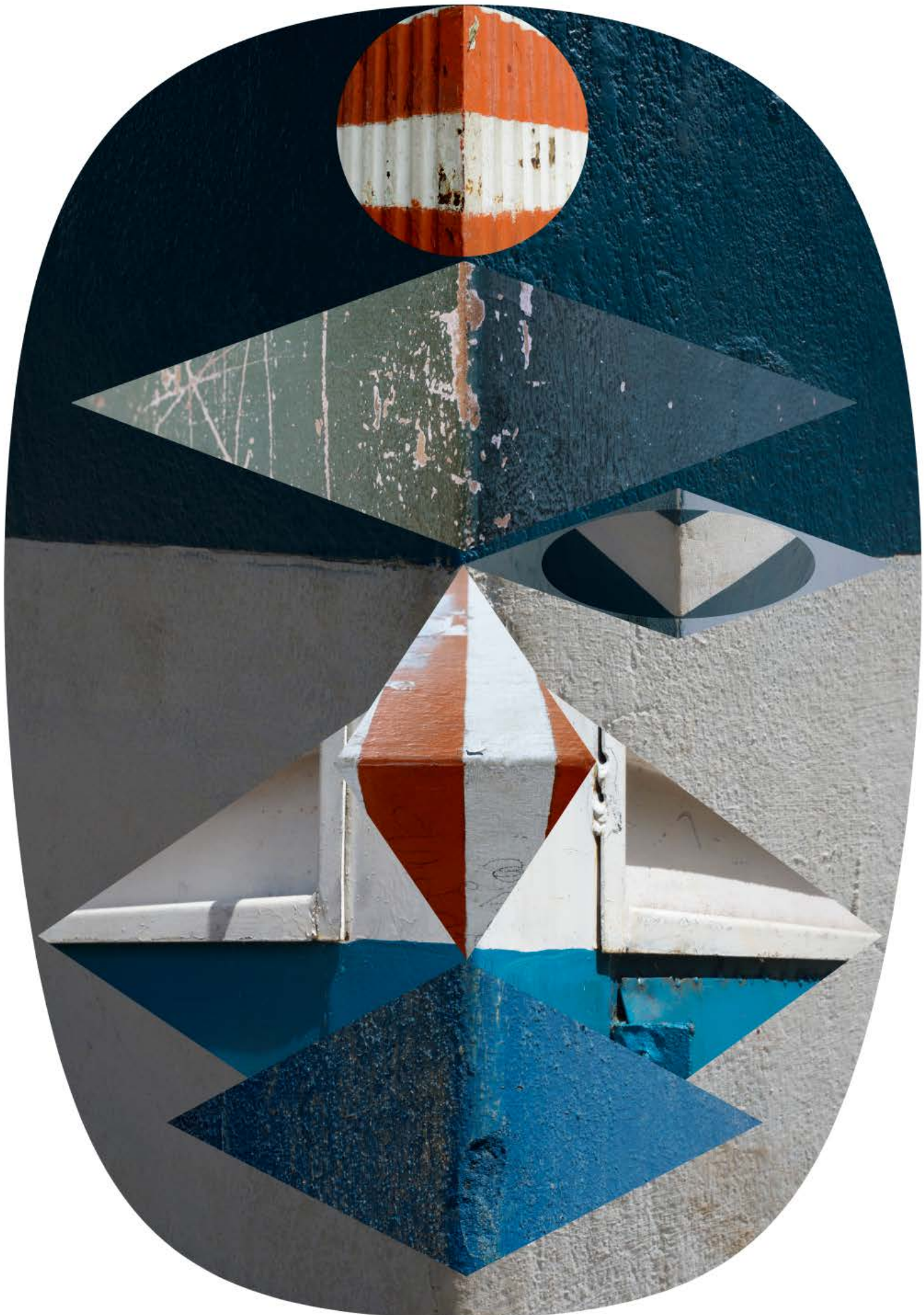


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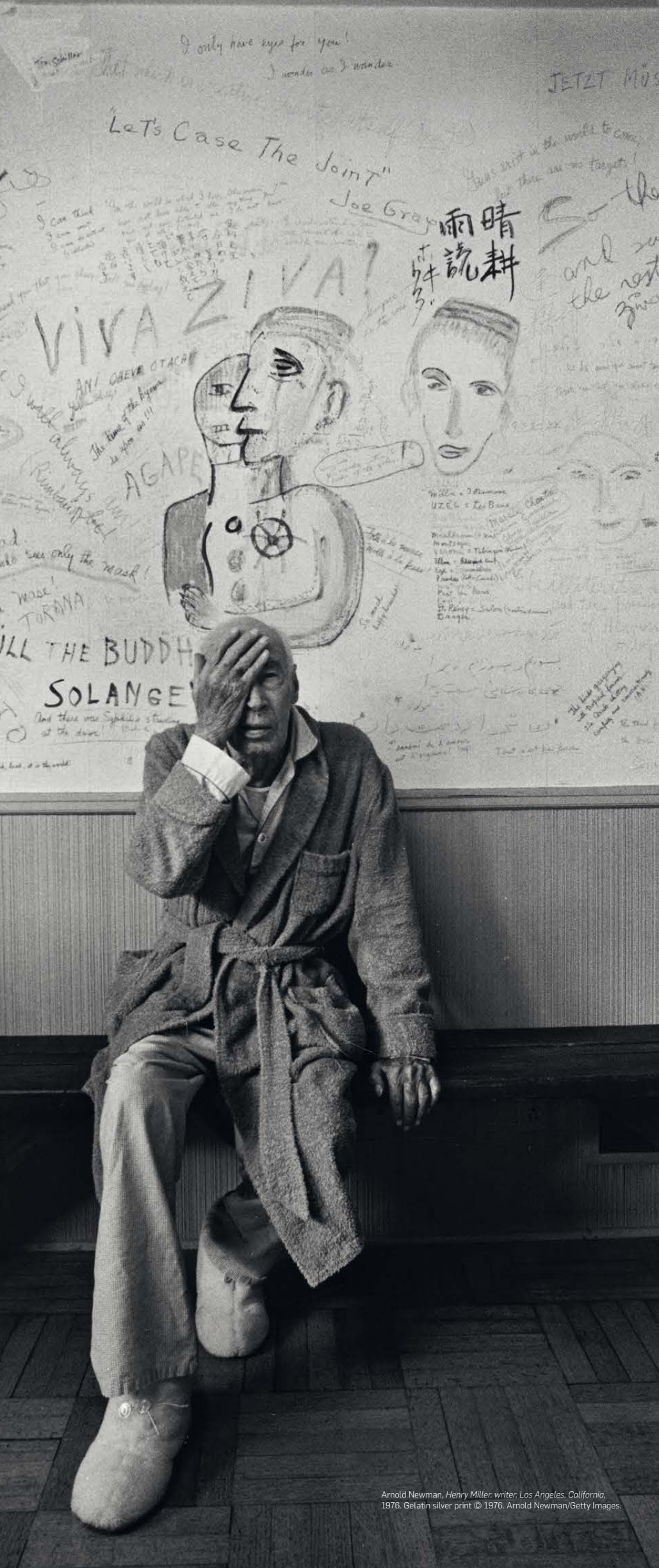
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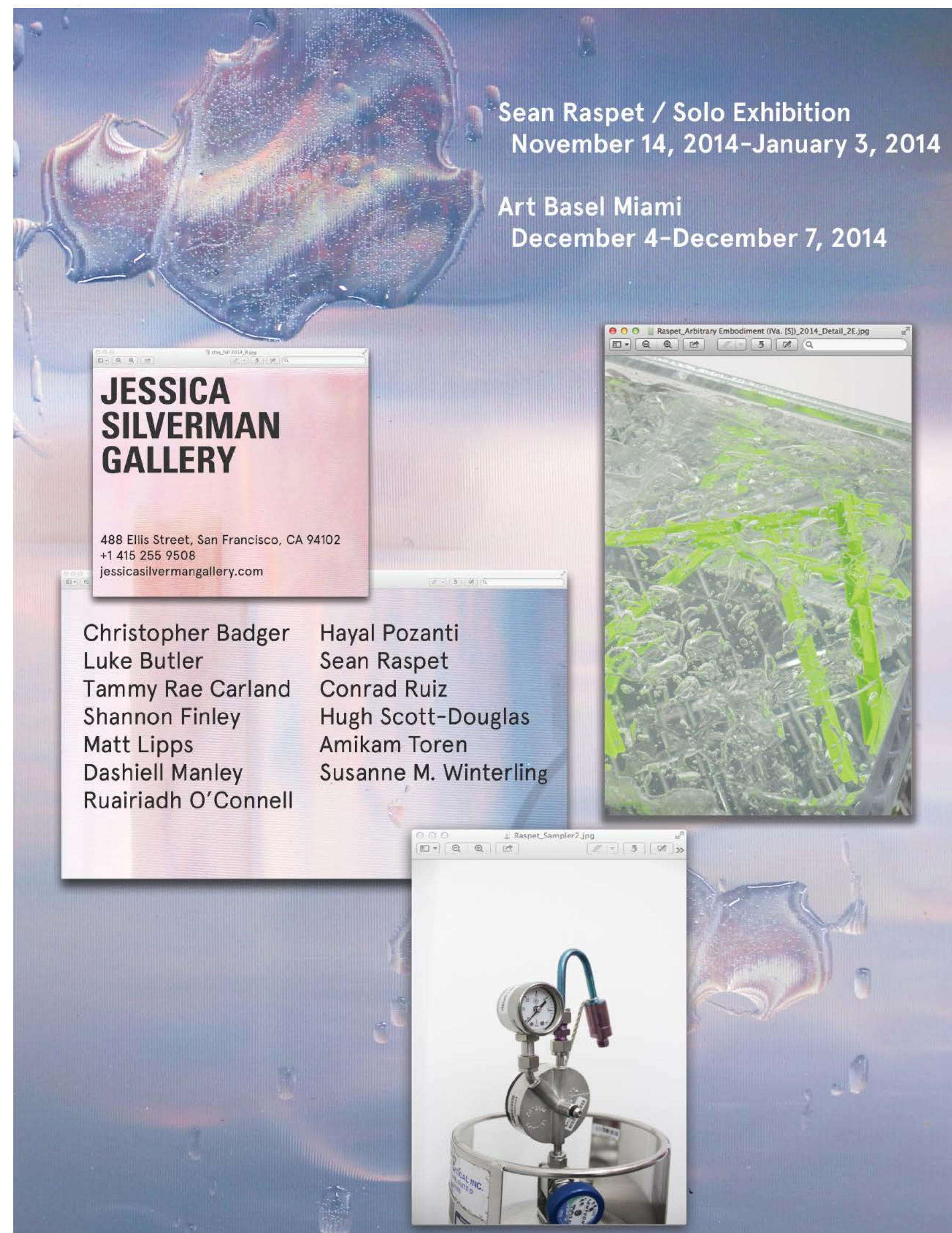
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Image: Tony DeLap, Bluey-Bluey, 1992, acrylic on canvas, wood, 88 x 47 x 9 in, image credit: John Vokoun



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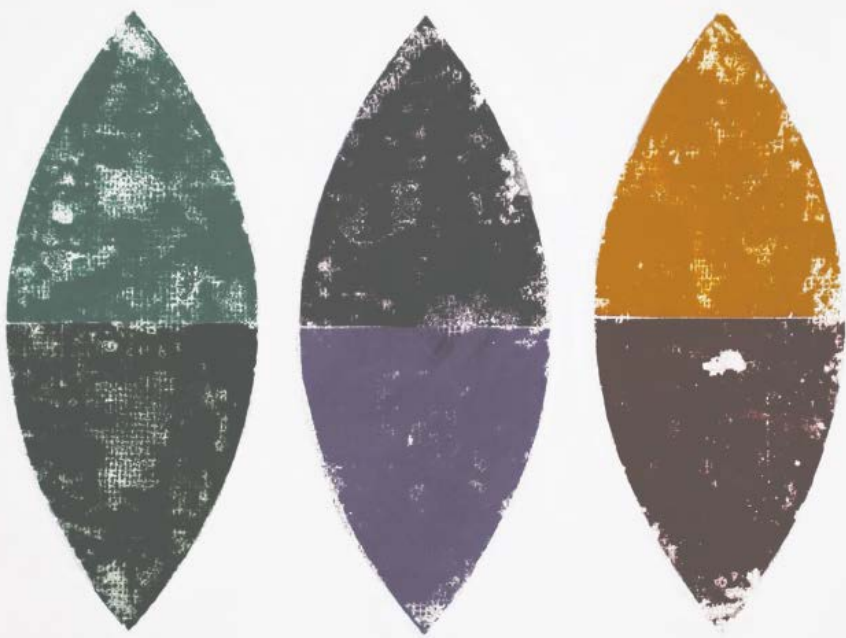
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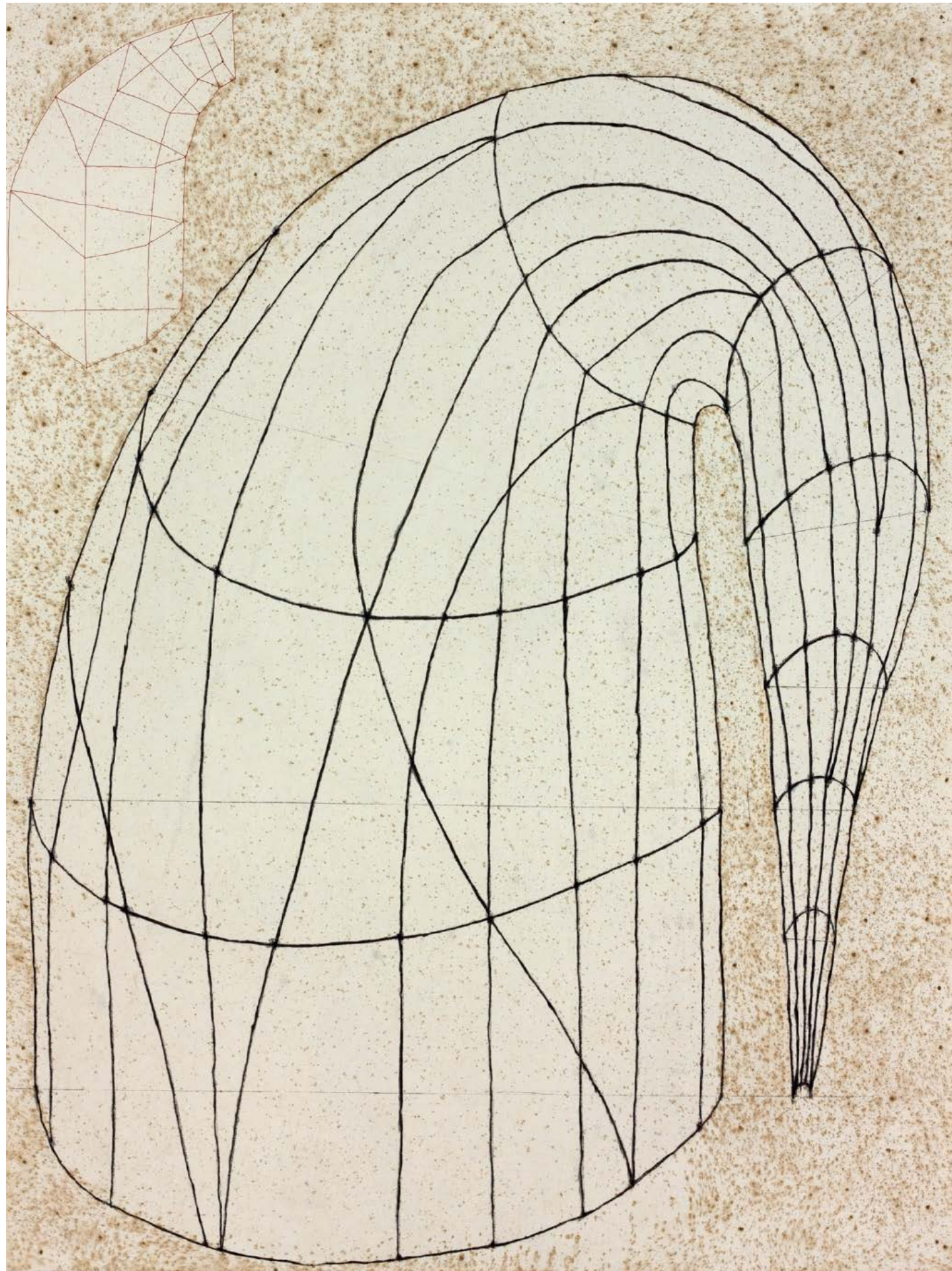
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SFAQ [PROJECTS] ISSUE 18

Alexandre Arrechea

COVER and CENTERFOLD

"During my last trip to Havana, I created a new series of photographs that will be printed on many materials other than paper. These photographs consist of wall corners in Havana, some of which have famous histories. It is the corner of a building that suffers the most; its straight lines become chipped, fragmented, and distorted. Through these deviations, I want to reveal the face of the neighborhood. I have worked with these walls to build a series of objects, masks, and imaginary spaces. For SFAQ, I thought it would be interesting to see two ideas that will be printed on wood tried out on paper. For the cover I have created *Mask vedado*, 2014, and *Box 23-E vedado*, 2014, for the interior."



Barry McGee

Doubled Sided PULLOUT POSTER

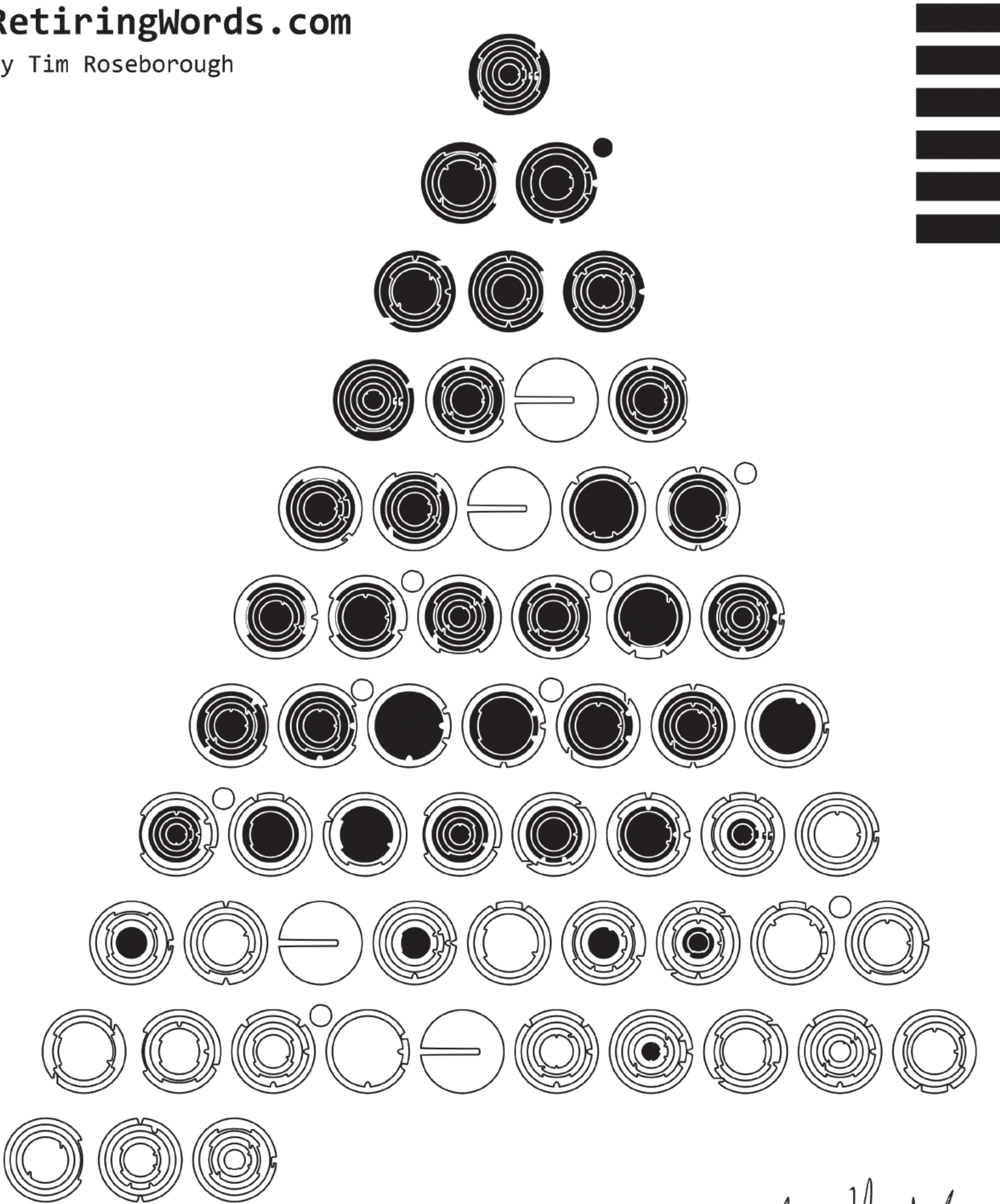
Barry McGee
Untitled, 2014
Acrylic on panel



These original artworks will be show at the SFAQ[Projects] booth, Q15, Art Basel, Miami, 2014.

RetiringWords.com

by Tim Roseborough



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Tim Roseborough

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Andrew McClintock

Managing Editor (Print and Online)
Peter Cochran

Editors
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Staff Writers
Peter Cochran, Peter Dobey, Jarrett Earnest, John Held, Jr., Lucy Kasofsky, Andrew McClintock

Contributing Writers
Arie Amaya-Akkermans, Ingrid Burrington, Anthony Choice-Diaz, Peter Dobey, Jarrett Earnest, Christopher Michael Fraga, John Held, Jr., Jordan Kantor, Tony Labat, Constance Lewallen, Courtney Malick, Carlo McCormick, Julio César Morales, Nicholas O'Brien, Joseph del Pesco, Mark Van Proyen, John Rapko, Lele Sav-eri, Alain Servais, Gianni Simone, Ben Valentine, John Zarobell

Online Writers
Lani Asher, Bianca Builen, Cathy Fairbanks, Gladys-Katherina Hernando, Merideth Hillbrand, Kelly Inouye, Leora Lutz, Courtney Malick, Shana Beth Mason, Ariel Rosen, Robert Strang, Sarah Thibault, Johanna Thompson

Contributing Photographers
Juan Carlos Alom, Johnna Arnold, Isaac Contreras, Brian Forrest, Kris Graves, David Heald, Casey Kel-baugh, Andrew McClintock, Patrick Miller, Julio César Morales, Geandy Pavon, Will Ragazzino, Pedro Reyes, Guillermo Soto, Martin Soto, Jens Ziehe

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This issue is dedicated to the memory of:
Charles Campbell, Joe Durrett, and Neal McCue

CONTACT
Publisher: andrewm@sfaq.us
Advertising: advertise@sfaq.us
Listings: listings@sfaq.us
Distribution: distribution@sfaq.us

SFAQ LLC
441 O'Farrell St.
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A Note from the Publisher:

When I first started *SFAQ* in the looming shadow of the 2008 crash and against the onslaught of print media “deaths” around the world, people told me I was crazy. But that wasn't the first time. When I was fielding the idea of our new sister magazine, *DFAQ*, the reaction that I got was not “what the hell are you doing?” It was “of course you are.” Of course there is the desire to build another conduit, or vessel, to connect with people, with artists, and with culture. So here we are . . . two magazines, with room and the urge to grow.

Besides *DFAQ*, I am proud to announce the beginning of SFAQ [Projects]. Since the beginning of *SFAQ*, we have included artist projects in the form of tear-out centerfold posters, zines, booklets, artist pages, and other interventions in the tradition of artists' magazines that date back to the '60s. These artworks will now be referred to as SFAQ [Projects]. One major addition is that these original piec-es that appear as free content within the magazine will have freestanding coun-terparts. These commissioned works will be exhibited at SFAQ booths during international art fairs and other cultural events. Our inaugural SFAQ [Projects], to show at our solo booth at the upcoming Art Basel, Miami, will be created by Alex-andre Arrechea, Barry McGee, and Tom Sachs.

In addition to these two developments, we are extremely thrilled to open the first SFAQ [Projects] Pop-Up space in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco. We aim to further the dialogs started in *SFAQ* and bring new dimensions to art and discourse through artist, writer, and curator talks, workshops, exhibitions, and to provide a home for collaboration. The space will be supported by the Kenneth Rainin Foundation and SFAQ Advisors and will open in the spring of 2015. Lots more information to come.

Last but not least, we are launching a new *SFAQ* website in the first few weeks of November. After four years of having our low-fi website, we are looking forward to this dynamic and fluid new platform. Visit us soon at <http://sfaq.us>.

Each branch of our growing *SFAQ* family tree will continue to expand our main mission: creating an alternative voice for what we all believe in that exists outside of the mainstream and outside of corporate control. So I ask you to stand up—stand up for your rights, stand up for those who cannot, stand up against the art machine of greed and wealth and the consolidation of power. Art is for the peo-ple. We are for the people. If ever there was a time to be more revolutionary it is now. Fight the powers that be.

Andrew McClintock

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Cover Image:
Alexandre Arrechea, *Mask vedado*, 2014.
Color print. 39 x 37 inches.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Arie Amaya-Akkermans is an art critic and writer based in the Middle East, currently living in Beirut, Lebanon. His writing has appeared in *Canvas*, *Artsy*, and *Hyperallergic*. Formerly assistant curator at Albareh Art Gallery in Bahrain, his current research concerns visual culture in Turkey and Lebanon, aesthetics of technology, and representations of political violence.

Ingrid Burrington works on an island off the coast of America. More at lifewinning.com.

Anthony Choice-Diaz is a San Francisco Bay Area-based public intellectual, historical scholar, community organizer, and indigenous activist who researches and writes about social movements in the Americas.

Peter Cochrane is the managing editor of *SFAQ*. He *really* likes dogs, flowers, and books.

Peter Dobey is an artist and Lacanian psychoanalyst raised in the exact epicenter of the Loma Prieta earthquake in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The *SFAQ* foreign correspondent and editor divides his time between the Bay Area, Mexico City, and Paris.

Jarrett Earnest is an artist, writer, and co-director of 1:1, a collaborative that took the form of an art space in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. He writes regularly on contemporary art and pursues the interview as a distinct critical form, publishing long, innovative interviews with artists such as Maurizio Cattelan, Richard Tuttle, and Nayland Blake, among others. He is presently at work on a book of writing and drawing, exploring the aesthetics of intimacy. All of his disparate projects engage the intersections of performance, poetry, the visual arts, and politics.

Christopher Michael Fraga is an anthropologist, translator, and writer. His current research examines the role of contemporary art and its proponents in mediating the economic and political changes that characterize Mexico's recent history. He teaches in the Department of Sociology & Anthropology and the Latin American Studies Program at Swarthmore College.

John Held, Jr. will be presenting a paper in New York City on archiving Japanese mail art during the September 2014 conference, "For a New Wave to Come: Post-1945 Japanese Art History Now," sponsored by PoNJA GenKon, NYU Asian Studies, and Japan House. In October, Held will deliver the keynote address to inaugurate the exhibition *Focus Latin America: Art is Our Last Hope* at the Phoenix Art Museum. In November, he will travel to Venice, Italy, to complete a one-month residency at the Emily Harvey Foundation. Held has been a staff writer with *SFAQ* since 2011.

Jordan Kantor is a San Francisco-based artist whose work has been shown in numerous exhibitions, including, most recently, at Churner and Churner, New York (2014); Ratio 3, San Francisco (2013); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2012); Henry Art Gallery, Seattle (2011); Seattle Art Museum (2010); Art 40 Basel Statements (2009); the 2008 California Biennial at the Orange County Museum of Art (2008); Johnen Galerie, Berlin, Germany (2008); Thomas Dane Gallery, London (2007); and Artists Space, New York (2006). In addition his own studio practice, Kantor writes on contemporary art subjects and is a frequent contributor to *Artforum*.

Tony Labat has developed bodies of work in performance, video, sculpture, and installation. His work has dealt with the body, popular culture, identity, urban relations, politics, and the media. He has exhibited internationally over the last 30 years, received numerous awards and grants, and is represented in many private and public collections. Recent exhibitions have shown at Barbara Gladstone Gallery, the 11th Havana Biennial, Gallery Paule Anglim, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, and Atlanta Contemporary Art Center. He's currently chair of the MFA program at the San Francisco Art Institute. He lives and works in San Francisco.

Constance Lewallen was born and raised in New York City. She received her BA from Mount Holyoke College and her MA from California State University, San Diego. She is currently adjunct curator at the University of California, Berkeley,

Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. In 1996 she curated *Jay DeFeo: Selected Works 1952-1989* for Moore College of Art in Philadelphia, which traveled to the UC Berkeley Art Museum. As senior curator at BAM she curated many major exhibitions including, most recently, *A Rose Has No Teeth: Bruce Nauman in the 1960s*, all of which were accompanied by catalogs and toured nationally and internationally. Her most recent exhibition, *State of Mind: New California Art circa 1970*, co-curated with Karen Moss, premiered and traveled internationally in 2011. Her book on David Ireland's house, published by UC Press, will be released when the house reopens.

Courtney Malick lives in Los Angeles where she works as a writer, independent curator, and private art adviser, focusing on video, sculpture, performance, and installation. She received her MA from the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College in 2011. She has curated exhibitions and performances in both New York and San Francisco. She is a regular contributor to *Artforum*, *SFAQ*, *V Magazine*, and is a founding contributor of *Dis Magazine*. Malick has also worked as studio manager for photographer Jane Wattenberg; curatorial assistant at LACE for the exhibition *L.A. Goes Live*, part of the Getty's Pacific Standard Time; assistant director at Broadway 1602 and Daniel Reich Gallery; as an archivist at Vito Acconci Studio; and as curatorial assistant to Larry List for the exhibition *The Art of Chess* at the Reykjavik Museum. In 2013 she was commissioned to write an essay for the scholarly online journal *Viralnet.net* in association with California Institute of the Arts, as well as contributing text to the catalog for the Palazzo Preckham exhibition at the 55th Venice Biennale.

Andrew Nissim McClintock was born in El Paso, TX, on January 1st, 1972. After identifying her son as a prodigy at just seven years old, his mother sent him to live in San Miguel de Allende. There, he was placed under the tutelage of his uncle, a direct descendent of Diego Rivera, and forced into an intense regimen of al fresco brushwork training. By the age of sixteen, McClintock had painted a number of prestigious political murals throughout Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Michoacán, making him an enemy of the then-powerful military regime. Shunning his burgeoning political status, McClintock vanished from the fresco scene and re-invented himself as a sport fishing guide off Punta La Bufadora. It was there he built his first Gutenberg press out of driftwood and began printing a local arts and culture magazine by hand along the Pacific coast. Over the years, the magazine would grow to become the prestigious *SFAQ*, along with its sister offshoot *DFAQ*. But always true to his technique, McClintock still hand-tiles and prints each copy of *SFAQ* and *DFAQ* on a traditional Gutenberg rack.

Carlo McCormick is a senior editor at *Paper Magazine* and a critic and curator based in NYC.

Julio César Morales employs a range of media and visual strategies as an artist, educator, and curator exploring issues of migration, underground economies, and labor on personal and global scales. Morales's work has been shown in many venues including San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (Denmark), Museo Tamayo (Mexico City, Mexico), and in bi/triennials including Lyon, San Juan, Istanbul, and Singapore. His collaboration with Eamon Ore-Giron (Los Jaichackers) will be featured in the forthcoming Prospect 3 Biennale in New Orleans curated by Franklin Sirmans. Morales's work has been written about in *The New York Times*, *Artforum*, *Flash Art*, *Frieze*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Art in America*, and *Art Nexus* amongst others. He has received awards from The Rockefeller Foundation, The Creative Work Fund, Artadia, The San Francisco Arts Commission's Public Art Program, Printed Matter, and others. Morales is currently the Curator of Contemporary Art at The Arizona State University Art Museum.

Nicholas O'Brien is a net-based artist, curator, and writer. His work has appeared across the U.S. and internationally, including venues in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York City, Mexico, Berlin, London, and Italy. He has also been featured in several publications, including *ARTINFO*, *Art F City*, *Sculpture Magazine*, *Dazed Digital*, *The Creators Project*, *DIS*, *ilkethisart*, *Frieze d/e*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, and *The New York Times*. He is currently living in Brooklyn working as a visiting artist professor and gallery director for the Department of Digital Art at Pratt Institute. More info can be found at doubleunderscore.net.

Joseph del Pesco is founding director of the San Francisco branch of the Kadist Art Foundation. Located at 20th and Folsom in the Mission district, Kadist presents events and exhibitions, hosts artists for residencies, and collects contemporary art.

Mark Van Proyen is an artist and art critic based in northern California. His writings have appeared in *Art in America*, *Art Issues*, *CAA Reviews*, *New Art Examiner*, *Bad Subjects*, *Art Practical*, and *Square Cylinder*.

John Rapko is a Bay Area-based philosopher whose work is primarily in the fields of art philosophy, art history, and ethics. He has taught and lectured in several art schools, colleges, and universities in the Bay Area, including UC Berkeley and Stanford, as well as in South America and Europe. He currently teaches art history at the College of Marin and ethics and the philosophy of art at CCA. He has published academic writing in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, the *British Journal of Aesthetics*, and the *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, and art criticism in *Artweek* and at *art-critical.com*. He disdains the haughtiness of the art world, but finds it increasingly amusing. As for education, he received his Ph.D from the University of California, Berkeley, but for his real education he owes his influence to Mark Van Proyen, whose legacy has helped him to realize that he is not the most cynical person on Earth.

Lele Saveri was born in Rome in 1980. He studied photography at the University of Greenwich in London. Besides working as a freelance photographer, for various international magazines such as *Vogue*, *l'Uomo Vogue*, *Rolling Stone*, *Vice*, *GQ*, *I-D*, amongst others, he worked as photo editor for *Vice* magazine from 2007 to 2011. Since 2012 he has been running 8-Ball Zine Fair, a biannual fair dedicated to self-publishing, always happening in different pool-halls in NYC (and recently also in San Francisco). Since 2013, Lele has also run and curated Muddguts, a project space in Brooklyn, N.Y., where he lives and works.

Alain Servais is a happy father of two girls. He is Flemish and was educated at Le Collège Saint-Michel and was trained in investment banking at Drexel, Burnham, Lambert on Wall Street and at SocGen Strauss. He serves as the head of international bond trading at Banque Dewaay in Brussels and does independent consulting for banks in the management of asset-backed securities. As well, Servais is the designer and founder of Registr'art, the service company to private collectors and of the smartphone app European Art Tour (E.Art.T). He is an avid information-sharer via Twitter and can be followed @aservais1.

Gianni Simone escaped from his home country in 1992 and found refuge in Japan, where he promptly found a job teaching people how to shout HELP! and avoid being robbed on foreign buses. Since 1997 he has been unhealthily active in the mail art network, unleashing on the unsuspecting public, among other things, the *Treatise of Pataphysical Anatomy* and the international fake political campaign poster project. He has recently opened the Stickerman Museum—Tokyo Annex. When not running after his two kids and from his wife, he is usually busy making zines, writing for high- and low-brow magazines, and exploring Tokyo.

Ben Valentine is an independent writer who studies how tech, creativity, and politics intersect. Ben works with *The Civic Beat* and has written or spoken for SXSW, Salon, *Hyperallergic*, YBCA, and *VICE*, to name a few. Ben also helped organize the *World's First Tumblr Symposium* with *Hyperallergic*, is an Internet Archive's *Tumblr* resident, and was formerly a *Tumblr* Fellow for the 2014 Personal Democracy Forum. Ben travels.

John Zarobell is assistant professor of international studies and program chair of European studies at the University of San Francisco. Formerly, he held the positions of assistant curator at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and associate curator at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. He is a regular contributor to periodicals, has written for numerous exhibition catalogues, and has published in *Art History*, *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, and the *Berkeley Review of Latin-American Studies*. His first book *Empire of Landscape* was published in 2010, and he is currently working on his next: *Art and the Global Economy*.

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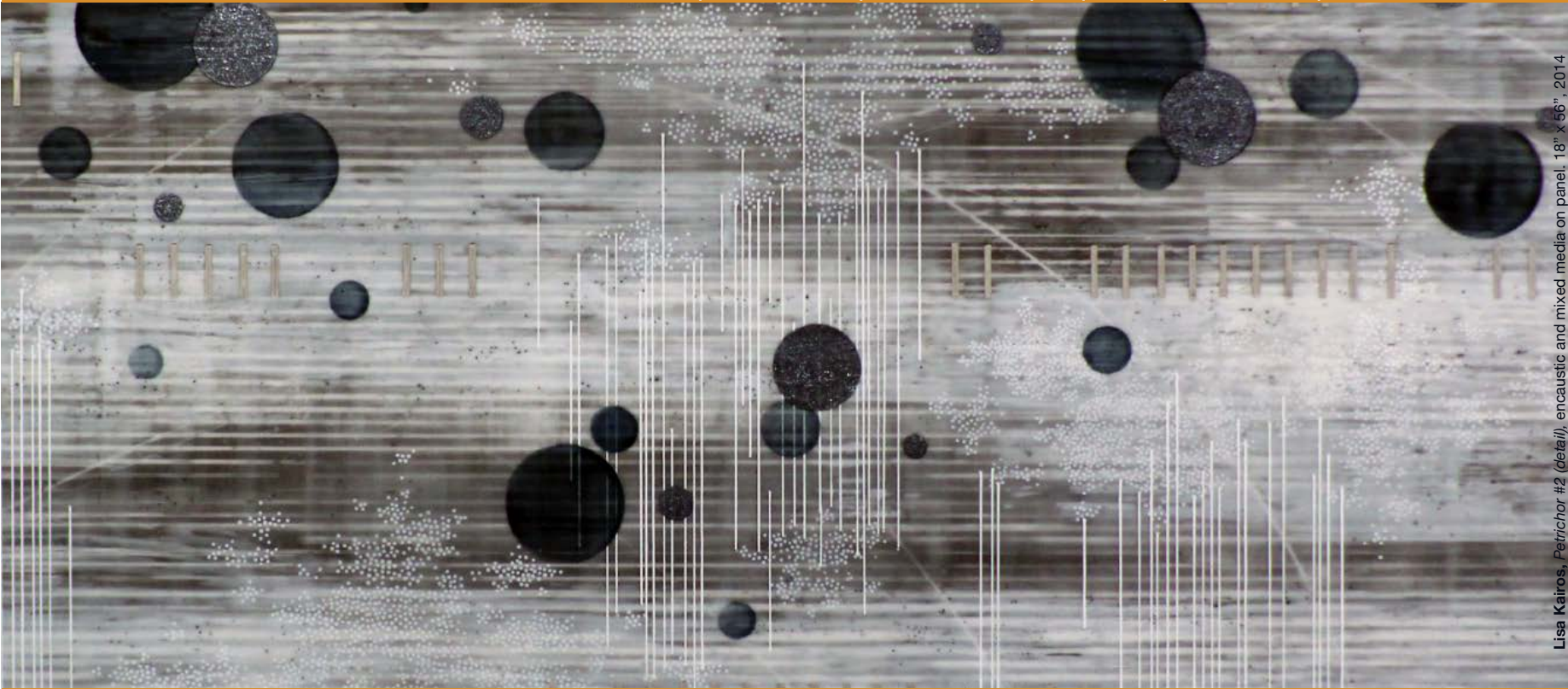
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Lisa Kairos, *Petrichor #2* (detail), encaustic and mixed media on panel, 18" x 56", 2014

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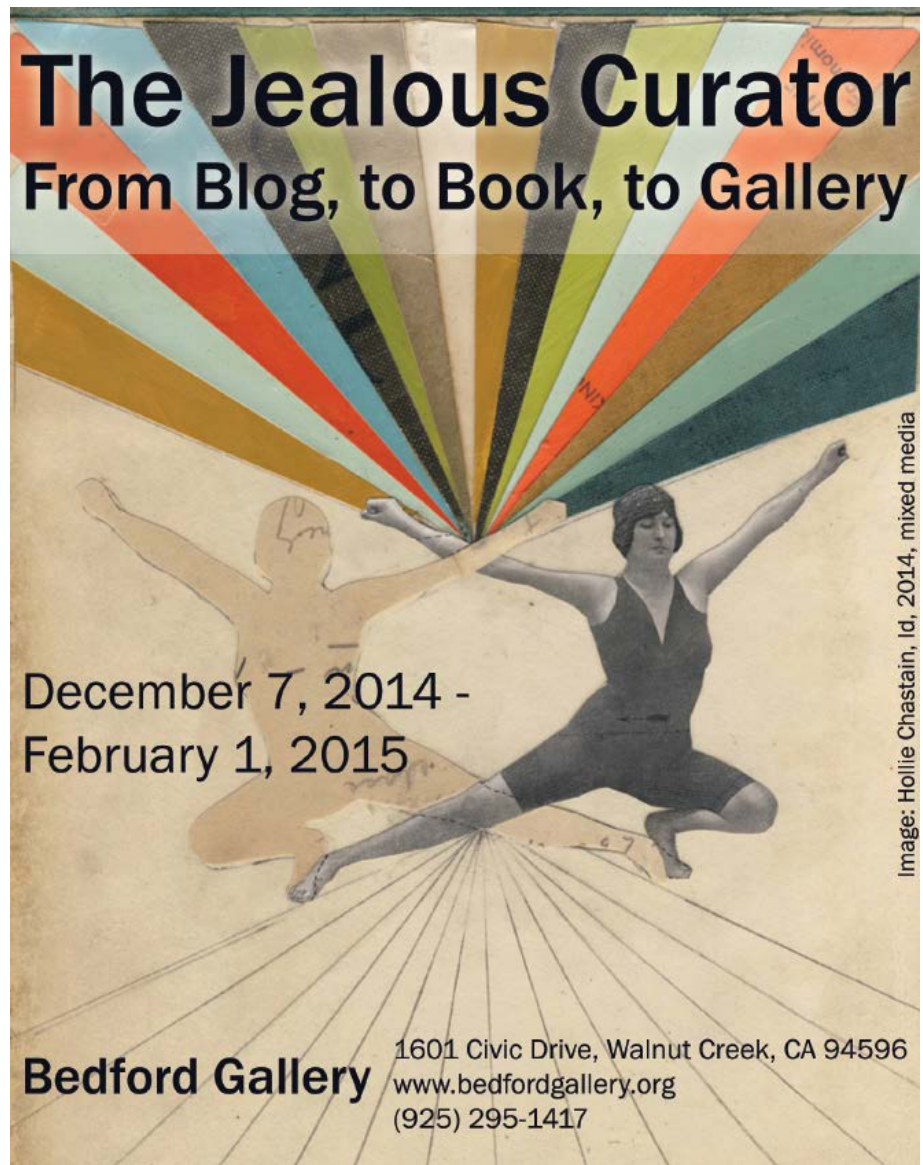
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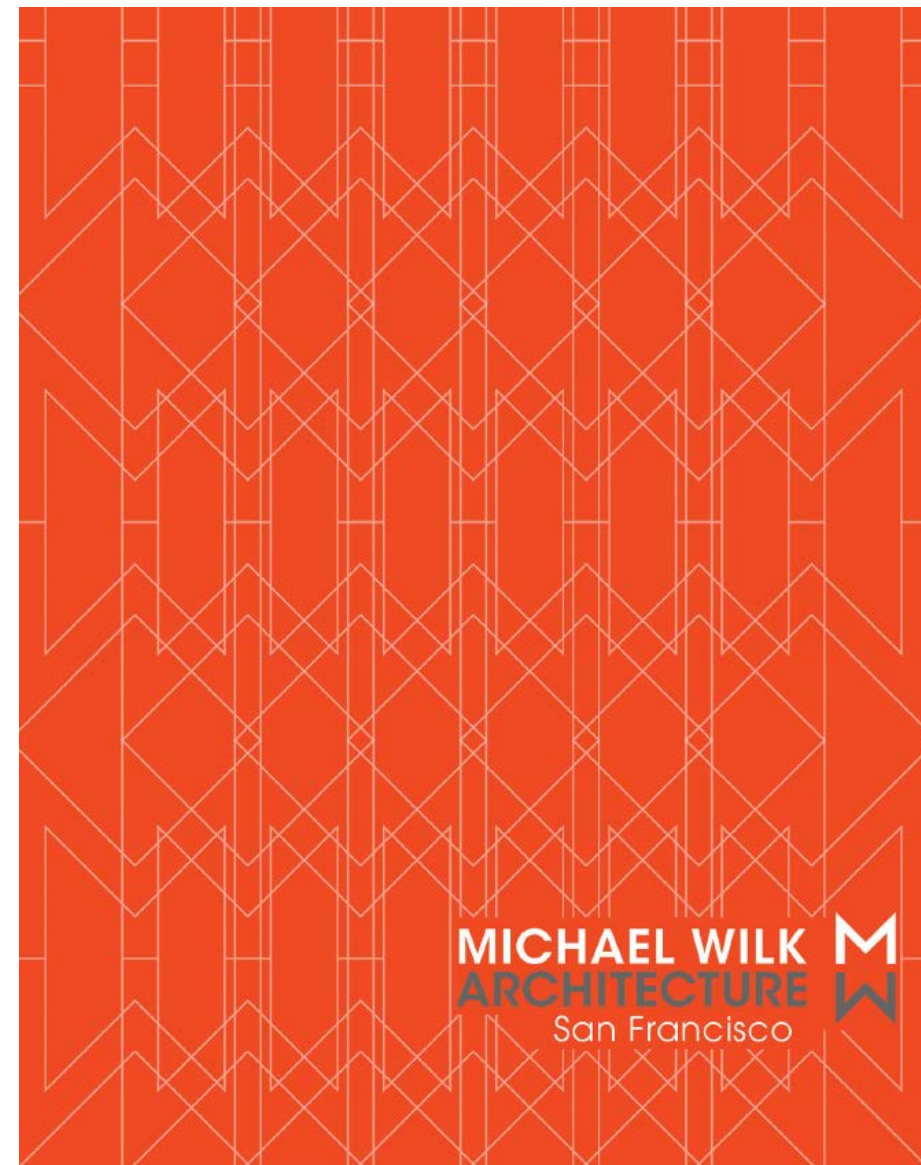
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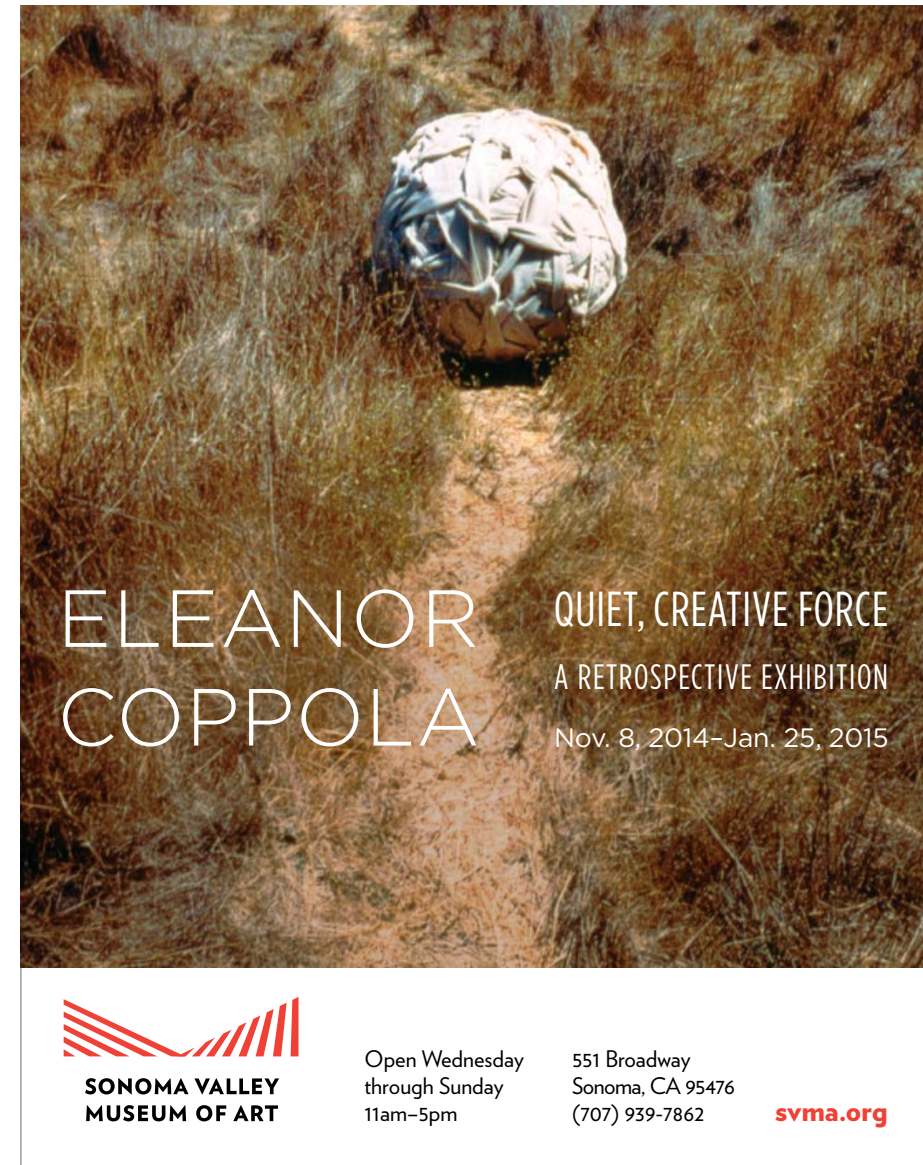
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Image: Hollie Chastain, id., 2014, mixed media

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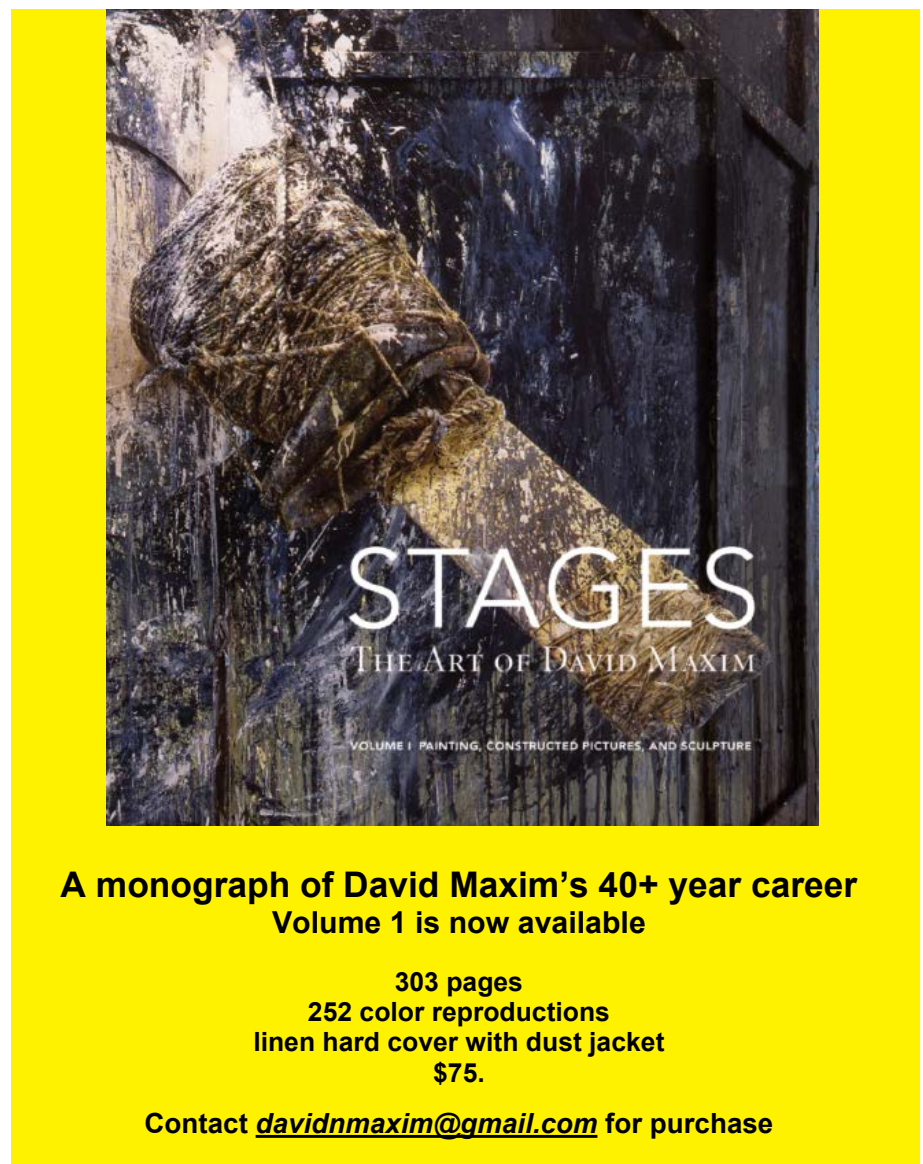
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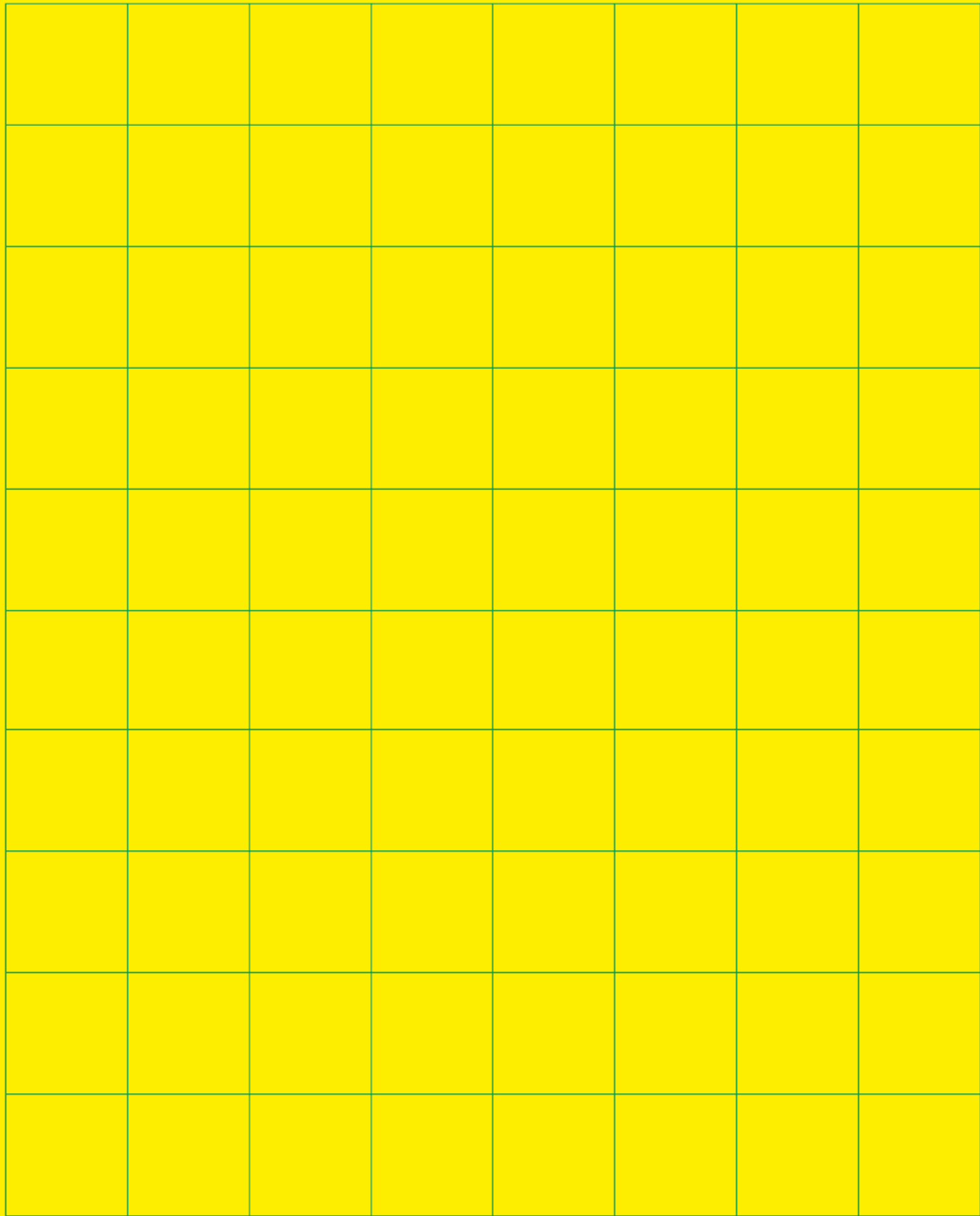
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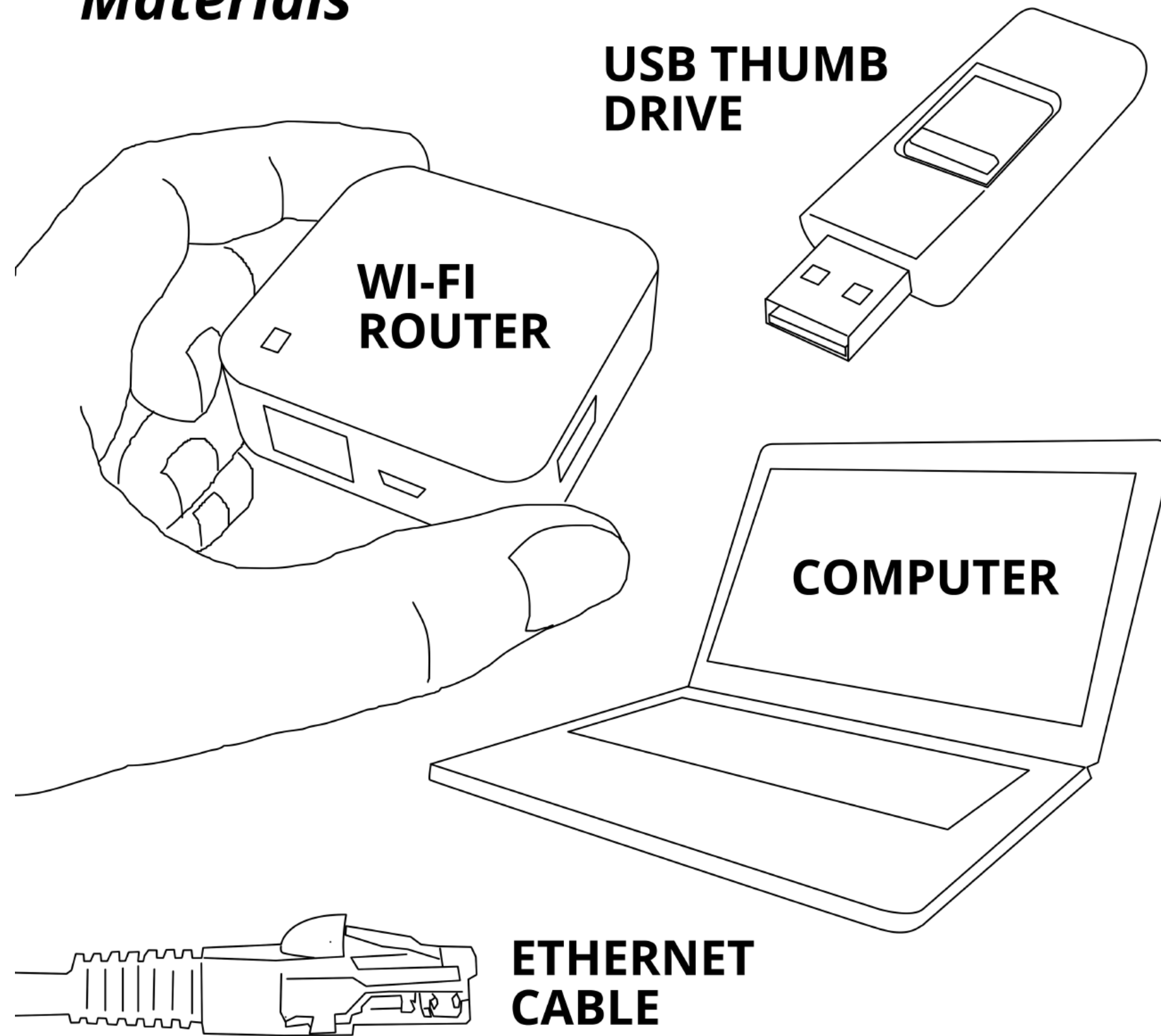
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- **Run the script
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- **Join Wi-Fi network OCCUPY.HERE**
- **Visit <http://occupy.here/> and invite your neighbors**

For a detailed DIY installation guide, visit occupyhere.org

SFAQ Issue 18 Columns

Searching For A Citizens’ Media, Online

Ben Valentine
34-35

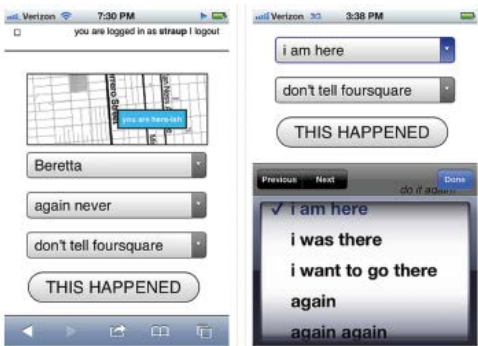
Mainstream media is often damaging to wide ranges of people or, as in the case of the devastation at Ferguson, Missouri, fails to report all together. We are coming to see both sides of the technological double-edge sword and the implications of access to user-created media distributed through social platforms. Citizens’ media—democratic, free, and truly representative of its co-creators—has so far only been glimpsed, but we must focus on its future.



Islands In The Stream: On Local Networks & Internet Freedom

Ingrid Burrington
36-37

If you could remake the Internet from scratch with all the knowledge of the current history of the Internet, what would it be like? We think of “the Internet” as one massive entity, an external river though which we swim. But as ulterior Internets arise, from user-created LANs to neighborhood Wifi networks, how do we shape the future of the Internet?



Toward A Folk Video Game (Part Two)

Nicholas O'Brien
38-39

When does a video game become more than a platform for gamers? What does it mean when development shifts into the hands of the players and the mechanics of control are manipulated to change a game entirely? Broadcasting play through the Internet, altering the intention of developers, and recent questions of social ethics in gaming brought about by #gamergate fuel the second part of this search.



On Point 2.04

Mark Van Proyen
40-41

As biennials and triennials grow exponentially around the world, two exhibitions that represented the art of Northern and Southern California occurred simultaneously. *Made in L.A.* and *Bay Area Now 7*, both billed as showcasing the most exciting works in contemporary art today, slid into lackluster disappointment and cultural fetishism.



Liminal Space

Carlo McCormick
42-43

The real and metaphoric interstitial spaces between here and there are riddled with anxiety. Like security checkpoints at airports and bridges between cities, we expect art to take us somewhere, so we're going to have a problem with it when it creates a kind of waiting room of persistent indeterminacy. Threats of terrorism explode across headlines when a white flag replaces the American one on the Brooklyn Bridge, but a simple phrase quells the masses: “It’s art.”



Diabolical Self-Subversion

John Rapko
44-45

Pulling from the second chapter of his book *Achievement, Failure, Aspiration: Three Attempts to Understand Contemporary Art*, John Rapko questions the ethics of using the blatant murder of animals and desecration of their corpses for artistic and curatorial aggrandizement. Can a work of art be evil? What are the responsibilities of viewers and how are we implicated in participation?



Misreading The Art Market

John Zarobell
46-47

Though auction house giants Christie's and Sotheby's share between them 500 years of experience and command 38% of the global art auction market, they do not create the full composition of the art market. Through the flipping of and the continued growth in art as part of one's investments, auction houses are contributing to the damaging reasons people buy art. Have we moved into an era of art ownership not out of love but as part of an asset portfolio, or can alternative art exchanges arise?



Art In The Shadow Of Art Market Industrialization: Moving Toward A Sustainable Ecosystem

Alain Servais
48-51

Since the year 2000, the financial volume of art at auction has gone from \$41 million to \$826 million in 2013. With this new injection of wealth driving a chomping-at-the-bit urge to buy and sell, something is getting lost in the mix. Galleries tour the world attending art fairs and auction houses set up outposts in every major city around the globe, but the relationships that foster the growth of artists are deteriorating as each party moves quickly to make another dollar. Industrialization and greed are destroying the art world, but a new ecosystem of support may flourish in the wake.



The Hidden Story In The U.S. Immigration Debate (Part One)

Anthony Choice-Diaz
52-53

In 2006, the proposed H.R. 4437 legislation, otherwise known as the Sensenbrenner Bill, sought to enforce any association with undocumented persons as harboring a criminal, making such an act a punishable offense. So outraged were documented and undocumented immigrants that over the course of several months millions marched in protest in the streets. Between then and 2014, immigration rights have only worsened as more incarceration and deportation of immigrants has occurred than in any other time in U.S. history, garnering Obama's administration the title of “The Great Deportation.” Anthony Choice-Diaz tracks the history, and the wars, that have been waged against immigration in the United States.



Searching For A Citizens’ Media, Online

By Ben Valentine

“For surely we shall pay for using this most powerful instrument of communication to insulate the citizenry from the hard and demanding realities which must be faced if we are to survive. I mean the word survive literally.”

—Edward R. Murrow, from his famous 1958 speech, “Wires and Lights in a Box.”

If not for social media, few of us would have ever heard of Michael Brown’s death in Ferguson, Missouri. Police kill close to one hundred African Americans every year, so Brown’s death was not deemed newsworthy. In the aftermath of the shooting of the unarmed teen, protests went on for two days before being covered by major broadcast² media outlets: three days and nights of demonstrations before national media began a conversation about race and policing in this country. Thanks to the people of Ferguson taking to the streets and sharing their rallying cries and protests on social media using hashtags, images, videos, and impactful messaging, protesters broke through mass media silence on a topic in dire need of more attention.

Social media has been lauded for its integral role in mass protest movements around the world. Egyptians occupying Tahrir Square and Turks occupying Gezi relied heavily on Facebook and Twitter for real news—news that could indeed save their lives—that was almost entirely absent from mass media reporting. Social media has been celebrated in these instances as media by and for the people; a citizen media. But that’s not the entire picture.

Firstly, what is “citizen media”? There are many thinkers in this field, often using slightly different terminology. Courtney C. Radsch, journalist, media expert, and freedom of expression advocate calls this type of empowered social media “citizen journalism,” which she defines as:

“An alternative and *activist* form of newsgathering and reporting that functions outside mainstream media institutions, often as a repose to shortcomings in the professional journalistic field, that uses similar journalistic practices but is driven by different objectives and ideals and relies on alternative sources of legitimacy than traditional or mainstream journalism.”³

To Radsch, while citizen journalism “functions outside of mainstream media institutions,” its value is seen almost entirely in relationship to external power structures, namely mass media and politicians. This is not a media by and for the people but by the people and for society, for power structures, and for change.

Looking deeper for a definition of media “by and for the people,” we find Clemencia Rodriguez, professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Oklahoma who coined the term “citizens’ media.” In Rodriguez’s book *Citizens’ Media Against Armed Conflict: Disrupting Violence in Colombia*, she details her findings from years of investigating media’s role in peacekeeping in Colombia, and defines citizens’ media as “those media that facilitates the transformation of individuals into citizens.”

It is important that we understand “citizen” here as separate from legal citizenship to a nation or the right to vote, but rather as a self-determined state of being, “defined by daily political action and engagement.” Rodriguez’s citizens’ media stands in contrast to Radsch’s citizen journalism because the focus is internal and based on hyper-local transformation. She believes that “the goal is not to communicate, express, or inform, but instead *to perform* all those local identities, values, ways of life, cultural practices, and forms of interaction.” In this way, while there are many examples of citizens filling in for the inadequacies of the press, Rodriguez’s citizens’ media is a truly individually run and focused media, and consequently, is much harder to find on social media by design.

I define social media as a media environment that enables users to connect with each other as well as create and share content. While some definitions of social media focus solely on the users’ production of and interaction with media, we cannot forget the hardware and software that house that activity. In this understanding, social media from, for example, a Russian user of VKontakte, Russia’s most popular social network, is to be understood as different from that of a user on Twitter living in Iceland. Local laws can affect what is deemed legal to say or do on a platform. Every platform has differing affordances like file formats, text size, and types of filtering. Furthermore, the cultural makeup and diversity of the community of users on differing platforms make for very different media.

Social media platforms are mediators for communication. The algorithms they use to select what you see (what posts on Facebook you see, what is “trending” on Twitter, who you should follow, etc.) are often based on user data, but users are not in control. Emily Bell, the director of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia, writes, “The most powerful distributor of news now is . . . an algorithm governing how items are displayed to the billion active users on Facebook.”⁴ Social networks are increasingly becoming the arbiters of political discourse, news, and interpersonal communications, all of which rely on profiting from the data you share. For this reason, we are seeing a growing need for more transparent social media platforms.

Christian Sandvig, faculty associate of the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard, writes, “In effect Facebook is re-ordering your conversations with your friends and family on the basis of whether or not someone mentioned Coke, Levi’s, and Anheuser Busch.” Many users shrug this off as it has almost become an accepted given of free online media, but Sandvig pushes harder. “Corrupt personalization is the process by which your attention is drawn to interests that are not your own.” Just as author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie said in her TED talk, “Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person.”⁵ Subtle affordances of platforms can steer or invent new stories about us. The result is antithetical to a media by and for the people.

Furthermore, all of this “user-generated content,” which is actually very affected by the platform, sits inside of a complex infrastructure few of us know

anything about, let alone control. When compared to how few channels there were on TV not that long ago, many celebrate the number of blogs and social media accounts as evidence of current media’s diversification. However, the most fundamental infrastructure of the Internet consists of only thirteen tier 1 Networks,⁶ eight of which are based in the U.S. These are the cables through which all our data passes. So, can we really say *our* data?

Yes and no. We do own our data in many ways. We can create anything legal, share it in a way the social network allows, and delete it if we choose. We can sell the images we add to other venues. However, many platforms keep and profit from the data, *even if you “delete” it*. While we can sell the images we have shared, so too is the social platform selling information and even the images themselves.

Bruce Schneier, a computer security and privacy expert, said that these technologies do magnify power, but governments and corporations have more power to magnify, thereby continuing the imbalance. Schneier said, “At a most fundamental model, we are tenant farming for companies like Google. We are on their land producing data.”⁷ Tenant farming is a notoriously unjust economic and power relationship where an institution or individual with deep wealth and power negotiates an agreement with someone with little wealth or power. Needless to say, the owner of the land usually profits greatly. As Mark Zuckerberg’s net worth passes \$34 billion⁸ after founding Facebook only ten years ago, the metaphor rings true.

But does this honestly matter? Absolutely. While people of course make media by and for themselves even within capital-driven systems, understanding the influences of those systems and how they might interrupt or override the user’s goals is integral to our understanding citizens’ media. Planning protests, visiting legal organizations, using privacy software, attending legal demonstrations, etc., are all acts that, while historically protected under our constitution, have come to merit targeted surveillance. The repercussions and fear associated with this type of surveillance can be even worse outside of the U.S. The right to free speech, to privacy, and to assembly, i.e., the bedrocks of democracy, which are integral to a robust citizens’ media, are being stripped by governments and corporations en masse.

While nobody seriously debates the influence of pens vs. pencils on discourse, the technologies used for discussion have changed dramatically. The undeniable value of keeping a journal, writing love letters, and writing calls to action remains. Nevertheless, the tools we use to do so work in very different ways today. Issues of surveillance arise throughout these systems that stand to moot the concrete opportunities for empowerment they present.

Rodriguez spends a lot of energy emphasizing the off-air aspects of citizens’ media. While on-air programming was the obvious product, workshops, conferences, parties, public screenings, and more were *integral* aspects of Rodriguez’s idea of citizens’ media. Similarly, given the limitations of citizens’ media on so-



Graffiti supporting Twitter and Facebook in Tahrir Square, Egypt. Courtesy of the Internet.

cial media, I believe that workshops, offline meetings, legal battles, privacy tools, and institutional support become integral to a citizens’ media. Without serious improvements in digital literacy for the greater population, we remain at the whims of larger corporate and governmental interests.

There is a plethora of organizations enabling citizens to speak and use media safely and effectively, and their partnership with all of us holds the most power to make social media safe for citizens. Organizations like WITNESS, the Center for Media Justice, Prometheus Radio Project, Free Press, Freedom of the Press Foundation, Electronic Frontier Foundation, International Modern Media Institute, Reporters Without Borders, Committee to Protect Journalists, Global Voices, and so many more realize that digital literacy extends beyond understanding how to post online or send an email.

What few users understand and have time to learn is how many laws, interests, technical issues, and even issues of infrastructure intersect with our daily communications. Fighting for municipal broadband, data retention laws, issues of jurisdiction of networked content, algorithmic filtering, etc., all intersect when considering a citizens’ media online, and most users, including me, need and deserve better help navigating than the corporations offering us Internet and social platforms are willing to offer.

The media that we consume is constantly reestablishing who we are and what type of society we want to be. Citizens’ media is a democratic and free media, truly representative of its co-creators and therefore best suited to represent our ideas, cultures, and debates. While social media has increasingly become the home for our society’s conversations, it has also become a confluence of private and governmental interests obfuscated by law and code.



Participants in the #iftheygunnedmedown used two photographs of themselves to question media representation of young African American men. Courtesy of the Internet

1)www.rtdna.org/content/edward_r_murrow_s_1958_wires_lights_in_a_box_speech#.UrkNdl050mx
2) http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/08/20/cable-twitter-picked-up-ferguson-story-at-a-similar-clip/
3)http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2161601
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7)http://threatpost.com/bruce-schneier-technology-magnifies-power-in-surveillance-era/105365#sthash.SKA2TEoc.dpuf
8) http://www.forbes.com/profile/mark-zuckerberg/

Islands In The Stream: On Local Networks & Internet Freedom

By Ingrid Burrington

If you could remake the Internet from scratch with all the knowledge of the current history of the Internet, what would it be like? What kind of communications would you want to create? What kind of services? What kind of *scale* would your Internet have?

These are not exactly the questions that come with Commotion Wireless's Construction Kit, but they're implicit in the process of trying to think through building a new, local network. Commotion, a project of the New America Foundation's Open Technology Institute (OTI), is a free, open-source tool designed to help groups setup and maintain mesh networks without necessarily having in-depth technical knowledge. Articles and essays about local networks (like this one!) cite Commotion as an example pretty regularly, in part because it offers an undeniable use case: resilience in a crisis. OTI had worked with a community organization in Red Hook, Brooklyn, to set up a mesh network in the neighborhood (Red Hook WiFi). While not particularly utilized at first, the network proved incredibly valuable in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, acting as a local resource for information, and later as a gateway connecting the mesh to a satellite uplink provided by FEMA.

While the particular use case of a crisis response is an awesome reason to support localized infrastructure, I'm honestly more interested in how Red Hook WiFi provided hyper-local services to the neighborhood—the local network hosted an app surveying residents about their experiences with stop-and-frisk, and another provided real-time status updates on the B61, the primary bus line serving Red Hook. It's great that Red Hook WiFi acts as a bridge to connect the neighborhood to the web, but it's also a way to connect people in the area to each other, addressing policy issues and providing services.

Red Hook WiFi is a network that operates at a neighborhood scale, offering the option to connect to the worldwide scale. In contrast, Dan Phiffer's occupy,here is both humbly and critically anti-scale. Initially prototyped during Occupy Wall Street, occupy,here is firmware that turns a single router into a small local area network (LAN—basically, a network of machines, near to one another, that can talk to each other but that aren't connected to the web) hosting a simple forum application. Users can create handles or be anonymous, and can upload and add images and files to the forum. It's been presented mostly in art contexts since Occupy, although I've tried it out as a hyper-local backchannel at conferences and Phiffer is interested in other applications for it.

What's the purpose of a network that "connects" people who are less than a thousand feet apart? If two people are right next to each other, why not just communicate directly, face to face? Why would you have a forum application for people who are, if not a block apart, *in the same room*? In the context of Occupy Wall Street, the project had incredibly pragmatic applications. In a gallery, it's not always clear what users are supposed to do. What would happen in a less formal context—a high school hallway, a hotel lobby, an apartment complex?

Somewhere between Phiffer's super-local occupy,here and Red Hook WiFi might be projects like Aaron Straup Cope's. Cope has an uncanny tendency for building things that serve needs people didn't realize they had, in particular the need to be able to put our stuff somewhere. Recognizing that online platforms die and fail without necessarily offering backups, Cope began building things that hooked into platform infrastructure to provide exit strategies from them. Parallel-flickr takes a user's Flickr login information and allows them to generate a backup of their Flickr account that honors their existing permission settings. Another project, PrivateSquare, allows a user the same check-in and sharing functionality of FourSquare with the option to push that information to FourSquare or keep it stored with the PrivateSquare instance. It turns a sharing platform into a place diary, subverting the network into an archive. Cope's projects are a form of network-gleaning, using loose threads of the web to weave together a more personal and controllable experience.

At the heart of Commotion, occupy,here, and projects like PrivateSquare are questions also central to debates over surveillance and net neutrality. Who owns the infrastructure, and do/can we trust them? What, if anything, do the owners of infrastructure owe to their users? How much digital literacy should be required of a user, and to what extent is that expectation of literacy victim-blaming? We forget, at our own peril, how relatively new the net actually is. Humans are still learning how to *live* online, suspended in uneasy public-private protocols; the past two decades have made it more, not less confusing. The expectation of expertise assumes that expertise is even possible and encourages a particularly nasty strain of techno-libertarianism. To borrow an example from surveillance debates: the assumption held by some that deep knowledge of cryptography is a prerequisite for maintaining privacy online—and that those who don't learn don't "deserve" that privacy—also assumes everyone has the time, energy, and skills to learn it. Which, to parallel a real-life example, suggests that if you can't treat a gunshot wound by yourself, you don't deserve medical care. Do we all have to be able to configure and setup our own server racks to feel like we are using an Internet that's *ours*?

Popular rallying cries of Internet activists these days speak to "taking back" and "resetting" the Internet. The implicit assumption in this framing is that the Internet *used* to be one way, and it's not that way anymore because someone has damaged it—government agencies, giant ISPs, information infrastructure companies.

For those who might relate to this framing, there's an understanding that the Internet used to be smaller—or, at least, it used to *feel* smaller. You could talk to lots of people online, but the circle of strangers you connected to was still personal, still meaningful. If strangers appeared, they were only occasionally monsters. The Weird Old Internet didn't have algorithms filtering information to please you or hyper-targeted ads. The net that we're supposedly "taking

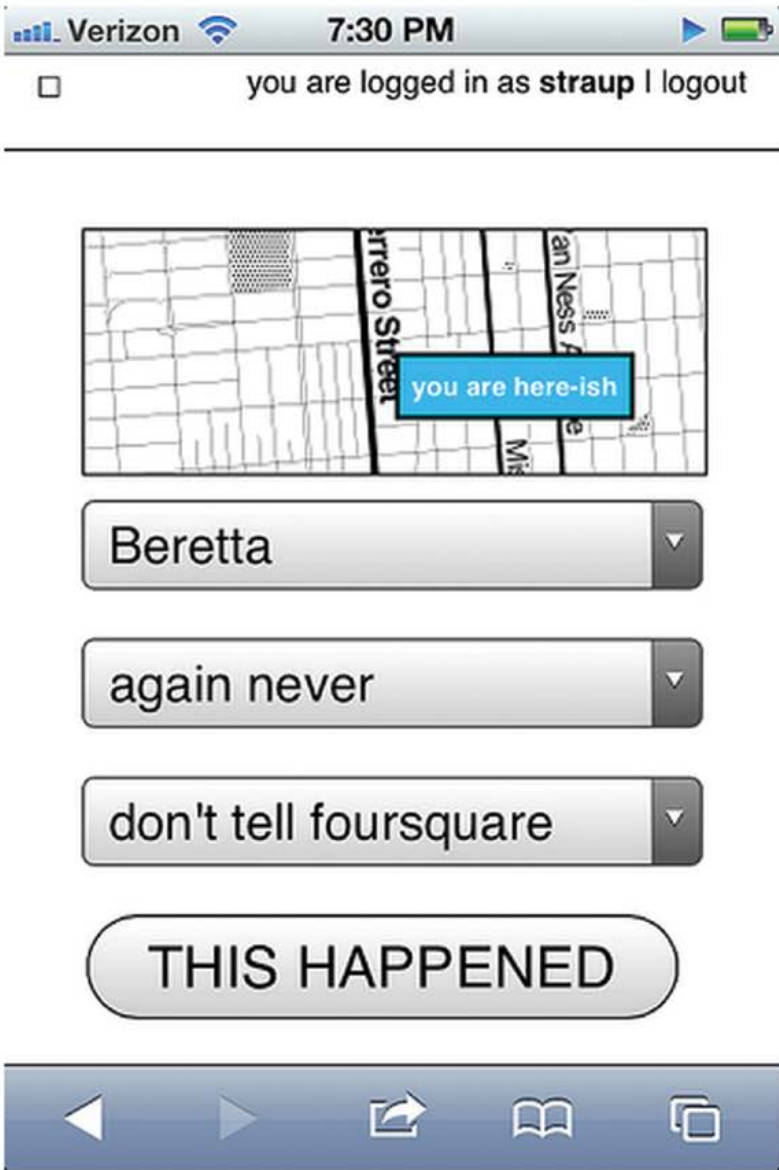
back" was, we're led to believe, a more empathetic, human one.

It was also slow, difficult to use, and to some extent a far more homogeneous population expressing empathy with each other. It was a lot of weirdos, enthusiasts, hobbyists—many of whom were men, many of whom were white. (The writer and my friend Joanne McNeil has informally referred to this as "the Internet of dads," a term that I hope is understood as a term of critical compassion—we love the dads who built the Internet the way a teenage girl loves and resents her dad, some of my best friends are dads, etc.). Parts of the Weird Old Internet were great, but it's up for debate whether it was any safer for or accessible to the marginalized voices that have made the web such a galvanizing political force in the last few years.

My fear, then, when we talk about *taking back* the net is that we're somehow also *going back* to a net that may have not existed, or may not have been as magical as we think it was. While I have my own fond, fuzzy memories of a Weird Old Internet of my own making, I don't really believe that was everyone's Internet, and I don't really *want* that Internet back.

Going hyper-local won't save the Internet from the machinations of Comcast, Google, or the State any more than a rhetorical "reset" will. A local network's community is as self-selecting as the Weird Old Internet's was. To suggest that we simply build new Internets in the face of the current one's complexity and toxicity has its own risks, mainly of creating the kind of fiefdoms and walled gardens that the fight for net neutrality seeks to prevent. To some extent the local "offline" network risks creating more elite backchannels, now merely enforced by signal reach rather than social dynamics.

In the background of every contentious discussion of the future of the network is a tricky, sentimental thing: trust. People don't really like to talk about trust when they talk about resetting or fixing the net, because right now, the technical fixes for trust at the network level are still somewhat rickety, opaque, and easily (and apparently frequently) betrayed. And, to some extent, the infrastructure is so massive that to default to distrust is to withdraw from the whole. We can't build a new Internet; we can perhaps only pray that the tubes and pipes haven't been corroded to their core. To default to trust, to *offer* trust, is a frightening thing in a fragile world. For all their shortcomings, perhaps the greatest value in smaller, localized network projects is working at a more human scale—one that allows for trust and accountability—than transatlantic cables or social networks. While small, local networks aren't a panacea, I believe in their potential because I believe in *people* more than I believe in corporations or nation-states. As more groups experiment with localized networks, as we build more islands in the stream of the net, our archipelagos will also need strong, sturdy bridges.



Privatesquare, a web application to record and manage a private database of Foursquare check-ins. Developed by Aaron Straup Cope in 2012.



Occupy,here, a router that establishes a local area network from any mobile device. Created by Dan Phiffer in parallel with the Occupy movement.

Toward A Folk Video Game

By Nicholas O'Brien
(Part Two)

The question, unresolved from part one, remains: how does a developer or a gaming community initiate a folk tradition with video games? By looking at *Goat Simulator*, one can observe some initial steps towards creating such a tradition by generating development or content through discourse. First developed as a joke, *Goat Simulator* came into being through community participation and support, purchasing of models from third-party vendors, and the purposefully sloppy implementation of the ragdoll physics of the Unreal 3 engine. The way in which *Goat Simulator* was conceived and developed provides an interesting account of how game development can be self-reflexive while also creating a space for non-developers to participate in the continued playability of a game long after its release. Because of this openness on the part of *Goat Simulator's* lead developer Armin Ibrisagic, the game has fostered an entire sub-community of supporters and enthusiasts to experiment with game development as a "low-stakes" commitment.

This generosity and light-heartedness—driven in part by the tools itself but also the community of contributors and enthusiasts—is the root of the development of a folk tradition within video games. As a result of Ibrisagic's development efforts the game quickly garnered attention and support from such unlikely sources as the magazine *Modern Farmer*. In this way, the game becomes more than merely an exercise in technique (albeit purposefully broken) and transcends outside of a cloistered player community. The joke-y quality of this title enabled the game to be considered of greater cultural value or merit than a title that only avid video game players could fully appreciate. Perhaps some of this is due to the absurdity of the gameplay, but some of it must also be attributed to how the game questions the absurdity of simulation games that attempt to present manual labor as leisure (as is the case with the *Truck Simulator* franchise).

That being said, generating discussion is not the same as generating discourse. The *Mordern Farmer* mention does signal a departure from insular game journalism, but the *discussion* does not contribute to *discourse* regarding contemporary agricultural practices. This is to say that the contribution of the game to the discourse of contemporary agricultural practices is only novelty, and not meaningful exchange. For a game to develop a folk tradition it must avoid novelty.

Although not outright a folk video game, *Goat Simulator* is tapping into two distinct powerful sources where folk traditions are emerging within video game culture: subversive play and modding. Subversive play is a broadly defined term used to identify communities of experimental play that are using games as they were not intended. The act of subversive play often occurs within small communities of avid players—especially with older video games—and can generate discourse (and peripheral participation) for non-players. One common method that highlights these peculiarities can be found within community speedrun campaigns. These gatherings often showcase an individual player's prowess and masterful knowledge of a game's designs, flaws, and engine abnormalities. Exposing these exploits often leads to radical shortcuts for traversing

a game without needing to complete time-consuming tasks. This type of subversive play becomes a kind of competition that goes against the original design of the game, repurposing the title into an entirely different kind of challenge.

However, the subversiveness of this gesture alone does not generate a folk tradition. Where this style of play starts to take on folk-like characteristics is when speedrun challenges create meaningful exchange outside of the game. Like a fun-run for charities, competitions like Classic Games Done Quick cull together speedrun players to raise money for organizations like the Prevent Cancer Foundation. When the game itself in these speedrun campaigns is merely a wrapper for initiating meaningful discourse via grassroots fundraising, a folk tradition starts to emerge. At this point, the game as playable media transcends being a device for entertainment and is instead used to serve a cause that services a community well beyond video game players. Speedruns that occurred during Classic Games Done Quick repurposed existing older titles and metamorphosed them into folk video games. But this happens only at the point where the subversive gesture of the speedrun creates discourse—or, in this case, benefits—in a cultural community beyond the scope of the players. The speedrun performed in isolation rarely creates discourse, even when documented and distributed through video channels on *twitch.tv*. Beating *A Link to the Past* in your parent's basement will never come close to developing a folk tradition.

Though *Goat Simulator* isn't a speedrun-style game, the somewhat arbitrary scoring mechanism undermines normative gameplay found in standard simulation games. The game itself reinforces the need for subversive play within game development, and underscores the desire of players to experiment within game spaces. However, as noted before, merely presenting subversive play strategies within *Goat Simulator* does not designate it as a folk video game. In order for *Goat Simulator* to become a folk video game the gestures of subversiveness would have to generate meaningful discourse outside of gaming culture—instead of only discussing the hilarious potential for broken physics simulation.

It could be argued that one limitation of *Goat Simulator* is that its intentions are too narrowly defined. Though the game was initially developed with education in mind, the audience never sought to extend beyond or develop discourse with individuals outside of gaming culture. In order to mitigate this, Ibrisagic always intended to release the game with a participatory component for amateur and casual developers. Thus, *Goat Simulator* points to another location where folk traditions are emerging within video game development: modding. Like many contemporary titles using unique and/or custom engines, Coffee Stain Studios decided to offer players an opportunity to contribute to the further development of the game in gesture of supporting the community that supported the creation of the game from the beginning.

Modders—amateur or semi-pro programmers, 3D modelers, and game developers—take the existing core of a game and modify the content for their own purposes. Several games released on Valve's Steam distribution platform have dedicated "workshops" where modders can share and distribute content. User-generated content varies from useful head-up display (HUD) changes to the impractical substitution of custom skins to turn your character into popular television characters (think playing *Left 4 Dead* as a teletubby). Running the gamut of from the helpful to the absurd, mods are a long-standing tradition of player-based contribution to all types of different games. The popularity and impact of modding has generated stand-alone titles, most notably observed in the development of the *Defense of the Ancients* franchise as a mod for Blizzard's *Warcraft* titles. Though limited to PC games, modding exists within a thriving community of player participation that often challenges and/or undermines developer intentions.

More recently, modding has become a platform for critical reflection that extends and exceeds preliminary game content. As a result, the strength of a game could be measured more on the strength of its modding community/activity than by its initial sales. Modding not only permits player participation, but it also greatly extends the longevity of a game's impact on gaming culture as well as affords a game more opportunity to initiate discourse outside of gaming culture. The criticality that contemporary modders are bringing to their communities is something Coffee Stain Studios's observed to be beneficial to their initial development intentions. Ibrisagic and his development team wanted to create a scenario where their initial criticality of simulation games could be carried on by the players of their game. They wanted the joke to live on.

Healthy modding communities like those that exist with Bethesda Studios' *Skyrim* shed light on the ways in which players want to create folk traditions within the existing normative structure of blockbuster game development. By noting this, one can argue that folk traditions within video games up until now have only occurred at the point of community activation. The willingness on the part of the user to, for instance, develop a mod for *Skyrim* which substitutes dragons for *Thomas the Tank Engine* trains speaks to the energies and desires of players to have titles engage in a conversation outside of games exclusively.

That being said, this example of model (and sound) substitution does not necessarily provide meaningful evidence that modding is the backbone of developing folk traditions within video games. If this were the case, one could argue that folk traditions have existed within video games since the release of *Little Big Planet*. Though modding is incredibly important for providing users with tools to create a folk tradition within video games, it's essential to note how these tools get used in order to initiate or foster discourse outside of gaming culture.



A regular dragon, not Thomas the Tank Engine, from *Skyrim*, developed by Bethesda Game Studios, 2011. Courtesy of the Internet.

One mod that was released earlier this year for *Civilization V* by Steam workshop user "Steph" comes very close to establishing a concise model for developing a folk tradition for video games. In the regular mechanic of the game, players can win through a variety of different resolutions between warring populations: diplomatic, dominance, cultural, etc. Steph's mod offers a new alternative through hosting the World Cup. At a glance, the mod is a way of reaching victory through hosting the premiere event for global fútbol. Similar to a diplomatic victory, the mod initiates a voting process to bid for hosting the world cup within your civilization, but instead of casting votes, your civilization provides production dividends. Once selected, the process of hosting requires substantial building of infrastructural improvements to your cities at an unreasonable building pace. In order to augment this new responsibility a new unique unit is provided (only available through this mod) called the "Migrant Worker." According to the Steam workshop page:

"The Migrant Worker is half the price of the regular worker and can only be bought. With additional movement, they are willing to work long hours without food or water. You hold their passports and salaries so they'll never stray—if they run too far from your territory and the heat doesn't kill them, there are literally countless afflictions and human rights abuses that will! They are the foundation on which your brand new stadiums rest on—or at least their bodies will be. But don't worry when they perish, with 1.4 million units to choose from, it's a never-ending supply of cheap labour!"

The mod, in effect, calls for players to consider the political and social weight of their civilization's quest for victory. By proposing that the metric of winning in *Civilization V* is without moral consciousness—i.e., a military victory has no refugees or diaspora—this mod provokes players to think of the implications of expanding their empire. Far from the morally devoid creation of a global society based on conquest of one kind or another that the *Civilization* franchise proposes, this mod puts the political implications of globalism at the forefront of player engagement. As a result, the modder ends her description with the pithy—yet charged—question: "Will you become an armchair activist as well as an armchair general?"



Skyrim, developed by Bethesda Game Studios, 2011. "Really Useful Dragons" Thomas the Tank Engine mod by Trainwiz and friends. Courtesy of the Internet.

By equating the process of hosting the world cup to the activities of a war, the modder suggests that this simulation must consider the cost of dominance and victory in the face of global capitalism and post-colonial theory. This mod situates the player of the game as an active agent of Western-centric logic, culpable in the dispersion of a cultural perspective fraught with unaddressed problematics. By generating a meaningful discourse around the dynamics and political implications of this simulation, Steph's mod develops a folk tradition within *Civilization V*.

Though pointing the finger at the seemingly apolitical tendencies of *Civilization* developer Firaxis (or game development in general), the FIFA World Cup Resolution Mod points to a discourse that appears neglectful, if not downright toxic. Conquest, empires, and creating imperial dominance—popular as they may be—might require more attention to nuance. Thus, the mod itself sheds light on the whole political precariousness of the game's (unintentionally colonial) stance. In effect, the mod retroactively suggests that the best way to avoid the political culpability of playing *Civilization V* might be in not playing altogether.

The subversive gesture of Steph's mod repurposes the game as a mechanism to discuss global politics, and as a result reformulates *Civilization V* as a site for developing a folk video game tradition. However, in doing so, the subversive gesture renders the game as a playable media—an essential quality for classifying it as a game—somewhat irrelevant for developing a discourse outside of video game culture. This being said, using the game's modding potential to discuss the ways gaming culture avoids such difficult yet pressing points of discourse, the mod itself acts more as a point of commentary than anything else. Though showing the political pitfalls of Firaxis's title is a significant folk-like gesture, doing so usurps the gameplay of *Civilization V* altogether. The gesture, powerful as it may be, becomes a stand-in for play itself. Which begs the question: are video games to be blamed for inconsiderate (or short-sighted) development, or is the way we play these games where we can find fault?

Perhaps the problem for contemporary developers and artists working within video games is not isolated to their medium precisely, but instead can be attribut-

ed to the current state of play within contemporary video game culture—or else culture at large. The development practices of contemporary indie and blockbuster companies should certainly be questioned, but the problem also requires examination at the point of reception and the ways players and non-players alike demarcate play as an activity isolated from the everyday concerns of society. Though play is essential to the establishment of human civilization (no pun intended here), as articulated by Johan Huizinga, the parameters of play's existence are perpetually put in opposition (or one step removed) from the rest of civilized cultural expression.

The pervasiveness of video games within popular culture has initiated this process of renegotiation where play lives and how play interfaces (and enhances) other forms of cultural expression. There is a mutual inclusivity between the development of a video game tradition and the breakdown of diverse play spaces. In other words, demarcating the space for play hinges on the development and fostering of folk traditions within video games. Though indie-arcades and game-jam conferences are locations where meaningful discourse is being explored through subversive play and modding, few attempts have been made to cross-pollinate this discourse with non-players.

Recent debates and conversations around #gamersgate, however, have suggested another possible alternative for the development of a folk video game tradition. This is through discourse itself, and not through play and/or gaming. By initiating a debate regarding the ethical imperatives of video games as a cultural platform of exchange—and highlighting the inequities that run rampant in the games industry—the most outspoken voices within #gamersgate are shaping a discourse that should speak to players and non-players alike (and as a result, for better or for worse, is garnering attention from a variety of non-player audiences). #gamersgate poses, aside from its contentious and fraught internal politics, a critical position for analyzing video games and players not through the development of products, but instead through the development of discourse. It is in this proposition that #gamersgate fosters a foundation for a folk tradition within video games.

On Point 2.04

By Mark Van Proyen

In a review of one of the past decade's many unmemorable Whitney Biennials, Peter Schjeldahl's takeaway was that we had come to a pass where critics would have to content themselves with parsing the narrowing gap between the pretty good and the not-so-hot, implying a point of final homeostasis that hovers around the kinda okay, with all of the boredom that appertains. To put additional words into his mouth, we might go on to say that, at that point, the entire art world had become a vastly interchangeable MFA exhibition, a place where the perpetual recirculation of threadbare clichés could proceed with impunity and without shame. So long as any viewer is willing to mask his or her intellectual dignity behind a smiley-face icon, it's also okay, mostly because any more exacting standard of seriousness and grand artistic ambition have gone the way of the dodo. As Andy Warhol put it in one of his more prophetic moments, "art is about liking things." And now, almost half a century later, we have lots of "liking" taking the forms of Yelp reviews, *Artforum* top ten lists (mercifully discontinued as of late), the odious Facebook like icon, and no good reason to continue the charade of the museum being a place where cultural production can be understood in terms that are any different from those of everyday entertainment.

On the biennial front, things haven't changed much, as can be surmised from the recent *Made in L.A.* exhibition that closed a few weeks ago at the Hammer Art Museum. It was all "kinda okay," but the longer I examined the work of 35 artists and artistic collaborations contained therein (curated by Connie Butler and Michael Ned Holte), the closer to "meh" the aggregate experience became. Certainly, the production values of the exhibition were impressive, earmarked by a judicious installation and a beautifully designed catalog that maybe looks a bit too high fashion for its own good. And the exhibition had a few high points, such as the room full of optically vibrating monochromatic paintings by Marcia Hafif and the ceramic works by Magdalena Surazé Frimkiss. But in other cases, the show lapsed into a kind of outright silliness larded with a stunning amount of selective art historical amnesia.

Said amnesia is relevant because Holte landed the curatorial gig as a response to his *Artforum* review of the original *Made in L.A.* exhibition from two years ago. There, he complained that the selections represented predicable and well-worn lineages that had no reason to be exhibited together, which as far as I can tell is the obvious problem with every biennial. Presumably, he would remedy this situation when given the curatorial car keys, and in some ways he did just that, in that the artists included in the recent exhibition hail from far more diverse gender and ethnic backgrounds. But despite this change of cast, for the most part, the work that they present is still attached to many of the same lineages that Holte earlier decried to be instances of "southern California navel gazing." It includes lots of work that seems to want to be critical of celebrity media pastiche only to tacitly admit a kind of dumb envy of it, much of which was featured in the line-up of regularly scheduled performance events that were part of the exhibition. If we were to take a peak at some back issues of *High Performance Magazine* from the early 1980s, we would remember where

we saw things much like it—in a three-decade old southern California tradition of performance artists such as Lowell Darling, John White, and Dark Bob who performed as stand-up allegorists of the special could-have-been-a-contenderism that was tinctured with existential dread. Their pre-cellphone work harked back to an older era of performance art taking place in a bygone age of cigarette-addled actors waiting for calls from their agents, calls that never came. Now we have the Internet to host such shenanigans. Lucky us.

We can also note that a sizable slice of *Made in L.A.* looked like a reunion of 2nd generation Mike Kelley impersonators (for example, the works by Samara Golden, Harry Dodge, and Barry Johnston), their inclusion no doubt intended as an *homage* to the artist who took his life in 2012, as well as an assertion of the continuing influence of his work on younger artists. It also bears noting here that, despite Kelley's international art world celebrity, even his earliest work was fully in step with a much longer-standing southern California interest in revealing the operations of the urban id that harks back to Ed Kienholz, Chris Burden, and the Kipper Kids—all of whom were very visible in the early 1970s. Where as Kelley's work extended this tradition by showing the uncanny aspects of its discrete structures and obsessive logics, the current crop seem far too content to imitate his handling of materials without fully grasping the depths of his sinister purposes, making their work look like Disney Channel versions of routine transgression. We also need to remember that it was Paul Schimmel's 1992 *Helter Skelter* exhibition that launched Kelley as an international art star, even as it also reprioritized much of the Southland's artistic landscape. I hasten to add that *Helter Skelter* took place twenty years ago, meaning that it might now be time for the art of the Southland to move on, before all of the kids-from-fame starfucking ends up being mocked in an Amy Poehler ad for Old Navy blue jeans—whoops it just happened; see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ap89uPrNUFI>.

There is much else that can and should be said about *Made in L.A.*, but it seems far more interesting to stop here and contrast that exhibition to the seventh iteration of the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Bay Area Now triennial, on view until October 7. Despite its shortcomings, *Made in L.A.* was still head-and-shoulders more interesting than *Bay Area Now*. And the reasons for this are simple: the Hammer show at least made an attempt to look good by making the artworks included therein look like they were made by artists who intended their work to be viewed as art. *Bay Area Now* includes work from about 200 artists, but just as cable television gives its viewers 400 channels of nothing to watch, so too does *Bay Area Now* give its unfortunate viewers nothing to really see excepting its pretentious algebra of inclusion established by way of an ill-advised experiment in "decentralized curation." The implication of this charade of decentralization is that the purpose of such exhibitions is something other (read: influence peddling via the sub-contracting of influence peddling) than providing a stimulating experience for those who would invest their time to view it. No "meh" there, just lots of frowny face.

Here is how that algebra tried to work. YBCA curators Betti-Sue Hertz and Ceci Moss put together a jury that was tasked with selecting 15 local arts organizations (most, but not all, being non-profits, although those that are not formulate their programming as if they were). These chosen organizations then sub-curated little mini-exhibitions that reflected their respective missions, all of which were artlessly shoehorned into the YBCA galleries so as to create the unfortunate impression of a third-tier art fair—a cruel joke on how the not-for-profit art world has become co-opted by the neoliberal imperatives of commodification. Only in this case, the commodities in question are the career profiles of arts administrators, which are prized by way of their "positionality" amidst the non-profit world's interlocking directorate of board memberships and advisory committees. This joke was born out by what may be the best work of art in the exhibition, which was not even intended as an artwork. It was a title tag informing the viewer about one of the selected organizations called *Important Projects*. Its directors were acknowledged to be Joel Dean and Jason Benson, who had invited Jason Benson, Joel Dean, Edgar Mojica, and the Yerba Buena Center of the Arts staff. There, we see the varnish fully stripped from the normative operations of non-profit business-as-usual as it might be scripted from conferences of the National Association of Artists' Organizations, especially from its sessions devoted to "partnering" and "mission diversity" (which is how many arts organizations try to advance their programming into the world of social justice philanthropy).

For the sake of all of those Facebook snivelers who are always whining about why it is so important to find something to "like" in every cloudy situation, I will here concede a few glimmers of tarnished silver in BAN7's lining. The FOR-SITE Foundation had the good sense to show a trio of three-dimensional works by one artist (Nathan Lynch), set against a wall emblazoned with a poetic text. The piece was titled *Dead Reckoning*, and looked as if the Joan Miró mushroom factory had dropped huge specimens of glazed ceramic on a trio of redwood buoys. Although the work presented itself in terms of a sculptural yesterspeak that we might remember from the late 1980s (one might think of Tony Cragg or Robert Therrien), I am beginning to feel that this may not be such a bad thing, because the index of that which is up-to-date seems to be everything that earlier artists would have simply rejected as being too feeble to show in public.

Another silver-lined moment was the presentation by the Bay Area Art Workers Alliance, which was a post-minimalist installation titled *Invisible Labor* that mimicked a shop space. The BAAWA roster represents about half of the artists included in the entire BAN7 exhibition, and it is fair to assume that the installation was a collaborative project of some kind. Nonetheless, the idea of an exhibition featuring the work of that many artists who do the often times unrecognized, behind-the-scenes labor in galleries and museums seems a timely one—and I might respectfully suggest here that the BAAWA expand its membership beyond preparators and art transportation workers so as to include other kinds of museum-related toilers, including office workers. But as it stands, their installation gets lost in the circus, and

there is no chance to see work by the individual artists who comprise the group.

Let's assume that all of the preliminary tweets, Facebook updates, and blog reviews have been logged, and none have broached any real argument with Kenneth Baker's dismissive take on the exhibition as being "anemic and uninspired" (*SF Chronicle*, July 18). For that reason, there is no need to get too particular about it or *Made in L.A.* here. Better that we should get on with registering the points of contrast between the two exhibitions, and see if we can touch on some larger issues that may prove to be instructive. In their own very different ways, both tell a story of problematic priorities that have much to do with the persistent and pervasive vexations of each city's art world. In L.A., to be an artist means to labor in the shadow of the Hollywood dream machine, which provides an opportunity for firsthand glimpses of its inner clockworks, but also the danger of being seduced by itsinsel-shrouded priorities—which at this juncture has already happened to the entire art world, by which I mean the entire global art world. Until someone founds a southern California chapter of starfuckers anonymous, that will continue to be a problem.

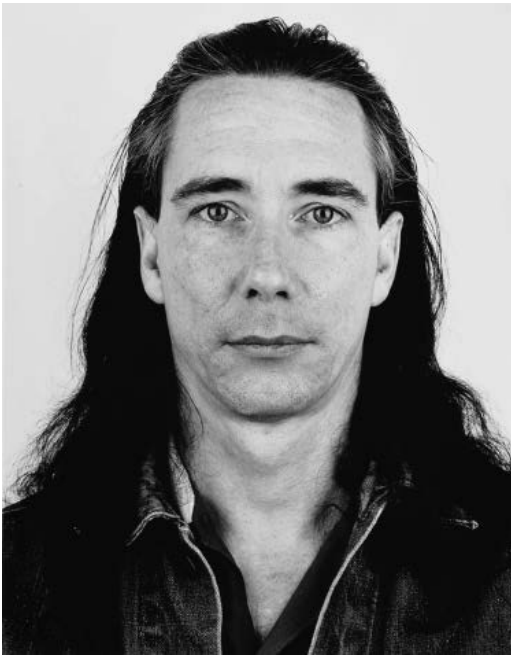
The northern California art scene has picked a very different poison, but it is still quite toxic for art. I refer here to *nonprofititus*, and although the gullible might see it as a way of warding off good old-fashioned neo-liberal starfucking, the project of non-profit sheep trying to legislate artistic vegetarianism in a world run by neoliberal wolves is looking a bit pathetic, especially in the way that it leaches the flavor and nutrition from the artistic vegetables in its garden. This is so for several reasons that are brought to light in BAN7. One of these is called the Fallacy of the Organizational Chart. It reflects on how, with hidden envy hiding behind the pseudo-criticality of loyal opposition, the real culture of non-profit organization mirrors corporate organizational models, especially at the upper level where the first earmark of executive status is the ability to hire someone else to do one's job. The organization of BAN7 seems drenched in these cultural assumptions (manifested in its chain of curatorial sub-contracts that turn the exhibited art into an afterthought), even if it is covered in the greasepaint of a kind of noblesse oblige that pretends to want to see a thousand artistic flowers blossom while keeping the lion's share of manure for themselves and their hard-working assistants.

The second of these reasons is called diversity fetishism. Obviously, cultural diversity in both programming and perspective is a good thing for any arts organization and in any art community, but it should not be elevated as a singular goal. In art, difference may be worth a lot, but it is not worth all of those other things that art can and should do for its audience, such as being able to engage the interest of that underserved community comprised of sophisticated onlookers. Nonprofititus has a blind spot on this front because it cannot put those other things in a statistical appendix and attach it to a grant application, so they kind of just go away. It is also odd that, for all of BAN7's advancement of "diversity," anything resembling political art seems magically

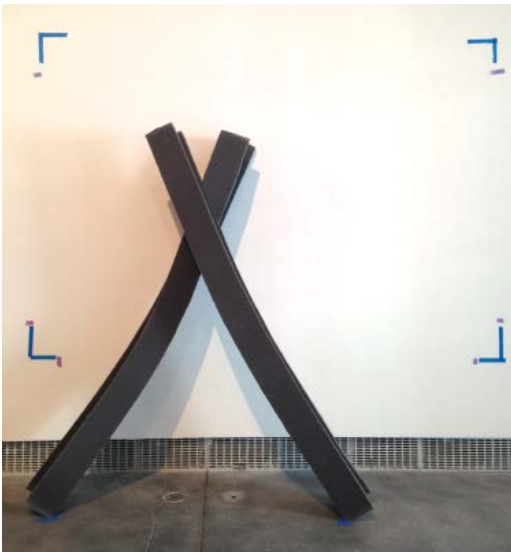
scrubbed from the mix, giving some credence to the view that the "identities" featured are only loyal opponents whistling in a gathering darkness.

Finally, there is the fetishism of the non-profit organization itself, apart from its instrumentalization of diversity fetishism. This is felt in northern California like no other place in the country. We are often told that such organizations are our area's unique historical contribution to the nation's artistic legacy, but I am here to tell you that this is only so much art historical hooey that fails to even rise to the standard of wishful thinking. Yes, from 1950 to 1965, there was a kind of golden age of cooperative, artist-run galleries made possible by cheap rents, and then there was a subsequent silver age of artist-run spaces that were given substantial support from government funding agencies. It is a naive mistake to see the latter as a natural evolution of the former, because the differences between these two very different structures loom much larger than any apparent similarities. The earlier operations were outposts for intentional communities of desire, while the later were recast as farm teams for the gallery system and zones for the cultivation of loyal opposition insofar as the Vietnam War was concerned. With those grants came reporting requirements, and with those requirements came the eventual necessity for "non-profit accounting" in service to ever more exacting thresholds of "compliance" (read: obedience). The difference between that model of non-profit operation and the current one is equally stark; only now the keynote is something called "venture philanthropy," which means that funders are not merely supporting organizations, but that they are exercising more direct influences on their programming.

Certainly, several of the organizations featured in BAN7 are on the renegade fringe of the non-profit world I have sketched, but in this exhibition, they are tarnished by proximity. Once again the question of "who gets to be an artist" can be seen fading away from repeated misuse, while the real question of "what constitutes a successful work of art" becomes evermore pressing and unavoidable—bad news for the world of non-profit arts organizations because it will be a long time before any venture philanthropist will want to underwrite its answer.



Mike Kelley. Courtesy of the Internet.



Joey Enos, *I-Beams*, 2014. Gray foam, polyurethane glue. 8x8"x6". Courtesy of the artist and Ever Gold Gallery.



Samara Golden, *Thank You*, 2014. *Made in L.A.* 2014. Installation view at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. June 15-September 7, 2014. Photography by Brian Forrest.

Liminal Space

By Carlo McCormick

While culture is in fact fluid and ever evolving, more hybrid than absolute, more transitional than determined, by our need to define and understand it we tend to ascribe those very terms of solidity and stasis that culture contradicts. Because we locate culture by place we presume it to be a set of destinations, and because we map changes in culture with a kind of historical linearity we also assume that culture is directional. Visual art does very well with determinate space—the monumental sculpture that comes to define the plaza it occupies and signify for its host city the site as a sight, the landscape that, for whatever poetic license it may take, will vest itself enough in the familiar to be about some place, the portrait that speaks to that person at that time, and the myriad genres from still life to history painting that all exercise some form of ontological premise. Even when art conjures enigma it still relies on specifics of space and time as context for content—Mona Lisa’s “smile” may continue to bewitch because it is betwixt, but its status has locality and venue in the mastery of Leonardo’s hand and the cultural temple of the Louvre. Much to that point, the kind of crossover fame that this painting has achieved is largely due to the spectacle of its temporary absence when it was stolen back in 1911, an event that made global headlines, stirred up international tensions, and drew mobs to the museum to gaze at the blank spot where the painting once hung.

As good as art is at making permanent the temporal, capturing for posterity the storm, the sunset, the glistening of morning dew, youth and beauty, or any of countless other fleeting moments we could cite in an index of clichés, it has considerable more difficulty when it depicts the interminable spaces of non-events by which time and life as we know it more frequently marches. It’s great at finding the spot, but it has trouble with what’s in between, and that’s not a failure of the medium by any means, it is rather the phenomenological dread we reserve for these interstices that make them so hard to behold. We expect art to take us somewhere, so we’re going to have a problem with it when it creates a kind of waiting room of persistent indeterminacy. Now, it’s become somewhat more debatable after the rush of modernism and the slippage of post-modernism whether art should deliver us what we want or decide what we need, but taking us someplace we don’t really consider being a place, or occupying that zone of intermediacy as if it were a legitimate place for creative expression, is pretty damn contrarian. You kind of want to just say “don’t go there,” but of course the problem with this kind of traumatic topography is that it’s less a there than a nowhere, a hypothetical composite of that pathological dis-ease we have between destinations in the insecurity of 21st-century terror.

Checkpoint of No Return

This map of places on the way—not the paths of travel that the arts have taken us on since Homer but the unremarkable way stations of tedium and boredom existing in between—is what occurred to me when I first considered Roxy Paine’s *Checkpoint*. At once a nowhere and an anywhere, Paine’s *Checkpoint* is a large-scale diorama of a TSA airport security check-

point constructed entirely of unfinished maple and birch wood. From the trays in which you must put an ever-growing litany of personal effects and the conveyor belts that take them away to the scanners and screens by which the self surrenders to the surveillance of the State in a way that cannot help but feel like a virtual molestation, *Checkpoint* is almost pornographic in its exacting detail while dreamlike in its poetic transmogrification of its brutal terms into a kind of abstract formalism. Conjuring this realm of shame and scrutiny, where we are all forced to go when going somewhere but forbidden from going to when we are not, we are allowed both the perversity of voyeurism and the mortification of exile; encased behind glass, *Checkpoint* is even less a place as art than it is life. It is a diorama, perceptually like a two-dimensional representation of its three-dimensional space, the tease of thrill and fear embodied in the promise of the beyond and the threat of the barrier that is our airport experience made manifest in an installation in which proximity and impenetrability become an architecture of relative and irrelevant distances. And, as if this were not enough, it is all framed in a forced perspective that actualizes the constraints and constrictions it takes to navigate this space as a kind of optical affront. We look into the quintessential room without a view and see what—an event without action, drama without characters, a place without being there?

For whatever provocations *Checkpoint* may bring to mind, however, there is a certain archetypal anxiety contained in its emptiness, an inherent discomfort that would probably always be there to some extent but is magnified by the fears and curtailed freedoms of a post 9/11 world. That is, while there is a literal reading of this space and its function, which is unmistakable to all of us, there is also a kind of discreet psychological effect in this general type of space anyway. Let us call this place of transition, waiting, and not knowing Liminal Space, from the Latin *limins* for threshold, and know that for whatever positive or negative outcome at the end of its passage to be there is to suffer some disruption of the self. It is interesting to note here, too, that anthropologists have paid some attention to liminality in terms of ritual, defining that stage in the midst of a ritual as the liminal stage between the identity one begins with and the identity one ends up with and describing it as a point of ambiguity and disorientation. In a society such as ours today, where movement invokes both insecurity to the traveler and an implicit threat to the safety of the destination, we can see how such a commute has been ritualized to a point where the intermediate becomes a kind of collective fetish as if, like our most instinctual response to change, the threshold contains that sublime boundary between life and death.

If we are to seek out the liminal, we might easily do so by finding those social bottlenecks where we get held up between one place and another, and where most significantly that delay in passage becomes a kind of pregnant pause without resolution—rife with the implications of significance but ultimately most powerful precisely for an absence of absolute meaning. Psychologically it would seem to be a space of inquiry where secrets are kept close, physically it would be a space without geographical designation, and politically it would be a space where the laws of individual rights are waived for the expedience of some other measure. It’s not so easy to find the liminal in art be-



Sace (IRAQ) and Year (IRAQ) fillins on Brooklyn Bridge, C. 2000. Courtesy of the Internet and with much respect to Dash Snow (RIP) and IRAK.

cause it’s not easy to manifest it there, but as this gray area of suspended logic continues to spread and permeate so much of our world, it is all the more vital for art to confront it.

Before we cite other examples by way of explanation, we might reconsider *Checkpoint* one last time in terms of where it was shown. Now this might be a pretty cheap shot, but it sure is worth considering the pedigree of Roxy Paine’s gallery. Marianne Boesky is an important gallery, what we would call blue chip for the number of major artists it represents. Without having the slightest idea of her relationship to her family, however, it strikes us as a pretty dubious flagship for contemporary art, because her father would be Ivan Boesky, one of a handful of truly evil players who have come to define the malignancy of laissez-faire capitalism in America. As a refresher, because his scandal is so long ago and maybe overshadowed by so many other equally vile economic transgressions, Boesky was the man who amassed one of the world’s greatest fortunes by the mid-eighties through the practice of corporate takeovers, which disassembled American industry to such a damaging degree that we are still feeling the effects today. He was convicted of insider trading and served a nominal sentence, greatly reduced because he turned informer as part of a plea deal with the Securities and Exchange Commission, which is to say on top of his myriad crimes he was, worst of all, a snitch. Frequently cited as the inspiration for the Gordon Gekko character in the movie *Wall Street*, it was Boesky who famously said, in a commencement speech in 1986 for the UC Berkeley Business School, “I think greed is healthy.” It is not, and he’s a perfect example of that, for greed is that thirst which cannot be slaked, a destination that gets exponentially distant as one moves towards it, so that it is forever liminal. Truth is that so much of the money that comes into the art world is so filthy in its origins we don’t want to look too closely at any of it, but what is relevant here is that Boesky was a master of liminality, working as an arbitrageur taking advantage of the price difference between two markets; that is, operating in the space in between.

A Bridge Too Far

We don’t look for liminal space, and often we consciously choose to look the other way. We just know it’s there. But when art turns its gaze upon it, the problematic and provocative nature of the subject inevitably incurs misunderstanding and even wrath. One of the most iconic of liminal landmarks in New York City is the Brooklyn Bridge. Though it represents a kind of tourist



Roxy Paine, *Checkpoint*, 2014. Maple, aluminum, fluorescent light bulbs, and acrylic prismatic light diffusers. Installation view at Marianne Boesky Gallery; New York, New York. 14 ft. h x 26 ft. 11 in. w x 18 ft. 7 1/2 in. d. Photograph by SFAQ.



Courtesy of the Internet.

destination unto itself, its function as an intermediate between destinations complicates it. A monument and a motorway, the complexity of prosaic use and poetic properties has opened up the bridge to a beautiful ambivalence in the arts. It is here, in the operative metaphor of Hart Crane’s highly influential book *The Bridge*, where America is recast from its rural stasis into the urban reaching, that the urban art form of graffiti had its Alamo, and if America is to be understood as a land of punitive overreaction, the Brooklyn Bridge indeed deserves its hallowed place among our national symbols. Maybe it’s the ghosts of all the immigrant workers who died building the damn thing, but surely it is haunted by the infamy of tabloid exaggeration and cultural persecution. Its mythic stature in urban art dates to the story of Smith & Sane, adventurous and innovate graffiti writers who went afoul of authorities for conquering the bridge with a huge tag. When, then, is a bridge not a bridge? When it is a national landmark.

It is by this logic that the crime of defacement became seen as a desecration, the status of historic site turning vandalism into a federal crime, the response so draconian and unrestrained that Sane’s subsequent death by falling from the bridge remains shrouded in mystery, with speculation ranging from suicide to murder.

With such a history, then, when artists return to the Brooklyn Bridge to situate self-expression on the social canvas of public space, they speak across a chasm far greater than that spanned by the bridge itself, their voices carrying with untoward amplification and undue distortion. Any conquest is rare and noteworthy, certainly so when famous art world bad boy Dash Snow got up not only his tag of Sace but a RIP tribute to Sane along with a “Fuck Guliani,” and particularly so this past summer when the huge United States flag that flies from the tower of the bridge was removed and replaced by one that had been painted

over in white. The hue and cry was so great you would have thought that someone bombed the Statue of Liberty, and indeed bombing was the implication. Fighting yet another made-up war without borders or any other real sense of definition, the War on Terror has inspired in us a fear greater than all the mutant genes, crack babies, and psychedelic homicides of the War on Drugs, and posited all that dread within the interstices of travel. Considered at first a terrorist attack, when such hyperbole couldn’t sustain itself morphing into a shocking lapse of security, the furor latched onto the event without consideration of what it might mean. Was this the white flag of surrender or the bleaching of American authority? Was it a desecration of the flag or of the bridge, and was this attack merely symbolic or deeply visceral? The absence of apparent purpose, and worse that defining silence where we might hear the voice of some bogeyman, made it disturbing in its pointlessness, lost like a Malaysian airliner.

I’ve often found over the years that if people get really upset about something they can’t understand, you can tell them “it’s art” and they stop worrying so much. It becomes an explanation in and of itself, all the better because people are used to not understanding art. This of course proved true for the flag on the bridge. Once we learned that it was the work of two German street artists, Mischa Leinkauf and Matthias Wermke, it seemed (in the public eye at least) less an outright molestation than a fair warning about protecting our bridges, guarding our flags, and, well, staying very afraid of terrorists. The hack art writer from the *NY Times* to whom the artists eventually spoke, taking authorship over their work by way of confession, thought he was being clever by comparing the work to Jasper Johns’s seminal *White Flag* of 1955, which after all lives in NYC. The artists had some other reasoning, so quirky and beautifully beside the point that it had to be the truth, about paying homage to the German engineer John Augustus Roebling who was responsible for the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge. As someone who has been a fan of these artists for some time now, let me offer another context: street art, occupying that thin membrane of urban topography where private property meets public space, is predicated on interface and most prominent at the intersections.

Some artists, Leinkauf and Wermke in particular, have understood this inherent intermediacy of their practice and played with these spaces in between or to the side with hilarious effect. More social than political as artists, their gestures are visual pranks, interventions in the quotidian that poke fun of our reality. On an earlier trip they had attacked the Brooklyn Bridge previously, but as that piece involved balloons it just didn’t have the gravitas of a defaced flag to raise the hackles of panic. That kind of gesture—minimal, non-invasive, and momentary—is at the heart of their praxis. Masters of the liminal, their art works best at a sidelong glance, the subway train in the station, conductor and passengers alike perplexed as “workmen” arrive with squeegee and bucket to clean the window, or their own DIY transport, riding the subway rails on their own handcar. Stepping into the transitional, the boundaries and thresholds of liminal space, art prods and tickles us where and when we least expect it allowing for questions and doubts to flourish in the breach between certainties.

Diabolical Self-Subversion

By John Rapko

The previous issue of *SFAQ* contained an excerpt from the first chapter of my little book *Achievement, Failure, Aspiration: Three Attempts to Understand Contemporary Art*. The first chapter considered the work of William Kentridge as an instance of a distinctive kind of achievement in contemporary art, one that Rosalind Krauss dubbed “the recreation of a medium.” Below is a selection from the second chapter, wherein I tried to isolate and analyze a distinctive kind of *failure* in contemporary art, wherein the artist creates a work that involves a kind of subversion of the very virtues and activities required of a sympathetic and attuned viewer of visual art. Or so I claim:

I shall investigate this issue [of kinds of failure] through consideration of what I take to be a remarkable disaster in contemporary art: an exhibition of the work of the artist Adel Abdessemed entitled *Don’t Trust Me*. The work opened at the San Francisco Art Institute in late March 2008, and was closed shortly thereafter in response to protests. This work is such that it inevitably invokes a kind of reaction familiar in response to many (purported) works of modern art, namely “Is this art?” ...

First the work: As you approach the gallery you see two video monitors on the floor. Your gaze rests on the one that shows an adult pig. The image is closely framed, but you can make out that the pig is tethered, outside somewhere, in front of a drab building. Suddenly, a blur, a loud crack, then, after a fraction of a second, the pig topples. Repeat. The blur is the head of a sledgehammer whose blow kills the pig. Inside there are more monitors showing the same scenario with other animals, including a small doe or perhaps a fawn. On the right, written in neon cursive, is the phrase “The world looks different when seen with an animal’s eyes.” In the middle of the room is a large screen showing someone, presumably the artist, suspended by a rope tied to his foot, over a concrete pad. The pad is covered with large sheets of paper, and the person seems to be trying to draw on them. He’s suspended from a helicopter just outside the frame, and his unsteadiness as the helicopter slightly ascends and descends frustrates his attempts to draw. He’s allegedly trying to draw Gericault’s *Raft of the Medusa*. Four other video monitors showing other animals being bludgeoned are arrayed on the floor around the screen. Upstairs there’s a large neon outline figure of a human brain ...



Adel Abdessemed, *Helikoptère*, 2007. Video, 3 min (loop), color, sound. Dimensions vary with installation. Courtesy of the Internet.

One way of approaching the work is to consider three ways in which contemporary artworks are typically “experienced” (in a very loose sense). I’ll call these ways the rumor, the glance, and the encounter. A great many contemporary artworks seem to have as their primary aim getting themselves talked about (the rumor); my semi-random examples above perhaps fall in that category. Another type seem to exhaust themselves in what can be taken in at a glance; the viewer’s typical response is to say “oh, it’s one of those x’s,” where “x” is either a work of the artist (in which case the work is a kind of “logo” of itself, a feature of recent art that Richard Wollheim once suggested is a degenerate form of the interest in artistic style) or a category of artworks. The commentaries about Abdessemed’s piece remain at the level of the rumor and the glance. They content themselves with discussing “the very idea” of a piece that is, or has among its parts, videos of animals being bludgeoned to death. Remarks [made in defense of the piece] such as those of [former SFAI president Chris] Bratton and [former SFAI dean Okwui] Enwezor are typical of what Noël Carroll has identified as the hermeneutic atmosphere surrounding today’s art made for international biennials, where the taboo on hand-made artifacts, the primary use of photography, video, film, and texts, and the technique of radical juxtaposition are given a purported intelligibility by an atmosphere of “theory” conjured through the citation of, or even more typically mere allusion to, various works of Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, etc.

By “encounter” I mean what has long been taken to be the authoritative experience induced by artworks: the perceptual and imaginative encounter with a densely meaningful and richly significant artifact, one made in such a way as to guide and reward such perceptual and imaginative attentions. What encounter does this work induce? I refrain from an extended interpretation of this repugnant work, but I’ll focus on the particular uses to which Abdessemed puts the videos of the slaughters. There are, I think, three uses: (a) The sequences are shot and edited so as to force upon the viewer a sense of nightmarish repetition. The animals are framed so that the blow is sudden and unprepared. The action is difficult to grasp at first, so that to recognize and understand it, the viewer must see it repeatedly—so this element exploits the curiosity and openness of the viewer to induce the viewer to sustain exposure to the image. (b) The im-



Adel Abdessemed, *Don’t Trust Me*, 2008. Video, 8 sec (loop). Courtesy of the Walter and McBean Galleries, San Francisco.

ages of the slaughter are peripheral and provide framing elements for the chief, space-eating image of the artist suspended in his buffoonish task. The viewer seeks relief that is not allowed, and is immersed without refuge in loud sounds of crushing skulls. (c) A third mechanism fits into the more traditional thought that a work is evil if it requires warm sympathy for depravity to appreciate the piece. For the arrangement of the elements of the work makes it clear that Abdessemed aims to use the images of the slaughter to add an aura of pathos to his attempt to draw. Like the unfortunate animals, his fate, too, is tethered to powerful forces just outside the frame. It is not that the slaughter, either as such or as depicted, is depraved, but rather that the use of the images is in the service of the self-sentimentalization of the depicted artist.

With these descriptions in mind, let’s review our sense of failure in art. The philosopher Michael Tanner has suggested that there are three kinds of bad art: the incompetent, the trivial, and the corrupt. Tanner does not clarify what he means by the corrupt, but drawing from another writing of his we can divide the corrupt into the sentimental and the evil. It seems to me that many people recoil from the thought that there are evil works of art, and perhaps for various reasons, most prominently that artworks are not the sort of thing that can be evil, or that calling things evil is a remnant of the Christian moralization of the world and should be abandoned. It’s a complex question, but it seems to me that if we jettison the word “evil,” we will end up needing and using other, similar terms to do the job of picking out people, practices, and artifacts that are of a piece with activities that involve the energetic pursuit of pleasure without remorse in harming others. As for the first objection, I think that many people would countenance the thought that there are at least two defensible senses to calling an artwork evil. We might say that a work is evil to the extent that it requires and rewards an active sympathy with depravity in order to have an appropriate encounter with the work. An example of this, besides quite a lot of Hollywood films, would be a work which requires that one embrace the thought that, say, a revenge murder is less heinous than a slight insult to the murderer’s honor. There are many complications with this thought, most immediately the thought that the work may well reward such sympathy with at least some sense of what it’s like to be such a murderer, and perhaps more richly some insight into what it’s like. So we would at least have to qualify the thought by saying that the work offers no such sense of “what it’s like.” It would be a further question as to whether any particular work met such a criterion. A second sense which I suspect many people would countenance is the idea that a work is evil to the extent it serves an evil practice or ideology. Many have thought (though it is again a very difficult question) that Leni Reifenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will* is evil in this sense.

Instead of saying that the work as whole is (or isn’t) evil, we can consider the particular uses to which Abdessemed puts the images, instead of just considering the question, probably impossible to answer, of how he obtained the images. The uses can be considered in isolation for analysis, but of course with regard to an artwork there is always the further (and more important) question of how the analytically distinct uses interact and contribute to the meaning of the work as a whole. Now the third use seems to best fit at least one of the pre-theoretical intuitions about evil art, in that we are asked to undertake an imaginative task in exploring the metaphor or metaphors arising from the framing of the central image with the peripheral images of animal slaughter; this task might

well also be thought to involve keeping in mind the initial dictum that “things look different through an animal’s eyes.” But, again, the metaphor that we are invited to explore—that the buffoonish task of the hanging artist is the target of the frame of the bludgeoned animals—is deprived.

It is the first two uses, I think, that offer a more difficult challenge to reflection. For neither of these uses—the use to shock, and the use of the images, and particularly the sounds, to draw the viewer into quasi-automatic participation in the spectacle—fit well the intuitions about evil art. We must search.

In the previous [column], we concluded it was a distinct virtue of an artistic practice if the medium used could reasonably be seen as “fertile”, that is, as offering the sense that the current work or works in that medium are not the end of that medium. We can now extend that point to the thought that it is a virtue of a particular artistic practice if it fosters and sustains the goods that are internal to the practice of (the) art. Contrariwise, it is a vice of an artistic practice if the works within that practice are destructive of the goods internal to the practice of the art. Such works, if there are any, are to that extent evil. Now, what is common to the first two uses to which Abdessemed puts the videos is that they presuppose for their “effect” a recipient who wishes to see. To see what? Well, art, some art, perhaps this particular work, and in seeing to be regularly rewarded with contact with the goods internal to art. And this “effect” is that the viewer unwittingly is drawn into a situation, which, on reflection, she would not (or at least might not) wish to be in: the seer of animal snuff films, and participating automatically in the raining blows of the sledgehammer.

This is bad, but perhaps it is not the last word. Is there some value in experiencing the work on the whole, to which the experience of these parts contributes and which (partially) legitimates having undergone it? One answer (a version of (a) above) would be that this is after all part of how the world is. The problem with this answer is that it makes the question disappear; the point could apply to any artwork, and we lose the sense that there is something problematic about this particular work. The core of the unease, I think, stems from the durable recognition that the work in some way is in the service of the (self-) glorification of the artist, both in the generic sense and in the particular artist, Adel Abdessemed. The artist gives a contemporary jolt to a noxious cliché of the artist as a uniquely suffering being. A sensibility that crude is one in which we cannot have confidence: “don’t trust me” indeed.

John Rapko’s book *Logro, Fracaso, Aspiración: Tres Intentos de Entender el Arte Contemporáneo [Achievement, Failure, Aspiration: Three Attempts to Understand Contemporary Art]*, was published by the Universidad de Los Andes in 2014.



Wim Delvoye’s pig farm in China. Courtesy of the Internet.

Addendum (2014):

Since I wrote the above, curator Larys Frogier has published a monograph on the eponymous wayward artist, *Adel Abdessemed* (2011). One factual point needs correcting: Frogier reproduces the letter wherein Abdessemed informed the San Francisco Art Institute that the videos were *not* “documentations,” but that he searched for some place where he could buy animals and film them being slaughtered. So the “origin” of the videos is now known. Frogier explicitly states that the claim that the works are documentations of an existing practice was a false fabrication by Okwui Enwezor, then-dean of the San Francisco Art Institute, and the show’s curator Hou Hanru. This fabrication is enshrined in an official SFAI publication, *Paradigm Shifts* (2011), in a statement reproduced therein and attributed to then-president of SFAI, Chris Bratton.

The issues clustering around the use of animals as materials in contemporary art have been raised again in a recent show at SFAI called *Wrong’s What I Do Best*. The show, co-curated by Hesse McGraw and Aaron Spangler, allegedly presents the work of artists who bear some sort of resemblance to the country music “outlaws” whose work is inseparable from their hard-livin’ lives, and yet whose work, in its very waywardness, somehow simultaneously obscures those very artistic lives from which it emerges. The show’s announcement attempts to catch the eye with a photograph of a taxidermic pig, its back marked with a skein of tattoos. It’s a work, if that’s the word, by the Belgian artist Wim Delvoye, who began tattooing live pigs in the 1990s, and who, allegedly in evasion of Belgium’s animal-protection statutes, in 2004 set up an “art farm” of tattooed pigs in China. After being tattooed, the pigs, so Delvoye claims, are allowed to live some of their “natural” lives at this farm. At some point, determined by who knows what criteria, the animals are killed, then either made into taxidermy or skinned; in the latter case, the skins are then stretched and displayed. Along with Abdessemed’s films of animals being slaughtered; or animals confined in a tiny space and set to fight each other; or a recent one showing chickens set afire, their legs bound and hanging from a wall, these artworks have been grouped together in discussions of the use and abuse of animals in art. The inclusion of two of the taxidermic pigs in this show reprises one of the first showing of such “works,” which was also at the San Francisco Art Institute October–November 2000.

Why are these works so unsettling? Is it the very idea of using animals in art that is morally problematic evinced through the visceral reaction that ensues, even for those who eat meat and wear leather? In the opening chapter of his great book *Painting as an Art*, the philosopher Richard Wollheim describes what the painter does in the course of practicing painting as an art; the account might well be thought valid, with some qualifications, for the visual arts generally: The painter paints and monitors with her eyes the results of her activity. So in the act of painting, the painter actually plays two conceptually distinct roles—the agent/maker and the viewer. The painter qua maker marks something for the painter qua spectator. The painter, Wollheim stresses, is the first viewer of the painting, though of course not the last. And so the viewer of a painting has a particular intimacy with the painter qua maker; the maker has made it for the viewer, and the viewer takes up what the painter has done, gazes upon it, explores it, imaginatively enters it, reflects on it, with each of these affecting and being affected by the others.

In a discussion of ethical issues in the uses of animals, philosopher Tzachi Zamir has noted that something made to be perceived has what he calls an ethical depth-structure, that of a temporally extended action: the action inaugurated by the making of something is only completed in the appreciative viewing of the thing. In the arts, the appreciative viewer necessarily experiences a kind of intimacy (a complicity) with the actions of the artist to a greater degree and intensity than in a wide range of other uses of artifacts. The viewer consummates what the artist begins. This is the very making of something to be seen, put to such an astounding range of good uses in the millennia of human life, that is at the core of the idea of the visual arts. As there is no existing practice of, say, Delvoye’s tattooing of pigs, in the very viewing of the work we are asked to enjoy, and then to develop a taste for, works that involve an unnecessary use of animals; an action that one would find abhorrent in everyday life.

Even if something along the line of thinking suggested here is right, this could only be the beginning of engaging with these complex issues. But there’s an irony in the show *Wrong’s What I Do Best* that escapes the curators. One wonders whether the curators did, after all, sense something of this depth-structure, and seek to exploit it to further a problematic effect through Delvoye’s two pigs, placed a few feet from each other in the gallery’s mezzanine. One could not see them until one arrived near the top of the stairs. Both pigs’ heads are slightly cocked, the farther one more so, so that one sees without preparation the pigs as if they are turning towards you as you arrive. The effect is of the briefest sort, as a kind of dullness and lack of focus afflicts the pigs’ eyes, and one is struck rather by their peculiar alienness and lifelessness, deader than the dead. The cheapness and half-heartedness of the effect seem like nothing so much as the emblem of the show, as the show’s announcement suggests, but not in a way that does credit to the curators.

Misreading The Art Market

By John Zarobell

In a recent *New York Times* article, “Barbarians at the Art Auction Gates? Not to Worry” (August 17, 2014) Lorne Manly and Robin Pogrebin reported on new findings that suggest that the widely held perception that speculators are flocking to the contemporary art market may be premature. They drew on studies by Tutela Capital and Beautiful Asset Advisors that suggest that, though the average turnaround on sales of contemporary material at auction has dropped in the past decade from five to three years, this is actually a recurring trend that is no different from the situation in the nineties. Their conclusion is that fears about flipping contemporary art have been greatly exaggerated. The problem is that the scope of these studies is limited to an examination of Christie’s and Sotheby’s auction houses, which do not accurately represent the complexity of the art market.

The term *flipping* comes from the real estate market and refers to investors who buy up undervalued housing stock, make superficial repairs, and resell the property for a profit in a short time frame. The length of that time frame is not fixed—flipping has no formal definition in this regard—but the implication is that these investors are free riders on a market, interested in increasing their capital holdings, not the property itself. In the art market, the notion of flipping upsets the very core of the market’s self-perception; the ideal is that contemporary art is purchased by and for passionate collectors who see works that move them personally and they want to own for a lifetime, no matter what the price of the work. It is not a surprise to discover that any suggestion of speculation in the art market raises shackles. Artists and dealers of contemporary art consistently assert that they are not in it for the money, so if their market is being invaded by speculators, this is a real crisis. Yet, the result of the studies commissioned by the *New York Times* is clear from the title—there is no need to worry because, as one of the authors of the studies put it, “reselling art at auction is not a new phenomenon.”

The research presented shows that, if you look back twenty or so years, one finds that contemporary art was being resold at the same rate, and, most importantly, only around two percent of contemporary art that is bought is resold at major auction houses. Thus, the concept of the cycle, a favorite metaphor of econ-

omists, is employed to dispel the supposed barbarian speculators. Such speculators are a bogeyman quite easily vanquished but the solutions this article presents about the legitimacy of the art auction market and its participants points to a set of deeper questions about the role of art as a commodity and the auction system that supports that dynamic. What is more, it focuses its attention, as so many reports and studies do, on only two major corporations.

There is a chasm between what is reported about the art market and how the market works for those involved in it; this amounts to misreading the market for contemporary art. Based on shared assumptions, successful messaging, and their 500 years of combined auction experience, Christie’s and Sotheby’s appear like tried and true art world institutions whose services are necessary for anyone owning valuable works of art. Such collectors are a minority, to be sure, but they might find themselves in need of money and sales at auction do establish a fair price in a public market for buying and selling works of art. Functionally, the auction houses are in fact the trading floor of a commodities market where artistic futures are cashed out and art comes to signify price, and vice versa.

In the simplest terms, the auction houses Christie’s and Sotheby’s, undisputed industry leaders with 38% of the global art auction share combined, play an essential role for any market. They provide liquidity. If you own a work of art that you no longer want or you need the money that would come from selling the work, the auction house provides a place for you to convert your asset to cash. The fact that art auctions exist is proof that there is such a thing as an art market—not an abstract economic concept but a real location where goods are exchanged and money tendered, even if through wire transfer.

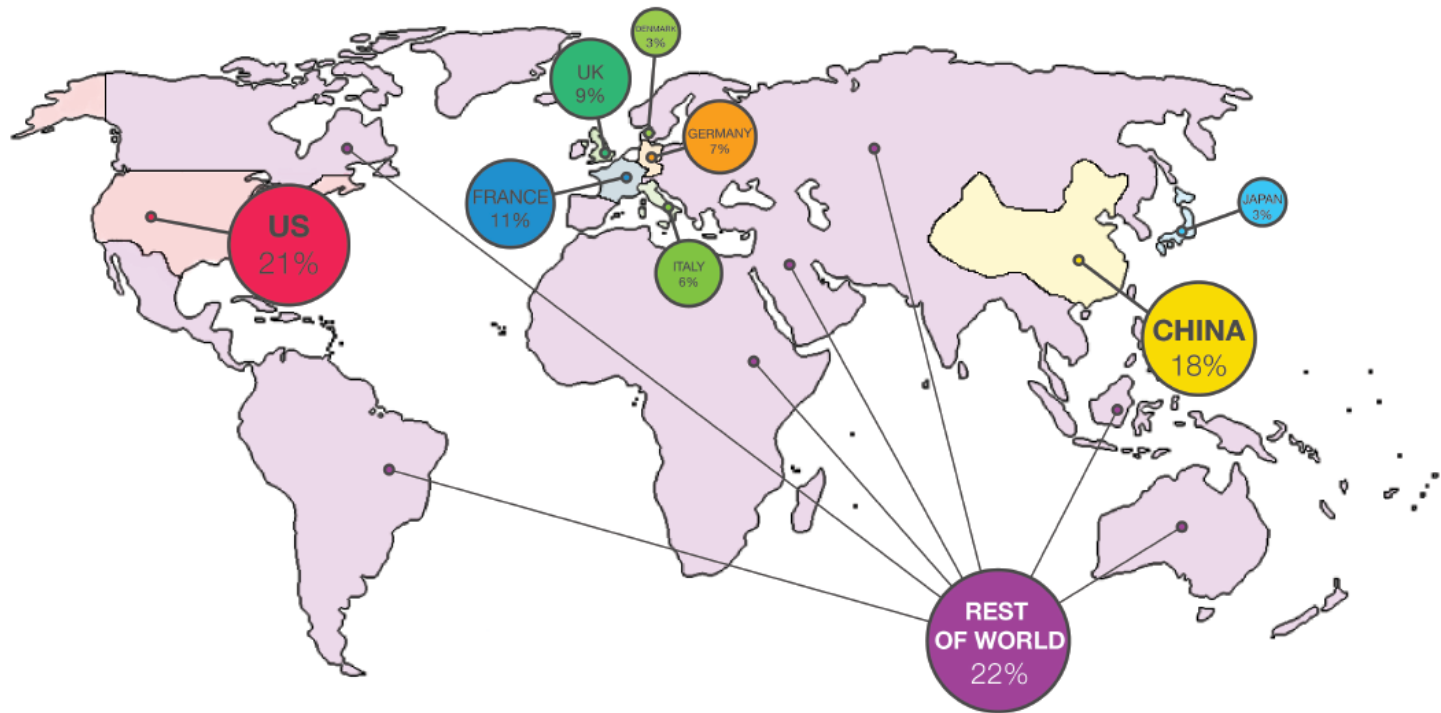
The guiding lights of the auction houses are the so-called three D’s: death, divorce, and debt—the primary reasons most art has come to market historically. Since there is no way to insure that only committed and compassionate collectors enter a market, it is likely that any market where there is money to be made will become the target of speculators. We know a speculator because they act in bad faith, buying a work of art only because of the likelihood that it will gain in value

so that it can be converted into profits at a future time. In the past, auction houses have tried to avoid speculation on contemporary art by a tacit agreement not to sell goods by living artists or those made less than a fixed period of time before the auction (say 20 years). Eventually, as the market for contemporary art heated up and as auction houses struggled to make their bottom line, these barriers collapsed. Now the postwar and contemporary categories have become the largest segment of the global art auction market, according to leading arts economist Clare McAndrew. This has caused major changes at the traditional auction houses, including several boundary-blurring episodes like auction houses providing private sales (as though they were a gallery or an art advisor), the acquisition of established galleries by auction houses (Christie’s recently converted Haunch of Venison, which they bought in 2007, from a gallery selling fresh work to secondary sales), and the push for contemporary artists to sell their works directly through the auction houses. This last trend is especially present in China, and growing in prominence internationally, but Damien Hirst has been the poster boy of this revolution since 2008, when he cleared more than \$200 million in auction sales just as the global economy went belly-up.

Countless articles have appeared about the business practices of auction houses, from their lack of regulation to chandelier bidding to the newly popular third-party price guarantees. All of these sound bites are old news to players in the art world who accept these devices as necessary dimensions to the auctioneer’s trade. What they do demonstrate is that art auctions are both a business and an industry, not merely the dusty preserve of cash-strapped aristocrats and high-net-worth individuals.

The services offered by Christie’s and Sotheby’s (one privately held and the other publicly owned) are more vertical and horizontal than any other agent in the art market. Not only do they propose a variety of services around the buying and selling of art, such as insurance and financing, but they also produce wine and jewelry sales and retail luxury properties as well. Further, the offices of Christie’s and Sotheby’s circle the globe like the governor’s offices of the former British Empire. They also make more art market news than everyone else combined, usually for sales records and the inau-

A world map with art auction market values by volume in 2013. Designed by Eva Krchova.



FINE ART AUCTION MARKET GLOBAL SHARE by volume

source: TEFAF Art Market Report 2012 & 2014

gurations or new auction locations (recently adding Beijing and Shanghai, respectively). An online tour of their press releases for the past year is prohibitively extensive.

Further, thanks to the fact that their sales figures are a matter of public record, cultural economists and others have privileged data from their sales in constructing academic analyses of the art market. The article by Manly and Pogrebin mistakenly doubles their significance, stating they “account for about three-quarters of the value of the auction market worldwide” even though sales only amounted to \$11.6 out of \$30.1 billion in 2013. Though Christie’s and Sotheby’s are instrumental to the art market, they are too often confused for being it. This delusion allows those in New York and London to believe that they remain at the center of art commerce.

On one level, who could argue this point? New York has more art dealers than any other city and more auction house proceeds than any single location and London would qualify for the second spot on both counts. But further thinking on the art market must expand our purview beyond the rhetoric of centralization and global dominance. The gap between theory of the market and the practice of art business is manifested in several dimensions that demand further explanation. Over the course of the next year, this column will explore three of these: globalization, securitization and the informal economy. I’ll devote the rest of this column to introducing these themes.

Globalization is such a visible economic and social transformation world over it has become something of a cliché, and even counter-movements encouraging local shopping and “slow food” now seem well established. But there are two views of globalization—as a destructive economic force and an underlying economic reality—and both of them are relevant to the art market today. The whole notion that there is a single art market is belied by the countless forms of artistic exchange, some of which are properly economic and others that simply are not. This amounts, more or less, to an attempt to colonize artistic production and cir-

culatum and to attempt to turn it in to an economy. So much for the bad side of globalization. On the flipside, since the market for contemporary art today exists within the domain of cross-border exchange, the idea that a study of auction houses based in New York and London could constitute an adequate picture of the art market is, quite frankly, a flimsy scrim concealing an enormous international market for art and artists, including but not limited to international art fairs, global biennials, touring exhibitions, and dealers whose business functions are spread across multiple continents.

Regarding securitization, there is a tremendous impact of this trend in the art market globally and it should be understood as one of the most important factors driving values of contemporary art to unprecedented heights. Securitization means turning any experience, process, or object into a monetary value. Obviously the process of constructing such values is an aspect of the business of an art dealer and there are many strategies and devices that make this process rational within particular contexts. But the broader trend of seeing works of art as capital assets has led to the development of ancillary financial products and services related to the buying and selling of art objects. Owners of valuable art collections borrow money against their collection in order to expand it and such debts can, like any other financial instruments today, be packaged and sold on a market of their own. The purchase of a high-price artwork can result in the risk of losing money, so such collectors can insure against loss of value and such insurance policies can equally be sold on a secondary financial market. With the previously mentioned third-party guarantees, auction houses limit their exposure to negative market pressures by guaranteeing a fixed minimum price for a major work coming up for auction, but these guarantees are offered by collectors who are interested in making money (if the work goes for more than the minimum they get a cut), but also of the prospect of ending up with a desirable work at a fixed price if the work does not make its reserve price. All of these are examples of more money flooding into the art market, not for the art works themselves, but for the investment opportunities that the market offers beyond the simple notion of flipping.

The informal economy, otherwise known as the gray market, represents the class of transactions that are off the books. In a recent book on the subject, *Stealth of Nations*, Robert Neuwirth relates an OECD report stating that half of the world’s jobs are currently in the informal economy and this number is expected to increase to two-thirds by 2020. Such statistics underline the enormous proportion of economic exchanges that are not counted by traditional economic models. In the global art world, the informal economy is brisk. Not only do most artists sell work out of their studios or at small regional art fairs or markets, but there is a gift economy that parallels economic exchanges and maintains a set of relationships between artists, dealers, curators, and critics. More troubling dimensions of the global gray market, such as offshoring, are equally present in the art market. One example is the expansion of free ports worldwide, in Switzerland, China, and Southeast Asia, suggesting that many art investors are turning to these tax-free loopholes to store their art while they make further investments or trade on the risk these works represent. Of course, there is also a black market for looted antiquities and, given the lax regulation of finances in the art market, the very real threat of money laundering. Various Chinese examples have been exposed in a recent series in the *New York Times*, but these are quite likely not an isolated phenomenon in the global art trade where cultural values mix with economic ones, and there are few rules, only a series of accepted customs.

If we want to understand the multiple dimensions of globalization and the art market, it is crucial to look beyond current misinterpretations and to start to take account of the brave new world we occupy. If we can make sense of the art market and the industries it has spawned, we will be better prepared to develop alternatives.



Christie’s auction house, in Shanghai. Courtesy of Christie’s.



Sotheby’s May 2014 Contemporary Art Evening Auction. Courtesy Sotheby’s.

Art In The Shadow Of Art Market Industrialization: Moving Toward A Sustainable Ecosystem

By Alain Servais

Art is a language which opens your heart to the Other. (Mera Rubell)

Art as a form of experimental activity overlapping with the world. (Claire Bishop)

Art is not beauty or novelty; art is effectiveness and disruption. (Leo Ferrari)

Q: What is art for?

A: It's a way of resisting the lack of meaning in things, a desperate attempt to make sense of how random and absurd the world is—and it's also a way of celebrating exactly that. (Amalia Pica)

I truly love art, and I love it with a dose of curiosity, searching of the limits, and ample questioning. I have also been immersed in financial markets since my adolescence, which has developed within me innate analytical reflexes. I hear and read so much about the vicissitudes of the current evolution of the art market, but I feel the view is not large enough. I need to achieve more height and a broader contextualization in order to understand it and hope to make some useful recommendations.

There is much talk about the gallery model lately and how galleries should find a solution to their problems. I think one solution involves taking a step back and creation collaboration between galleries and stakeholders. Galleries cannot find solutions to their problems alone—cooperation is a necessity.

The Art Market: An Evolution Toward Industrialization

So what kind of world are we stepping into? It's a world that many industries have known for a long time. Think about the watch industry in Switzerland. Who would have thought that in the 1980s the Swiss watch industry would be on its knees, close to totally disappearing, killed by the Japanese watch industry? Obsolescence and a need for deep restructuring is a natural cycle of evolution that the art industry has not yet lived through.

The art market was, until recently, a small industry with comparatively little money involved, living under the radar of “financialization.” Things have changed dramatically in a short amount of time. To illustrate this, we only need to look at the evolution of the auction of artworks in the European Union, the United States, and Hong Kong created by artists born after 1950, which I assume as a definition of contemporary art. Investigating sales data of such artworks, I could not believe that as recently as 2000 the total was \$41 million—an amount you would find in a single evening's sale at Phillips Auction House today. This figure is now in the region of \$850 million, or a factor of almost \$21 million in 14 years. There is no reason to doubt that the increase in turnover is of the same proportion in galleries.

Suddenly, the buying and selling of art is not a hobby anymore, but exists on the kind of money that brings professionalization and greed. Let us try first to understand what the source of this wall of money is in order to assess its durability.

This cycle started in the Reagan era at the end of the 1970s. Reagan diagnosed that the U.S. economy was almost dead; he surmised that no innovation and no development had come out of the previous crisis. So he said, “Okay, among other radical reforms, I'm going to slash capital gains tax from 39% to 20%.” In doing so, he showed that the deficit could become smaller. It seems technical and simplistic, but it started a ball rolling that increased the income share of the top 1%, as a competition to the bottom rung of the tax bracket continued over the years.

However, this is not only about taxes, but also about capitalist risk-takers seeking to take advantage of big opportunities, just as China has offered. China entered the international capitalist field not because they're generous to foreigners, but because they observed that they had 20 million peasants moving to the cities every year, and if they didn't find them all jobs, after 10 years there would be 200 million unemployed in the cities and the communist system would collapse. So they opened special economic zones for international trade and Western capitalists rushed in. The Chinese government was very satisfied because profit was not their primary concern—they were focused on employing their countrymen and women. In 1991, the Iron Curtain fell and the world market grew as global access opened to billions more workers and consumers. This shift caused a massive transfer of well paid and stable manufacturing jobs from the West to the developing world and a rise in low-income service jobs. With advances in technology and the continued use of petroleum, raw materials usage increased dramatically, spreading wealth to resource-rich countries like Brazil and the nations within Central Asia and the Middle East. The result is what we have today: the wealthiest 1% of the global population now controls above 20% of the income.

The Consequences of Amassed Wealth

Absolutely all assets—art at the top of the list—attractive to this contingent with “surplus” money have skyrocketed: real estate, wine, car collections, jewelry, stamps, etc. In 2012, Christopher Knight wrote of a long-term study conducted by two universities that revealed that the most relevant variable explaining movements of art prices is the concentration of income at the top; expressed more plainly, income inequality. This is definitely a disappointing conclusion for those who believe in the “humanist” qualities of art:

“Two years ago a team of economists at Yale School of Management and Tilburg University in the Netherlands crunched the art market numbers and came to some sobering conclusions. Using mostly British art-market data compiled since 1765, William Goetzmann, Luc Renneboog, and Christophe Spaenjers found a variety

of factors were involved in today's stratospheric art prices. They include things like the new globalization of the buying pool. More wealthy buyers equal more competitive bidding.

However, for the period between 1908 and 2005, one factor edged out all others: Art prices rise—and rise faster—when income inequality goes up... The study's authors found that a ‘one percentage point increase in the share of total income earned by the top 0.1% triggers an increase in art prices of about 14 percent.’”¹

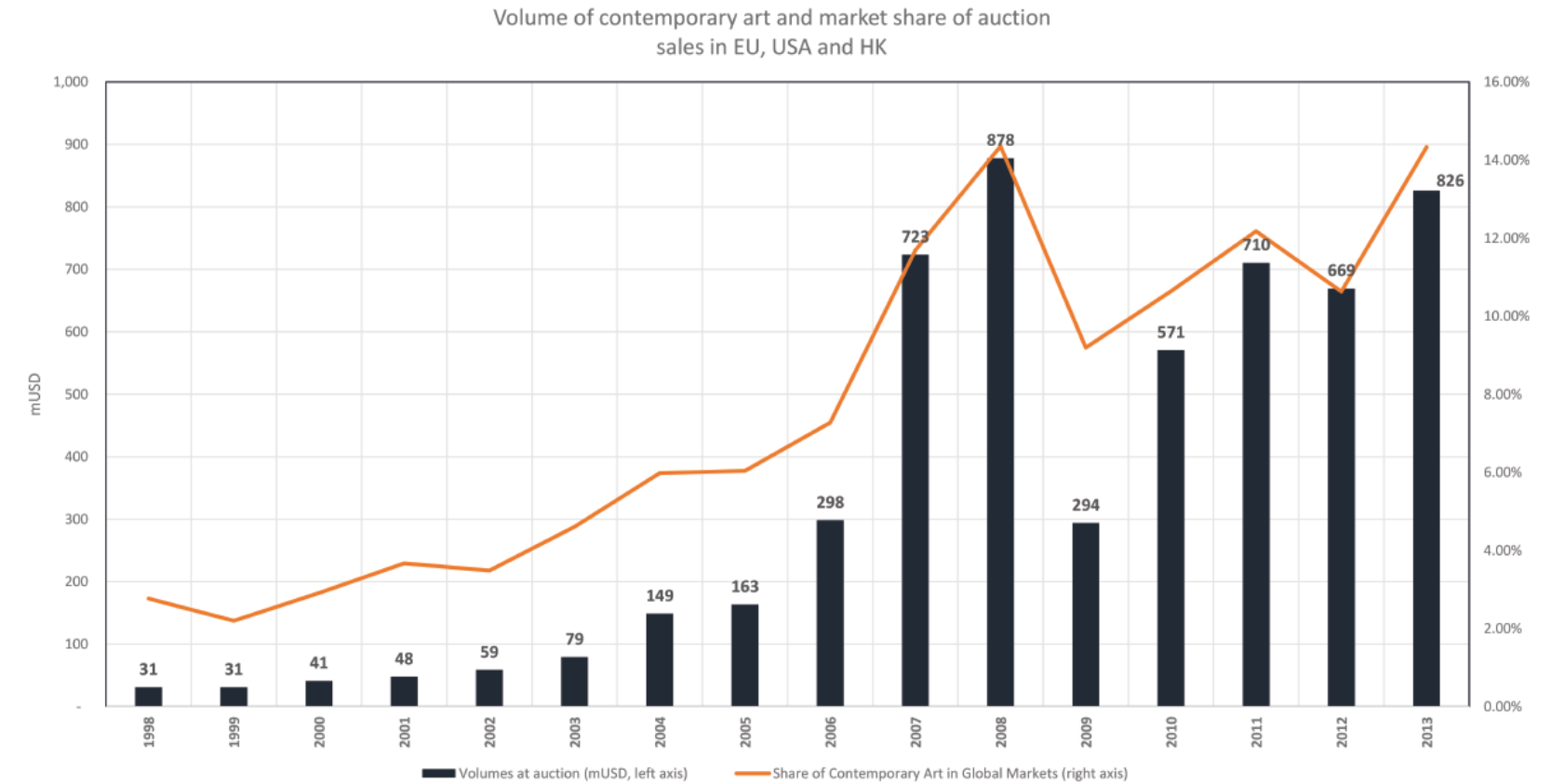
That “new money” is bringing with it different tastes and certainly less sophistication to art. I would not go as far as Charles Saatchi in describing the new buyers, but I have no doubt of a certain standardization, safety, and conservatism they bring with them:

“Even a show-off like me finds this new, super-rich art-buying crowd vulgar and depressingly shallow... Do any of these people actually enjoy looking at art? Or do they simply enjoy having easily recognized, big-brand name pictures, bought ostentatiously in auction rooms at eye-catching prices, to decorate their several homes, floating and otherwise, in an instant demonstration of drop-dead coolth and wealth. Their pleasure is to be found in having their lovely friends measuring the weight of their baubles, and being awestruck.”²

Auction Houses

Cold, corporate entities were the first to develop a larger bucket with which to catch this flow of money, with Christie's baton-passing dream-team of Philippe Ségalot, Dominique Lévy, and Amy Cappellazzo at the lead. This group introduced the auction of emerging artists at the end of the '90s, refined the event-driven push to buy at auctions, further “curated” their sales to match public taste, multiplied the number of auctions and their formats (long gone is the time of May and November auctions), reinforced very effective marketing strategies to create hype even when the quality does not justify it, developed their massive informational advantage into more private sales, and Sotheby's has gone so far as to move beyond auctions from the primary market with the opening of its S2 gallery space in New York (following in Christie's footsteps).³

In line with online auction services like Paddle8, auction houses have developed a deadly weapon for attracting more sellers and even artists directly: online auctions where the results of individual sales are not made public. This is ideal if you do not want to “burn” unsold lots, or if you want to undermine and devalue fair prices through an opaque sales system. Transparency of auctions has previously created an understanding of the value of an artist's work—removing this throttles the field.⁴ These corporations' primary weaknesses are greed and poorly controlled costs, which pushes them to raise commissions to unbearable levels, which should in turn create necessary competition. But like past illegal cartel agreements illustrate, we are



Courtesy of TUTELA CAPITAL S.A.

in a duopolistic system. The exclusive nature of the art market makes competition difficult and expensive.

It is essential to understand auction houses as the triggering and disrupting agents of change in the evolution of the art market. They are decisively grabbing more of the galleries' turf, from the most valuable to the least, as well as within primary and secondary markets. This economy consists mostly of two behemoths. To illuminate the capability of their international sway relative to the small world of galleries, the publicly listed Sotheby's has a market capitalization of \$2.5 billion! Yes, \$2,500,000,000! This should be enough to convince individual galleries that only through association and organized collaboration will they be able to protect their ground and future relevance.

A group of galleries, among them the most prominent and entrepreneurial, also perked up to this “wave of money” and decided to develop larger “buckets” (a term first introduced to me by Andrea Glimcher of Pace Gallery) to catch this new rain as well. They identified art fairs as a key weapon to compete on the field of event-driven buying started by auction houses. From there, along with other tactics, they adopted branding strategies similar to those of the luxury goods industry. It is not my intention to label these galleries as the “bad guys.” Indeed, they took advantage of a rare opportunity and did so in a brilliant, entrepreneurial way.

Brutal Art, Brutal Investment

But it all came with the heavy burden of fixed costs that include staff (and particularly “qualified” sales staff and artist liaisons), real estate for multiple locations, art production, catalogue editing and production, and participation in exceptionally expensive art fairs around the world. The important consequence of this multitude of fixed-cost burdens on these mega-galleries (as I nickname them) is that they have no time to develop an artist anymore. Selling *is* the priority,

and the organization is run completely along these lines. This has started another industry-changing trend: the “brutal” competition over very bankable artists (or VBAs, as I call them), as Pace's Marc Glimcher intoned while simultaneously inaugurating the gallery's London branch with a showing of Mark Rothko paintings and Hiroshi Sugimoto photographs.⁵ In addition, this whole system involving new and often “entrepreneurial” money that follows the rebranded, neo-luxurious mega-galleries and auction houses is also contributing to the art-flipping sales strategies instilled in the market, which by now has unfortunately spread its profiteering influence among the most seasoned collectors.

As Alexander Forbes discovered in his research for *Artnet* on art as investment, “In 2012, 53 percent of collectors took an investment view, to some extent, on their purchases. Just two years later, in the 2014 survey, that cohort has risen to 76 percent of overall respondents. An even greater 81 percent of arts professionals surveyed in 2014 suggested that their clients claim to take the possibility of a future return on investment into consideration when buying art... Wealth managers appear to be most interested in art's potential tax benefits for their clients, expressing the most interest in art philanthropy and estate planning services. That is an area which can, at times, benefit from the art market's opacity. So, it will be interesting to watch where wealth managers' interest shifts in the coming years as the structures that bolster that opacity continue to be broken down by innovation.”⁶

These market driven trends also bring about a pseudo art investment industry and the infamous “art funds.” For a comprehensive view, even if it is in need of refreshing, I highly recommend *Art of the Deal: Contemporary Art in a Global Financial Market* by Noah Horowitz. The art fund industry has suffered extinction twice already (in 2000 and in 2008) because it is based on a faulty business plan: buying works, valuing them optimistically as no valuations exist, selling the best performing pieces to boost performance, but then

collapsing when the unsalable leftovers are liquidated. Mr. Horowitz underlines the inherent massive conflict of interest between the fund and its managers when acquiring “hot” artworks plus the “against-nature” character of the art fund industry in an art market where galleries try their best to avoid re-selling. How could you ever consider as an “asset” an instrument that needs to rise in price by at least 50 to 100% in order to recover transaction costs, without mentioning the total opacity of these complex transactions? The most intellectually insulting part is the insistence of professionals calculating performance comparisons complemented by senseless correlations and simply imaginary Sharpe ratios⁷ in their reports on “art as investment.”

Indeed, more top galleries have been extending their “hunt” for VBAs at the lower level. I only have to remind you of cases like Takashi Murakami moving from Marianne Boesky to Gagosian, or Ryan Trecartin from Elizabeth Dee to Andrea Rosen, or Adel Abdessemed from Kamel Mennour to David Zwirner, et cetera.

We would not care so much if this only concerned those few hundreds of individuals at the top of the market, but this drive for money rather than art—and I am not saying one has to exist without the other—is polluting, if not endangering, the whole ecosystem that supports the creation and distribution of art.

As the time for artists to make their place in the sun shortens due to the demands of the market, they are pushed to emphasize what sells, which is often not the most demanding or most interesting art. This quote by Alex Katz from *New York Magazine* summarizes the situation perfectly: “It's hard for young artists. You're an adult at 18, but for a painter it takes longer. You don't really get it together until 35 or 45. In the 1950s, you had seven or eight years to experiment. But now you have to sell your first show and your second show and get a third show. And if you don't, you're a failure.” Then again, he says, “there are always people with new walls.”⁸

How are those tier-two galleries supposed to hold their ground at a table where the chip minimum is increasingly expensive and losing with their best-selling artists leaves them with no compensation? This all leave us schematically with three gallery tiers: the mega-galleries, the mid-size, and the emerging (with less than five years of existence). Only the top tier is thriving in the current circumstances. Emerging galleries do all right in their first years, but as soon as their artists mature they are faced with difficult choices leaving them to take a more business-like approach. Too many of them prefer to close, even if they reach the “nirvana” of LISTE Basel or FIAC, rather than compromise their vision. Examples are numerous around my country: Tulips and Roses, Hoet Bekaert, Vidal Cuglietta, Sebastien Ricou. The mid-size ones are crushed under higher and higher fixed costs and are often faced with the difficult “grow or go” dilemma, with some taking a shot at the top league (Sprüth Magers, Sean Kelly, Lehmann Maupin, Friedrich Petzel, and more), while others quit with interesting insights in their “lot” (d’Amelio Terras,Martin Klosterfelde, Nicole Klagsbrun, Jérôme de Noirmont, DCKT, Galerie Kamm, Giti Nourbakhsch).

The Foundation, Structure, and Infrastructure of the Art Industry

Starting with the belief that the art market is now an “industry,” the path to its future is lain through reinforcing its foundation, structure, and infrastructure. The first and essential step at this point is to define at an industry level what *best practices* are as in any sustainable business. These best practices would be cast into *model contracts*, which would replace the dangerous handshake way of currently doing business. Those best practices and model contracts would be decided after swift discussions among visionary representatives of the art market’s stakeholders: artists, collectors, galleries within the three tiers, directors of institutions, and of course, a few lawyers. This implies the constitution of *professional associations*, starting with the three tiers of galleries, despite the fierce individualism of most gallerists. Otherwise, we will continue the broken status quo, deepening the fortunes of lawyers through case-by-case negotiations..

Don’t be scared. This is the normal development of an industry. Are you not using model contracts for buying a house, a car, a vacuum cleaner, or for hiring employees or buying insurance? What if nothing changed? It is a real possibility as conservatism is pervading the organization of the art world. This could be a vision of a dark future in which a winner-takes-all market thrives: dominating auction houses fighting with mega-galleries for VBAs who increasingly become represented by *agents*. Around them would arise “exhibiting” galleries without a deep involvement in the artist’s development.

I received an email from a keen and ideally positioned observer: Annette Schönholzer, who was, until last summer, Art Basel’s director of new initiatives. She wrote, “The situation across Southeast Asia and China is even more precarious, where the gallery system as we know it, and which still is widely taken for granted in the Western Hemisphere, is neither deeply rooted nor has established and reliable relationships and responsibilities between galleries, artists, collectors, auction houses, or art fairs.”

Let me list some relationships in urgent need of contracts through the proliferation of expensive litigations and abuses of power as these are the most convincing evidence that best practices and model contracts are essential at this point:

-Contracts drawn at the time of the purchase: Too many withdrawals from buyers and galleries occur. As well, consignment agreements protect accountability, as in the case of the lost Sol LeWitt wall-drawing certificate of Steinkamp vs. Rhona Hoffman.⁹

-Between galleries and artists: Is it acceptable that the gallery’s main asset can walk through the door at any time and without any compensation for the years if not decades of investment in its development? Soccer clubs have found a way to compensate for this training, and though I am far from comparing art galleries with soccer clubs, would it not be possible to find balanced arrangements that monetarily value this essential investment in the art world? New York legislature recently strengthened the provisions requiring galleries to separate and hold in trust the artwork and sales proceeds owed to consignors. Galleries that disregard these obligations may now be criminally sanctioned, and may have to pay attorney’s fees to artists in civil suits.¹⁰ Such rules do not exist outside of the U.S.A. and will be necessary as I have had to intervene more than once at artists’ request in similar conflicts.

-Between collectors and artists: It is known that artist Daniel Buren is refusing to issue certificates to collectors before an auction sale. In addition, see cases like Cady Noland vs. Marc Jancou, and Murakami vs. Boesky, regarding the misappropriated sales of artworks; or Kreuk vs. Danh Võ and Sobel vs. Eggleston, which dealt with the misunderstood conditions of artists’ deliverables.

-Between collectors and gallerists: See Perelman vs. Gagosian, Cowles vs. Gagosian, Hoffman vs. Levy, Jane Holzer vs. Stephan Stoyanov.

-Between collectors and artists advised by their galleries on reproducible media, such as photography, video, or digital art: There is absolutely no understanding by galleries and therefore by artists that the rights and duties of both parties should be clearly stated before buying reproducible media. Exhibitions? Preservation? Editions? The medium is completely stifled by this lack of structure and vision. In addition, see the case of Sobel vs. Eggleston.

-Between art advisors and collectors: See Maleki vs. Amir Shariat and Achenbach vs. Albrecht.

Toward a Resistant Ecosystem for Art

It is becoming difficult for challenging art to flourish in the current market. I remember conversations I had with serious and dedicated gallerists: Philippe Valentin of Chez Valentin in Paris and Anita Beckers of her eponymous gallery in Frankfurt. Both came to the same conclusion: “Programs are getting artistically better and better but we sell less and less.” It is indeed becoming more difficult to support oneself while presenting challenging artwork outside of popular sales trends. How can the “little” stand in the face of true “war machines”?

Then one night I watched a documentary about the French resistance during WWII. I was impressed by the way people from totally different backgrounds and beliefs—communists, Catholics, nationalists, bourgeoisie, proletariat, nobles—put aside their differences in order to achieve one goal. I am very far from comparing auction houses, mega-galleries, and their clients to the Axis powers, but I was impressed by what the concentration of “little” forces could achieve, even when confronted with overwhelming power. And I believe now that this collaboration across the fence

is the solution to let “different” art blossom under the shadow of the larger and still growing art market tree. In times of change and crisis, you need to construct outside of the usual way of thinking.

Building the Resistance through Alternative Models

The professionalization of the gallery system is the necessary first step. I find that galleries rarely have a legitimate business plan, but rather a short road map that consists mainly of participation in art fairs if they are achievable. So much focus is on the art fairs they love to hate that they forget about necessary improvements in their operation. Gallerists need to decide what to do with their spaces as so many complain that the number of visitors is decreasing dramatically. One option is to spend more time and energy “animating” the space, shaping it into a forum where visitors, collectors, experts, and artists can meet, exchange, learn, and eventually buy. As well, these spaces could serve as conduits for artists and other experts to engage with the public, rather than keeping them behind closed doors. I like the model of *thepublicschool.org*, which is a “framework that supports autodidactic activities, operating under the assumption that everything is everything,”¹¹ and functions as a network to connect people who want to teach with people who want to learn.

Gallerists should also take the time to thoroughly understand emerging and longstanding collectors who are close to or interested in the gallery every chance they get. The art world can feel like an inaccessible entity that hides behind a bristly wall, and attempts to reach out to those who are interested need to be made. Too often I meet with gallerists who have not even taken the pain to Google me in order to save their time and mine. When collectors open their houses or private collections to new viewers I hear so often that the previous night was unfortunately too long... Is this a service industry or not?

Another facet where galleries are lagging in the wider economy is their inability to adopt technology that would improve their operational efficiency. How rare(but how simple of a task) is it still to find a PDF of catalogs on a gallery’s website, to record and distribute talks online with artists or experts, to develop online sales, to communicate via Twitter or Instagram or any other social media platform? Online sales are still in their infancy, but if they can increase sales by 10-15% a year without expensive efforts and with new clients, why neglect the possibility? Galleries are doing very little to take advantage of myriad resources, an absolutely basic step that every new business takes. In my travels, I am still surprised to find gallery personnel who hardly speak the art world’s lingua franca, English. This is a must. While galleries complain about the lack of visitors, they adopt opening hours that do not take into account the schedules of their potential clientele. It is coming to the point where only the unemployed or those who work outside of the standard workweek can visit them. Is this the objective?

Cooperation, not Separation

Cooperation between galleries and artists is the first and most essential relationship. It is only through this bond that developing artists can hope to establish and grow, which should be the central purpose of the gallery. I often (though not always!) feel a growing distance between galleries and their artists. Both parties are responsible: Artists often do not want to commit to more than one or at most a few shows, expecting that they will be discovered and swept up

by a mega-gallery, and consequentially galleries do not want to invest too much in an artist who could leave them at any moment, despite vows of “eternal love.” This is a lose-lose relationship built upon the false hopes of both parties. As described earlier, a balanced, industry-wide model contract should be implemented as currently, without such, artists most often refuse to sign *any* contract, as they do not feel able to judge its fairness. Exceptions made through addenda to these model contracts, as with any binding document, would be possible through individual negotiations.

Galleries must build close cooperation between each other, as well. Gallerists, particularly those of the old school, are fierce individualists. Because of this, cooperation, particularly between old and new organizations, is sometimes very difficult. A tight collaboration and the compromises necessary to reach it are now necessary if they want to resist the overwhelming power of auction houses, mega-galleries, and art fairs. Unfortunately, old-school gallerists still primarily hold the reins in selection committees for clusters like Arte Madrid, or Neca in Bruxelles, or in too many art fair selection committees.

Public authorities must also contribute more substantially to galleries and other venues supporting the arts. This does not always have to come in the form of subsidies. Latitude, an arts-funding organization in Brazil, offers extensive support to galleries in the interest of attracting collectors and curators to the country, or to help them disseminate their projects abroad. Latitude also helps with transportation, professional training, and the consolidation of other logistical tasks.¹²

Organizations such as KunstKoop in Holland, and a recent initiative by 10 Group in Sydney, Australia, are supporting the purchase of contemporary art by offering standardized and cheap or interest-free loans for this purpose.¹³ These groups function either through governmental funding or through a combination of governmental seed money and private philanthropy that carries the loaning system into perpetuity. In Belgium, the BAM Institute for Visual,

Audiovisual, and Media Art is organizing visits by international artists and makers multiple times a year to offer insight into the Belgian art scene. I am also appreciative of effective global collaboration through the exchange of space between like-minded galleries, such as Galerie Jocelyn Wolff in Paris and Labor in Mexico City, or between cities as with Brussels Cologne Contemporaries.

Collectors also have responsibilities that they must uphold between galleries and artists, and it would be unrealistic for me to present them all as saints. The capacity to aid in the production of artworks is one of the key competitive advantages of wealthier galleries. Collectors and galleries should collaborate in a mutual, profitable relationship for producing specific works. A few years ago, Emmanuel Perrotin, owner of Galerie Perrotin, had the foresight to create a “production” company. I don’t know why the initiative was later abandoned, but in my opinion this kind of business has a future, particularly in helping smaller galleries support their best artists.

All of this collectors’ support is essential for the future “marketability” of the artist, as often collectors check the usual price databases. Many gallerists shrug at auction prices, pretending that auction houses are not the same industry, but it is an insane mistake or sheer blindness that leads to this decision as buying from galleries or at auction is taking two parallel paths to the same art for a collector. Proactive galleries have adopted one potential solution: To inform an interested collector that the work of an artist is coming up at auction, describing its context and its retail value. If only one collector competes with other bidders, it can bring the price to a manageable level, which is a win-win situation for the collector, the gallery, and the artist. I recently received an email from a gallery I have a relationship with that exemplifies this approach:

“Dear Alain,
I hope you are well. Remembering your interest in Elliott Hundley, and in case you were not already aware, there is a special free-standing bulletin board and collaged screen that is coming up tomorrow

morning at Christie’s. The estimated is 50,000 to 70,000 GBP (\$79,300–\$110,200). Generally speaking, we would estimate the price should be more in line with the low end of this estimate. We were happy to learn that the reserve has been lowered to be more in line with current retail prices for Elliott’s sculptures, and therefore an opportunity to acquire an early significant sculpture. It clearly stands out as a fantastic heavily worked sculpture, with all of the meticulous layering and detail that is so signature of his practice. We’re always happy to let you know about this kind of opportunity, and certainly want you to have our opinion and advice about the price.”

Lastly, it is the responsibility of collectors who complain about the standardization of “fair art” to make the effort to visit, promote, and support galleries outside of the mainstream.

The Future Economy of Art

The art market is at a historical turning point. Many paths are open to its future. I am hoping that galleries and other stakeholders will realize the necessity of making radical changes even if it means giving up some part of their “traditional” influence. I share my final thoughts with those put forth in a recent post by Edward Winkleman: “[V]arious members of the current community, who might see the advance of one or more components of an entire ecosystem as a threat to the control they currently enjoy over a segment of the scene... would be wise to embrace the entire ecosystem model, even should it temporarily inconvenience some of the currently long-suffering players. . . . In the end, everyone benefits [more] from there being a much bigger pie than they do by foolishly or fiercely protecting their little slice of the current, smaller pie. It’s not always easy to see things from that point of view, but it’s clear when folks act in ways that don’t recognize it, they’re generally doing so quite selfishly. Which is understandable, but not productive in the end.”¹⁴

Without changes along the lines described above, the existing gallery ecosystem is at risk of collapsing.

The Hidden Story In The U.S. Immigration Debate

By Anthony Choice-Diaz
(Part One)

Somewhere along *la frontera* and deep in Latin America are missives of tears and starvation aplenty, but what is missing from the discussion among the primary power brokers and pundits of U.S. immigration and “the crisis in Central America” of women and children is any semblance of a lineage of truth. What we get instead is a constant shuffling of blame and excuses about why nothing has changed. The real story of immigration today is best borrowed from a term popularized by the late Ronald Reagan. The immigration problem is a “trickle down” or better yet a “voodoo economics” of human life and migration, only no one is putting the puzzle pieces together to talk about what is actually going on. The question of immigration and immigrants has been in the news probably since the very notion of “citizenship” emerged, but in the American context of late it’s taken on a far more smoldering character, that now, thanks to media talking points and shallow analysis, awaits its next iteration and connection to the War on Terror narrative.

As an audience of rabid media consumers, we have stopped asking why this connection between war, global policing, and immigration needs be made as a matter of state policy or public thematic. Perhaps the reason is best explained as an ongoing extension of a root infrastructure based on racism, exploitation, and asymmetrical power relations. Instead, the cynics assume it’s but policy pandering and manipulation, while those more accepting of the status quo genuinely assume there is a drug cartel ready to pounce, or an illegal waiting to steal their job. It doesn’t matter which formula is used—immigration under this framework becomes an “American problem” in need of “American leadership,” which is to say it is a U.S. problem calling for an ever-increasing array of rhetoric and interventionism on the part of Washington, DC. The actuality on the ground, however, is more complicated, but no less grotesque a headline. Indeed, a continental situation of crisis proportions has emerged and neither its causes nor affects are easy to outline or determine.

In the last few years the term “migration” has been thrown around and used to displace and describe the phenomena of mass immigration. Those on the American left have begun to do so seeking a more genteel language, fitted with decorative butterflies even to make it seem more palatable for the uninitiated and xenophobic. Yet the situation is such that daily broadcasts and news stories are filled with images and pieces about masses of children, families, orphans, refugees, individuals, and peoples gravitating



Former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton with Honduras’ then-President Manuel Zelaya. Courtesy of the Internet.

from country to/through country as if proverbial hot potatoes. These individuals are consistently passed off as someone else’s problem, until the pitiable human refuse in need of saving or condemning find themselves settled in *el norte* or elsewhere, wherein a charitable, missionary hand offers a future where survival is possible, ever so patiently fulfilling our own Kipling burden of being helpful and exceptionally American. What everyone in the equation is finding, however, is far from ideal, and much closer to false hope and optimism.

While women and children seem to travel in exodus out of places like Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, the shadow of post Cold War Central America is rarely referenced in the media’s friendly explanation of their story. They stand as human relics of a bygone era that were disallowed from standing before American popular memory as refugees from a common past in which the question of democracy and freedom might not have been all that friendly an affair. Instead, the immigrant, the migrant, the exile, and the refugee stand before an absent history save that which is iconographic for what is “trending” and worthy of a hashtag. They can be photo ops and sympathetic receptacles from which American guilt can be assuaged with a dollar amount, but they cannot be bearers of history that might cause us to question the benevolence of #Pax Americana.

The history emptied out of the immigration debate isn’t even that old, though it is pre-9/11, and like many things prior to that date its nuances and importance seem lost in light of an “attack upon America” or our “way of life.” But the human refuse left over after what was done elsewhere in the name of American freedom and prosperity now stands in front of us, bereft of home, health, and job by the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), death squads, cartels, poverty, starvation, structural readjustment, and coups backed by the United States. It was the benign neglect begun under “Dubya” that seemed to free Pandora’s box. As U.S. foreign policy shifted toward the Middle East and a perpetual war on terror, much of Latin America and the Caribbean were left as an untended “backyard,” to use the Beltway parlance. Already plundered by gunboat diplomacy, tin pot dictators, banana republics, and proxy fiefdoms, the future fate of *sur de la frontera* (south of the border) had already been predetermined in the minds, plans, and backrooms of Washington. Or so they assumed.

Their blueprint basically expected a continuation of the “same old, same old,” which is to say — compliance. But as children, gardens, and herds left untended tend to do, things went awry. Weeds sprouted and unwatered seeds never grew or even died disrupting the idea of an “end of history” for the region. Thus a hungry new political crop began to replace the old and succeeded in subverting all those dreamy notions of compliance. Progressive leftward mass-movements seized power throughout the region, except in places where U.S. clientelism and interventionism was most paramount, such as in Honduras, Haiti, and Colombia (but even that can change). Today these contemporary and convoluted echoes of history are ignored, creating a cascading continental tragedy, an inheritance of a bitter set of crops, if you will. Negligence has left us with but two questions: what actually happened then and what is actually happening now?

A Broken Workshop

The Cold War for the most part ended in the late 1980s, but post Cold War U.S. policy toward Latin America didn’t solidify until the early 1990s with the establishment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). NAFTA rewrote the geo-economic relations of the hemisphere, most specifically between the U.S. and Latin America. Following the “success” of NAFTA, its smaller cousin the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) came into being, and thus NAFTA became the FTAA. With the rise of the *maquiladora*, industrial cities became factories, resurrected “company towns” as economic Bantustans, and transnational agri-corporations penetrated Latin American domestic markets creating a rural flight pattern of the impoverished into the major urban centers throughout the hemisphere. Those cities, overwhelmed by a demand for jobs they were incapable of fulfilling and exhausted of economic opportunity or social safety nets, became launch pads into a pipeline of transnational mobile job seekers venturing ever northward into the virtually unregulated arms of a U.S. job market salivating for cheaper and cheaper labor. It is from this initial transformation that our contemporary “immigration” crisis was born.

In the boom and bust economy of the ‘90s, two simultaneous precedents were set; that of the formalized restructuring of U.S. economic relations with the global south, and the dot.com bubble burst. The rise of Silicon Valley’s non-permanent contract workers and the necessity of an H-1B visa reform movement were born. Ironically, the former wealthiest corporation on Earth, Apple, was in fact the cost cutting leader in that period. With massive layoffs and rehires of re-stated “temporary” labor, Apple was not only able to weather the recession but in fact flourish, grow, and profiteer. Its business practices became the new standard not just for Silicon Valley but for the industry as a whole. Never mind the fact that the then-CEOs throughout the Valley were colluding in a criminal conspiracy to reduce and fix wages and enter into an illegal non-competition agreement regarding hiring and “poaching” one another’s employees. Strangely, in the glitter and glamour of the faux Camelot aura of New Democrat Clintonianism, not only was the marriage of Silicon Valley and Democratic Party politics concretized as so aptly covered by Sara Miles in a 2002 issue of *Wired* magazine, but the very essence of the New Corporatist work ethos of Silicon Valley was borrowed and adapted from Hollywood magic man George Lucas in the way he controlled his own costs and workers. California ideology had indeed come full circle; who needs an Ayn Rand when you have Luke Skywalker’s real daddy at the helm?

These two worlds of immigration and workers’ needs couldn’t have contrasted each other more. Computer engineers, programmers, and machine language jockeys poured forth from Pakistan, India, Taiwan, and China to fill out what seemed to be human factories of technically savvy employees to feed the Information Age. Meanwhile, the rapid impoverishment of the continental south created an endless stream of under-skilled, low-income labor to make sure this new epoch full of Silicon Brahmins, Cyber Mandarins, and Technorati remained fed, fattened, clothed, and serviced. This was the new reality, one veiled by the euphoric blindness of easily accessible credit and gilded

dreams of prosperity. The shot heard around the world that would emanate from Thailand, Indonesia, and South Korea was a discharging canon of crashing home loans begun in 1997. The War on Terror quickly became passé for a brief window as the global financial crisis took hold of Washington’s leadership at the highest levels. But what happened just prior to credit default swaps, subprime loans, underwater mortgages, and the greatest transfer of wealth in human history? The Immigrant Rights Movement was reborn.

El Gigante Awakens

In 2006, millions of documented and undocumented immigrants and their children marched throughout the U.S. in an unprecedented display of popular dissent. They were one of the largest demonstrations in U.S. history and the first by those in defense of so-called “illegals” against the gross criminalization of their desire for prosperity, a humane life, and family unity. The proposed H.R. 4437, or Sensenbrenner Bill, came on the tail of Patriot Act (2001) and Patriot Act II (2003) hysterics. Among many other things, the bill sought to criminalize any association with undocumented peoples as “harboring a criminal” and thus a criminal offense. So outraged were the unrepresented and silenced underclass of predominantly Latino workers that over the span of three months (March, April, and May), millions of people took to the streets. As things began to heat up, their slogan of protest was transmuted by Democratic Party operators from “No on H.R. 4437” to “*hoy marchamos, mañana votamos*” (today we march, tomorrow we vote). One must admit this is a rather convenient play on words during an election cycle, made all the more strange considering it was applied to an utterly and legally disenfranchised population and movement. The demands of the people seemingly achieved, the Sensenbrenner Bill disappeared. Or did it?

Within a year a new wave of particular legislation and action took effect—2006 marked the beginning of the most frightening sequence of anti-immigrant sentiment and policy the U.S. had seen or employed since the time of the Palmer Raids (1919–1920) and Operation Wetback (1954). Ostensibly, Operation FALCON (Federal and Local Cops Organized Nationally) I, II, and III were a multi-phased dragnet that took place over weeks across all fifty states targeting federal fugitives. The final results of which were the largest recorded number ever arrested in the span of a single operation: an excess of 10,000 people. To be sure many of those arrested were in fact “criminals” it was no accident that a large number of those taken into custody happened to be undocumented foreign nationals. In volley of tit for tat actions the first of the major pro-immigrant demonstrations took place between March 10th–31st, while the next phase of Operation FALCON II raids took place April 17th–23rd. Responding with growing discontent, ever larger immigrant rights demonstrations took place throughout the country from April 1st–May 1st, with estimated participants in the millions. In the years that followed 2006, under two presidential administrations, more immigration incarceration and deportation has occurred than in any other time in U.S. history. Some have even begun to refer to Obama’s administration as “The Great Deportation.”

What has been conveniently overlooked and forgotten in most of the rhetoric around immigration is the actual origins of contemporary immigration policy. In American popular mythology about immigration, like citizenship, it is seen as a mechanism held up in light of racially narrow family histories rooted in the Statue of Liberty’s call to “give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” Immigration is yet another political issue in dire need of fixing in a broken regulatory system, a system by which one can ultimately obtain a path to citizenship. The problem with these assertions is that the H-1B “workers visa” didn’t come into existence until the mid-’60s as part of President Lyndon Johnson’s Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. As he signed the legislation into law Johnson stated:

“This [old] system violates the basic principle of American democracy, the principle that values and rewards each man on the basis of his merit as a man. It has been un-American in the highest sense, because it has been untrue to the faith that brought thousands to these shores even before we were a country.” (October 3, 1965)

Unfortunately, this law very specifically states that the H-1B visa is a “non-immigrant visa” (section 101(a)(15) (H)). Within a few short years under the administration of then-President Richard Nixon the laws regulating immigration were supplemented and modified as part of the Omnibus Crime Control Act of 1970. Upon signing the law, Nixon said:

“... I AM SIGNING into law today the Omnibus Crime Control Act of 1970. . . . Our goal is the increased effectiveness of our criminal justice system in order to reverse the unacceptable trend of crime in our Nation. From our efforts in the Nation’s Capital, we are already learning that this trend can be reversed. By applying new techniques and adding resources, we have been able to halt —and even to reverse— the spiraling crime ...” (January 2, 1971)

Nowhere does Nixon mention immigration or a path to citizenship as a paramount issue (let alone a second thought) in the bill’s authoring nor in its implementation. But it was this bill that began the “war on crime” and the beginning of the legislation for “securing the borders.” From its very beginnings, contemporary immigration has been framed as a criminal, not civil,

matter. In the 1700s citizenship was limited to “free white persons” of “good moral character,” those Indian savages and recalcitrant three-quarters of men living as slaves need not apply. Naturalization by geography of birth didn’t even emerge until almost a full century later, after a civil war had been fought. Nonetheless, by the 1900s a quota system was established in such a way that specifically emphasized European paths to immigration and citizenship, as long as they weren’t “subversives.” These are the various laws and legacies to which President Johnson is referring. Not that it really changed that much, because as Senator Edward Kennedy stated at the time when discussing the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965:

“... the bill will not flood our cities with immigrants. It will not upset the ethnic mix of our society. It will not relax the standards of admission. It will not cause American workers to lose their jobs.” (February 10, 1965)

One must ask what it did, what it has done, and what reforms have been done since? The simple answer is that it codified into black-letter law the system by which ongoing criminalization statutes could be strengthened, refined, reinforced, and ultimately enforced upon a very specific population. Thus it was no surprise that in the voodoo soup that was Ronald Reagan’s 1980s, narrow refugee and immigration quotas and ceilings were established as a means of regulating both wanted and unwanted immigration. For the first time criminal and fiduciary penalties were established for employers that knowingly hired undocumented workers. So broken was the system that a general amnesty was granted to some 3 million undocumented immigrants, and an intensification of prosecution and patrol by the United States Border Patrol was mandated into law. The history of the regulatory enforcement arm of U.S. immigration policy has always been federalized. In 1940 it was removed from being a simple economic issue and firmly placed under the purview and subdivision of the Department of Justice. From then forward it was a criminal matter. Previously it had been housed in various locations of governance such as the Department of Treasury (1891), the Department of Commerce and Labor (1903), and the Department of Labor (1913) before it was all replaced and solidified independently by the heavily militarized Department of Homeland Security (2003). In a post 9/11 social pressure cooker such as this, the structure could produce an Operation FALCON and dissent on a scale previously unseen.



Central American migrants risk life and limb riding freight train wagons to reach the U.S. Courtesy of the Internet.

Santiago Roose:

Barbarism, Globalization, And Architecture In Latin America

By Arie Amaya-Akkermans

The 21st century begins with an abrupt return to space. After the long extended flight of the modern era, globalization itself was preached and practiced as a metaphor for flight and liquidity, and the new world of multiculturalism heralded the beginning of a new world order. The Towers of Babylon of absolute space rose in defiance of human scale, us not having had enough time to catch up and accommodate our sensory organs to this new order of perception; our sense of places entered the Copernican dynamics, once our old places became too large to be lived in. We began to simply transit through places, rather than inhabit them. This new space is not a square or even a dot: morphologically, the space operates as a multidirectional vacuum that, rather than grounding, continues expanding endlessly, reproducing social space cyclically. To be sure, this new space is no longer a combination of sites in their particularity, but a field of simultaneity.

What happened to time, then? It is not that it disappeared, but the conflation of time-space that made the edifice of metaphysics collapse curved space in such a way that it acquiesced with the temporal once time became the topography and currency of the modern world, losing its experiential value. The process is far more complex: the obsession with history in the 19th and 20th centuries had to do less with the dissolution of national states and more with the political history of time themed around cycles, progress, crises, and an ever accumulating past. While modernity is always a project of the future—like salvation—the realities of colonial domination throughout Earth made it an imperative to root the civilizational argument for imperialism in the fulfillment and achievement of a remote past as a destination. The aesthetics of Romanticism are only an early symptom of this program, which culminated in totalitarian expansion in the 20th century. With the unavoidable collapse of the European colonial project, new socio-economic realities emerged that uniquely shaped the degree to which time receded from the public domain with its political history, in order to open up a neutral emplacement.

Latin America is a particularly interesting case for cultural practitioners (artists, architects, theoreticians) because the early independence of the nascent states, in the early 19th century, meant that not only did they become independent long before the end of the colonial era, but they also inherited the intellectual apparatus of historicism and imperialism, well engineered into the state. Despite significant advantages and none of the cultural and ethnic heterogeneities of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East (the civilizational project had been very successful in both exterminating the native population and spreading the religion and language of the motherland), the region remained at an impasse with a chronic lack of infrastructure, industry developed only slowly, political strife has been as constant as the dependency on foreign aid, which has come in recent decades, hand in hand, with both armed

conflict and economic boom. Strangely enough, unlike the Middle East, Latin America did experience the different phases of modernity, while still remaining particularly insular and subject to the politics of the new empires, although in its innovative form, without a civilizational argument, and exclusively at the service of corporatism.

It is precisely because of this complex heritage that Latin America has carved out for itself a place in the history of art, not only through the modern period: in the face of evidence of the contemporary's depletion, an endless supply of modernist work from the most diverse enclaves, particularly those in conflict, has begun to emerge, but Latin America had been already long established. Contemporary art and its predecessors, the avant-gardes and their countless strategies for contestation, were present in Latin America at the time of their inception in the West, but as the art market morphed into global aesthetics, the strategies became of questionable relevance. How do artists from Latin America respond to the challenge of new (economic) geographies, attempt to challenge third-worldism, and speak the international artspeak of the contemporary?

When Peruvian artist Santiago Roose (b. 1974) returned to his native Lima after a decade in Europe, he went through a year of re-adaptation and re-cognition of his native city; a journal of writings, sketches, drawings, and photography: "The root of the matter is that there was this whole talk about constant progress, growth, and a lot of blahblahblah. The first image, in comparison with what there was before, was exactly that; there was a visible face to this progress. However, this visible face of progress in Latin America is a facade, a kind of wall of shame behind which everything is the same or much worse." Trained in photography and design, Roose chooses to not simply articulate a discourse but to enter through interventions between the visual and the material, a "polysemy of critical contents that could overlap, juxtapose, and combine into a more complex symbolic structure." Whenever we hear about photography in the context of the third world, one thinks often of the fetishism associated with images of misery from peripheral and endangered tropes. Roose, however, takes on a sculptural path, often interwoven with other practices.

In one of his most recent works, *Sistema de frontera* (*Boundary System*, 2014) presented at the art fair Art Lima 2014 Projects Room, he displayed two functional structures (in this case, a watchtower, which often occurs in his work) that have stepped back from their function into a system of equilibrium with each other that is not only eminently sculptural but also annuls functionality in such a way that they become "two frozen bodies in continuous action." In his work, Roose wants to distance himself from the ornamental nature of architectural interventions in contemporary art and proposes a critical architectural discourse for public art, in which the structures become analogous symbols for social structures and, above all, conflict.

The artist stabilizes his works in a discourse about art that does not favor the exploitation of a symbolic order of consumerism in order to advance a political program that is governed solely by economic interest.

Similarly, returning to the watchtower, in *Sistema teoreticamente estable* (*Theoretically Stable System*, 2013) shown at Art Basel Miami Beach 2013 Public Sector, a public art sculpture cum temporary installation, Roose simulates the fragile fabric of contemporary society through two temporary structures, closely tied with surveillance and the current obsession with security on the local and geopolitical level: the watchtower and the dog house. According to the artist, architecture operates under ethnographic semiology; it is purely descriptive. In these structures, the crass object and the material emerge as a sort of urban monument that requires a process of excavation through an experimental archaeology that will reveal not the found object, but the internal dynamics of the engineered object. The object is not a relic of the past, but a catalog of the moment, which displays social relations as a function of the structure, rather than the other way around. The emphasis on temporal structures is not necessarily a metaphor for precarity as much as an indicator of how the temporary has solidified into a condition.

Across the world, people living in transitory mega-cities, temporary high rises not suited to survive natural disasters, internment camps for refugees and the displaced, rings of misery around cities and dangerous hinterlands, are more numerous than those living in organic cities with running water, electricity, and transportation grids. After the Industrial Age lies in ruins (think about the car factories in Detroit, now one of America's most violent cities, or the structures of brutalist architecture from England to Sweden to Brazil, now either derelict or gentrified), the solid modernity of aluminum and steel which begot the postwar world becomes a distant antiquity whose language of progress and civilization is more and more foreign to a world in which only tiny islets of security remain in the third world. It is surrounded by complex security schemes, planted as a quicksand in a world no longer at war and apparently less poor than any other period in human history, but also the most unequal and violent of all possible worlds. The fact that we perceive such a world to be the most violent perhaps has more to do with how much exposure we have today to images thereof.

Certain critics of modernity insist that there was never a "modernity," or at least that whatever it is, it's not "qualitatively" different from antiquity. The problem with this view is that, while eliminating a good number of dichotomies, it doesn't offer an alternative to a world in crisis; it is also perhaps true that crisis is the only dynamic under which the modern can function and produce economic growth. In one of his most celebrated structures, *Torre* (*Tower*, executed first in Lima in 2011 and then at La Otra, Bogotá's biennial in 2013), he elaborates on the symbolic language



Torre (Tower), 2011-2013, mixed media, 600x200x800. Courtesy of Galeria 80m2 Livia Benavides, Lima, Peru.

of power present in the periphery of cities and the instability of buildings in the rings of misery: "This piece is a criticism of urban modernism, but also of the hierarchy of social classes, the crowding in the peripheries, the indifference. The work is made of four floors in the form of block dwellings that grow into a tower. Each one comes with its own stairway, and they get poorer and poorer as you climb up them." There is something frightening about entering this structure, built with local found materials, for the ground seems to crumble under you as you climb up.

It is, however, two larger projects, *Determinaciones socioterritoriales* (*Social-Territorial Determinations*, 2012–2013) and *Maloka* (2012), where Santiago Roose deploys the fuller extent of his critical architecture, for they are conceived as real-size structures that, albeit temporary, provide a ground for social architecture and for a surrogate public space whose abolition throughout the developing world and transformation into memory-less spaces of consumerism has remained a constant. "The project along the coast was a type of *huaca* (the name given to all the pre-Columbian shrines laying in ruins throughout the country). It was fabricated with the most precarious materials used to build slum dwellings. From this duality a number of possible interpretations emerge which I prefer to leave open. The piece was some one hundred meters long and was perfectly visible from different points of the coast of Lima and right in front of the commercial bay and touristic zone. I should also mention that it took place during the time when the two new art fairs had just opened in the midst of the World Economic Forum."

Roose also developed a similar project in Burkina Faso using a different structure with a similar function, but, rather than the performative element of transporting the materials and constructing it on site, it acquired a truly social dimension: "The piece in Africa was an experiment in social architecture. A live structure which responded to immediate needs that were brought up in the process of assembling it. An exercise on adaptation in every level. First it responded to the basic need of shadow from the reckless sun, and gradually it turned into a welfare center, sometimes a bar, etc., depending on the moment of the day. It is the work with the utmost social resonance I've done so far, for the people in the neighborhood helped me put it up but then they completely adopted it as their own. I ended up going there merely as a guest." These practices, however, shouldn't go without scrutiny. What does one make of architecture and the context of social exclusion in the contemporary art world of fairs, biennials, big money behind art institutions, and the elite sport of collecting objects of misery?

The artist expands on the topic of contemporary artists from Latin America (and other regions as well) bringing the misery of the third world without irony into the luxury halls of fairs and biennials: "Latin America, from a contemporary art viewpoint, is a kind of catalogue of fashionable objects that speak of our miseries. Objects in the broadest sense of the word. I have this feeling since I assumed myself as contemporary artist that it is necessary to be global in order to be 'good,' as if globalization was a necessary step not to fine-tune one's discourse or broaden the scope of action, but to fall within the fashion of standardization imposed by the fairs and the curators. But for a 'peripheral' artist, the ideal is not to establish his own specificity within the art world but to make his work exotic within the frameworks decided by the globalization of art. Chunks from the periphery are torn off and distributed throughout, from London to Hong Kong, pretending to offer a glimpse into what's being



Colonía litoral 1 & 2, (Coast Colony), intervention on a public beach in Lima, 2013. Courtesy of Galeria 80m2 Livia Benavides, Lima, Peru

done in Latin America. As Juan Javier Salazar points out, Latin American political art mad out of situations that are both bloody and terrible is now in fashion."

The notion of the barbarian is making a comeback, acquiring new layers of meaning that are related to both the geopolitical and the socioeconomic order. In the classical world, barbarian referred to the foreigner that did not speak Greek and was therefore thought of as uncivilized, ill-mannered, uneducated, and violent. This notion lived through the ages in a number of circumstances and at present is used when referring to the infamous violence of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria; however, the circumstances of barbarism are never exceptional enough as to not be explainable through the dynamics of power and money. Exoticism and Orientalism (the same ideologies that constructed the third world, and architecturally planned it as a zone of randomness) are forms to exhibit oneself as a barbarian—to send across the message that the human condition is divided between north and south, and that the wars against the peoples of the south, however despicable and aimless, were unavoidable. And as Roose has eloquently argued, there is no global aesthetic other than the painful process through which difference is obliterated for the sake of order in a very turbulent world.

What happened, then, to globalization, and what's its effect on the architectural structure of contemporary life? "The answer is contained in the question itself. Security is the new obsession of the civilized world. It has gradually replaced everything else, including happiness or modernity itself, for instance. Security is one of the world's largest industries and this has caused an irreparable loss of the human dimension in global architecture. This is an enormous and constant exercise of power that has become blind to itself. The dimension of this economy is written in each folder of every architectural structure; everything is almost transparent. You could easily perceive how cold it is inside each of these flats. I'm personally more interested in what neither hides nor showcases. The old houses of the middle classes, the same houses that in Latin America are becoming globalized buildings, half by opportunism and half by imposition. But, how to make an eight-story building in a place where there's no such a thing as number eight?"

We are at a moment when our experience of the world is less than that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skin, as suggested by Michel Foucault. Network, rather than time or space, is the most apt metaphor for the situation in which we are living now. Transparency is a realm of obscurity in which there's little direct access to experience or information, and everything is diluted in a gigantic cloud (another very apt metaphor nowadays). This situation of transition, of living in a world half virtual and half real, has immediate political consequences for the vast majority of the world who are not interconnected and who, despite receiving the images of a global world that is open and prosperous, cannot enter it. For them, the walls and the boundaries and the checkpoints and the watchtowers are very real. Santiago Roose's work is a not-so-subtle reminder that while those structures that we see in the periphery of our cities seem temporary, they are the building blocks of a pseudo-global aesthetic, lurking from underneath a discourse of progress, which is based on privilege and, by definition, on exclusion.

In his book *Spatial Aesthetics: Art, Place and the Everyday*, Nikos Papastergiadis suggested that a new spatial aesthetic (which obviously favors grand scale) is characterized by the history of site-specific practices whose utopian drive limited its scope for action. But contemporary art, as in the case of Roose, is not merely relational aesthetics and redefines itself as both social project and aesthetic framework. Exhibiting a work of art is no longer simply an emplacement but also an engagement between place and perception. Accordingly, Papastergiadis concludes: "I would argue that art does participate in the political through its own internal process of extending the language of resistance and representation. When art challenges the boundaries by which we understand the aesthetics of the everyday, and combines this experience with a new understanding of connection to our surrounding world, then it could be argued to have expanded the sphere of politics."



Maloka, 2012, intervention in the popular neighborhood of Bougsemtinga, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Courtesy of Galeria 80m2 Livia Benavides, Lima, Peru.



Prototipo de accidente (*Accident prototype*), 2013, 360x420x350, wood, cane, corrugated roofing sheets, paint. Courtesy of Galeria 80m2 Livia Benavides, Lima, Peru.



Asterisco (*Asterisk*), 2012, wood, variable size. Courtesy of Galeria 80m2 Livia Benavides, Lima, Peru.

Alexandre Arrechea

In Conversation With Tony Labat

Let's start at the beginning, your childhood. I know your parents were very supportive of you becoming an artist and played a major role. Can you talk a bit about your formative years before going to art school in Havana?

I was born in Trinidad, Cuba. I spent most of my childhood there. I moved from Trinidad to study in Havana, but for fifteen years I was in Trinidad. I was born in a beautiful area of Trinidad in the center of the city, very well known for its architecture from the 18th century, so for me, Trinidad has always been a way to understand architecture. My father who was a machinist was always the center of our family. He was the one who carried the weight at home, and of course, I was always interested to see what the father does. It seems like I was nine, when for the first time I traveled to where my father worked and I discovered that it was a sugar mill. There he built pieces for the machines to continue working. It was very attractive to me, and very dangerous too, because my father told me, "I'm not supposed to bring you to this place, but I want you to know what I do." So I was really excited to see those monster machines, and also to know that my father is the one who helped those machines continue working. Of course, that was a very exciting thing for a kid to know. I said to my father that I would like to be like him, to build machines like that and keep them working for the sugar mill. You have to realize that it is a city that is involved with sugar production, since the 17th century, so for me I felt that, in trying to be like my dad, I would be part of a history of Trinidad. Everyone wants to be like his or her father, but I also wanted to be a part of the history of my city. Those are the first years of my childhood.

Eventually, because my father did all these pieces for the sugar mill, he drew them at home. He would make a study on the pieces he had to build, and I'd look at him, what he did, making measurements, numbers—not with a measuring tape, but a caliper (*pie de rey*) that helps to calculate the size of relatively small objects. For me to see that particular instrument at home every day was very special. It is a tool that was part of the landscape of my house in Trinidad. And of course, my father at the time told me, "It's nice that you are thinking of being like me, but I would like you to be something else!" Because of the way he drew the machines, I wanted to start drawing like him, so he encouraged me to do drawings and we started making little competitions between the two of us. And then my mother, one day, she handed me a box of colors so I could start doing more drawings. Then I continued doing drawings with paper that my father brought and the colors my mother gave me, and I started to build a pile of drawings—birds, houses, things in my surroundings, from books—this and that, and my mother asked why I don't start giving the drawings to the family so they all have a piece of what I do. I loved the idea and started giving my drawings to my family and that gave me—granted me—the name El Pintor. The family started to call me "The Painter." I was like, whoa, that's cool. And my uncles who drove big trucks started to ask me to do paintings for their trucks, and I was involved in creating some weird things for my family, and I ended up going to an art school! It's as simple as that!

What a beautiful story. A book was just published on your work and everything you've been doing. It seems to be a kind of . . . not an ending, of course! But yet sort of like a closure, an end to a chapter in your career, and today we're talking about a new beginning. The next chapter if you will. Can you say a little bit about the book?

Oh definitely, the book is about to be launched pretty soon. *The Inevitable Space*, edited by Cristina Vives from Turner Books. I wanted to launch it in Havana because of course I think Havana is the place to launch that book. It contains 20-something years of collaboration, work with different artists, and for me, it is a book that is a closure of material of my art career. Especially because, like you know, I've done special collaborations that lasted for 12 years with Los Carpinteros, and I've done work with friends who have always been near to me and who share some of my thoughts, and I think that the book somehow also pays tribute not only to my work but to the work of those who have been collaborating with me. The book is divided into four chapters. You start with chapter one, which somehow talks a little bit about the early days as an art student in Trinidad and my move to Havana. Then there is chapter two, which is about the collaborations. The third chapter is chapter one and it's funny because it goes one, two, three, one. Back to the beginning again, and that chapter is the one about what I've been doing in the last five or six years.

And a new chapter began. Let's start with the very ambitious project No Limits that you did on Park Avenue.

Park Avenue is definitely the most ambitious thing that I've been involved in in the last 15 years. The gallery that I work with recommended I submit a proposal to the Park Avenue committee and I was a little bit reluctant because I'm not very interested in the type



Tony Labat and Alexandre Arrechea, 2013. Photograph by Juan Carlos Alom.

of work that is on Park Avenue. But at the same time, I thought that this street that is so beautiful would bring a lot of visibility to my work, which I wanted to take to my advantage. Obviously because I've been working with architecture for so many years in different ways I thought that it was a great opportunity to address issues that I have been dealing with in the past and put it on Park Avenue as a conclusion to this period of work and to introduce my work to New York. I initially wanted a very easy piece, something that people could grab immediately where people wouldn't necessarily need to go and think about it because it's so deep and so special that they need to rethink their life or whatever, no, no. I wanted it to be something simple. And the first thing that I wanted was to use landmarks that are very familiar, not only to New Yorkers, but to people in general, people who visit New York, people who know New York from afar and that type of thing.

I included the Empire State Building, the Chrysler, and other buildings that are known and are important architecturally because they represent a period of architecture that I've always been interested in, that early New York of the '20s and '30s when things were starting to pop up in the city and when the verticality of New York started being something. An architecture that changed not only New York but started pushing the boundaries of architecture around the world—those very early days when I started to draw the studies, I was attracted to the idea of dealing with New York in that setting, in which I was a foreigner but didn't want to be one. I wanted to be a participant; I wanted to be someone who can bring other points of view to a city that sometimes feels like it's going to crush you. Based on that, I started to build sculptures or prototypes that were actually buildings in different shapes. And those shapes sometimes allude to something else—it could be architectural elements, or maybe a fire hose. What is the meaning of creating a building that is coiled like a fire hose? Very simple—architecture and nature. Even when it represents a tower, it is a structure of fragility, and part of that fragility is a moment in which the building for whatever reason will be in danger and will need a fire hose. I am trying to create a metaphorical relationship, which is why, apart from that first object—*The Room of All*, 2009, that was this object that connected art to the economy—I created these fire hose-like buildings. But then I also created a spinning top. Spinning tops for kids are so meaningful, but I love the metaphor of the spinning top because you make it dance, and if you stop, it stops, and then everything stops. For me, to use spinning tops as part of the metaphor of *No Limits* was very important because it's somehow related to how society functions and the power that we give to make things work. Having all of those elements at hand helps



The Fact, 2014. Wood, acrylic embedment, metal 30' x 12' x 9' foot. Photograph by Geandy Pavon. Courtesy of the artist.



Black Sun, 2009. Video installation at NASDAQ, Times Square, NY 2010. Courtesy of the artist.



White Corner, 2006. Two videos- projections on wall corner 118 x 78 in. each side, 8 min loop. Courtesy of the artist.

me a lot to build this other city—a parallel city, parallel to New York—that is not perfect; it has failed. It is a city that is weak, but at the same time it is a city that can be joyful, that can be happy, but I think it goes to both ends. That’s why for me *No Limits* feels like a critique of the idea of how power for the sake of power can be limitless, but it can also be fragile.

I’ve been explaining in interviews that when we were filming the documentary based on this project we were pointing a camera toward a top that nobody knew could rotate, and all of a sudden a kid approached it and started rotating the spinning top. For me that was magical, because one of the things I was pursuing was letting people know they can interact with the pieces. You don’t put a sign that says “you can play with this.” When you approach it and you see that this thing can rotate and you do it and it happens . . . wow, that’s beautiful. To see that kid making the 15 to 20-foot-tall top rotate, I realized that people are in power to change and control things themselves, and he just went there and he did it and it happened and he felt happy. That moment to me was very important.

I would like to use that image. I wanted to talk to you a little bit about your process. On the one hand we have the handmade that we can categorize as the drawings, and then on the other we have the fabricated. Collaboration comes in with fabrication, so I was interested in that, and then of course the relationship of the drawings to the installation and the sculptures. You were talking about your father and the drawings, but in order to make the drawings work and happen he needed the collaboration of others to complete the monster machines, and it seemed really amazing. We’re here talking about something similar to what your father did.
Absolutely. I think it was part of the essence in the beginning.

I was just curious about how there’s always this relationship between the handmade and the fabricated. Can you share some of how the process changes from one to the other and how they have a dialogue with each other?
I have practiced working with the drawing and the fabricated object for so many years, but I’m always trying to find new angles to bring in to enrich that process. Initially, when

I was doing my work, that process was very simple. You make the drawing and after that you create the sculpture. When I was working with Los Carpinteros we would call those drawings “letters.” Letters that we wrote to each other in order to understand what we were thinking, and to share the idea with the other and let them understand it, which somehow built a dialogue that is apart from the drawing. When I ended that type of relationship with my work there came a new moment, and I remember when I started creating this series of reminders that I saw for the first time in San Francisco, which are these drawings that are made out of magnetic strips on metal panels. They were in between being a drawing and being a sculpture. I loved the idea of the drawing that can be renewed and changed into a different shape or situation.

Then I was in this period where I wanted to create drawings that were not related to the possibility of making a future sculpture, but those were drawings for the sake of being an idea painted on paper. Recently I have been trying to twist this relationship between drawing and sculpture. I am calling the drawings in my recent exhibition *The Map and the Fact* “maps,” because maps help us follow certain paths and describe what we were thinking and our realities at the time of making the drawing. I created a drawing, but I didn’t want to build a sculpture based on the entire drawing. I thought, what if I choose one little portion of the drawing and create a sculpture based on that?

In this case, the map is a drawing based on a sort of upside down world map, which has been confusing for people because they aren’t used to seeing the world that way. And then you have the sculpture, which resembles a plowed field because of the shape of the lines taken from a portion of that map. These days we are living in this dilemma of globalization where people want everything but at the same time want to eat a homegrown tomato, you know? Because it’s tastier, it’s healthier, and all that. Part of the recent work is about localization. I am trying to bring in this problem through the relationship between drawing and sculpture, especially since these days I’m traveling back and forth a lot and you sometimes want to feel a sense of being at home and the only way to pursue that is to build in your mind this utopian place. I think for me and for you, and for many of us who are in that situation, we are trying to build this place that actually doesn’t exist, because you have to take a little bit of here and there and start to build up this fictitious utopia. I’m trying

to connect this relationship between the drawing and the sculpture and all these problems that we are now in. I don’t know, sometimes I accomplish it but sometimes I don’t.

You’re talking about a certain kind of reversal that you’re doing, if the drawing comes first and the sculpture comes second or the other way around, but I think you’re talking about a departure.
Right now, I think these new drawings are closer to a painting than a drawing, because I don’t reproduce that drawing. It’s more like the energy of the drawing rather than the measurement and the size of the object that I am trying to build on the paper.

But at the same time the drawing in this case (The Map and the Fact) has a relationship to the floor piece. It’s as if they are one piece.
Absolutely, I want to have a dialogue between the two of them. I don’t know if I was clear about that, but rather than pursuing a finished object made from a drawing, this time it is more like building context instead of a sculpture. I see this sculpture sort of like an island somehow, because the yellow platform with all these drops of water encapsulated in this Plexiglas are an isolated landscape that is trying to build something new. I’d rather hear the water, the idea of the plowed field, the essence of things, where things start to grow up. You clean the soil and you create this field and you bury the seeds and water them and eventually you’ll have a tree or a plant or whatever, and I think it’s in the *ideas* where we start cultivating more portions of our lives—not the big aspects where we can get lost, you know?

So now we have the drawing that relates to the idea of the world map, the entire world map, and we are trying to cover every aspect of the world where we travel, but we are losing the essence of things, and I want people to rethink these terms. Like I said initially, people prefer now the homegrown tomato because it’s healthier and tastes better than a tomato that comes from nowhere, that you don’t know how it was grown and all that—I feel right now the necessity of relating to a small portion of my life rather than a larger map. You know how this works, you just create an environment and situations.

Does this mean that we have an Alexandre Arrechea project involving a small tomato garden?
I don’t know! But the idea attracts me a lot right now.

What I’m getting from you and I’m seeing is that you are now shifting. The work that you’re doing now, and the relationship between the function of the drawing and the sculpture has differed from, let’s say No Limits, where you were creating a drawing of the top with a building on top and next to me was a sculpture of the top with a building on top.
Right, exactly, exactly.

What’s next for you? Also I would love to know if you have any projects in mind involving other media/vehicles. You’ve worked with video before—any future ventures into other types of production and distribution?
It is great that you mention video at this time. With *The Map and the Fact*, the relationship of the drawing and the sculpture became more problematic than it was with previous works. Now I want to come back to video and continue my particular investigation on space in art and architecture. Works such as *White Corner* have been very instrumental in this return. Recently the Bronx museum in N.Y. has given me the opportunity to use their studio facilities for a certain period of time. I want to experiment with creating a new series of video installations involving the evolution or expansion of space in museums. A few years ago I started a series of drawings that reflected on the creation of new spaces in museums. The titles were like *34 New Spaces for the National Museum in Havana* or *20 New Spaces for Reina Sofía Museum in Spain* and so on. Later I abandoned the series. Now I have come back to it and it will be very interesting to use video. Let’s say I want to create ephemeral spaces in museums using video—how am I going to develop this? I certainly don’t know at this moment. But this idea has become an engine to start working again with this medium.



I have always been interested in the idea of art as a platform that makes possible other things and brings reflection to any given subject. With *White Corner*, for the first time I reflected on the relationship between architecture and video; how space conditions the video projections and somehow helps to reinforce the theatrical act depicted in the two opposing images that I used in that particular case. At the same time video creates a kind of awareness of the space. You don't only look for what is happening in the image, but you want to walk around and see behind the wall where the image is projected because it is also important. It is not merely a surface for the image; it is part of the essence of the work. Since I developed this project a few years ago I have been dying to continue this investigation. I know there is a lot to be discovered. Let's say I want to create ephemeral spaces with video and architecture using, for example, the Bronx Museum as a subject. Then this installation could be exhibited at Reina Sofia Museum or any other space. A "museum" inside the museum. Fusing institutions in a different manner.



Empire, 2013. Steel 14 x 9 x 2 ft. Photograph by Alexandre Arrechea. Courtesy of the artist.



[sequence] *MetLife*, 2013. Steel, polymers. 16 x 5 ft. Video still from *NOLIMITS* documentary. Photographs by Juan Carlos Alom. Courtesy of the artist.



On the other hand I want to continue developing sculptures in dialog with specific architecture. I recently finished a sculpture in Madrid, *Sledge Hammer- Alamar*, which targeted the architecture built in the seventies and eighties in Cuba, specifically the housing projects imported from socialist eastern countries. With this sculpture I am commenting on the impact of this type of architecture in the urban landscape of Cuba and Havana in particular and the subculture generated in these places. The piece is made out of painted steel and wood—when you look at it you want to lift it and use it. At least this is what happened to me. It is a provocative object. In this sense I link the energy of this sculpture to *Black Sun*-, the animated video of a wrecking ball that was projected against the NASDAQ building in Times Square in N.Y. back in early 2010. I believe I haven't lost the desire for questioning or simply provoking a slight smile.

Like father like son.



[this page]
Trinidad, 1987 Gelatin
Silver prints. Photographs
by Alexandre Arrechea.
Courtesy of the artist.

Pedro Reyes

In Conversation With Peter Dobey

I first found out about Pedro Reyes's project the *People's United Nations (pUN)* while attending the 2013 Creative Time Summit in New York. There was a booth in the auditorium there for recruiting individuals from all over the world to represent their homeland as part of the exhibition at the Queens Museum, the site where the UN General Assembly met from 1946 through 1950. *The People's United Nations* congregated its 150 citizen-delegates for two days in late November of last year.

Reyes' contribution at the Creative Time Summit was the organization of conversations between himself and former Bogotá mayor Antanas Mockus Šivickas, who famously introduced mimes to curb traffic accidents in Bogotá, as well as numerous other political endeavors that took cues from art and creative impulses in general. The conversation was entitled “The Absurd and Urban Transformation,” and successfully brought genuine curiosity and playfulness to the very dry bureaucratic problem of tax collection. The conversation culminated with the two of them offering tokens of public resources in the form of sacramental bread to the mouths of audience members.

Long an admirer of Pedro's ethics in the form of art projects inspired by psychotherapy, I was now a follower of his aesthetics, which I perceived to be adorations to humanity and the complexities of human psychology and spirituality. The following freeform interview is an attempt to understand the mechanisms behind his therapeutic thought process.

Can you tell us how you originally came up with the idea for People's United Nations?

The dream of making a parallel organization to the UN may be something that I thought since I was a child. I used to read *Mafalda*, which was a very influential cartoon for several generations in Latin America. Different from Charlie Brown (*Peanuts*), Mafalda was always commenting on the Vietnam War, the tensions between the Pentagon and the Kremlin, or the dictatorships in Latin America. Her dream was to grow up to become an interpreter at the UN to smooth the exchanges between countries. Many years later I got invited by Larissa Harris to present a project for the reopening of the Queens Museum. The building was the first home of the UN and where many historical events, such as the partitions of Palestine, and North and South Korea were discussed. Two other factors were crucial: the Queens Museum has a special vocation for social practice with a unique community outreach, and Queens is perhaps the most ethnically diverse place on Earth.

Your work is political, in a direct sense, and yet it seems to work precisely because it is not overtly political. It is transformational rather than political. Can you say something about the positive outcome you hope for with much of your work, especially your project People's United Nations?

We live in a world where different cultural environments overlap as in a kind of palimpsest. Each cultural environment has its own set of parameters to assign value. My work in general is very optimistic and Panglossian, as in the character from Voltaire's *Candide*. It suggests optimism regardless of circumstances, and is very utopian. Dr. Pangloss is someone who speaks all languages with all species, the Latin *pan* for everything, all, and *glossa* for a list of words; glossary. *People's United Nations* is a totally Panglossian project in the sense that it aims to bring everyone together —one representative from every country in the actual UN. Humor is a very important aspect of all of this. One of the main theses of my work has to do with humor and the way that jokes work. Most jokes have a setup and a punch line. The setup involves something that is wrong or is going in the wrong direction. To tell a joke is a process of things becoming an awkward situation, and the punch line is this shocking delivery far below your expectations. And when something is far below your expectations, when someone is in a ridiculous and embarrassing situation, the way one can best handle such shock and disappointment is with laughter. For instance there is a joke where a guy goes to a doctor and the doctor says to the patient, “Here is your analysis and it says that there is not much time left, only ten.” The patient replies anxiously, “Ten months? Ten weeks? Ten days?” And the doctor says, “No ... 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5 ...” —you know? You have to have a setup that is a kind of warning and a delivery that is between your expectations of reality and the realpolitik. The way that a joke allows one to deal with disappointment is through laughing. According to biologists, laughing is a kind of reaction where, say, you thought you were being attacked but you realized it was a false alarm, and then a scream is produced that is this kind of a spastic thing that we call laughter.

What I am trying to do with pieces like *p(UN)* is reverse the mechanisms of jokes. So you have an extremely optimistic punch line, something that is so far above your expectations that the shock value is a resolution that is extremely, hilariously optimistic. I do that because I believe that the shock value of optimistic projects is something that brings new ideas to life. It is a little bit messianic, but it is based in spontaneity.

In his book on the psychology of jokes and laughter, Freud says that jokes produce revelations through their technique—creating something that makes sense via the mechanisms of the nonsensical, juxtaposing two conflicting ideas—and in this way jokes are akin to how our unconscious mechanisms make sense in dream displacement, allowing for new interpretations to arise. Can you say something about the thought process of conflict resolution in p(UN)? You say that diplomacy has proved not to work, so you want to try alternative play therapies.

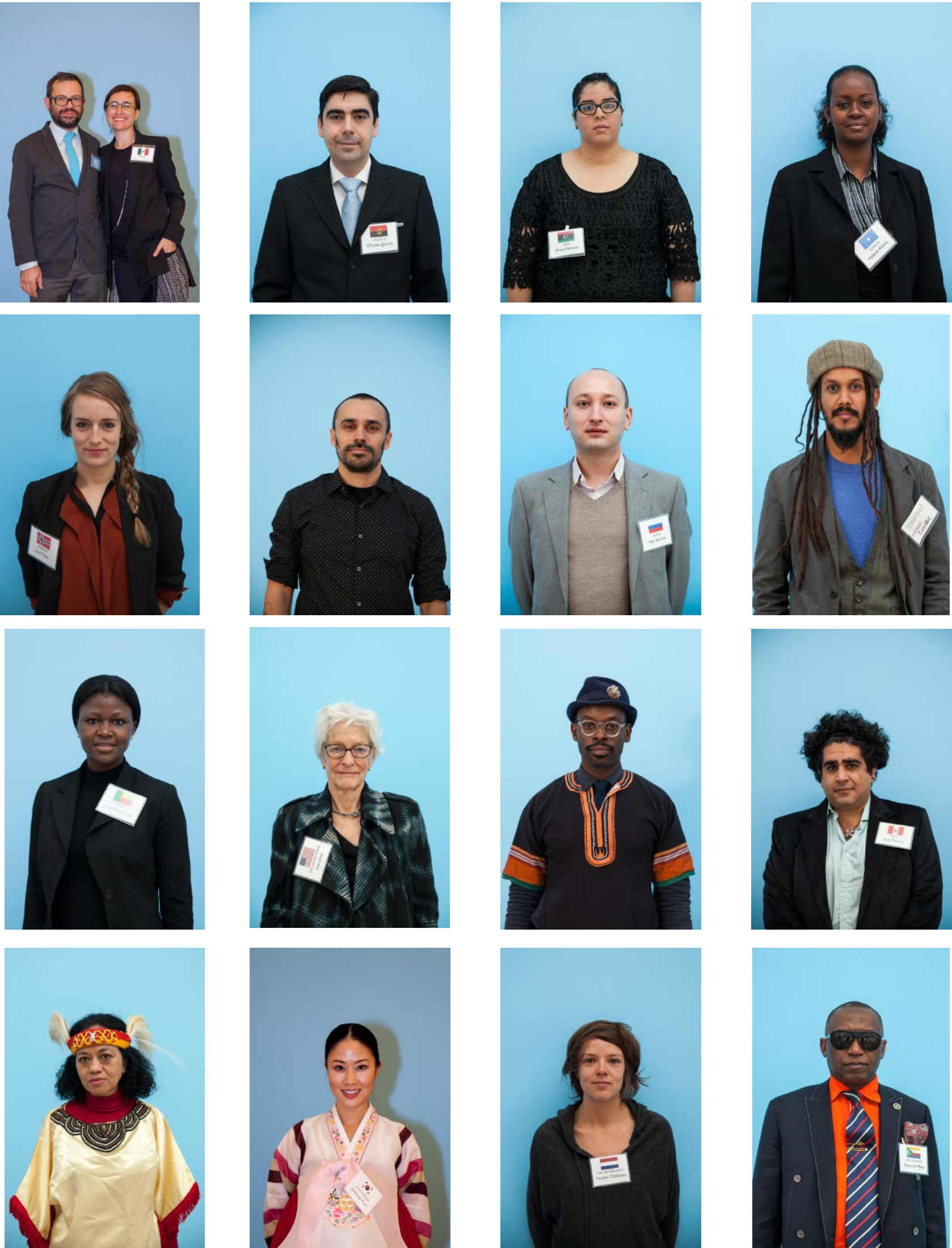
For instance, one of the workshops at *p(UN)* consists of breaking down the participants in groups of five or six, and then for the first ten minutes everyone has to share the most embarrassing thing about their own country. Then the participants have a workshop where they envision an ideal world where, if they were to open the pages of a newspaper, they are to imagine the polarities were switched around from the worst to the best. For instance, people who were from the Philippines were angry that the Catholic Church had ruined the reproductive rights of women. So then they were able to imagine a joint venture between the Catholic Church and the State to open abortion clinics nationwide, and they expressed this idea though the workshops. Another example emerged when the people of Turkey were embarrassed that they had the highest number of journalists in prison. The reversal of that fact was that Turkish prisons could become journalistic meccas and that a newspaper called the *Turkish Prison Times* would sweep the Pulitzerz. Because really it's not that farfetched; it's actually a completely plausible idea. Imagine that you create some kind of network inside a Turkish prison that becomes an online newspaper through which they smuggle their texts. It really could be!

What I'm trying to do comes from this basic thing that I believe in, that there are two ways to deal with reality. One is to focus on the problem, and the other is to focus on the solution. But the focus on the solution has to be something that is daring. And I do that in sculpture as well. With *Disarm* and *Imagine*, a continuation of my project *Palas por Pistolas*, I transformed seized guns into musical instruments. Turning a machine gun into an electric guitar is a successful, positive transformation. Many of the operations that are underlying my work are basically quite systematic in the sense of identifying an agent of suffering and death and destruction and making a change in polarity where these agents become something extremely positive. For instance, I may do a collage where I turn a tank into kind of a musical-mechanical orchestra on wheels, or I take a drone and I turn it into a dove, and it becomes a drone-dove. Visualizing something positive is a stepping-stone towards that reality. You have to have a vision.

It would seem to me that a concentration of yours is to play with the given polarities of a situation. With projects such as Disarm and Imagine you have made a pretty straightforward reversal of polarities, from this extremely negative force of the weapons to this very positive source of the musical instruments. However, it's a great deal more nuanced with something like People's United Nations, where the act is not necessarily reversing or transforming a given situation, that of the UN, but rather presenting viable resolutions that could easily be implanted by the already existing state of affairs. Nonetheless, there is a visceral reaction to the solutions offered through p(UN), such as the absurd and hilarious ones you have mentioned with the delegates of the Philippines or Turkey. Why do we have this internalized reaction to these great solutions that says, “that's clever, but it's totally crazy, too crazy to work”?

I believe it is because the status quo is insane by nature, how things operate normally is often wrong from the very get-go. What we are used to accepting as normal is in fact insanity. It's why R.D. Laing would say something along the lines of “perfectly normal people have killed two million people in the last century.” The idea is that you are never going to run out of incredibly wrong things in the world that need to be corrected. They're everywhere, from energy for communication, or distribution of wealth, everything is wrong.

For instance, food, when I was doing the catering for *People's United Nations*, I wanted to do a kind of prototype dish that could become the staple food for the future, and my rationale for doing this turned into the “GrassWhopper,” which is a hamburger of crickets, of grasshoppers, and if you stick to the most rational solution, this is it! The GrassWhopper is the most kosher thing to grow in this way, because insects such as crickets don't need refrigeration, and they are pure protein, and no suffering is involved. If a cricket eats



Selected portraits from, *Citizen-Delegates*, 2013. Documentation from his exhibition *The People's United Nations (pUN)*, Queens Museum, New York City. Photographs courtesy of the artist.



Disarm, 2013. Instruments made from de-commissioned weapons, Lisson Gallery, London, 2013. Courtesy of the artist and Lisson Gallery, London.

100 grams of grass it becomes 100 grams of protein in its body so it's a kind of 1:1 translation, whereas a cow has to eat the equivalent of hundreds of football fields to create a single pound of meat. There are so many aspects to illustrate how this food choice is in fact the most rational, economical choice of all. It may look exotic and strange, but that's only because our regular world is wrong and completely upside down.

Intuitively we laugh at the GrassWhopper and jump a bit because it sounds disgusting and absurd to our usual sensibilities. However, if you were a super-rigid bureaucrat crunching the data, it would be something where to see this on paper it would be the most pragmatic food solution.

One of the things that art does best is to bring estrangement. You have to make the familiar strange in order to reveal the arbitrary standards that we live inside of. And you have to make the strange familiar to introduce something new. Monotony is gray. Art brings color, and when it punctures the monotony of the everyday, it creates estrangement. In order to do this you must make the strange familiar and the familiar strange.

This idea of estrangement is really interesting in the context of People's United Nations because it seems to be at odds with the espoused mission of the actual United Nations. What I imagine is that the United Nations seeks to be seen in the public imagination as bringing people together to create a common understanding and set of solutions, and in this way presents itself as diametrically opposed to estrangement. So then, the artistic component of p(UN) would seemingly go against that logical, rational, practical ideal of the actual United Nations. I'm trying to contextualize the idea of estrangement within the kind of cultural politics that play out at the UN that supposes a goal of “mutual understanding” and “democracy.” But what makes it work has to do with it being not only estrangement; it's also role-play. Estrangement is one condition present but the reason these individuals felt like they needed to be there, the reason people were so committed to the project, was because of the aspect of role-play, and playing a part that is already inside of them. I was afraid the volunteers would not show up, because this was in New York where people's time is very coveted, and especially since it was freezing and all the way up at the end of the 7 line in Queens. It was a big request for people to do this for free. But in the end they not only showed up for the first day but they came enthusiastically for the second because they were passionate about it. They really devoted two whole days to this, and these people were all very busy people, important people in their respective fields. I really believe that

the reason why they committed was because of the aspect of role-play. The moment that they accepted their roles as delegates, they would fail their countries if they failed to be there. Their countries would not be represented. So they had an honor and a duty to—

Their identity. Twice removed, and put back again.

Yes, helped by the fact that they were wearing a badge. I believe a lot in the rich role of props. So they were asked to dress in business attire or their ethnic clothing, just as in the UN, and also they were wearing a badge with their flag and their name. If these same people were just at a party it would be different, but the fact that they became delegates created a kind of atmosphere of respect and admiration for each other, and it was all because of role-play. Estrangement is just a kind of substrata; it is this role-play that brings a certain cohesion to the psychodynamic.

In some way this role-play becomes a dress-up game where someone becomes themselves again, albeit in the role of their entire country. But of course they were not alone. You have people in character talking to other people in character but the character is themselves.

In New York everyone is from everywhere, but during *p(UN)* they were delegates and they were talking on behalf of their nations and their legacies and their cultures. They had to advertise and advocate for their countries. They took it very seriously because they were around others doing the same, which set up opposition that would not exist on the streets of NYC normally. As for coming together with the other delegates in new ways there was a therapist from the school of Milton Erickson doing couple's therapy, and I had these people from different countries going to this couples therapy and really talking about their long-standing hatred between their two countries to this therapist. There were many other situations where there was socio-drama. I use a lot of psychology, mainly Milton Erickson and Jacob Levy Moreno, founder of psychodrama and socio-drama.

It seems that the most important thing is that you have made a space for various new psychological states to play out, in this case literally psychological “states”! What strikes me is how seriously the delegates took role-playing. Because in a way it was also a state of play, a universal country of ridiculousness. And it is within this very psychological playground of absurdity that all of this was taken very seriously.



Imagine, 2012. Documentation of fabricating a musical instrument out of a destroyed weapon. Courtesy of the artist.

I believe that the mind loves cognitive dissonance. When you don't know if it's real or if it's a joke, then you're actually paying attention. And above all, the existence of the two possible interpretations, the coexistence of those two: Is this serious? Is this a joke? I've been talking with a neurologist, that I've had a long-standing conversation with, about how we get excited by cognitive dissonance. You are playing a role and you are aware that it's a joke, and at the same time it's serious. And that is exactly what provides you access. I have these opposing interpretations, that it all has to do with our own meta-theater. The mask frees you to perform roles that otherwise would be unbearable. Because if this were pretending to be serious it could be about worthiness or it could be patronizing, or it could be messianic, but you're stating, you're warning, that this is a joke and a game, so then people relax, and precisely because they are relaxed you can talk seriously. If you talk serious straight-talk to people you scare them off. You have to present it as a game for it to become serious; at least that was my framework for this project. In other scenarios there is a demand and a place for earnestness as well, and some aesthetic experiences demand this earnestness. For instance, in *Sanatorium* at documenta, I had different people coming in, but there always had to be a place for this ambiguity between play and earnestness; it was also a big role-play game. Suddenly I had some serious workshops that had to be conducted in full earnestness. I had a Protestant pastor at documenta who came to give a blessing workshop . . .

[Laughs]

Why do you laugh?

I laugh because it could have only been a Protestant pastor doing such a thing—the Protestants who once swore off aestheticism, and yet he's doing it in a place that is highly aestheticized. On one hand it's this very aesthetic experience of the blessing, one probably most associated with the aesthetics of the Catholic Church, but this priest would be reprimanded immediately if he was Catholic. He has traded one aesthetic venue for another . . . for an ethics and aesthetics of earnestness.

A blessing is something that has to be earnest. It consists of you saying something positive to someone and then complementing that with a physical gesture. Wishing someone good, it's very powerful. Most importantly, it's beautiful.

It's interesting though that you use a blessing as being exemplary of earnestness in the face of role-play and an open-ended play in general. Pre-

senting serious matters as a game was at the heart of the conversation you had with Antanas Mockus Šivickas at the Creative Time Summit. Can you introduce our readers to this project of Antanas's and the conversation you two had around it?

Antanas Mockus is a mathematician, philosopher and used to be the mayor of Bogotá. I was interested in showing a very particular policy that he implemented that increased tax collection by 30% in Bogotá. He created something called “110% for Bogotá,” where the citizens of Bogotá went to the tax service office to pay taxes and you could opt for paying 10% more and you could choose where that extra 10% would go. What was most exciting about the project was the idea of empowering people to take part in direct democracy. It was not something that you could do online—you had to go to an office to pay your taxes. He created a casino in these places.

PD: At the beginning of the talk you remarked that he had “turned the entire city of Bogotá into a game.”

It was a very sophisticated and whacky game that worked. He has one of the wackiest minds I know. He created this pseudo-casino and people were using this kind of dreidel called a pirinola that you spin, which has six sides and it says things like put one, take one, take two, pass, etc. Every time you bet money you lose or you gain. Antanas is so sophisticated that he created a seven-side pirinola. So when you spin the pirinola, you will end with two faces up, so you have the freedom to choose whether to be selfish or altruistic, and that is how one decides how to spend this public money. The citizens became addicted to this democracy and were going back to the cashier to pay more taxes to get more points and bet more on which projects they wanted funded.

A fantastic phrase, “addicted to democracy.”

Yes! So tax collection was then able to be increased 30% because people were very excited to take part in this addictive and fun game to promote paying taxes. And if you paid 10% extra you were given these chips. For whatever you were paying you were given a stack of chips and then you could enter these tables where people were gambling for where the money should go, and you would bet on certain projects, which made the whole process very exciting. People would lose their money and then go pay more taxes to get more chips and get the projects they wanted funded. And these chips resembled and acted as the body of Christ, the *hostia*, and they said on them “Public Resources-Sacred Resources,” and the citizens were given a small piece of paper with which they had to classify where the resources would be put—social justice, roads, etc.—and

he was trying to create a cultural change by saying that stealing public resources was a worse scene than stealing private money. He sees money given as a tax to be holy, and he was teaching people that the biggest proof of love for your country was to pay your taxes. That is how some of the pain of paying taxes could be relieved. You had to be extremely careful about how you handled your public resources. And so that's why we ended the Creative Time talk by giving away these pieces that resembled the communion bread as if we were in mass. People made a line and we gave it to them in the mouth while saying "public resources, public resources" instead of "body of Christ."

This blessing gesture you surprised the audience with was a brilliant mix of play and earnestness. And I believe Antanas beautifully placed it into language when he said at the end that he was convinced that humanity cannot change many of its problems without taking a look at religious traditions. I believe a lot in the importance of religious mythologies, aesthetics, and ethics in art. I am Catholic in this sense.
I am Catholic but I don't know what I am now ...

But, I bring this up in light of the certain dichotomy and dialectic that was at play, if you will, with the presentation you and Antanas made by giving the body of Christ as if at mass, because this gesture is at once the most serious, and indeed earnest gestures imaginable if you are a believer, but the way it was presented was very playful and childlike, and outside of the usual context it's given at the Church. It seems to be a fundamentally artistic gesture.
Antanas would say so. One of his favorite quotes is, "When I don't know what to do, I ask myself, what would an artist do?" And so now I ask myself, "What would Antanas do?" To me he's a genuine genius.

You have said that your artwork has an intention to heal. Can you speak a little bit about this?
The idea is not creation for creation's purpose; I believe that art has to have a purpose. At least for me. There is this story of Bashō, the Japanese poet, who is working with an apprentice, walking in a field where there are many dragonflies, and the apprentice says, "Master, I have a haiku," and the master says, "Okay, tell me." "A dragonfly takes out its wing and you have a pepper pod." And the master says, "No, that's not a good Haiku. You have to say, 'take a piece of pepper, and add wings and it's a dragonfly.'" So it has to be something that adds positively and that is a kind of healing process that reveals something beautiful and good, and I'm not afraid of having that ethos, that moral intention in itself. That's why I insist on, you know, that the work is not completely open-ended, that the work has an intention to heal. It's about healing.

In this sense it's an Aristotelian ethics, something which aims toward the good and the positive rather than inverting things.
It's a categorical imperative. And I acknowledge that this is strange within the art world, because in the art world there is a kind of parenthesis or exception where you don't have to be ethical, you only have to be aesthetical. I don't know why, but I believe that things have to make the world better. And I don't believe that all art has to be like that. It's only something that I ask for most of my own work.

When I create group activities I hope for collective creativity and spontaneity to produce a spectrum of different ideas. This is coming from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He is possibly the most important philosopher from Latin America in the 20th century. He states an obvious thing: there are the rich guys and the poor guys, and the rich guys think the poor guys are inferior. You cannot expect change to come from above—you have to teach yourself if you want liberation. One must take responsibility for one's own liberation process, and when you have a problem you have to socialize the problem. Then I have to turn to Augusto Boal because he takes Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and he creates *Theatre of the Oppressed*, wherein what you do enunciate the problem with a one-act play, a short play, with a critical moment where the oppressed face all the oppression, and you don't have a solution. Then you stop the play at that moment, and you invite the audience to contribute with solutions, but they cannot verbally say the solutions, they have to act them out. The people from the audience come on stage and decide which actor they want to replace and then you have different endings. You have a problem and you have the audience who become "spect-actors" through which you explore all the potential outcomes of the problem. You have a spectrum, a rainbow of solutions.

In the end it is about the difference between learning and teaching, learning and being taught. Augusto Boal says that the whole problem started with Aristotle because Aristotle was a hack for the government, you know? Aristotle, when he created the idea of tragedy, he was first of all saying, okay, drama is going to be a prescription where we're going to show what those people should not do, because if they do that they will end up destroyed. So you should not sleep with your mother, etc. ...

Yes, of course. This is the double-edged sword of the Aristotelian ethics of the good, "You must do this."

Yes, Aristotle alienates the audience by creating the chorus. You don't need to participate now that there's a chorus that will sing for you, that will lament when there is disgrace, or will celebrate when there is victory. He alienates reactions from you. He basically separates the audience from the actors and he kills spontaneity and agency from the public. Augusto Boal and Jacob Levy Moreno, through psychodrama, group therapy, and the encounter movement, basically brought back theater to its primitive stage where the audience could participate and change the end of the play.

One can change the trajectory of the story because they have their own understanding and not someone else's.
I believe that you have to create an idea that the audiences can experience and make as their own. If an idea is truly valuable everyone will understand it. The idea that an artist should not create small curtains—basically, I don't want bullshit.

I see a kind of curatorial dictation in art today that reminds me of this flaw of Aristotle's—all too often the way an exhibit is organized and written about demands an art spectator to experience it with a strict, often oppressive pedagogy, where they tell you how to look at a piece of art. That seems like bullshit.
Well, I like obscurity and I like art—I enjoy some art about art. But I don't expect other artists to follow the same rules that I make for myself. I don't think that it's bad that there's self-referential art. But I do believe that art should speak to most people, even though when I do this I put myself in a risky position because I know that in reaching out, your audience may have curators in it.

But what I appreciate in much of your work and your thought process is what I see as creations of open spaces that let the viewer see for themselves, spaces that one can navigate on their own and decide between what is good and what is not, because the most basic and yet most profound thing one can understand is their own lived experience.
I have a kind of a very personal dogma that my work has to be understood by everyone.

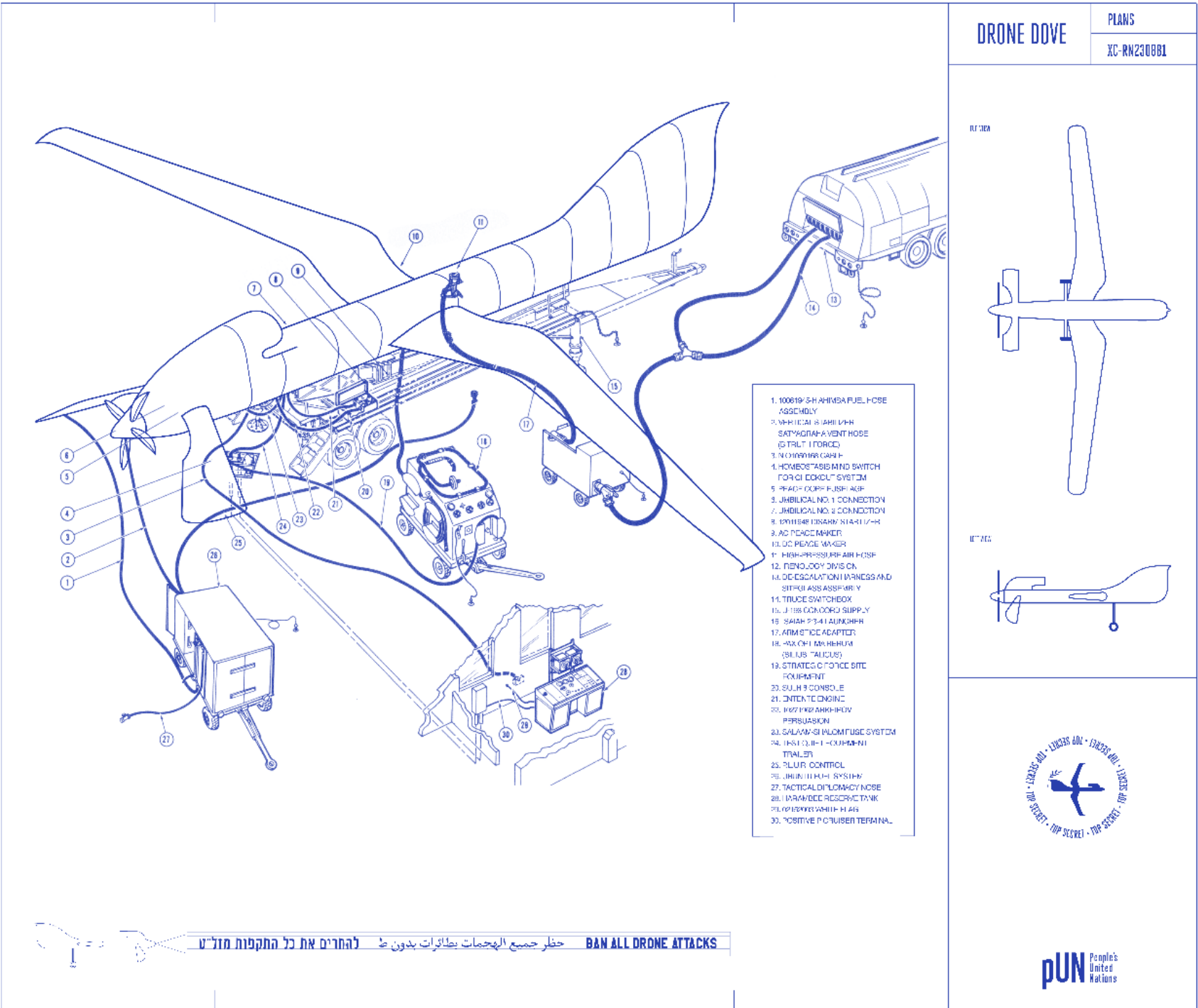
Has to be or could be?
Has to be. Yeah.



Citizen-delegates and other participants of *The People's United Nations (pUN)*, Drone Dove in foreground and official pUN flag with motto "Hands-on with a vision" in background. Queens Museum, New York City, 2013. Courtesy of the artist.



Antanas Mockus Šivickas offering a *Public Resources-Sacred Resources* to host Lucy Lippard during the 2013 Creative Time Summit in New York City. Photograph by Casey Kelbaugh. Courtesy of Creative Time.



Pedro Reyes, Blueprint plans for *Drone Dove*, 2013. Courtesy of the artist.



Pedro Reyes, *Drone Dove*, 2013, artist rendering. Courtesy of the artist.

Deconstructing Tercerunquinto

By Christopher Michael Fraga

“You have, I suppose, dreamt of finding a single word for designating difference and articulation. I have perhaps located it [. . .]. This word is *brisure* [joint, break]—broken, cracked part. Cf. breach, crack, fracture, fault, split, fragment. . . . Hinged articulation of two parts of wood- or metal-work. The hinge, the *brisure* [folding-joint] of a shutter. Cf. joint.”

—Roger Laporte¹

This passage from a letter from one French philosopher to another somehow made its way to me, and now it has made its way to you. I would begin this missive of my own by supplementing Laporte’s glosses of the word *brisure* (themselves lifted from Robert’s French dictionary) with an additional sense culled from the *Oxford English Dictionary*: “brisure, n. 2. *Fortification*. A break in the general direction of a rampart or parapet; *spec.* of the parapet of the curtain adjacent to a bastion constructed with orilons.” To Laporte’s figure of the brisure as rupture and opening, then, I am adding the supplement of the brisure as fold, the effect of which being to multiply the length and surface area of a defensive barrier.² This will be our point of entry/non-entry: a hinge, a joint, a threshold; or, alternatively, a fold there along the architectural border that would separate inside from out.

The artists known jointly as Tercerunquinto came together in their current configuration in 1998 while studying at the Facultad de Artes Visuales of the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, on the northern edge of Monterrey, Mexico. From the start, Julio Castro Carreón, Gabriel Cázares Salas, and Rolando Flores were drawn toward the architectural functionality of doorways and walls. Indeed, in hindsight some of their earliest works seem to have been the product of a meticulous analysis of architecture’s most basic precepts. *Trabas para puerta* (perhaps best translated by the pun “Door Jams,” 1999, 2013) was, in its first instantiation, part of an exhibition held in an apartment whose tenants had recently been evicted. The artists modified one of the doorframes in the apartment slightly, making it impossible to open or close the door completely. Given the circumstances of the exhibition, this intervention was both site-specific and situation-specific. Their compromising the accessibility of the exhibition space itself must be read not only in terms of mere architectural functionality or dysfunctionality, but also as an act of protest or even as a symbolic act of retribution (with all its economic-moral implications of debt and repayment). Impeding the operation of a physical brisure, Tercerunquinto simultaneously introduced a brisure of another order, joining the phenomenal field of space-time to the extra- or non-phenomenal field of social and ethical relations.³

Other early pieces by the trio worked at the brisure from the other side of our composite definition. *La BF15 + Pared* (The BF15 [Gallery] + Wall, 1999) consisted of an addition to the exterior wall that separated the short-lived Galería BF15 in Monterrey from the adjoining lot. This wall was extended along an axis perpendicular to the façades of the two buildings, blocking the sidewalk and invading the street just enough to introduce a new spatial constraint into the curbside parking pattern in front of the gallery. The nuisance that this protrusion posed to pedestrians was only marginally more inconvenient than the uneven sidewalks that typically mark the passage from one private lot to the next in many Mexican cities.

Both *Trabas para puerta* and *La Bf15 + Pared* might be regarded as repurposing the “breaching procedures” that sociologist Harold Garfinkel had developed in his ethnomethodological studies. “Since each of the expectancies that make up the attitude of daily life assigns an expected feature to the actor’s environment”—doors should open and close, sidewalks and streets should be unobstructed—“it should be possible to breach these expectancies by deliberately modifying scenic events so as to disappoint these attributions.”⁴ Garfinkel’s own procedures involved transgressing unspoken, preconscious social norms in order to phenomenalyze them—that is, to make them apparent and thus to make their operation available to empirical observation. Despite their formal parsimoniousness, Tercerunquinto’s early, architecturally inflected breaches had a similar effect. The non-operational door in *Trabas para puerta* expressed and reiterated the jammed relations between apartment owner and lessee; the extended surface of *La Bf15 + Pared* phenomenalyzed the specific contours of an already disjunctive experience between private and public space in urban Mexico. Similar breaching procedures have informed *Baranda* (2002), *Ampliación de un área verde* (2004), and *Camino trunco* (2007).

Much of Tercerunquinto’s work around the turn of the millennium was characterized by a latent interrogation of the spatial relations of neighborliness. This interrogation was made particularly explicit in a project called *Vecindad* (2007), a word that can refer, on the one hand, to a specific kind of multi-family housing unit arranged around a central patio, prevalent in certain lower income neighborhoods in Mexico City; or, on the other, to more general notions of vicinity and neighborliness. For this project, the artists prompted negotiations between the owners of two adjacent prefabricated homes in order to reconfigure the wall separating their property, adding additional folds to its surface without altering the square footage of land occupied by either one.

With an eye to the operation of the brisure in the collective’s work, it might be tempting to read the angular form of the reconstructed wall as a first architectural step on the evolutionary path toward a defensive parapet for each neighbor. The most salient aspect of *Vecindad*, on the contrary, is that Tercerunquinto assumed the position of a third party, initiating and mediating an exchange between two different actors. Here the artists’ architectural intervention was but a pretext for a social process, which ultimately became the core of the piece. By contrast to *Trabas para puerta*, which materialized the antagonistic relationship between a landlord and his tenants, *Vecindad* orchestrated an act of mutual accommodation, the practical territorial outcome of which being, quite deliberately, nil.

Vecindad was not the first time that Tercerunquinto had staged neighborly relations by spatializing them, putting them *en scène*. One of their more powerful actions, *Proyecto para MUCA Roma* (Project for MUCA Roma, 2004), had already used negotiations between neighboring sets of actors to reconfigure and re-phenomenalize the barrier between them, if only temporarily. For this project, the artists sought to transform the space of the Museo Universitario de Ciencias y Arte in Colonia Roma, an outpost of Mexico City’s Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, by converting it into storage space for a group of merchants who sold their wares at an informal weekend market on the median that bisects nearby Avenida Obregón.

According to Mariana David, then curator of the MUCA Roma, the project involved negotiations with several actors, including the Legal Department of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, “since temporarily lending its exhibition space to commercial use made it vulnerable to legal suits.”⁵ Individual vendors were eventually made to sign short-term contracts before they were assigned a padlocked storage space within the museum. The negotiations leading up to the exhibition lasted longer than the exhibition itself. The incorporation of participants in Mexico City’s bustling “informal economy” into the rarefied space of a university museum had the effect of putting the vendors—however briefly—vis-à-vis with university officials, museum staff, and the city’s art-going public.⁶ Similar processes of negotiation have been crucial elements of a number of Tercerunquinto’s recent works, notably *Integración del Consulado General de México en Miami a la exposición Mexico: Sensitive Negotiations* (2002, Instituto Cultural de México, Miami) and *Acceso abierto* (2005, The Power Plant, Toronto).

Unbeknownst to Laporte, Jacques Derrida had found his own way of “designating difference and articulation” with a single word. With *Of Grammatology*, his concern was to conceptualize the specific brisure that joins the putatively linear *time* of speech to the *space* of writing, in the narrow (alphabetic) sense of the word. He designated this juncture *espacement*, which Spivak’s translation cannily nominalized as “spacing.”

The lexeme “Tercerunquinto” itself offers a handy illustration of what Derrida was describing. In a recent interview, the artists gave an indication as to how they understand their name, which has often been rendered, somewhat misleadingly, as “a third of a fifth.” In Julio Castro’s words, “It’s like if you divided a whole into five parts and then named each of the parts that made it up.” Gabriel Cázares continues: “Primerounquinto, segundounquinto, tercerunquinto. [Firstonefifth, secondonefifth, thirdonefifth.] It also refers to something that is never complete, which reflects our way of producing.”⁷ Here the artists instruct us in how to parse what they themselves typically write as a single lexemic unit: “Tercerunquinto” is to be read as “tercer un quinto” (rather than, for example, as “terce runqu into”). Regardless of the graphic decision to erase or to close the implied spacing within the Spanish syntagm “tercer un quinto,” that spacing continues to operate (for Spanish speakers, at any rate) at the level of signification.⁸



Project for Museo de Arte Álvaro y Carmen T. de Carrillo Gil, 2008. Courtesy of the artists.



Project for Museo de Arte Álvaro y Carmen T. de Carrillo Gil, 2008. Courtesy of the artists.



Baranda, 2002. Courtesy of the artists.



Vecindad, 2007. Intervention. Courtesy of the artists.

A set of spacing procedures constitutes a counterpart to the breaching procedures described above. Perhaps the most potent example of these is *Desmantelamiento y reinstalación del escudo nacional* (Dismounting and Reinstallation of the National Crest, 2008), commissioned by the Centro Cultural Universitario Tlatelolco (CCUT) as part of a broader commemoration of the hundreds of protestors and bystanders who were murdered by federal troops at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Mexico City on October 2, 1968. In the weeks leading up to the fortieth anniversary of the Tlatelolco massacre, Tercerunquinto removed five of the six marble panels that comprise the Mexican national crest on the façade of the CCUT. On October 2, 2008, the last of the six panels was dismounted, leaving in its place an empty space. This stood as a poignant index of the state of exception that had exempted the perpetrators of the massacre from the rule of law. The following day, however, the artists re-installed the crest. In the interim it had been restored to its original brilliance, articulating two different moments in time with this installation of a novel brisure.

A similar albeit less politically fraught operation was at work in a piece the artists undertook the following month as part of their exhibition *Investiduras institucionales*. For *Proyecto para el Museo de Arte Alvar y Carmen T. de Carrillo Gil* (2008), Tercerunquinto negotiated the dismounting of all exterior signage indicating the museum's name, moving it inside the exhibition space, where it was periodically cleaned and polished by unionized museum workers.⁹ This act of spacing confounded the distinction between inside and outside by severing the museum's proper name from its proper place. (Derrida had of course already acknowledged that "the proper-ness of the name does not escape spacing.")¹⁰

The spacing procedure that distinguishes these projects from the breaching procedures described above implies, again, a relation to phenomenality. Spacing—the blank interval that separates the words on this page, these very words, here—is precisely the *non*-phenomenal, that which does not appear, which does not disclose itself to sensory experience. The impossibility of a brisure that would articulate these two different procedures has become evident only in some of the artists' more recent projects.

Whether or not the artists had intended it to be so, the fate of *It Was Built To Fail* (2009) was foretold by its own title. The proposed work was to be part of *Descent to Revolution*, an exhibition curated by James Voorhies at the Columbus College of Art & Design in Ohio, as part of his Bureau for Open Culture initiative. The artists proposed to emblazon the eponymous words—quoting Michael Coleman, the mayor of Columbus at the time—on the exterior of the City Center Mall in downtown Columbus. Neither Voorhies nor the artists were able to elicit a response from the city's officials. With the collective's negotiation process thereby foreclosed, the project went unrealized, and the unmoored title of the piece re-inscribed itself on the artists' performative gesture.¹¹

By contrast, Tercerunquinto's most felicitous negotiation process to date has perhaps been *New Langton Arts' Archive for Sale: A Sacrificial Act* (2007, 2013). In 2007, during a residency at New Langton Arts in San Francisco, and after many consultations with figures at other institutions in the city, Tercerunquinto suggested that the non-profit arts organization sell off its most valuable asset: namely, its artistic and institutional archive, consisting of documentation for three decades' worth of exhibitions, including photographs, slides, press releases, postcards, posters, and audiovisual recordings of events, as well as the organization's financial records.¹² These materials were collected in non-descript cardboard storage boxes and put on display in anticipation of a possible sale. The proposal generated a series of impassioned discussions among the staff at New Langton Arts as well as in the San Francisco art community; some of these debates were in turn recorded as part of the documentation of the project itself. This circular distension of the structure of the project—here projecting the possibility of an interminable, almost Borgesian archive—bears more than a passing resemblance to the circle of infelicity that would condemn *It Was Built To Fail* to fail shortly thereafter.

The artists have repeatedly underscored the importance of the subtitle to their conception of the piece for New Langton Arts: it was to be *A Sacrificial Act*. From an anthropological standpoint, the title of their project constitutes something of a category error, as sacrifice by definition entails an act of making (*-ficus*) sacred (*sacer*)—and is thus a form of communion with the divine—whereas a sale, mediated by the money form, would be difficult to regard as anything but the most profane of human acts. In effect, however, the artists were suggesting that the organization divest itself absolutely of both its institutional memory and its symbolic capital, thereby committing a kind of auto-decapitation. The money form of New Langton Arts' payment would merely serve as the vehicle for the organization's resurrection to come.¹³ With this sacrificial act, the collective's negotiation process has assumed a decidedly messianic cast. This confrontation with death is the experience of the impossible *par excellence*.

And here Tercerunquinto's analysis has placed them before yet another threshold. They are poised to take their leave of the ontology that has grounded Western aesthetics since Aristotle framed the philosophical value of *poiesis* in terms of its relation to the realm of the probable.¹⁴ But to displace this ontology, to depart from the realm of the actual, the probable, the imminent, or the virtual, would be to step into death itself: "The impossible is the final death, the necessity of destruction for existence."¹⁵ The impossible, as Derrida argued late in his own life, is a special kind of aporia or non-passage whose "elementary milieu does not allow for something that could be called passage, step, walk, gait, displacement, or replacement, a kinesis in general."¹⁶ Through a protracted deconstruction of the problematics of the brisure, the members of Tercerunquinto—that partial and partible collective, that "something that is never complete"—have arrived at a breach into which they cannot step.

1) Letter to Jacques Derrida, quoted in Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 65.

2) The functional purpose of this fold was to provide a line of fire from the rampart to any would-be aggressors approaching the base of the wall. The Italian philosopher-architect Leon Battista Alberti was the first to conceive of polygonal walls as an effective architectural defense against heavy artillery, still a relatively new development in fifteenth-century Europe. See Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 8-11.

3) For an explicit formulation of the brisure that articulates debt to guilt, see Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 39-40 and passim.

4) Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1967), p. 57.

5) Mariana David, "Proyecto para MUCA Roma: Aparadores culturales, bodegas comerciales," in Taiyana Pimentel, ed., *Investiduras institucionales*, proyecto #2 (Mexico City: Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, 2008), p. 3

6) One is tempted to read this piece, along with several others in the list that appears in the following sentence, in terms of Lévinas's concepts of the *autrui* and the *visage* (too hastily translated as "the face"). See Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

7) It is unclear whether the decision to render "primerounquinto, segundounquinto, tercerunquinto" as undivided lexemes was the artists' or the interviewer's. See Ricardo Porrero, "Contrato colectivo de trabajo: Entrevista a Tercerunquinto," *Código* magazine, published December 18, 2012. Available online at: <http://www.revistacodigo.com/entrevista-tercerunquinto/>

8) For now I must leave aside the artists' habit of signing their name "Colectivo 3^{er} 1/5". Suffice it to signal the translation between the graphic regime of the Roman alphabet and that of the Indo-Arabic numeral system, and to urge the reader to fill in the implied history.

9) See non-paginated insert included with the exhibition catalog. Taiyana Pimentel, ed., *Investiduras institucionales* (Mexico City: Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, 2008).

10) Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 89.

11) A closer reading of this project would pursue the relationship between the iterability of Coleman's words and their performative reinscription on Tercerunquinto's project. In this connection, see Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1988). For further details on *It Was Built To Fail*, see <http://www.descenttorevolution.net> and <http://www.bureauforopenculture.org/archive-dtr.html>

12) María del Carmen Carrión, "Apuntes alrededor de actos sacrificiales y males de archivo," in Taiyana Pimentel, ed., *Investiduras institucionales*, proyecto #6 (Mexico City: Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, 2008), p. 1.

13) In 2013, Tercerunquinto re-staged *New Langton Arts' Archive for Sale: A Sacrificial Act* at Galerie Peter Kilchmann in Zürich. In its second iteration, the sacrificial act involved putting the artists' own memory—in the form of their documentation of the piece—up for sale.

14) "It is not the poet's function to relate actual events, but the *kinds* of things that might occur and are possible in terms of probability or necessity." Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Stephen Halliwell (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 59 (§9, 1415a37-1451b26).

15) Georges Bataille, "Nietzsche's Laughter," in Stuart Kendall, ed., *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, trans. Stuart Kendall (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. 18, 24. Bataille's own explorations of the impossible, too, crystallized around the possibility of decapitation. See Denis Hollier, ed., *The College of Sociology, 1937-1939*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

16) Derrida, *Aporias*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 20. The subtitle of the French edition of *Aporias* translates as "To die – to await (one another) at the limits of truth."



[this page] *Dismantlement and Reinstallation of the National Coat of Arms*, 2008. Intervention. Courtesy of the artists.



A Sacrificial Act, 2007. New Langton Arts, San Francisco. Courtesy of the artists.



No young artist can resist a \$50,000 cannon blast, 2012. Installation view at Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, part of the group show *Resisting the Present*, Mexico 2000-2012. Courtesy of the artists.

Eamon Ore-Giron

In Conversation With Julio César Morales

You were the founder of the Los Angeles-based performance/music group OJO. Can you talk about its origins, the collaborators, and how this fits within a larger context of your artistic practice?

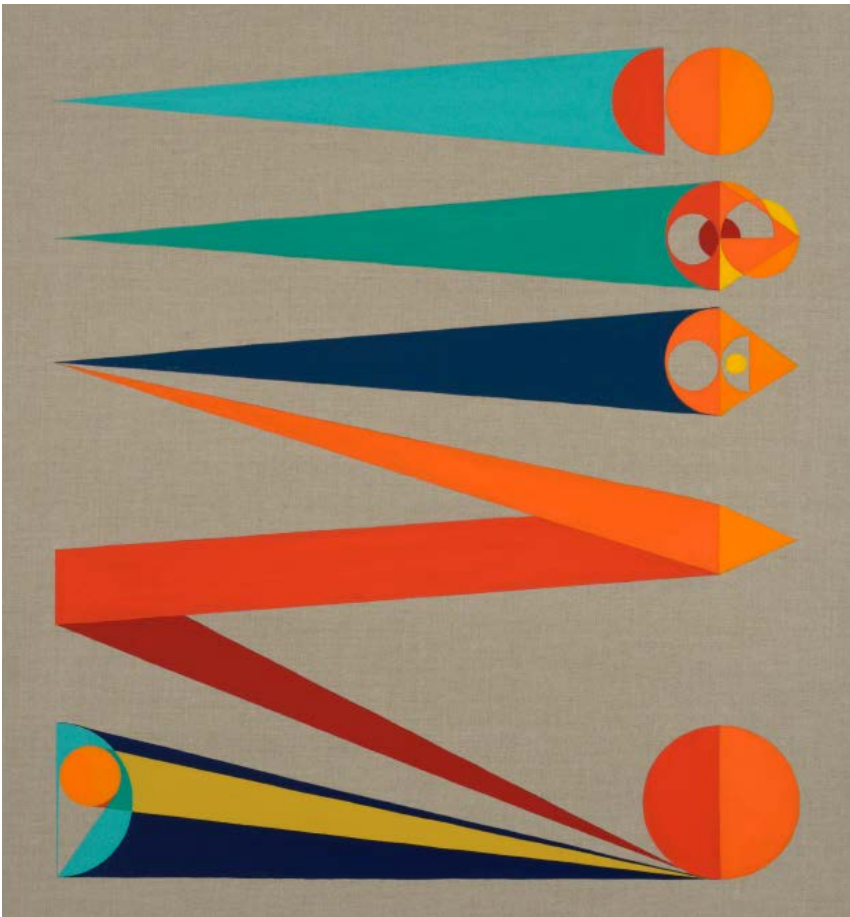
OJO was created when I was at UCLA in the mid-2000s. There was a dingy little sound room we named the Clam, where fellow students would go and record strange music. It was a sensory deprivation-tank-like space. I met Joshua Aster, Justin Cole and later Brenna Youngblood and two other non-UCLA people Chris Avitabile and Moi Medina in the Clam. There was no specific intention to our group other than to create sound in a free way, with no designs on being a band but also not really declaring ourselves an art performance group. Our first performances centered around really loud beats I created on my 808 drum machine, which I had recently found at St. Vincent De Paul. We loved that strange minimal boom of the bass and the different pitches it was capable of and we would create these strange environments with a bunch of slide projections, video projections, and a huge stack of speakers in the middle of the room, also sometimes pouring hundreds of pounds of salt on the floor to add to the sound of shifting sand under your feet. It was really magical but also totally lo-fi and low budget and we all loved the freedom we felt in exploring sound while simultaneously exploring ideas of performance. There was no specific composition, just really open movements that we all were aware of, and once a performance started we had no idea where it would take us, because we also gave the audience the power to influence the sound by including them in certain actions. Musically we were all influenced by sparse acoustic guitar players like Sandy Bull or John Fahey but also totally into Tangerine Dream, Popul Vuh, all the way to Kompakt Records from Germany and J Dilla, so we were pulling from a ton of influences when it came to music. It was a part of all our lives for probably around seven years until our dream was fulfilled when we performed in Bilbao, Spain in 2012, and since then we've all gone on our own paths. I still really miss playing with OJO and really love and miss everyone involved but I also know that's how everything goes and I'm happy that we even had what we had. I don't know how it fits into my larger practice because to me there is no hierarchy in my work, I have always addressed needs in my life as they come and that's how art has always been to me.

What is the connection between your musical endeavors as DJ Lengua to the relating of cultural archiving, memory, and re-imagining of history through the language of music?

My Lengua production work was a way to connect to people without asking for permission from those that hold the keys to the white cube. Lengua means tongue in Spanish. Lengua allows us to communicate. Lengua also makes great tacos. I started producing back in '99 and have since the beginning pulled from dance music from all over the Americas, the first LP I did was with you! It had hi-energy as well as dancehall, mambo and cumbia influences. Growing up like a typical American kid I was into hip hop and skate culture, but there was always another side that I was exposed to when going to see family in Peru that would expose me to a very different, native South American vibe. All of this gave me a unique way of seeing the Americas and pop culture and folk culture; I see my music as a way of illustrating that, and feeling it. I also was exposed to the Sonidero music scene in D.F. back in the '90s, and through that I learned so much about the bigger picture of Latin America and it's music. I also felt the need to collect and piece together these lineages because they were getting ignored and were getting lost in the rush to modernize Latin America, so my friends and I started a successful night club called Club Unicornio and also I helped my friend Sonido Franko start his blog Super Sonido (<http://supersonido.net/>) where we post free MP3s along with info about the music we love. Lengua is/was a way for me to tap into popular forms like straight up dance music or cumbia and play with tracing an alternative map of the Global South, the same way so many of my favorite DJs and producers—TOTAL FREE-DOM, Fatima al Qadiri, Nguzunguzu—are working today.

In your early work from the '90s and early 2000s, your “new folk” paintings explored your personal experience growing up in Tucson, Arizona. Can you describe the unique cultural landscape you grew up with and the influences that it had on your work?

Eungie Joo wrote a piece in *Flash Art* back in 2002 in which she included me, describing my work as a new form of folk; in a way I guess it was a precursor to the whole freaky folk musical scene to come out of the Bay Area. I used to resent the word folk. I felt like it was a way to say my work was simple, old fashioned, or had some tie to traditional values, but now I'm cool with it, I see it as going against the dominant flow. Regarding my upbringing, I'm from two very different cultures, one based in the U.S., you could say redneck, a very western culture—my cousins in Arizona round up cattle near Bisbee and Agua Prieta. I've never been a country boy but totally get it, I love the desert and dirt roads—not the politics, but love the people. My other side is from the mountains of Peru. So I always got this really intense blend of influences and memories. When I was a kid we would go to festivals in the mountains of Junin and Huancavelica to be specific. These festivals were for me completely surreal, Fiesta Santiago, for example, is a celebration of the animals by the campesinos of the Andes. They drink and dance for a month straight, day and night, with incredible



Shifting Right, 2014. Flashe on linen. 42 x 38 in. Courtesy of the artist.

music. It's a celebration with roots go way back before the Spanish arrived in that part of the world. There are strange characters that populate that world, they give blessings to the animals for good health, just like in the ancient pagan world but now it's totally mixed up with pop culture references and cartoon characters and Catholicism. I have always been drawn to these dances and also to the Yaqui dances from Tucson and Sonora. To me I could see the connections, I could see the through line that connects these very different places and so I set out to illustrate that.

How is your new body of work a reflection on this past tradition and new interests?

It's not a conscious thing, I have moved away from being autobiographical. Lately I just want to make work that speaks to a certain simplicity—simplicity in color and form and in process as well. Whether I'm sitting down concentrating on making a small painting or doing a video work, I'm looking for a way to convey complexity in basic forms. I do reflect on larger historical manifestos such as Oswald de Andrade's *Cannibal Manifesto*. It's amazing how something written in the 1920's can still be so relevant. It speaks to the idea that cannibalizing other cultures is our greatest strength as people of the Americas. We are all people that have our feet in two worlds especially now as the Internet is creating such a strange mix of everything.

Is there a connection between your geometric abstraction paintings and what is referred to in music as open tuning techniques? Are you riffing off the actual musical methodology or more about “open mind tuning” and how humans used it to alter their consciousness?

I definitely like the idea of what open tuning represents. To me it represents the fact that we are shaped by our landscape. It's also about simplicity. You can give someone who doesn't know how to play the guitar an open tuned guitar and it will sound good. It also connotes location, like the Mississippi Delta has its own specific open tuning just as Hawaiian music has its own. The connection probably resides in the specific parameters that I have regarding shapes and colors, and there is a template of sorts, just like in open tuned music—there is a set template of sounds you choose from to create your individual sound. I came to abstraction after working a long time in figurative work so for me it's really like thinking of the world in a totally new way. Abstraction is such an instinctual way of seeing and feeling; it's the root of our perception. Over the past ten years I've been slowly losing eyesight in my right eye, and I've noticed the affect on my work. I'm forced to flatten everything out and to allude to space with flat color. I'm being forced to create a lot more with a lot less, so I think that's also another way the two relate.



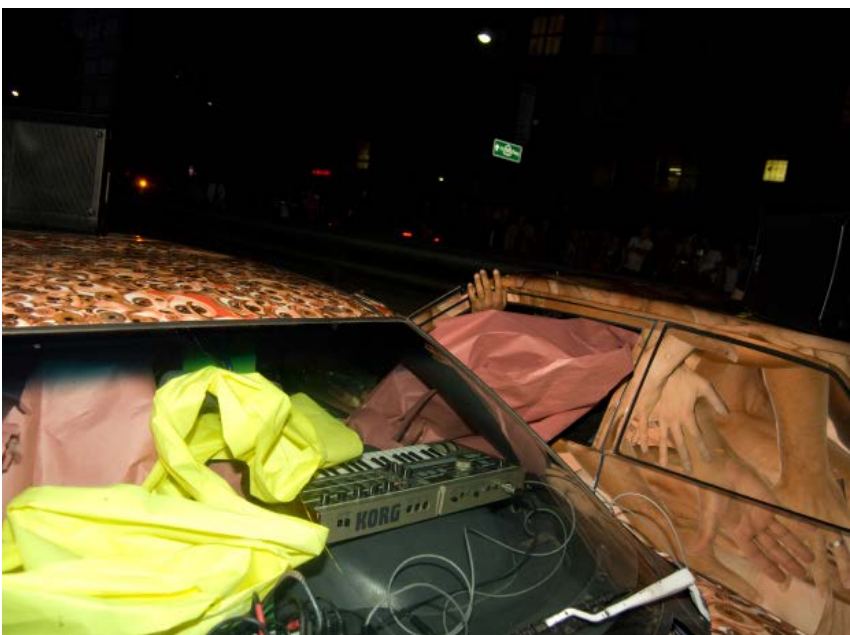
OJO performance, 2006. Queens Nails Annex, San Francisco. Photograph by Julio César Morales.

In a recent review for your 2013 exhibition, Smuggling The Sun by New York Times art writer Ken Johnson, he ends the review by posing the question “What would his paintings be like, I wonder, if he put his all into them?” referring to your desire to not devote your practice only to painting and his desire that you only create paintings. How does this type of questioning lead you to consider audience more in the production or understanding of your work?

That was a really great review because to be asked that in such a public format is pretty intense. It definitely made me question the idea of singular aesthetics, and it also made me ask myself, what is this drive to create in so many mediums? My friend and I were just talking about Kai Althoff and he described him as a style jumper; I guess in a lot of ways that's how I feel the arc of my work has been as well. The question of audience is totally relevant, because as a music producer I could get my work and ideas out to so many more people through very populist means on the Internet like SoundCloud and earlier, MySpace. My cousins and friends in Mexico and Peru could download my music and be totally involved in my practice. I even have fans in far-off places like Odessa, Ukraine, and Frankfurt, Germany. There are amazing vocal remixes of my beats in Argentina and Holland. I guess the way I saw painting and sculpture was that it was very much a rarefied object and comparatively the art audience is very small and very specific, and to get access to the spaces to get my artwork out into the world can be very frustrating—there's so much BS in the gallery world. But I don't like to dwell on the negative aspects of the system, instead I like to keep focusing on the work and I have found that if I look at production as a way of life then it will be something that never stops. Those thoughts have driven me to be much more single minded in my approach, and ever since that show I have been much more focused on my painting practice, although my two upcoming exhibitions involve major video pieces, one that was filmed in the Amazon with you, and the other in the highest mining town in the world. I'll never completely abandon other formats, but there isn't a day that goes by that I'm not holding a brush in my hand; it's something deeply rooted in my life. Currently I'm waiting for the proper opportunity to exhibit a new body of works that I'm really excited about; maybe I'll get another opportunity to hear what Ken Johnson has to say about them.

The Peruvian guerrilla group Sendero Luminoso (The Shining Path) adopted a Maoist ideology in the early 1980s. What were some of the repercussions to Peruvian contemporary culture and to your own family? Is there any connection to this within your artwork for the Road to Ruins exhibition in 2010?

That period shaped the experiences I had visiting Peru as a kid. It was a terrible time, my family suffered like so many other people that were caught in the crossfire between the guerillas and the government. The poverty was also a form of violence and it was always very hard to see my family in such dire circumstances and yet I was able to leave and be here. Regarding the Shining Path and the effects it had on Peruvian contemporary culture, we could write a huge book on that subject alone, but in a nutshell, it forced a mass-migration of *campesinos*—country people whose customs are indigenous and language is not Spanish—into the capital city of Lima. That had a very powerful impact on the physical infrastructure, or lack thereof, of Lima and it also had a profound impact on the historically racist attitudes people from Lima had towards the campesinos, also referred to as “cholos.” The word “cholo” is really interesting because it's a lot like the word “nigga” here. Back in the day it was a way of putting someone down, an insult, but over time it became a term of endearment. Its meaning changed as so many cholos were migrating into the city and their culture transformed the urban cultural landscape. Peru is hardly over its fucked up racism



OJO performance, *Flesh Car Crash*, 2008. MOCA, Los Angeles. Photograph by Patrick Miller

but things have gotten better in a lot of ways. The connection I was making in *Road to Ruins* was that I had an album by the '80s Peruvian chicha band Los Shapis and the album art-work was an appropriation of the Ramones album *Road to Ruin*. I fell in love with this ripped off cover art. It symbolized so much to me; I related to the dual identity it reflected within my own life and it also was such a great use of piracy out of necessity, it was really “punk” without even being punk music. The title of the Ramones album also made me reflect on how ruins are all that anyone knows of Peru. Every time someone finds out that I'm Peruvian they ask me if I've been to Machu Picchu or some shit like that. It took me over thirty years to ever get to Machu Picchu! But more than anything I like to think there was some subconscious connection, a sublime collision of underdogs—Los Shapis, a bunch of cholos from the Andes with The Ramones, a bunch of degenerates from Queens, NY.

The history of Asian labor and culture in Latin America is relatively unknown in the Western world. Through your own artistic inquiry can you speak about your research on the subject matter and current events that drive your Morococha project that you are creating for LAXART in 2015?

Even within Latin America there's a certain amnesia regarding Asian immigration and indentured labor from China and Japan. I was interested in how the relationship between Peru and China in the recent past was through Maoist ideology, the Little Red Book and the Shining Path, and how that relationship has turned into the opposite scenario in which Chinese government-owned companies are buying up Peru's natural resources to keep up with the global demand for their products. It's such a radical flip in terms of ideas of progress and social aspirations in both countries. A little over a year ago I had heard about plans that a Chinese-owned mining company named Chinalco, was relocating the whole population of the town of Morococha, the highest copper mining operation in the world. Morococha was also a town that I had passed through on my way to visit family my whole life, and such a harsh and inhospitable little place, so it was surprising to read the name Morococha in the *New York Times*. I was fascinated with this new relationship to Asia and also how Chinalco was approaching relocation of the population. Chinalco had constructed a brand new town about 10 miles away from the old town. I became really into the idea of documenting the old town in the process of becoming a ghost town, not quite dead yet but in the process, like the faint vision of a phantom hovering over a real body. I was also interested in seeing the architecture and planning of the new town, a “just add water” pop-up town. So I went up to Morococha this past August to see what I could find. I was warned by the company officials I met with that the town had been placed under a state of emergency, and that they are not responsible if anything were to happen to me. When I arrived there, which was a very grueling and dangerous drive through the mountains, there were still some buildings standing inhabited by people that hadn't agreed to the terms of removal and were very suspicious of anyone, much less me with a camera entering this apocalyptic landscape they called home. The video is called *Morococha* and will be showing at LAX-ART this coming January 2015.

Living for the past 11 years in Los Angeles, you must have seen the art market and art culture shift and fluctuate to its current state. The new “Warehouse Era” gallery boom in the downtown area with such spaces as Night Gallery, the Mistake Room, Gavin Brown's enterprise and François Ghebaly among others. Do you think this is bringing L.A. a new art platform? Are there any other movements happening that we should be aware of?

Yes, I have seen a lot of changes in the art scene of L.A. I've also seen a lot of changes in the demographics of this town too. My neighbors used to have shaved heads and wear Nike Cortez with white socks pulled up and run through my backyard running from the cops. Belmont yards were still totally active. Now, instead there's a huge condo on top of the yards and my neighbors have beards and drive Volvos. I can't say that I loved having my thug neighbors point lasers at me at night but I also don't like seeing poor people constantly pushed out. It's hardly something that's unique to L.A. Specifically talking about the art scene, I've seen an aversion to content in L.A. Everything seems to be funneling into strictly formalist concerns and pseudo-transgressive work. L.A. is definitely pushing hard to be regarded as the new capital of contemporary art but in reality it's still very small and local. I'm glad Cesar is bringing in artists from outside. I especially like Korakrit's strange brand of mind-bending. I really like Francois's program and he has a loyalty to his



[this page] *Morococha*, 2014. Production Stills. Courtesy of the artist.

artists that is really admirable. I don't know much about Night Gallery and Gavin Brown's Mission space other than it seems like a lot of cool people hang around there. I do think the addition of Hauser & Wirth and Schimmel downtown is definitely a game changer in regards to the blue chippers. I remember Chinatown gallerists bemoaning the fact that collectors would never drive east of La Brea and now it's exploding downtown, with gallery shrapnel hitting Boyle Heights. By far the best gallery in town is The Box run by Mara McCarthy—it's downtown. As far as artists whose work I'm into: Cayetano Ferrer, Gala Porras-Kim, Gina Osterloh, Math Bass, Erik Frydenborg, among many others. I remember George Kuchar telling me the only good art movements are bowel movements. He also said that while he was filming he knew it was a good shot when he drooled. I found myself drooling a lot in the Amazon.



Open Tuning (E-D-G-B-D-G), 2012. Hydrocal, cocaine, steel, copper, twine, flashe. 74 x 27 x 12 in. Courtesy of the artist.

Chris Sharp

Co-Founder Of Lulu (Mexico City)

In Conversation With Joseph del Pesco

Why is Lulu small?

Because it's located in the re-purposed, white-cubed living room of an apartment. Smallness also thankfully obliges us to aim for a certain much-coveted (at least by us) precision.

Who is Martin Soto Climent?

He is a Mexican artist based in Mexico City, also co-founder of Lulu.

Just what is Stewism?

Stewism is the title of a Simon Dybbroe Møller show (Lulu's second), and either an aborted, impending, and/or maybe just a one-man movement.

What's a project space?

Lulu is still trying to figure that out, but more or less: a quasi-informal, independent venue that concentrates on the craft of making exhibitions (although we do present talks and have started producing publications).

Always one artist at a time?

Not always, but often. Stay tuned for our forthcoming *Lulennial: A Slight Gestuary* (the first edition of a biennial) in Feb 2015.

How has the program been received in D.F.?

As far as I can tell: with a mixture of delight, suspicion, indifference, support, and appreciation.

How about the audience?

We have a dedicated audience, which is growing in and beyond D.F. At Aliza Nisenbaum's opening, we had a group of kids from Guadalajara. After they stared at the show for about an hour, I went up and talked to them. It turned out that it was the first time they had been to Lulu, but they knew the whole program inside out. It knocked the wind out of me. I gave all of them free Aliza Nisenbaum catalogs.

What does Lulu mean?

Lulu is a name. We borrowed it from our local, neighborhood juicer, *Jugos y Licuados Lulu*, where we have breakfast and fresh juice almost every morning. She has been to the space a number of times and loves it.

Are there other programs like Lulu in D.F.?

No, but there are other project/artist-run spaces like Bikini Wax, whose program is often fresh out of school and much more local, or Lodos Contemporaneo, which is more post-internet and international. Both are run by talented artists in their mid twenties, and both are serious and great.

How would you sum up the curatorial voice of Lulu?

Prioritizing idiosyncrasy and a certain resistance to language, it is composed of artistic practices that are characterized by an intimate relationship with their material vocabulary and a perfect integrity of form and content. As for the overall arc, I think it would be easy to perceive our entire program as an ideally cohesive, linear group show.

What do you mean by a “resistance to language”?

I mean art that actually puts up a resistance to language, which is difficult to explain by virtue of either not departing from principles or protocols, or not yet being codified either by formulas or procedures (i.e., international-style conceptualism). Art, in other words, that does not originate in language, and is therefore not in the service of and does not seek to illustrate an idea, but is nevertheless inseparable from an idea.

Small work for a small space?

We don't invite them because they work small, but because they are or can be precise, or aphoristic in their presentation. Artists are often surprised, then relieved, by the scale of Lulu. For example, Nina Canell had just opened a solo at Camden Arts Centre in London and was preparing a solo at Moderna Museet Stockholm at the time of her show here. She found the scale of Lulu to be refreshing and manageable.

Mostly artists from elsewhere?

The idea is to show artists who have had little or no exposure in Mexico, which means, at least for the time being, presenting artists from elsewhere. We have plans to eventually

feature local, Mexican artists though. This reasoning, however, is motivated by and perhaps secondary to a desire to show a kind of art (which is as idiosyncratic as it is preoccupied with form) you don't see much of in Mexico.

Do you invite the artists to address the context of Mexico?

Not really, as we're not really interested in replicating a kind of '90s biennial method of socially motivated, context-specific practices. Some artists do inevitably end up responding to the local context though, either deliberately or through coincidence. I think this happens because a criterion for inviting an artist is how well the work will resonate with the local context and vice versa. There has to be some oblique and unexpected crossover or compelling point of friction, otherwise it doesn't make much sense.

What does it mean to introduce an artist to Mexico?

Good question. At the risk of contradicting myself, I would like to think that it is like introducing a foreign word into a language and thereby expanding its vocabulary. The beautiful thing about that is, as we all know, foreign words are almost always changed by the languages that adopt them. It's a two-way process, which Lulu is in the humble business of perpetuating (or is that perverting?).

What happens during the opening day?

We generally have bilingual talks, inviting local critics, artists, and curators to get involved. It is really helpful in connecting what is often totally unknown work to the local context.

Has artwork appeared in other parts of the building?

Yes, in our Allison Katz and Camilla Wills show, in which they painted a giant wall-painting in another room, and our recent Kate Newby show, which takes place in the courtyard, on the sidewalk outside and the neighbor's roof.

Might Lulu grow or move?

Yes, I hope Lulu will grow and become a non-profit. Move we eventually will, but not for at least another year or maybe two. After publishing our first catalog by Aliza Nisenbaum, we also want to expand that side of our activities and publish more books. We're currently in discussion with Nathaniel Dorsky about a Mexican edition of *Devotional Cinema*. And we're also thinking about starting a printed quarterly called *Guayaba*.

Anything for sale?

Depends on the show. So yes, but not at all a criterion for what we show. We're just trying to make ends meet. Otherwise everything is paid for by Martin and me.

Is opening a very small space implicitly a statement against the gargantuan (biennial) exhibition?

It was not meant to be, but it seems that it is, or that it is becoming so. We are not exactly against large exhibitions or initiatives, but we are for precision, which is something that is difficult to attain in the large-scale exhibition. Lulu could, however, be seen as a critique of the maximalism and expansionism that seems to dominate the art world—and not just the commercial art world, but the art world as a whole.

What kinds of interesting/productive things has working with tight restrictions yielded?



Willem de Rooij, *Bouquet IX*, 2012. White ceramic vase, plinth, 10 different sorts of flowers. Photograph by Guillermo Soto. Courtesy Daniel Buchholz Galerie, Cologne and Berlin, and Lulu, Mexico City.

It's hard to say. The question implicitly assumes that Lulu is somehow handicapped, when I think just the opposite. I see palatial spaces like the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, or, say, Gagosian in Chelsea, NYC, and I almost feel bad for the artists that have to fill them up or get crushed by them. For me, those spaces are actually handicapped by their excess. But then maybe this is just very personal—after all, I have an almost fanatical adoration of economy. I love Borges and the short stories of Donald Barthelme. I think the only perfect novel I have ever read is *Spanking the Maid* by Robert Coover, and that perfection is indivisible from its economy. Granted these are literary analogies, but I think there's a lot to be said for distilling things down to what is most essential to them and thereby aiming for an ideal simplicity.

Something about Lulu that surprised you?

Perhaps the thing that has surprised me the most is the extent to which people really embrace the whole experience—of coming into our home/studio, sitting in the yard with plants, getting a juice at Lulu, being in this part of town, etc. They see the whole process as part of seeing a show at Lulu.

Because this is a self-funded endeavor, it's by default a kind of generous act (for D.F., for the world, for the artists), or is it?

Indeed, or is it? I'm glad you asked this. I once had a local artist come to Lulu and ask me why we were doing this—if it was merely to show off our great taste or if it was a vanity project. These seemed like incisive questions/critiques, but I'm not so sure they were because there is no way to defend one's self against them, or at least not the first "question," which necessarily implies that art should be utilitarian, do something other than merely reflect the so-called refinement of whoever promotes it. That it must be about something other than taste, and as such, ultimately serve the greater good (the taste issue is a funny one—this paradoxical taboo totally replicates the logic of political correctness, implicitly supposing that taste were something that could ever be completely removed from art).



Kate Newby, *I feel like a truck on a wet highway*, 2014. String, thread, ceramic wind chimes (high fired porcelain, stoneware, glaze), paint. Photograph by Isaac Contreras. Courtesy of Lulu, Mexico City.

As for the vanity project question, this also seems to be a non-issue. For even if it were, even if in some hypothetical, worst case scenario Lulu was just some elaborate subterfuge to amass cool capital and enrich our sex lives, and was not about a love of art, pure and simple, local inhabitants of Mexico City would still be seeing artists they have never seen in Mexico. Besides, we're wholly financially responsible for what we do; we have received no public funding. In other words, we're not taking from the public coffers for our own good. All that said, I'd prefer not to think of it as having anything to do with generosity because that puts us in a kind of noble philanthropic position. Although we believe we have created a win/win situation with Lulu, in the end it is simply about doing our best to make good, well organized, professionally presented exhibitions.

What's it like living with and around these artworks? How do some works age differently?

It is wonderful, a great privilege. But also a little stressful. Some of the shows we make, such as our recent Kate Newby exhibition, are quite delicate, and need to be treated with great care. But I love being able to see her show every day, see how plants, for instance, grow around a piece outside, or how the rain has modified a piece installed on the sidewalk. It is a very unique experience.



Allison Katz and Camilla Wills, *Perra Perdida* (Mural), 2013. Paint on wall. Photograph by Martin Soto. Courtesy of Lulu, Mexico City

Jens Hoffmann

In Conversation With Jordan Kantor

To begin, perhaps I can start by asking you to talk a little bit about your formative experiences with art early in your life. What is the art you remember from your youth—and where and how did you encounter it? When did you become aware that being a curator was a possible profession? I know that you initially studied theater direction, and I am curious about the shift in your self-image regarding your career: When did you first identify as a curator of art and begin to seek opportunities in the field? And can you talk a little bit about your early experiences working with artists in that capacity? Did these experiences help shape the approach to curating that you practice now?

One of my first experiences with art that had an impact was seeing Jan Hoet’s *Documenta 9* in 1992. I was 19, and it was the last big trip we did with our teacher before graduating from high school. I was more intrigued by Hoet as a personality than by his selection of artists for the exhibition. I went to a Rudolf Steiner school, and art played an enormous role in our education. Museum and exhibition outings were very common.

By the time I finished school in Frankfurt, the Museum of Modern Art there had become my second home. It was run at that time by Jean-Christophe Ammann, and right around the corner was the Portikus, the famous Kunsthalle that Kasper Koenig founded. I was mostly interested in theater then and worked at the Theater am Turm, which was part of a larger network of theaters in Europe presenting what later would be called post-dramatic theater. It was once run by Rainer Werner Fassbinder. It was very committed to theater that was interdisciplinary: directors like Jan Fabre, Robert Wilson, Reza Abdoh, Jan Lauwers, the Wooster Group, and Heiner Goebbels. A lot of the younger German directors coming out of the theater program of Hans-Thies Lehmann did their first productions there: Stefan Pucher, René Pollesch, Gob Squad, She She Pop, and more. It was an incredible time.

The person running the theater was Tom Stromberg, a German theater dramaturge and producer, who himself came out of a well-known theater family. He invited me in 1997 to co-organize the theater program of *Documenta X*. I had already worked as an intern at the Portikus with Koenig (on shows devoted to Wolfgang Tillmans, Andreas Gursky, and Boris Mikhailov) and as an exhibitions assistant at Dia in New York, so I was knowledgeable about contemporary art. My projects with Lynne Cooke at Dia included a Juan Muñoz exhibition and her Sydney Biennale in 1996.

Right after *documenta X*, I became assistant curator for the 1st Berlin Biennale. I was the first to be hired for the undertaking, so I had to find the offices, order computers and telephones, hire staff, and so on. It was great training. In the meantime, I had started studying directing at the Ernst Busch school for dramatic arts in Berlin, where we worked with a lot of former Brecht protégés, like Manfred Karge and Heiner Mueller.

After my undergrad degree, I moved to Amsterdam to get my MA at a newly founded school called DasArts that was conducting advanced research in theater and dance studies and had big ambitions in regards to redefining theater and dance. It was run by Ritsaert ten Cate, the founder of the Micky Theater in Amsterdam, and was part of the Amsterdam School for the Arts.

All of this is not 100 percent chronological, but we are talking about a period from 1994 to 1999. I spent a lot of time in New York during those years, being involved in theater through a job at Performance Space 122 where I worked as a research assistant for RoseLee Goldberg. But also being fully immersed in the art world there, mostly through the job at Dia and by hanging around galleries, sneaking into openings, et cetera.

Two of my more memorable experiences were seeing Felix Gonzalez-Torres’s first show at Andrea Rosen Gallery and seeing an Alex Bag show at 303. As my final project for my MA, I curated a show—my first exhibition ever. It was called *Contemporary Self-Portraits* and took place at the Sean Kelly Gallery in 1998 (when it was still in SoHo). I was 24 years old and thought I had it all figured out. It was focusing on more abstract notions of self-portraiture by artists such as Sarah Sze, Sean Snyder, and Vibeke Tandberg. This brings us all the way up to the Berlin Biennale, which was a big change and shift for me as it was really the start of my career in the visual arts. Yes, the training in theater had and still has an enormous influence on my work.

Indeed, maybe we can talk a little bit about theater now, inasmuch as I wanted to ask you about how you characterize your own curatorial approach. What jumps out to me in what you just mentioned is the many experiences you had with curators with strong individual perspectives in their curatorial discipline. One might even say that in some sense Jan Hoet, Kaspar Koenig, Lynne Cooke, and RoseLee Goldberg practice a kind of “auteur” curating.



Jens Hoffmann holding a Karl Marx puppet by Pedro Reyes, 2013. Photograph by Pedro Reyes.

(Not to mention the theater directors you list.) This seems especially borne out of your reminiscence that it was the force of Hoet’s personality more than the individual artists in documenta 9 that made an impression on you. Do you think that auteur curating is the right term to describe these figures? If not, do you have another way to describe some of the commonalities between them—or maybe they are more different than similar? In any event, do you consider yourself as a curator with an auteur approach—i.e., that an exhibition is as much an expression of your personality—or perhaps an incarnation of your thesis—than anything particular to do with the specific art in the exhibition? If so, do you think this perspective relates to theater, so far as a director helps organize a performance by actors specifically chosen for their appropriateness for a given script? Or is this totally off the mark?

Let us talk first about the curators I mentioned and the idea of curators as “authors.” Jan was a very intuitive person. I had the chance to get to know him a little more toward the end of his life, and he was a big emotional force. He refused to be rational or intellectual in any way; it was all about what his gut told him. Kasper was a bit similar but a slightly more grumpy version. Lynne, on the other hand, is a very academically rigorous curator who writes, researches, places work into larger historical contexts.

None of them are your average American museum curator, but I would not describe even one as an author-curator. An author-curator’s career develops like an artist’s in that she or he follows particular themes or subjects over many years, and each new exhibition clearly develops out of previous ones, following a particular examination, a form of curatorial evolution and development. Most important of all is a signature style, not only in terms of the type of show but also how the exhibitions are set up. They are somehow recognizable because of certain characteristics they carry.

I have spoken and written quite a bit about the idea of the curator as author and in particular how François Truffaut spoke of certain filmmakers as authors. I am interested in the idea of the curator as author and for a very long time I would have said that that is how I

would understand myself, but now I tend to think of myself more as a curator-as-educator. Yes, the exhibition as an expression of my subjectivity is important, but at the same time, working on shows that reach more people than just a few art-world insiders is a big priority. To do intelligent shows with mass appeal is what I am after. I am not so much interested in teaching an agenda, a specific program, or a curriculum, but more about showing the audience the possibilities of thinking outside the box and how to think critically about their lives.

There is a certain political aspect to my work as well. I am definitely influenced by Bertolt Brecht, and it comes up in all my shows in some way. Another aspect that comes from theater is my strong interest in dramaturgy: the installation and flow of an exhibition, different speeds, moments, juxtapositions, the architecture of the space, and how the audience encounters that. I don’t want it to be entertainment, but I also don’t want to preach.

There are also more obvious connections between directing and curating, such as working collaboratively with a group of people. Developing a vision for a production on stage is not so different from doing it in a gallery. I always speak of “staging an exhibition.” I already mentioned Truffaut; filmmakers and cinema are important influences on my work and maybe help demonstrate how I see my work: Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Jean-Luc Godard, Peter Watkins. All directors for whom politics and aesthetics go hand in hand.

I find the shift you describe in your own aspirations as a curator very interesting. You mention a move away from a practice in which the curator is an author toward one in which the curator is an educator. Can you talk a little bit more about this in practical terms? Do you have a sense of why your work has developed thus? Are there specific ways in which this manifests itself in how you conceive of your exhibitions—do shows now look less “yours” than shows you’ve done in the past? (I would argue that the portfolio of exhibitions you organized during your tenure at the CCA Wattis Institute had a very strong, identifiable curatorial aesthetic.) Has this affected the kinds of artists you choose to work with? How does this emphasis on teaching and reaching a larger audience affect your choices of artwork, exhibition installation, catalogue design, public programming, and all the other things that you manage in and around an exhibition? Can you give an example of an exhibition you organized in the past that you might do differently today?

At the outset of my career I was interested in exhibitions that were self-reflexive, meaning, the audience was told they were looking at an exhibition, and the shows prioritized display, referenced other people’s exhibitions, laid out the curatorial research, or were even exhibitions about other exhibitions. That was early on. But the self-reflexivity has stayed. I connected that sort of conceptualization of curating to larger themes I was interested in, particularly literature, storytelling, and narratives that asked larger questions of human existence. I thought if my exhibitions could contribute to a diversification of exhibition making, introduce new forms and types of shows, then visitors would understand that the gallery space, just like the theater stage, is not that dissimilar to the world we live in, in that it is about make-believe, it has its rules, traditions, customs, cultures, et cetera, all of which need to be questioned.

Most of my exhibitions have been very context specific. They are the results of looking at the history and the current realities of the place they take place in. In recent years I have worked in positions that have asked for a stronger responsibility toward a critical engagement with society. We are all trapped in particular systems that we need to break out from, and I hope my exhibitions can trigger thoughts that will help audiences think critically about life.

My shows still “look,” “feel,” and “read” like the ones you’ve seen in the past, but I spend much more time now thinking about mediation and how to bring all elements of an exhibition to a larger audience. This can happen via wall texts, longer captions, tours, presentations by participating artists, apps, micro-sites, brochures, and more in-depth publications. My goal is to make shows that speak to very diverse audiences: the academic, the art hipster, the casual museum visitor, and beyond. I want to hold a conversation with all of them simultaneously.

I am very much a learning-by-doing kind of person, and each show gives me the chance to try something different and new. If I repeat myself, I don’t want it to be because I’m running out of ideas, but because I am trying to understand something that I did not completely “get” with just one show. The idea to redo *When Attitudes Become Form* or *Other Primary Structures*, for example, I was interested in doing shows about iconic exhibitions

that wouldn’t be straight remakes—that would speak about history and how history is written, and how it’s subjective, and how we fill gaps of not-knowing. This in turn means the future is also subjective, meaning we can control what will happen in the years to come, we have a chance to deal with poverty, ecological problems, war, and many other issues that distress people today.

I’d like to continue with the idea of a Brecht-inspired, politicized curatorial practice for a moment. Can you elaborate a bit about the ways in which you think exhibition making can deal with issues like poverty and ecological problems, to stick with your examples? While, of course, there are different audiences for art, the type of people who have the time, means, and desire to engage with exhibitions is still a very small fraction of those who might be politically mobilized to “think for themselves.” And, needless to say, the audience for art is still, by and large, a privileged cohort. Are you thinking of a turn to directly politicized curation, or are you referring to something more along the lines of exhibition practice as a type of pure research? And, how does your interest in accounting for the context of exhibitions manifest itself, exactly? Surely, the context for a museum exhibition in New York City creates different opportunities than for one for a biennial in Shanghai. Can you perhaps give some examples of how context specificity has inflected your politicized address to audiences?

No, I do not mean at all that exhibition making or art should address poverty or pollution. What I mean is that we as humans, as a global community, have to address those and many other issues. Art is not the place to speak about this. There is always another layer, which is the factor of form and aesthetics. Art is not activism. The audience who comes to our museum is actually quite different than that privileged cohort you are talking about, which you would find more at the New Museum, I think, where art is turned into a lifestyle for downtown creative types.

The Jewish Museum, where I am now working, is distinct in that the thousands of members we have and need to address and communicate with are not art insiders but culturally interested people from all walks of life. Also interesting is the incredible history of the museum, in particular its exhibitions in the 1960s and 1970s. The first show I did here, *Other Primary Structures*, was responding to the history of the museum as well as to the reality that it has been very Western/Northern-centric, so I deliberately included artists from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe to signal that the museum will be much more global from now on. It was quite a political show, as it was thinking about histories versus history, Eurocentrism versus global multiculturalism.

I am really glad you raised the idea of a global view of art and aesthetics within our discussion of context specificity. Since the issue of SFAQ in which this interview appears is loosely themed around Central and South American art, I was wondering if you could comment on the different ways in which art made in these areas is received in different contexts—perhaps most specifically drawing on your experience working on the east and west coasts of the United States, as well as in other parts of the world. Is it possible to generalize about how Central and South American art is seen in different contexts, and, if so, can you sketch what you have seen to be the different inflections? Are there distinct ways in which your relationship with the region informs your curatorial practice?

It is, as you say, hard to comment on art coming from an area so large as Central and South America, which has so many different countries and cultural contexts. Coming from Costa Rica, it has always been very natural for me to look at art from Latin America, and I have worked with Latin American artists since the very early stages of my career. On the west coast, especially in Los Angeles and San Francisco, art from Latin America is far less exotic than it is on the east coast or in Europe simply because California has a history that has engaged much more with Latin America, not only because of immigration but also historically through being part of Mexico until the middle of the 19th century.

I don’t think there has ever been a big interest in art from Central America. (I do not understand Mexico as part of Central America.) Very few artists from Central America have shown outside their home countries compared to artists from Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia, or Brazil. What has always been interesting to me is that even in South America, there are countries that many Latin American curators have never traveled to, for instance Paraguay, Bolivia, Ecuador, or even Uruguay, not to mention Guyana or Surinam. Also artists do not travel much from country to country. Information about the art world in Colombia will most often arrive in Brazil via the United States or Europe.

So, I think we are still at a very early understanding of how to look at contemporary art from that region. But a lot is changing. Brazil is very interesting to me since it is such a melting pot of European cultures, African influences, and the indigenous population. One finds traces of this history all over the continent. I am myself part Afro Caribbean, European, and indigenous American, and this of course affects my interests related to art and culture. In 2009, I co-organized the 2nd San Juan Triennial in Puerto Rico, a large-scale exhibition focused specifically on art from Latin America and the Caribbean. In preparation for that show, working with a curator from Venezuela, Julieta Gonzalez, and one from Brazil, Adriano Pedrosa, I did a lot of research in the region and it was the start of a much deeper relationship with artists from that continent, which continues through today. What you will see when looking back at the last 20 years of art production in Latin America is that certain countries are being focused more on than others: Mexico had a boom, Brazil had a boom, now Colombia has a boom. Many people are excited about art from Argentina at the moment, which will be the next boom.

Can you speak more specifically about some of the South American artists you have been thinking about as a result of the research you were doing for the San Juan Triennial? Who hasn't yet received the attention they deserve? Also, can you tell us about the Colombian “boom” you describe, as well as perhaps what lies ahead for a broader international reception of Argentinian art?

Around 2009 I did a lot of visits to Bogotá and started to get to know its scene more and more. A number of artists I started working with for the San Juan Triennial that I have followed and worked with since include Johanna Calle, Mateo López, Nicolas Paris, Gabriel Sierra, Danilo Dueñas, Bernardo Ortiz, Nicolás Consuegra, Felipe Arturo, Carolina Caycedo, and Milena Bonilla. Also around that time I started visiting Buenos Aires more and met artists I subsequently showed in San Francisco and elsewhere, including Nicolás Robbio, Jazmin Lopez, Edoardo Basualdo, Adrián Villar Rojas, Jorge Macchi, and several others. Adrián Villar Rojas in particular has received an enormous amount of attention, with an upcoming solo show at Marian Goodman in 2015, which is provoking even more interest in artists from that country. I have to admit that my deepest knowledge in regards to art from Latin America is around Mexican and Brazilian artists. I have worked in both countries and shown many artists from there over the last 20 years.

Can I zoom out for a moment to ask you a more theoretical question, one that might even be a bit contentious? You mentioned earlier, by way of negative definition, a contemporary cultural trend, prevalent in some museum programs, but also seen more broadly, in which art is turned into (or reduced to) a kind of lifestyle. To my mind, this attitude seems endemic to contemporary culture today, even beyond art: DJs, personal shoppers, fashion editors, et al. have appropriated the position of “curating” as a kind of marketing strategy, and often frame it as postmodernism's default form. (In the absence of originality, all we can do is remix, etc. . . .) Can you comment on this trend, and also maybe talk about where the edges that separate the serious art curator and the lifestyle art curator get fuzzy—like, for example, when curators collaborate with commercial galleries, or even author texts in auction catalogues—essentially working as functionaries of a hyper advanced capitalism for the luxury market?

I notice among younger curators, writers, and even artists the desire to be part of the art world not necessarily because of an interest in art or art history, but primarily because of a lifestyle decision. The art world is seen as glamorous, and therefore a desirable place to be in. Museums tap into that and sell it to those who are not in the arts professionally but want to be somehow associated with it. Curating as a term and activity has been completely devalued and today describes simply the act of making a choice or a selection: among items on a menu, the lineup of songs in a club, window dressing, et cetera.

Curating is obviously much more than just making a selection; it's about creating a context and developing an idea, installing works, conceptualizing a publication, and so on. I am interested in the idea of selecting, though, and it brings us back to the question of authorship. An author is someone who makes choices, chooses words or artworks to develop and articulate an argument, and what is important here is the index and the criteria that are developed in order to make these choices. Because if you don't have that index, how can you make choices?

Perhaps it could be interesting to talk about how to think of curatorial quality. How do I know a curator knows what she or he is doing versus just distributing a group of works randomly in a space? There is such a difference between someone picking five works from the studios of some artist friends and showing them in an apartment gallery versus me doing a historical, global overview of minimalist art in a museum, yet both are called curating. My solution to this dilemma has been to not call myself a curator anymore, but an exhibition maker. I also like the term “making.” It sounds more hands-on and creative.

That is a really helpful distinction, I think, between curator and exhibition maker. It seems in making that distinction, as well as by foregrounding the “making” aspect of what you do, you are underscoring your work's creative nature. This may seem a polemical question, but can you talk a bit about the differences between the “making of exhibitions” that you do and the “making of exhibitions” that artists do? Along these lines, I also wanted to bring up that a couple of years ago the name “Jens Hoffmann” appeared on the list of artists represented by 303 (one of the most significant galleries for contemporary art in New York). When you click on the link to learn more, the website returns a “404 Not Found” error message. Can you unpack this a bit? Was this an attempt to productively blur the lines between different types of cultural producers? I, knowing you, take it as a lighthearted and ironic turn at the curator-as-artist posture . . .

I should mention that I have organized exhibitions for commercial galleries. I never had an issue with the commercial element of the art world—only the element that is uncritical and not reflective. For many years people have said that I am an artist who uses the medium of the exhibition like someone else uses photography or painting. It was very important to me to *not* be understood like that, as my desire was to diversify curating and talk about exhibition making, not art making.

I understand the concern, though, and I think that some of my past shows have been fine balancing acts of creative curating that were also inspired by artists. I think my name is still on the list of artists of 303 Gallery. This came up as a result of a lot of different conversations and situations. The owner, Lisa Spellman, thought of my work as art and said she wanted to represent me, and I told her that it wasn't possible. But then I began thinking, what if a gallery *did* represent a curator? I agreed to have my name on the list. I was interested to see how people would react to a curator being represented by a gallery. In a very simple little gesture, a mixing of ideas between curating and art making, blurring the lines between creative practices. I eventually curated a show for 303 called *Marxism* in 2012.

Thanks so much for all your time and attention. It's been a pleasure talking with you. Any plans to come back to the Bay Area soon?

I spent five very good years in San Francisco and the city is special to me in many regards. The art scene is strong in the Bay Area. Fantastic artists that I admire very much have come out of San Francisco, for instance Bruce Conner, Jess Collins, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Anna Halprin, and many others. I wish I could come back at some point. One never knows.



When Attitudes Became Form Become Attitudes, 2012. Installation view, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, curated by Jens Hoffmann. Photograph by Johnna Arnold.



Jacob and Jens Hoffman, *Marxism, a comedy*, 2012. Installation view, 303 Gallery, New York. Courtesy of the artists and 303 Gallery.



When Attitudes Became Form Become Attitudes, 2012. Installation view, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, curated by Jens Hoffmann. Photograph by Johnna Arnold.



Thomas Ruff, *Nudes bb03*, 2004. 155 x 110 cm. each. Framed C-prints. Photograph by Jens Ziehe. Courtesy of the artist and Johnen Galerie, Berlin.



Hans-Peter Feldmann, [left] *Robert*, 2002. Cabinet on cardboard base with 12 hats, 1 telephone, 1 cornet, 1 pair of boxing gloves, 1 ball, 3 pairs of shoes. 123 x 204 x 44 cm. [right] *Eiereimer auf Stuhl mit Pappsockel*, 2003. Eggs, bucket, wooden chair, cardboard base. 61 x 96 x 89 cm. Photograph by Jens Ziehe. Courtesy of the artist and Johnen Galerie, Berlin.



From the archives of the Deutsches Theater, Berlin. Photograph by Jens Ziehe. Courtesy of the artist and Johnen Galerie, Berlin.



Tim Lee, *Rust never sleeps, Neil Young, 1979*, 2010. 3-channel 35 mm slide projection. 19 x 29 cm (image). Photograph by Jens Ziehe. Courtesy of the artist and Johnen Galerie, Berlin.



Geoffrey Farmer, *You Know Nothing, The Owl Knows Everything*, 2007. Installation variable, 18 spears made from found pieces of wood, broom, foam mop, painters extension, electrical tape, nails, ranging from approx 38 to 48 cm. Photograph by Jens Ziehe. Courtesy of the artist and Johnen Galerie, Berlin.



Installation view of *Other Primary Structures* at The Jewish Museum, New York. Photograph by David Heald/The Jewish Museum.



Installation view of *Others 2*, the second part of the exhibition *Other Primary Structures* at the Jewish Museum, NY. Photograph by Kris Graves.

Graphic Space Is The Place

Visual Poetry In Latin America

By Gianni Simone

Visual poetry: poetry or art in which the visual arrangement of text, images, and symbols is important in conveying the intended effect of the work.

The above definition comes from the mighty Wikipedia, and in its noncommittal blandness is a good enough starting point to introduce a subject that through the years has taken multiple shapes and branched out in different directions. Actually, it only takes a little research to dig up a number of contrasting views on what this strange beast really is, the most important being the distinction between visual and concrete poetry. But I am too lazy to venture into this kind of sophistry and will put both of them into the same cauldron. To satisfy the more insistent reader I will just reiterate that (see the Wikipedia, again), “Whereas concrete poetry is still recognizable as poetry, being composed of purely typographic elements, certain types of visual poetry are much less text-dependent. The majority of visual poems incorporate text, but the text may have primarily a visual function.” The emphasis is mine, just to make it clear that trying to separate the two is more trouble than it’s worth. At first I was actually tempted to do away with the text and just fill the pages with works because images are more effective than thousands of words to explain how visual poetry works and what makes it so special... but then I realized I would be paid less for my (non) effort, so...

Any artistic endeavor has its currents and national traditions, and Latin America has been without a doubt one of the most significant places for visual poetry production in the last 60 years. It all started in 1952 in São Paulo, Brazil, when Décio Pignatari and brothers Augusto and Haroldo de Campos adopted the concretist principles in order to find a new approach to making poetry. The name they chose for their group and magazine was Noigandres (from Ezra Pound’s *Cantos*) whose mysteriously nonsensical nature was well suited to introduce the “new thing.”

To be honest, concrete poetry had many ancestors, from 300 BCE Greek altar poems to Jewish micrography and Arabic calligrams down to more recent examples like the mouse’s tale/tail featured in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, Stéphane Mallarmé’s *Un Coup de Dés*, Guillaume Apollinaire’s *Calligrammes*, and of course Futurism’s dynamic collaged poems. However, Noigandres introduced a marked sense of social criticism that went beyond simple formal research. As Augusto de Campos pointed out in the essay *Concrete Poetry: Tension of Things—Words in Space—Time* (originally published in *AD: Arquitetura e Decoração*, n. 20, Nov./Dec. 1956), “Far from attempting to evade reality or to deceive it, concrete poetry is against self-debilitating introspection and simpleton simplistic realism. It intends to place itself before things, open.” A typical example of Noigandres’s early output is Pignatari’s famous (*beba*) *coca cola* (1957) whose riff around *coca / caco / cloaca* is a very effective puke-inducing indictment of neo-colonialism and globalized culture.

beba coca cola
babe cola
beba coca
babe cola caco
caco
cola

cloaca

drink coca cola
drool glue
drink coca(ine)
drool glue shard
shard
glue
cesspool

In March 1958 the poetic trio published their manifesto, *Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry* in *Noigandres* 4. Backed by Mallarmé’s words (“our intelligence is now used to think synthetic-ideographically instead of the analytic-discursive way”), they proceeded to declare that “the historical cycle of verse (as formal-rhythmical unit) is closed” and “concrete poetry begins by being aware of graphic space as structural agent.” In other words, concrete poetry is a sort of meta-communication in which forms and structure, instead of the usual verbal message, achieve a “coincidence and simultaneity of verbal and nonverbal communication.”



Guillermo Deisler, 1975. Private collection.

While concrete poetry is mainly preoccupied with the typographical arrangement of words, a new, more eclectic tendency began to form in the mid-’60s thanks to such magazines as Edgardo Antonio Vigo’s *Diagonal Cero* (Argentina, 1961), Dámaso Ogaz’s *La Pata de Palo* (Chile/Venezuela), Guillermo Deisler’s *Ediciones Mimbres* (Chile) and Clemente Padín’s *Los Huevos del Plata* (Uruguay, 1965). Visual poetry—or New Poetry as it was called at the time in Latin America—was born as a synthesis of ideological criticism and artistic theory whose verbo-visual expression could be revealed only through mass culture’s visual tendencies. Mounting consumerism had had a depersonalizing effect on information, producing at the same time new artistic and communicative models in which the technological element assumed a considerable weight. As a reaction to this, visual poetry tried to develop an alternative linguistic code, highlighting the contradictions inherent to the new mass media.

As Clemente Padín told this writer in a recent interview: “At the end of the ’60s our artistic activity focused on the controversial question of the language that at the time was seen as a tool in the hands of the political regimes. Governments used it to cover with a veil all the social and economic scars in our countries. In other words, language no longer was an instrument of truth, but was used to give a distorted representation of reality and legitimize the system. It was precisely in order to denounce and destroy those kind of elegant lies that we took up experimental poetry. Visual poetry is perfect in this regard because in its desire to distance itself as much as possible from verbal language, it brings into effect an economy of linguistic expressions. This frequently results in the use of a limited number of words and as a consequence the possibility of employing complex rhetorical figures is greatly reduced, the oxymoron being the one that emerges most often. Many visual poets love to use it because it generates not only ambiguity—that is the cornerstone of poetic creation—but it also calls attention to its own dual and contradictory structure. In a famous work by [Uruguayan poet] Jorge Caraballo, for example, the word *patria* (fatherland) loses the letter *t* and changes into *paria* (pariah). This letter, which can be also considered the visual rendition of a person, is caught between being and non-being, between belonging and not belonging to the patria and becomes the narrative focus of the poem. We start with patria as a community of



Cisoria Arte magazines, 1977. Edited by Dámaso Ogaz, issue 4, Venezuela. Private collection.

citizens. This is followed by the crisis of the concept of patria and its organic nature due to a breaking away from democratic consensus, and finally we arrive to the assumption of exile, the status of the pariah expelled from his country. Caraballo created this poem while in prison, when he was in a state of physical and mental duress, forced perhaps to choose between his patria and exile, on the verge of becoming a paria. In my opinion visual poetry is arguably the only art that is able to express complex ideas with such an economy of means.”

Even in Brazil the ’60s and ’70s brought a wind of change. Bypassing Noigandres’s poetry, seen as somewhat rigid and dogmatic, such visual artists as Avelino de Araujo, Leonard Frank Duch, Philadelpho Menezes, and Hugo Pontes chose a different path, using quick wit and keen observation to create ideograms and carpet pages out of the words and images of daily life and commercial exploitation.

Menezes, borrowing from the semiotic theory that he taught at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo, went so far as to write *Poetics and Visuality: A Trajectory of Contemporary Brazilian Poetry*, an illustrated history in which he analyzed Brazilian contribution to experimental poetry. His idea that truly experimental poetry went beyond mere aesthetical concerns to reflect a broader ideological order probably hurt the sensibility of the Brazilian authorities as he was not able to publish his essay in his country and eventually the book came out in the United States in 1995 thanks to the San Diego State University press. As Menezes writes in the introduction, “the mere declaration of transgressive principles will not produce a poetry which pretends to be “avant-garde.” [...] One might hypothetically ask if to write an entire book without the use of the letter ‘a’ or to make a poem in which all the words begin with the letter ‘c’ is a ‘procedure.’ I would have to answer yes. They are procedures, but useless, banal, sterile ones. A procedure does not serve for much if it merely takes the form of the circus juggler playing with language, but it has value only if it takes the form of a compositional method projected from the semantics themselves of the work from which one can extract aesthetic meaning [...].”



XUL magazine, Aug. 4, 1982. Edited by Jorge Santiago Perednik, issue 4. Argentina. Private collection.

On the subject of visual poetry, Menezes says that a discussion of “visuality” must question the concept of “poetry” itself. If we agree that poetry is an “articulation of language” we must accept that poems can be created also from non-verbal signs. “Language is in a state of permanent revolution. It seeks to register and reflect the complex ideology of a period of profound social and cultural transformation. Experimental poetry is sensitive to and structured by this historical conjunction of forces, echoing the turbulence and frenetic mutability of our times and turning its influence back upon these times.”

According to Menezes, the incorporation of the visual element has given birth to three distinct poetic forms: collage-poem, package-poem, and montage-poem. “In montage-poem the poetic function is indebted as much to the word as to visual images, both of which produce the syntactic composition motivated by verbal signs [...] Physical independence from the word, and semantic autonomy are elements that prefigure this actuation of visual signs. Thus, I have suggested the term ‘visual poetry’ for this last tendency.”

In Argentina, while Vigo produced *Diagonal Cero* and *Exagon*, a new important magazine was founded in 1980. Edited by Jorge Santiago Perednik, *XUL* was one of the very few cultural projects that dared raise a dissident voice during the terrifying years of military repression. At the end of the ’70s, while thousands of people were “disappeared,” all the radical presses were destroyed, their materials confiscated, and laws were passed making it a crime to be found in possession of subversive literature of any sort. In such a climate of terror, putting out a magazine that did not follow the official party line was one of the most daring things that a group of poets could have done. Between 1980 and 1997 *XUL* provided a space for literary and political expression despite the hostile environment. The journal highlighted the specificity of poetic language, devoting most issues to a particular subject or author and celebrating the most outré linguistic behaviors, never ceasing to push the boundaries of what was officially accepted. Visual poetry was often featured in its pages but issue #10, published in 1993, particularly stands out for the space devoted to this genre. This survey would not be complete without mentioning Mexico’s contribution. In this country the avant-garde had temporarily taken root in the



Mario Jose Cervantes, from *Ult Pictura Poiesis*. Private collection.

early '20s with the so-called Stridentist movement, which had formed as a rejection of traditional aestheticism and in order to impose a new aesthetic that reflected people's preoccupations. However, Stridentism's radical proposals had not found the right cultural environment to fully achieve its objectives.

Then, at the end of the '60s, it was future Nobel laureate Octavio Paz (who, by the way, was a great friend and admirer of the Noigandres group) who reintroduced experimental poetry in Mexico through such iconographic poems as *Blanco* and the *Topoemas* series—works in which he applied his knowledge of Hindu thought and mandala structures, mixing them with a sort of cubist sensibility. Throughout the '70s and early '80s, more poets and artists worked for the renovation of the language. However, their desire to go beyond poetry's traditional representational qualities took the form of a series of direct actions upon the real that transcended paper and resulted in performance actions. Following the example of Padín and other South American artists, Mexican artists began to explore this avenue of expression through so-called PIAS Forms (Performance-Installation-Environment), as well as varied practices such as book-objects, neographics, mail art, psycho-music, and other multimedia events. Groups like Peyote & Company or the No-Group, for instance, put on installations and performances, and staged urban, topographical poems. This is, by the way, one of the characteristics that distinguish Latin America from other regions: In fact, while in other countries, like the U.S., performance has been the exclusive domain of plastic artists, Latin American poets have embraced both media in a constant search of new forms of expression. In Mexico it was poets like Juan Infante, Araceli Zúñiga, and particularly César Espinosa who pushed in this direction. Starting at the end of the '70s with the Movement of the Groups, these artists began to ask for public events that could help them pursue their activity beyond the bland festivals of "experimentation" supported by the official cultural bureaucracy. Eventually Espinosa organized the first Biennial of Visual and Experimental Poetry in Mexico City. This event has been a focal point for the development of the avant-garde in both art and literature in Latin America.

As Espinosa recalls, "Our aim was to spread in the Mexican artistic media the tradition and practice of the visual poetic text/act which had millenarian antecedents. In the 1980s, the Mexican biennial came to revitalize the practices of visual poetic experimentation in Latin America."

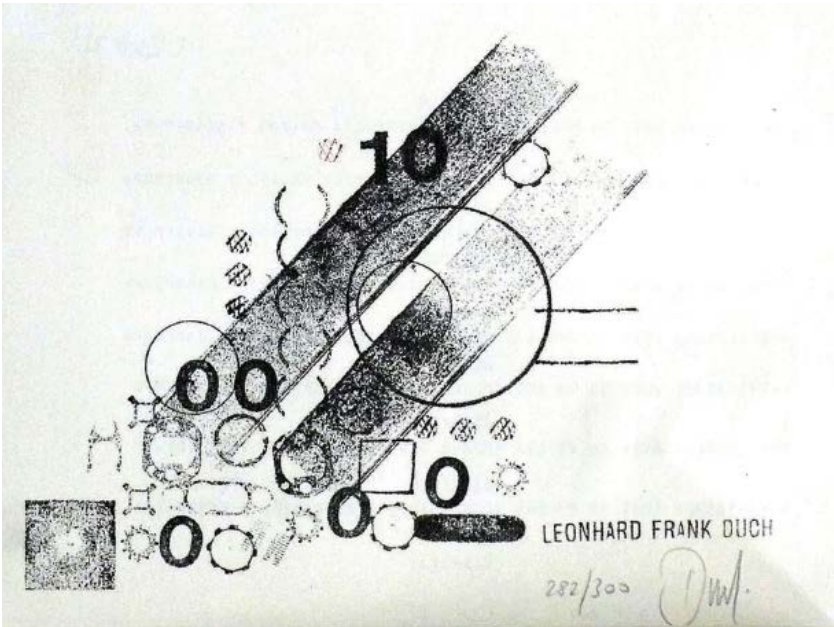
Artists who have been constantly active in different countries of Europe and North America, like Enzo Minarelli and Fernando Aguiar, have emphasized the importance of the Mexican biennial, observing that while the European festivals are more restricted and are limited to one or two aspects of poetic creativity, in Mexico room has been made to unfold the broad spread of experimental poetry comprising performance and sound poetry, video poetry, street actions with the public, exhibitions of visual and concrete poetry, theoretical discussions, and sessions of dance and musical experimentation.

Espinosa again: "The Biennial did not come out of the blue. We can't forget the presentation of the 'collective poem revolution' organized in 1981 by the Collective-3 mail art group. This work was exhibited in the Pinacoteca of the Autonomous University of Puebla (1982) and in the Xochimilco gardens of the Autonomous Metropolitan University in Mexico City. It was made up of around 500 works from 40 countries, which offered different takes on the polemic surrounding the triumph of the Sandinista revolution in the early '80s. The other line leading up to the biennials was the edition, since 1982, by the same group, of the anthology *Poetry in Circulation* and of the magazine of alternative poetry *Postextual* (1986), which published works of visual poets from twenty some-odd countries including places both in Eastern Europe and South America where censorship curtailed freedom of expression (East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, which were under socialist rule, but also Brazil and Chile, at the time ruled by a military dictatorship)."

The first edition of the biennial got to a rough start at the end of 1985 due to the disastrous earthquake that had hit the country, but the Post-Arte group (Espinosa, Zúñiga, Cosme Ornelas, Maria Eugenia Guerra, and Jorge Rosano) who organized the event managed to get things going by distributing the events in different places in and around the capital. The second biennial (1987) was a much smoother affair and even managed to travel all the way to California where the works were exhibited at the Callexico campus of San Diego State University. As Espinosa remembers, "A growth in complexity came with the third biennial in 1990. It was made up of six simultaneous exhibitions in Mexico City, corresponding to national or regional sections, such as Southern Cone of Latin America (Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile) curated by Clemente Padín and Jorge Echenique, and the United States section, curated by Harry Polkinhorn (previously exhibited at San Diego State University). The Portuguese section, curated by Fernando Aguiar, was exhibited in the building of the University Television Studios (UNAM). The UNAM was a particularly important place for the future development of Mexican video art. It was here that the Pola Weis video studio was inaugurated and where the TV-UNAM-produced *Visual Poetry: Visual Poetic Experimentation in Mexico* was first showed. Still another section from Brasilia was curated by Paulo Bruscky, with a historical exhibition of 100 experimental poets starting with Oswald de Andrade's works from 1918."

In a few years the Mexican biennial managed to become a focus of attention and diffusion of poetic creativity, fast becoming the most important artistic event in Latin America. Despite not awarding any prizes and being completely non-competitive, it has managed to attract more and more local artists besides featuring a growing international presence, each time featuring between 150 and 300 artists. All of this, adds Espinosa, while going "against the grain of the bureaucratic cultural programs and the circuits of artistic speculation."

Clemente Padín once again best sums up the important role played by visual poetry through the last decades. "The vanguard is necessarily experimental with regard to its language, that is to say, it would not be vanguard if it didn't establish radical projects impelled by the search for and production of new information. It is not about redundantly manipulating a well-known repertoire of signs in a way that is accepted by the establishment. It is about generating information that keeps asking questions and challenges the current language and, in so doing, challenges the society that sustains it, questioning and forcing to rethink its structures through novel processes. These multi-formed transformations, in turn, are the seeds that are going to give birth to a new kind of knowledge and information. Poetry cannot escape this kind of process; it is not possible to create truly new forms without empiric experimentation.



Leonhard Frank, 1978. Rubber stamp print. Duch from Recife, Brazil. Private collection.



Guillermo Deisler, *Poema Visual*, 1983. Private collection.

Fifty Years Of Latin American Mail Art

Beyond The Cactus Curtain

By John Held, Jr.

Dictatorships, deportations, and the disappeared: the dark years of Latin American political and cultural repression were often marked by imprisonment, torture, and worse for those artists challenging the status quo, even in the most subtle of ways. From the 1960s to the 1980s, when the waves of repression were washing over the Southern Hemisphere of the Americas at their harshest, an open communication channel still remained. The international postal system, operating under universal treaty, encouraged a connection between a growing cadre of artists working in the margins of contemporary art, giving once-isolated individuals a global voice.

Marginal fields of art, divorced from commercial outlets, which these artists avoided, united them. Their choices of media were manifold, including artist publications of all kinds in periodical and book form, rubber stamps, postal stamps (artistamps), visual poetry, collage, photocopy and machine manipulated art, video, audio, performance, and political protest. These activities and media were manifested both individually and in cooperative actions, reflecting a developing group dynamic. The postal system provided the practitioners of these activities a long-distance social and cultural network in the mid to late 20th century anticipating the Internet. Through helping hands at home and abroad, Latin American artists encountered camaraderie in the face of censorship, arrest, and exile.

These artists, drawn to non-commercial collaborative artworks, both poetic and political in nature, were encouraged by a growing circle of international artists influenced by Marcel Duchamp's broad conceptual approach to art. Duchamp was accumulating contemporary currency in the post-war era, uniting a new generation of critical thinkers. These practices included the obsessive letter writing of Ray Johnson, and the event scoring of Fluxus.

Both Johnson and Fluxus, following Duchamp's lead, sought to disrupt the filter between art and life. Johnson's artful correspondence was cloaked in the everyday activity of letter writing. Fluxus artists sought to raise the level of mundane actions to closer inspection. Brushing one's teeth, cooking one's meal, opening and closing doors—when placed in the context of contemplation and performance—brought new awareness to the commonplace, bridging art and life.

Argentinian Mail Artist Edgardo Antonio Vigo, who encouraged "an art that signals in such a way that the everyday escapes from the sole possibility of being functional. No more contemplation, but activity ..." reflected this emerging attitude towards art and its relation to the everyday.

Often acknowledged as the father of Mail Art, Johnson had been schooled at Black Mountain College in the late 1940s, mentored by John Cage and Josef Albers. From Albers, he honed his design skills. From Cage, he learned to make something from nothing. Moving to New York, Johnson embarked upon a career in design, using the postal system to promote his intentions, and in the process, formed a growing core of correspondents fascinated by his unique approach to the activity.

In 1962, E. M. Plunkett identified and named Johnson's practice the New York Correspondence School, a takeoff on the New York School of Abstract Expressionists. Johnson expanded art lessons by mail, including instructions to "add and pass" his incoming correspondence to either known or unknown persons.

That same year, Fluxus, under the organizational capabilities George Maciunas, began publishing and performing. Many of the New York-based Fluxus artists had studied with Cage in his composition class at the New School for Social Research in 1958. Yoko Ono had spread awareness of Fluxus to Asia. In Europe, several adventuresome artists, including Ben Vautier and Robert Filliou, involved themselves in the agenda set by Maciunas. By the end of the 1960s, Filliou was declaring the existence of an "Eternal Network" of artists, some entering, some leaving, but always a core group remaining to dispense an ongoing philosophy of a universal union among artists, featuring cooperation over competition.

Mail Art is concurrently a medium and movement. The utensils of the postal system—envelopes, rubber stamps, postage stamps, and philatelic practices, such as first-day covers and cancellations—become fodder for the practitioner. In this sense, we can un-capitalize "mail art," and treat it like any other artistic media, such as painting, sculpture, printmaking, watercolor, etc.

I have chosen to capitalize the spelling of Mail Art to indicate acknowledgement that the medium has gained an international following, becoming a movement, which like other artistic movements of the past, has generated publications, exhibitions, histories, manifestoes, and institutional collection. The ongoing activity of thousands of artists utilizing the postal medium has earned the activity the right to "capitalize" itself.

As Mail Art diffused around the globe, various geographic regions acquired unique characteristics. Mail Art in North America took its lead from Ray Johnson and Fluxus. Neo-Dadaist in nature, it assumed a seemingly frivolous, art-for-art's sake approach, incorporating but cloaking more serious issues, such as the decentralization, democratization, and commodification of art based on principles earlier established by Marcel Duchamp.

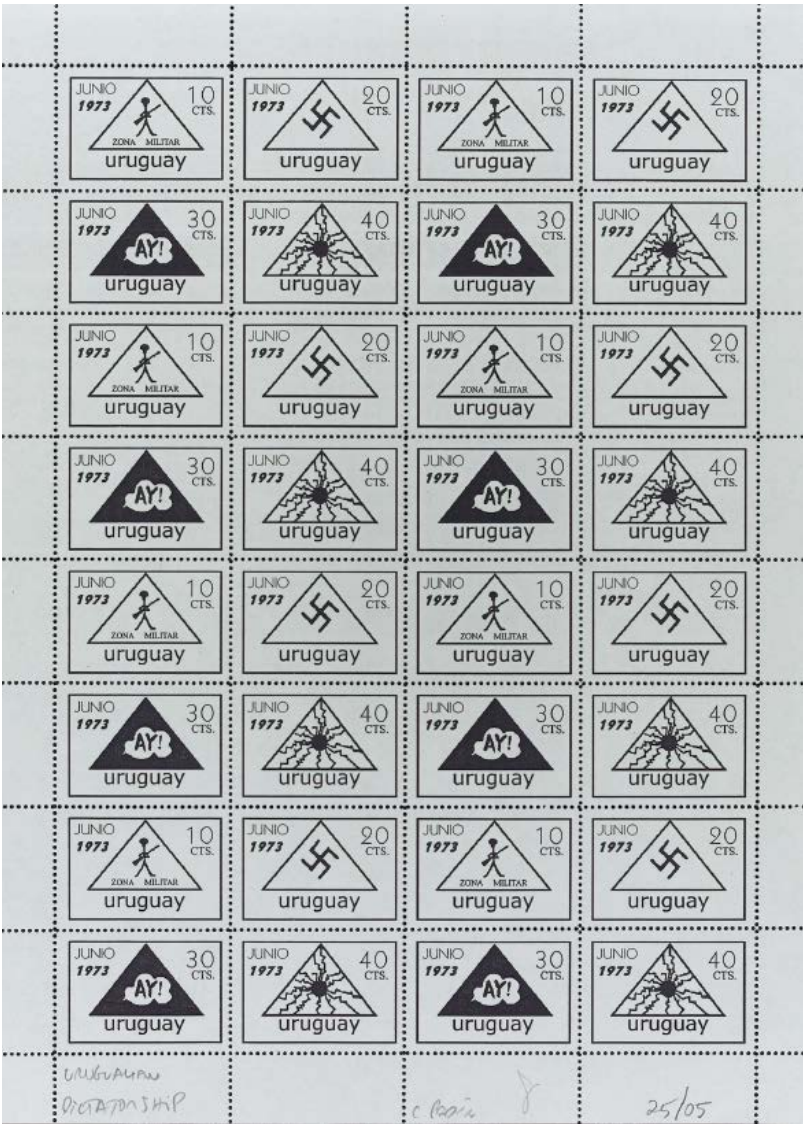
In Western Europe, Mail Art tended toward an intellectual exercise, shorn of the frivolous camouflage employed by their North American counterparts. For some, especially in Eastern Europe, the stakes were especially compelling, and involving oneself in the activity had serious consequences. Europeans, such as Hervé Fischer, Jean-Marc Poinot, Ulises Carrión, Romano Peli, György Galántai, and Geza Pernecky were among the first to write critically about Mail Art, promoting the theoretical and distributional innovations of the field.

Japan and South Korea were home to active Asian Mail Art practitioners. Ray Johnson had established contact with Gutai leader Jiro Yoshihara as early as 1957, his work appearing in *Gutai* magazine, resulting in the group's transformation of traditional holiday greeting cards into Mail Art fodder. Multitudes of Mail Artists thrived in the atmosphere created by Shozo Shimamoto's AU (Artists' Union and/or Art Unidentified) organization, after his Gutai years. Individually conducted projects, such as On Kawara's *I Got Up at* ... and Mieko Shiomi's *Spatial Poem* indicate the Japanese propensity to reach across borders for fellowship in the face of geographic divide.

Latin America is a different case. Mail Art in the Southern Hemisphere of the Americas appeared early, was widespread, and assumed an important place in the network of international alternative art practices. The relatively liberal 1960s, when waves of generational change swept over Latin America, as they did elsewhere, gave way to a tsunami of repressive governmental interference in the lives and art of its people the following decade. Rising to the occasion, many artists turned to direct involvement in politics and social reform.

Uruguayan visual poet and Mail Artist Clemente Padin tried by a military court and imprisoned in August 1977 for "attacking the morale and reputation of the army," writes that, "Almost naturally Mail Art has become an instrument of battle and denunciation calling on the tenacity of our peoples to win better, more humane living conditions, under the sign of social justice and peace."

Paulo Bruscky, in his essay *Mail Art: The Art of Communication* states that, "Mail Art appeared at a time when communications, as well as other means of expression, were becoming more difficult. During this time, official art, seemed to involve speculations of the private market ... Mail Art, the art of correspondence ... is no longer a minor thing. It is the most viable art system available in recent years. The reasons are simple. It is anti-bourgeoisie, anti-commercial, anti-system, etc. This art has shortened the distance between people and between countries, as shown by expositions and communication centers. In these places the art was not judged nor awarded, as things were in the old showrooms and bi-annual meetings. With Mail Art, art regains its main functions, information, protest, and denunciation."



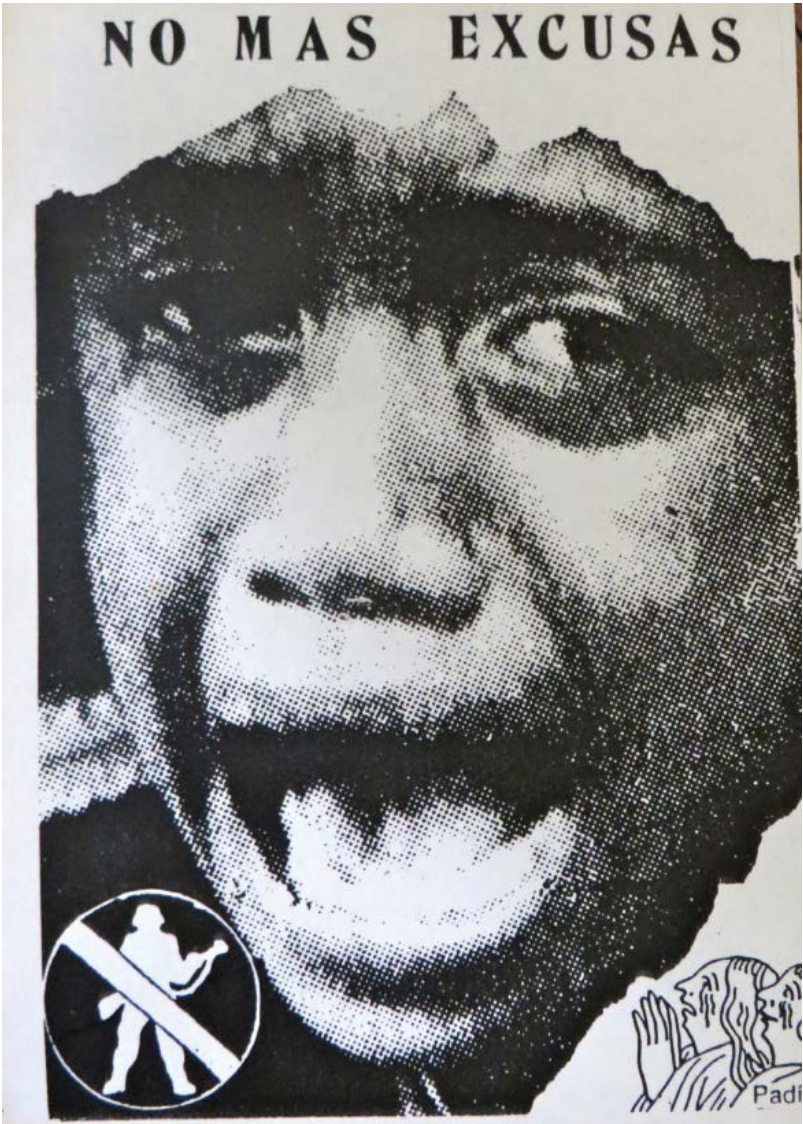
Clemente Padin, Uruguayan Dictatorship, Circa 1990. Artist Postage Stamps. Montevideo, Uruguay. Collection of John Held, Jr.

Padin writes that, "Towards the beginning of the 1960s, various South American artists—poets and visual artists—made art projects and distributed them through the mail, without using the term 'postal art.' Among them were Edgardo Antonio Vigo from Argentina, the Chilean Guillermo Deisler, and the Uruguayan Clemente Padin. Also at that time the North American group Fluxus took up Mail Art and mass communications events, following similar antecedents established by the Dadaists, Futurists, and Surrealists."

Towards the end of the 1960s, long-distance communication among artists accelerated, and the postal system was increasingly seen as a medium through which art could be generated. A project that placed the postal system front and center of artistic attention, and often acknowledged by early practitioners of the field, occurred in 1969 when visual artists Liliana Porter and Luis Camnitzer conceived of a project demanding multiple mailings, sponsored by the Torcuato di Tella Institute in Buenos Aires.

Years later, Camnitzer, in his 2007 book *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation* reflected upon the situation confronting Latin American artists: "The epidemic of dictatorships that spanned Latin America from the sixties to the mid-eighties made the use of mail a perfect vehicle to allow for the communication between isolated artists and the rest of the world. The network became important enough to justify the organization of international exhibits in Uruguay (1974), Argentina (1975), and Brazil (1976), and in Mexico and other countries shortly thereafter. The notoriety of these efforts had two consequences: the number of mail artists increased greatly and censorship became more sophisticated and intense."

In 1971, a meeting occurred in Buenos Aires at the Center of Art and Communication (CAYC), a major distributor of information about alternative arts throughout Latin America, administered by Jorge Glusberg, who directed the organization from 1968 until his death in 2012. The event occurred at the opening of the exhibition *International Exhibition of Propositions to Realize* and brought together some of the key players in the Latin American Mail Art community in an early display of solidarity.



Clemente Padin, *No Mas Excusas*, Circa 1990. Postcard, Montevideo, Uruguay. Collection of John Held, Jr.

Edgardo Antonio Vigo, an Argentinian artist from La Plata, curated the exhibition, attracting the attendance of Uruguayan artist Clemente Padin and Guillermo Deisler from Chile. All three artists had become acquainted with one another's work in 1967 when they began to publish art periodicals dealing with visual poetry. Padin's magazine *OVUM*, Vigo's *Diagonal Cero*, and Deisler's *Ediciones Mimbre*, were distributed within and outside South America. In these early years, Mail Art was not the connection for these artists, rather their interest in visual poetry. Their publication activities, along with Venezuelan Dámaso Ogaz's *C(art)A* brought them into contact with international artists, notably Julien Blaine in France, members of Fluxus, and General Idea in Canada, who were distributing *FILE*, the major Mail Art info-zine of the era.

The first exhibition of Mail Art in South America, *Creative Post-Card Festival* was curated by Clemente Padin at Gallery U in Montevideo, Uruguay, from May 11 to 24, 1974. Ismael Assumpção organized the *First Internationale of Mail Art* from September 7-15, 1975 at Caixas College in São Paulo, Brazil. Three months later, the *Last International Exhibition of Mail Art* took place at the New Art Gallery in Buenos Aires, Argentina, curated by Edgardo Antonio Vigo and Horacio Zabala. A year in the making, the exhibition attracted the participation of 199 artists from 24 countries.

In the same month as Vigo and Zabala's *Last International Exhibition of Mail Art* and following Ismael Assumpção's *First Internationale of Mail Art*, some months previous, Paulo Bruscky and Leonhard Frank Duch organized the *First International Exhibition of Mail Art*. Duch wrote that the exhibition "was based on the idea of bringing together all the material received from many friends in Mail Art, although they weren't abundant. We wanted to do the exhibition through the mail, but we did not receive permission. Then we put it up in a large room of the Barão de Lucena Hospital, a government hospital. There was an immense table with glass and we put the works under glass."

Another Mail Art exhibition was planned by Bruscky and Duch in August 1976, but the political realities of the time intervened. In a letter to Clemente Padin, dated March 2, 1977, Bruscky stated that "it was prohibited and censored by the police, and even we (the organizers) were prisoners for three days. The exhibition was closed one hour after its opening ..."

Padín writes that, “During the period of the dictatorships mail art turned totally to the denunciation and exposing of the national internal situation . . . thus we cite the closing by the Brazilian military of the *II International Exhibition of Mail Art* organized by Paulo Bruscky and Daniel Santiago in Recife in 1976; the brutal exile of the mail artist Guillermo Deisler after Pinochet’s and the ITT’s conflict with Allende . . .; the kidnapping of Palomo Vigo, son of the Argentine mail artist Edgardo-Antonio Vigo; the torture and incarceration for many years of the Uruguayan mail artists Jorge Caraballo and Clemente Padín; the persecution, incarceration, and the exile of the Salvadoran mail artist Jesús Romeo Galdámez, now in Mexico; the suspension of the civil rights of Andrés Díaz Poblete, son of the Chilean mail artist Eduardo Andrés Díaz Espinoza.”

Padín himself received some of the harshest treatment at the hands of the authoritarian government. “In 1974, during the Uruguayan military dictatorship, I organized the first Latinoamerican Mail Art exposition at Galeria U. in Montevideo, Uruguay. My edition of apocryphal mail art stamps denounced the dictatorial regime for its brutal suppression of Uruguay’s human rights and this eventually led to my imprisonment from August, 1977 to November, 1979.”

For Padín in 1977 there was no choice between art for social reform and “art for art’s sake.” His imprisonment was an important turning point in Mail Art, for when word of his arrest in the international artistic community (“The Eternal Network”) became known, it became obvious to all that art was not merely a game, decoration, or a career path, but a weapon that could be used in the face of societal injustices with life and death implications.

San Francisco poet Geoffrey Cook and French visual poet Julien Blaine spearheaded an international effort to gain the freedom of Padín and fellow Uruguayan artist Jorge Caraballo. The campaign to gain their release was two-pronged: (1) encourage individuals to write their governments and the government of Uruguay to circulate information about the case, and (2) to win the support of influential individuals, organizations, and governments to intercede on the release of the artists.”

Caraballo was released shortly after his detention, arrest, and conviction. Padín languished in prison until 1979, shortly after his predicament reached the attention of the American and French ambassadors. In reviewing the episode, Cook wrote, “What did we accomplish? We did what we could, and it may have convinced the Uruguayan government that whatever they did to the artists would not be done in the dark. We may have convinced them that negative actions would be counterproductive to their own goals. The project has shown us that structures exist within the art world through which we can affect change and influence larger forces. The project represents a small cry in a collapsing universe.”

Padín was not alone in his suffering for the sake of artistic practice directed toward social justice during these years of repression in Latin America. His friend Guillermo Deisler, of German heritage living and teaching in Chile, was arrested for two months after the September 11, 1973 military coup in Chile, before friends were able to obtain a French visa for him. After a few months, he decided to move to East Germany with his family, and after a meeting with fellow Chilean refugees, he decided it would be best to relocate to Plovdiv, Bulgaria. In 1986, he returned to Halle, East Germany, where he remained until his death on October 21, 1995. His collection of over 5,000 Mail Art works is now located in the archives of the Academy of Art in Berlin.

Writing of his friend, Clemente Padín illuminates the mindset of the emerging Latin American artist coming of age in the 1960s: “Guillermo Deisler’s formation was not very different of that of many young artists who, toward the ’60s, were emerging in the scene of Latin American art, marked to fire by the more important social-political factors in the history of our countries, after the independence struggle of the past century. The Cuban Revolution was the point of departure of nearly all our generation and guided and impelled us in the struggle for eradicating social differences on behalf of a just and solidary society.”

Deisler stated that, “For the Latin American people—and we are already quite a number of creators that, voluntarily or impelled by political circumstances, have been obligated to the exile community—Mail Art becomes the palliative that neutralizes this situation of ‘expired citizens.’ [as] Paraguayan writer Roa Bastos [calls] this massive emigration of ‘workers for the culture’ from the South American continent.”

The imposed exile and enforced global meanderings Guillermo Deisler took did not deter his positive outlook on life. In the titles of two of his many publications over the years, we catch a glimpse of his determination to move beyond victimization. *UNI/vers()* gathered works of visual and experimental poetry from the international community in 35 issues from 1987 until his death. It suggests the notion of a global creative brotherhood based on the individual and extending outward. His *Peacedream Project* was an assembling magazine, asking contributors to submit 100 copies of their work for distribution. Along with his rubberstamp, “pARTner,” Deisler’s “peacedream” suggests a passion for international understanding and community in the face of political adversity and geographical distancing.

The relative freedom Deisler enjoyed in Eastern Europe, due in part to his persecution for communist sympathies elsewhere, gave him the opportunity to spread the practice of Mail Art under two of Eastern Europe’s most repressive regimes. His struggle for artistic integrity in the face of political pressures, his continuing expression of ideals exemplified in the concept of an “Eternal Network,” and his outreach to other Eastern European artists denied an outlet for their outreach to contemporaries abroad, endeared Deisler to the international Mail Art community, which cheered his positive approach to life despite hardships unimaginable to most.

I have mentioned the effect Deisler’s political persecution had not only on himself, but his family, who shared the artist’s refugee status in shifting dislocating environments. His was not the only family to experience agonies. Edgardo Antonio Vigo lost a son to the campaign of disappearances experienced by Argentinians. In 1976, his son Abel Luis (“Palomo”) was kidnapped and never heard from again. A vigorous campaign was undertaken within the Mail Art community to determine his whereabouts and to “Set Free Palomo.”

Fellow artist Graciela Gutiérrez Marx from La Plata joined the Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo) in support of Palomo Vigo, forming a bond that resulted in the two collaborating under the pseudonym G. E. Marx Vigo from 1977 to 1984. Collaborating on both textual and visual materials disseminated throughout Latin America and beyond, the two artists became inspirational figures in the wider network. Their artfully mailed manipulations mark a high point in Mail Art collaboration.

They were not alone in bringing attention to those missing during the era of repressive regimes. A description of a recent exhibition of the work of Paulo Bruscky states that, “For our missing ones, a collaged postcard from 1986 that features the faces of three people who went missing under the military regime in Recife exemplifies Bruscky’s pioneering role in the Mail Art movement. By mailing cards like these across the globe, Bruscky turned his artworks into political tools that allowed him to develop an international network of people who were aware of the persecution and infringements of civil liberty that the artist and his contemporaries were experiencing in Recife.”

Taken from the first book written on Latin American Mail Art, *EL Arte Correo en Argentina* by Fernando Delgado and Juan Carlos Romero of the Buenos Aires arts organization Vortice Argentina, the words of essayist Belén Gache express the sentiments of most examining the field. Mail Art in Latin America was a necessary expression—sometimes dangerous, sometimes effective—against the virulent violent culture of the era. “In Latin America, Mail Art rises as an activity linked to the resistance against that political and cultural repression that convulsed the continent in the ’60s and ’70s. The diffusion and expansion of this artistic form related directly to a will to denounce the local violence situations through envelopes, stamps, seals, chains of interchange, etc.”

That era passed, and Mail Art forged on. As political turbulence lessened in many of the countries, Latin American Mail Artists built upon a rich heritage of rage and resistance, pursuing social justice while publishing an increasing number of periodicals, exhibiting expanded amounts of “art at a distance,” and staging performances in support of issues of both a local and universal nature. Some bemoaned the lessening of urgency the medium addressed, and it was true that art made in less politically intrusive times may have, on the surface, seemed frivolous in comparison.

Luis Camnitzer, nearing completion in his book *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation*, with the chapter, “From Politics into Spectacle and Beyond,” laments the changes that followed in the wake of lessening tensions. “In Argentina, many artists from the Tucumán Arde [a vanguard politically orientated art group from the late 1960s] generation stopped their artwork completely. In Brazil, many of the artists who at the beginning of their careers were strongly rooted in a political context slowly moved away from merging art and politics, and evolved to a point where their information would be acceptable for formal exhibition. Politics remained, but in most cases they became exhibitable politics. The shift did not necessarily mean a true and general political and ideological softening, but it certainly indicated a shift in the ambitions for a definition of an audience and a resignation about the dimensions of the consequences art making could have for society at large.”

Not all agreed that a downward shift took place, rather an ensuing renovated vigor. Clemente Padín, writing in *Network, Mail Art, and Human Right in Latin America*, states that, “Undoubtedly the permanence of Mail Art for so many years has weakened the strength of the primitive rebellion, when it questioned the rest of the artistic disciplines, forcing them to recompose their structures taking in consideration its controversial proposal. Nowadays, although its process of institutionalization has greatly increased and it is almost integrated to the cultural frame of legitimization of the social status, it still keeps its power of calling and its ethical strength . . . The emerging generations based on the critical reading of Mail Art and its use in both graphic and distributing means, that new times offer them, will know how to revive this international artistic instrument deeply involved in its time and what is human.”

The number of exhibitions in Latin America after 1985 retaining political and social motifs signified the enduring retention of resistance to injustice within the regional Mail Art network. In 1986, Gilberto Prado of Brazil organized *Stop the Star Wars*. That same year, Clemente Padín, never far from his political foundation, organized an exhibition against apartheid. Guillermo Deisler, ensconced by exile in East Germany, organized *International Mail-Art: For Chile and Latin America*. The first Mail Art exhibition took place in Cuba in 1990 when Pedro Juan Gutiérrez curated the exhibition *Project Mail Art to Cuba*. Also in 1990, at the height of troubles in Medellín, Columbia, Tulio Restrepo organized the exhibition *Zona Postal*. In 1992, Carlos Montes de Oca curated *Urgent Mail Art Show* accompanied by a catalog containing an essay by Guillermo Deisler. Celebrating the Cuban patriot José Martí, Clemente Padín organized an exhibition on his behalf in 1995.

Vortice Argentina was indicative of the way Mail Art would trend in Latin America after the era of bloody regime changes. Formed in 1997, the organization was mindful of Mail Art’s Argentinian heritage, one of the founders being Juan Carlos Romero, an active figure in the early publications and exhibitions staged by Vigo, Zabala, Glusberg and others participating in the early- to mid-1970s. Fernando Delgado was a newer but no less energetic adherent to the field, who had begun publishing a Mail Art magazine *Vortice* in 1996. The following year, the periodical changed its name to *Vortex*, a “Visual Poetry and Experimental Graphic publication,” edited by Delgado and Romero. In 1998, Delgado opened Barraca Vorticista, one of the first galleries in the country devoted to Mail Art and Visual Poetry. An archive was also established to document the arriving Mail Art, and an online website was designed to share the work internationally. In late 1996, the organization was given a grant by the National Art Fund to support the publications it was producing. The activities of Vortice Argentina, including a special website devoted to Edgardo Antonio Vigo, were acknowledged by the Argentine Association of Art Critics in 2001.

It was E. A. Vigo who introduced Juan Carlos Romero to the international Mail Art network in 1970, and as such, Romero participated in many of the seminal Latin American Mail Art activities including the Mail Art section organized by Walter Zanini as part of the São Paulo Biennial in 1974, and *The Last International Mail Art Exhibition*, organized by Vigo and Zabala in 1975. Romero was also included in an important early 1974 publication, Herve Fischer’s *Art and Marginal Communication* published in France.

“During the military dictatorship between 1976 and 1982,” Romero writes, “I narrowed my participation in Mail Art considerably, starting again a few years later when I collaborated for Argentinian publications like *Hoje Hoja Hoy* [edited] by G. G. Marx and Hilda Paz, 1985, [and] Edgardo Vigo’s *International Book of Stamps and Postmarks* (1991) . . . In 1996, though the *Vortice* publication, I met Fernando Delgado, with whom I organized several projects . . . [including] from 1999 the annual projects Mail Art Day and Visual Poetry Meeting.”

In one of several essays in the catalog, Montse Fornós and Matriz Grupal continued to stress the importance of activism implicit in Latin American Mail Art. “If in all its years of running and experience, Mail Art has been able to abolish the barriers from its network, it must continue working to open doors to dialog. The change and the creativity, to demythologize art and to rescue its collective function, to leave the mere aesthetic contemplation of works and to offer the possibility of acting, to imply the observer as participant, and to make possible the expression of the majority to oppose these social events that violate the elementary rights of humanity.”

In 2005, Delgado and Romero published the first full-length book on Latin American Mail Art, *El Arte Correo en Argentina* (Vortice, Buenos Aires, 2005), which concludes with the essay *DODO not DADA* by distinguished Italian Mail Art practitioner and theorist Vittore Baroni. Baroni ponders the current situation of post-millennial Mail Art, questioning, “So, is Mail Art still alive or (almost) extinct?”

“Though I never stopped swimming in the correspondence flow since I first entered the postal network way back in the late seventies, this question is becoming more and more difficult to answer. The Mail Art community, if there ever was one, from my observation point seems to be receding into utter obscurity or melting into (inter)net-art, which is a wonderful but rather different kind of experience. Yes, there are still Mail Art shows and ‘festivals’ being organized around the (Western) world, but the medium has become a bit stale and tired, the original feeling of excitement and discovery is long gone (and this is understandable for a phenomenon that spans four decades, no small feat in itself!) but it has not been replaced by the wisdom and maturity that old age usually brings forth.”

“Things have changed a great deal in the almost thirty years I spent inside (and outside) the postal net: riding on the crest of the new wave/punk energy in the seventies, but still maintaining the positive ideas of the hippie era. Resisting the boredom of the eighties and nineties, clinging to the collectivist utopia of a free-for-all and open trading system, entering the new millennium to find out that, after all, maybe those cynical punks were right, this is a ‘no future’ situation for the planet. Evil forces prevail, the model for global cooperation that Mail Art so well exemplified proved inapplicable to

the big numbers. Maybe all the money we dumped in postage stamps and photocopies would have been better invested in some charity project, maybe a little voluntary social work would have been less wasted time.”

During the dark period of political upheavals, the practice of Mail Art in Latin America was itself a political statement. The mere act of reaching out to the wider world threatened forces seeking to control the flow of internal information. A participatory art, one that was open to all, with no judgments of quality was subject to suspicion in a political climate seeking to stifle individuality. When one stumbled upon Mail Art—in a magazine, exhibition space, or classroom—one could not help but be enchanted by the freedom of creativity expressed in the face of adversity. And, if others could do it, perhaps . . .



Edgardo-Antonio Vigo, *Set Free Palomo First Day Cover*, 1976. Postcard. La Plata, Argentina. Collection of John Held, Jr.

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Medellín, Colombia

By Courtney Malick

La Tienda Medellín

In Medellín, the second largest city in Colombia after Bogotá, and currently one of the most metropolitan cities in all of South America, a dramatic and visible shift in art and culture is taking place. Though the city, along with most of Colombia, had been notorious throughout the 1980s and '90s for its excessive and widely public violence, the first decade of the 2000s and its flux in governmental powers brought new systems and priorities to Colombians everywhere, and to Medellín in particular. Now, in the midst of the second decade of the 2000s, when finally such gradual implementations can start to flourish and their ensuing results are expanding, progress within all aspects of daily life and culture, including education, urban landscapes, and art and music, are drawing the attention of cultural producers around the world.

For five university students finishing their degrees in the United States in intersecting fields of studies, this blossoming sense of excitement within contemporary art in Medellín became an interest and a place where they felt they would be able to continue to promote change through art that could infiltrate all aspects of daily metropolitan life. It was through that basic motivation that Columbia University alums Rian Rooney, who studied architecture; Thomas Bettridge, who studied philosophy and is currently one of the editors of *032c* magazine; Diego Arango, who grew up in Colombia and also studied architecture; Alejandro Uribe, born in Medellín and studied environmental engineering; and one Yale graduate, Nicholas Murphy, who studied art history, all decided to travel together to Medellín in 2011. Shortly thereafter, they began preparations to open a new kind of hybrid store/gallery at the city's center in 2012.

Through Kickstarter and private donations from other invested parties, the five men's ideas came to fruition in what they called La Tienda Medellín (The Medellín Shop). In the gallery's mission statement, they make it clear that La Tienda Medellín was conceived in direct contrast to the increase of consumerism and the cultural delineations that it is creating between the "haves" and the "have-nots." Though the resurgence of the economy is a positive turn of events for Medellín overall, it is important, as La Tienda points out, that people understand its origins, which are rooted in the extreme violence that the city and all of Colombia suffered in past decades. In response to such unsafe urban environments, robust cities like Medellín began building very large shopping malls, which were constructed as panopticons wherein large crowds of people could be easily monitored, creating an interior state of surveillance that encapsulated the majority of the city's population. Today, with an impressive 400% decrease in the city's murder rate over the past decade, such monitoring through gated enclosures is no longer necessary. These malls now function as any other, selling a never-ending supply of products, and in the process are weeding out those Medellín citizens who once took refuge in the malls but now simply cannot afford to shop there. La Tienda's existence as a store rather than a stereotypical art gallery meant the reimagining not only of commercial and display space for those already imbedded in the art scene of Colombia, but more importantly to reclaim consumerist space as one that does not have to be about the exchange of money, but rather of ideals and the kind of personable engagement that fosters community building.

For these reasons it was essential for La Tienda, from its inception, that the exhibitions and events that took place there lend themselves to the demotic and be an approachable space for all to enter and interact. The five founders chose a space in Belén, a bustling central area of Medellín, where there was no chance of isolating visitors. For their first exhibition, they wanted to bring the issue of the problematics of the current state of mall culture to the fore and organized a show called *MALL GUSTO*, which opened in July 2012 and included a number of local artists (another prerequisite for the gallery) who utilized simple media and processes to create works that reflect on the overblown sense of consumerism and the understated quality of working within one's means with easily attainable resources.

Throughout the next six months La Tienda continued to produce dynamic and engaging exhibitions, workshops, performances, and public events that engaged the people of Medellín in all kinds of ways that allowed them to understand contemporary art as a part of life that is available to everyone and does not have to be attached to the exchange of money.

Campos de Gutiérrez

Among the many local artists based in Colombia and in other surrounding parts of South America whom exhibited work at La Tienda, including Nicolás Astorga, Santiago Pinyol, and Juan Obando, was Andrés Monzón, who not only continues a studio practice in Medellín, but also founded a residency and accompanying exhibition program



Aurora Pineda, 2013. Performance documentation. Espiga, Medellín, Colombia.

there as generative and unique as La Tienda. Also founded in 2011, Monzón's manifold program, Campos de Gutiérrez, is idyllically set within a 19th-century coffee plantation in the foothills of Medellín. Like La Tienda, Campos de Gutiérrez's core objectives are to engage and strengthen the communities of the city through their engagement with art and related events that deter from the kind of traditional art communities that promote class distinctions. However, whereas La Tienda focuses on local artists, the curatorial methodologies and impetus for exhibition making of Campos de Gutiérrez is distinctly Colombian, yet invites artists from all over the world to temporarily bring their practice to the city of Medellín.

Another important principle of the residency is that it aims to preserve a certain historical understanding of Colombia and its varied culture, while using historical narratives as a way to "repurpose historical structure for the present." In addition to the residency program on the plantation, the organization has also branched into several other facets that include Maati, Espiga, and their ongoing archive project. Maati, which simply translates to "clay" in Sanskrit, is an initiative founded by Monzón along with fellow artists Parul Singh and Amara Abdal Figueroa that connects to Campos de Gutiérrez's repurposing of history in its attempt to build upon ancient ceramic traditions from around the world. Simultaneously, Espiga makes up the curatorial branch of the organization, exhibiting works created within the residency and also by local artists. In their curatorial statement, they describe their overall methodology as, "A Sheaf, or Espiga in Spanish, is composed of various elements like flowers or grains, linked by a central structural axis. Similarly, Espiga aims to link individual works by means of a comprehensive exhibition."



Chris Wolston, 2013. Installation view. Espiga, Medellín, Colombia.

Espiga has produced many rigorous exhibitions that take on large and complex themes that consciously attempt to reflect the tone and "character" of the artworks, thus following the original curatorial model of the infamous Walter Hopps. *WAX, WANE*, a group exhibition that took place in December 2013, questioned the possibility of a historical and humanitarian trajectory that could be capable of moving both backwards and forwards simultaneously. This existential, philosophical pursuit came out of the work of the participating artists and their shared incorporation of the "act of drifting," as the press release explains, and builds upon the various physical and aesthetic depictions of drifting that can be found within their works to raise larger questions about constructions of time and cyclicity.

Both organizations have plans for further programming in the fall of 2014 and into 2015. For Campos de Gutiérrez, that will mean working with a new group of eight international artists along with one curator, which will culminate in a group exhibition at the end of the year. Though the future is a bit more precarious for La Tienda, as they plan their next move and next pop-up project, the work that they have produced thus far continues to be discussed and disseminated. It is particularly important to keep in mind that both of these organizations and their sometimes intersecting exhibition projects are taking place in a city that has had far less exposure to contemporary art than many other parts of South America has in the past. For those reasons, it is especially admirable that they have continually put the interest and engagement of the local community in Medellín first when structuring their programming, rather than panning to the more esoteric "intellectuals" that make up the ever-remote, ephemeral contemporary art world.



Wax Wane exhibition, 2013. Performance documentation. Espiga, Medellín, Colombia.



Germán Alzur, 2013. Installation detail, Espiga, Medellín, Colombia.

Pelé

In Conversation With Jarrett Earnest

Like everyone, I am entranced by the videos of Pelé as a mover. He seems to bend space and manipulate gravity. At 72, the age he was when we met, he was still incredibly poised and gracious. I started by telling him that I am an artist, not a sports writer, “so if the questions seem weird—that’s why.”

How much of the sport is about a quickness of mind and not just a quick body?

I think 95%. Sometimes I am very surprised because a lot of people who write about sports think that it is only about power—to be strong—and that is not true. As a forward you have to think ahead, to know before you have the ball what you’re going to do—where your companions are, where your opponents are, your position on the field. This is something that very few players do; when they get the ball they don’t have a whole picture of the field. I used to tease my son who was a goalkeeper that goalkeepers don’t need to think because they just stay there. That is the biggest difference between the good player and the normal player, being able to think far ahead.

How much of your awareness of everyone’s location on the field was visual perception or bodily/spacial awareness?

In my case it was vision because I have a great facility to see on the sides. Part of this is experience because a lot of players just look at the ball. If you do that the defender will come from behind and steal your ball.

From your first World Cup in 1958 you were filmed and broadcast around the world. Did you see these films later? How did that influence your playing?

It was different then because the technology was different. Normally the coaches and trainers would discuss what happened before and after the game, but at that time they didn’t have the facility to show us the film, so I didn’t see it—today you can see it instantly.

Do you think that the instantaneous quality of video has changed how people play today?

Oh yeah, because the coach has the film to show to the players—“look at what you just did, I want you to go do it differently”—then the young players have more vision about what to do. It helps a lot. When you play against a good player—in my case, every game I had one guy who was like my wife, all over the field where I used to go, he’d follow me. If I had opportunity to see a film of this guy before we played then I’d know his weaknesses, what side to go on—that is a fantastic opportunity.

You’re very famous for the bicycle kick, and a long time ago you wrote that it was not necessarily the best kick for making a goal but that it looks great. I wondered about that relationship between the beauty of the gestures and useful soccer movements. How do they balance or relate?

The beauty of the movement is very important because people come to the field to see a show. Beautiful kicks are important for the show, but to win the game you have to score. I think the combination of goals with beautiful play—beautiful dribbling—is what I’ve always tried to give to the public. Every game I played had full audiences, and before the game I used to ask God: “My Father, if we have to tie the game let’s tie it 4-4, not 0-0,” because I wanted to give something for the people who came to watch.

Because of that I wonder if you think football is related to dancing?

Oh, yes! Especially for Brazilians, they have a talent for movement, for the samba. Football has a natural movement; it’s like a ballet, no doubt.

What do you think people misunderstand about the game now?

What bothers me is the quality of the game because, unfortunately for the new coaches, they want a “tougher” game—they prefer more defense than play. They are not giving a show. I have in my mind that the team who should win is the team that puts on a nice show.

To call it the “beautiful” game seems like an aesthetic distinction; what do you mean by it?

I started to say that when I used to play with the New York Cosmos, because they were mixing American football and soccer, and I used to tease them, saying “Listen: American football is a really tough game. Soccer is the really beautiful game.” In reality the beauty of soccer is that everybody can enjoy it, if you’re fat, you’re small, you’re tall, whatever. And it’s a communication all over the world—that’s why it’s the beautiful game.



Pelé bicycle kicks for Brazil against Belgium in 1968. Courtesy of the Internet.

Txema Novelo

Sacred Rock 'n Roll

Nothing speaks more of tainted religions than the current world faith crisis of Catholicism, Judaism, or Christianity. Pervert priests, the Israeli bullying on Gaza and the usual false miracles of Christian TV preachers.

Still, why the hell does religion keep playing an enormous role in modern societies? What are the algorithms behind faith that make them end up working just like transnational organizations, obsessed with becoming life-faith monopolies, allowing only one truth—theirs. The only reason the European Union found for not including Turkey was religion. At that time Sarkozy told the EU that Christianity should be the only allowed religion for the group, and even though Turkey worked hard to get its infrastructure up to EU standards, they were rejected. Somehow the Operating System of each belief seems to be unable to recognize or read as the other, just as a PC cannot run Mac OS software, and vice versa. I mean Jesus—or better said Isa Ibn Maryam—is one of the holiest prophets in Islam and even though they don't consider him to be the son of God (God is one), "their God" "Allah" happens to be the same Abrahamic God as the God of Jesus and Judaism.

We are at the verge of a third World War, which is not fueled by either expansionism or political conflicts, but by different beliefs and faiths.

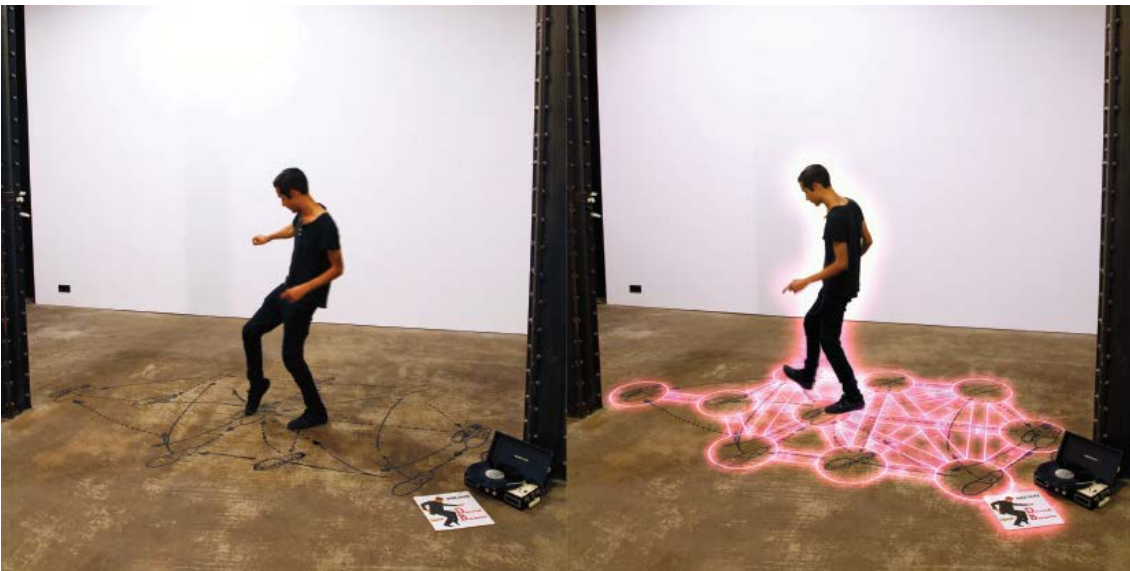
Talking about tainted matters, what happens with faith in rock 'n roll? I mean, you used to love Bob Dylan, right? Now vinyl is hip again, and so are turntables. If you did not ditch those records, would you still play them again? Does that faith still remain in you? Kabbalists talk about a concept called "the equivalence of form." They say in the corporeal world two objects are close or far through a mechanical action, but in the spiritual world, two spiritual objects are close by equivalence of form. Let's say if you have a heart for Spacemen 3, you are close to Txema Novelo, even if you are in Thailand and he is in Mexico City. For example, he believes that M.I.A. has an equivalence of form with Bob Marley. For Novelo, they both share a political sense of liberation and justice, they are both believers. Marley was a Rastafari and M.I.A. believes in Hinduism. He also thinks that contemporary performers like her serve well the figure of a POP prophet or



Teenage Jesus, 2013. From the Crossroads installation series. Vinyl LP, Turntable, Vinyl Lettering. Courtesy of the artist and Yau-tepec Gallery.

theologist under a close inspection of something like a consumer inquisition. First because she is alive, and has not yet been "sanctified" to a massive audience (like Bob Marley). Some sort of analogy would be as if she was a modern Giordano Bruno (with every record on trial) and as if Bob Marley was like a black Jesus.

Novelo has brought into his work an awareness of a new religious iconography, bringing forward the Good Ol' Bobs, synonymous almost to washing machines, played so many times on the radio that seems as washed out as those Catholic saints, just like those same washed out but still relevant religions. In that vision, all the elements of his work turn into all the elements of his religion, which happens to be same as Dan Graham's "good ol rock 'n roll".



Magick Dance, 2011, from the The Theurgys series. Vinyl LP, Turntable, vinyl ground decals, spectator. Courtesy of the artist and Yau-tepec gallery.

Yes, rock 'n roll and spirit, but from a very particular order which he calls the church of Spiritualized, or Alan Vega, or Genesis P. Orridge or Brion Gysin, and even though these are some of its somehow forgotten icons, many young priest keep popping up all the time, from every generation, following their testament, waiting to be sanctified.

Sacred rock 'n roll, that's the algorithm behind his work, and it's divided into five different bodies:

"The Sculptures Series" / "The Crossroad Series" / "The Theurgy Series" / "The Faith Can Roll Rocks Diptychs" / "The Anagram Movie Series"

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the death of rock 'n roll icon Kurt Cobain, Novelo has continued this lineage with the immaculate conception of his newborn "Mantra Machine", *All in All is All We Are*.

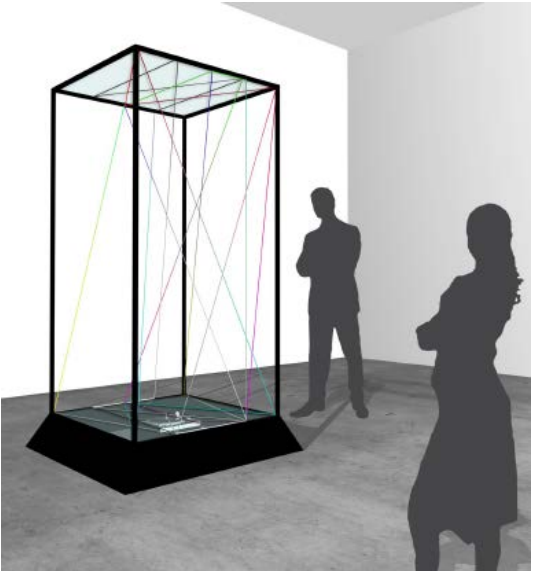
The lyrics of Nirvana's holy hymn *All Apologies* act as the impetus for the machine's choral scripture: "All in All is All we Are". Applying the ancient occultist technique known as "sigilism," Novelo has made a looming-looping machine that mechanically winds two groups of colored threads together, one sect in the spectrum of RGB—the sum of all colors, "All in All"—and the opposing sect in its opposite color model—CMYK, representative of "All we Are."

Novelo's guiding spirit that found him on the quest for his Mantra Machine's creation came down to him from an altogether different saint, the Christian cabalist figure Matthew, who states:

"Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven"

The Gospel of Matthew, 18:18

This will be part of two show at Yau-tepec Gallery in Mexico City, February 2015, with Justine Frischmann paintings.

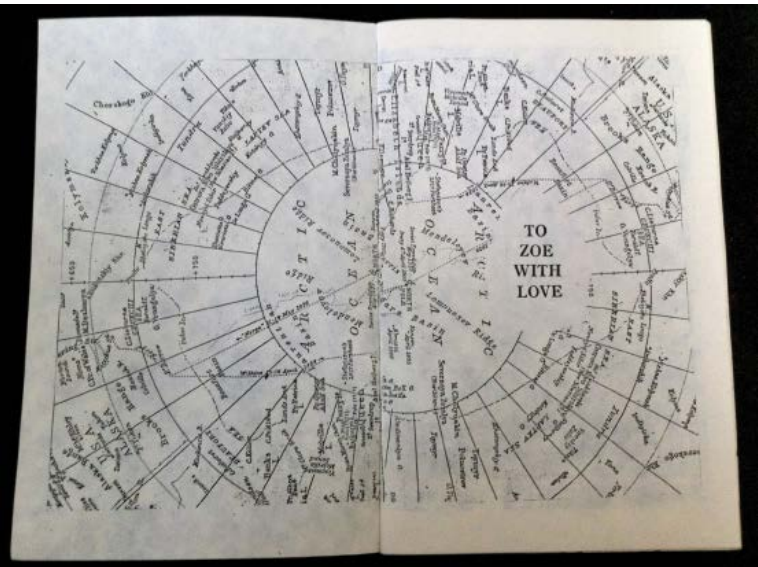
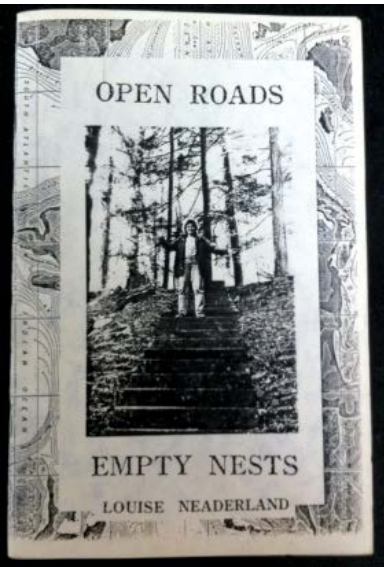


All in All is All We Are, (The Mantra Machine), artist rendering. Interactive installation project to be presented in 2015 at Yau-tepec Gallery, Mexico City.

Zine Reviews By Lele Saveri

Open Roads / Empty Nests By Louise Neaderland

I have never heard of Louise Neaderland's work until this year's Art Book Fair at PS1. She's been in the game for so long that all the zines she had on her table had yellowish paper, which gave such an extra layer to every publication. The zine I purchased is dedicated to her daughter Zoe (who's on the cover). It was published in 1988 and it's the first zine I've seen of a mother wishing good luck to her daughter leaving the household to step into the world—there are juxtapositions of Zoe walking with maps of different parts of the world. I found it very simple and very sweet.



Blazer Sound System By Blazer Sound System

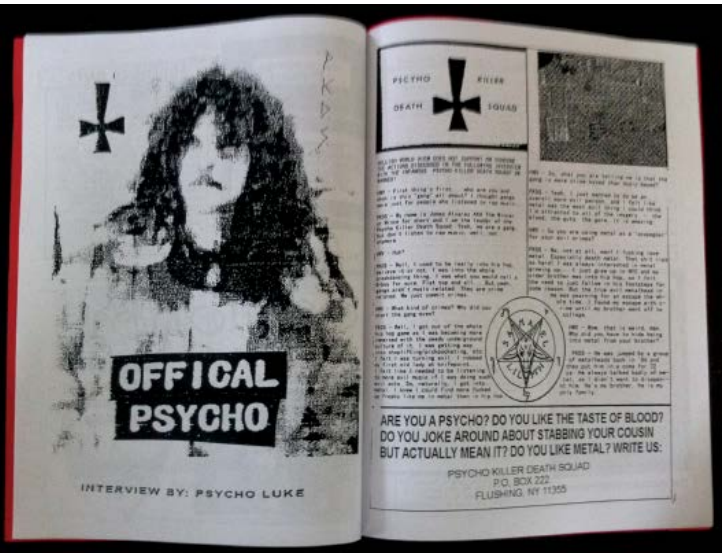
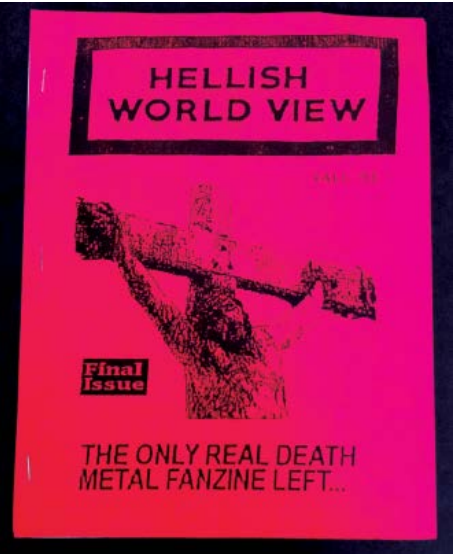
I am a big fanzine fan. Like many people, that's how I got into zines in the first place, so that's what gives me the warmest feeling whenever I see one. Unfortunately, blogs happen to be cheaper and reach out to a bigger audience, so fanzines are pretty much disappearing.

Blazer Sound System is a dub/reggae DJ crew based in Brooklyn. They are passionate about reggae, dub, smoking pot and everything Jamaica-related, and so it makes sense for them to do a fanzine of all of it. Influenced by classic music zines of the 1970s and 1980s (it's even bound with screws), it also comes with a screen-printed poster, stickers, and a mix CD. Excellent.

Hellish World View By Matthew Bellosi

Again a fanzine. This time it's a pretty weird one, not in the look but in the content. The artist (Matthew Bellosi) isn't just passionate about what's in the zine (metal bands from what looks to be the '90s) but about the zine format itself.

Laid out like the best metal zine you've ever seen, with skulls, blood, weird spiky fonts, blurry portraits of long-haired men and faded Xeroxed ads, Hellish World View talks about all those metal bands you've always heard the name of but could never find a record (because they never made one).



Linda Blumberg

Executive Director of the Art Dealers Association of America (ADAA) and Former Executive Director of the Capp Street Project in San Francisco from 1992–1999.

In Conversation With Constance Lewallen

You have been executive director of the Art Dealers Association of America (ADAA) for eight years now, and previously you have had a series of high-level positions in arts administration. You headed a residency program from 1985 to 1986 at La Napoule, a French-American art foundation in the south of France. Subsequently you were at the Department of Cultural Affairs in New York as Assistant Commissioner in charge of the Percent for Art program and public affairs from 1987 to 1992 where, with Tom Finkelpearl [the newly named commissioner of New York's Department of Cultural Affairs] who you hired to direct the program, you worked with artists to realize permanent works in city buildings. Many will remember you as the Executive Director of the Capp Street Project here in San Francisco from 1992 to 1999, after which you became Director of the Arts at the American Academy in Rome for three and a half years. You returned to New York to work at the Central Park Conservancy as Vice President for Communications and Marketing during which time you oversaw the 2005 Gates project of Christo and Jean Claude. Your entry into the New York art world dates back to your co-founding of PS1 with Alanna Heiss in 1976. Actually, it goes back further than that, to 1973 when I met Alanna at the Clocktower.

The Clocktower preceded PS1, correct?

Yes, it was the first location of the Institute for Art and Urban Resources, which Alanna had founded in 1971 for the purpose of finding empty spaces that could be used to present site-specific art.

How did that meeting take place?

It was through the artist Richard Nonas who I met at an opening at Ron Feldman's gallery. At the time I was lecturing on art history in the galleries of the Met [Metropolitan Museum] and the Modern [Museum of Modern Art] as part of Brandeis University's continuing education. I lectured a couple of nights a week, because at the time I had small children.

Subsequently you opened PS1.

First I opened the Idea Warehouse in a loft at 22 Reade Street, which was mainly for performing arts. Philip Glass opened it with a performance of *Music in Twelve Parts*. Mabou Mines performed there, as did Scott Burton and many dancers. Brice Marden gave us a drawing to use for a poster, which he signed, and we sold to raise money to open the space. We were not allowed to have a lot of people in the loft because of building regulations, so we scheduled our first events, *Four Sundays in February*, on Sundays when building inspectors weren't working. We hadn't realized that there was no heat or light in the building, so we had to rig the electricity. It was freezing. Then, we founded PS1 in June 1976.

That was the heyday of the alternative space.

Mainly because there was funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and still unused city-owned buildings in New York.

You've had quite an amazing background. All of your previous jobs involved working directly with artists.

Yes, and doing exhibitions.

You had nothing to do with the commercial art world. And here you are—you couldn't be more in the midst of the commercial art world than you are now. How is that for you?

I miss working closely with artists; but since the early days I worked with dealers who were supportive of the alternative space movement. Dealers like Leo Castelli were on the board of PS1, and many were helpful, because we were doing things they couldn't do in their galleries. By the time I joined the ADAA, the art-dealing world had expanded so dramatically that I really didn't know any dealers. When I interviewed for my present job I said, "There's one thing you ought to know, I have never sold anything in my life." They saw that as a positive, because it meant that I didn't have any alliances or preconceived ideas.

To whom do you report?

I report to the board of directors and the president, a gallery dealer who serves for three

years. For the first three years of my tenure, the president was Roland Augustine of the Luhring Augustine Gallery. He was followed by Lucy Mitchell-Innis, of the Mitchell-Innis Gallery, and currently the president is Dorsey Waxter of Van Doren Waxter.

How many galleries belong to the ADAA?

There are 182 members across the country; 132 are in New York.

Are you interested in expanding, are you always looking to add galleries?

We are because we know that an organization can't remain static and continue to be vital. It's a trade association and represents not only contemporary art dealers but also those who deal in the Renaissance, 18th, 19th centuries, early American. We try to keep that balance.

Although the majority show contemporary art.

Well, as the material from earlier years becomes harder and harder to get, the younger people who come into the field are almost always dealing in contemporary art.

Are you trying to include more galleries nationally?

Yes, we always want to make sure that we are not only a New York organization. We actively look for galleries across the country and usually one out of the four galleries accepted each year is from outside New York.

What are the criteria for admission?

We have a rigorous application process, which I am sure many find irritating. You have to be nominated by an existing member, and each member has one nomination per year. There is a year-long process through which the membership committee assigns members to go to the gallery, look at its program, and get a sense of what it's doing. You have to be in business for at least five years, or eight if you are a private dealer.

Private dealers can become members?

There are private dealers as well as public dealers, primarily in the non-contemporary area.

What happens next?

The committee recommends prospective galleries—usually four—to the board and then they are presented to the entire membership who vote and make comments; if there is a really grievous issue it's up to the committee to try to figure out if it is personal animus, or a real issue.

What is the membership fee?

There is a one-time initiation fee of \$3,000. Dues are \$2,250 per year. Also, there are assessments for special projects, but we try hard to limit them.

What are the advantages to membership?

We feel strongly that being a member has a certain prestige in the collecting community. We have a document called Standards and Practices that everyone signs, and we expect members to comply. Also, we represent the art dealing community in a public way in the press, and we informally lobby the federal government and local legislatures. And then of course we organize the Art Show once a year.

Which is highly successful and respected.

It's the oldest running art fair in America, this is the 27th year. We are the only fair whose entire gate and gala go to benefit the venerable Henry Street Settlement. We also fund-raise and get sponsors for them. Together we raise almost a million dollars for their programs.

What does it cost to be in the fair?

There is a booth fee, which is fairly modest compared to other fairs.

I know there's a lot of competition, because of space limitations at the Park Avenue Armory where it takes place.

Applications exceed booths by 30 to 35. The Armory can only fit 72 booths.



Fairgoers at the ADAA Art Show. Courtesy of the ADAA.

How do you choose which galleries will participate each year?

We ask for very specific proposals and encourage curated exhibitions or one or two-person shows. We discourage a random selection of everything in the gallery. Now other fairs are following suit. We also try to balance eras and mediums. We seek to have a variety.

How is it that some galleries are included year after year?

Half the galleries are chosen by the art show committee, which changes every three years. The other 36 galleries are selected based on their proposals and based on voting by people who have applied. Last year 104 galleries applied and they all then vote and rank the galleries they want to be included or whose proposals are strongest. Therefore, some galleries are repeatedly voted in because their peers want to show with them.

In other words you try to be democratic.

It's difficult; there's always disappointment and anger. We do try to be fair. For example, if a gallery is left out for a period of time, we try to make sure they are included.

What is your role?

I organize the process and have a voice in the committee.

Is there any thought to changing the location in order to accommodate more galleries?

That has come up often. We sent out a survey asking our members about moving to another space, but the idea was rejected because a lot of the press, curators, and collectors frequently comment on the uniqueness of the fair, which to a large extent is its intimacy. It's small, manageable, high quality, and Park Avenue is an accessible location. But we continue to discuss adding an additional space or moving to another space, but so far we haven't seen a location that compares.

Being in the middle of the art world and representing the most prestigious galleries in United States, how do you see things changing? I have talked to other dealers, interviewed some, and the proliferation of art fairs always comes up. They say fewer people are coming into the galleries, preferring to go to the fairs. What is your opinion?

I think it's a real issue. Art fairs serve a purpose and are part of every gallery's business, but artists still need exhibitions. I haven't heard dealers say they don't need a real space despite all the talk of art fairs and the Internet. However, the nature of galleries will change. Maybe shows will be up longer; maybe galleries will get bigger or smaller; maybe there will be shared spaces, but the fact is that I went to Chelsea for the openings in September and could hardly walk in the streets for the crowds. There is a high attendance at openings and a growing audience for contemporary art.

Don't you think that many people prefer art fairs because they are less intimidating?

I think that's true to a certain extent. We are trying to demystify some aspects of the art world that put people off. Galleries have to become more accessible to a growing public.



Fairgoers at the ADAA Art Show. Courtesy of the ADAA.

What do you mean?

They need to supply more information, show more willingness to talk to people. I think there's misunderstanding on part of public. They don't know that when they don't understand a show, they are not alone. Even professionals like myself need to read the press release and often ask questions. Otherwise, the experience can be very superficial. ADAA is currently featuring interviews by dealers online so people can better understand the business and the gallery programs.

What you are saying is that not only does the public need to be educated, but also that dealers need to learn how to improve the visitor experience.

Yes, to greet people and make them feel welcome to ask questions rather than act as if it's an annoyance. Serious buyers are recognized but you don't always know. Someone told me they got an email message saying "Got anything in bronze?" It turned out to be an important collector.

You mentioned briefly the new phenomenon of art being sold online.

I don't see it becoming an important direct sales enterprise. At a certain price point, between five and ten thousand dollars, it makes sense, but it's hard to believe that someone would spend a hundred thousand dollars without seeing the work in person.

It might act as a gateway.

Yes, and we applaud it. One of our dealers says he does sell quite a bit online, mostly to younger people who spend so much of their time in front of a computer. It's generational.

What is the biggest change you have seen in the years you have been at the ADAA?

When I started in the art world there were three art fairs, now there are upwards of 180. It would seem that it has reached the limit, but I thought that when there were 100. One of the biggest changes I have seen is that now dealers are always on the road.

We know it's very expensive to participate in art fairs. What do the smaller dealers do?

They must be selective and know where their market is. For example, for a long time we thought the Hong Kong fair, which was just bought by Art Basel, was only for galleries who showed Chinese artists, but that no longer seems to be true. Small galleries have to choose carefully and weigh expenses versus sales and meeting new collectors.

Not doing art fairs is not an option, true?

I think that's pretty much true.

We haven't talked about auction houses—dealers are throwing up their arms.

Dealers deal with auction houses but now auction houses are really competitive. They are acting like dealers, putting on shows, but they don't know the artists as dealers do. It's a real issue and is a symptom of sheer speculation in the art world.

Such as?

We are hearing more about people using art as collateral and viewing it as an asset class in their portfolios.

Getting back to ADAA, I know it has other functions.

We have an appraisal department with an excellent reputation with the IRS. People can get cheaper appraisals but they risk having to pay fees and penalties down the road. We also have public forums four times a year—one in Boston now. One a year takes place outside New York.

And you give a curatorial award?

Every year. We have a foundation that dealers voluntarily contribute to every year. We work with the Association of Art Museum Curators (AAMC) to give two awards a year for research and development, one for a pre-war exhibition, and one post-war. The AAMC panel makes the selection that is referred to the ADAA, and we collectively make the final decisions.

Is there anything else you would like to add in terms of services offered by the ADAA?

Yes, our relief fund. When Superstorm Sandy hit New York, we raised 1.3 million dollars through the efforts of our dealers, and 98 percent of the grants went to galleries and nonprofits, which were not members of the ADAA. We are proud of that. Some of our bigger galleries who had suffered severe damages themselves were most generous. They knew they could recover but wanted to makes sure smaller galleries would also. We continue to have a fund for future emergencies.

How do you think things might be different in, say, five years?

It's hard to say. If you asked professionals ten years ago what the art world would be like in ten years, they couldn't have imagined the growth. There are always new areas to be explored; the Internet has expanded everyone's horizons. Africa, for example, is becoming an area of interest.

What about the phenomenon of certain artists, even some relatively young, selling works at exorbitant prices?

Those kind of prices are promoted in press but still represent a small percentage of art-ists—one percent of the one percent. So many other artists struggle and don't make a living from their work. The art world will always be related to the economy. In the 1990s and 2008–2009 recessions, the art world came to a dead halt. There is always the potential for that happening again. It's hard to know how things might go wrong, but it can happen quickly, it can turn on a dime.

In other parts of the country in which commerce doesn't play such a big role, there seems to be a move toward non-commercial practices. I see artists working collaboratively and engaging with communities. Social practice is definitely important in the Bay Area.

Art reflects the ethos of a particular place and certainly the definition of art has grown and expanded. There's more participation in the world, and all kinds of hybrid forms that mix performance, theater, music, etc.

It's funny that the rejection of the saleable object was the ethos of the conceptual artists of the 1970s who were reacting against the commodification of art. But now it's more about community engagement.

Well it's part of a general expansion of the art world. Steve McQueen and Julian Schnabel are successful commercial filmmakers, for example. All boundaries are being permeated.

One thing that seems to persist is the underrepresentation of women, even now.

Yes, even though opportunities for women have greatly expanded, their work still sells for lower prices, they don't do as well as men at auctions, and are still not equally represented in the galleries. It's extraordinary that that's still the case, given that so many dealers are women. It's better but not good enough.

Could something like PS1 happen now?

Maybe not. PS1 depended on the good will of artists who worked hard to open the space for the first exhibition. Could it happen now? Not in the same way, but that's the essence of creativity, what's most exciting. You can't imagine the future; it's the job of artists to imagine the future.

Paintings From A Gone World

A Conversation With Lawrence Ferlinghetti

In Conversation With John Held, Jr. (Part Four)

(In Part One of the Ferlinghetti interview, we discussed his childhood background, obtaining his doctorate from the Sorbonne, meeting fellow bookseller George Whitman, moving to San Francisco, becoming regional correspondent for Art Digest, offending Jay DeFeo and defending controversial murals. In Part Two, we continued examining Ferlinghetti's career as a painter, often overshadowed by his sizable reputation as bookseller, poet, publisher and defender of cultural freedoms. In Part Three, we discussed his thoughts pertaining to grants, his inclusion in the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a visit to his ancestral home in Brescia, Italy, recent painting exhibitions in Italy, archives, and the difficulty of being a poet who paints. Part Four concludes our discussion.)

Lawrence Ferlinghetti: The Museum of Modern Art is closing for two years. I wish I had seen *The Clock* [Christian Marclay]. Did you see *The Clock*?

John Held, Jr.: I saw about forty-five minutes of it.

I wanted to, but . . . SFMOMA has this gallery at Fort Mason, which is for local artists. But that's how they get out of having anything to do with local artists at SFMOMA itself. I met one of the directors of the museum at some party, and he told me, "There are no great painters here. If there were, we would be paying attention." I mean, can you imagine the director telling me that?

Yes, I can . . . unfortunately.

Well, it may be true. I shouldn't say that. There are not many of the old style painters who really flung paint the way it was in the days of the 1950s or '60s with the abstract expressionists, where you just ran in and threw paint at the canvas. I did a lot of that. There are very few old style oil painters. At Hunters Point now, there are all kinds of other mediums.

Do you use oil or acrylic?

I use oil and acrylic. I use oil on acrylic. Do you know about that?

No, but it's an interesting combination. Tell me about it.

This is basic. I don't know how many have learned it in art school. People ask me, "What formal training did you get at an art school?" Well, I got the formal training myself. For instance, there's a wonderful book called, *The Natural Way to Draw*, by [Kimon] Nicolaides, who was an art teacher at the Art Students League in New York for many years. I went through that book page by page. And then I learned lithography on stone in a four hundred year old litho studio in Paris called Stampa Bulla. I worked in a lithography studio in Prague, and just last year I worked at the Kala Institute in Berkeley. At the Krevsky show there was one of the portfolios. Lithography on stone—the way it used to be done over several centuries. Oh yeah, acrylic and oil . . . If you put acrylic on the canvas first, because with the change in temperature and humidity, the acrylic doesn't expand and retract. Whereas, oil will expand and retract. So, if you put acrylic on top of oil, the painting is going to expand and retract and crack the acrylic on top of it. So, the rule is you put the acrylic down first and then you can put oil on acrylic and it won't crack.

Is this a standard technique of yours?

It's not me. It's been professional knowledge since acrylic existed. It makes a big difference.

Painters use acrylic because it dries faster.

Yeah, but then they don't use oil also. I put oil on acrylic.

Which is unusual, I think.

You do the underpainting in acrylic. Acrylic has gotten very good. It's gotten to the point where it's sometimes hard to recognize it's not oil painting. But still, there's a difference. One you get the underpainting on, it goes much faster.

I should mention some of your paintings include text, which I think is effective. Kenneth Patchen did something quite similar.

Here we go again, attaching me to the literary world. It's a separate activity, as far as I'm concerned.

I like crossover—the combination of worlds. What do you think of Patchen's work, for instance?

Well, as far as pure art goes, it's really cheating to put words on the canvas.

A point well taken.

But nevertheless, I often can't resist, especially if I've got some famous poetic line buzzing around in my head from decades before. Like I did a portrait of Ezra Pound, and I took one of his most famous lines and painted it on the canvas. The line was, "I have beaten out my exile." I couldn't resist putting it on there.

You often have images that reoccur. Birds, for instance.

Last night the Giants played the San Diego Padres, and they lost in the thirteenth inning around midnight. By then the birds were circling around the field. This morning, I asked Jack Hirschman, "A hitter hits a fly, and the ball hits a bird. What would be the ruling on that?" You know?

[Laughs] No.

Fowl ball.

It would be a foul ball? You came up with that, or Hirschman?

I did.

Oh, fowl ball, F-O-W-L.

That's right.

[Laughs] I'm a bit slow. Are you a baseball fan? I know Jack loves the Detroit Tigers.

I sure am.

Another recurring motive is water.

I love being on the sea having been in the Navy for four and one half years. I never had a desk job. I went from one ship to the next. I just loved being on the sea. Luckily, I was on wooden ships the whole time. Wooden subchasers, 110 feet long. I worked on fishing boots in New England, and I knew how to handle small craft—piloting before the war. Instead of being on some big battleship, I got to be my own boss, and a skipper of a sub-chaser. Really close to the water. Ten feet above the water. Whereas, if you're on an air-craft carrier, you're a hundred feet in the air, and it's not the same thing.

It's pretty impressive you were doing something like that in your twenties.

I know it.

We should mention that you were involved in the invasion of Normandy, as well. That had to have had some effect on you.

[paging through a book] Achille Bonito Oliva—just so you'll have it.

He's the Italian critic who called you the grandfather of the transavant-garde.

That's right. Sorry I can't give you this one. The other one has beautiful photography.

A lot of art books are printed in Italy these days.

That's not new. It's been going on for a long time. The printing is just so much better—and cheaper. Even with the euro—well it was much cheaper before when the euro was more in our favor. After the Second World War, we were the conquerors. We set the exchange rates. That's why it was so cheap for students like me on the G. I. Bill in France. I think we got \$60 a month besides the tuition being paid. We got that much to live on, and I had about three times as much money as any French student I knew.

Well, as you mentioned, there were a lot of Americans over there. One person who attended the Académie Julian about the same time as you was Robert Rauschenberg.

I wish I'd known him.

I looked it up. 1947, 1948.

Yeah, we probably passed each other in the hall. As I said, I didn't take any formal classes. It was so cheap. The model was like twenty francs for three hours, or something like that.

You've always drawn from the model.

Oh, yeah. Which is totally out of fashion. I mean, easel drawing is totally out of fashion. Drawing from the model is considered old hat. A friend of mine, who is a professional lithographer, came over for one term to teach at a San Francisco art school. He saw that the students were casting photographs onto the stone. He said, "Why are you doing that?" They said, "Well, we don't know how to draw." [laughs] So he packed up and went back to Italy. "You don't need me here." These days, one thinks of themselves a painter or poet just by saying so. That's it.



Salon 94, Member of ADAA. *Satan Ceramics*, 2014. Mary Frey, Pat McCarthy, JJ PEET and Tom Sachs. Installation view, Salon 94 Freemans, New York. Courtesy of Salon 94.

Or what’s worse—an artist.

Any words on paper you can call a poem. And any paint on anything can be a painting. So where do you go from here?

Wayne Thiebaud calls himself a painter, not an artist. One shouldn't refer to oneself as an artist. That's best said by another. But at 94, I think you could probably get away with it. After all, you are in the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Have you ever gone to any of their meetings?

I went to the first meeting when I was installed, but I haven't been back since, because New York is great when you're young, but the older you get the harder it is to navigate New York. It's a major accomplishment to get across town these days. If I had a lot of time, if I had nothing else to do, if I didn't have a bookstore, I'd go to live in the Village again, where I lived when I was going to Columbia. But the Village isn't even recognizable anymore.

There's no there there anymore.

When Gertrude Stein said, "There's no there there," she wasn't talking about Oakland—everyone thinks she was talking about Oakland. She was talking about the middle west-ern city where she came from, Pittsburgh—but it wasn't named Pittsburgh when she was born, it was named something else.

Did you see the Stein shows at SFMOMA and the Contemporary Jewish Museum?

The Jewish Museum received quite a bit of criticism for having the Stein show, because [Gertrude Stein] was protected by the Nazis and was never touched. There was a story in the *New Yorker*, which laid this out some ten years ago. In fact, she made some rather raw comments when she found out the Jews were being exported to the death camps. So, there is good reason for the Jewish Museum to be criticized for showing her work.

They have the Allen Ginsberg photography exhibition there now.

Allen had a marvelous eye. Just terrific. But he also had a terrific publicity eye. As soon as he saw two people who were friends of his, he immediately sensed the future pub-licity. Getting a picture of Gregory Corso giving a statue a kiss in Washington Square, or something like that. So, he has all these marvelous photographs, a lot of them just per-sonal shots that he took. He was lucky, because he had Robert Frank to produce the final prints. Anyone can go around with a box camera and take pictures, but it's who makes the final print that makes a huge difference. I don't know how many of his photographs were printed by Robert Frank, but Robert Frank had a lot to do with it. He was good. Allen was an omnivorous artist. He was an artist. He wasn't just a poet. He was an extraordinary per-son. He had an omnivorous mind. You could see him at some party. He's talking to some-one who nobody knows, some kid who just wandered off the street, and Allen is talking to him for half an hour. And everyone is wondering, "Who's he? Why's he talking to him?" And Allen is just siphoning up the kid's brain. He's very interested in what the kid is saying. It's really remarkable. When we went to Australia, we stopped in Fiji and went around the island on a bus, and we were walking on the dirt street of some town, and he was asking everybody he ran across some question about, "What kind of trees are these? What are these funny little things growing out of the ground?" He'd write it all down in his notebook. Remarkable notebooks, if you've read any of his journals. Surprising. The poetry just came out spontaneously.

His archive is at Stanford now.

Yes. Bill Morgan, the archivist in New York, sold it to Stanford for a million dollars shortly after Allen died. Before Allen died, 1997 maybe. The Bancroft Library wanted it too, but they didn't get it.

The sixtieth anniversary of City Lights is coming up next week. What's hap-pening with that? Anything special?

It's going to be an open house. On our fiftieth anniversary we had a big event. The avenue was closed, and everything. Kevin Starr, the State Librarian, spoke, and many others.

It's still available to view on YouTube.

This time it's just an open house with a lot of appropriate jazz in Kerouac Alley, food and drink inside, and a lot of little separate events, poets reading. I didn't have much to do with the planning.

You're fortunate that you have people helping you out.

[Ferlinghetti begins signing some books for me that I brought along.] Well, I'm glad you have this one [*The Secret Meaning of Things*, New Directions, 1966]. You know, it's sur-prising. You publish a book of poetry, and it's like dropping it off a cliff and waiting for the echo. I've published some books of poetry and never heard a word, didn't get any reviews, and no one ever said anything to me about the book. Really.

Why don't you sometime try —

cried the poet to the painter

(totally turned off

by the silence of painting)

Why don't you sometime try

and see what you can do

to break out of it

Just try to show

with your dumb brush

Just try to show

with your mute eye

How the earth trembles

as lovers after loving

echo like bells



Van Gogh #2 (Arles n'existe pas), 1994. Oil on canvas. 62.5 x 54.5 in. Courtesy of Krevsky Fine Art.

Theda's Island, Chapter 8: The Gas Colossi

By Mark Van Proyen

"This is called the snow card exercise. We are going to break into four groups for about 40 minutes, and each group will have a leader and a note taker. Everybody will have two sets of ten cards. You will be asked to write one sentence on each. On the pink cards, we have questions that ask about your best hopes for NCSAD and on the green cards you will write your worst fears. These answers will be compiled by the note takers and then will be presented to the larger group at the end of the exercise. The goal is to find out if there is an unspoken consensus about what the future of the school should look like, and if we can accomplish that, then we can start to identify the next steps and best practices that will help get us to that point. Does everybody understand?"

The question was asked by a middle-aged woman wearing a trim grey skirt and dark green blouse, both setting off her elegantly dyed red hair. Her palsied smile looked like it was welded onto her face, a likely effect of the multiple bouts of cosmetic surgery that were further suggested by a noticeable excess of loose skin lurking behind her jaw. Her eyes blinked at alarmingly rare intervals, and there was something oddly deliberate about the way that her upper torso swiveled, suggesting that she may have been constrained by an orthopedic device. A plastic medallion proclaiming her to be Laurel Margolis, Retreat Facilitator rested like a badge of honor on her silk blouse. Despite her Spanish surname and her oddly unfashionable yellow footwear, she perfectly conveyed the image of an Irish schoolmarm of classic lace-curtain vintage. She was the very same woman who introduced Helmut Zyklon at the *Citadel Lyceum* meeting in February, and that fact made my skin crawl.

From across the large room, Vic Thorsness stood and raised his hand. "Are we going to have enough time for that discussion before we go into the accreditation briefing?" Several of the other board members looked toward Vic, seeming to share his concern about the lateness of the hour.

Laurel shot Theda an inquiring glance. Theda responded by looking at her watch. She then whispered something to Toby, who dutifully nodded and walked toward the table upon which large urns of coffee and tea were set next to stacks of Styrofoam cups and pastries. Turning back to the whole group, Theda said, "It does seem as though we are running a bit late. I think it might be best if we skip the snow card exercise and take a short break. But before we do that, I want to remind everybody about tonight's dinner and dance and make sure that everybody understands the details. I am told that the basement garage is open late and since your parking is already part of the in-kind donation given to us by the hotel, the best thing might be for all of us to just walk to the party site. It is located several blocks south on Van Ness, and one block over on Franklin. There is no sign on the outside of the building, but you should know that it's the prop warehouse for the opera. I am told that Anita worked with the opera's propmasters to provide some special treats for our party environment. We will have great food courtesy of Café Appreciation, music by DJ Getit and lots of really nice wine donated by Afrownow vineyards." Glancing around the room, Theda found herself greeted by thirty pairs of enthusiastic eyes. Twenty of these were planted in the faces of the members of the Board of Trustees, who were attending the Saturday retreat out of a sense of *noblesse oblige* and a reasonable desire to show that some small portion of their wardrobe

consisted of something other than business attire. An additional pair of eyes belonged to Ms. Margolis, and five more belonged to the members of the school's executive staff, including Anita, Toby, and Rhoda. Hobie and Jessica Dobey, who was Hobie's rather mousy executive assistant. The remaining four pair of eyes belonged to the contingent of "faculty representatives," comprised of myself, Vic, Pepo and Photobitch.

Sensing nothing other than sighs of relief about the change of agenda, Theda played to the sentiment of the moment. "Okay, let's take a break and then reconvene at 4:15 sharp."

Seconds later, two lines formed at the coffee service table and the room filled with the murmur of genteel small talk. As I took my place in the coffee line, I looked upward to avoid making eye contact with any potential source of chitchat, noticing a large plastic chandelier hanging high above our heads. It was the only piece of distinctive décor in the hotel's large meeting room, and was an exact doppelganger of those in the two meeting rooms at the San Jose Convention Center. This similarity had me imagining low-wage workers in Indonesia or Brazil working their fingers to the bone to make large, ostentatious plastic chandeliers for corporate hotels. No doubt, their business was booming at the end of the second week in March of 2001.

"Are you as bored as I am?" I turned toward the familiar voice to my right, and found Vic standing right next to me. I wondered if anyone else heard his question, and I wondered if I should care if anybody did. Since a response was called for, and since I was unsure of who might be listening to our conversation, I decided to channel the evasive voice of my old friend Captain Diffidence. "I think that much of the day has been taken up by everybody getting to know each other a little bit. The next hour should be better, or at least more to the point. Accreditation is something that we need to pay attention to." Without realizing it, I had begun to use language like Laurel had been using it throughout the retreat, emphasizing a measured tone of voice that confidently deployed the strategies of deflection, circumlocution and pseudo-statement. How could I have let myself speak in such a degraded way? How strange it was that these little modalities of speech could move so freely through a group of people, rather like an infectious disease. Then it hit me: The very same woman who introduced Helmut Zyklon a month earlier had just infected everybody in the room with some kind of linguistic virus, and I was the only person in the room who had taken cautionary notice of the ensuing fever.

But then, maybe I was not the only one who did so. While I took my turn at the coffee dispenser, Vic leaned over to whisper something truly frightening. "That woman running this circus is my ex-wife. Either she doesn't recognize me, or she is trying very hard to pretend that she doesn't recognize me. I think she's pretending."

Even though I was stunned by Vic's ghastly news, I did manage a quip. "I think everybody in this room needs to stop pretending." I knew that Vic had been financially devastated by what he called "divorce number two," and deductive reasoning assured me that retreat facilitator Laurel could not have been divorce numbers one or three. To be treated like a faceless toddler by the devastator must have been much worse than merely galling, but Vic was keeping his cool. My spirit was lifted by the thought that all in attendance should stop pretending, although

I could not imagine how we might be able to get to that point. Maybe if Pepo made a t-shirt graphic containing that injunction, he could claim that it would have magical powers of protection from the evil language virus being spread by Typhoid Laurel.

There was a timely clinking of spoons on glasses, which silenced the room and sent everyone in it to their seats. Toby and Rhoda took their cue to start passing out packets of documents, which prompted several board members to reach for their reading glasses. When I received my document set, I noticed that the top page had a rubber stamp embossment on it proclaiming that its contents were "confidential," meaning that they were for the eyes of board members and no one else. Laurel gathered up her materials and quietly removed herself from the room without saying goodbye or anything else. I felt like I was in a James Bond movie.

When the room was quiet, Theda spoke up, and the tone of her voice was urgent. "As you all know, NCSAD is currently undergoing a routine accreditation visit in three weeks, and as part of that visit, the team who will write the report will want to interview the board, both as a group and also as individuals. It is very important that we pass this review, because good status with accreditation is what allows us to give government-backed financial aid to our students, and the large majority of them could not afford to attend our school without that support. It is also important to know that PASC—that's the Pacific Association of Schools and Colleges, which is our chief accreditation agency—anyway, PASC has been put on notice by the new Secretary of Education to be more vigilant and stringent in its evaluation of schools, and I am told that we will be among the very first to be evaluated under the new criteria. Does anybody have a question before we begin?"

A board member wearing a red plaid sweater vest raised his hand. "What is PASC?"

"It is the Pacific Association of Schools and Colleges, which is chartered by the Department of Education to oversee all institutions of higher learning in the five states that about the Pacific Ocean, plus Nevada and Arizona. That is indicated on the top page, as a subtitled topic under the heading of 2001 Accreditation Strategy. Are there any other questions? Okay, let's proceed to page five. The first three pages are simply statements about the rationale for accreditation. Now on page five, we see that our preliminary report was sent out on time and that it identified three areas of further concern, including Institutional Capacity, Program Assessment and Governance. Program Assessment is being worked on by the faculty in conjunction with the Dean's office, while Institutional Capacity and Governance are issues that of special concern for the board."

The man in the plaid sweater vest again raised his hand, and Theda stopped to hear his question. "If Alfred Uhl is leaving, and we don't have a Dean, how will we respond to any questions about Program Assessment?"

Theda struggled to sustain patience, and at that moment I realized that Dean Alfred was not in the room. His absence from this particular meeting was troubling. She looked over at Toby, and then back at Hobie before saying, "Yes, it's unfortunate that Alfred is not here, but he couldn't make it because of a family issue. And just for the record, I would like to say that Tom Lawrence has graciously agreed to accept the position of Interim

Dean until the search process indentifies a permanent candidate. Tom could not make it to the meeting today, but he will be at tonight's dinner and dance celebration. Alfred has assured me that he and the leadership of the Academic Senate have already put together their part of the report. Jay, can you add anything to the topic?"

I was taken off guard by the question, so I made the near-fatal mistake of answering with complete honesty. "This is the first I have heard about any report about Program Assessment."

Instantly, Vic chimed in to snatch credibility from the jaws of my innocent gaffe. "Actually, Alfred, Tammy St. John, Tony Landini, Pepo McNally, Russet Vodavich and myself all worked on the report—we finished while Jay was on sabbatical, before he came on to the board." The fact that the report had never been circulated to the full faculty seemed to not matter to anyone other than myself.

The conversational ball bounced back to Theda, who seemed eager to seize it. "I think that it is best that we focus on the aspect of the report that concerns us, especially insofar as governance is concerned. I think that PASC will give us big points for having faculty members on the board, and they will also see the vital role that our Academic Senate plays in our curricular operations. Capacity may be a more serious concern, in that there is an expectation that the school's fundraising operation needs to cover at least twenty percent of our annual operation expenses. The fact is, our current efforts in Development and Marketing only cover about a third of that, and that even includes the money that we bring in for specific parts of our exhibition program. But questions about capacity also go to the issue of deferred maintenance to the building, and there we have some good news: our landlord has agreed to match any money that we put into the place, if we commit to a long-term lease.

The man in the plaid sweater vest posed yet another question. "Given the soft state of the real estate market, is there any way that we might be able to borrow money to buy the building from the landlord, or maybe even another building? And I see here in the report that one of the points being made about capacity is our lack of a residence facility. How is that being addressed?"

It looked as though Theda was being challenged, and I wondered about the man the plaid vest. I didn't catch his name at the beginning of the meeting when we all introduced ourselves, so I turned to Vic for guidance. "Who is that guy?"

In a conspiratorial whisper, Vic responded by saying "He is Jerry Singer. I think that he is some kind of real estate developer—one of the new board members that Theda brought into the fold. The thing that you have to understand is that he is asking all of the questions that Theda wants him to ask. This little drama of antagonism is all according to script."

Theda was playing the role of "being on the hot seat" fairly well, and it seemed that she was on the defensive in front of the very people to whom she had to answer. "Jerry, you're asking the right questions, but they really go to the issue of strategic planning rather than passing an accreditation visit that takes place in less than a month. On the other hand, if PASC sees that we are tackling these problems in an ambitious way, they might weigh that against our poor fundraising performance."

Gingerly, Hobie raised his hand. "Perhaps we can figure out a way to collateralize our endowment. It has performed pretty well for the last seven years, even better than the NASDAQ. Now might be the time to move



it over to capital allocation and jump-start an aggressive capital campaign.

Photobitch's hand shot upward. "I think that it is very important to remember that the money from the endowment goes to student scholarships. Would it be ethical to take that money and put it toward building projects?"

Theda's prepackaged retort was the essence of pure predictability. "I haven't run any numbers, but it seems to me that students might benefit more from a dormitory, especially in a city with high rents like San Francisco, and especially since they could fund their education with low interest government loans. And once, or I should say, if we have secured a new property, we could use its equity to secure more loans at an even lower interest rate. I for one think that Hobie's idea is a good one, but I am curious about the rest of the board?"

After the ensuring silence stretched beyond everybody's comfort zone, Theada offered a proposal. "Since we have some nuts and bolts to go over about the accreditation visit, I think the best course of action would be to form an ad hoc sub-committee to study the possibility of translating some of our endowment money into a capital campaign for building improvements and a residence hall. Can I have a motion to that effect?"

Photobitch: "So moved."

Jerry Singer: "Second."

Theda: "All in Favor?"

Twenty hands shot into the air, including those of Vic, Pepo and myself.

Theda turned to Hobie and asked, "Can you and Jerry be co-chairs of the new committee?" Without waiting for a nod of agreement, she appointed Photobitch and two other board members to the task force.

Skipping the agenda document about public programs, Theda said, "We are running out of time here, and what I would like to do is have everybody form groups of

about six or seven people so that we can streamline the accreditation briefing in a way that gives each board member a specific set of answers for questions that are bound to come up. Hobie, you are in charge of finance, and I will be in charge of governance issues. Russet can you put together a group about program assessment?"

"Yes, but I only have a preliminary draft of that part of the report, and it's on my laptop. I think that Alfred amended it before sending it out. Is there any place that I can print out copies?"

Hobie said, "The hotel has a business center on the second floor, I need to go up there myself to check email." Turning toward Theda, he asked, "can we get a five minute break to put these documents together?"

"Okay. Five minutes, but only five minutes."

While other board members were milling around, I made for the lobby so that I could make use of the less crowded men's room near the concierge desk. But upon exiting the meeting room, I saw something that had me circling back for cover. Photobitch and Typhoid Laurel were conversing near the front entrance of the hotel, and it looked like Photobitch was being scolded for something. I was too far away to hear what they were talking about, but I did see Laurel reach into her trolley bag to produce a large envelope, which Photobitch squirmed away into her spacious black leather tote bag. After this exchange, they both looked about to see if anyone was observing them, but since I was hiding behind a ficus tree and a tall wingback chair made of imitation leather, I knew that I was blocked from their view. A cab driver barged into the lobby, prompting Laurel to wheel her trolley bag out through the hotel's revolving outer door.

I resumed my quest for the men's room, which was a success. Upon exiting, I saw Toby, Rhoda and Photobitch caucusing in the lobby, but as I was in no position to spy on them without detection, I walked right past them, offering a polite salute of recognition. They stopped talking and smiled back at me, resuming their conversation only when I was beyond earshot.

When I returned to the retreat room, I saw that those remaining had formed into three groups, each of which had a leader and a note-taker scribbling onto sheets of newsprint that were perched on flimsy aluminum easels. Without detection, I wandered over to the coffee serving area to discover that both coffee urns had been drained, leaving lukewarm water as the only remaining beverage option.

"Jason! Come over and join us!" The voice was Theda's, who bid me to sit at the only empty seat in her group, which was right next to her. Not far away was a miserable looking Vic Thorsness, who slumped in his chair flashing sad puppy dog eyes. As I took the seat, Theda rather brazenly put her hand on my knee, sending a shiver down my spine. "We were just talking about our organizational structure, which some of the newer board members seem to have questions about. Maybe you could try to explain it?"

"Well, as I see it, the upper administration reports to the President, and the President answers to the board. The Dean's office is part of the upper administration, and in collaboration with the Academic Senate, it formulates, organizes and evaluates the curriculum. How did I do?"

Before Theda could answer, one of the new board members spoke up with agitation in his voice. "I don't understand whey we need to have an Academic Senate. I think that the Dean should have more power, including the right to hire and fire anybody for any reason."

Then Vic piped up. "Even in the corporate world, there are all kinds of possibilities for wrongful termination. At an academic institution, the free exchange of sometimes controversial ideas needs to be protected, otherwise it's not really free. That's why we have tenure."

The chubby man was undeterred by Vic's logic, which seemed to hit a sore point. "Academic freedom is overated, and more often it is used an excuse for poor performance. I think that if there were more accountability built into our system, the teachers would work harder and more students would be willing to pay our high tuition costs. I also think that we could leverage a more streamlined personal policy into improved fundraising performance."

Vic kept his cool. "Given what we do get paid, and given what we are paid for, I think that it more than safe to say that we work hard enough. Especially since we are required to be leaders in our respective fields, which also takes some work, as you can no doubt imagine."

Theda went into gracious hostess mode. "Perhaps we can just say at this time that all of us have to recognize that we are all in the same boat. The important point is that we need to commit to what we have to do to create a successful institution."

Chubby Man: "If the boat is going to sail, we all need to know who the captain is, and also know that the captain is the captain, rather than the chair of some committee of entitled freeloaders."

I could tell that Vic was growing incensed, but his composure remained intact. He knew that having the last word on this topic was important. "We need to remember that we already are a successful institution, and have been so for a long time. Why talk about fixing something that's not broken?"

Now it was Theda's turn to assert the superiority of her position, which she did with a certain amount camp theatricality. "Well Vic, to answer your question, yes, NCSAD is and has been a very successful institution, no one disputes that. But I also have to tell you, that

success will not last very much longer unless we make some changes. For one, our cost of doing business is going up—largely because the landlord has thrown a hefty raise of rent at us, lease or no lease—and also because we have a much larger overheard than was the case even ten years ago. Much of that overhead cannot be avoided because much of it goes to hiring specially trained compliance officers to perform a variety of legally mandated tasks. Preparing for PASC accreditation is but one of those tasks, but at the moment it is the most challenging. We need to provide them with every assurance that we are a stable and professional organization. And for that we need your help, and everybody else's help as well."

No doubt, Theda's condescending tone reminded Vic of Typhoid Laurel, and he had enough. But he also remembered seeing Craig Andresen being hauled away in a police car, so he just stood up and said "excuse me, I have to make a phone call." Then he made an abrupt move toward the door.

Theda turned to me and asked, "Is he all right?"

"Yes, I think so. The retreat facilitator was Vic's ex-wife, and I think he may have been upset seeing her here. I guess there is still some bad blood between them. Do you want me to go out and check-up on him?"

Insincerity spilled out of Theda's mouth. "That might be a good idea. I am so sorry if he was offended. Please tell him that I had no idea of any history between him and Laurel."

I stood up and walked toward the lobby, noticing that the other two groups were concluding their tasks and preparing to rejoin the larger group in what the agenda document labeled as the plenary session. I looked at one of the pieces of newsprint perched on flimsy aluminum tripods, and made out the word ReNEWall on one of them, scribbled and underlined in Photobitch's distinctive looping script.

Upon entering the lobby, I saw that Vic actually was talking on the phone. When he saw me he pocketed the device and waved me over. "Sorry to leave you in there like that, but I couldn't take it any more. I think that we just sat through the first movement of the grab-your-ankles symphony."

"Seemed more like the overture to the grab-your-ankles-opera, but your point is well-taken. What just happened in there?"

"Actually, I'm not sure. Looks to me that Theda and some of those board yo-yos are using the accreditation preparation as a pretext for a covert screw-the-faculty campaign. While you were on sabbatical, Alfred met with a group of faculty to develop the preliminary report, which was sent out before Theda started. I heard that she was furious about that, which might have had something to do with his decision to retire. It's certain that it has something to do with the fact that he didn't come to the retreat. Anyway, I heard that Theda sent a second, amended preliminary report in just a few days after she was officially hired, and on the amended report, some key facts and figures didn't mirror the ones that Alfred sent in December. When the PASC team gets here, you can bet that there will be some serious questions about finances. But what I was getting from the chatter in there is that, if those questions get pointed at the board, it will make good on any shortfalls only if the faculty gives up a pound of flesh in terms of contract concessions.

My mind raced to connect dots. "Grab your ankles indeed. Listen, there is something else I need to talk to you about. Back in February, when I was at the UAA

conference in San Jose, I stumbled into a large meeting being held by another organization; it was called the Universal Association of Life Coaches. Anyway, I bring this up because I saw your ex there—Laurel? Was that her name? She was more-or-less running the first part of the meeting, and then she introduced this guy named Helmut Zyklon, who called everybody assholes for twenty minutes."

Vic looked off into the gloomy void of painful memory. "When she left me, it was for him. Back in the day, she worked for him and they were having an affair. A couple of months after she left me, she got dumped in favor of a much younger woman, but she stayed on as his administrative assistant. I don't even want to imagine what kind of sordid nonsense was going on, although I did hear some gossip about Laurel being responsible for keeping Zyklon's harem in line and fully staffed. But that didn't stop her from cleaning me out. Later, he was chased out of the country for tax evasion, so I am surprised to hear that he made an appearance. He was chased out of France too, but that was a different story."

"There was no advertisement of his being there, so maybe he is came in under the radar. I found out later that the Universal Association of Life Coaches is a front for the Citadel Lyceum group."

"One of many such fronts. Actually, the correct name of the group is Citadel Lyceum Global Initiative for Underserved Self-Esteem. It bills itself as a provider of managerial education services. Do you remember back to the seventies, when Zyklon was doing the ZEST training? Well, after he got popped for tax evasion, he went to Paris, figuring that if Roman Polanski could get amnesty there for statutory rape prosecution, they would certainly protect him from an American tax problem. But after a few years, Citadel Lyceum was tossed out of France because they have laws on the books that make it illegal for for-profit organizations to use volunteer labor. I also heard that the French government hit them with some obscure anti-Masonic legislation that had been on the books for so long that nobody even knew it was there, but I am pretty sure that Citadel Lyceum has nothing to do with the Freemasons. Anyway, the last I heard about Zyklon was that he was living part-time in the Cayman Islands, or maybe Bermuda. Rumor has it that he is within walking distance of the bank that holds and manages his pile of loot.

Continued in issue 19 (Feb-April, 2015)

NEW YORK:
303 Gallery
319 Scholes
532 Gallery Thomas Jaeckel
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Allegra LaViola Gallery
Ana Cristea Gallery
Anthology
The Artbridge Drawing Room
Betty Cunningham Gallery
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Invisible Exports
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Mixed Greens
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Printed Matter
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Scaramouche
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CB1 Gallery
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Cherry & Martin
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David Kordansky Gallery
dnj Gallery
Echo Park Pottery
Edward Cella Art + Architecture
Fellows of Contemporary Art
Fowler Museum at UCLA
G2 Gallery
George Billis Gallery
Giant Robot
Human Resources
Ikon Ltd.
Institute of Cultural Inquiry
International Art Objects

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Launch Gallery
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Rosamund Felsen Gallery
Rose Gallery
Sabina Lee Gallery
Schomburg Gallery
Subliminal Projects
Susan Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects
Thinkspace Gallery

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SPAIN:
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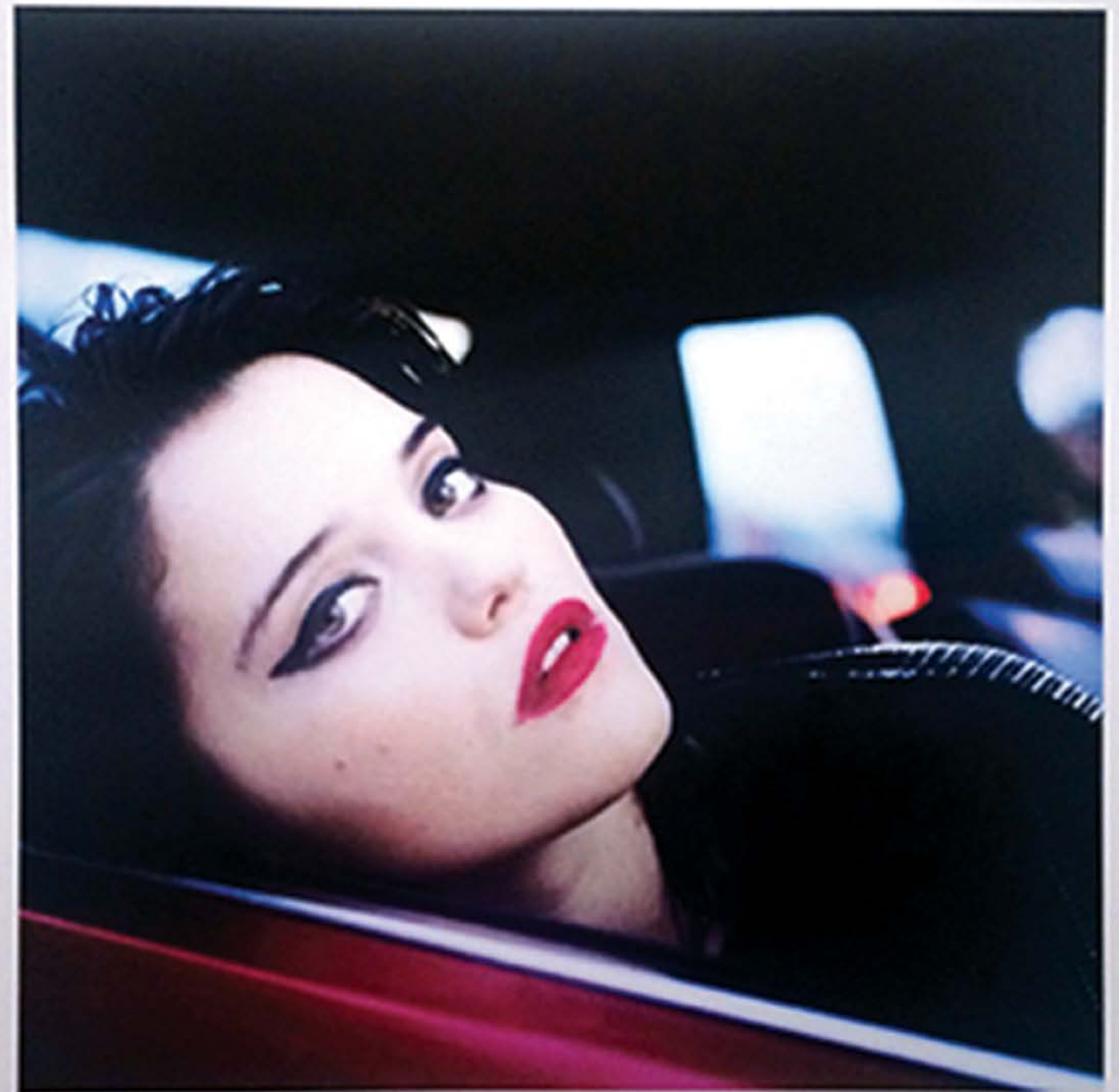
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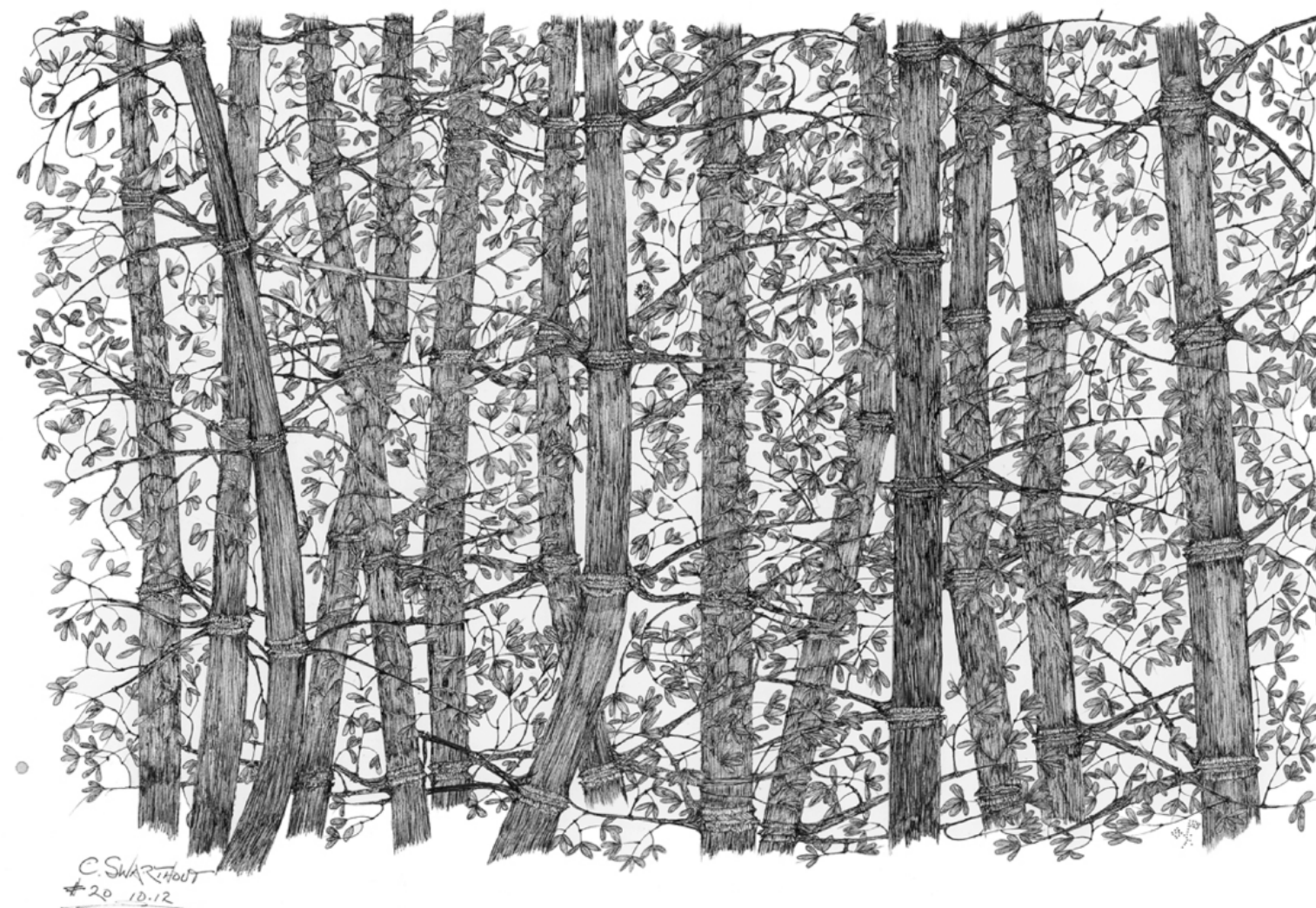
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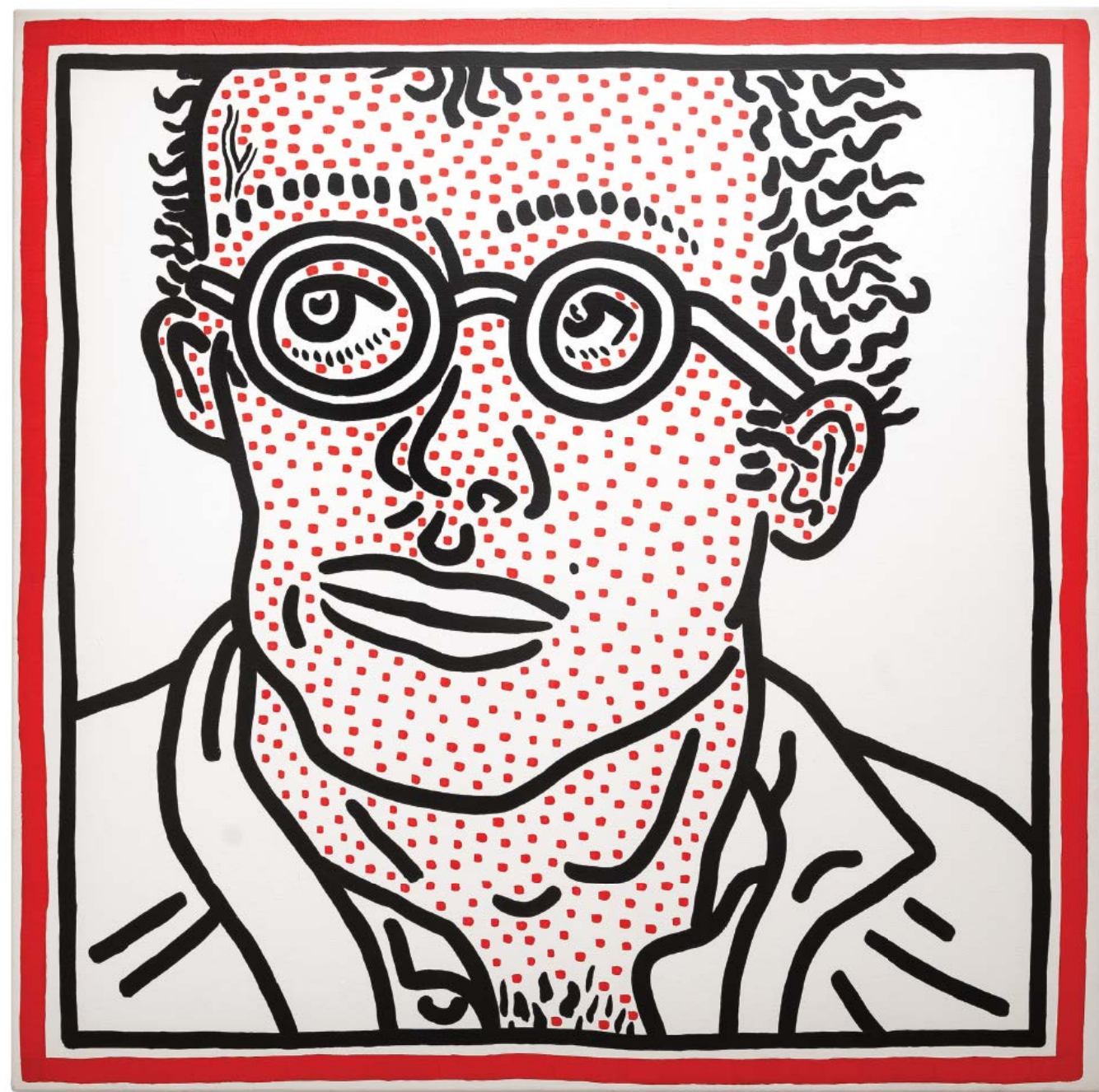
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Through his graffiti-inspired drawings, paintings, sculptures, and murals, Keith Haring created an immediately recognizable iconography that speaks to a diverse population. Making its US premiere at the de Young with more than 130 works of art, *The Political Line* lends gravitas to the artist's career by focusing on his political activism. Exuberant, profane, witty, and provocative, the works in this exhibition trace Haring's creative development and his historical significance as an advocate for social justice.

NOVEMBER 8, 2014–FEBRUARY 16, 2015

This exhibition is organized by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Director's Circle: Penny and James George Coulter. Curator's Circle: Sloan and Roger Barnett, Ray and Dagmar Dolby Family Fund, Holly Johnson Harris and Parker Harris, and the Shimmom Family. Conservator's Circle: The Buena Vista Fund of Horizons Foundation. Patron's Circle: The Keith Haring Foundation. Supporter's Circle: Juliet de Baubigny, and Richard and Peggy Greenfield.

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Eleanor Coppola : Sonoma Valley Museum of Art "Quiet Creative Force"
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