effect an instrumental outcome, such as a "solution."[12] Till argues, however, that creative actors can exercise choice within such contingencies, and that "we enter into these choices as sentient, knowing, and situated people."[13] What might "situated" mean in this context? Donna Haraway coined the term "situated knowledge"[14] to explain the value of "partial perspectives," that is, knowledge that emerges from the particular, embodied place of the individual, or a group of individuals with shared experience. Situated knowledge has a provisional quality to it, in that it comes from "points of view which can never be known in advance."[15] Haraway is careful not to privilege situated knowledge as superior to professional or, in her case, scientific knowledge, but she does underscore how the embodied or subjective nature of this knowledge has meant that it is viewed with suspicion, and is typically othered and denigrated within authoritative forms of discourse and practice. For this reason it is a frequently under-mobilized source not only in science but also in urban design and revitalization work. There are parallels between what Haraway is describing as a messy form of embodied and partial yet still valuable knowledge, and the kind of building and site that we found at the Wellington tower: a place of dereliction, presumed vacancy, under- instrumentality, and contingency.[16] These ways of thinking about space and knowledge helped us to refuse to characterize a ruined industrial building as an urban problem in need of a solution, and supported our approach to the tower as, instead, a rich resource in its present state, a "witness" of urban change, and a powerful interlocutor for the unpredictable individuals and groups who participated in our project.

Image 2 – Interior of the Wellington tower, 2009. Photo: S. Janssen

Image 3 – Interior of the Wellington tower, 2009. Photo: S. Janssen

The expression "points of view" thus had several senses for us. The Wellington tower inspired the first of these, as it was designed to facilitate multiple views over Montreal's then-industrial heart, the Peel Basin. The tower's windows were, at the time our project began, boarded up but they still had the potential to be literal apertures onto a changing urban landscape, while summoning the histories of labour that are disappearing from view throughout the city's formerly industrial core. The second sense of the phrase was tied to the tower's cultural landscapes, which are, as of this writing, still mutating. These include: the cultural landscape of labour and industry; the cultural landscape of homelessness and itinerancy; the cultural landscape of ruderal urban ecologies, and the cultural landscape of urban renewal, destructive as this is of the other landscapes. And finally, we saw our project as enacting and enabling different voices and points of view about the encounter with these cultural landscapes. A key means for us to access all these points of view was to walk (or if walking was not possible, roll). In traversing the distance from the Darling Foundry to the Wellington

tower, we gave our participants first-hand access to the tower at a moment of intense change.

Griffintown: Site and context

Griffintown is inextricably linked with the history of Montreal's industrialization, urban development, and deindustrialization. Eighty-four hectares of urban land comprise the district, which is located in Montreal's southwest borough, and situated adjacent to the Lachine Canal, today a National Historic Park. In the eighteenth century Griffintown was considered to be the city's first suburb.[17] It formed in tandem with Montreal's industrial revolution, which attracted immigrants from the United Kingdom, some of whom brought with them technology, science, and capital, and went on to acquire fortunes through the railway, tobacco, and sugar refining industries.[18] In contrast to this small elite, the majority of immigrants arriving in Montreal were poor, uneducated, and Irish Catholic. Griffintown is where many such immigrants settled. The neighbourhood's industrial growth meant that its residential density

Image 4 – Aerial view showing Griffintown in 2015. Source: Google maps

Image 5 – View of Griffintown, c. 1896, towards the South Shore, showing St Ann's Church (demolished 1970), the Lachine Canal and the Peel Basins. Source: McCord Museum

was the greatest in Canada in the second half of the nineteenth century. As early as the 1850s, Griffintown had evolved into a burgeoning working class neighbourhood, built alongside the major industrial installations of the time. This 1896 photograph of Griffintown depicts a line of laundry in the middle foreground, perhaps 20 metres from the nearest shipping basin. This proximity communicates what was once the dense configuration of industry, canal, railway, church, and housing.

Between the 1850s and the end of the nineteenth-century the population of Griffintown increased with another wave of immigrants (as many as 100,000)[19] and the local migration of equally poor and unskilled rural French Canadians. Urban sociologist, Montrealer Herbert Brown Ames (1863-1954), described Griffintown as "the city below the hill," observing how the working-class immigrants residing in this quarter of the city were segregated morphologically as well as through economic divisions from the middle-class society who lived in the "city on the hill."[20] Residents lived in deep poverty,

in tight compression, but developed closely-knit communities and a strong sense of collective identity.[21]

The morphology of Griffintown changed dramatically throughout the twentieth century. A key factor resulting in the deindustrialization of Griffintown was the closure of the Lachine Canal in 1968. The cultural landscape of Griffintown, however, had already begun to transform with the construction of the Canadian National Railway viaduct in the 1940s and the Bonaventure Expressway in 1965, developments that served to further isolate the neighbourhood from Montreal's downtown core and the Old Port district to the east. The expressway was the more damaging of the two changes, however, as it literally severed the neighbourhood in two. A wave of construction of transportation infrastructure coincided with the city's embrace of utopian urbanism [22] and modernist planning initiatives, many in preparation for the 1967 world's fair, Expo 67. Although Griffintown was located squarely in the middle of the effects of this modernizing and utopian turn, the impoverished neighbourhood remained peripheral in every way to Montreal's drive to reimagine itself as a cosmopolitan, postindustrial wonderland in 1967.

The Wellington tower, at the crossroads then and now

Griffintown, and thus the Wellington tower, stand literally at the crossroads between four distinct neighbourhoods: Vieux-Montréal to the east, Ville Marie to the north, Petite-Bourgogne to the west and Pointe-Saint-Charles to the south. Petite-Bourgogne and Pointe-Saint-Charles share in the working-class heritage of Griffintown and the Wellington tower, as both neighbourhoods developed in relation to the availability of work alongside the industrial canal, while Vieux-Montreal and Ville Marie today belong more to a moment of postindustrial prosperity.[23] All four districts have seen gentrification and transformation of their built environments, primarily through new-build, residential space, but this phenomenon is more pronounced in what were, formerly, fairly

homogenous, working-class neighbourhoods. In Petite-Bourgogne and Pointe-Saint-Charles, for example, owner-occupiers live next door to long-term renters, some of whom have family histories of working in the railway and canal industries dating back multiple generations.[24] For such established residents, the Wellington tower is a significant icon of an era when skilled labourers were numerous and when Montreal was just relinquishing its crown as Canada's most powerful industrial city. There is still a wealth of living memory of the tail end of this period: the second World War and the fifteen years following the war.[25] This is precisely the period in which the Wellington tower was built.

The Wellington tower integrated highly advanced technology and electrical switching systems. These systems efficiently managed the physical matter of railways, trains, an enormous swing bridge (now locked) and lift bridge (now gone). The building is of considerable heritage value in terms of its unusual form, concrete construction, and modernist architectural language. It also summons an era of

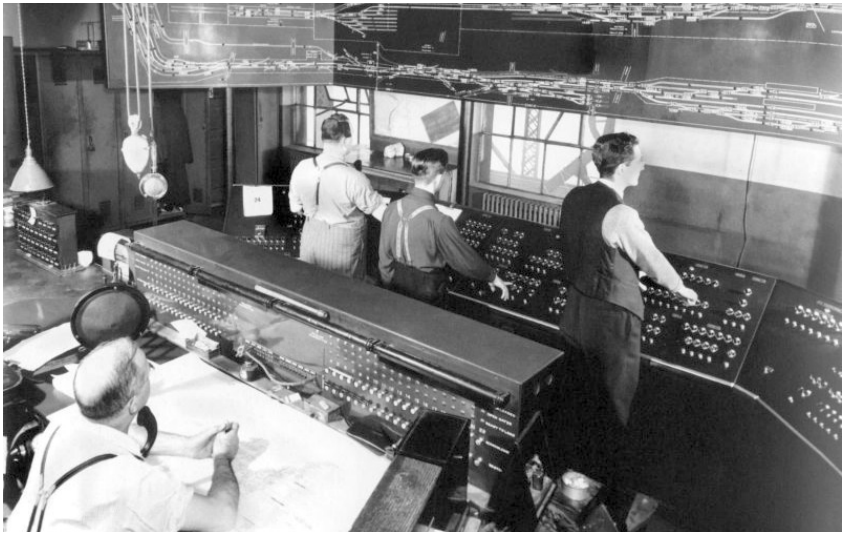

Image 6 – Interior of the Wellington tower, showing switchman and technicians at console, c. 1948. Source: Musée canadien des sciences et technologies

Image 7 – The swing and lift bridges, Peel Basin, Griffintown, 1943. The Wellington tower is visible at left behind the swing bridge. Source: Archives nationales du Canada, PA202868

specialized labour; many of the jobs associated with this tower, such as switchman, signalman, movement director, and bridgeman, live on in memory only.

"A sparkling sense of community"? Griffintown's uneven redevelopment

The move to transform the tower into a community cultural centre can be seen as part of a larger trend of top-down creative industries, cultural incubators, and social innovation-style projects.[26] The language used to describe these initiatives tends to gloss over the idea of "community", while art or "creativity" tends to be harnessed, uncritically, to Creative City aspirations.[27] While "heritage" is certainly invoked--belatedly--by Griffintown's developers, the reality is that those same developers have destroyed most of the neighbourhood's physical, built heritage, and much of its intangible

Image 8 – Billboard advertising "District Griffin" condominiums, 2011. Photo: S. Janssen

heritage. The sector is literally unrecognizable from five years ago. Janssen observed in 2014 that at that time "it was increasingly difficult to discern between the ruins of deindustrialization, what was being rebuilt, and what was being ruined as a direct cause of Griffintown's revitalization."[28]

Griffintown's proximity to water (the canal) and the central business district have been key factors in the speed and heavy-handedness of its redevelopment. Construction has proceeded swiftly, but has been dogged by controversy. Numerous low-rise nineteenth- and twentieth-century buildings have been razed and are being replaced with 10-15 storey residential towers, indistinguishable from banal developments elsewhere on the island of Montreal. The original number of subsidized housing units (935) has been cut by 51%, and lumped together in a poverty pocket out of sight of the canal.[29] Critics observed how the provision of public amenities, such as schools, green spaces, and health-care services did not appear to have been among the

Image 9 – Contingent shelter approximately 150m from the Wellington tower, 2014. Note the new colour panels lauding the district's industrial past. Photo: C. Hammond

city or the developer's goals.[30] Less frequently mentioned were the needs and rights of the long-term residents of the district, many of whom are, or were, homeless, transient, or economically marginal. These individuals are being squeezed into ever smaller and more precarious corners of what has become an epic building site. In contrast, the billboards advertising the new condos suggest that thousands of new units have been designed exclusively for upwardly-mobile, able-bodied, heterosexual couples (mostly white) in their early twenties.

The city has celebrated Griffintown's current revitalization as the largest building project in Montreal's urban development since Expo 67.[31] Yet the contrast between poverty and excess intensifies with the completion of each new residential tower. Griffintown's first upscale, boutique hotel opened during the same summer that

Image 10 – The bicycle track in front of the Wellington tower (visible at right), July 2014. Photo: C. Hammond

we undertook Points de vue, within a few hundred feet from the tower's boarded up windows and graffitied surfaces. During one of our preparatory walks on a sunny Saturday in July 2014, we saw a bride in a $10,000 dress sweeping towards the tower from rue Peel. A wedding photographer, with an entourage of several well-tanned men in tuxedos, scampered after her on the bicycle track that runs adjacent to the Lachine Canal. Just before she reached the Wellington tower, the bride posed against the backdrop of a tiny vegetable garden that an itinerant community has planted, illegally, on the ramparts of the Canadian National railway tracks, for food.

The city and the developers have lauded Griffintown's urban renewal from the outset as a crusading force for good, revitalizing "dead" and "wasted"[32] urban space, and bringing order and public safety to the district. In the words of developer Le Canal, "Yesteryear's rundown neighbourhood is gone. Today, Griffintown

Image 11 – Alt Hotel in background; District Griffin sales pavilion in foreground, 2015. Photo: C. Hammond

is synonymous with an eclectic mix of residents, a sparkling sense of community, and a taste for the good things in life."[33] Griffintown has even been touted as Canada's "next great neighbourhood."[34]

The discourse on Griffintown as a previously blighted, even dangerous urban site, socially and culturally disinvested, laid the groundwork for the market-driven revitalization and served in turn to justify the lack of public consultation. Tropes such as revitalization and rehabilitation position profit-driven development as the fast lane to better urban futures, as an unimpeachable source for the life of the city itself. What this powerful discourse obscures, but does not entirely eradicate, are smaller, interstitial, cumulative urban dynamisms, such as postindustrial ecologies, and the intensely creative, socio-spatial survival strategies of less visible, under-resourced urban agents. The politics of space are particularly acute in this part of Montreal at this time. Griffintown is thus a powerful site for artistic engagement in and with those politics.[35]

Image 12 – Points de vue's urban lab #2: Participants seated on the grass adjacent to the Wellington tower. Photo: C. Bédard

Griffintown and "cultural activism"

The authors of the present text have had a critical and creative relationship with the spaces and politics of Griffintown since 2010.[36] In that year, Janssen created Urban Occupations Urbaines, a curatorial platform for bringing artists into the neighbourhood to work critically and creativity with Griffintown's spatial histories and fast-changing urban fabric. In her call for proposals, she emphasized that artists would need to engage with the neighbourhood's then-threatened cultural heritage, its architecture, and morphology.[37] Janssen asked the selected artists to reflect on the enactment of private interests in what were, then, "public", under-instrumentalized, and interstitial spaces in the neighbourhood. The artists then created site-responsive projects via specific themes such as: consumerism; green space as fragile public amenity; local myths and histories of crime, gender, and class; the cultural fertility of postindustrial landscapes, and representations of collective memory. Throughout, Janssen developed relationships with a variety of stakeholders and cultural actors concerned with what was, then, the start of Griffintown's renewal. Part of her method was to conduct extensive oral histories with long-term residents, whether these were squatters, renters, or property owners, likewise with artists and newly arrived cultural workers.[38] Thus by the time we created Points de vue, core members of our collective had had three years of close engagement with Griffintown, working in the tradition of intervention via the intersection of art and cultural activism.[39]

Urban Occupations Urbaines and Points de vue's cultural activism are not isolated instances of resistance to urban injustice in this part of Montreal. They belong, rather, to a sustained history of community action and self-determination in Griffintown and other de-industrializing neighbourhoods in Montreal's South-West, which have focused less on art production and more on urgent social needs such as the right to housing, safe streets, access to education, food, self-government, workers' rights, women's rights, and anti-racism movements.[40] However, artists have also organized

in Griffintown in particular, as the redevelopment project directly threatened, and then destroyed, many artists' studios.[41] These forms of action continue throughout the South-West in response to gentrification and are, as is Points de vue, part of a deep history of collective resistance to uneven forms of urban development.

The urban laboratories

While we considered interviews as a method for facilitating public consultation, in the end we chose to work in a way that drew upon our collective skills as artists, theatre professionals, architects, curators, educators, and social historians of the built environment. Our method was hands-on. We designed each lab principally around four different walking routes between the Darling Foundry and the Wellington tower. The Wellington tower and its surrounding cultural landscape were the key interlocutors in our labs; they became active partners in the creative and social work of realizing each of these events.[42]

Lab #1 – Les Jeunes/Youth: a treasure hunt for the Wellington tower

Les Jeunes/Youth was Points de vue's first urban laboratory, held on 28 June 2014. Curators Camille Bédard, Noémie Despland-Lichtert, and Chantale Potié[43] devised a post-industrial treasure hunt to orient children between the ages of four and twelve to the cultural landscape surrounding the Wellington tower, and to re-imagine the tower not as evidence of urban blight but rather as a treasure to be found. Co-curator Potié describes the afternoon:

> The team provided families with a hand-drawn map marked with architectural clues. These led participants from the Darling Foundry towards an enigmatic treasure––the Wellington Tower. The young participants were engaged with way-finding activities, drawing, origami, and creative mapping to traverse and

> experience the neighbourhood. They were invited to observe their environment and to note their journey in a handmade notebook, separated into four categories: construction, flora and fauna, landscape, and moments. At a mid-way activity stop near the Lachine Canal the children drew a future of their own devising for the neighbourhood. These drawings were then folded into paper boats, brought to a small pier on the Lachine Canal, and launched into the water as an ephemeral trace of the event. Upon arriving at the tower, the children created maps of their journey, referencing the things they saw, remembered, and enjoyed most about their treasure hunt.[44]

As Griffintown does not at present have a school or any cultural destinations primarily directed at children, we felt that an urban lab that privileged the experience, responses, and pleasures of young people would be an important launch for our efforts to engage with perspectives not usually heard or seen in the neighbourhood. Our small but enthusiastic group of children and parents consented to being filmed on their walk; this film [45] and ephemera from the lab became the content for this aspect of our exhibition. In the children's collective vision, Griffintown became a dreamscape; not

Image 13 – Still from "Pathways" (Thomas Strickland, videographer and editor), 2014

a dream of condo towers, market prices, and boutiques, but rather a place of seeking, finding, and envisioning.

Lab #2 – Spatial justice: public space and accessibility

In this lab, curators Marie-France Daigneault-Bouchard, Shauna Janssen, and Thomas Strickland asked: who has access to the swiftly-changing built environment of Griffintown and the Lachine Canal district? The district's transformation into an enormous chantier (construction site) has diminished the safety of the streets, as it has shrunk the quantity of public and un-programmed space. On a sunny 26th of July, 2014, our participants found that one must be fit and young to dodge the piles of rubble, navigate the heavy machinery and missing sidewalks, and tolerate the daily reverberations of

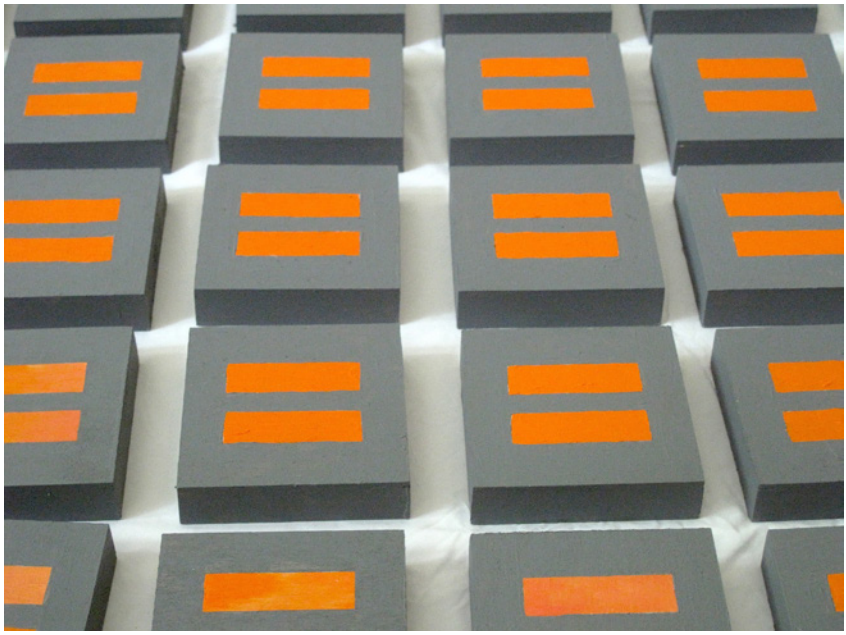

Image 14 – Spatial justice emblem: acrylic on wooden panel, colour photographs. Design: Shauna Janssen and Thomas Strickland; fabrication: Cynthia Hammond and Thomas Strickland

pile-drivers pounding into bedrock. Using this chaos as a shared experience and basis for reflection, we invited participants to explore the question of accessibility in the built environment by thinking about visible and invisible disabilities, the gendering of space, economic displacement, and exclusion by class.[46] We gave each participant a spatial justice emblem, designed in solidarity with logos created by human rights groups.

As participants wove their way along the precarious route between the Darling Foundry and the Wellington tower, we asked them to identify and mark moments of what they considered to be spatial injustice. This directive resulted in the discovery of diverse instances of inaccessibility and injustice, including physical constraints for all those who are not normatively mobile, the auditory and olfactory barrages of a construction site, and the more subtle visual obstructions that slip into social barriers, such as the planters lining the sidewalk in front of a new upscale cafe, just a few meters from a homeless squat, or a homophobic statement scrawled across

Image 15 – Participants traversing Griffintown during the Spatial justice urban lab, 26 July 2014. Photo: C.Bédard

Image 16 – Spatial justice emblem, urban lab, 26 July 2014. Photo: S.Janssen

Image 17 – Spatial justice urban lab outcomes, as shown in the exhibition at the Darling Foundry, September 2014. Photo: Mathieu Gagnon

a wall. Participants placed their spatial justice emblems in specific locations of their choosing along our route and documented these gestures. Of the many photographs taken, the curators chose sixteen images for the exhibition. These pictures collectively mapped spatial injustice in the cultural landscape of the Wellington tower. The images were a reminder to those who would redesign the tower that it would need to be attentive to a diversity of future users, not just to the young, athletic bodies pictured throughout the neighbourhood on advertising and hoarding walls.

Lab #3 – Archiving urban change: the social agencies of material culture (23 August 2014)

Our aim with the third lab, "Archiving Urban Change" was to create a hands-on, haptic, and archaeological exploration of a neighbourhood in transition. Curators Marie-France Daigneault-Bouchard, Shauna Janssen, and Thomas Strickland invited participants into an embodied, collective work of witnessing, archiving, and gathering the material culture of urban change. In brief, we built an archive in an afternoon. And we asked: what can this archive tell us about the past, present, and future of the Wellington tower, its environs, and the transformation of both? We provided participants with tools to collect and record the traces of a specific moment in urban time and space. In teams, we explored overgrown parking lots, neglected parks, abandoned interstitial spaces, condo sales pavilions, and living space, both formal or informal. Some chose to take field notes, some photographed the findings, while others took on the role of urban explorer. Participants gripped the spirit of their roles with gusto, collecting pieces of danger tape, bricks, broken tiles, water samples from a dumpster, a feather, sunglasses, a rusty street sign, broken glass, interior decorating fabric samples, and a single playing card, among other objects.

We delighted in seeing the participants embrace their work of finding significant or telling artifacts along the four itineraries we had

mapped from the Darling Foundry to the Wellington tower. They easily made the shift from pedestrians avoiding garbage on the street to intrepid explorers collecting specimens with intelligence and humour. The activity concluded in a gathering by the Wellington tower, where we laid out all the findings on a white tarp. Fortified with juice and water, the participants then were invited to write individual reflections about an object of their choosing. We asked them to consider whether their object spoke to the past, present, or future of the neighbourhood. In her text, one respondent dwelt upon a collection of small stone fragments:

> The building from which these stones originated was created in the past. [But] I believe this building reflects both past and present because, despite its dilapidated state, it is still standing; it is part of the present environment, although its future is uncertain. I certainly hope it will not be torn down to make space for something new. I would rather they renovate it. These pieces of concrete and asphalt evoke solitude and nostalgia. They ask for our help.[47]

Another participant wrote,

> This object (architectural, decorative fragment) of the present recalls the past through its shape and its dusty state. It is also linked to the future by its questioning of the site's future and its architecture––the city's transformation. The history of this object is linked to the transformation of the site, something that cannot be avoided. It recalls the demolition of the older buildings in this neighbourhood. The dust that covers it evokes a lunar, lifeless space.[48]

What the above reflections illuminate about the participants' experience in this lab are how these kinds of spatially situated encounters with the material culture of urban change allow for the surfacing of affective and emotional connections to a given place. This lab afforded our participants time and space to share and act within Griffintown's shifting landscape, to literally handle the "details" and sometimes "ordinary affects"[49] of urban change, and to see, hear, and feel the city at a moment of dramatic transformation. Here, the cultural agency of the built environment also looms large,

The Postindustrial Landscape Lost and Found: Archiving Urban Change
Paysage postindustriel perdu / trouvé : Archivage du changement urbain

Nom / Name ISABELLE PICHET
→ PIÈCE ARCHITECTURALE DÉCORATIVE

Décrivez comment cet objet appartient au passé, au présent ou au futur. / Describe how this object belongs to the past, present or future.

CET OBJET DU PRÉSENT RAPPELLE LE PASSÉ PAR SA FORME ET SON ÉTAT PRÉSERVÉ. IL EST AUSSI LIÉ AU FUTUR PAR LE QUESTIONNEMENT SUR L'AVENIR DU LIEU ET DE L'ARCHITECTURE QU'IL POSE : LA TRANSFORMATION DE LA VILLE.

Imaginez comment cet objet pourrait être relié au futur de la tour Wellington. / Imagine how this object could be related to the future of the Wellington tower.

PAS LA TRANSFORMATION QUI PEUT AVOIR ÉVITÉE À CE SITE, EST LIÉE À L'HISTOIRE DE CET OBJET.

Quel genre d'histoire cet objet évoque-t-il? Donnez un exemple. (désir, douleur, joie, peur, plaisir, nostalgie, solitude, amour, espoir, ...) / What kind of narrative does this object evoke? Give an example. (desire, pain, happiness, fear, pleasure, nostalgia, loneliness, love, hope, ...)

IL RAPPELLE LA DÉMOLITION DES ANCIENS SILOS DU SECTEUR. LA POUSSIÈRE QUI LE COUVRE ÉVOQUE UNE ESPACE CLOS SANS VIE.

POINTS DE VUE

Image 18 – Archiving Urban Change reflection text written by Renata Ribiero, 23 August 2014

The Postindustrial Landscape Lost and Found: Archiving Urban Change
Paysage postindustriel perdu / trouvé : Archivage du changement urbain

Nom / Name Renata Pacielle Pinto

Décrivez comment cet objet appartient au passé, au présent ou au futur. / Describe how this object belongs to the past, present or future.

Les fragments de pierre que j'ai choisis du passé selon moi, car le bâtiment a été construit au passé (ce sont des morceaux du bâtiment). Selon moi, ce bâtiment témoigne en même temps le passé et le présent parce que malgré son état délabré il est encore là, il fait partie de l'environnement présent. Son futur est incertain. Je l'ignore j'espère qu'il ne sera pas détruit pour faire place à quelque chose de nouveau. J'aurais préféré qu'il soit restauré.

Imaginez comment cet objet pourrait être relié au futur de la tour Wellington. / Imagine how this object could be related to the future of the Wellington tower.

De la même façon que ce bâtiment pourrait être restauré, la Tour peut aussi devenir une nouvelle forme de vie dans cet espace plein d'histoire. J'imagine un quartier "Vertige" où tous ces buildings de béton et brique seraient des espaces de vie, de culture, de loisir, d'échange, d'histoire

Quel genre d'histoire cet objet évoque-t-il? Donnez un exemple. (désir, douleur, joie, peur, plaisir, nostalgie, solitude, amour, espoir, ...) / What kind of narrative does this object evoke? Give an example. (desire, pain, happiness, fear, pleasure, nostalgia, loneliness, love, hope, ...)

Ces ~~(pierres)~~ morceaux en béton et asphalte évoquent la solitude, la nostalgie. Ils nous appellent, ils demandent "au secours"... L'objet me parle, il crie, personne ne voit comme une "résurrection", mais comme quelque chose de mort

POINTS DE VUE

Image 19 – Archiving Urban Change reflection text written by Isabelle Pichet, 23 August 2014

Image 20 – Participant collecting artifacts in the Archiving urban change lab, 23 August 2014. Photo: C. Hammond

in that the mutation of this landscape was acting in turn upon our participants and, in some sense, radicalizing their experience of a place undergoing unchecked, controversial development. As Grant H. Kester explains, some of the "most meaningful engagement with the pressures exerted by capitalism occurs precisely through our daily experience at the intersubjective and even haptic level."[50] This and the other Points de vue labs intensified such daily experience by building the participants' capacity to notice, to engage, and to reflect, together. The mood by the end of the workshop had shifted from gleeful urban discovery to a deeply personal, embodied quietude, but this reflective space was shared in the company of others who had the same experience in common. Perhaps the most meaningful aspect of this lab, for us, was that when our activities concluded, the participants did not want to leave. They wanted to stay near the tower, together.

Image 21 – Participants in the Archiving urban change lab seated next to their artifacts and writing reflections, with the tower in the background, 23 August 2014. Photo: S. Janssen

Lab #4 – Urban greening – mapping urban biodiversity

Our run of luck with bright, sunny days ended abruptly with our final urban lab, which took place on a dark and rainy 13 September 2014. Noémie Despland-Lichtert curated the "verdissement urbain" (urban greening) lab, which was designed to bring participants into a close encounter with the postindustrial ecologies of Griffintown. There is increasing interest in the question of "ruderal" landscapes, that is, pockets of urban biodiversity that have flourished in the so-called wastelands left behind by human, often industrial, activity.[51] In a neighbourhood in development, such landscapes are at great risk. To bring this aspect of Griffintown into relief, our team approached local urban naturalist, Roger Latour, to facilitate. Latour is an expert in urban biodiversity and self-seeded urban landscapes.[52] He led enthusiastic participants from the Darling Foundry to the Wellington tower and back, on a winding tour of discovery of Griffintown's ecologies.

Image 22 – Participants with urban naturalist Roger Latour during the Urban greening lab, 13 September 2014. Photo: S. Janssen

Parking lots, cracks in the sidewalks, and abandoned lots revealed how the neighbourhood's location alongside a canal and an active railway track had resulted in a wonderful variety of plants. Despite the wet weather, participants collected end of season specimens, including prairie grains (various types of wheat and grasses), herbs (plantain, catnip), flowering plants (goldenrod, Lady's thumb, toadflax, and clover), and food (dandelion, Riverbank grape). We had expected the participants to only take small samples of the plants they found interesting. However, inspired by their discoveries, they took ever larger samples of the early autumn plants. The sense of precarity was acute, not because our participants were busily chopping away at the early fall growth, but because caution tape, orange plastic cones, and notices informing the public of imminent construction showed us, with great immediacy, that these spaces and plants were not going to be flourishing for much longer. The

Image 23 – A milkweed bud found on the Urban greening lab, 13 September 2014. Photo: S. Janssen

Image 24 – Jessie Hart leads the drawing phase of the Urban greening lab, 13 September 2014. Photo: S. Janssen

participants knew that the specimens they took would be part of our exhibit later that month.[53]

After our tour concluded, once again at the tower, we returned as a group to the Darling Foundry to get warm, drink hot chocolate, dry our specimens, draw them, and press them in anticipation of their presentation at the gallery in less than two weeks. As part of this phase of the lab, artist Jessie Hart [54] guided the participants (many of whom had no prior drawing experience) in the rudiments of botanical illustration. As participants had already been encouraged to select plants from aesthetic choice and in response to what they had learned from Latour, we found that there was no hesitation in shifting to the next step in the process: representation. Again, our expectations were exceeded in terms of how long our participants stayed, and what they contributed. The lab was a joyful, convivial conclusion to our four afternoons in Griffintown.

We had ten days to translate all the outcomes of the urban laboratories into a coherent exhibition that would communicate

Image 25 – Points de vue, view of the exhibition at the Darling Foundry, 24-28 September 2014. Photo: M. Gagnon

Image 26 – Points de vue, view of the exhibition at the Darling Foundry, 24-28 September 2014. Photo: M. Gagnon

effectively to a diverse public, while representing a diverse set of participants and intentions. In the case of the third lab, "Archiving urban change", all participants' "points of view" were represented in the gallery display, via the artifacts they collected and the written responses we received. In other cases, some curatorial selection was necessary, such as with the "Spatial justice" lab, which relied on photographs taken by participants. Some images were better framed than others and some were out of focus. When it came to representing "Les jeunes/Youth" our team decided that video was our preferred method to communicate the spirit and findings of the lab. The video was suggestive rather than documentary, and so is itself a partial perspective on the events that day. And in the case of the "Urban greening" lab we collaborated on the creation of our display with our two experts, Latour and Hart, who worked with the core curatorial team [55] to make a generous and representative selection for the display. In addition, the participants in each lab

were named on didactic panels that explained the purpose of the workshop, in French and in English.[56]

Towards an inclusive urban future: "culture" and "community"

To return to a question we posed at the very beginning of our process in 2013: what do 'culture' and 'community' mean in a neighbourhood like Griffintown? As this essay has demonstrated, the words 'community' and 'culture' are more complex, ambiguous, and even more exclusive terms than they might initially appear, if they are taken in context. Various scholars have informed our position on the notion of 'community' as something that develops around issues or sites of shared concern, rather than emerging out of consensus or some idea of essential similarity.[57] For art historian Miwon Kwon, the "instability of identity and subjectivity can be the most productive source of such explorations" in community-based art projects.[58] Kwon also imagines collaborative and community-based art projects as both a coming-together and unraveling-of collective social processes.[59] As it pertains to community-specific art projects, Kwon suggests that the "unstable and inoperative" nature of community can create alternative models of collaboration, spatial, and social belongings.[60]

Following Mouffe and Kwon, we saw the labs as spaces for developing temporary communities in which it would be possible to build shared concern for the Wellington tower's history and its future purpose, but also for the larger context of Griffintown itself. What our participants consented to was joining our collective on the journey––literally on the walk––to the tower, its past, present, and potential futures. Together, with and through our differences, we witnessed a specific moment in time in the transformation of Griffintown. Our labs were thus points of transfer and dialogue, as well as points of view,[61] and built, in a sense, spaces that were public, for temporary social encounters as well as collective discovery.

Urban space generally and neighbourhoods particularly are sites of contestation, where divergent spatial politics and power relations are negotiated. When urban revitalization projects fail to include meaningful public consultation, the effects are manifold, including the destruction of significant parts of the built environment and erasure of the material locus of living memories. Other, interstitial histories are also at stake, as development frequently targets postindustrial spaces that are home to marginal city dwellers, such as the homeless, artists, the under-employed, and the transient, who are often displaced as a result of these so-called revitalizations. In Griffintown's shift from industrial urban zone to postindustrial leisurescape, there has been a deep disconnect between the human (and non-human) agents who live in and use these spaces on a daily basis and those who hold the most power to transform the neighbourhood.

One of our aims with Points de vue was to foreground these forms of human, non-human, and spatial agency. We did this by collecting the visual and textual accounts of important, first-hand encounters with changing urban landscape. Normally urban assessment is delayed until the moment of a building or urban plan's completion. An innovation of our project was to not simply insist on a form of public consultation, but also to privilege the material, visual, and textual traces of that consultation. As described above, our exhibition included hundreds of objects, specimens, images, and one video from our process. Thus our process and results made visible the fact that the Wellington tower, even in its ruined and abandoned state, was important, like-wise the social and biological life that surrounded that building.

As mentioned above, we saw the Wellington tower in its post-industrial state as a witness of sorts to the transformation of its surrounding cultural landscape. And more significantly, we believe that our labs afforded our participants an encounter with the city that was transformative, that (temporarily) transformed their experience of the city and their perceptions of urban renewal. In our view, the labs themselves were a series of micro apertures or openings that

made it possible for our participants to indulge their curiosity about the future of the tower by taking part in the making of collective spatial encounters that allowed for multiple and critical points of view to surface, and for our participants to take part in witnessing up close the materials, biodiversity, and spaces that are produced by urban change.

Conclusion: conflict, enchantment, and the making of public space

It would be easy, given all the actors, events, and outcomes to simply illustrate a positive portrait of what happened with Points de vue.[62] Our collectively-planned and carefully executed series of events over the course of a year meant that we got what we sought: multiple points of view about the tower and its possible futures, and for that matter, multiple points of view about our project, strategies, and outcomes. But inherent to such multiplicity is conflict and dissent; our project was dogged by practical, logistical, and interpersonal power dynamics and problems. We encountered a number of challenges and contests to the power that we had taken, without asking anyone's permission, to enter into the charged discourse about Griffintown's redevelopment in general, and the future of the Wellington tower in particular.

We experienced insider-outsider dynamics emerging within our relatively small groups, when occasionally, among our participants, a resident of an adjacent neighbourhood (never Griffintown) asked what right we and the other participants had to be engaging in this sort of work; in other words, if we didn't live near Griffintown, how could we have a say? Midway through the summer we experienced another form of this sort of territorialism when we received pressure from some of the official competition finalists to cease our labs. In a series of emails, one member of a finalist team told us that our work might dilute or distract from the sanctioned redesign activities. (We explained that we were working with the Darling Foundry and did

not need approval for our labs; that we looked forward to sharing the results with all finalists, and invited the individual in question to participate in the labs herself. She declined.) We saw some finalists attempt to colonize our public events, and use them to gauge this or that intention for the tower, a backhanded form of public consultation (we resisted).[63]

We also saw issues of authorship arise, within our team and with our participants. Despite using standard image and participation consent forms, which outlined the intent to incorporate outcomes from the labs in our final exhibition, two participants raised doubts towards the end of the summer about the ethics of "using" the participants' creative labour for the purpose of our team's exhibit. One solution we came up with was to give one of these participants space for her own work in the exhibit, but we remain unsure of the success of this decision, as the work was not directly connected to the goals of Points de vue, and it had little connection to the Wellington tower itself. And we discovered subsequently that another participant had attempted to claim our work as hers in conversations with other cultural actors, by virtue of the fact that she had attended all labs.

Interpersonal dynamics with our participants were compounded by questions of ethics and attribution, both during the labs and following their conclusion. We were troubled at times by how to share credit while remaining equitable in the identification of relative effort. Not everyone who worked on Points de vue as a core curator did as much work as others, yet we shared credit consistently throughout the process. And while we agreed, as a group, to always identify all collaborators in any public presentations and publications about Points de vue, no matter the differences in workload or contribution, there have been instances when hardly any of the core team were credited in public discussions of the project.[64]

Money and remuneration were also at issue. While everyone who participated as an organizer or curator was paid a stipend, we struggled with the fact that no-one was paid a fair hourly wage for

the time they put into their part of our project. The many problems of free or near-free labour in the art world are well-known to us, and the particularly gendered dynamic of women working in the arts for very little money is not one we wished to uphold. Yet in practical terms, we did uphold it, despite the majority of our funding going to the stipends of our team, because the majority of our collective were under-employed women. And relatedly, we were at times dispirited by the lack of communication or practical support from our partnering institutions, and at others inspired by the arrival of unexpected allies and funds.[65]

So why do it? We believe that art is never a solution to social and economic urban problems, but rather a means to make those problems visible, palpable, and bring them into a wider cultural discourse, to the attention of different constituents, or to those with official, decision-making powers. It was very important to us that art and culture not be relegated, in the retrofit of the Wellington tower, to some simpering colour-block panels celebrating the sweat of long-dead labourers, nor to some high-tech gambit that would have nothing to do with the context and affect of the tower, and everything to do with culture as entertainment. And equally, through our work as artists with Points de vue we imagined a "right to the city"[66] that isn't necessarily predicated on consensus, or certain prescribed modes of collectivity, encounter, participation, and community engagement. Rather, the social and creative dynamics that surfaced and were produced by Points de vue are more closely aligned with what Mouffe refers to as agonistic approaches to critical art practices.

Mouffe posits that artists and artistic urban interventions can play a role in contesting "visions of public space as terrain where consensus can emerge"[67] and support "dissensus that makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate."[68] Following Mouffe, we believe that the city is not a passive entity waiting for the seminal, creative move of the artist to bring it to life (the risky counterpart to the dreadful discourse on urban revitalization mentioned above), or to make it more democratic.

Nor should our practice be mistaken for a salve that city officials might rub upon socio-spatial conflicts. Conflict is part of working in the way that we chose to develop the Points de vue project. If one could say that a "community of concern" formed around the Wellington tower through collaborative acts of witnessing and engaging with the phenomenon of a postindustrial turn, then, as artists, we would be the first to acknowledge that this community was conflicted, uncertain, resistant, occasionally bored, as well as being enchanted,[69] engaged, and entangled in what we had collectively discovered, what we shared, and what we made public. And that contingency, uncertainty, heterogeneity, and enchantment are precisely what we feel a space for multiple points of view should be: a city. To end this essay, we offer a translation of a commentary on our exhibition in September 2014:

> Bravo on this work for space, over which we never sufficiently concern ourselves, in my opinion. This is a neighborhood that has a great need of activism, considering the vandalism of the monster promoters! It's important that you interpellated the community over these spaces and this heritage for the purpose of remembering a common history. It would seem that only the past can be the guarantee of a good future. Don't stop this work! I'd love to collaborate with you sometime.[70]

Cynthia Hammond graduated from Concordia University's interdisciplinary doctoral program in 2002. From 2004-06, she held the first, federally-funded postdoctoral fellowship at the School of Architecture, McGill University. Hammond teaches interdisciplinary practice and method, architectural history, and studios and seminars on spatial theory at Concordia, where she is presently Chair of the Department of Art History. Her publications explore gender, public history, and questions of heritage in relation to the built environment. Cynthia also has an ongoing exhibition record as a painter, and as a socially-engaged public artist. In her pedagogy, research, and creative work, Cynthia foregrounds the city as her collaborator in mobilizing multiple publics around the politics of urban change. http://cynthiahammond.org

Shauna Janssen is a Montreal-based urban curator, founder of Urban Occupations Urbaines, and a founding member of Points de vue. Her curatorial work involves long-term, documentary, site-specific research projects that collaborate with contested urban spaces. Her ongoing research addresses the cultural politics and futures of postindustrial cities. Janssen has worked for theatre companies around the world for over two decades, and in 2014 earned her PhD in interdisciplinary studies from Concordia University. She has coordinated city-wide creative events, such as Encuentro 2014, and in 2015 was artist-in-residence at the Center for Art and Urbanistics / Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik, Berlin. http://shaunajanssen.ca

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all participants in the Points de vue urban laboratories, as well as Concordia University and the Darling Foundry for financial support of our project. Special thanks to Micheline Chevrier for translation and assistance throughout the Points de vue project, and to Noni Brynjolson for encouraging and facilitating our contribution to FIELD.

Notes

1. Chantal Mouffe, "Democratic Citizenship and the Political Community," in The Return of the Political (London: Verso, 2005) 67.

2. We are borrowing mindfully here from the title of Reyner Banham's 1976 book, Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past (Harper & Row).

3. Madeleine Cummings, "Griffintown expansions sparks controversy," The McGill Daily, 12 September 2011 (web) http://www.mcgilldaily.com/2011/09/griffintown-expansion-sparks-controversy/.

4. Aditi Ohri, "Funeral for a faubourg," The McGill Daily, 22 September 2008 (web) http:// www.mcgilldaily.com/2008/09/funeral_for_a_faubourg/. Since the mid 2000s, numerous ad-hoc initiatives emerged in response to the city's plans to revitalize Griffintown. The "Committee for the Sustainable Redevelopment of Griffintown" has been tracking the redevelopment online: http://www.griffintown.org. Other useful online sources that speak to a history of activism in Montreal's South-West include the websites of the Carrefour d'education populaire, the Atwater Library, Action-Gardien, and the Clinique communautaire de

Pointe-Saint-Charles. Facebook has seen an increase in the informal archiving of the visual culture of both industrial urbanism and the surviving social networks of these historic neighbourhoods; some of these groups are actively working to preserve working-class heritage. See, for example, "Griffintown Memories," "The Real Pointe-Saint-Charles," and "La Fondation du Horse Palace de Griffintown," all on Facebook.

5. "Transformation de la tour d'aiguillage Wellington," 9 December 2015 (web) http:// www.ville.montreal.qc.ca/culture/transformation-de-la-tour-daiguillage-wellington.

6. For more information, see "About," Points de vue, 2014 (web), www.pointsdevuemtl@wordpress.com.

7. See Points de vue: Tour d'aiguillage Wellington (Montreal, 2013), 20pp (available online) The proposal's co-authors were Erika Ashley Couto, Marie-France Daigneault-Bouchard, Cynthia Hammond, Shauna Janssen, and Chantale Potié. Noémie Despland-Lichtert, Adeline Paradis-Hautcoeur, and Pascal Robitaille translated the original English into French. Couto, Paradis-Hautcoeur, and Robitaille subsequently left the group to pursue other interests, while Camille Bédard and Thomas Strickland joined the team in summer 2014.

8. See Quartier Éphémère, "Mandate," Darling Foundry/Fonderie Darling, 2013 (web) http:// fonderiedarling.org/en/mandate.html.

9. In this form, the project took the name, "Points de vue: People, Places, and the Spatial Politics of Urban Change." See http://fonderiedarling.org/en/Points-de-vue-exposition.html.

10. The exhibition ran for five days, September 24-28, 2014.

11. The phenomenon by which formerly industrial landscapes are turned into leisurescapes is part of what we are calling the postindustrial turn. To this we would add the wave of interest in deindustrialization, and direct forms of engagement with the heterogeneous historical processes attached to deindustrialization in different places. These forms of engagement include oral history, art, scholarly research, urban exploration, and what has been called "ruin-gazing" or "ruin porn." See, for example, Steven High, "Brownfield Public History: Arts and Heritage in the Aftermath of Deindustrialization," in The Oxford Handbook of Public History, James Gardner and Paula Hamilton, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2015) and Tim Strangleman, "'Smokestack Nostalgia,' 'Ruin Porn' or Working-Class Obituary: The Role and Meaning of Deindustrial Representation,"

International Labor and Working-Class History, special issue, "Crumbling Cultures," 84 (2013): 23-37. As fast as cities race to transform and capitalize upon the built traces of the industrial era through redevelopment and "revitalization", heritage activists, artists, and other observers/actors are increasingly engaged with trying to understand, document, and preserve those traces, or part, before they are completely consumed and drained of their historical weight. North American cities such as Sudbury, Hamilton, Windsor, Philadelphia and many others engage in practices of "forced forgetting" when they strip from the deindustrializing city the evidence of fiscal failure––empty and ruined buildings. See Steven High, "Beyond Aesthetics: Visibility and Invisibility in the Aftermath of Deindustrialization," International Labor and Working Class History 84 (Fall 2013): 140-153.

12. Jeremy Till, Architecture Depends (London: The MIT Press, 2009), 55.

13. Ibid., 59.

14. Donna, Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and Privilege of Partial Perspective" Feminist Studies 14.3 (Autumn, 1988): 575-599.

15. Ibid., 585.

16. Gil M. Doron, "…badlands, blank space, border vacuums, brownfields, conceptual Nevada, Dead Zones1, derelict areas…" in field, special issue: "Architecture and Indeterminacy" 1.1 (September 2007), 12.

17. Robert David Lewis, "The Development of an Early Suburban Industrial District: The Montreal Ward of Saint-Ann, 1851-71," Urban History Review 19.3 (February 1991): 166-180.

18. Jean-Claude Marsan, Montreal in Evolution: An Historical Analysis of the Development of Montreal's Architecture and Urban Environment (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1981), 174.

19. The influx of Irish immigrants in Montreal at this time was largely due to the Great Famine (1845-1850).

20. Herbert Brown Ames, The City Below the Hill: A Sociological Study of a Portion of the City of Montreal (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972).

21. Richard Burman's homage to Griffintown, 20th Century Griffintown in Pictures (Montreal: Burman Productions Reg'd, 2010), is a visual essay on this collective spirit.

22. André Lortie, The 60s: Montréal Thinks Big (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2004) 21.

23. The relationship between class and space in Montreal is complex and marked by historical proximities of rich and poor. The economic fortunes of the city since the closure of the Lachine Canal in 1968 had a devastating effect on the Old Port and canal districts. The Old Port was the focus of a determined revitalization effort in the 1990s, and property values have shot up accordingly. Ville-Marie is the central business district of Montreal.

24. Steven High, ed., La Pointe: L'Autre Bord de la track/The Other Side of the Tracks (Montréal: Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, 2015).

25. Steven High, ed., Canal: De la/From There (Montréal: Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, 2014).

26. With regard to the Wellington tower and its future as a site for cultural innovation, see Allen McInnis, "Dilapidated Wellington Tower to be reborn as cultural centre," Montreal Gazette (on- line) 15 July 2015 http://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/dilapidated-wellingtown-tower- to-be-reborn-as-cultural-centre.

27. In the late 1980s, British urban planning consultant Charles Landry coined the "Creative City" concept. See Landry's The Art of City Making (New York: Routledge 2006); The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators (London: Earthscan, 2000); and, co-authored with Franco Bianchini, The Creative City (Bournes Green: Comedia, 1995).

28. Janssen, "Urban Occupations Urbaines" (2014), 16.

29. See Cummings.

30. See, for example, Sophie Thiébaut, Richard Bergeron, Etienne Coutu, "Le Quartier Griffintown réincarné," Mémoire présenté à l'Office de consultation publique de Montréal (Montréal: Projet Montréal, 2012) 16pp (web) http://projetmontreal.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/ document/Mem_Griffintown_OCPM.pdf.

31. Michelle Lalonde, "Griffintown Residents Want Heads-Up on Plan B," The Gazette 22 January 2009: A7.

32. For example, Montreal-based architect Hal Ingberg described Griffintown as "dead" in response to a public presentation that co-author Janssen gave in 2010 on Griffintown's long history of transformation.

Janssen and Ingberg were participants in the "Ephemeral City" series of public forums (# 5 "Public Space"), hosted by the Canadian Centre for Architecture on 18 February.

33. See "Griffintown," Le Canal (web) nd. http://lecanal.ca/en/griffintown.

34. Air Canada, in-flight magazine, "Canada's Next Great Neighbourhoods: Griffintown Montreal," enRoute, 28 September 2012) (web) http://enroute.aircanada.com/en/articles/neighbourhood-watch-montreal.

35. Janssen elaborated on these ideas in her doctoral dissertation, "Urban Occupations Urbaines: Curating the Post-industrial Landscape," Diss., Concordia University, 2014. The dissertation can be accessed here: http://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/978384/1/Janssen_PhD_S2014.pdf>.

36. See www.urbanoccupationsurbaines.org

37. Over forty artists participated in Urban Occupations Urbaines, including Hammond, who participated via her design alter-ego, pouf! art+architecture, which she founded with Thomas Strickland. See http://www.cynthiahammond.com/pouf.htm.

38. Janssen details this process and her findings, which include a critique of "community" in the context of an entire neighbourhood swept up in construction, in "Urban Occupations Urbaines" (2014).

39. On this concept see Grant H. Kester, Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); and The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2011).

40. Igor Sadikov, "Protesters denounce gentrification of Southwest Montreal," McGill Daily (online) 5 February 2014. http://www.mcgilldaily.com/2014/02/protesters-denounce-gentrification-of-southwest-montreal/>. See also Cynthia Hammond and Thomas D. Strickland, "Biting Back: Art and Activism at the Dog Park," On Site Review 30, Ethics and Publics (Fall-Winter 2013): 6-11; Simon Vickers, "Making Co-opville: Layers of Activism in Point St-Charles (1983-1992)," MA thesis, Department of History, Concordia University, 2013; Jessica J. Mills, "What's the Point? The Meaning of Place, Memory, and Community in Point Saint Charles," Quebec, MA thesis, Department of History, Concordia University, 2011; Shauna Janssen, "Reclaiming the Darling Foundry: From Post-Industrial Landscape to Quartier Éphémère," MA thesis, INDI Program, Concordia University, 2009; Danielle Lewis, "The Turcot Yards: Community Encounters with a Queer Sublime,"

Montreal as Palimpsest 3 (Department of Art History, Concordia University, 2009): 27pp; Le Collectif CourtePointe, The Point is… Grassroots Organizing Works: Women from Point St. Charles Sharing Stories of Solidarity (Montreal: CourtePointe Collective, 2006); Brian Demchinksy, ed. Grassroots, Greystones, and Glass Towers: Montreal Urban Issues and Architecture (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1989). See also Joseph Baker, "An Experiment in Architecture," The Canadian Architect 18 (1973): 30-41. In 1970, Joseph Baker, an architect and professor at McGill's School of Architecture, initiated the Community Design Workshop. Baker launched the Community Design Workshop in response to the deprived communities living in Montreal's working class neighbourhoods lacking basic housing and public amenities. Baker is also featured working with the Community Design Workshop students in Michel Régnier's documentary film, Griffintown (1972). See <http://www.nfb.ca/film/griffintown.

41. The "Couloir Culturel/Cultural Corridor – Griffintown" was active from 2009-2013 and their presence is archived at <http://www.griffintown.org/corridorculturel/>.

42. Our lab participants consisted of Montrealers from various neighbourhoods. We reached out to members of the general public via two social media platforms, facebook and a wordpress blog; and to residents of Griffintown via a poster and postcard campaign. We further reached out to members of the Concordia community (students, staff, faculty) who are residents of the South-West of Montreal or interested in that part of the city. We also made use of several existing communication networks, such as the Darling Foundry's mailing list, which includes residents in the South-West, cultural organizations across Montreal, and members of the art community of this city. Our participants varied from workshop to workshop; some had zero connection to the South-West but were concerned with the politics of urban change more broadly, while others were long-term residents. Our participants included persons with reduced mobility, international visitors to Montreal, high-paid executives, under-employed artists, and students. A complete list of all participants' names were included in our didactic panels in our exhibition, and in our exhibition publication. Our outreach encouraged several politicians to attend our exhibition, including the Mayor of the South-West, Benoît Dorais.

43. We are grateful for the assistance, in this and all our labs, of Alyse Tunnell.

44. Didactic panel description, Points de vue (exhibition), Darling Foundry, 24-28 September 2014.

45. The film "Pathways" (Thomas Strickland, videographer and editor) can be viewed online at <https://vimeo.com/123375471>.

46. The organizers would like to thank Arseli Dokumaci for providing an introduction to these themes during the first part of this lab.

47. Renata Ribiero, participant, "Archiving Urban Change", 23 August 2014. Translated from the original French by Micheline Chevrier.

48. Isabelle Pichet, participant, "Archiving Urban Change", 23 August 2014. Translated from the original French by Micheline Chevrier.

49. Kathleen Stewart, Ordinary Affects (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007).

50. Grant H. Kester, The One and the Many, 226.

51. Diane Saint-Laurent, "Approches biogéographiques de la nature en ville: parcs, espaces verts et friches," Cahiers de géographie du Québec 44.122 (2000): 147-166.

52. Latour has published several books on this subject and maintains a blog detailing his projects and discoveries: http://floraurbana.blogspot.com/.

53. All specimens not included in the exhibition went into compost.

54. See "Friends – Jessica Hart," Points de vue (2014) https://pointsdevuemtl.wordpress.com/jessica-hart/.

55. These members were, in order of leadership, Shauna Janssen, Thomas Strickland, Marie-France Daigneault-Bouchard, Noémie Despland-Lichtert, Camille Bédard, Chantale Potié, and Cynthia Hammond.

56. From the beginning of the project, practical considerations decided that for the purpose of designing and executing the final display, we would work as a curatorial team, led by Shauna Janssen and her co-director, Thomas Strickland. With seven members on our team, only ten days to prepare the exhibition, and less than three days to install the exhibition, it was not possible to extend our collaborative process with our 100 project participants into the gallery. (Finding time for the seven members of the curatorial team to meet in the gallery at the same time was, alone, a challenge, given conflicting work schedules.) We informed the participants from the outset that this would be our process as well. But even if they did not curate the exhibition's contents, all 100 participants participated directly in the exhibition in the sense that they produced those contents, themselves.

57. Rosi Braidotti, The Posthuman (Polity Press, 2012); Bruno Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik, or How to Make Things Public," In Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy, exhibition catalogue, Centre for Art and Media, Karslruhe, Germany (March 2005) 4-31; Rosalyn Deutsche, Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics (Chicago, Ill.; Cambridge, Mass., Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts; The MIT Press, 1998).

58. Miwon Kwon, One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2002), 137.

59. Ibid., 154.

60. Ibid., 7.

61. Our use of the term dialogue here is in keeping with Grant H. Kester's idea of "dialogical aesthetics" and discursive forms of creating meaning. Kester is articulating a critical framework for social art practices, and the capacity for dialogue to create an aesthetic experience. See Kester, Conversation Pieces, 2004.

62. Our project led one of the team finalists in the design competition, Eastern Bloc and Espace temps, to approach us to collaborate on their final proposal to the city in May 2015 via a partnership with Concordia University. This team did not win the bid for the retrofit of the tower, but we still felt that our work had been successful in that this team began to engage more directly with the built, social, and environmental histories, as well as divergent voices and positions within Montreal's South-West, in their thinking and proposal.

63. Marie-France Daigneault-Bouchard, one of Points de vue's curators, discovered during our Spatial Justice lab that several representatives of one of the finalist teams were using our end-of-day group discussions to ask participants their opinion about possible features in the future redesign of the building, such as the location of cafés. They also did not identify themselves to their group as design finalists. As our purpose in this lab was explicitly to deal with questions of accessibility, Marie-France asked the individuals to reorient their participation in the discussion, and remained with the group to ensure that spatial justice remained the topic in question.

64. Dire as this sounds, this problem has provided us with an opportunity to build an ongoing, open discussion about the ethics of shared authorship, the politics of collaboration, and the need for peer-to-peer consultation and mentoring in this type of work.

65. The majority of our funding came from Concordia University's Aid to Research-Related Events Program, but some much-needed additional funding also arrived, thanks to Shauna Janssen's lobbying, via the Darling Foundry. And during the intense few days of installation leading up to the exhibition's opening, Pierre Giroux, the Darling Foundry's technician, provided assistance and support late into the night, long after gallery closing time.

66. Henri Lefebvre is most associated with this term, which understands all citizens as having the right to speak out about, occupy, and change their city. The Right to the City: Writings on Cities, E. Lebas, trans. (London: Blackwell, 2006) 147-159. See also David Harvey, "The Right to the City," in The Right to the City, Zanny Begg and Lee Stickells, eds. (Sydney: Tin Sheds Gallery, 2011) 11-28: Margaret Crawford, "Rethinking 'Rights', Rethinking 'Cities': A Response to David Harvey's 'The Right to the City,'" in The Right to the City, 33-37.

67. Mouffe, "Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces," Art and Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods 1.2 (Summer, 2007): 3. http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/mouffe.html

68. See Mouffe, "Artistic Activism," 4.

69. We make a distinction between art-as-entertainment and art collaborations with the city as a means to enchantment. Jane Bennett describes the "wonder of minor experiences" as different from blockbuster, high-budget urban spectacle, in that the former are more intimate, personal, and embodied. See "The Wonder of Minor Experiences" in The Enchantment of Modern Life (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001) 3-16.

70. Exhibition commentary from the Points de vue visitors' book, September 2014, comment by Manon S. Russo. Translated from the original French by Cynthia Hammond.

FIELD
A JOURNAL OF SOCIALLY-ENGAGED ART CRITICISM

C'undúa: Activist Art in Downtown Bogotá

Ruben Yepes

In 2007 I attended a presentation of Colombian art collective Mapa Teatro's Testigo de las Ruinas (Witness of the Ruins), a performance piece created in response to events that occurred in an infamous neighborhood in downtown Bogotá known as El Cartucho. The neighborhood was for many years the home of drug addicts, crooks, beggars, prostitutes and peasants displaced by the Colombian war. El Cartucho—which means 'calla lily' in Spanish, but also 'bullet shell'—was Santa Inés's most derelict street, by extension lending its name to the sector.

Directed by Mapa Teatro's founders and directors Rolf and Heidi Abderhalden, Testigo de las Ruinas began with a video projection of a woman sitting on a yellow couch, accompanied by a recorded female voice that referred to life in El Cartucho. The video was complemented by the woman's actual presence to the right of the stage. As the projection was turned off, she put on an apron and disappeared into the darkness of the unlit stage, only to appear again on the other side, next to a table with cooking utensils. We would see her brewing chocolate and mincing corn to make *arepas*—baked cornmeal cakes, a popular Colombian staple—while other screens displayed scenes of the neighborhood's demolition. Cloaked figures silently walked in front of the screens; the projector beams blended their contours into the images behind them.

El Cartucho (also known as 'the alley of death') remained for many years neglected by the city's administration, despite being just a few blocks away from Casa de Nariño, the presidential palace. The Santa Inés neighborhood, and especially El Cartucho street, was—and still is—in the minds of Bogotá's inhabitants an invisible border that divides the city in two: the organized, comfortable north and the impoverished, dangerous south. In the late 1990s the local government decided that it was time to recuperate the area. Entire blocks of republican houses and buildings were demolished to make way for the Tercer Milenio Park. Santa Inés's residents met the project with protests; many of them were forcibly removed. The project was also met with criticism from other sectors, who denounced the lack of a plan to relocate the neighborhood's inhabitants.[1] Indeed, brute force took the place of social aid: El Cartucho's *desechables* (which translates to 'discardables', the street term for the city's undesirables) were rounded up and transported to the city's stock yards being later released in different parts of the city, leaving them to their predicaments.[2]

Mapa Teatro, an "experimental artist laboratory" created by the Abderhaldens in 1984 dedicated to the collaborative production of socially-committed performance and visual art pieces, took up the task of memorializing the transformation of El Cartucho. Testigo de las Ruinas was the final piece of a series of five works that, between 2002 and 2013, adopted different art forms, media and practices with the purpose of recording the transformation: Prometeo I and II, Re-corridos, La limpieza de los establos de Augías and Testigo de las Ruinas. Mapa Teatro calls the series *C'undúa*—the Arhuaca culture's word for the realm of the afterlife. This article considers the social work of this series vis-à-vis the violent process of spatial and social change that Santa Inés underwent.

Due to their heterogeneous, ephemeral and participatory nature, it is inadequate to refer to the *C'undúa* pieces in terms of self-contained, representational artworks. I propose that these works may be better understood as *aesthetic events*. Following recent work in visual studies and aesthetics that posits the relational

character of art, I use this term to highlight that, in each case, these works produce a complex relationality that creates its own time and space, assembling diverse elements: the materiality of the objects and actions presented, the discursive content of those objects, the affects and sensations they elicit, the discourses that frame the latter, as well as the discourses and frames that the spectator/participant brings to the above elements.[3] The aesthetic event is an eruption, an emergence, one that assembles disparate elements whereby a suspension of the relationality that configures the habitual world is put into place.[4] Mapa Teatro's works may be considered aesthetic events insofar as they involve the emergence of a temporally delimited space of complex objective and subjective interactions in the sites where they have occurred.

I posit that these works have a fourfold political agency: 1) they give visibility and audibility to an invisible and inaudible—indeed, an erased and silenced—sector of Bogotá's society; 2) they connect separate urban and social spaces, bringing them into contiguity; 3) they produce new spaces of social interaction, mutual recognition and construction of collective subjectivity; 4) they endow at least some of the former inhabitants of Santa Inés with spatial agency. I will consider these theses with the purpose of illuminating the relevance of Mapa Teatro's work as a form of social intervention. Although in considering each thesis I will emphasize one or another of the *C'undúa* pieces, it is to be understood that these forms of agency are not exclusive traits of the works on which each section focuses.

Presence

Testigo de las ruinas constituted a space in which the former inhabitants of El Cartucho, as well as their histories and predicaments, were made visible and audible, literally: the screens on stage and the reenactments gave presence to those rendered invisible by governmental action. Here, *presence* means the capacity to be seen

and heard in such a way that requires engagement from those who see and hear. In *C'undúa*, the visible *evinces* that which has hitherto escaped from view, while the audible functions as *testimony* of that which hitherto has not been heard. Together, what is shown and what is told work to counter effacement and silence.

We could follow this analytical route in relation to Testigo de las Ruinas, but I wish to turn here to the series of works titled Re-corridos (De-ambulations, December 2003). Approaching the old republican house that serves as Mapa Teatro's residence, visitors would encounter several backlit photographic images of the Tercer Milenio construction site. At the door, an interactive sound installation would reproduce the voice of the old neighborhood's bell ringer. Inside, a video installation showed the demolition of the Cartucho's last standing house; in another room, the demolition sequence was rendered on another screen, opposite to which

Image 1 – Las escalas (Re-corridos), Mapa Teatro, Mapa Teatro residence, Bogota, 2003, photograph by Mauricio Esguerra © Mapa Teatro Archive

Image 2 – Los restos (Re-corridos), Mapa Teatro, Mapa Teatro residence, Bogota, 2003, photograph by Mauricio Esguerra © Mapa Teatro Archive

another image showed the demolished house rebuilding itself, an accomplishment of playback. Another room was cluttered with remnants from the demolition: doors, window frames, parts of furniture. Along the house's staircase, photographic projections of Santa Inés's former inhabitants would gaze at visitors while the interactive sound reproduced their voices as they narrated fragments of their personal histories. Other projections would show scenes from the former neighborhood. On the second floor rested several wooden carts like the ones used by the neighborhood's recyclers, which bore television sets showing recyclers as they went about their activities. Visitors could also weigh themselves on a scale; an image of an equivalent amount of recyclable trash would be projected on the contiguous wall. Another room featured thousands of clattering and chiming glass bottles hanging from the ceiling. In the next room, backlit cracks in the walls resembling scars would interactively produce the voices of former Santa Inés

Image 3 – Los carros (Re-corridos), Mapa Teatro, Mapa Teatro residence, Bogota, 2003, photograph by Mauricio Esguerra © Mapa Teatro Archive

inhabitants as they narrated how they got their own body scars. In yet another piece, television sets amidst wooden crates cramped in a corridor displayed the laboring of Santa Inés's recyclers. In a compelling piece, outmoded radio sets standing on metallic legs would light up while reproducing the voices of former inhabitants as they, once again, narrated their life histories.

The titles of the installations speak of each piece's specific referent: The Witness, The Bell Ringer, The Debris, The Steps, The Carts/The Weight Scales, The Bottle, The House, The Bedroom, The

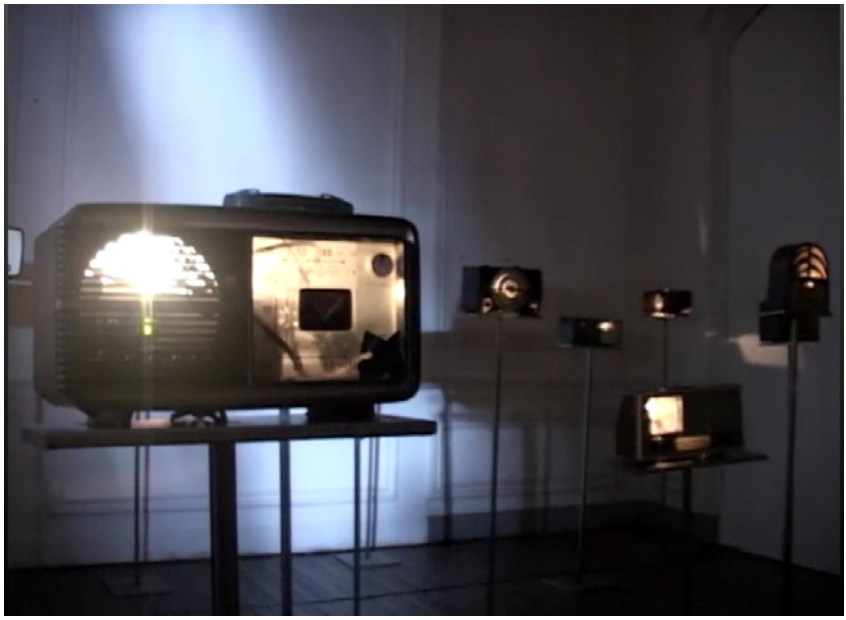

Image 4 – La voz (Re-corridos), Mapa Teatro, Mapa Teatro residence, Bogota, 2003, photograph by Mauricio Esguerra © Mapa Teatro Archive

Skin, The Match, The Remains, The Voice. These objects, images and sounds act as surrogates of the former inhabitants of Santa Inés, giving presence to their histories and life experiences. However, the twelve installations functioned as a whole, integrating into the republican house that served as their site and which resembles many of Santa Inés houses in their better days. The installation was an immersive experience that created a unique sense of space and temporality, which extracted visitors from the usual activities and pace of Bogotá's bustling center. This is the event character of Re-corridos: the emergence of a visual, auditive, tactile and at times olfactory experience that brought into relation the different objects, images and sounds put forth by the installations, the evocative space of the Mapa Teatro residence, the sensitive experience of spectators and the histories, hopes and plights of Santa Inés's former inhabitants. As an immersive aesthetic event, this assemblage of elements had the power to both affectively and discursively engage

those who came into relation with it, thus giving presence to the old neighborhood and especially, to its effaced community.

The piece that most evidently alludes to visibility is La limpieza de los establos de Augías (The Cleansing of the Augian Stables), a complex, multi-spatial installation that took place in August and September 2004. The work links two disparate spaces: the site of the demolished Santa Inés neighborhood and Bogotá's Museum of Modern Art (MAMBO). At the museum, visitors would walk amidst a series of video projections and television screens transmitting in real time the construction of the Tercer Milenio park, as well as images of people looking into a series of niches installed on the metal barrier that secluded the construction site. However, they could not see what these people were seeing; for that, it was necessary to visit the actual construction site. There, twelve television sets installed into the metal barrier featured a loop sequence of the last house to be demolished in El Cartucho. Spectators were in turn recorded by three cameras, secluded in concrete columns placed in front of the barrier, which transmitted back to the museum in real time. An interplay of visible and invisible elements thus emerged; to have a complete experience of the work, spectators had to visit both sites.

All of the works in the *C'undúa* series, particularly the one described above, remind us of what Nicholas Mirzoeff calls "*the right to look*": the right to see that which power strives to obscure from sight.[5] Mirzoeff suggests that hegemonic configurations of power operate by determining which social and political processes and subjects are rendered visible to the community, and which remain invisible. The right to look is thus about upsetting *visuality*—the visual logics and dynamics of power.[6] In the *C'undúa* series, there is a consistent countering of the invisibility to which state power sought to reduce the spatial transformation of the Santa Inés neighborhood and the subjects that inhabited it. The virtuality of the images presented in the Augian Stables installation, for instance, endowed actuality to a process of urban and social effacement. By refusing to submit to the logic of invisibility as effectuated by state intervention, the Augías installation opened a space in which the

Image 5 – La limpieza de los establos de Augías, Museum of Modern Art/Tercer Milienio park, Bogota, 2004, photograph by Rolando Vargas © Mapa Teatro Archive

public was endowed with a vantage point from which they could see hegemonic power at work.

Visibility and audibility are preconditions for politics: seeing others *looking*—for example, the spectators at MAMBO looking at the Tercer Milenio spectators—not only spurs curiosity about what others might be looking at, but more importantly, signals the need to critically examine the functioning of power. While the loop sequence of the demolition of the last standing house in the Augías piece calls for an adequate historical narration of the imposed transformation of Santa Inés, the visibility of the Tercer Milenio construction process acted as an allegory of the need to monitor state action. Mapa Teatro's intervention drew attention to the fact that, as citizens, Bogotanos have a *right to look*—and, we may add, a *right to listen*. Only by closely looking and carefully listening where power demands that we look away and not hear may we open the

Image 6 – La limpieza de los establos de Augías, Museum of Modern Art/Tercer Milienio park, Bogota, 2004, photograph by Rolando Vargas © Mapa Teatro Archive

possibility of a heterogeneous history, one that reveals the violence, omissions and refusals of power. Such an exercise of the right to look is what makes the *C'undúa* works precursors of political action; their agency consists in the production of presence as a means of provoking further engagement and actions.

Relationality

Augías functions as an allegory of *C'undúa*'s capacity, as aesthetic event, to interrelate distinct spaces. Doreen Massey writes that space functions as "the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist, the sphere of coexisting heterogeneity."[7] Augías interconnects two spaces that are geographically separate from one another: the Tercer Milenio construction site and MAMBO's exhibition space. These sites were complemented by the virtual presence of the

endangered urban space of Santa Inés. Hence, the installation may be seen as a mediation between two (or three) spaces.

But it is more precise to say that the installation opened up a complex relational space, one in which heterogeneous spaces interacted with each other in an ordered system of references and correspondences. Consider the use of video projections. The museum contained the virtual spaces of the video projections, framed by the quadrilateral limits of the images. These limits functioned as a framing device insofar as they constituted a liminal border that not only separated the moving images from their immediate surroundings (the museum space) but also *communicated* both sites: the spectator's attention shifted from their virtual presence as neutral observers of a process taking place at the construction site to a fully embodied sense of being in the museum space. Similarly, the video footage of the demolition of the last El Cartucho house took viewers into a space that existed in a previous moment in time, while their embodied position at the construction site kept them aware of the actuality of the space in which their viewing experience occurred. Indeed, spectators attending the museum were prompted to take the journey from museum to construction site, which would expose them to the rich architectonic and social variation of the urban space between the two sites. The journey was a process of physical and symbolic distancing—and of preserving that very distance. From virtual image space to architectonic cultural space; from past space virtually recreated to actual urban space;

Image 7 – La limpieza de los establos de Augías, Museum of Modern Art/Tercer Milienio park, Bogota, 2004, photograph by Rolando Vargas © Mapa Teatro Archive

from the space of the museum installation to the on-site installation: Augías brought these heterogeneous spaces into relation with each other as an aesthetic event.

Let us turn from spatial to social relationality. The *C'undúa* project was initially funded by the Mayor's Office and the United Nations' Development Program in an effort to use art as a means of commemorating the old neighborhood. City officials wanted to place a permanent monument in the area. However, Mapa Teatro did not yield to this intention, arguing that the project should stem from a productive dialogue with the community. Mapa Teatro assembled an eclectic team of historians, anthropologists, social workers, university students, actors and artists. The year-long series of workshops they carried out with the community eventually produced the two initial works of the *C'undúa* series: Prometeo I and Prometeo II.

The first of these works took place one December evening in 2002 at the site of the recently demolished neighborhood. In this first instance, several stories told by Santa Inés's inhabitants were either enacted or recited. A significant number of people attended. Were it not for the performances—or "install-actions," as R. Abderhalden calls them—it would be unlikely that those who came from other sectors of the city would visit the no-man's land that Santa Inés had become. Neither would they have come into contact with the Santa Inés community, nor taken part with them in any sort of collaborative project. The space opened by Prometeo allowed for the construction of social relations of mutual recognition, collaboration and collective memorialization.

For Prometeo II, white candle lanterns were used to map the outlines of the formerly existing houses. The former inhabitants brought in some of their furniture and personal belongings, setting them exactly in their original resting places. Two large screens served as a backdrop. Visitors could walk through the grid as the histories of Santa Ines's inhabitants were enacted and recited by Mapa Teatro's actors, or by the former inhabitants themselves. Archival footage

Image 8 – Prometeo II, Tercer Milenio park construction site, Bogota, 2003, photograph by Fernando Cruz © Mapa Teatro Archive

Image 9 – Prometeo II, Tercer Milenio park construction site, Bogota, 2003, photograph by Fernando Cruz © Mapa Teatro Archive

of Santa Inés and of the neighborhood's inhabitants narrating their life stories was projected onto the screens. At times, the former inhabitants would mimic the images of themselves being projected onto the screens, enacting, as R. Abderhalden says, "the spectacle of themselves witnessing stories of loss."[8] At other times, they would carry out simple actions such as lighting matches while standing on top of chairs, playing cards and dancing. These actions were complemented by the interactive sound presenting a combination of music and voices recorded when the neighborhood was still upright. The event ended in an open ballroom style dance. In sum, a multidimensional assemblage of actions, images and sounds produced a complex event in which the stories of the former inhabitants of Santa Inés were at the center of the relationality.

Mapa Teatro's collaborative work with Santa Inés's inhabitants became seminal for the other *C'undúa* pieces. In Testigos, the woman making arepas literally took the stage, relating to her audience through the reenactment of her personal history. Recorridos created an analogous relation, but one that was mediated by the installation's objects: as remnants and bearers of personal history, these objects acted as surrogates of Santa Inés's inhabitants. In general, the *C'undúa* series brought into relation sectors and subjects of Bogotá society that would likely otherwise have remained separate: the community of a stigmatized, impoverished and effaced neighborhood, and individuals with the time and type of cultural background that motivates them to visit museums and engage with art.

As events, Prometeo I and II brought into relation diverse elements: the history of Santa Inés, the personal histories of the neighborhood's former inhabitants, their furnishings and personal belongings, the social imaginaries that marked off the area as prohibited and dangerous, and the former inhabitants of Santa Inés and those attending the install-actions. By interrelating these otherwise disparate objects, discourses and persons, Mapa Teatro's intervention opened up an unlikely space of encounter and recognition, of visibility and participation. For some viewers this

suggested a reaffirmation of their identities while for others it was seen as a deconstruction of stereotypes.

If, as Henri Lefebvre argues, power produces a representational space that limits and even prescribes social practices, then the production of a heterogeneous space of encounter equals the exploding of those representational mechanisms of power.[9] It is not that Bogotá's South would no longer be seen as dangerous to those who actually went there to meet and collaborate with Santa Inés's former inhabitants, or that this encounter annulled all differences and proscribed future separations. Rather, Prometeo's relational space implicated those who took part as visitors in ways that prevented stereotypical representational distancing, and that, further, encouraged engagement with the complexities and the violence of the social processes of their city.[10]

Collective subjectivity

It is not merely the case that the *C'undúa* series produced a space of encounter or contiguity of different subjects; it is also the case that this space of encounter may itself be seen as a production of subjectivity. That the subject is relational is something that we are very aware of in this day and age.[11] The subject is intersubjective, constructed through the mediation of our relations to others. But our analysis suggests that the relational character of the subject has yet another dimension: our relations to objects and places. Others, objects and places: these are the terms of the relational processes that *C'undúa* sets into motion.

The work of *C'undúa* in relation to subjectivity has two moments. First, a moment of recognition, whereby the link between the subjectivities of the former inhabitants of Santa Inés, diverse objects from their everyday lives and the physical and social space of the neighborhood becomes central. This is one aspect of the relationality that *C'undúa* constitutes, as discussed above. But, following from this first moment, there is the production of a collective subjectivity,

achieved specifically in the two Prometeo install-actions and more tangentially in the Testigos performance. In the first case, the link between subjectivity and space is explored with the mediation of the mythic narrative that informs the Prometeo pieces. In the second case, this narrative and the exploration that it mediates became a platform for the construction of a collective subjectivity, however transient and ephemeral it may have been.

Rather than seeing Mapa Teatro's use of myth as an allegorical strategy, it is more relevant to see it as a generative structure. This is what R. Abderhalden implies by highlighting the capacity of myths, which "repeat themselves like dreams, continually forming and deforming in a mobile structure that always reanimates itself," to act as generators of narratives and images.[12] Myths are narratives tensed between the repetitive nature of their retelling and the differences introduced with each reiteration. The purpose of Mapa Teatro's appropriation of myth was to spur and prompt the production of images and ideas, both from their *C'undúa* team as well as from the former inhabitants of Santa Inés participating in the creation of the artworks.

Myth's generative nature is especially salient in considering Mapa Teatro's use of the story of Prometheus. In the myth, Prometheus's punishment for stealing fire from the Gods of Olympus is eternal suffering, which comes in the form of an eagle that eternally eats away at his liver while he is chained to a rock. After 3000 years the Gods take pity on Prometheus; his savior, Heracles, must surmount a wall of liver parts and eagle excrement in order to rescue him from his bondage. In Prometheus I the myth became, as R. Abderhalden says, both "an image that corresponds to the devastated landscape of Santa Inés-El Cartucho" and "a catalyst for stories."[13] The myth became a generative structure, one through which two complex events were fashioned and effectuated.

It is worth noting that Rolf and Heidi Abderhalden followed the version of the myth written by Heiner Müller, the German playwright known for his fragmentary, open-ended scripts. In Müller's rendition,

Prometheus has become accustomed to the eagle and is not sure whether he wishes to be freed by Heracles. The reference is clear: as bad as living conditions were in El Cartucho, its inhabitants had become accustomed to them—indeed, they had molded their subjectivities in relation to the neighborhood—and were not sure they wanted to leave. Surely, Müller's text functions as an allegory of the ambivalence that many of Santa Inés's inhabitants felt about their forced departure. But more importantly, the narrative opens a space in which this aspect of the subjectivity of Santa Inés's former inhabitants is recontextualized and reconfigured through the working and creative relations between them and Mapa Teatro's team.

As R. Abderhalden says, an "experimental community" took shape, one in which memory, imagination and action were explored without following a prescriptive procedure.[14] In this context, the mythical narrative became a catalyst for experimentation in unforeseen directions. The experimental community that the project produced allowed for an exchange of stories, ideas and images. It offered a relational space for critical self-reflection and for the re-creation of personal narratives of identity and place: the Santa Inés community explored their memories and longings as they worked and exchanged stories and ideas with Mapa Teatro's team, while the latter generated performative and aesthetic ideas as they related to the community, learning about their lives and coming closer to them in the process.[15]

Subjectivity follows action. Through the experimental actions undertaken by the creative community assembled for the Prometeo project, a common group identity at once creative, transient and agential emerged. Here, action prompted what, following Sartre, we may describe as the passage from a collective—an assemblage of individuals in contiguity with each other—to a *fused group*—an assemblage of individuals oriented around a common goal emerging from within the group, whereby any individual may represent the group identity as a whole.[16] A relational space articulated around a common project prompted diverse subjects *to identify themselves*

through others, thereby transforming themselves in the process. In the Prometeo project, the formation of collective subjectivity reveals itself as the result of a process of experimentation that eroded the separations between subject positions.

Prometeo I and II emerged as the continuation of a process of social and creative exchange, as well as the opening of that process to a broader public. The performances became what anthropologists Arthur and Joan Kleinman refer to as an *enacted assemblage*, a space in which "interconnected cognitive, affective, and transpersonal processes of body-social memory come together."[17] This description, we may note, is consonant with my definition of the aesthetic event as assemblage. As aesthetic events, these performances brought together the embodied reenactment of memory of both the individuals participating and of the group as a "body-social." But further, insofar as those who attended the performances also participated in them—through their engagement with the situations being enacted before them—the performances

Image 10 – Prometeo II, Tercer Milenio park construction site, Bogota, 2003, photograph by Fernando Cruz © Mapa Teatro Archive

brought together a broad group of people who, at least temporarily, embodied a collective subjectivity.

Spatial agency

Few people in Bogotá would have denied that El Cartucho was in need of official intervention for many years. However, the way in which governmental intervention was carried out in El Cartucho and the lack of a relocation plan meant that many people who, for better or for worse, knew only the ways of life developed in that area found themselves suddenly destabilized. This destabilization took the form of deracination, displacement and the loss of means of subsistence. To lose one's space is to lose one's bearings: with the neighborhood's leveling, the former residents found themselves dislodged from the ways of life that they knew.

Michel Foucault suggests that power does not only function by direct repression and action upon individuals, but by the active and continuous modulation of the *milieu* in which populations exist: power both predisposes and limits the spaces of social interaction, the points of contact between distinct social sectors, the confluence of different social subjects and identities and the movements of individuals and groups.[18] In this sense, power seeks to foster and regulate populations insofar as they serve the purposes of production; the sectors of society that do not serve these purposes are not actively eliminated (although in Colombia they sometimes are) but passively disowned. By leveling Santa Inés, state power sought to control a population seen as both dangerous and unproductive, dispersing them throughout the city with no regard for their fate.

C'undúa, resists the operation of power through the *spatialization of agency*. We have already seen how, in the Prometeo projects, the space of the leveled neighborhood is occupied with the purpose of rendering the invisible and inaudible visible and audible, and with the purpose of producing a relational space that counters

separation, exclusion and stigmatization. As events, the two Prometeo install-actions produced an *emplacement* of Santa Inés's former inhabitants, an opening of a space from which they resisted the actions of power. Such is the spatial dimension of agency; let us look at it further in the other *C'undúa* install-action (or performance/installation), the work with which I began this article: Testigo de las ruinas.

This work was not formally extraordinary—the moving of screens on stage and the sound effects notwithstanding. Rather, what is salient about it is the fact that, as most people in the audience would have probably suspected, the woman on stage was not a trained actor but a former inhabitant of Santa Inés, whose name we would learn later as the performance unfolded: Juana María Ramírez.[19] Ramírez was the last person to leave the neighborhood when the state intervened. She performed on stage the same labor from which she made her living: making and selling hot chocolate and arepas. When I saw the performance, my initial thoughts were that Ramírez was not being allowed to be herself. It felt too scripted, too contrived. However, this impression was progressively dispelled as the performance advanced, completely disappearing when Ramírez stepped off the stage to offer arepas to the audience. In retrospect, I embrace the way in which her inclusion in the piece was carried out—after all, Ramírez was not an actor, and was in fact learning from the experience. Her very presence on stage was the first important aspect of her contribution to the piece.

Ramírez's performance serves to counterpoint Testigo's electronic elements: video projections and sophisticated lighting are sharply contrasted by her mincing of corn and by the gas powered grill. The install-action, to put it in Diana Taylor's words, "makes a street on the stage on the street."[20] As an event, Testigo constitutes a continuous process of spatial modulation. On the screens, demolition balls and bulldozers knocked and destroyed houses and streets; as this occurred, Santa Inés's former inhabitants recreated the neighborhood through their testimonies. While electronic technology is used to evince a process of destruction,

simple actions on stage and spoken words are used to convey the human experience of inhabiting the derelict neighborhood. This counterpoint serves to further underscore Ramírez's onstage presence: while the past is marked by the virtuality of the projected image, Ramírez is unobjectionably before her spectators, her actuality taking preeminence over the images of the past. *Actuality* and *virtuality*: Henri Bergson refers to the present moment as the actual, that which "feels most real to us", while the virtual is that which feels relatively "less real", memory in the case of the past, or fantasy or desire in the case of the future.[21] The actual and the virtual are not mutually exclusive; rather, they coexist in present duration, wrapping and modulating each other. The interrelation of the actual and the virtual makes the event of Testigo a complex assemblage in which different spaces coexist as they gravitate on the undeniable presence and present of Ramírez's performance.

Such is Ramírez's—and Testigo's—spatial agency: not merely the occupation of a space—stage, theatre, performance space—but the production of a space in which acting and narrating are empowering. In speaking of spatial agency, I follow Lawrence Grossberg, who argues that identities "spatialize"—their space being not only the locus of narration or action but also the emplacement and circulation of the narrating and acting agent.[22] The spatial dimension of identity is constituted by the series of emplacements from which someone occupying a given identity position may appear and be seen, speak and be heard; in short: the emplacements from which one may act and exert influence. Different identities are endowed with different spatial girth: some of them have a broad scope of action; others, a very narrow one—or, as in the case of the former inhabitants of Santa Inés, almost none at all. But, in Testigo, Ramírez does not simply yield to the annulment of the spatial dimension of her identity; rather, she occupies a new emplacement, opened up by both the install-action as an artwork and her performance as a former inhabitant of Santa Inés. Ramírez's new emplacement opened new spaces for her personal narrative, spaces in which her voice and actions resist power's intention to annul and forget. The complex event-space of

the performance/installation constitutes the spatial dimension of her agency, Ramírez being its main spatializing element insofar as her presence constitutes the most actualized dimension of the event.

Through her participation in Testigo, Ramírez both broadens her identity and shifts her subjectivity. Mapa Teatro's install-action circulates: apart from Mapa Teatro's Bogotá house, Testigo has been presented in Vienna's Wiener Festwochen, Prague's Four Days in Motion Festival, Berlin's Hebbel Theatre, Zurich's International Festival, Toronto's Aluna Theatre, Yale University's Repertory Theatre, Buenos Aires's Teatro San Martín, Mexico City's Museo de Arte Contemporáneo and the Festival Iberoamericano de Bahía, Brazil. Ramírez's presence on stage has contributed to Testigo's national and international resonance; Mapa Teatro's reputation has allowed Ramírez to circulate and reach audiences far beyond her scope as a former Santa Inés neighbor. While such travels are undeniably advantageous for Ramírez, the point is not how much she travels, but how much the space of her agency expands, how much both her identity and subjectivity *spatialize*. The spaces Ramírez reaches, the new relations she establishes, the visibility and audibility she obtains: all of these aspects contribute to her imagining of herself otherwise, to a modulation of her own representations of her place in the world. In sum, through Testigo, Ramírez replaces her old spatial identity with a new spatial dimension that henceforth informs her subjectivity.

Fifteen years after the leveling of Santa Inés and the scattering of its population, El Cartucho continues to represent in Bogotá's social imaginary an invisible border and a dangerous urban sector. The Tercer Milenio park continues to be underused and scarcely visited, although there have been official efforts to give it cultural and recreational value. The process of spatial transformation and social effacement put in place by state power has been effective in evacuating the unsightliness of the old neighborhood and in scattering its outcast population, but it has not attended to the social issues at the core of El Cartucho's emergence and lengthy existence.

What did Mapa Teatro's intervention achieve? Surely, it did not heal Bogotá's class-related social wounds. Nor did it change the predicaments in which many of the former inhabitants of Santa Inés found themselves after the state intervened, or the predicaments they were in before such an intervention. But these effects were not promised. The agency of the aesthetic does not lie in the transformation of social structures, but in *the motivation towards further agency*. Its agency must be understood in terms of the production of engagement, not in terms of its transformative effects. Visibility and audibility, relationality, the re-creation of individual and collective subjectivity: these dimensions of the *C'undúa* project function, not to transform the political, economic and social structures that produced El Cartucho, not to improve the lives of the area's former inhabitants—even though, as we have seen throughout this article, it actually did for a few of them—but to engage Bogotanos with the need to attend to the social issues that both produced El Cartucho and that were produced by the destruction of the neighborhood.

As aesthetic events, the *C'undúa* works opened a series of spaces in which such engagement was provoked. If there have not been significant transformations of Bogotá's social landscape, it is not because Mapa Teatro's project failed, but because Bogotanos have failed to follow through with the need to exert change. But this does not need be seen in a defeatist light: *C'undúa* might not have been enough, but it was an important starting point; as such, it calls for further aesthetic—and social—interventions. As Massey says, space "is always in the process of being made."[23] Speaking to this notion, *C'undúa* draws attention to the need to continue opening spaces of engagement, spaces of visibility and audibility, spaces in which both social relations and subjectivity may be reworked and recreated.

Ruben Yepes is a PhD candidate in Visual and Cultural Studies at the University of Rochester, where he obtained an MA degree in 2015. He

also holds an MA in Cultural Studies from Pontifical Javerian University (Bogota, 2010). His dissertation addresses the representation of the Colombian armed conflict in contemporary art and film. Ruben is the author of *La política del arte: cuatro casos de arte contemporáneo en Colombia* (2012) and *María José Arjona. Lo que puede un cuerpo* (2015), as well as several articles on contemporary Colombian and Latin American art, film, aesthetics, and art education.

Notes

1. César Enrique Herrera De la Hoz, *Evolución del concepto de espacio público en Bogotá desde la perspectiva de análisis de las políticas públicas 1990 – 2006, Estudio de caso: el Parque Tercer Milenio,* (Master's Thesis, Bogotá: National University, 2011), available online at: http://www.bdigital.unal.edu.co/6424/1/697012.2011.pdf

2. Diana Taylor, "Performing Ruins", *Telling Ruins in Latin America* (Ed. Vicky Unruh and Michael Lazarra, New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 2008.

3. Namely, I follow Douglas Crimp's *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), Jacques Rancière's *The Politics of Aesthetics* (London: Continuum, 2009) and Julianne Rebentisch's *The Aesthetics of Installation Art* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013).

4. This is a working concept; in no way do I lay claim here to a theory of art as event.

5. Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look.: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

6. According to Mirzoeff, visuality refers to a "specific technique of colonial and imperial practice, operating both at 'home' and 'abroad', by which power visualizes History to itself" (*The Visual Culture Reader,* New York: Routledge, 2013, xxx). Putting the specific decolonial nature of Mirzoeff's project aside, I take from his definition the broad relation implicit in it between visuality and regimes of power.

7. Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), 9.

8. R. Abderhalden, "The artist as witness" (Bogotá: Conference paper, 2006).

9. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Cambridge MA: Blackwell, 1991).

10. I have resisted analyzing the relational dimension of *C'undúa* in terms of relational art, as Rolf Abderhalden and other commentators have done. My reason for resisting Nicolas Bourriaud's label is that it too easily slips into an ideological register. I agree with Claire Bishop when she points out that relational art, at least in those artists and artworks that Bourriaud refers to, does not really constitute democratic relations, insofar as they rest too easily on an ideal of the community and subjectivity as a coherent whole, a new "totalitarianism of the social" which effaces difference. In Bourriaud's relational art, difference stays at the gallery entrance. In *C'undúa*, on the other hand, there is an evincing of difference, and it is only through hard work and ongoing collaboration—through the construction of "experimental communities" that difference is assuaged. See Bourriaud, (2002); Bishop (2004, pp. 51-79).

11. This awareness is a legacy of feminist and poststructuralist thought, which have in turn profited from the work of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. Stuart Hall synthesizes this trajectory in a well-known essay, "Who Needs Identity?" (1996).

12. R. Abderhalden, "The artist as witness".

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. I want to comment on the title of the fourth work in the *C'undúa* series: "The Cleansing of the Augian Stables" refers to one of the twelve labors of Hercules. As the legend goes, Augeas, King of Elis, owned the single greatest amount of cattle in the Peloponnesus. The cattle's stables had not been cleaned in over thirty years; but Eurystheus, in whose service Hercules labored, demanded that he complete the task in just one day. This labor was intended to humiliate him and to be impossible, as the livestock ate in great quantities and therefore produced an enormous amount of dung. However, Hercules succeeded by changing the course of two rivers, whose waters he used to wash down the stables. Considering this a foul move, neither Augeas nor Eurystheus acknowledged the completion of the task. We could refer to this use of the Greek myth in terms of allegory, identifying Hercules's supernatural power with the reckless power of the government as it wiped out the Santa Inés neighborhood, perhaps identifying the divine cattle with the area's former inhabitants. Or perhaps state power is to be identified with Augeas and Eurystheus, while the Mapa Teatro team takes the traits of Hercules, in their astute outwitting of a government that proposed what may be seen as the

humiliating task of memorializing a process of urban effacement. But this sort of allegorical reading leads to dead ends: it is not completely clear who is identified with whom, and the traits of the characters and figures in the story cannot be transposed without contradiction.

16. Jean Paul Sartre, "The Fused Group", *Critique of Dialectical Reason,* Book 2 (London: Verso, 2006).

17. Karen Till, "'Greening' the City? Revisions of Sustainability in Bogotá" (Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, 2009).

18. Michel Foucault, "Class of January 11, 1978", *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978* (Oxford: Macmillan, 2009).

19. For the purpose of writing this article, I have revisited the performance/ installation through a video recording, courtesy of R. Abderhalden.

20. Diana Taylor, "Performing Ruins".

21. Henri Bergson, "Chapter 1: The Intensity of Psychic States", *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (New York: Dover, 2001).

22. Lawrence Grossberg, "Identity and Cultural Studies: Is That All There Is?", in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage, 1996).

23. Doreen Massey, *For Space*, 9.

Works Cited

Abderhalden, Rolf. "The artist as witness", Bogotá: Conference paper, 2006. Available online at: http://hemisphericinstitute.org/journal/4.2/eng/artist_presentation/mapateatro/mapa_artist.html. Accessed 04/02/2014.

Bergson, Henri. "Chapter 1: The Intensity of Psychic States", *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, New York: Dover, 2001.

Bishop, Claire. "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", *October*, no. 110, 2004: 51-79.

Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics,* Paris: Presses du reel, 2002.

Crimp, Douglas. *On the Museum's Ruins*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995.

Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix. *A Thousand Plateaus.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

Foucault, Michel, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978,* Oxford: Macmillan, 2009.

Grossberg, Lawrence. "Identity and Cultural Studies: Is That All There Is?" In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, London: Sage, 1996.

Hall, Stuart. "Who Needs Identity?", *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, London: Sage, 1996.

Heidegger, Martin. *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning).* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Heidegger, Martin. "The Origin of the Work of Art", *Poetry, Language and Thought,* New York: Harper and Row, 1971.

Herrera de la Hoz, César Enrique. *Evolución del concepto de espacio público en Bogotá desde la perspectiva de análisis de las políticas públicas 1990 – 2006. Estudio de caso: el Parque Tercer Milenio,* Master's thesis, Bogotá: National University, 2011.

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Cambridge MA: Blackwell, 1991.

Massey, Doreen. *For Space.* London: Sage, 2005.

Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *The Visual Culture Reader.* New York: Routledge, 2013.

Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics.* London: Continuum, 2009.

Rebentisch, Julianne. *The Aesthetics of Installation Art.* Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013.

Sartre, Jean Paul. *Critique of Dialectical Reason,* Book 2, London: Verso, 2006.

Taylor, Diana. "Performing Ruins", *Telling Ruins in Latin America,* eds. Vicky Unruh and Michael Lazarra, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Till, Karen. "'Greening' the City? Re-visions of Sustainability in Bogotá", New York: Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, 2009.

FIELD
A JOURNAL OF SOCIALLY-ENGAGED ART CRITICISM

An Interview with Wu Mali

Zheng Bo

Image 1 – Wu Mali, 2015, photographed by Wu Yi-Ping

Among contemporary Chinese speaking societies, Taiwan has the most vibrant scene of socially engaged art. It has been energized by a few historical forces: Taiwan went through a relative thorough democratic transition in the 1980s, when the idea of citizen participation took root; in the 1990s, the government responded to civil society demands and formulated policies such as "Integrated Community Building" and "Community Cultural Development," enabling artists to go into communities to create works with official support; and as its economy becomes increasingly post-industrial, the public in Taiwan is paying more attention to local, tangible, everyday issues.

Wu Mali (born 1957) is the "godmother" of Taiwan's socially engaged art. Since the 1990s she has produced a series of highly influential projects, among which, Art as Environment—A Cultural Action at the Plum Tree Creek *(jointly produced with Bamboo Curtain Studio) won the Taishin Arts Award in 2013, the most prestigious art prize in Taiwan. Parallel to her practice, she led the translation of two important texts, Suzanne Lacy's* Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art *and Grant Kester's* Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*, into Chinese. In 2007, she organized the landmark conference* "Art and Public Sphere: Working in Community"*—and later edited a volume of the same title—to unite local practitioners, theorists, and officials. She is a dedicated teacher, and now heads the Graduate Institute of Interdisciplinary Art at National Kaohsiung Normal University. Recently she has also been active in building regional connections; in 2014 she curated a large exhibition titled* Art as Social Interaction*, showcasing socially engaged projects of 30 artists and groups from Taiwan and Hong Kong.*

ZB: You majored in literature in college, and went on to study sculpture at Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in the 1980s. What made you move from creating art objects to producing socially engaged projects?

WM: After I returned to Taiwan from Germany in 1985 my first publicly exhibited work was an installation made of paper, titled *Time Space*. I covered the entire room with newspaper. It was the turbulent moment before the lifting of martial law, and some people interpreted my work as a criticism of the media. Though social criticism was not my intention, I came to the realization that even formal experiments already contain some social critique. This pushed me to reexamine the established practices of art making. What art academies taught—the investigation of formal aesthetics—could not connect with what was happening outside. I saw a huge gap between the art being produced and the ground-shifting social movements in Taiwan that were criticizing the government and the international political order. So I moved away from formal aesthetics to look for connections between art and society. In the following decade, I treated art making as a form of social critique.

In 1997 I interviewed female workers in clothing factories, and woven their stories into a work titled *Stories of Women from Hsin-Chuang*. My exhibition was well received, but it did not provide any real help to these female workers. I was confronted with the ethical question: what is the goal of so-called "critical art" or "political art" in general? Is it to catalyze change by focusing the public's attention on some social issue? Or to use social issues as raw materials for art production, so I could accumulate fame as an artist? Different artists have different needs and desires. Some make art to work out personal problems, some to materialize their visual impulses. I am not this kind of artist. I like to observe life and find reasons, to make problems visible and to search for transformative potentials.

From 2000 to 2004, I worked with Taipei Awakening Association (TAA) to complete three art projects, together titled *Awakening from Your Skin*. I organized "Fun Fabric Workshops," guiding the women to do some self-searching before they developed their own works using fabrics. Their individual works revealed some collective concerns. Through this process of making fabric crafts, the participants realized that they share similar life experiences, and the workshop became a medium of mutual support. TAA activists were

surprised by the results of the workshops. They did not anticipate that art could accomplish what they had long deemed difficult, i.e. to introduce feminist thinking to the grass roots. The activists had been pushing for "hard" tactics like street protest and lobbying, ideas quite alien to ordinary women. In contrast, art was more affective and more accessible. The participants felt encouraged and supported by each other, and gradually built up self-esteem and agency. Women who used to be silent became quite expressive, speaking for themselves and sympathizing with others. It was a process of empowerment.

Image 2 – Awakening from Your Skin (fabric workshop, 2003)

ZB: Situating social practice within an existing social movement and collaborating with existing organizations is indeed an effective strategy. Artist can bring fresh ideas to the social movement; the artist's work is also more likely to generate concrete results in a relatively short time frame. However, it is not always possible to embed socially engaged art in an existing social movement;

sometimes we are working in a field without any prior movement; we have to initiate one. In 2006 you worked with the Cultural Affairs Bureau in Chiayi County to organize *Art as Environment—A Cultural Action along the Tropic of Cancer*. You placed seventeen artists in ten remote villages. These artists had to start from zero. There were no NGOs in these rural communities to provide support. Did this project lead to any immediate result?

WM: Let me give you a specific example. Taihe Village is famous for Oolong tea. Taihe residents are experts in growing tea, but they did not care so much about art and design, the aesthetics of tea utensils and teahouses. In 2006 I arranged for Tsai Chiang-Lung, a ceramic artist, to go to Taihe, with the hope that he and the villagers would learn from each other. Within a year, the villagers learned to make teapots, and embraced the idea of tea culture. On the other hand, the artist got new inspirations from this exchange. The villagers drew Tsai's attention to the nuances of taste when different types of tea were brewed in different kinds of pots. This prompted Tsai to investigate the best match between tea leaf and pot clay. It became one of his research projects. What change might unfold when an artist goes into a community is not entirely predictable. In my preliminary research I learned that the tea industry in Taihe was not sustainable. Tsai is not only a ceramic artist but also someone deeply concerned with ecological issues—he is the head of Society of Wilderness in Chiayi. So I asked him to go to Taihe, with the hope that his environmental ideas would influence local people. Yet nothing happened in the first two years. In 2009 Typhoon Morakot struck Taiwan. It caused serious landslides and destroyed most of the tea plantations in Taihe. The younger generation in the village started to think about sustainability. This then gave Tsai the opportunity to bring up ecological issues with the community.

After the typhoon, one of Tsai's teachers in graduate school, Chen Cheng-che, went with Tsai to help with reconstruction in Taihe. Chen is an expert in bamboo architecture. He discovered that an abandoned pigpen in the village was actually built with precious Formosan cypress from Ali Mountain. He tidied up the pigpen and

turned it into a teahouse full of Zen spirit. Young people in the village were very much inspired and started building their own teahouses. When I placed Tsai in Taihe in 2006, it was purely an idealistic experiment. To my surprise, chance allowed significant changes to materialize, both for local folks and for the artist. In many cases, socially engaged art needs chance. You cannot know for certain what will grow up tomorrow from the seed you plant today. *A Cultural Action along the Tropic of Cancer* directly and indirectly led many artists to enter communities. Subsequently, community-based artist residency has become an important cultural policy adopted by various levels of government.

ZB: Taiwan is no longer in the phase of rapid industrial expansion. A lot of factories have relocated to Mainland China. People in Taiwan are paying more attention to their relationship with nature. For more than a decade you have been working on projects related to land and water. In 2011 you and Bamboo Curtain Studio initiated the project, *Art as Environment—A Cultural Action at the Plum Tree Creek*. This massive endeavor included community mobilization, pedagogical programs in primary and secondary schools, dance, theatre and other events. In your words, it was to "glue together fragmented land and divided knowledge so that people can rediscover and reimagine the local." This "cultural action" began with a series of breakfast gatherings. Why did you choose food as the starting point of community mobilization?

WM: Zhuwei, the site of this project, is in Taipei's northern suburb. The community borders Datun National Park. The mountainous terrain made it difficult for real estate development, so a lot of farmland has been saved despite the pressure of urban expansion. Some people who do not own land are also attracted by the physical, self-sustaining lifestyle of farming and rent land to grow crops. Plum Tree Creek winds through Zhuwei. We wanted to use food to attract people to action. For one year, we organized a breakfast party every month, presenting innovative cuisine made from ingredients-of-the-month. At each gathering a specific topic would be discussed. Gradually a comprehensive understanding of

the creek emerged. The relaxing conversations allowed us to grasp the texture of the land and the lineage of local culture, and unite local residents who cared about environmental issues.

In Taiwan, many recent art projects and social movements, in both urban and rural areas, are trying to refocus people's attention on land, water and nature. Taiwan has a long agricultural tradition; its influence remains strong. Many retired folks in Zhuwei actually grew up in the countryside, so they were quite experienced in farming. Now they do it as a form of exercise, or for a healthy diet. To re-establish a lifestyle close to nature is a good starting point to re-connect art with life.

ZB: How was the project funded?

WM: At the beginning we did not have any financial support. It was just a group of enthusiasts working together. Later we received a curatorial grant from the National Culture and Arts Foundation, so we launched the project formally. More important than money was the mobilization of community members. Each person in the

Image 3 – A Cultural Action at the Plum Tree Creek (breakfast gatherings, 2011)

community represents a certain kind of resource. The breakfast gatherings were in fact a process of learning about the community, getting people out, and gradually linking up people's resources. So our main focus was to think carefully how resources in the community can be integrated, rather than applying for funding. Our project, *A Cultural Action at the Plum Tree Creek*, lasted from 2010 to 2012, and received a lot of attention from the art world. In 2013 it won the Taishin Arts Award; we were given a prize of NT $1,000,000 (about USD $30,000). We set up a trust with this money to enable future artists-in-residence at Bamboo Curtain Studio to continue making socially engaged works along Plum Tree Creek.

ZB: In describing your work, you frequently use the word "chance." Does it mean to wait for the right moment in the right place, as described in traditional Chinese wisdom?

WM: Chance does not mean passively waiting for things to happen. The key to socially engaged practice is to continue "weaving." As mentioned earlier, everyone holds some resources. Seemingly insignificant skills like writing, cooking and woodworking, when integrated, could become a remarkable force. The force will get bigger when more friends come along. In this constant weaving, something is bound to emerge. The process is dynamic, yet unpredictable.

ZB: The fabric workshops and breakfast gatherings have one thing in common: they both emphasize the return to everyday life; they both use an amiable form to bring community together. Some critics might say, this relatively "soft" approach does not touch on harsher, more fundamental problems, and lacks criticality or antagonism. How would you respond to such criticism?

WM: This way of seeing things is too simplistic. Let me give you an example from the fabric workshops. One of the participants was a full-time housewife. Previously, when her husband suddenly called to inform her that he could not come home for dinner because of some engagement at work, she would become irritated, and the couple argued a lot. After she started attending the fabric

workshops, instead of getting angry, she felt happy that her husband was not coming home for dinner, because she did not need to stop her craftwork. Without her own working space, she did all of the craftwork in the kitchen. The point is, her own change startled her. It made her nervous. So she brought this up in the workshop to discuss with other women. In one way or another the women in the fabric workshops rediscovered their own needs, their own purposes of life, and their own values. The process was rich in details and cannot be summed up by theories. The reality is, many social changes take place in life's crumbs and scraps; they remain beyond notice if we only talk about critical theory in abstraction.

For another example, when villagers in Taihe started to appreciate tea culture, some critics may claim that they are adopting a petit-bourgeois mindset. But what they are doing is entirely different: they do not depend on capitalist operations of market, consumption, and profit making. They are willing to forgo monoculture, willing to keep some weeds and wild flowers. They even make tea out of them. This is a huge change. In the 1990s my art making had an antagonistic, critical flavor; in the recent decade and half, the core of my practice is to locate the problem and then search for possibilities to turn things around.

ZB: To effect long-term change, socially engaged practices and social movements need to come together in alliance.

WM: Social practice is often only the beginning. It needs to be followed by the sustained efforts of social movement organizations and communities. Our work is never restricted to the so-called art world. We cooperate with local organizations to promote citizen education, to build mechanisms to strengthen civil society. For example, in 2006 I initiated the project *By the River, On the River, Of the River—Tracing Danshui River* with several community colleges in New Taipei City. As an art project, it was declarative. But after it ended, the community colleges have all continued working on the issue. In *A Cultural Action at the Plum Tree Creek*, a significant part of our work was in fact to develop educational programs with

primary and secondary schools. Inspired by our proposal to search for the legendary tree plum, Chen Chien-Hsing, a teacher at Zhuwei Elementary School, wrote a class plan to help students investigate Zhuwei's ecological history. Bamboo Curtain Studio, my partner in the Plum Tree Creek project, is a respected local organization. They have carried on the work after I left.

The Plum Tree Creek project generated visible changes. New Taipei City government started to pay more attention to this waterway, and is now working on a new landscape plan. Previously they never discussed policy plans with local residents; now they send the plans to us, and we then, through Bamboo Curtain Studio, distribute the plans in the community. A platform for dialogue has been established.

ZB: Having translated two important English texts, you are quite familiar with socially engaged practice in the West. In your opinion, how is Taiwan's socially engaged art different from the way it is practiced in the West?

WM: Let me say a few words about political economy first. For a long time Taiwan was an agricultural society. After WWII, it became the manufacturing base for American and Japanese corporations. Factories proliferated and Taiwan placed itself at the back end of global capitalism, similar to the situation in Mainland China today. Since Mainland China started to open up in the late 1970s, many factories have moved out of Taiwan to China. Taiwan lost its competitiveness, and the economy has stalled in recent years. In short, within the system of global capitalism, Taiwan occupies a very different place from that of Europe and North America. The history of art is also different. Traditionally, art in Taiwan was very much intertwined with folk religion and quotidian practice.

When Japan colonized Taiwan, so-called "modern art" education was introduced. What the Japanese brought was "second-hand" modern art, for example, French impressionism which they adored. In 1949, when the Nationalist government fled to Taiwan, they came with court paintings and calligraphies—classical, elite art. At the same

time, the American military personnel stationed in Taiwan became the main buyers of modern art, propelling the rise of the gallery industry. Painting groups like May Society and Oriental Society, catering to American taste, rode the wave of abstract expressionism and remained influential from 1950s till the early 1970s.

For our generation, the desire to return art to the fertile ground of life resurged. We want to redefine the value and meaning of art. This entails a process of relearning. In 2006 when I organized *A Cultural Action along the Tropic of Cancer*, we were actually building a learning artistic community. Artists in Taiwan have a different task at hand: art is not equal to object production; Taiwan does not possess the conditions for an art capital market to circulate. We cannot depend on the constant reinvention of "the avant-garde" to sustain art. One way for art to survive in Taiwan, and for it to have a real purpose, is to return to everyday life to search for possibilities, to let art become an indispensible part of life.

ZB: This idea to re-acquaint oneself with folk life, with land and water, should not slide into a kind of nostalgic conservatism, right?

WM: You could say that Taiwan in the 1970s was dominated by strong nativist sentiment. It was caused by the despair people experienced in the industrialization process, when traditional values were quickly vanishing. Today, after extensive reflection on the dialect of the local, after we have gained enough confidence, discussions of the local are no longer just nostalgic, but rather inquisitive and forward-looking. We are celebrating Taiwan's multiplicity. Taiwan has a number of aboriginal communities with very different cultures. This diversity was further enriched by cultural practices introduced during Qing Dynasty, the Japanese colonization, and later the Nationalist migration, and the American influence. There are lots of difficult questions waiting for us in layers of history. Previously we could pretend to not see them because we lived in a totalitarian system. After the democratic transition, these questions are slowly being teased out with new tools of knowledge

production. We now recognize, and embrace, Taiwan's historical and cultural complexities.

ZB: While it is important to be grounded in the local, to address specific local concerns, how should we link the local with the international?

WM: Local and international issues are always interconnected. The form of our lifeworld is shaped by various intricately linked local and global factors. For example, when we looked into the cause of Plum Tree Creek's pollution, we discovered that upstream pig farmers released sewage into the creek, and downstream municipal wastewater was not properly managed. All these point to the bigger, global problem of urban expansion. I do not think that we should get rid of small pig farms on the edge of the city; compared to large meat companies, they are much more environmental. What we should do is to help these individual farmers find ways to make the process more sanitary. The local government wants to treat sewage in a centralized facility and then discharge the water into the ocean. The problem is, when wastewater is sent to the ocean, not to the creek, the creek will simply dry up. Farmers in the region

Image 4 – Student presentation, 2012

will not be able to water their land. Our work is to excavate the complex issues underlying the specific problems of this small creek, including the way we think about development, the way we imagine land. A single art action will not be able to resolve the predicament, but it can energize more people to start thinking about it. Social change always starts with alternative social imaginaries.

ZB: In addition to your own practice, you are also dedicated to educating and supporting a new generation of practitioners. How are they different?

WM: Previously artists often went into communities with the intent to collect materials, both physical and social, but their ultimate goal was always to exhibit artworks, or documents of art projects, in museums. Nowadays, the younger generation has come to realize that museum opportunities are few and far between; they are no longer fixated on getting validated by elite institutions. They move into communities to work and to live: they convert disused structures into studios, create conversations with local people, local spaces, and local histories, and become committed community members. They are motivated by different reasons, and pick up different identities. Some go in with a creative industry mindset, searching for business opportunities; some want to experiment with alternative social and economic models, practicing "social design." Many young people have chosen to move to the countryside not for artistic reasons, but simply because they do not want to bear the economic pressure of living in urban centers. Once they are in the countryside, the problems they encounter would inevitably push them to start thinking about alternative ways to design their individual and communal lives.

ZB: This term you just used—social design—sounds promising. Design suggests practicality, while allowing some space for imagination. If the younger generation no longer foreground their artist identity, no longer emphasize that they are making art, if they can receive support from multiple fields and channel different forms

of social energy, it is perhaps time for the notion of socially engaged art to recede from view.

Wu Mali was born in Taipei and lives and works in Kaohsiung and Taipei. For the past three decades, she has been the leading artist and theorist on community-based public art practice in Taiwan. More recently, her work has taken an eco-feminist turn in response to the impact of globalization. In 2013 the *Plum Tree Creek* project won the Taishin Visual Arts Award. Her artworks have been exhibited at the Venice Biennale, Taipei Biennial, Asian Pacific Triennial, and Fukuoka Asian Art Triennial. Currently she teaches at the Graduate Institute of Interdisciplinary Art, National Kaohsiung Normal University, Taiwan.

Zheng Bo is FIELD's Corresponding Editor for China. His essays on Chinese socially engaged art have been published in multiple journals and books (most recently in *Global Activism: Art and Conflict in the 21st Century*, MIT Press, 2015) and he is an editorial board member of the *Journal of Chinese Contemporary Art*. Currently he is building an online database and a MOOC, both on Chinese socially engaged art. Zheng currently teaches at the School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong, and is an affiliated member of the Institute of Contemporary Art and Social Thought at China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, China.

This interview was partially supported by a grant from the Research Grants Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China [Project No 21403014].

Huang Chen helped with the transcription and translation of this interview. She is a researcher on the "Socially Engaged Art in Contemporary China" project at the City University of Hong Kong.

FIELD
A JOURNAL OF SOCIALLY-ENGAGED ART CRITICISM

Activism vs. Antagonism: Socially Engaged Art from Bourriaud to Bishop and Beyond

Jason Miller

Where once the socio-political clout of art seemed hemmed in by fashionable theories of aesthetic formalism, today's artist is engaged in a wide variety of practices, many of them bearing little resemblance to traditional artistic mediums. Where once the disenchanted modernist stood ready to safeguard the aesthetic from the corrupting encroachments of a market-driven culture industry, today's artist is all too eager to venture deeply into the waters of political activism, social engagement, and public dialogue. And, where the critic's purview was once limited to those objects designated as art by the sanctioned space of the museum or the gallery, today's critic must contend with the proposition that art is principally an *activity*, taking the form of shared meals, literacy workshops, community gardens and the like. Accordingly, this shift in contemporary art has led many critics to ask, in one form or another: Where is the art? How do I interpret and evaluate this activity *as art*?

The concept of "relational aesthetics," introduced in Nicolas Bourriaud's eponymously titled book, was an early and influential attempt to theorize the so-called "social turn" in artistic practices.[1] In this brief but ambitious exposition, Bourriaud's account of relational aesthetics was both descriptive, responding to the proliferation

of artworks in the 1990s that sought to enable various forms of social relations, as well as prescriptive, advocating an expanded conception of the artwork beyond the largely commercialized, object-centered ontology of art that preceded it. Yet, while the scope of artistic practices has in the meantime expanded to include "participatory," "activist," "post-production," "community-based," or "dialogical," art, philosophically there remains both considerable confusion about, as well as a dominant resistance to, what we might broadly refer to as "socially engaged" art.

A commonly accepted narrative among art world literati is that this "arty party" (as Hal Foster's notoriously dubbed it) came to a close when art criticism arrived on the scene to shed some sobering light on relational aesthetics' uncritical valorization of social participation in art.[2] Standing at the light switch is Claire Bishop, who argues that the expansion of relational art is all well and good except that, in Bourriaud's account, anyway, "the *quality* of the relationships in relational aesthetics' are never examined or called into question."[3] Notably, Bishop does not address the (already questionable) ontology of relational aesthetics itself. Instead, she seizes on the normative deficiency of Bourriaud's account: it doesn't tell us how to evaluate such relations *as art*.

Although the work of artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija, Félix González-Torres, Gabriel Orozco, Pierre Huyghe, Liam Gillick, Maurizio Cattelan and numerous others has largely maintained, if not pronounced, its character as relational or socially-engaged art, this critique—call it the *normative critique*—has given way to an alternative conception of "relation antagonism," which champions disruption and confrontation as aesthetic ideals. My aim here is not to discount the significance of aesthetic antagonism, but to show that it is no less subject to normative critique. Granting Bishop's concern that socially engaged art "has become largely exempt from art criticism," we can likewise insist that antagonistic art not exempt itself from social and ethical criticism, and that the aesthetic is inextricably, even if problematically, bound up with the ethical. Nor is my aim to defend Bourriaud's account of relational

aesthetics (indeed, I have my own reservations about it). Instead, I wish to defend more generally a conception of socially-engaged art in which the complex interface of sociality, politics, ethics, and aesthetics serves as a catalyst, rather than an obstacle, to the critical evaluation of art.

Relational Aesthetics in Detail

The ontological claim of relational aesthetics seeks, above all, to expand the definitional limits of art beyond the material object to include the set of human relations occasioned by the production and reception of art. Its "theoretical horizon," as Bourriaud puts it in characteristically opaque prose, is "the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space."[4] Instead of a singular, discrete object, the work of art is conceived as "a bundle of relations with the world, giving rise to other relations, and so on and so forth, ad infinitum."[5] Thus, when Rirkrit Tiravanija sets up a pop-up kitchen at the Venice Biennale, or when Félix González-Torres invites viewers to take from a pile of candy in the corner of a gallery, we are being asked to consider the work of art, not as the dish served up or the piece of candy, but as the various modes of participation, interaction, exchange and relations that such work entails. According to Bourriaud, in such instances we are to ask: "does this work permit me to enter into dialogue? Could I exist, and how, in the space it defines?"[6]

On the one hand, Bourriaud situates relational aesthetics within the conceptual lineage of Fluxus, Dadaism, and Situationism. Appealing specifically to the emergence of "happenings" or "situations," of the 1960s, Bourriaud posits relational art as the inheritor of the collectivist, anti-consumer ethos of an earlier avant-garde. So too does Bourriaud identify relational aesthetics with a strand of modernism that rejects the notion of aesthetic autonomy in favor of a Marxist-styled critique of social conditions, where the aim is

to collapse the bourgeois distinction between "pure" and "political" art.[7] Expanding on Marx's concept of a "social interstice," he situates the relational work of art in the liminal space between aesthetics and politics, where the possibility for new forms of interaction and engagement can begin develop. In this respect, Bourriaud carries forth the Marxist legacy of production aesthetics that extends from Walter Benjamin to Roland Barthes to Terry Eagleton. Moreover, far from signaling a radical break from the discourse of modernism, the emergence of relational art is taken as testimony that modernity "is not dead". Provided we understand "modern" to imply "a soft spot for aesthetic experience and adventurous thinking," relational aesthetics can be interpreted as the latest manifestation of the modernist appeal to experimental artistic processes as the principal point of resistance to the commodity-driven politics of the culture industry[8].

On the other hand, Bourriaud insists that relational aesthetics "is not the revival of any movement, nor is it the comeback of any style."[9] Allowing that intersubjectivity and interaction have undoubtedly informed various avant-garde practices, he nevertheless maintains that the present generation of relational artists treats these, not as "fashionable theoretical gadgets" nor as "additives (alibis) of a traditional artistic practice," but rather as "the main informers of their activity."[10] Further, Bourriaud maintains that relational art is uniquely positioned, both historically and conceptually, to avoid both the naïve utopianism of early avant-gardist art as well as the entrenched pessimism of the post-Duchampian anti-aesthetic. In the first place, the relations are primarily *aesthetic*: they offer open-ended opportunities for exchange rather than prescriptive formulae aimed at concrete social reform. This lends some clarity to the seemingly counterintuitive claim that relational aesthetics does not represent a theory of art, but rather a theory of *form*, insofar as "form" is defined in terms of the human encounters elicited by the work. By the same token, these aesthetic relations privilege the construction of shared experience over the deconstructivist strategy that reduces all forms of experience to semblance and

spectacle.[11] Thus Bourriaud touts relational aesthetics as a "much-awaited alternative to the depressive, authoritarian, and reactionary thinking which, in France at least, passes for art theory in the form of 'common sense' rediscovered".[12] It is a modernist-Marxist aesthetics with a twist of optimism.

The Normative Critiques of Relational Aesthetics

It is important to approach *Relational Aesthetics*, not as a full-throated theory of relational art, but rather as a curatorial vignette of emerging participatory art practices that Bourriaud sought to showcase in his 1996 exhibition *Traffic*, at the CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux. As such, even sympathetic readers are right to note its rather cursory analysis of a complex global trend evident in art of the 1990s. As Grant Kester observes, "While Bourriaud's writing is compelling, it is highly schematic. Further, he provides few substantive readings of specific projects. As a result, it is difficult to determine what, precisely, constitutes the aesthetic content of a given relational work."[13]

There are also unresolved conceptual difficulties with Bourriaud's analysis, beginning with his core ontological claim that the relational work of art *just is* the set of social relations produced by the work. If the work of art is identical to its emergent properties, (i.e. the relations produced) what is the work *itself*? What is the thing that produces these relations? Take any one of the works from Félix Gonzélez-Torres' *Untitled* series, for example: If the work of art consists in the act of participation itself—the *taking* of the candy—then what is the status of the pile of candy in the gallery corner? Of any individual piece of candy? And how are we to characterize these relations aesthetically? What about them allows us to distinguish art from non-art?

Critics are right, however, to leave aside the rather sterile definitional issues in Bourriaud's thesis and focus instead on the more interesting difficulty of evaluating relational art. After all,

how exactly are we to evaluate the aesthetic success or failure of a pile of candy in a gallery? By the degree of participation? The more candy taken from the pile, the better the art? Seen in this light, there is a point to Foster's glib trivialization of relational aesthetics, since if "everything seems to be happy interactivity," it seems there is no *aesthetic* basis by which to evaluate relational art.[14] At any rate, Claire Bishop's more substantial and sustained critique of relational aesthetics is also motivated by this concern. "Bourriaud," she writes, "wants to equate aesthetic judgment with an ethicopolitical judgment of the relationships produced by a work of art. But how do we measure or compare these relationships?"[15] Even granting Bourriaud's descriptive account of the gestalt switch from production to participation discernible among a particular group of artists, it fails to address any kind of criteria for evaluating these works. "If relational art produces human relations," Bishop rightly points out, "then the next logical question to ask is what types of relations are being produced, for whom, and why?"[16]

The normative critique operates on the common sense assumption that not all relations are worth celebrating, aesthetically or otherwise. It is one thing to champion relationality as a conceptual tool for making sense of art works that don't necessarily seem like art work: a hammock slung in the MoMA garden, storytelling in a public square in Copenhagen, mock weddings, recorded interviews, televised game shows, literacy workshops, or even chickens getting drunk on whiskey. But it is quite another to praise relationality as a good in itself, given that exploitation, humiliation, and physical or psychological abuse are also human relations, but presumably not the sort that relational artists want to endorse or enable. So it turns out we can't simply collapse the ethical and the aesthetic under the rubric of "relational" art. The qualitative nature of the relation must in some sense matter to the aesthetic value of the work. It also matters who is involved with or affected by relational art. If it happens that the only community fostered by Tiravanija's work is, as Bishop alleges, comprised of art world insiders who "have

something in common," then this surely is relevant to the quality of his work.[17]

Relational Antagonism

As we've seen, Bishop's normative critique identifies a key deficiency in Bourriaud's account of relational aesthetics. However, in shifting from this critique to her own account of socially-engaged art, Bishop collapses an important distinction between the empirical claim (that Bourriaud does not in fact anticipate relevant evaluative concerns) and the conceptual claim (that relational aesthetics lacks the theoretical resources to meet this objection). Acknowledging this lacuna in the theory of relational aesthetics does not commit us to abandoning the theory altogether, unless Bishop can show that the shortcoming is fundamental to the theory itself. However, this is not her tactic. Instead, she leverages the critique of relational aesthetics as a pivot point to her own alternative account of socially engaged art: *aesthetic antagonism*. The logic of her argument is roughly this: given the absence of any aesthetic criteria for evaluating relational art, a competing theory which champions aesthetic strategies of dissonance, subversion, disruption, is the de facto more theoretically viable alternative.

But how exactly does the proposed account of relational antagonism escape the normative critique? For Bishop and other advocates of aesthetic antagonism, it is a more authentic commitment to the "open-endedness" of their works, a tribute to what Jacques Rancière terms the "emancipated spectator."[18] Perhaps this too easily absolves the artist of the ethical implications of his or her work. But in shifting away from the ethical turn in art, does the proposed alternative too easily inscribe the evaluation of the work within the familiar domain of the aesthetic? Bishop has a point that "good intentions should not render [relational] art immune to critical analysis." [19] But nor should the consequences of

antagonism be impervious to ethical analysis simply because we are dealing with works of art.

Among Bishop's preferred artist-provocateurs are contemporary artists Santiago Sierra and Thomas Hirschhorn. Sierra's performative works are in some sense interactive, but they are predicated on fundamental inequalities between artist, performer, and spectator. Indeed, any ideals of dialogue and democratic participation are conspicuously cast aside in these works, highlighting instead the crudely exploitive exchange relations between Sierra and the workers whom he pays to carry out dehumanizing tasks, as indicated in the aptly-titled performances: *160cm Line Tattooed on Four People* (2000); *Workers Paid to Remain inside Cardboard Boxes* (1996-98); *A person Paid for 360 Continuous Working Hours* (2000); and (more charming still) *Ten People Paid to Masturbate* (2000).

For Bishop, the pronounced antagonism of Sierra's work illustrates precisely the fallacy of sacralizing relationality as a good in itself. His art intends to drive home the reality that actual human relations are often exploitive and dehumanizing. It purports to lift the fog, as it were, from the glassy-eyed utopianism of relational aesthetics and awaken us to what's really going on. In contrast to Tiravanija's happy soup kitchen, Sierra is there to offer the sobering reminder "that there's no such thing as a free meal: everything and everyone has a price."[20] Relational antagonism, then, stakes a claim about what constitutes the appropriate aesthetic response to such social ills. Rather than constructing alternative modes of discourse and engagement, Sierra's strategy is to reproduce these ills as a spectacle that demands a critical reckoning. In so doing, aesthetic antagonism claims to deliver us from naïve interventionism to heightened critical awareness, from utopian idealism to an "ethnographic realism," wherein—as Bishop explains—the outcome of Sierra's actions "forms an indexical trace of the economic and social reality of the place in which he works."[21]

Clearly, such claims are heavily freighted with their own normative assumptions. Sierra's work does not transcend ethics, but rather

carries the (implicit) moral injunction toward critical awareness. Indeed, art that evokes "sensations of unease and discomfort rather than belonging" has aesthetic value only in relation to the presumed ethical value of raising consciousness by means of these sensations. Likewise, the aesthetic preference for art that "acknowledges the impossibility of a 'microtopia' and instead *sustains* a tension among viewers, participants, and context," reflects a normative judgment about the ethical merits of antagonism over consensus.[22] It is important to see, then, that Bishop's attempt to reaffirm the aesthetic in socially engaged art does not imply that the aesthetic trumps the ethical, but rather that a second-order ethical imperative for critical awareness trumps any first-order ethical concerns about the nature of aesthetic relations. It is on this assumption that the apparent ethical violations enacted in Sierra's work are defended in the name of art. Aesthetically rendered exploitation is presumed to be not only qualitatively distinct from exploitation as such, but ethically privileged, insofar as it is in the bigger business of raising awareness via artistic provocation.

But let us consider the normative force behind these claims. It is derived, in large part, from Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's influential concept of political "antagonism" articulated in their 1985 publication *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. It is an ambitious attempt to rectify the failed leftist strategies of social reform through the poststructuralist theory of radical democracy. This approach signals an explicit break with Habermas' discourse of "consensus" as the regulative principle of deliberative democracy. Difference (i.e. lack of consensus), they argue, is a constitutive feature of any society characterized by multiculturalism and value pluralism. Thus a radical democracy is one that aims, not to eliminate, but to embrace and promote this tension as a productive political force that "forecloses any possibility of a final reconciliation, of any kind of rational consensus, of a fully inclusive 'we'."[23] Bishop adopts both the principle and the language of this approach:

> Laclau and Mouffe argue that a full functioning democratic society is not one in which all antagonisms have disappeared, but

> one in which new political frontiers are constantly being drawn and brought into debate—in other words, democratic society is one in which relations of conflict are *sustained*, not erased.[24]

Her primary interest, however, is in translating this progressivism from the political to the aesthetic. Framing relational aesthetics as the aesthetic equivalent of a regressive, consensus-based politics, Bishop goes on to identify relational antagonism, characterized by relations of dissent, friction, unease, instability, confrontation, and the like, as the aesthetic equivalent to the politics of antagonism.

More recently, however, Mouffe has attempted to clarify some of the aesthetic implications of political antagonism. These remarks reflect a more general attempt to distinguish between antagonism, understood as the uncritical valuation of confrontation for its own sake, and what she now terms "agonism," introduced to emphasize the importance of disagreement and difference as democratically productive forms of social engagement. As Mouffe explains,

> Agonism is a 'we/them' relation where the conflicting parties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognize the legitimacy of their opponents. [25]

In the context of aesthetic practice, this means that, "according to the agonistic approach, critical art is art that foments dissent; that makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate." As she goes on to clarify, however, this does not mean that critical art "only consists in manifestations of refusal."[26] This pessimism can take different forms, but above all Mouffe is concerned that today's critical art all too readily dismisses "the importance of proposing new modes of coexistence, of contributing to the construction of new forms of collective identity."[27] Further:

> This perspective, while claiming to be very radical, remains trapped within a very deterministic framework according to which the negative gesture is, in itself, enough to bring about the emergence of a new form of subjectivity; as if this subjectivity was already latent, ready to emerge as soon as the weight of the

> dominant ideology would have been lifted. Such a conception is, in my view, completely anti-political.[28]

Instead, Mouffe advocates a pluralistic approach, according to which the critical potential of art is not constrained to strictly negative and reactionary responses, but also bears the responsibility to put forward new models of politics and new modes of collective identity.

Mouffe's response pinpoints exactly what has been lost in translation from the political to the aesthetic in Bishop's notion of aesthetic antagonism. Simply put, she mistakes cynicism for critical skepticism. The "tension" in such works is seen, not as a productive impetus, but as bleak testimony to the fact that *that's the way the world is*. Even if Sierra's work succeeds in frustrating the naïve assumption of art's emancipatory potential, it fails as an aesthetic counterpart to a politics of antagonism that ultimately aims at a more robust ideal of democratic relations. It is not antagonism, but *nihilism*, which for Bishop frames the aesthetic virtue of these works. It is a declaration of art's sociopolitical impotence that echoes Sierra's own fatalist admission: "I can't change anything [. . .] I don't believe in the possibility of change".[29]

Paradoxically, instead of furnishing the normative basis for relational antagonism, Mouffe indicates why the concept of antagonism—political or aesthetic—is itself subject to normative critique. The normative critique can thus be reformulated and applied to antagonistic art by asking: What is the ethical value of aesthetic antagonism? As we've seen in the case of Sierra's work, the question has an added urgency, since what is at stake is the possibility of justifying exploitation under aestheticized conditions. It raises the question of how we distinguish the critical object from the object critiqued. And in fact this ethical question has been at the heart of a critical response to Sierra's work:

> Sierra's work is not symbolic, it is not simply *about* oppression, it is oppressive itself. Again, that hypothetical defender of Sierra may say that his work does this in order not to excuse itself from the cruelties of the labor market. But why recapitulate something in order to say it is wrong? Furthermore, why simply stop at saying

> it is wrong, something any moral midget can do, and instead not try to help transform those social relations?[30]

And how ought we—if indeed we *ought*—to evaluate the mimetic reproduction of exploitive relations as an *aesthetic* relation?

However we answer this question, it cannot be on the basis of the artist's good intentions. Consider the work of Italian performance artist Vanessa Beecroft. Like much of her work, her 2007 performance piece, *VB61, Still Death! Darfur Still Deaf?* (2007), staged at the 52nd Venice Biennale, explicitly addresses the plight of Sudanese refugees. For the three hour performance, the artist enlists a group of approximately thirty Sudanese women (all painted black) to play dead on a white canvas floor as she (the overseer) alternates between active and passive participation: one moment moving about the inert bodies as she douses them with splatters of bright red fake blood, the next moment feigning aloof indifference.

The work is fiercely antagonistic. It is a gruesome scene, highly charged with overt, heavy-handed political content and scripted to evoke a maximal sense of unease and discomfort in viewers. Its moral raison d'être is to force the viewer to confront the horrors of the genocide in Darfur. But what of its aesthetic merit? Is this guaranteed by its antagonistic character alone? From a spectator standpoint, one has to ask whether the feeling of unease is (as intended) a consequence of confronting our own moral indifference to real horror or (what is more likely) a consequence of the problematic spectacle that is a white, middle-aged female artist simulating a bloody genocide over the motionless, black bodies of stand-in refugees. Indeed, Beecroft's self-appointed role of voyeur-provocateur aims to disrupt an established order and emphasize the failures of collective conscience. But one can equally construe the controversy that her work instigates as a failure on her part to sufficiently reflect on the ethical implications of her own artistic practices. Critic Suzie Walsh poignantly observes that,

> By safely distancing herself rather than implicating the audience . . . Beecroft seemed unaware that her refusal to involve herself

> and the audience any further perpetuates the separation and detachment that the work itself was supposed to critique.[31]

Much the way relational aesthetics falls short in its unreflective estimation of relationality as an aesthetic virtue, Beecroft is either oblivious or indifferent to the ethical dimensions of an aesthetic performance that seeks to peddle an ethics of awareness through blunt antagonism. Consequently, the aesthetic failure of *VB61, Still Death! Darfur Still Deaf?* is tied to its failure as ethical stimulus. Good intentions aside, feelings of shock and discomfort produced by the performance fail to elicit a convincing moral response.

Beecroft's insensitivity is not limited to this work; it reflects a broader tendency in her repertoire to privilege the artist's disruptive act over the more complex set of circumstances that call for acts of intervention. This reality surfaced most visibly at the debut of Pietra Brettkelly's documentary film about Beecroft at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival. As indicated in the title, *Art Star and Sudanese Twins*, the film documents the artist's efforts to adopt twin boys from an orphanage in south Sudan. As one critic writes, the film "cluster-bombs her faddish fascination with Sudanese orphans and paints Beecroft as a hypocritically self-aware, colossally colonial pomo narcissist."[32] Another critic caustically dubbed the whole scenario a "Hooters for intellectuals."[33] Admittedly, Beecroft's work does not offer an edifying vision of social progress as an aesthetic object. But the aesthetic means by which she attempts to shock her audience out of ethical complacency cannot, simply by virtue of this aesthetic strategy, exonerate itself from ethical critique. It cannot be the antagonistic gesture *per se* that counts as an aesthetic virtue—it matters *what kind* of antagonism it entails. The ethical bears on the aesthetic evaluation of the work.

Antagonism and Aesthetic Autonomy

So far, we've seen that relational aesthetics and relational antagonism represent two distinct conceptual approaches to

socially-engaged art practices, and that the normative critique turns out to apply equally to both. An evaluative set of criteria is in order whether aesthetic relations take the form of consensus or antagonism. But here I think it is necessary to acknowledge a gross disparity in the respective implications of this critique. Critics have rightly targeted the ostensible absence of aesthetic evaluation in the ethical treatment of relational aesthetics. But should we not be equally concerned, if not perhaps *more* concerned, about the absence of ethical criteria in the aesthetic estimation of antagonistic art? It is difficult to see the celebration of relationality in the work of Tiravanija or Gillick, however naïve or unreflective, as anything but a trivial academic concern next to the melancholic affirmation of Beecroft's genocidal theater or Sierra's exploitations as aesthetically appropriate forms of antagonism. In particular, at work in the subtle theorizing of aesthetic antagonism is the problematic assumption that conscience-raising has not only inherent ethical value, but also an ethical priority that shields the artist from any other form of ethical critique. Though robed in the cloth of progressive politics, this assumption is at bottom a revised formulation of romanticism's appeal to aesthetic autonomy, an attempt to separate the aesthetic as a privileged domain of critique.[34]

A perfect illustration of the moral self-certainty of artistic provocation is Christoph Schlingensief's *Ausländer Raus: Schlingensiefs Container*. In this politically charged art performance, a group of real-life asylum seekers are invited to live in a makeshift compound of shipping containers assembled in front of the Viennese Opera House in conjunction with the Vienna *Festwochen* art festival. Styled after the popular European reality TV show, *Big Brother*, the daily lives of the refugees are documented and broadcast on a streaming webcast while the public participates in voting out (i.e. deporting) the inhabitants two-by-two. The remaining "winner" is awarded a cash prize and "the prospect, depending on the availability of volunteers, of Austrian citizenship through marriage."[35] Meanwhile, the spectacle is saturated with mock xenophobic pageantry, including a large banner that reads

"Ausländer 'Raus! ["Foreigners Out!"] and a constant stream of jingoistic rhetoric mimicking that of Austria's nationalist far-right FPÖ party (Freedom Party of Austria).

No doubt there is a significant ethical dimension to even some of the basic practical concerns that this elaborate art stunt raises—e.g. the legal ramifications, the safety of the participants, the dubious "prospect" of asylum, and so forth. But it is the xenophobic posturing of the work, cast in the light of irony and clever ambiguity, that gets to the heart of the ethical critique of aesthetic antagonism. Those of us who, like Schlingensief, possess a keen critical acumen are clued in to the real political critique encoded in the act of aesthetic mimesis. With a knowing wink we are invited to read the progressive counter-message in the populist sloganeering spouted from the artist's megaphone. To everyone else, however, the work reads as racist demagoguery run amok. Schlingensief, of course, feeds off the public confrontations that predictably result from this ambiguity among the crowds that gather daily at the site. Whether, or to what extent, this work legitimates or amplifies anti-immigrant sentiments, or provokes threats or acts of aggression toward immigrants, is not part of Schlingensief's conceptual program. And why should it be? An ethics of awareness provides the justification for the artist's silent response to the expression of moral outrage and indignation. And there are many. But one woman's reaction, captured in the documentary film about the project, is particularly revealing. In a throng of people surrounding the artist in the square, an elderly woman emerges, slinging the water from her water bottle at Schlingensief, tossing the empty bottle at him, and shouting at him a string of insults: "Du Sau! du Scheißdreck! Du . . . *Künstler!* ["You pig! You shit! You . . . *artist!*"]. Her response, though simple and familiar, exposes the chink in the armor of aesthetic antagonism, namely, that even the most sophisticated conceptual wrangling does not grant the artist the right to behave like an asshole.

Conclusion

I want to conclude by drawing attention to Bishop's own shifting attitude towards socially-engaged art and her growing sympathies for the kinds of participatory and collaborative art practices she once criticized. Bishop acknowledges this transition in the introductory remarks of her more recent monograph. "An important motivation for this study," she explains "was my frustration at the foreclosure of critical distance in these curatorial narratives." However, as she goes on to acknowledge, the "hidden narrative of this book is therefore a journey from skeptical distance to imbrication" regarding her critical engagement with participatory art.[36]

I take it that this increased acceptance of relation-based art practices has evolved not only from the affinity that naturally develops from the greater involvement with artists and their works, but also from the realization that there is something to the claim that certain artworks have a certain resonance beyond the aesthetic that cannot be discounted. Both the theory and the practice of socially engaged art have also evolved in the meantime, due in no small part to the force of Bishop's critique. Both artists and critics are far more attuned to the complex norms of artistic practices that approximate political activism or cultural anthropology, so it is no longer necessary or even appropriate to discount such practices as artless pedantry. Instead, the normative critique is but one of many tools employed in a critical process that applies to a broad range of artistic practices attempting to transgress traditional aesthetic boundaries.

Jason Miller teaches philosophy at Warren Wilson College in Asheville, North Carolina. He has published several articles on the intersection of aesthetics and politics and is currently working on a book on the social significance of art in G. W. F. Hegel's philosophy of art.

Notes

1. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, translated by Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with the participation of Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2002).

2. Hal Foster, "Arty Party," *London Review of Books*, (December 4, 2003), p. 22.

3. Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October,* (January 1, 2004), p. 65. Bishop develops this criticism in a more recent publication: Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London; New York: Verso Books, 2012). However, as I will touch on below, her position shifts considerably in the book from her original criticism.

4. Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, p.14.

5. Ibid., p.22.

6. Ibid., p.109.

7. See Walter Benjamin's 1934 essay "Author as Producer," *New Left Review* (vol. 62, no. 1, July-August 1970).

8. Bourriaud, p.45.

9. Ibid., p.44.

10. Ibid.

11. Herein lies the distinction between relational aesthetics and Guy Debord's closely related notion of "situation" as a disruptive force. (Cf., Bourriaud, p.85).

12. Ibid., p.45.

13. Grant H. Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p.30. Similarly, Liam Gillick admits: "the book does contain major contradictions and serious problems of incompatibility with regard to the artists repeatedly listed together as exemplars of certain tendencies." (Liam Gillick, "Letter to Claire Bishop," October 115, Winter 2006, p.96.)

14. Hal Foster, "Arty Party," p. 22.

15. Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," p. 65.

16. Ibid.

17. Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," p. 67.

18. Jacques Rancière and Gregory Elliott, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso, 2009).

19. Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents," *Artforum International* vol. 44, no. 6 (2006), p.178.

20. Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," p. 70.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics,* (London: Verso, 1985), p. xvii.

24. Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," p. 65.

25. Chantal Mouffe, keynote presentation at the "Cork Caucus" event in 2005. Published in *Cork Caucus: On Art, Possibility and Democracy,* (Cork, Ireland: National Sculpture Factory, 2005), p.153.

26. Ibid, p.162.

27. Ibid. Specifically germane to this debate (though not discussed explicitly here) is the question concerning the relation of critical art to the culture industry. Here too, Mouffe is skeptical of a full-throated "strategy of withdrawal," which regards any and all artistic practices within a commercial or institutional context as compromised and co-opted. She writes that a museum, for instance, "can under certain conditions provide spaces for an agonistic confrontation and it is a mistake to believe that artist who choose to work with them cannot play a critical role and that they are automatically recuperated by the system." Chantal Mouffe, "Strategies of Radical Politics and Aesthetic Resistance," accessed November 7, 2015, http://truthisconcrete.org/texts/?p=19.

28. Ibid.

29. Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," p. 71.

30. John Menick. "Review of Sierra's *"Nine Forms of 100 x 100 x 600 Cm..."* at Deitch Projects. *THE THING*, July 13, 2002.

31. Suzie Walsh, "Sudan Performance VB61, Still Death! Darfur Still Deaf?" *Art Fair International*. September 7, 2007, accessed September 7, 2007, http://www.artfairsinternational.com/?p=29.

32. Logan Hill, "'Art Star' Vanessa Beecroft: Slammed at Sundance," *Vulture,* accessed June 3, 2013, http://www.vulture.com/2008/01/vanessa_beecroft_slammed_at_su.html.

33. The critic, to the best of my knowledge, has not been identified. The comments were first reported by Roberta Smith in a *New York Times* review of the exhibition dated May 6, 1998. http://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/06/arts/critic-s-notebook-standing-and-staring-yet-aiming-for-empowerment.html, accessed February 1, 2015.

34. Bishop has attempted to dissociate herself from this affiliation. "This is not to say," she explains in regard to antagonism, "that it signifies a return to the kind of high-modernist autonomy of Clement Greenberg, but rather to a more complicated imbrication of the social and the aesthetic". In regard to Sierra's work, she remarks that the "motif of obstruction or blockade" that she champions in his work "is less a return to modernist refusal as advocated by Theodor Adorno than an expression of the boundaries of both the social and the aesthetic after a century of attempts to fuse them." ("Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," p.78.). Her refusal to engage in the central question of how aesthetic relations are produced and sustained beyond the simple insistence that they be disruptive, disorienting, and antagonistic saddles us once again with the all too familiar conception of art as a distinct domain, detached from the norms of social and political relations. Neither she, nor Sierra, for that matter, offers any specification as to what sort of "boundaries" separate art from other domains of experience.

35. http://www.schlingensief.com/projekt_eng.php?id=t033, accessed February 1, 2015

36. Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, p. 6.

FIELD
A JOURNAL OF SOCIALLY-ENGAGED ART CRITICISM

The Inertia of Change: A Review of Nato Thompson's *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21st Century*

Hammam Aldouri

In *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21st Century* (Brooklyn and London: Melville House, 2015), Nato Thompson, chief curator of the non-profit arts organization Creative Time, chronicles his direct involvement with, and retrospective reflections on, recent artistic initiatives that are increasingly becoming identified under the rubric of "socially engaged art." At its most basic level, the book operates on two interconnected levels. First, it functions as an attempt to theoretically consolidate Thompson's experiences as a curator, activist and collaborator in art projects over the course of the last twenty years. Second, the book is a contribution to the rapidly expanding field of literature on socially engaged art practice.

At a more refined level, *Seeing Power* can be said to present a distinct conception of socially engaged art, a conception that concerns practices that "self-consciously operate at the intersection of art and politics" (16). Thompson's conception of socially engaged art rests, more precisely, on the unification of the conjunction "art and politics" in "the wild place we call art activism" (vii). Art activism is understood by Thompson in terms of modes of artistic strategies that transform our understanding of politics and ourselves in the very texture of the power dynamics that structure our everyday existence, that is, within the substance of the infrastructures of

economic, political and technological networks that frame the ways in which we experience reality (vii, 36, 60, 81, 98, 109, 132, 143 and, in some sense, 137). In order to explore art activism, Thompson begins his book with a brief historical account of the absolute liquidation of viable modes of cultural resistance in advanced capitalist societies. Indeed, it is "in this fairly dismal moment – the moment of total and utter co-option" of alternative, anti-capitalistic modes of life, modes exemplified in the revolutionary impulses of the 1960s, that Thompson's reflections commence (12). After establishing the historical setting in the first chapter, the book unfolds in six subsequent chapters, each one punctuated by explorations of recent artistic-activist projects such as Jeremy Deller's *It is What It Is: Conversations About Iraq* (2009), the reconfiguration of the Occupy movement into the Occupy Museums movement (2011-ongoing) and Paul Chan's *Waiting for Godot in New Orleans* (2007).

Importantly, Thompson tries to give some sense to the distinctively spatial politics of art activism. This idea underpins the theoretical and political thrust of his emphatic belief in the transformative power of art activism. What I mean by "spatial politics" is demonstrated in Thompson's analysis of Chan's *Waiting for Godot in New Orleans*. Thompson immediately draws our attention to the fact that the artist wanted to produce Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in a specific area: the Lower Ninth Ward and Gentilly, that is, within the areas most affected by the 2006 storm Hurricane Katrina. What is perhaps more significant in the spatial politics of Chan's project is its commitment to "create a project that might actually alleviate the suffering of those affected by the storm" (109). A spatial politics, then, does not simply mean relocating an artistic project from one place to another in such a manner that the actual everyday life of the place of relocation remains auxiliary to the project. Rather, it embodies a sustained involvement with the everyday life of the area in which a project is actualized. In Chan's case, this involved learning about the experiences of the people who lived in the areas most affected by the storm through a series of meetings over the course of several months. These meetings allowed the

project to embed itself in the community in a way that allowed it develop a more concrete sense of the "extremely fraught series of relationships and political tensions that [constitute] a community" (110-11). With this embeddedness, the project evaded the problem of becoming simply another transitory and voyeuristic intervention, one that amounted to "disaster tourism" (109).

It is, I believe, at the point of the conjunction of spatial politics and social change that the problem with Thompson's book emerges. In what follows, I will argue that Thompson's reflections restrict the understanding of social change to an overly spatialized conception, one that, problematically, sets aside the question of the temporal character of social transformation.

In order to have a deeper understanding of Thompson's spatialized understanding of social change, it is worth taking note of the two claims that structurally and conceptually bracket Thompson's book: at the very beginning of the work, the author states that he will take a "geographic approach to ideas" (viii); and at the very end, we are reminded that, at bottom, "ideas are built in space and with resources" and, a fortiori, "space is where the battle is" (163). The necessity of underpinning the spatialized understanding of the conjunction of art and activism is that it "provides a way to think about power concretely, not just theoretically or abstractly" (159). Space allows us to come into contact with power in all its concrete reality since space is the most concrete of things.

It is the confluence of space and concrete reality that provides Thompson with the necessary standpoint to resolve the aporia that is putatively attached to socially engaged art, namely that of the irreconcilability of the autonomy of art and its direct social affect: "socially engaged artists deploy techniques of didacticism in order to make a work just legible enough, so that they can then engage a viewer in a level of ambiguity that will allow her to explore the work for herself" (35). This reconciliation is based on the production of spaces within pre-established spaces of legibility and illegibility (62). As we have seen, this is at work in Chan's *Waiting for Godot*

in New Orleans. Another example is Jeremy Deller's *It is What It Is*. The project consisted of an "exhibition" of a car that had been demolished during an explosion in Baghdad during the Iraq War. Deller took the car, along with an American Iraq War veteran and an Iraqi refugee and artist, across the United States, displaying it in spaces such as town squares and college campuses. Not only does the work literally spatially re-locate an object from one context to another (from Baghdad to cities and towns across the United States), it also punctures a new space in the areas in which it is exhibited. This is succinctly expressed in the first sentence of the second chapter: "In 2009, the artist Jeremy Deller brought a piece of the Iraq War to America" (29).

And yet, can we think about the relation of art, activism and social change adequately if our reflections are restricted to its spatial dimensions? Thompson fails to sufficiently reflect on the temporality of the very task that it tries to articulate, that is, the way in which artistic initiatives can "truly change culture" (ix). That is to say, Thompson does not examine the temporal character of the process of change itself that is immanent to all modes of social change. This is odd to say the least, as change is a preeminently temporal category. More precisely put, Thompson's overly spatialized focus yields from out of itself the shape of its misrecognized presupposition: Thompson de-temporalizes change because of the restricted understanding of the spatial relations of art activism. The upshot of this is unavoidable: the comprehension of socially engaged art alienates itself from the very principle it tries so hard to set up and revivify (social change).

There is a decisive point at which the de-temporalization (and re-spatialization) of time is staged in Thompson's book. It appears at a moment in which the definition of the achievement of socially engaged art practices is disclosed: "[socially engaged art] can offer physical spaces of engagement over time. They are, in a sense, prolonged encounters of difference and affinity that transpire in the world and between people…They are somatic. They are lived" (145). This definition develops Thompson's earlier identification of the task of socially engaged art as "the deployment of cultural forms and the

production of political change" [52]. Socially engaged art practices produce spaces of transformative experiences that are contained in time. Time is, thus, defined as a mere vacant container in which events take place and are understood. Consequently, the dynamic of time is voided of any temporal character (the convergence and divergence of past, present and future) and, more precisely, is re-spatialized as an empty vessel in which things are placed (it was Socrates who, speaking of the structure of education, makes a distinction between spatialized learning and a temporal process of cultivation). Thus, the time of so-called somatic relations and transformations produced within these "prolonged encounters" is subsumed within a conception of time so empty of any ontological status that it renders the very processual dimension of the encounters – of what makes them decisively temporal – auxiliary, if not totally nugatory. Moreover, the temporal dimension of the potentiality of the artistic practices Thompson is trying to grasp, that is to say, the temporal character of their capacity to be able to offer alternative spaces is, likewise, stripped of its specific temporal character.

The consequences of this are, I believe, dire. A re-spatialized conception of time reduces any comprehension of the political core of socially engaged art to that of the realm of empirically demonstrable phenomena, that is, to a spatial realm in which the supposed transformations of society are verifiable through the senses (it is striking that "seeing" is the privileged mode of aesthetic experience in Thompson's book). More problematically, the restriction of social change to its sheer spatial character reduces change to a pure present, that is, a spatialized apprehension of time that sets aside the temporal interconnection of past, present and future (a pure present suspends any relation to other temporal forms). Reduced to a spatialized pure present, the dynamics of change are hypostatized. This hypostatization is registered in the rhetoric of exigency that presuppose the politics of art activism. Once again, Chan's project provides a paradigmatic example. In so far as it was carried out in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, it oriented itself in response to what could be called the

"ideology of here and now politics," that is, a politics that engages directly with the present in its most immediate form. Captured within such an ideology, the promise of social change in socially engaged art becomes the mere shifting of the spatial elements that already form the configuration of the present, thus reproducing and recycling the elements that inform it, elements that allow us to immediately recognize it as the present in the first place. Reduced to a pure present, the practice of the artistic transformation of society has no relation either to the past or, more importantly, to the future since it is caught within the limits of the state of the present understood as a container in which events and transformations occur. As I have tried show, this strips social change of its temporal relation to that which is in the process of being produced, and is yet to be fully actualized.

The question of the status of change and, more precisely, of the temporal status of the potentiality of the actualization of change articulated by socially engaged art practices, is not only extremely complex, but it calls upon a philosophical legacy that is far more expansive than the historical purview of post-Hegelian Marxism that Thompson grounds his opening historical reflections in (since they are based in Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic philosophies, if not markedly earlier, in pre-Socratic, hylozoic philosophies). Thompson is not, of course, offering us a philosophical treatise on social change in his book. However, in the second sentence of the book, he does note that *Seeing Power* consists of an "unusual combination of philosophy and practice" (vii). Assuming that philosophy does not simply mean a general attitude or ethos, this suggests that there is a philosophical status to Thompson's thoughts that needs to be taken more seriously. The lack of sustained philosophical work on the temporal dimension of social change understood through the structure and import of socially engaged art – resulting in a misleading de-temporalizing and re-spatializing concept of change – leads Thompson into further theoretical problems that his book touches on, but cannot adequately address. Although a detailed analysis of these problems far exceeds the scope of this review,

I would nevertheless like to make brief note of two issues before concluding.

First, Thompson's book does not allow us to reflect on the global nature of what is increasingly referred to as "global networks," that is, of multidimensional modes of connectivity that move across geopolitical borders and, crucially, across different time zones. Thompson does not, for example, critical examine the transformative effects of an infrastructure such as the Internet. This is remarkably surprising since digital modes of production and reproduction are a constitutive feature of cultural practices in the very period that Thompson consciously locates his book, viz. the 21st century. What, for example, happens to the spatial dynamics of social relations produced in socially engaged art when their distinctively spatial character is inextricably permeated by the temporalities of digital communicational systems, that is, systems that eliminate the so-called "somatic" experience of given spatial zones by way of technologies that reduce social transactions to mere fractions of a second? Strangely, Thompson does not explore the relation of the explosive development of communication technologies to the dissolution of the "alt-globalization" (21) movement in the last few years of the twentieth century. (The last few years have seen a sharp increase in theoretical interest on the "alt-globalization" movement. The expression "alt-globalization" – short for "alternative-globalization and social justice movement" – is, in some sense, a unifying term that brings together a diverse number of social justice movements organized against the disastrous economic, social, political and ecological effects produced by increasingly deregulated and aggressively trans-national capitalist markets.) The Internet, one infers from reading Thompson, is simply a device that aids the agent that has learned to symbolically and economically profit from the aftermath of the liquidation of the alt-globalization movement: the "hipster" (24ff). The "hipster" is Thompson's most deplored contemporary subject in so far as s/he embodies a kind of feckless, apolitical saunter through the cultural practices of advanced capitalist societies as if they were natural mediums in

which one can realize one's most spontaneous desires. Thompson avoids a more sustained reflection on the Internet precisely because it troubles the more immediate spatial sense of activist politics, that is, of a politics "characterized by aesthetic interventions, culture jamming, and a host of neo-Situationist tactical media approaches" that, at bottom, create "interventions in space" (22).

Second, the historical development of the United States and its place in the development of the history of the twentieth century (in the post-war context, especially) is not addressed at the adequate level of historical and critical analysis in Thompson's book. This omission is perplexing given the privileged geopolitical place anchoring Thompson's book: from the reflection of the American retail store "Hot Topic" (13) to the festivities of the Victorian Stroll organized by the city of Troy in the State of New York (147ff), Thompson's thoughts are grounded in the United States. The evasion of a critical analysis of the geopolitical specificity of the United States fails to give the reader a clear sense of the distinctive nature of the nation's temporal development as a peculiar paradigmatic case of the intensification of the capitalist mode of production. Arguably, the United States is a peculiar paradigm in that it is a distinctively atypical example in the history of the emergence of the social form of the nation-state. This weighs in immediately on a political activism that tries to reconfigure cultural practices in light of the historical failure of the "alt-globalization" movement. One could ask: what does the artistic actualization of social change amount to within a context in which the very social form of life has emerged from out of a frontier ideology that valorizes the self-actualization of the individual? Without an analysis of the historical development of the United States, we cannot come to understand the way in which its social-cultural forms are historically mediated.

In sum, *Seeing Power* operates as a useful and, in some sense, welcome introduction to anyone interested in establishing some preliminary coordinates to help navigate the rapidly expanding discourse on socially engaged art practices. I believe, however, that it has to be read with a certain caveat, one that Thompson does

not himself provide. The caveat is that without an analysis of the temporal structure of the dynamics of change that give sense to what "social change" means, any claim made on the transformative effects of socially engaged art is either wholly misleading or, worse, a form of inert sloganeering masquerading as critical insight.

Hammam Aldouri holds a PhD in philosophy from the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy, Kingston University, London. He is currently a Helena Rubinstein Fellow in Critical Studies at the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program.