

**Mumia Abu Jamal** *Writing On The Wall* • **Adam Rothstein** *Seeing Water* • **Nicole Archer** *Style Wars: Critical Reflections On The Power Of Style* • **Ben Valentine** *Infrastructures Of Power And Magic* • **John Zarobell** *The Informal Economy And The Global Art Market* • **Nicholas O'Brien** *Can The Blockchain Save Digital Art?* • **John Rapko** *The Anti-Genius, Or, Why Do Curators Talk Like That? (Part Two)* • **Dave Hickey** *In Conversation With Jarrett Earnest (Part Three)* • **Mark Van Proyen** *On Point 2.07: The Loneliness Of The Long-Distance Art Critic* • **Arie Amaya-Akkermans** *Unfinished Centuries*

## Writing On The Wall

### Mumia Abu Jamal

#### 1. Christmas in a Cage January 1982

Shortly before 6 a.m., the speaker in this tiny, barren cell blares a message, said to be from prison superintendent David Owens: "A Merry Christmas to all inmates of the Philadelphia prison system. It is our hope that this will be the last holiday season you spend with us."

A guard reads Owens's name and the speaker falls silent for a half hour. I wonder at the words, and ponder my first Christmas in the hospital wing of the Detention Center.

#### Christmas in a cage

I have finally been able to read press accounts of the incident that left me near death, a policeman dead, and me charged with his murder. It is nightmarish that my brother and I should be in this foul predicament, particularly since my main accusers, the police, were my attackers as well. My true crime seems to have been my survival of their assaults, for we were the victims that night.

To add insult to injury, I have learned that the forces of "law and order" have threatened my brother and burned, or permitted the burning of, my brother's street business. Talk about curbside justice! According to some press accounts, cops stood around the fire joking and then celebrated at the station house.

Nowhere have I read an account of how I got shot, how a bullet happened to find its way near my spine, shattering a rib, splitting a kidney and nearly destroying my diaphragm. And people wonder why I have no trust in a "fair trial." Nowhere have I read that a bullet left a hole in my lung, filling it with blood.

Nowhere have I read how police found me lying in a pool of my blood, unable to breathe, and then proceeded to punch, kick and stomp me — not question me. I remember being rammed into a pole or a fireplug with police at both arms. I remember kicks to my head, my face, my chest, my belly, my back and other places. But I have read no press accounts of this, and have heard tell of no witnesses. Nowhere have I read of how I was handcuffed, thrown into a paddy wagon and beaten, kicked, punched and pummeled. Where are the witnesses to a police captain or inspector entering the wagon and beating me with a police radio, all the while addressing me as a "Black motherfucker"? Where are the witnesses to the beating that left me with a four-inch scar on my forehead? A swollen jaw? Chipped teeth?

Not to end prematurely, who witnessed me pulled from the paddy wagon, dropped three feet to the cold hard earth, beaten some more, dragged into Jefferson Hospital, and then beaten inside the hospital as I fought for breath on one lung?

I awoke after surgery to find my belly ripped from top to bottom, with metallic staples protruding. My penis strapped to a tube, and tubes leading from each nostril to God knows where, was my first recollection. My second was intense pain and pressure in my already ripped kidneys, as a policeman stood at the doorway, a smile on his mustached lips, his name tag removed and his badge covered. Why was he smiling, and why the pain? He was standing on a square plastic bag, the receptacle for my urine.

Am I to trust these men, as they attempt to murder me again, in a public hospital? Not long afterward, I was shaken to consciousness by a kick at the foot of my bed. I opened my eyes to see a cop standing in the doorway, an Uzi submachine gun in his hands. "Innocent until proven guilty"?

#### High-water pants and cold

Days later, after being transferred to city custody at Giuffre Medical Center under armed police guard, I was put into room #202 in the basement's detention unit, which is the coldest in the place.

After I was transferred to what's laughingly referred to as the new "hospital wing" of the Detention Center, I found out what "cold" really means. For the first two days, the temperature plummeted so low that inmates wore blankets over their prison jackets.

I had been officially issued a short-sleeved shirt and some tight high-water pants, and I was so cold that for the first night I could not sleep. Other inmates saved me from the cold. One found a prison jacket for me. (I had asked a guard, but he told me I would have to wait until an old inmate rolls, or gets out. So much for "using the system.") Other inmates, and a kind nurse, supplemented my night warmth.

The prison issued one bedsheet and one light wool blanket. When I protested to a social worker, she told me defensively, "I know it's cold, but there's nothing I can do. The warden's been told about the problem." Why am I concerned about the cold? Because the doctor who treated me at Jefferson Hospital explained that the only real threat to my health was pneumonia, because of my punctured lung. Is it purely coincidental that for the next week I spent some of the coldest nights and days of my life? Is the city, through the prison system, trying to kill me before I go to trial? What do they fear? I told all this to my prison social worker (a Mrs. Barbara Waldbaum), and she pooh-poohed the suggestion.

"No, Mr. Jamal, we want to see you get better."

"Not hardly," I replied.

Miraculously, after my complaints, some semblance of heat found its way into the cells on my side of the wall. Enough to sleep, at least. Is it coincidental, too, that the heat began to go on the night I was visited by Superintendent David Owens?

"It is our hope that this will be the last holiday season you spend with us. ..." Owens's words ring through my mind again—is there another, grim meaning to this seemingly innocuous holiday greeting?

#### Echoes of Pedro Serrano

There is another side to this controversial case that people are not aware of. My cell is reasonably close to the place where Pedro Serrano was severely beaten and strangled to death. I have talked to eyewitnesses—some of whom I knew in the street. These brothers, at considerable personal peril, have told their stories to police and to prison officials, to city Managing Director W.W. Goode, to the Puerto Rican Alliance, and to me. Some have been threatened by guards for doing so, but they have done so despite the threats.

According to several versions, Serrano, who had already been beaten by guards, was shaking his cell door, making noise to attract attention. Guards, angered at the noise, ordered all inmates into lock-up. Most complied. One, a paralyzed, wheelchair-bound inmate, did not. He drove his chair near a wall and watched in silence.

The guards opened Serrano's cell, dragged him out, and proceeded to punch, kick and stomp him. He cried out in pain and terror, but the other inmates, locked up, were helpless. One guard, well known for his violence, reportedly whipped him with his long key chain, producing thin red welts in Serrano's white flesh.

Before this latest assault on my brother and myself, I had covered a press conference called by the Puerto Rican Alliance and members of the Serrano family. I saw photographs of Pedro Serrano, his face swollen even in death. I saw a body riddled with swellings, bruises and welts. I remember the thick, dark bruises beneath his neck, and I remember calling David Owens for a comment.

"Mumia, Mr. Serrano was not beaten to death, according to all the reports I've received. The Medical Examiner concurs," Owens said authoritatively. "Mr. Serrano was not beaten by any members of my staff," Owens would later proclaim to my radio listeners.

Remember the dark bruise around Serrano's neck? Owens told me he apparently strangled on a leather restraining belt, by exerting pressure until death. Inmate eyewitnesses said a guard wrapped the leather strap around Serrano's neck and pulled him back into the room, where he was again beaten and placed in restraints. Serrano, arrested for burglary, was described by his wife as being in love with life, and surely not suicidal, as prison officials have suggested.

Why have I recounted these intricacies of a case that is now public knowledge? I'll tell you why: Because my jailers, the men who decide whether I am to leave my cell for food, for phone calls, for pain medication, for a visit with a loved one, are the very same men who are accused of murdering Pedro Serrano.

Remember the DA's claim that police had enough evidence to charge me with murder? How much more evidence do they have on Serrano's accused murderers? Yet every day they come to work, do their do, and return home to their loved ones . . . while others sit in isolation and squalor. Consider the scenario—accused murderers guarding accused murderers! How insane—yet how telling it is of the system's brutality.



22-25  
OCTOBER  
2015

fiac!

GRAND  
PALAIS  
&  
HORS  
LES  
MURS,  
PARIS

非常電話  
SOS

740m

fiac.com

Organised by  
Reed Expositions

Official sponsor  
Groupe  
Lafayette

東京タワー

rad-i-cal \ˈra-di-kuhl\  
adj / n relating to or affecting  
the fundamental nature of something;  
far-reaching or thorough

pres-ence \ˈpre-z-n(t)s\  
n the bearing, carriage,  
or air of a person

Clifford Owens, *Anthology (Mengo Knight)*, 2011. C-print. 40 x 60 inches. Courtesy the artist.

#RadicalPresence

rAdIcAl prEsEncE  
BLACK PERFORMANCE IN CONTEMPORARY ART  
CLOSES OCT 11 ▪ DOWNSTAIRS GALLERIES

YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS • YBCA.ORG • 415.978.ARTS

AUGUST 22, 2015-JANUARY 10, 2016

TAHOE

A VISUAL HISTORY

Experience one of America's most beloved  
landscapes through the eyes of 175 painters  
photographers, architects, weavers and sculptors.

PREMIERE SPONSORS: Wayne L. Prim and Miriam Prim and the Wayne L. Prim Foundation LEAD SPONSORS: Nancy Siebens Binn; EMPLOYERS'; Deborah Day in memory of Theodore J. Day; I. Heidi Eoeb Hegerich; IGT; Nancy and Brian Kennedy; The Satre Family Fund at the Community Foundation of Western Nevada; The Ranson and Norma Webster Fund at the Community Foundation of Western Nevada; Wells Fargo MAJOR SPONSORS: The Bretzlaff Foundation; Carol Franc Buck Foundation; Irene and George Drews; The Thelma B. and Thomas P. Hart Foundation; National Endowment for the Arts SUPPORTING SPONSORS: Carole Kilgore Anderson and Family in memory of J. Robert Anderson; Kathie Bartlett and Family in memory of Matthew, Phil, and Syd Bartlett; Denise and Tim Cashman; Chase International Real Estate; Judy and David Collins; Andrea and John Deane; Dolby Family; Susan and Stuart Engi; Leonard and Sara Lafance; Anne BrockintonLee and Robert M. Lee; Maureen Mullarkey and Steve Miller; Enid A. Oliver, ChFC, Ameriprise Financial Services, Inc.; Sandy Raffaealli, Bill Pearce Motors LEAD MEDIA SPONSOR: RGJ Media MEDIA SPONSORS: Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority PROMOTIONAL SUPPORT: Getaway Reno Tahoe; KUNR; Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority; Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County; Reno Tahoe International Airport; Summit Shopping Center; Tahoe Blue Vodka; Tahoe Transportation District; Tahoe Quarterly

NEVADA MUSEUM OF ART

Donald W. Reynolds Center for the Visual Arts | E. L. Wiegand Gallery  
160 West Liberty Street in downtown Reno | 775.329.3333 | nevadaart.org



Brian Gross Fine Art

Meridel Rubenstein | *The Volcano Cycle*  
September 12 – October 31  
Opening Reception:  
September 12th / 3 - 5pm  
Artist Talk: 3:30pm

Tuesday - Saturday 11-6pm  
www.briangrossfineart.com  
248 Utah St, San Francisco, CA 94103  
415-788-1050

CATHARINE CLARK GALLERY

Andy Diaz Hope | *Content Void Content*  
Kara Maria | *Haywire*  
September 12 – October 17  
Opening Reception:  
September 12 / 2 – 5 pm  
Artist talk: 3:00 pm

Sandow Birk | *Imaginary Monuments*  
October 24 – December 23

Sandow Birk | *American Qur'an*  
Book Release / November 2

Tues- Wed & Fri - Sat 11-6pm  
Thursday 11 – 7 pm  
www.cclarkgallery.com  
248 Utah St, San Francisco, CA 94103  
415-399-1439

jack fischer gallery

Ward Schumaker | *Dogon Kayak*  
September 12- Oct 17  
Opening Reception:  
September 12th / 3 - 5pm  
Artist Talk: 4:30pm

Kate Nartker | *Solo Exhibition*  
October 24th- December 5th  
Opening Reception:  
October 24th / 4-6pm

Tuesday - Saturday 11-5:30pm  
www.jackfischergallery.com  
311 Potrero Ave, San Francisco, CA 94103  
415-522-1178



PAULSON BOTT PRESS

ISCA GREENFIELD-SANDERS

NEW ETCHINGS

2300 4TH STREET BERKELEY, CA 94710 P: 510-559-2088

**Publisher & Editor in Chief**  
Andrew McClintock

**Managing Editor (Print and Online)**  
Peter Cochrane

**Editors (Print and Online)**  
Lucy Kasofsky and Lauren Marsden

**Editorial Assistants**  
Mario Ayala, and Alexandra Toledo

**California Community Manager**  
Mario Ayala

**Contributing Writers**  
Nicole Archer, Dave Hickey, Nicholas O'Brien, John Rapko, Adam Rothstein, Ben Valentine, Mark Van Proyen, John Zarobell, Jarrett Earnest, Arie Amaya-Akkermans, and Mumia Abu Jamal

**Online Writers**  
Lani Asher, Peter Cochrane, Terri Cohn, Kimberlee Córdova, Rebecca Cuomo, Dean Dempsey, Peter Dobby, Jarrett Earnest, Max Goldberg, John Held Jr., Glen Helfand, Jessica Hoffmann, Anna Hygelund, Kelly Inouye, Gladys Katherina-Hernando, Suzanne L'Heureux, Steffanie Ling, Leora Lutz, Lily Mageniz, Courtney Malick, Lauren Marsden, Shana Beth Mason, Amanda Roscoe Mayo, Mack McFarland, Evan Moffitt, Sarah Thibault, Johanna Thompson, Anna Martine Whitehead, Kate Wolf, and Coco Young

**Contributing Photographers**  
Adam Rothstein, Caroline Maxwell, Nathan Murrell, Boris Dogrusoz, Mustafa Haznedi

**Images Courtesy of**  
Adam Rothstein, Ascribe, MAK, Monegraph, Didem Pekün, SALT, Dilek Winchester, Bijan Yashar

**Thanks**  
Paule Anglim, Jamie Alexander, Janette Andrews, Alexandre Arrechea, Alan Bamberger, Renna Bransten, SIA Club, David Coffin, Tina Conway, Leigh Cooper, Charles Desmarais, Jeff Gunderson, Peter Kirkoby, Paul Kos, Tony Labat, Lauren Leasure, Kent Long, Tom Marioni, Pat McCarthy, Jesse McClintock, Carlo McCormick, Barry McGee, Austin McManus, Guy Overfelt, Joseph del Pesco, Tom Sachs, Jocko Weyland, SFAQ Contributors, and everyone who supports us through advertising, subscriptions, and donations.

**Supporters:**  
**SFAQ Advisors:**  
Nion McEvoy, Kevin King, Eric Rodenbeck, John Sanger, Rivkah Beth Meadow, Michele Meany, Adam Swig

**SFAQ Friends Circle:**  
Sue Kubly, Art Now International, Kadist Art Foundation, Charles Cochrane, Katie Brinim

**CONTACT**  
Info: info@sfaqus  
Advertising: advertise@sfaqus

**SFAQ LLC**  
441 O'Farrell St.  
San Francisco, CA, 94102, USA  
sfaqus

All Material © 2015 SFAQ LLC  
Printed on 60% post-consumer papers in Hunters Point, SF.  
SFAQ uses environmentally friendly soy-based inks.  
Designed in the Tenderloin, San Francisco.

**BLACK LIVES MATTER**  
**STOP THE TPP**  
**SUPPORT SNOWDEN**  
**SUPPORT MANNING**  
**BERNIE SANDERS FOR PRESIDENT**  
**FREE MUMIA!**

COLUMNS

**Mumia Abu Jamal**  
*Writing on the Wall*  
Page 1 & 5

**Adam Rothstein**  
*Seeing Water*  
Page 6-7

**Nicole Archer**  
*Style Wars: Critical Reflections On The Power Of Style*  
Page 8

**Ben Valentine**  
*Infrastructures Of Power And Magic*  
Page 9

**John Zarobell**  
*The Informal Economy And The Global Art Market*  
Page 10

**Nicholas O'Brien**  
*Can The Blockchain Save Digital Art?*  
Page 11

**John Rapko**  
*The Anti-Genius, Or, Why Do Curators Talk Like That? (Part Two)*  
Page 12

**Dave Hickey**  
*In Conversation With Jarrett Earnest (Part Three)*  
Page 13

**Mark Van Proyen**  
*On Point 2.07: The Loneliness Of The Long-Distance Art Critic*  
Page 14

**Arie Amaya-Akkermans**  
*Unfinished Centuries*  
Page 14-15

CONTRIBUTORS

**Adam Rothstein** is an independent writer, researcher, and artist. He writes about politics, media, art, and technology wherever he can get a signal. He is most interested in the canons of history and prediction, the so-called "Future-Weird," the unstable ramifications of today's cultural technology, and the materials and ideas out of which we build things. He is on Twitter @intertome.

**Nicole Archer**, PhD is an assistant professor in the history and theory of contemporary art at the San Francisco Art Institute, where she also serves as the chair of the BA Department + Liberal Arts. Nicole researches contemporary art and material culture, with an emphasis in modern textile and garment histories. Further interests include critical and psychoanalytic theory, corporeal feminism, and performance studies. She is currently writing a manuscript entitled *A Looming Possibility: Towards a Theory of the Textile*, which considers how textiles are used to produce and maintain the limits of "legitimate" versus "illegitimate" forms of state violence.

**Ben Valentine** is an independent writer and curator based in Cambodia who studies how tech, creativity, and politics intersect around the world. 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.

**John Zarobell** is assistant professor of international 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—both online and in print—and he has written for numerous exhibition catalogues. His first book, *Empire of Landscapes*, was published in 2010, and his next, *Art and the Global Economy*, will be published by University of California Press in 2017.

**Nicholas O'Brien** is a net-based artist, curator, and writer. His work has exhibited in Mexico City, Berlin, London, Dublin, Italy, Prague, as well as throughout the United States. He has been the recipient of a Turbulence Commission funded by the NEA, and has curated exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, 319 Scholes, and Eyebeam Center for Art and Technology. As a contributor to *Rhizome* at the New Museum, *SFAQ*, and *Bad at Sports*, he has been recently recognized as a leading voice within contemporary art by *Art F City*, *PULSE* art fair, and *Artsy*. His work has also appeared or been featured in *ARTINFO*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *DIS Magazine*, *Freeze d/e*, *The Atlantic*, and *The New York Times*. He currently lives in Brooklyn and is assistant professor in 3D design and game development at Stevens Institute of Technology.

**John Rapko**, a Bay Area-based philosopher of art and art critic, is the author of *Logro, Fracasso, Aspiracion: Tres Intentos de Entender el Arte Contemporáneo (Achievement, Failure, Aspiration: Three Attempts to Understand Contemporary Art)*. He teaches art history at the College of Marin and ethics and the philosophy of art at the California College of the Arts. 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 *artcritical.com*. Currently, he is writing a second book on the philosophy of contemporary art, *Return to Darkness*, based upon a series of lectures given in July 2015 at the Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá.

**Jarrett Earnest** is an artist and writer living in New York City. This fall he is teaching "Emotional Formalism" at the free, experimental art school *BHQFU*, where he is also the faculty liaison. His criticism and long-form interviews have appeared in *The Brooklyn Rail*, *SFAQ*, *The Village Voice*, and many other publications.

**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*.

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

Writing On The Wall  
Mumia Abu Jamal  
[Continued From Page One]

Justice for who?

What is the dividing line? That Serrano was a "spic," a "dirty P.R.," and thus his life is subject to the depredations of a system that talks justice yet practices genocide. I am accused of killing a policeman, who was, moreover, white. For that, not even the pretense of justice is necessary. "Beat him, shoot him, frame him, put fear into his family," is the unwritten but very real script.

I have been shackled like a slave, hands and feet, for daring to live. Those who have dared to question the official version have been threatened with dismissal from their jobs, and some with death.

Why do they fear one man so much? Not because they loved his alleged "victim"—but because they fear any questioning of their role as accuser, and occasionally executioner. Who polices the police?

The DA is well known as a character whose only interest is higher political office—obviously he would oppose a special prosecutor, for he wants his office to have the glory of hanging murder on "the radical reporter."

Where was [then-DA] Ed Rendell when Winston C.X. Hood and Cornell Warren were summarily executed, their hands shackled behind them? What credence did he give the witnesses to these murders? Or the outright, cold-blooded killing of 17-year-old William Johnson Green? Or the intentionally broadcast beating of Delbert Africa? Where was his unquenchable thirst for justice then? Need we mention Pedro Serrano?

Make no mistake, Jakel! For a nigger or a spic, there is no semblance of justice, and we better stop lying to ourselves.

Who are we to blame? No one but ourselves. For we condone it and allow it to happen. We are still locked in the slavish mentality of our past centuries, for we care more for the oppressor than for ourselves.

How many more martyrs will bleed their last before we wake up, stand up, demand and fight for justice?

And justice, true justice, comes not from the good graces of the Philadelphia Police Department, the District Attorney's office, the court system or your friendly neighborhood lawyer. It comes from God, the giver of your very life, your health, your air and your food.

71.  
Before Guantánamo or Abu Ghraib – The Black Panthers  
May 24, 2006

Long before the words Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib entered common American usage as reference points for government torture, there were several young Black men who knew something about the subject.

The year was 1973, and among 13 "Black militants" arrested in a New Orleans sweep were three men: Hank Jones, John Bowman and Ray Boudreaux. The three were beaten, tortured and interrogated by New Orleans cops, acting on tips supplied by San Francisco police. The men were stripped, beaten with blunt objects, blindfolded,

shocked on their private parts by electric cattle prods, punched and kicked, and had wool blankets soaked in boiling water thrown over them. Under such torture, the three gave false confessions in the shooting of a San Francisco cop in 1971.

The charges were eventually thrown out after a judge in California found that the prosecution had failed to tell a grand jury that the confessions were exacted under torture. Today, over 30 years later, Jones, Bowman and Boudreaux have again been called before a grand jury, to try to resurrect what was dismissed in 1976. Imagine what these men thought when they heard about the U.S. government torture chambers in Guantánamo, or Abu Ghraib in Iraq. The names may have been different, but the grim reality was the same. Today, these men have formed the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights to try to teach folks about what happened so many years ago, and what is happening now.

Their living example teaches us that history repeats itself, but in worse, more repressive forms. That's because their first conflicts with the state took place under the aegis of the since discredited Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO). That program, after the famous Church Committee hearings in the Senate, was declared illegal and a violation of the Constitution. Today, thanks to a Congress weakened by corporate largesse and frightened by 9/11, the same things that were illegal in the 1970s have been all but resurrected and legalized under the notorious USA PATRIOT Act. What we are seeing, all across the nation, is the emergence of what the late Black Panther Minister of Information Eldridge Cleaver called "Yankee Doodle fascism": the rise of corporate and state power to attack dissidents and destroy even the pretension of civil rights. I say pretension because the events I discussed earlier happened in 1973, yet none of the torturers, the violators, the criminals in blue, were ever sanctioned for their violations of state, federal and indeed, international law, to this day. Not one.

Think of this: the murderers of Fred Hampton Sr., those malevolent minions of the state who crept into his home and shot him dead (as he slept!) have never served a day, a minute, a second in jail for this most premeditated of murders, planned at the highest levels of government.

The roots of Guantánamo, of Abu Ghraib, of Bagram Air Force Base, of U.S. secret torture chambers operating all around the world, are deep in American life, in its long war against Black life and liberation. Is it mere coincidence that the most notorious guard at Abu Ghraib worked right here, in the United States; here, in Pennsylvania; here, in SCI-Greene prison, for over six years before exporting his brand of "corrections" to the poor slob who met him in Iraq?

Back in the 1960s and 1970s, Panthers and others spoke about fascism, but it had an edge of hyperbole, of radical speech, to move people beyond their complacency. Several years ago, a political scientist who studied fascism on three continents came to some pretty sobering conclusions.

According to Dr. Lawrence Britt, fascist states have 14 characteristics in common. They are, briefly: 1) powerful nationalism, 2) disdain for human rights, 3) scapegoating to unify against "enemies," 4) military supremacy, 5) rampant sexism, 6) controlled mass media, 7) national security obsession, 8) government religiosity, 9) rise of corporate power, 10) suppression of labor, 11) anti-intellectualism, 12) obsession with punishment, 13) deep corruption and cronyism, and 14) fraudulent elections.1

How many of these features are reflected daily in the national life of the United States? What happens abroad is a grim reflection of what has happened here, albeit quietly. The tortures of Jones, Bowman and Boudreaux won't be featured stories on Nightline, nor on (sup-

posedly "liberal") National Public Radio. (Remember the characteristic of "controlled mass media"?)

What happens overseas has its genesis in the monstrous history of what happened here: genocide, mass terrorism, racist exploitation (also known as "slavery"), land-theft and carnage. All of these horrors have been echoed abroad, shadows of hatred, xenophobia and fear, projected from the heart of the Empire outwards.

If we really want to change the dangerous trend of global repression, we must change it here first. For only then can the world breathe a deep sigh of relief.

106.  
The Meaning of Ferguson  
August 31, 2014

Before recent days, who among us had ever heard of Ferguson, Missouri?

Because of what happened there, the brief but intense experience of state repression, its name will be transmitted by millions of Black mouths to millions of Black ears, and it will become a watchword for resistance, like Watts, like Newark, Harlem and Los Angeles.

But Ferguson wasn't 60 years ago—it's today.

And for young Blacks from Ferguson and beyond, it was a stark, vivid history lesson—and also a reality lesson.

When they dared protest the state's street-murder of one of their own, the government responded with the tools and weapons of war.

They assaulted them with gas. They attacked them as if Ferguson were Fallujah, in Iraq.

The police attacked them as if they were an occupying army from another country, for that, in fact, is what they were.

And these young folks learned viscerally, face to face, what the White Nation thought of them, their claimed constitutional rights, their so-called freedoms, and their lives. They learned the wages of Black protest. Repression, repression and more repression.

They also learned the limits of their so-called "leaders" who called for "peace" and "calm" while armed troops trained submachine guns and sniper rifles on unarmed men, women and children.

Russian revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin once said, "There are decades when nothing happens; there are weeks when decades happen."

For the youth—excluded from the American economy by inferior, substandard education; targeted by the malevolence of the fake drug war and mass incarceration; stopped and frisked for Walking While Black—were given front-row seats to the national security state at Ferguson after a friend was murdered by police in their streets.

Ferguson is a wake-up call. A call to build social, radical, revolutionary movements for change.

Excerpted from *Writing on the Wall* by Mumia Abu-Jamal, and reprinted here with permission of the publisher, City Lights Books.



Seeing Water

Adam Rothstein

You can see the drought if you stare into the end of your faucet, like staring at the black part of a candle flame.

This method works just as well as any of the myriad charts, maps, visualizations, and website-embedded animations of a hamburger abstractly labeled with numbers of gallons of water. Look into the faucet. Stare into its dark, fathomless depths, then turn the knob, let loose the water, rinse clean your illusions, and open your third eye, which looks like nothing so much as the clockwise, Coriolis swirl of 70% of our body weight circling around a drain.

You just have to look hard enough. It is about effort, the sheer force of will to see what is hidden, so that you might understand about the water. We are told endlessly of how we must learn to handle the drought. We must understand and comply with water-saving techniques. We need to be on the lookout for water-wasting, for failures to comply with emergency measures. We must be shown data that explains the *real* cause of the drought. We must study maps that show which percent of what area is using what portion of the total water. We have to see this water infrastructure. If only we could embody the truth about water with our senses and our mind, then the drought would go away. If only we knew how much water we were using, and how precious it is to our lives, then the water accounting problem would solve itself. In this miraculous revelation, the fundamental collision of overpopulation and climate change that our civilization has wrought would simply—if one will pardon the phrase—evaporate. And so the great magical trick begins. The dark visualization wand is waved, and as we are ocularly prestidigitated, the water spurts out of the tap like a rabbit from a hat.

If you are one who wants it badly enough, there are places where you can take pilgrimage to learn the ways of water. At the California Department of Water Resources' visitor center in Vista del Lago this sort of artificial visual slip is performed on repeat, as the video track recycles every six minutes.

Vista del Lago means "view of the lake," of course. It's not a place, really—it's an exit high in the mountains off Interstate 5 north of Los Angeles that oddly has beach access. The view is not really of a lake: but of the Pyramid Lake reservoir. The pyramid is not really a pyramid, but an island in the middle of the lake that itself is not really an island, only a hill that has been partially submerged. It's named Chumash Island, after the former indigenous inhabitants of the area that are not really inhabitants anymore, having been reduced in number from more than 10,000 before Spanish contact to just 200 by 1900. But the island is named after them, and the lake named after the island, and the view of the lake named in Spanish, which just so happens to be the primary language of most of the people using the beach access for family barbecues on fine spring Sundays.

The visitor center's visuals are not really a view of California's water resources. Inside the dark, air-conditioned auditorium plays an aged animation called *Water Wasters*, featuring an anthropomorphic faucet dressed like Sherlock Holmes running through a rap sheet of criminal appliances such as "Runny Basin" and "Rinsey Sink" and suffering a strange case of painfully normative gender roles in addition to being responsible for wasting household water. There is the ever-present large hamburger model, molded out of compressed wood painted bright red, green, yellow, and brown, with accompanying values of gallons printed on each ingredient (eleven gallons a bun!). There are a number of photos of ships and fields of crops in

various locations. There is a scale model that shows the elevations over which water is pumped through the California Aqueduct. There is a video of Ronald Reagan blessing the Oroville Dam. But the real pinnacle of visual media is a video called *Wings Over Water*. In a darkened alcove, there is a giant red button in front of a dark screen. One presses it, and light leaps to the screen, sound to speakers. While a meditative, New Age score plays that might have been lifted directly from a yoga retreat or a crystal shop, the viewer is enjoined to marvel at video clips of the entire California Aqueduct system, shot from an aircraft tracing graceful arcs over the beautiful Central Valley.

You probably know where the Central Valley is, and you probably know why it is significant. Any article about the drought in the media makes sure to drive this point home. The Central Valley is the Californian Eden, where the waters come from: the Pishon, the Gihon, the Tigris, and the Euphrates replaced by the Sacramento, the American, the Feather, and the San Joaquin. You've probably seen maps, charts, aerial photographs of vegetable fields and land subsidence, of the unnaturally parallel lines of the California Aqueduct, the third largest river in the state, carrying water in quantities of millions of acre-feet off into infinity. You might have even crossed it, seen it from Interstate 5 as you fly north or south on radial tires at or above the beautiful, Californian 70 MPH speed limit.

The water is sucked out of the combined delta east of San Francisco Bay and transported by pump and engineered gravity flows in the wrong direction, uphill and over mountains to the largest metropolitan areas of California. Some of the water goes to the Bay Area itself, another aqueduct branch goes over the Coast Range towards San Luis Obispo. The rest of the water is pumped over the Tehachapi Mountains, where half of it flows west into Pyramid Lake, while the other half flows east across the Mojave Desert to San Bernardino. It is quite a thing, in the *Wings Over Water* video, to see the point at which a river splits into two equal halves—something quite impossible in nature.

You can also see maps of the California Aqueduct at the visitor center. You can even get one for free from the Department of Water Resources. It is printed on a thick, high-quality paper in shades of yellow and blue. It shows all the waterways of California: including the natural rivers that only flow thick during the wet times of the year; the dams that ensure these flows are saved and metered out on a schedule to make sure the sucking pumps can extract what they need from the rivers even in the driest of summers; the California Aqueduct, the Los Angeles Aqueduct, the Colorado River Aqueduct, and the other smaller concrete-lined canals that Federal and State projects have built across the state to create an intravenous lifeline for the burgeoning population and agriculture that has made the state famous.

But I wanted to learn more, to know the truth about the water. To see the real, hidden secrets not visible at the public shrine. And so I went to wander in the desert, to see the sacred sites of water infrastructure, to try to understand the knowledge there. I drove the entire length of the major aqueducts of California. Down I-5 from Shasta all the way to Los Angeles, then back north up the San Franciscoquito Canyon along the Los Angeles Aqueduct to Owens Valley, where the city famously muscled out the locals of their water rights some hundred years ago to allow it to become the metropolis that it is today. Then I drove down to the Colorado River, held back by the Hoover Dam—built to provide electricity so that Los Angeles could pump water out of that river, held back by another dam named Parker, further south at Lake Havasu. And I returned to the city along the Colorado River Aqueduct, back through the Inland Empire where the reservoirs are fed from both east and north. I traced the steps taken by California's infrastructural patriarchs, where water was forced to burst from the rocks, where the promised land was deeded, where the land was conquered so that cities could be built.

This wet network is laced all across the state, and although one can see it wherever one turns if one knows where to look, there is still something elusive. There is an ingredient of this infrastructural hamburger that refuses to be colored in. At Lake Mathews where the Colorado River Aqueduct terminates in the Inland Empire, the overlook is closed off by chain link and barbed wire, and warnings of imminent prosecution suggest that the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (who runs this particular artificial river) would rather you took your vistas elsewhere. At the point in the Mojave Desert where the Los Angeles Aqueduct crosses the eastern branch of the California Aqueduct, one can wander the site at will. But I still felt that there was something missing. I took an aerial camera on a tiny quadrotor, my own electronically summoned angel, and sent it skyward into the desert wind for a better view. I caught the streaming rays of sunlight passing through the clouds over the Tehachapis, the California Aqueduct extending horizon-bound in two cardinal directions while the silver-pipe enclosed Los Angeles Aqueduct completes the other points of the compass rose, vaulting over the open California Aqueduct like a massive worm chewing through the landscape. A rural road passes over the California Aqueduct on a bridge, and the open aqueduct siphons down underneath the natural path of a storm water wash to allow runoff to cross it without eroding the smooth concrete banks and stifling its flow with silt. The Pacific Crest Trail also crosses both aqueducts here in the desert, making this a path of many crossings. And my flying digital camera caught it all, suspended on electrically torqued blades in the billowing sky. My own shaky wings over water, with the digital eye suspended between them. But for what? What have I seen? What do I now know about the drought? What knowledge have I gained that will reveal the secrets of anthropocentric water management to me?

Every home has a water meter, the numbers of which spin only upwards by design, like the pages of a calendar as the Earth rotates in the light of the sun. But the units are mere numerology, abstract figures that we are told are either too much or not enough. Our water infrastructure is occult. As a total system providing for the lives of 38.8 million California residents, it is a cosmology not designed to be seen or understood. It has become impossible. There are too many people, too many tunnels, too many acres, too many pounds of beef, too many hamburger buns. Too many wet, fleshy life forms running around aspirating, perspiring, evaporating. And yet, who knows by weight the amount of water they need to survive? How much to drink, and how much to piss away down the drain? These sorts of biological knowledge have been replaced by sheer will, the ability to hold one's water and resist one's thirst.

We are shown altars and symbols, given texts and told to study and pray. The designs of the Bureau of Reclamation, the Department of Water Resources, the Metropolitan Water District, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and the pantheon of lesser water districts and bureaus that stretch across the patchworks of farmland and subdivision, are like the eyes of absentee gods. We draw out maps like zodiacs, we inscribe the diagram of the sacred water-measured hamburger on the walls of holy spaces and websites and in the coloring books of our children. But despite all of the attention we pay to the religious practice of attempting to see and understand water, we continue to live and die, our precious resources of freshwater inevitably flowing out into the saline sea.



A mocked up copy of the DWR map. Courtesy of the author.



Photographs of California by Adam Rothstein.





Style Wars:  
Critical Reflections On The  
Power Of Style

Nicole Archer

The fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent famously quipped that “fashion fades, style is eternal.” This enigmatic statement does much to elucidate the powerful place that style holds in many contemporary cultures. In particular, it alerts us to the relationship that exists between notions of style and notions of history. Or, to the idea that “to have style” is to have the means of inserting oneself into history, while “to lack style” is to risk oblivion. *Style Wars*—a new, regular column in *AQ*—suggests that the tracing of style’s fluctuating movements across varied social, political, aesthetic, and philosophical terrains is important work, and that this is particularly true within the realms of fine art, design, art history, and “visual studies” (as many important figures within these fields have long vied to claim and contest the ownership of this term). *Style Wars* aims to appreciate how critical considerations of style can offer opportunities to think across sets of subjectivities and cultural practices that are often disassociated or pitted against one another.

\*\*\*

As Halloween superstores again occupy empty storefronts across the United States, and legions of “sexy soldiers” and “sultry police officers” march out to flood city streets, house parties, and Instagram feeds, the inaugural installment of *Style Wars* stops to consider what the erotic stylization of deadly force might mean—particularly in light of recent police brutalities, and a long-overdue national conversation about the ways in which this force is disproportionately applied to marginalized communities. By focusing critical attention on a key antecedent to this endless stream of coquettish cop costumes, this piece asks, why is it stylish for one to be attracted to the kind of power that “the uniform” signifies? Furthermore, it examines how these sartorial styles, however campy or grotesque, serve as a serious index of our collective complicity in the ongoing production of state violence.

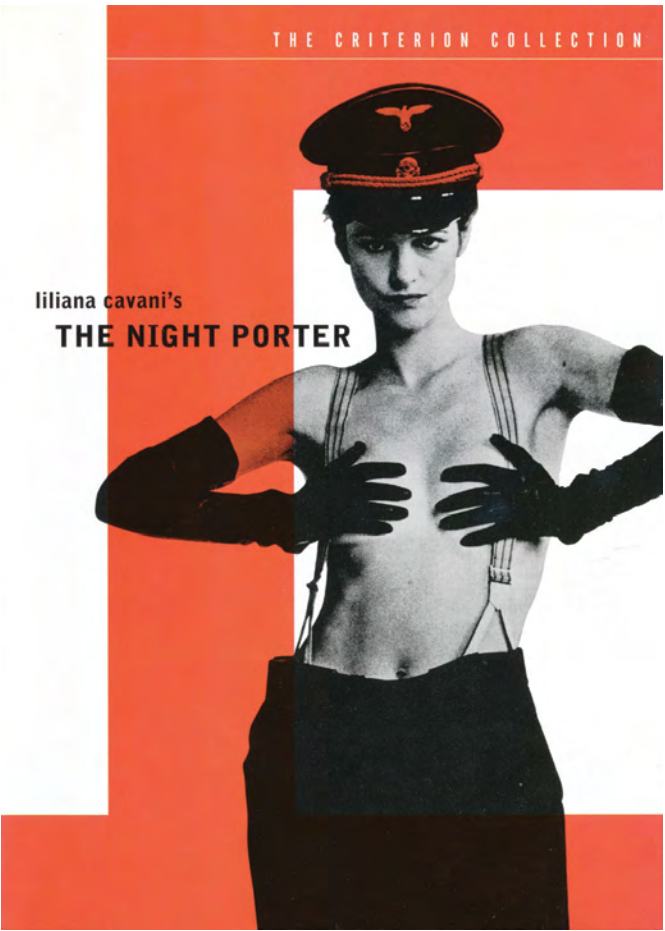
The Erotic Stylization of Deadly Force

During the twilight of the Vietnam War, Liliana Cavani’s 1974 film *The Night Porter* re-styled the fantasies and material cultures surrounding World War II (the “last good war”) to critically interrogate the notion that the presence of a strong military and police force works to create a less violent world. Some 40 years since the film’s first appearance in theaters, *The Night Porter* continues to ask viewers how modern technologies of acute corporeal discipline have altered our ethical and aesthetic fields. Its formidable claim is that cultures of uniformity—cultures that dictate regularity, consistency, and uniform behavior—also inspire particularly unique forms of cruelty and violence. Through its highly stylized plot and mise-en-scène, Cavani’s film boldly underscores how uniformity makes it increasingly desirable (if not necessary) for expressly “singular” forms of (dis) pleasure to eventuate within modern erotic and political life.

*The Night Porter*’s storyline follows the complex, sadomasochistic relationship between a young woman formerly imprisoned within an unnamed concentration camp, Lucia Atherton (Charlotte Rampling), and an older man who more than willingly served as an officer in Hitler’s *Schutzstaffel* (SS), Max Aldorfer (Dirk Bogarde). The complexity of this psycho-sexual relationship is powerfully shorthand in the infamous image of Lucia, painfully thin yet resiliently beautiful, seductively wearing a Nazi officer’s cap and little else but black, opera-length leather gloves and a pair of oversized men’s trousers, held in place by elasticized suspenders. Cavani does most of her heavy lifting simply by bringing this iconic image into representation, an image that has arguably come to serve as the modern template for how to stylize the erotics of power. The image encapsulates the perverse way that war, as Cavani explains it, “[detonates] the sadomasochism that is latent in each of us; [how] when there is war, the state monopolizes the sadomasochistic drive of its citizens, stirs it up, and uses it, legalizes it . . . [how it], therefore, becomes possible to be victims or assassins within the terms of the law.”

Despite critics’ claims to the contrary, Cavani’s explicitly erotic re-styling of the SS uniform is not a neo-Nazi attempt to take perverse pleasure in the Third Reich’s most extreme abuses of power. Nor is it a reduction of fascism to nothing but “a pretext for exploiting themes of kinky sex.” *The Night Porter* is not a prescription for how power ought to function, but an allegory for how it does.

Today, in the midst of another series of endless wars, secondhand versions of Cavani’s paragon of perversity abound. These copies all too easily substitute the Nazi raiments at the center of *The Night Porter*’s iconic image for any number of other, more generalized uniformed forces. These images tend to embody a kind of playful casualness that Rampling’s characterization does not, a lively bawdiness that works to displace the (SS or police) uniform’s association with violence and death by directing our attentions towards the “reproductive narrative” that is literally posited by the models’ heaving breasts and glowing skin.



Cover artwork for Liliana Cavani’s 1974 film *The Night Porter*. Courtesy of the Internet.



*The Night Porter* (film still), 1974. Directed by Liliana Cavani, distributed by The Criterion Collection. 118 minutes. Courtesy of the Internet.

While much is lost between Cavani’s ashen *femme fatale* (born within the *Camp*) and her progeny (born within the free market), I’d suggest that this ribald style’s foremost political challenge nonetheless remains intact—even if more recent styles tend to camp or commercialize this powerful aptitude for the sake of sublimating its implications. Taken as a whole, these figurations all “work” by drawing fetishistic attentions towards the deeply horrifying knowledge that orderly, modern forms of beauty cannot only survive, but can literally “get off” in hideous proximity to radical forms of violence. These styles highlight how uniforms function to materially harness and instrumentalize our desires’ transformative energy for the sake of varied interests. As the French philosopher and critic Michel Foucault explained in a 1974 interview for *Cahiers du cinéma*, “*The Night Porter* [’s] problem is—in general as in the present conjuncture—a very important one: it’s that of the love of power,” or the undeniable problem that, “Power has an erotic charge.”

Ultimately, all uniforms work to provide us with a stable and immediately fulfilling sense of power. The uniform produces an ostensibly immutable and powerfully predictable body—a body that stands in opposition to the capricious and more volatile corpses captured by everyday fashions. Positioned beyond the unpredictability of “fashion,” the uniform becomes a perfect object of desire. But situated outside the purviews of civilian life, its inaccessibility gives its wearer the decisive ground needed to produce the circumstances and terms under which “justifiable” forms of lethal, corporeal violence might be enacted by the selectively dressed few.

In Cavani’s debauched re-figuration of the uniformed body, the uniform’s power is proffered as extreme, differentiated (i.e., gendered) profanity. It is presented as an impious woman who takes pleasure in toying with the trappings of order and consistency. Put simply, Cavani subverts the stability of the uniform. She produces a uniformed body that is patently unpredictable, and in its wake, the popular proliferation of sexy-cop-costumes work to trivialize this challenge. Unlike the figure located at the heart of *The Night Porter*, these camp yet predictably heteronormative costumes fail to challenge the uniform’s authority. Rather than reveal just how constructed the power of the uniform is, and how complicit we all are in buying into its power, these ready-to-wear fetishes reify the uniform’s power and the authority of uniformed forces.

*The Night Porter* exposes the extent to which “we” are all made to desire our own oppression within modern culture, or, how power’s strength has come to be measured by the degree to which it can be made desirable to those who are most brutalized by it. And not just within the extreme theaters of war, but within the relatively mundane performances of everyday erotic life and fantasy.

It is midway through *The Night Porter*’s narrative that viewers arrive at the iconic image used in the movie’s promotional posters. The scene, a “flashback,” fantastically combines the aesthetics of a Weimar cabaret (as painted by Otto Dix), the imagined horror of an “officer’s club” located in the heart of a death camp, and the Orientalist story of the biblical *femme fatale*, Salome. At the center of this

unbelievable setting, Lucia commences a kind of sadomasochistic parody of Marlene Dietrich’s playful and burlesque, cross-dressing character from the 1930 film *Morocco* (Mademoiselle Amy Jolly), and slowly sings a low-key version of one of Dietrich’s most popular songs “Wenn Ich Mir Was Wünschen Dürfte” (“If I Could Have Wished for Anything”). The film’s gifted costumer, Piero Tosi, replaces Dietrich’s famous “industrialist drag,” or tuxedo, with dour, SS fetish-gear, and the rest is history.

As the young, frail Lucia sings her dirge accompanied by a band of Nazi soldiers wearing party masks, baroque ruffs, and pancake makeup, she positively saunters around the room (much to her lover, Max’s delight); holding her small breasts in her gloved hands, teasing the other officers with a tasseled party favor, and pretending to offer them a look into her trousers. These men’s “dates”—*other prisoners who appear less complicit in the evening’s affairs*—seem to be made more nervous by Lucia’s presence than by the officers they are presumably being forced to escort. The fear that these other young women have of Max’s “little girl” is shortly confirmed, when Lucia ends her performance and (like Salome) is presented with a gift from her patron. It is a box containing the head of another one of the camp’s inmates, aptly named Johann—the subject of a complaint Lucia once made to Max in passing. As she peers into the box, Lucia bites down on her fingers and a look that is equal parts revulsion and excitement washes across her face.

This markedly ambiguous and unpredictable body does not just put a kink in our usual sense of order and “rightness,” it perverts any sense in which “the uniform,” with its consistent textures and predictably legible array of signifiers, might serve as a trope for comfort (or as grounds for love). It revels in that which we cannot *not* want to feel (i.e., arousal in the face of radical evil), and it suggests that the perversion of our normal sensibilities is precisely what contemporary erotics *must* be built upon should we ever hope to get out from under the sway of certain highly organized forms of power. For so long as “the uniform,” any uniform (from the most detestable to the most subversive), is allowed to make use of our desires, it will work to powerfully draw our desires towards *its* highly regulated terms. It will be what primarily sets the terms of our aesthetic and ethical fields. And when uniformity or sameness is law, then violence (i.e., the violation of law) necessarily takes exceptional, unique forms.

No “innocents” lurk in the shadow of Cavani’s image, or in any of its campy citations. The power of these styles lie in their capacity to demand that we consider the consequences of living in a culture where our bodies remain predictable instruments of “the greater good,” and where a form of comportment defined by its ability to arrest our unpredictable, chaotic desires reigns supreme.

1) Cavani, Liliana. *Il portiere di notte*. Torino: Einaudi, 1974, translation by the author.  
2) McCormick, Ruth. “Fascism a la mode or Radical Chic?” *Cineaste*. 6.4 (1975): 31.

Infrastructures Of Power  
And Magic

Ben Valentine

For most of recorded human history, the tallest buildings in the world have been religious: the physical manifestations of power and magic. Constructed to be visible at the greatest of distances, cathedrals loom large in our minds. Their spires reach upwards to the heavens, and their sermons down into our souls. At times, cathedrals were even designed for a god’s eye perspective.

For much of recorded Western history, power has been inextricably tied to the church. While kings controlled mighty keeps and large armaments, they bowed to the bishops and monks. The church had a power over the masses the kings couldn’t wield—a divine authority. This power was more metaphysical, even as they spent much of their wealth and hundreds of years building cathedrals to impose that power. Monarchs and priests became conduits of divine power that were meant to impose, both physically and emotionally, on every one of their subjects.

After centuries of rule in the Western world, religious icons were replaced by industrial power, by capitalism. Soaring over global financial centers, skyscrapers impressed upon us the power of money, reaching farther into the heavens than any cathedral ever had, even while often borrowing styles of their religious predecessors. In 1894, standing at a breathtaking 584 feet, Philadelphia City Hall became the tallest building in the world—and the first to soar above a religious spire—surpassing the previous record holder, the Ulm Minster cathedral in Ulm, Germany by 54 feet.

Philadelphia City Hall quickly lost that title in an American-led race to the highest, reaching its pinnacle with the 1973 construction of the Sears Tower in Chicago at 1451 feet tall. By the 1970s, the gods of the West had shifted from religious fervor to economic prowess, a statement that was reflected in the shift away from decadent architectural flourishes to the matte finish of steel and glass. The United States was the irrefutable king of capitalism, holding the record for the tallest building in the world for just over 100 years.

Just as the cathedrals before, these skyscrapers drew us in. While cathedrals promised salvation and protection, the skyscrapers promised riches to those who danced in their walls, and destitution for those not able to make it inside. This symbol of American power was quickly replaced by even taller skyscrapers in other countries. The Sears Tower held the record until 1998 when Kuala Lumpur built the Petronas Towers. After that came Taipei 101 in Taipei in 2004, and then in 2010 the Burj Khalifa in Dubai was built at 2717 feet tall. The Burj Khalifa remains the tallest building today. Following the money, these new mega-structures are popping up wherever newer markets have emerged, signifying the undeniable wealth and power of Asian markets whose leaders have adopted capitalism wholeheartedly.

Even if some of these countries still masquerade as communist, their skyscrapers show their true allegiances. Were the gods of capitalism no longer appeased by the West, or had the West something new to worship?

At the top of every skyscraper is a large antenna. As a boy this always surprised me. Didn’t the powerful want their office, their restaurant, or home to be the tallest point? Yet what had made all that wealth possible was the communication behind it, of which these antennas were vital.

The architecture of power of the 21st century has shifted from the cathedral, the castle, and the skyscraper to housing centers for the receipt and transmission of data. Now, this display of might has sunk into the land, into undersea cables, and into nondescript, heavily air-conditioned structures few could identify as anything meaningful to anyone. The crucial structures of the networks that allow for global commerce and communication (and surveillance) are hidden black tubes not even a foot in diameter, thoroughly unimpressive structures at the edges of oceans, and bland data centers in the middle of nowhere. There is no monumentality behind them.



Ulm Minster, Ulm, Germany. Tallest building in the world from 1890 to 1901. Courtesy of the Internet.



Wilshire Grand Center in Los Angeles, California. Currently under construction, foundation laid in 2014. Courtesy of the Internet.

It makes sense that the mighty lords of China have some of the tallest buildings today, but what about the saints of Facebook? With more users than any single country has citizens, where are its towers, its identifiable presence in the world? Where do I go to pray to the blue god of Facebook?

The king, the priest, and the Rockefeller have become the Google or the NSA. 60 Hudson Street in New York, formerly the headquarters of the wire transfer and money order company Western Union, is now home to over 100 telecommunications companies and an algorithmic trading device that can make trades faster than those of Wall Street. At 2.9 million square feet, 111 Eighth Avenue remains the fourth largest building in Manhattan and has been the east coast headquarters for Google since 2010. These colocation centers are housed in the gutted remnants of the old sacred halls of capitalism.

These online companies and organizations slide into networks that span the Earth and distribute themselves for maximum impact and minimum accountability. They spread or “distribute” their missionaries across the globe and slide in between every aspect of our daily lives, even our most intimate conversations. We welcome them there. As the skyscraper became a hollow metaphor Asia employed to surpass the West, neoliberal power was reconstituted into nearly invisible satellite streams and GPS transmitted to magical black screens we feel obligated to examine upon awakening. The old dream of kings and priests to have a little black leather Bible in every citizen’s pocket has been achieved, only as magical glass tablets, and companies like Airbnb and Uber get the money we were meant to pay in tithes and taxes.

I once unwittingly had drinks while lounging on a waterbed with friends on top of Los Angeles’s largest colocation center, the Wilshire Grand Tower. This is one of the holiest of sites of today’s neoliberal economy and I didn’t even know I had entered its sacred grounds. I wouldn’t know what rites to perform if I had. As someone who studies these things, I am constantly struck by just how mundane these buildings are. The campuses of Google and Facebook are shiny happy playground for tech wizards, with more money than they know what to do with and more power than they’ll ever admit. The banality of power today belies the extent that it reaches.

From the tallest hotel in Battambang, Cambodia, where I live, I look down at cell towers towering over the flat farms and short buildings that dot the landscape all the way to the horizon. They’re much taller than the Buddhist wats and this new luxury hotel. While the hotel is a proud symbol to local capitalists of the times to come, the cell towers are in control here.

Even as much of the world comes online in the next decade, developing countries won’t get the infrastructures we rely on for our power. The roads, the hospitals, the schools, and the innumerable, now-invisible resources that are the bedrock on which soft power stands aren’t being built for the global South. The US and Facebook only want the next billion connected to their data hungry eyes, searching for more money to build more power, and “all military-age males who might be a threat to that power.” The prayer of today’s networked missionary priests is “connect, observe, categorize, and capitalize.”

In much of the world, cell towers are and will remain the tallest man-made structures around, creating connections between each other and, perhaps more importantly, with the US. They are the last converts and they must join. These tech companies will send holy silver balloons into the sky or fleets of magical unmanned planes to find each and every one, and connect them to us. This new power remains a Western power, even as it secretly moves through an international network. Though this outreach may appear to be obfuscated, it is still centralizing just as it was prior to the World Wide Web.

Conversely, the Abraj al-Bait, the third tallest building in the world, stands over the Kaaba in Mecca as a signal to the West that the Middle East’s power remains firmly tied to religion: that Islam is both a religious and economic force to be reckoned with. These super-structures are not for the West—non-Muslims aren’t even allowed to enter Mecca. The people who circle the Kaaba in prayer know where their taxes are due, or maybe more importantly, where they aren’t. Maybe this is why the sacred penta-union Five Eyes (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and United States) spend so much time watching them. Their idolatry doesn’t fit with the true cathedrals of today. They must fall in step; they must buy our goods and worship our gods.

But what if our Wi-Fi isn’t magic? What if we’re only connected to each other? What if the wisdom of the crowd is contingent on network affordances, which are determined by businessmen in conference rooms hoping for a raise, or by accidental remnants from coders who don’t really give a damn?



# The Informal Economy And The Global Art Market

John Zarobell

Standing around the Parking Lot Art Fair in San Francisco last May, I was surrounded by a variety of artists who showed up by 7 a.m. to claim parking spots to exhibit their art at a pop-up art exhibition staged outside of a bona fide art fair (Art Market San Francisco), taking place at Fort Mason Center nearby. Satellite art fairs are all the rage, but this one was a bit different. There were no dealers presenting artists, no booths, no walls or labels, and no fees paid to the organizers: instead it was a group of artists with no institutional affiliation. The crowd was pretty good on this sunny Saturday, and though the organizers emphasized that nothing could be sold unless an artist acquired a vendor’s permit from the city, transactions were tendered. The spectacle of artists organizing their own make-shift art fair in a parking lot with little prospect of legitimate commerce is a marvelous example of the informal economy at work in the contemporary art world, an economy whose effects have been little considered in the ample discussions of the global art market that have been taking place in the 21st century.

The term “informal economy” was first used by Keith Hart in the 1970s to describe how individuals in developing nations invented new economic devices in order to survive in a world with very few “regular” employment opportunities. Since then, informal economy has been a term employed to describe bottom-up efforts to generate a livelihood among those without secure financial footing in the global economy. It may not be a familiar term, but the concept of the informal economy is not foreign to anyone who has tried to make ends meet as an artist. Edgar Feige has broken down the underground economy into segments: the illegal economy, the unreported economy, the unrecorded economy, and the informal economy. For my purposes, I will use the term informal economy to refer to the last three sections, namely any transaction that is unrecorded, untaxed, and unregulated but not explicitly illegal. This is also described as the “gray market” to distinguish these economic activities from the explicitly illegal “black market.”

This distinction is spurious to a certain degree. While some have estimated the black market to be 20% of the global economy, informal employment makes up half of the world’s jobs, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).<sup>1</sup> While the distinction between illegal and legal business practices may seem clear enough on the face, there is a blending of black markets with gray markets and legitimate—if less regulated—markets such as the art market play a role in this process. The legitimate segment of the art market can be blended into gray and black without detection because there is so much money and art tucked away offshore, beyond regulatory scrutiny. Given the existence of offshore financial mechanisms employed by high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) who invest in art, it would be difficult for a seller of a work of art to determine whether the money transferred to cover the artwork was “clean” because money launderers are known to employ the tactic of “layering” to hide the origins of assets and blend “dirty” money with legitimate investments. One example directly relevant to the art world is the expanding domain of free ports.

A free port is a storage facility that exists formally outside of the territorial jurisdiction of any country. The Geneva Freeport, the first of its kind, was originally created in 1888 to store grain and other agricultural products in transit. The essential aspect of the free port, according to *New York Times* reporter David Segal, is the “temporary exemption of taxes and duties for an unlimited period of time.”<sup>2</sup> While one cannot store grain for an unlimited period, more valuable commodities such as art and wine (to say nothing of gold bars) could be stored much longer. In the era of offshore expansion in the late 20th century, tax loopholes and secrecy domains acquired a much greater significance in the global economy and, for art, the free port became the physical equivalent of the Swiss Bank account. Invisible to tax authorities, foreign governments and even the insurers of the art works themselves, art could be stored there with complete anonymity and sold without any taxes being paid.



Beijing Freeport. Courtesy of the Internet.



Geneva Freeport. Courtesy of the Internet.



Luxembourg Freeport. Courtesy of the Internet.

The use of free ports to store art marks a new era in the commoditization of the work of art. It is difficult to imagine a reason to keep artworks in a free port unless there is speculation going on. If you are a collector of fine art, you want to be able to see and to appreciate what you own. But if you are a speculator, all you need is storage since you are betting that the work is going to increase in value. So the free port is the perfect place to park your speculative art purchases because they cannot be traced to you and no government can tax you on these assets. Therefore, if you want to corner the market on the work of a certain artist and wait for it to escalate in value, the free port is your best bet.

In his expansive account of the development of the offshore financial world, Nicholas Shaxson underlines how certain countries, beginning with Switzerland, have regulated financial secrecy as a means to ensure the discretion of the banking industry and to protect assets held in these countries from external regulatory mechanisms.<sup>3</sup> Such a governance model is called a “secrecy jurisdiction.” This means that if you made a lot of money that you don’t want to report on your income taxes, you can park it in a secrecy jurisdiction and the tax authorities will not be able to find evidence of fraud because it is against the law for these organizations to report the contents of their accounts to the authorities. This does not mean, of course, that all money in Swiss (or Cayman) banks is the result of ill-gotten gains, but it does mean that no one can ever find out whether it is or not. The same is true for free ports. No one can tell if the art inside was stolen, bought with drug money, or simply a prudent investment expected to yield great returns in time. The secrecy of free ports, combined with the unregulated nature of the art market, means that it is very difficult to connect owners with works of art that are stored in a free port. No government can regulate, tax, or investigate property stored inside a secrecy jurisdiction, and so, for all intents and purposes, the art in free ports becomes invisible. Like an offshore financial center, the exclusive high-end domain of the art market is a secrecy domain, and in that world an informal economy thrives.

Yves Bouvier is an excellent example. As the owner of Natural Le Coultre, which runs the Geneva, Luxembourg, Monaco, and Singapore free ports, he is heavily invested in tax-free secrecy jurisdictions, but a recent scandal has exposed the nature of his business practices. In February 2015, he was indicted for money laundering in Monaco in relation to a deal he brokered for the Russian oligarch

Dmitry Rybolovlev. The accusations, denied by Bouvier and as yet unproven, involve a gap in price between the buyer and seller of a Picasso painting that Bouvier brokered. It is certainly not the first money laundering accusation in the art world but the domain of private dealers and intermediaries is a secretive one and any problems are rarely aired in public. While such an accusation is rare, it also exposes the practice of carefully planned negotiations for high-end artistic merchandise that happens outside of the media spotlight and the attention of regulatory agencies and tax authorities. My point is not that anyone involved with free ports is involved in shady business deals, but that much of the top end of the art market is already an informal economy existing beyond regulatory oversight and the players make their own rules since there is no regulatory body overseeing international art transactions.

Considering how the art market has evolved in conjunction with globalization, there has been a clear expansion of cross-border exchange of artworks. As the gap between national regulation and international commerce widens, so does the opportunity for criminal elements to engage in otherwise legitimate forms of exchange. Because it is formed by international commerce, the art market has embraced the globalization of finance and adopted elements of the offshore financial system. The result is that there is a burgeoning art economy that is invisible, undetectable, and so far unmeasured. There is no telling just how large a portion of the art market the offshore system hides.

It is not so difficult then to imagine how free ports allow artworks to be layered into the gray market, but authors who examine the informal economy and offshore finance have also noted that legitimate enterprises sometimes subcontract with informal enterprises in order to make their bottom line and we can find this dynamic in the global art world as well. The sharing economy has brought us more than just Airbnb and Uber—there are also websites that facilitate art auctions and private art sales, and international art fairs also allow many opportunities to skirt national regulations for private actors. Further, artists are the perfect demonstration of an informal labor pool, performing work at home and thereby evading workplace regulations, consigning and sometimes selling their product without a formal contract, and working on the margins of the formal economy.

The informal economy in the art world is not only a series of shady business deals—though it does include this category—but it is also a way that the distant and objective art market is personalized and made immediate. It is both a symptom of the shrouded financial transactions of the offshore economy and it is a salve to soothe the wounds that capitalism inflicts on those whose labor eschews its financial logic. Artists, curators, and non-profit directors, among others, work for free because they want recognition and they want to participate in a public conversation, but also because they do not want their labor to be monetized. Their actions provide a surplus that cannot be quantified and the rewards they receive for doing so are not the kind of thing you can claim on a tax form. Despite being tied to the economic structures that govern the rest of the world, and needing to earn a living, various actors in the art world—artists first among them—participate in a shadow economy where monetary value is not the ultimate goal or the arbiter of reality. They both participate in and reinvent the art market to suit their own needs and as a means to realize their own desires.

So the market for art is no simple thing. Though it is being measured with more precision than ever before, there are so many immeasurable transactions that what we think of as the art market is only a passing glance at what actually exists. It is quite possible that the scale of the informal art market is equal to or greater than the market that is recorded by cultural economists. Certainly, there are market manipulations that are invisible to the general public, if more accepted within a smaller coterie of participants. But there are also uncalculated domains of financial exchange, sales that are off the books, and generous contributions to the development of the aesthetic dimension of the human spirit that could never be quantified. What did it cost to put on the Parking Lot Art Fair? Ostensibly nothing, but that labor and those transactions, immaterial and otherwise, count for more than we might at first imagine. If all the artists and other art world actors who perform labor for free were to bill for these services, how much would it come to? This is a question that no economist can answer with any precision.

1) Gilman, Goldhammer and Weber (eds.), *Deviant Globalization: Black Market Economy in the 21st Century* (New York and London: Continuum, 2010).  
2) David Segal, “Swiss Freeports are Home for a Growing Treasury of Art,” *New York Times* (July 21, 2012). Accessed at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/22/business/swiss-freeports-are-home-for-a-growing-treasury-of-art.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/22/business/swiss-freeports-are-home-for-a-growing-treasury-of-art.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).  
3) Nicholas Shaxson, *Treasure Islands: Uncovering the Damage of Offshore Banking and Tax Havens* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

# Can The Blockchain Save Digital Art?

Nicholas O'Brien

The Seattle Art Fair has generated a significant buzz for being one of the first instances of an earnest attempt to marry tech money with the art world. While others have tried to wed the boom of over-valuated, venture-capital-infused businesses to speculative contemporary art markets (including last year’s Art Silicon Valley / San Francisco), none have been primarily instigated from within the tech-industry. For the Seattle Art Fair, Microsoft co-founder and private art collector Paul Allen attempts to bring together industries that have been dancing around each other for quite some time. Whether the fair can be viewed as a success or not (or depending on what metric of success one wishes to use), it seems as though the nut of contemporary art being of interest to boy billionaires is finally being cracked.

The fair didn’t come off as overly tech-centric or pandering to the interests of genius programmers. That being said, some gallerists who focus on digital art and so-called new media undoubtedly saw an opportunity to reach a much sought-after audience. Interactive sculptures, drone painting performances, and HD videos of 3D renderings attempted to lure collectors by appealing to shared interest in contemporary technology. As fruitful as tapping into a pool of newfound wealth can be for emerging artists working with technology, I can’t help but wonder if abiding by the tropes and strategies of art market economics stifles the potential disruptive qualities of digital art practices.

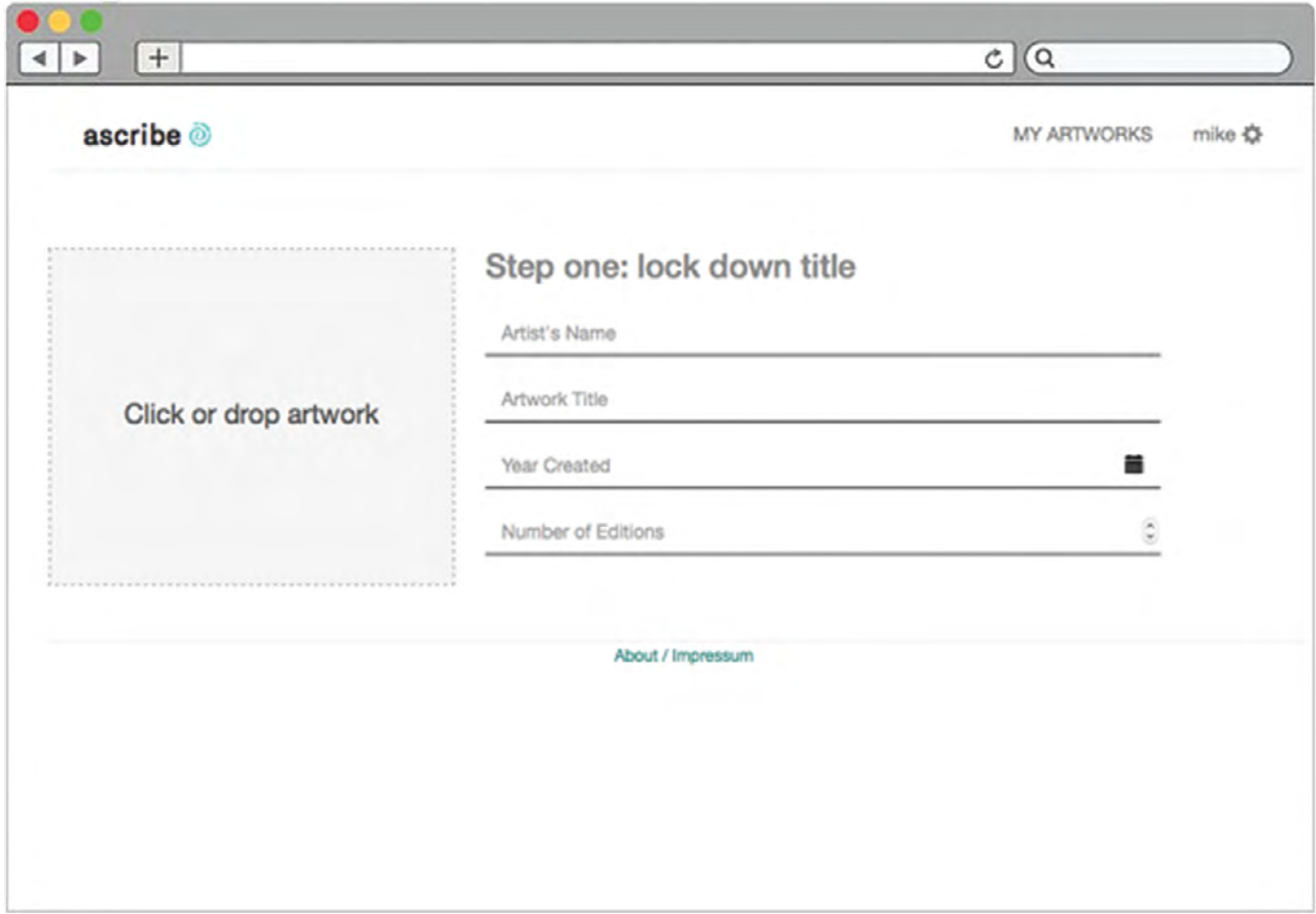
The Seattle Art Fair might be an easy target for directing these criticisms—it does not, after all, attempt to claim any radical agenda and only loosely promises a unique opportunity for emerging and established gallerists to interface with tech-industry collectors. However, for artists already invested in and responding to digital culture, the Seattle Art Fair might seem like a step backwards. Is a fair made and financially fronted by a well-known technologist in a technology hub the best bet for artists working in digital media to achieve long-term success? Perhaps a more important question could be: has the moment when digital art could confront the status quo of the art world already gone?

I ask these questions, particularly in the wake of the Seattle Art Fair, because I have seen, repeatedly, how digital art suffers from trying to be something that it is not. Over the years, many have tried to bring digital art into the contemporary fold, but few have made it stick in any meaningful way. If anything, private conversations I’ve had with digital artists about their experience with traditional art world dealings have been mostly negative. Though these artists yearn for recognition and participation within a larger contemporary art discourse, most inroads that lead toward that activity appear to contain unforeseen compromises that go against the ethos of their practice. Where some have found great success in translating their concepts from the browser or screen to the gallery, others continue to struggle to appease market demands and traditional methodologies for creating “significant” or salable work.

I suspect that much of this has to do with inherent political and social differences between digital media and the commercial art world. This probably comes as no great shock, but I think that recognizing these differences still gets systematically overlooked by artists and dealers alike. I will resist the temptation to fully enumerate these differences here, but instead will merely say that one primary divide is that digital art wants to be free and commercial art wants to be owned. This gap, though simply phrased, is the most significant problem facing gallerists and dealers wanting to bring together digital artists and the tech industry.

Finding a middle ground where digital art can remain free and where commercial galleries value the propriety of ownership has found some recent headway within the tech industry. Initial attempts at solving some of these systemic problems started bubbling up when Anil Dash and Kevin McCoy teamed up at Rhizome’s Seven on Seven event in 2014 to create a cryptosignature service called Monegraph. Using a cryptocurrency called Namecoin, the duo proposed creating a system wherein artists could authenticate works distributed online against forgery or unauthorized duplication. More recently other companies have also taken up the mantle of attempting to create a system of cryptosecurity to assist artists and creatives to gain more power over their content.

For roughly two years, a company based in Berlin called Ascribe has been attempting to create a magic circle where creators and owners can manage, oversee, and troubleshoot the distribution of intellectual property over digital networks. Started by partners



Screenshot from Ascribe.io tour showcasing interface for uploading content. Courtesy of Ascribe.

Masha and Trent McConaghy with Bruce Pon, Ascribe is using the blockchain to create what they’ve called an “ownership layer of the Internet.” According to Trent, the blockchain is like a “a database or spreadsheet, just one with very special characteristics.” He added: “Once you add an entry to it, you can’t remove it. Those entries are public and transparent for all to see. As a result, no one owns it—or another way to look at it is everyone owns it.”

I spoke with Masha, Trent, and Ascribe’s arts organizer Jazmina Figueroa over Skype several weeks ago to discuss how their product was attempting to create “digital ownership for the creatives of the world.” By allowing users to register work and embed encrypted metadata into assets they wish to distribute online, Ascribe is attempting to give everyday users a legal leg up against a world of endless terms and conditions on proprietary websites.

This is not to say that Ascribe is merely another service for tracking content online. Consumer/user-based web traffic analytics systems have been around for several years, and combined with social media analytic services found on Facebook and Twitter, users have been able to observe extensively the online distribution of their content. But access to this information alone is not sufficient for users to claim ownership of intellectual property. In most cases, users who distribute personal content of any kind have very little knowledge about their intellectual property rights. According to Trent, what Ascribe hopes to do is to “fix the user experience of intellectual property.” By “wielding” the intellectual property more easily through Ascribe, the creators of this service are hoping to give back power to creatives by giving them tools to claim proper attribution.

Currently, attribution is nearly impossible to trace without tirelessly combing the web manually. Masha told me of one story where a video artist was employing someone on a regular basis to search for bootlegs of her work online and to send cease and desist notifications. Needless to say, the labor of maintaining attribution for most artists who want to prevent unauthorized copies of their work to circulate online, siphons time and energy away from one’s studio practice. Where some attribution can be embedded and traced within the source code of HTML files and/or Whois domain registration information, more discreet forms of media like GIFs don’t have this affordance.



Experimental certificate prototype by Monegraph. Courtesy of Monegraph.

As an independent curator and arts professional working with digital artists, Masha had been experimenting with and researching ways of getting collectors more interested in work made and distributed primarily online. She initially found that the main concern for collectors had to do with the provenance of the media. Collectors not only wanted to make sure that the work they owned was genuine, but also wanted to be reassured of the origin of a work. It was not only important that the creation of the work be documented and accounted for, but that the transfer of the ownership be equally legitimate. This is where the blockchain becomes particularly useful, because modifications to an asset’s ownership can be re-attributed at the point of sale, thus preserving its provenance.

Maintaining transfers of ownership and understanding the copyrights held on a work is often the least visible and hardest to access piece of information for any work of digital media. Some long-term plans for Ascribe are to use the blockchain to make ownership more visible for everyday users. Jazmina added how the tool could also be used by communities of makers to support their friends:

“We were brainstorming and wondered if a user found someone’s work [online, if we] could work together to properly attribute media. Someone could find a piece and say, ‘This is me!’ or else help out a colleague/peer . . . There becomes a chance for action for everyone to get proper attribution as opposed to one person trying to control everything.”

By exposing this layer of ownership to everyday users, and allowing those individuals to act/engage with how their content is circulating online, Ascribe starts to outline a potential common ground for commercial art and digital art to coexist. Ascribe is creating what Trent calls a “thin layer” on top of the Internet for proper attribution to exist in a transparent way. Whether an artist decides to financially capitalize on preserving that attribution is left to their discretion. In other words, Ascribe only provides information; it does not provide mandates. All decisions—whether they be cease and desist orders or letters of thanks—are left to the individual who properly owns the work. As a way of encouraging the latter behavior, Ascribe is partnering with Creative Commons to encourage users to protect their work under a “Free Cultural Works” approved license. In doing so, “ownership” does not have to be synonymous with “commercial.” Trent continued to emphasize the need for digital media to remain open and accessible by discussing ownership as a component of an end goal:

“We’re not really interested in ownership as much as we’re interested in attribution. Ownership is just a benefit of attribution . . . Attribution is unfortunately a bit of a mouthful, and people don’t understand it as quickly. We don’t have a formed solution yet, but emphasizing the ability to share securely is a really exciting idea . . . When you even say the phrase ‘intellectual property’ it implies something that you own. Property is analogous with ownership. But there’s no agreed upon phrase for ‘intellectual attribution.’ There’s no phrase, but there really should be!”

Perhaps I should argue that Seattle Art Fair isn’t necessarily a step backward, but maybe just a step along the long road of trying to find the best meeting point between the worlds of digital technology and contemporary art. This ongoing process of shaping that middle ground won’t be solved by a simple keystroke and a genius piece of IP, but participation is necessary from all invested members. Designing the better phrases, and better frameworks, can’t happen in isolation from one another, and it is my hope that better alternatives for addressing our problems happen together.



During MAK NITE Lab on May 31st, 2015, the first digital artwork (a file) was purchased on cointemporary.com for bitcoin using ascribe.io to authenticate and transfer the ownership of the file through the blockchain. © MAK/Nathan Murrell.



# The Anti-Genius, Or, Why Do Curators Talk Like That? (Part Two)

## John Rapko

*Dedicated, as promised, to Dave Hickey*

Everyone remembers one's first time. In 2002, I first heard a lecture by an international curator,<sup>1</sup> that is, one of the people who was allegedly the leading figure in contemporary art since the end of the Cold War and the subsequent pre-eminence of "biennials," large, short-term shows of international artists occurring regularly on every continent except Antarctica. The speaker, the French curator Nicolas Bourriaud, was not so much connected with biennials as with an innovative contemporary art space, the Palais de Tokyo in Paris. There was an air of expectancy, for Bourriaud had recently coined the term "relational art" (or rather *art relationnel*, a monograph explicating the term was published in French in 1998 and had not yet been published in English at the time of Bourriaud's lecture<sup>2</sup>), and art magazines had begun trumpeting this new kind of art as the latest thing, the most "advanced" art of our time. It had something to do with inducing the establishment of human relationships. But what?

Relational art, so we were instructed, is the authentic art of our time. The historical contrast is with pop art, the previous, though alas now outdated, authentic art. We learned that in the not-so-distant past we lived in the world of industrial consumerism. Our primary way of forming identities, expressing and enjoying ourselves, signaling our social status to each other, and creating the quotidian meanings and significances of our lives was through buying from the great menus of the supermarket and the auto dealership, and "consuming" our purchases. The kind of art appropriate to this condition was one that mirrored both this kind of life's contents and their manner of production, and then held the image of these, a synthesis of consumer icon and mechanical presentation, up for inspection. So the need for an art of silkscreens of coke bottles and movie stars, and of paintings of soup cans and wallpaper, was born. But now, so we were asked to understand, we live in a different world, one of information, and information is something that is made for, and indeed only exists in, communication, i.e., something that passes from person to person. In this passage some "relationship," albeit thin and ephemeral, is established. So our new authentic art must reflect this condition. We need an art without "objects," one wherein the artist modestly conceives of herself as setting up a situation wherein information begins to move. But for information to flow, some persons other than the artist must actively take up the information, and then others in turn might respond further to those first active recipients. There is no consumption of the process of artistic making and reception but only the possibility of further extending the passages of communication. Since there is never a "complete" work offered, but only a potentially non-finite process of communication, there is nothing for aesthetic judgment to latch onto. To the extent that such works can be evaluated, judged, and appreciated, they are so in terms of the relative density and duration of the relationships induced by the work. Relational works are only more or less interesting in their appeal to participate, and more or less productive of a density and durability of the relationships induced.

Fortunately, we were further informed, a number of artists have answered the call for this new kind of art, and Bourriaud laid it out for us: Rirkrit Tiravanija, Carsten Höller, and half a dozen others I have forgotten (likely those discussed in the book, including Angela Bulloch and Liam Gillick) were each represented by an image or two of one of their pieces, or rather, part of the piece, which the artist presented as the situation intended to attract viewer-participants and to induce communications in the service of establishing new relationships. In playing out that excruciating ritual lecturing so familiar to today's art enthusiast, Bourriaud put up an image, identified the piece depicted and the relevant artist, in a few sentences described the project here instantiated, and then pronounced the piece "interesting and productive." A further merit of the productive in such art was that, since such projects were artistically non-traditional but typically ranged across everyday life and mimicked the activities of some non-artistic practice or institution—such as cooking and serving Thai food, or selling handmade trinkets at a gift shop—these works attracted non-traditional audiences into the formerly insular and elitist world of late-modern and contemporary art.

Bourriaud described one piece as consisting of the display of documentation of what, in the eras before relational art, would have been called a well-meaning switcheroo: an artist solicited funds for a project, and then gave the money instead to a charitable organization of unimpeachable goodness. This was again pronounced "interesting"—but in what sense?—and "productive"—but of what? During the question period, I asked Bourriaud to consider an imaginary piece, identical to the one he described, except that the money went to an evil organization; would not that piece be more interesting in challenging the art world's complacent liberalism, and more productive in bringing the concerns, if not the proponents, of an evil ideology into the art world? After a bit of back-and-forth, Bourriaud sadly but with an unmistakable vehemence informed me that I was a proponent of the outdated ideology of genius. Egad, had I been

exposed again as a young foguey? At the time, I was most struck by the non sequitur (I had said nothing about genius, nor about artistic creation generally), but since then what seems more thought-provoking are the questions whether and why appeal in the discourse about contemporary art is allegedly outdated. More pointedly: Why is this most articulate and thoughtful of curators concerned to insist such? What role does this rejection play in the discourse of the international curator?

For the past two hundred or so years, the term "genius" marks the place of the mystery of artistic making insofar as that process results in superlative works. Though the high evaluation of superlative artworks as necessarily produced by genius is a product of romanticism, with Goethe and Beethoven providing the initial exemplars, something of the concern to conceptualize artistic process is nearly coeval with Western philosophy itself. Plato's early dialogue *Ion* provided romanticism, in particular Shelley, with one central model of the artist as *inspired* genius: the character Ion is supremely effective in reciting Homer, but he does so without being able to explain how he does it. The power to move the audience just happens, and he is like a piece of iron magnetized by Homer, and who in turn magnetizes the audience. Ion is also indifferent to the ethical or political import of his art, and is only concerned that he is monetarily rewarded for it. Aristotle's only surviving treatment of an art, namely tragedy, treats the art as *poiesis*, a kind of making wherein the product is distinct from the process out of which it arises. An art (or craft; Aristotle's term is *techné*) is a rationally organized practice oriented towards the production of some good.<sup>3</sup> *Poiesis* is distinguished from *praxis*, a higher and more complete kind of action wherein the outcome is among other things the very process itself.<sup>4</sup> Process as *poiesis*, including artistic process, is conceptualized in terms of a particular schema fundamental to Aristotle's thought, wherein the maker in some sense possesses the form or intelligibility of the product prior to engaging with the material from which the product arises; the producer brings the form to the material. Correlatively, the material is conceptualized as mere stuff, but full of potential, and the process of production is the actualization of some of the material's potentials. Aristotle also provides a rich array of other materials for thinking about artistic process, in particular with reference to what have been called "autotelic" activities—that is, activities such as playing the flute that are in some sense good in themselves and self-perpetuating. Still, it would perhaps not be a complete exaggeration to say that something like the Aristotelian conception of *poiesis* has dominated the Western image of the making of artifacts.<sup>5</sup>

One criticism of the appropriateness of Aristotle's schema for understanding artistic process that immediately suggests itself, concerns the assumption that the form or intelligibility of the work is somehow unaffected by the process of its materialization. It seems the near-universal experience of artists that the initial motivating conception of the work is drastically transformed in the artist's encounter with her materials. Indeed, William Kentridge has said that the real work of artistic making only begins when the initiating idea is abandoned. But the conception of the artistic process as the work of genius can readily accommodate this thought, and in many prominent formulations the genius is said to work "unconsciously" or "like a force of nature." Or, alternatively, in a typical modernist formulation the genius-artist's process is a work of self-discovery or "journey into the interior." And it is surely these romantic conceptions, which propose the artwork as a kind of counter to everyday artifacts in their reliance upon "inspiration," together with the slightly earlier thoughts from Kant that a genius' significant artistic achievements are necessarily original and do not arise primarily from the application of rules,<sup>6</sup> that are the target of Bourriaud's and other international curators' rejection.

Two further criticisms might seem to motivate Bourriaud's rejection of the genius-model and proposal of the relational artist as a replacement: (a) in the genius-conception, agency is wholly the prerogative of the maker. The artist is a form-giving agent who imposes some meaning on an otherwise unformed and meaningless matter, and the audience of the work has no allotted role in the work's consummation other than exercising a distanced, contemplative, hands-off appreciation. Both material and viewer are passive. (b) The genius-model ignores the historical and political dimensions of artistic making, and short-circuits possibilities for more collective forms of making and reception. The genius' artistic process is a timeless monologue, unanchored in place, wherein the genius only ever finds aspects of himself. The actual psychological, practical, and institutional embodiment of the genius-model inevitably carries with it further maligned characteristics. Perhaps the most repellent of these for a contemporary sensibility is the stereotypically gendered dynamics wherein active creation is figured as male, and passive reception as female. The genius-model also resonates with 19th-century productivism, which treats production as an unqualified good, and conceptualizes the material Earth as just a collection of resources to be extracted and put to use.

But if one granted that parts of the idea of the artist as necessarily a genius are unsustainable, should one also follow the international curator in rejecting the whole conception? And is Bourriaud's proposed replacement, the relational artist, sustainable, or even desirable? One of the most central discussions in the visual arts in the past fifteen years has been a tense exchange of criticisms of Bourriaud's conception between the art historian-cum-theorists Claire Bishop and Grant Kester. In a highly influential article in 2004 Bishop argued that Bourriaud offered no reason to think that the relationships generated by a piece of relational art were valuable or sustainable, and that the relational conception embodied the loss of a valuable political aspect of artworks, their "democratic" role of contesting

orthodoxies in favor of creating ephemeral micro-utopias that are "[u]nthinged both from artistic intentionality and consideration of the broader context in which they operate." When, in 2006, Bishop put similar criticisms to the significantly different model of a new kind of social art proposed by Kester, he responded that Bishop's criticisms themselves presuppose a kind of insufficiently social conception of art wherein the *viewer/theorist* can still grasp the meanings placed in work by an artist or artists. On Kester's own conception of social art, the ongoing contribution of numerous workers, the numbers or identities of whom are not rigidly fixed in advance, remove the (initial) artist from a position of principle, stipulating the meaning, or even the content and shape, of the work. My sketch here of the complex issues is highly truncated, but one can sense the un-decidability of the debate among the competing conceptions.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, Bishop and Kester would agree with Bourriaud in rejecting the genius-model.

To test this rejection, consider the recent remarkable work of the Bay Area photographer Bijan Yashar. Recently Yashar has exhibited two bodies of work. For one Yashar has photographed details of paintings not to offer the details for inspection but rather to render and stabilize two aspects of the viewing of pictures that are habitually treated annoyances and extraneous to appreciative viewing: the micro-textures of cracks, warping, and uneven applications of the paint; and the occluding pools of light created by spotlights, windows, and other sources of uneven illumination. The density of detail and evenness of focus create a peculiar sort of trompe l'oeil effect in making it seem that the smooth paper of the print itself has the rough texture of what is (merely) depicted thereon. A second group of photographs taken on Santa Catalina Island focus on the weathered surfaces of cracked paint and shreds of accumulated posters. These superlative works merit their own article, but for my limited purpose here I would urge that they fit comfortably within the genius-model (stripped of the repellent accretions noted above) in the way in which they are initiated by a kind of noticing and the fusion of project and perception that undergirds the body of the work. Further, the two bodies of work enrich each other in gaining additional meaningfulness in comparison; the Catalina works' greater distance from their motif acquires additional significance when contrasted with the close view of the photographs of paintings. Bourriaud and the international curators generally offer no reason to despise the kinds of exemplary significance that arise in an artist's development, achievement of a characteristic style, and the testing of that style in her practice; their exhibitions show them to be uninterested in this variety of meanings, and their anti-genius discourse jettisons the conceptual resources needed to grasp it.

Now, Bourriaud and the international curators might respond (without a non sequitur) that Yashar's work, whatever its merits, lacks the foregrounding of collective or inter-subjective production and reception demanded of the authentic art of our time. But consider a second example: the artist Gema Alava has undertaken a project wherein she led a single blindfolded individual through a gallery of a museum and described evocatively the works exhibited therein. She performed this action eleven times with different individuals as the piece *Trust Me* (2010). A striking feature of this is the novelty and the intensity of the experience of the blindfolded person, who experiences the voluntary and temporary sacrifice of vision as an inducement to heightened visual imagination, and further the intensification of what would otherwise be the auxiliary and unnoticed sense of sound (Alava's voice), touch (Alava's hand), and kinesthesia. Inter-subjectivity is foregrounded, but what is in striking contrast to relational art is the continued constitutive role left for a non-participant viewer—that is, most of us whose access to the piece is through photographs of an instance of it. The continued role of the contemplative viewer seems to me responsive to a problematic feature of Bourriaud's conception of relational art: its lack of wholeness or unity, whether perceptual or imaginary, or even as a regulative idea. For any group of people to form a social unity, they must sense themselves, grasp themselves, and understand themselves to be such a unit.<sup>8</sup> The collected co-contributors to a piece of relational art are no more or less members of a collective than a few hundred people who happen to find themselves at a shopping mall at the same time. Alava's piece, by contrast, induces a structure of complementary imaginative tasks: the blindfolded person knows herself to be visible to a viewer, whether directly or through being photographed, and so can set herself as a secondary task imagining being seen. The non-participant viewer has a central imaginative task imagining what it's like to be the blindfolded person.

When the international curator pronounces the end of genius, many babies are thrown out with the bathwater. Perhaps one way of seeing what is valuable in the curators' rejection of genius is to consider it as part of a criticism of the hyper-individualism that afflicts modern and contemporary art. But the curator has neglected to consider the perennial mechanisms and forms of meaning-making in the arts, while accepting the fashionable dogma that contemplative viewing is only a kind of passivity, and solely the artifact of bourgeois art. It's hard to avoid the suspicion that the curators' seeming obliviousness is not ideologically motivated, for the evident effect of rejecting the genius-model is to wrest agency from the artist, and the failure to construct a model wherein collective artistic meaning might arise in such a way that it can be grasped by those who produce it and those who appreciate it leaves only one person with a grasp of the work's meaning: the curator him- or herself. Yashar's and Alava's works show, by contrast, that there is nothing obligatory in following the curators' lead in this.

## Dave Hickey

## In Conversation With Jarrett Earnest (Part Three)

**Third Morning: Being Hit by a Soft Buick**

*Mid-morning phone call: "Jarrett—Dave. I'm going to leave tomorrow because I'm not having any fun. But I thought of some more things about art writing that could really save you some time so come over today when you have a chance."*

The biggest problem when I started writing criticism was transitions. "How does it get from here to there?" Gradually I read enough to realize that you don't use them. No transitions. What you do is what I call a "jump shift." In an art essay, I will start off with some sort of conversational anecdote and it will amount to about three hundred words, then you jump shift. An essay I was working on once started off with a little narrative about being in Julian Schnabel's studio while they were tearing out the window to move out a 30-foot painting. Julian is directing everyone with his hands in the air and one of the working guys turns and says, "I bet Julian was an asshole in high school." If you build that up and give it the time to create a little mise-en-scène, then you can just put a dot at the end and start again cold: "Julian Schnabel was born in Brooklyn, New York in April, 1951." Then you go into that if you have that first hook nailed. My trick is to write paragraphs—don't worry about where they go or if they go. After I have paragraphs I put them in order: here's the narrative, here's the hook, here's the lede, here's the jump shift—it's a little train that goes along and you find the place to hook in another two paragraphs, then it's the end. That means you are developing these little groups of leitmotifs. If you try to write it rationally, it will sound stupid because it's not rational. It's a set of waves. What I spend a lot of time on is just keeping it close to the ground, so we can go through this, we can go through Julian's background, we can go through the rise of neo-expressionism and get to the place I was ultimately going. Julian's career as a movie director, for which he was rehearsing when he was moving the painting through the window. That was the sort of loose hook that was there—and I'll write it up one of these days, maybe—so I'm sorta going there and I'm sorta starting here. But mostly, if you write good paragraphs, you don't need a transition, you can jump.

***You reference John Ruskin a lot, who would write endless, paragraph-long sentences, so what do you see that needs to be in a paragraph to make it a complete unit?***

Well I agree with Henry James who said the paragraph is the basic unit of writing—James's paragraphs are a bit more portly than mine are, since I believe in the nested theory that eight bars of music is, statement, restatement, release, return, and twenty-four bars of music is: statement, restatement, release, return. So you're almost trying to write the essay in each paragraph starting from a different point of view. But the thing is to write good paragraphs, and what you want is a good stop at the end of the paragraph, because if it stops well you can go anywhere from there. And you want a good lede, like in any story. The trick in a paragraph, I think, is that they are like sonnets in the sense that they have pivots, called "volta's" in a sonnet. There is a place in every paragraph where it *turns*. You start out here and you end up there in a slightly more skewed position. Three-fifths into a paragraph I better start turning—something better start happening. Same thing applies to the essay—three-fifths into the essay it better start turning. What imposing a rational structure on things (and Arthur Danto was the main offender in this infelicity) is that the marching parade just soaks into the soil. You have to go back to the visible as much as possible. My preference—which most critics ignore—is to spend a lot of time actually describing the work. If you can describe the work then you have said what you have to say about the painting. You can presume that you are moving right along. So we have the scene in Julian's studio, then you have lots of background—what an asshole Julian was in high school in Houston, where I first met him. I mean he was not really mean; he was just who he is, he has a sense of *drama*—

***You met Julian Schnabel when he was in high school?***

No, I met him when he was out of high school and hanging around Houston trying to be an artist. Julian was trading his crap to all of his friend artists for their art, and I'm sure they threw it all away—it looked like crap—but I'm sure the ones that held them are very happy. So, here is your lede, here is your backstory—such that you need to fill in historical things—here is your description of the work, and if you can't get out from those three points *you're in trouble!* It sounds a lot more mechanical than it is. A lot of it is prosody and instinct. Sometimes I don't do it at all, but in general I try to start off with that thing I suggested to Peter Schjeldahl—"the lady standing next to me looking at the Kiefer blew her nose."

***When it comes to that set-up, the conversational lede, the biographical stuff, and then the description, how do you connect the biographical to the descriptive?***

It will connect because you say it does. The narrative pushes it up. You're the boss. That is what you discover, that is why you don't worry about transitions. If it's not there, the words will put it there and you won't have to do all the shit Arthur Danto does. I think it's fairly important to make your preferences clear; I've written essays where I've said, "In my universe I don't like this art. But in this universe I'm going to tell you how it might be good."

***What do you think of the personal essay as a form? Is "art criticism" something else?***

I mostly write personal essays. I find them much more flexible. I really learned how to do it when I was writing slick magazine profiles on celebrities—how do you profile a celebrity? where do you put in their background? where do you put in their performance—how do you arrange things like that, without having to say "thus" or "because" too much, *because you shouldn't do that*. Better to describe Roger Miller changing clothes 10 times before a show.

***The logic of the celebrity profile seems to be the "up close and personal," something more than the public face everyone knows.***

Bob Christgau used to say, "You are not the celebrity's friend, you are the reader's guy." I agree. You are noticing the socks with the holes in them and the bottles of cognac and whatever is around. I think you will find when you start doing this, it's like dressing a set, that you'll put in the things you want, like how in Julian's apartment there is a lot of North African stuff, but like Jeff Koons, strangely enough, nothing is funny. She was really having fun. In a sane world she would be recognized at the greatest art comedian of the 20th century. The Carol Burnett of art.

***How does humor and wit function in both your writing about art and the work of art itself?***

I thought early on John Currin was humorous, now it just looks frat house. There is art like Ruscha's that is witty, but wit is not going to get you a blowjob in New York. Personally, although I traffic in wit, I know that it doesn't really help and that people don't really like it. I come out of Alexander Pope and all of that ongoing ongoingness. So the idea of just lining all your little cars in the railroad yard and attaching them as they need to be attached is a pretty good strategy for me. I can't remember the day, but I can remember the feeling when I got an assignment that I *knew* I could write! When you think, "I don't know if I can write *this*," or, "What am I going to write about Bachman-Turner Overdrive?" you're dead. What I did with Bachman-Turner Overdrive, who fell somewhat short of valedictorians, was to invent a teenage companion, Norman, who was much hipper

there's not much there. I actually think that by going into the movies Julian saved himself—his movies are very nice. That is because, I think, Julian's temperament is Diaghilev's—it's the organizer, it's the guy that is casting the parts. He was always trying to make a movie for himself, which purportedly he did in *Basquiat* (1996). But how and where that connects to the paintings would be the hard part. If I were writing this connect to my imagination, I would basically call the paintings "set dressing."

***In what ways are figurative language—metaphors—useful or dangerous for describing art?***

Well, I wrote a piece about Lynda Benglis's big pour pieces that come out of the wall, and I ended up having to say about the same things about Robert Gober's legs coming out of the wall—they are about a natural world bifurcated by industry. I think that is right in both cases. I'm really an "everyday language" person, so if I start by saying, "The solution proscribed in this case..." I would say, "Would be a big dose of talent." You don't send out for figurative expression, it is forced out of the vocabulary in which you're writing. It just rises up. I think metaphors are forced up out of the prose.

***There was something you wrote about the Primary Atmospheres show, where you say the object's relationship to its form is that of aspiric to its mold, which I thought clicked a lot of evocative stuff together in a very simple way.***

That is pretty much the idea, and it's a version of the idea I was talking about with Jasper Johns: why does Jasper use letters and numbers and targets? Well, first because they are forms that have no originals and I think Jasper liked that, but, most importantly, they are *real stupid*, and stupid nearly always pays off in that sense.

***There is something he said to Leo Steinberg about the targets, that he uses them because they are something your mind "already knows," which is the same thing.***

Right, and I think that a lot of Jasper's iconography is just an excuse to make sexy surface paintings. I think children will be wondering about whether the target is an asshole for the rest of this century—and in Lari Pittman it occasionally is—but I don't think it is in Jasper's case. I like the logic of the flags: "The thing about the flag is not who made it but who salutes it"—"The best thing about the target is that you aim at it." You move the whole presence of the object into its extension in space. To go back to writing: I think you keep your promises. If what you're doing is all out of shape, the reason is probably that there is a promise you made up at the top that you are not keeping at the end. The fat lady in the second sentence must reappear if you're writing literary prose. Everything should be accounted for. But what you do about picking the wrong artists—shit, I don't know. I was talking about that Pistoletto piece, which was my first "big" essay, so I let it slide. That is why I find negative reviews much more difficult to write than positive reviews. I can figure out the conditions under which something might be good, but I can't explain why anyone would make bad art. I don't have a fucking clue!

***When you get into the description part of it, you mainly talk about the physical object itself in a tight frame, as opposed to the exhibition as an entity.***

If it is an exhibition I will usually pick out a typical object in the show. Nuance resides in the single occasion, so I think you're better off just talking about one. This goes back to the advice of Paul Williams, the songwriter: "Never put more than one interesting line in a song." And there is tendency to do that—you want to make everything gorgeous, but if it's a good hook just let it emanate. If you're being clear and grammatical don't worry about boring—people can read clear and grammatical very rapidly. If you want to make it hard, make it beautiful and difficult. Except criticism is a craft and not an art.

***You mainly write monographic pieces.***

That is what I write lately. I have this very interesting problem now: this story I should have been writing for two weeks while I've been down here seeing stars and jaguars, which is this story on David Levinthal. It's for the Smithsonian. There is a nice, simple, little "Smithsonian essay" to be written. But there is a much more complicated essay to be written about what happens when the stopped time in a toy and the stopped time in a photograph create the illusion of action—it's like a double negative. That is a little more grown-up than the Smithsonian wants, but ... There is also the argument to be made that "this is Western art because the size of the figure is related to the scale of the ground" so you can use a little bitty ground to make something look big. That seems simple enough, unless you have been to the Middle East or a Byzantine church—it's hard to describe. Even so, I like to write about things that I like but that I don't understand when I start. When I started writing I did learn some very basic rules, one of which is: don't start writing until you are ready to start writing. The transition from typewriter to computer, which you have never suffered, was that, on a computer, you can just write and erase and write and erase, but it won't get you there because you really need to wait until you have something to say. So—put it off.

***Until you have to do it?***

Yeah. Then you're getting more money per hour and you're not going to be boring. I can't imagine writing boring stuff for a long time. I think the deadline pressure really helps periodical journalism. Were it not for that I would probably still be revising my first little essay.

***Before you start writing do you envision how things go, like how the narrative works?***

No, I envision random words—a kind of bouquet of possible meanings. "Turtle," "veranda," "enfilade," or "mountain chickadee"—how they look."

***Descriptions?***

"Taller than a dog"—just vigorous little shots at describing or observing the art. I remember I wrote a pretty good piece on Mary Heilmann—I've known her for years. I knew her when she lived in El Segundo (all my girlfriends are ranked up and down the beaches of Southern California). I decided that the most persuasive, imaginative image of "Mary Heilmann" would be the Norman Rockwell picture of the little girl sitting out in front of the principal's office with a black eye and a big smile—that is *Mary*. She's such a willful imp that she didn't start painting until she was sure painting was dead. She was going around asking everyone, "Is painting dead?" Then, she started making paintings that have no lateral pressure—she was a ceramist—so all her paintings piss off at the edges, which is very effective of course.

All painters grow up learning discipline: "This is too much, this is too little, this goes in, this goes out, this should go flat"—all of these kinds of decisions. I always thought that Liz Murray had the ability to break every one of those rules. I don't think she ever thought, "This shouldn't stick out three feet," whereas any normal person would. Liz was perfectly free, and I think that explains her prodigious production. She was really having fun. In a sane world she would be recognized at the greatest art comedian of the 20th century. The Carol Burnett of art.

***How does humor and wit function in both your writing about art and the work of art itself?***



Jarrett Earnest reading Dave Hickey in the tub.

to childlike things, and I would take him theoretically on trips with me and he would keep me from getting too excited about Nils Lofgren or whatever was the latest pop of the day. There are thousands of devices. If the content is too personal, too much grounded in my experience, I'm much more comfortable going into the third person and writing it as "he."

***You did that for the introduction for the revised edition of Invisible Dragon.***

And I did it in the last essay in my short story book. The essay was called *Proof through the Night*, which I regard as the last great title from the Star Spangled Banner—I was happy about that. Proof through the night, don't we all need that? Also I have to tell you something else: one of the ways out of swanning narcissism, if worse comes to worse, is to quote yourself. You don't say, "I thought ...," you say, "I have a friend who thinks ...". Then you have some calm distance—you don't have to say who that person was. You really have a lot of options when you write, but that presumes that you have something in your mouth that you are chewing on, unlike that asshole at Princeton—he's not chewing on anything. What I'm saying is: a good essay on art is not always a good argument, it is a good story with implications—that is what you learn writing celebrity journalism. You are writing a story with available materials, available light. I learned how to do that—an evening in a room with Jeff Beck isn't as dazzling as you might think, but the interview was about Stratocasters. That is what Jeff Beck knows and loves so it was very sweet. Another real insight for me: I stopped taping interviews because I found that once I started using the tape recorder my eyes and ears shut off, like, "I'm going to trust the tape recorder on the table," and you can't do that. I write better than I transcribe, so I remember the voices.

You just need to understand that as you move on, you are not going to be any smarter than you are today. I'm not any smarter than I was when I was 23, but eventually I acquired the confidence that I was right. At first you think, "I think this, but everyone is going to hate me," then as you grow you think, but "I'm right—*fuck you!*" That is a good feeling. It gives you more energy if you think you're right about a certain kind of thing.

***I don't want to live in a world where everyone agrees, even if it is with me.***

I don't either! I do difficulty. If everyone loves it—I don't. I really think that Andy Warhol moved into Vallhalla by having his work largely misinterpreted. Barbara Rose still thinks the soup cans are ironic, *on no evidence whatsoever*. Just because she couldn't get her mind around them not being ironic, just because she couldn't see the residues of Mark Rothko amid the soup cans. Things like that can really fuck up the discourse. Like Wade Guyton, if you were old enough to have lived through the '70s, you don't really want to look at those Wade Guyton printouts and think of the shit everybody was doing in 1972 and threw away. A lot of artists now are suffering from what I call the "Dolly Parton problem," which she mentioned to me in her early days. She said, "The thing is, if you have big hits when you're 19 and 20 years old, it's really hard to change. You've got a bunch of disc jockeys saying: *Doesn't sound like Dolly!*"

***You were talking to her in the '70s, and she starts to transition into a pop idiom in the late-'80s?***

Mid-'70s. I went on the last tour she took with Porter Wagner. It was kind of fun and kind of sad. They loved each other, not sexually, but they had been singing together for years and it's hard to lose your harmony line. Dolly was really going somewhere. She's an amazing songwriter and getting hugged by her is like being hit by a soft Buick. But the Dolly Parton problem is going to grasp all these young zombie abstractions. Sooner rather than later they're going to have to have a new idea ...

***Do you feel you got perceived in a certain stylistic way you tried to move away from?***

No, I never tried to move away from it. I was really surprised, given the essays that I have written, that my accent and my home state would turn me into a monster. I've lost millions of dollars being from Texas, a place I detest, and I've always written about marginal, difficult artists—that is *what I do*. But show me to some academic feminist and she's right down my throat. I don't know why. Maybe I am a little sharp about academic footwear, but what do you want? Dull?

***What do you think it is to bring theoretical texts into teaching artists? Is there a best way?***

The writing that's not about art is the best, because the stuff about art is mostly lame, and most art is lame. I've taught a lot of books. I taught Northrop Frye, who is good because he classifies narratives in terms of the protagonist's control over the environment, so you start in the heroic mode where the protagonist has total control and you end up in the ironic mode where the protagonist turns into a beetle. It really helps kids sort out what they're doing and where they are placing things. It also helps abstract painters to see that there is a kind of class system in abstract painting. You can do Mary Heilmann right off the beach, or you can do Philip Taaffe right out of the beauty shop. Once you see these categories it gives you more clarity.

***You've written about a lot of artists that you know personally. Do you think that is useful or not useful?***

Actually, it is not useful at all. Artists are interesting people, there is no doubt about that, but they're like poker players. If you know a poker player socially, you know one person—that ain't the lady who plays poker with you. You know an artist as a person, but that ain't necessarily the one who makes art—it's a parallel reality. How someone as impudent as Ed Ruscha could have gone through life as such a courtly person—and he is a courtly person—don't ask me. And there are a lot of things I've written about people whom I simply don't like, but you don't have to be nice to be good, and all that like-don't-like shit just drips right away. I think that artists present themselves to the world very differently than they present themselves to their art. Maybe, if that were not the case, they wouldn't be artists. You were asking me if my rough manner was a defense mechanism? Yes. Except for my wife and Dolly Parton, I like art better than people. I would also say your theatrical promiscuity is a defense mechanism as well. I tried it. It worked, but I could never corner Hannah Wilke.

***Well, that is obvious. I would also say your theatrical promiscuity distances in the guise of being open.***

I know exactly what you mean: we develop these things because we are embarrassed by this ridiculous, wimpy profession—the art world is just plain wimpy, the people are way more wimpy—so we theatricalize our little edge. Nauman does this too. I have always done the things I say I've done, but it doesn't take a lot of years to do all the terrible things I've said I've done—it's not like a major investment of time to fuck up a lot. You will notice there is a lot of Dave in this interview, but not much you can understand.



Bijan Yashar, from Catalina series. Courtesy of the artist.



# On Point 2.07

## The Loneliness Of The Long-Distance Art Critic

Mark Van Proyen

I swear, we were there on time. The website said that the recent incarnation of the Agnes Denes *Wheatfield* in Milan would be open until 8:00 pm, but when we arrived at a few minutes after five, the site was closed—this owing to the time needed for a small army of caterers and stagehands to prepare for a special event to take place under a temporary pagoda that looked like a younger sibling of the Sydney Opera House. Nonetheless, a decent view of the piece could be had from the fenced-off perimeter around it, which, in terms of square meters, was somewhat larger than the original version that was installed under the auspices of the Public Art Fund at New York’s Battery Park in 1982. Next to the entry gate was a plaque hosting the heraldic emblems of all of the project’s sponsoring entities, some corporate, some government, but mostly *fondazioni* of the type that seem to have proliferated amidst the permacrisis that is southern Europe. No doubt these entities were providing the honored guests for the ensuing festivity, conveniently coordinated with EXPO Milan, that being the most recent iteration of what was once called The World’s Fair.

As was the case with the original 1982 version, the symbolism of the current *Wheatfield* remains pointed: at the moment when real estate becomes mega-exponentially more valuable than the land’s capacity for food production, a kind of absurdity sets in, and by calling attention to this absurdity as *absurdity* (rather than as the mass delusion of “normalcy”) is the point, because food is kind of important. I am told that the wheat will be harvested in the fall, and turned into baked goods that will be given away. From the looks of the large throng of refugees from North Africa huddled in a cordoned-off balcony at the Milano Centrale train station, harvest time cannot come too soon.

One could go on to read the piece as a latter-day ode to the cult of Demeter, sung at a time when the world could really use her help. Yet another reading takes note of the location of the new version: about halfway between Milano Centrale and the new corporate headquarters of UniCredit—perhaps the largest bank in Italy. The former is the world’s most complete and dramatic example of extant 1930s Italian Fascist architecture, while the latter is a hyper-futuristic phallus that towers over *Wheatfield* and the Milanese skyline like an upraised middle finger of gigantic proportions, the *vaffanculo qua non* of neoliberal triumphalism. It was not too long ago that UniCredit lost almost a quarter of its market capitalization in a single day of financial hemorrhage in the equity markets. But now it is back—resurrected!—although one wonders how long it will be before the rest of Italy follows suit. As it now stands, the building appears as the neoliberal *yang* casting a long shadow of *Wheatfield’s* *yin*, a lord of the manor surveying his domain of domesticated avant-garde art.

In 1982, Denes’s *Wheatfield* seemed uncanny and almost surrealistic. Part of the reason for this was its close proximity to Wall Street, which at that time had just begun to use computerized trading technologies and electronic fund transfer—removing much of the human element insofar as the international flow of capital was concerned. By placing something so economically fundamental as the amber waves of grain production in such close proximity to the circus of abstractions that was Michael Milken-era Wall Street, an obvious question pertaining to the common good was slyly raised and then answered with an immersive experience that traded intangible abstractions for the tangible reality of earth.

*Wheatfield* was and still is readable as an eco-feminist editorial on the earlier earthworks projects that were executed by Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, and Walter De Maria, many initially sponsored by Virginia Dwan, who owned the gallery that sold the editioned “documentations” of said projects. These artists received a lot of attention in *Artforum* during the early-middle 1970s, but their work was far from the be-all and end-all of land art. Writers such as Anna Chave have gone so far as to read rape fantasies undergirding Heizer’s brutalist upturnings of top soil, and San Francisco’s own Kenneth Baker published an eloquent book in 2008 about the analogy that can be made between De Maria’s *Lightning Field* (1977) and the unimaginable terror of a nuclear missile exchange. It was a topic that was on people’s minds on the eve of Ronald Reagan’s first term. At that time, a kinder and gentler land art seemed to be called for, and it first came in the form of Mierle Laderman Ukeles’s *Maintenance Art* projects undertaken with the New York City Department of Sanitation (circa 1972), followed up by Nancy Holt’s *Sun Tunnels* (1976—in memory of Smithson, who had died in a 1973 aircraft accident). Alice Aycock also did work in this vein during the late 1970s, but the jury is still out as to whether



Wheatfield and UniCredit, Milan, 2015. Photograph by Caroline Maxwell.

it was land art or public sculpture. Maybe the difference is not as important now as it seemed to be then, but at that time, it was crucial to divorce Earthworks from the realm of the human for the sake of calling attention to the workings of trans-humanistic geological time separated from humanistic biological time—from the standpoint of geological time, biological entities are mere infestations that come and go rather quickly. Thus, the sites of the early Earthworks tended to be the treeless deserts of the Great Basin and the Southwest, not just because they suggested the extraterrestrial topographies of vintage science fiction illustration, but because they were haunted by a remorseless indifference to the periodic bleatings that called themselves “human culture.”

George Kubler’s 1962 book titled *The Shape of Time* provided inspiration and guidance on this front (especially to Smithson), but when Denes executed *Wheatfield*, the polarity of humans and trans-humans found a different emphasis. The work did not partake in the remorseless indifference toward the human realm that gave the earlier Earthworks their sublime edge; rather, it showed a kind of nature that could, if given the chance, work in sustainable partnership with the human world, if that human world humanized itself away from abstraction, strategy, and paranoid projection. Not much sign of that ever happening.

To be forlorn is not necessarily to be forearmed. That was the takeaway from several dispersed art viewings in Italy during the summer. One of these was a small retrospective of the work of Charles Pollock presented at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, nicely coinciding with the rare presentation of Charles’s brother Jackson’s *Mural* (1943), which was originally commissioned by Ms. Guggenheim, and is now in the collection of the University of Iowa Museum of Art. Another painting by Jackson that remains in the Guggenheim collection titled *Alchemy* (1947) was also given new pride of placement, mostly to show off the stunning results of a lengthy restoration that it underwent during the past year. But Charles Pollock is a perplexity. He was ten years older than Jackson, and still managed to outlive his younger brother by 32 years. His early paintings bespoke the influences of social realism and American scene painting, and he flirted with almost every style that came along since that time, including one that was obviously and unconvincingly influenced by Jackson. But Charles’s story gets

interesting in 1956, the point when Jackson met his untimely death. It was almost as if a weight had been lifted from his shoulders, and the work that he started doing soon thereafter showed it—largish and foreboding works in oil featuring the interaction of two dark, deeply saturated colors. Think William Bazotes meets Franz Kline. Because Charles’s brother introduced him to the circle of artists that were close to Clement Greenberg in the 1940s, his work shifted again at the turn of the 1960s, this time toward the use of bright acrylic stain painting in the manner of Morris Louis and Helen Frankenthaler. These too were unconvincing: clearly the work of an artist who was trying too hard to fit into a mode defined by the work of other artists—proof that family romances live long and die slowly. Being the responsible big brother is its own suffocating cross to bear.

My vote for the loneliest painting in the world goes to a crucifixion scene painted between 1495 and 1497 by Giovanni Donato da Montorfano. In any normal circumstance it would be worth a great deal of very serious study; a large, mural-like multi-figure composition that makes brilliant use of the architectural space containing it (that being the church at Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan). In fact, it is a rather epic image, and it elegantly intertwines gospel symbolism with references to the politics of the high-late-Renaissance as they might have been understood in late-15<sup>th</sup> century Lombardy—one can even see the Sforza castle in the deep background of the center of the image. So why is this painting so forlorn? If your answer was that it is located in some inaccessible mountain monastery, you would be wrong. Many hundreds of people walk past it every day, and almost no one stops to take even a momentary glance at it. Why? Because on the wall of the other end of the old dining hall that it inhabits is another large painting executed around the same time titled *The Last Supper*, by Leonardo da Vinci. Maybe you have heard of it?



Didem Pekün, *Of Dice and Men*, 2011. Video Loop, 29 minutes. Courtesy of SALT and the artist. Photography by Baris Dogrusoz.



Didem Pekün, *Of Dice and Men*, 2011. Video Loop, 29 minutes. Courtesy of SALT and the artist. Photography by Baris Dogrusoz.

To live in the moment or to document the moment? A strange seamlessness foams up in between the truly cinematic and the more intimate descriptions of the everyday: a tram in London, or a window view from Istanbul. As cosmic background waves, the grandeur of the temporal ruptures; the intoxication of the future breaks through the sewn patches of the here-and-now. Passing through a number of different adopted positions, Pekün doubles and triples into persons and voices, into moments and eras, into histories and telltales. But *Of Dice and Men* is not a filmic essay about a protest movement somewhere, which sounds very ubiquitous today and not particularly incisive. The anxious loop between the everyday and the sublime and the artist’s question of whether we are able to move back and forth between them, and how, is not something specific to Gezi or Istanbul or Turkey but related to a profound moment of change and global transition of which Gezi is only a late symptom.

It is then not surprising that *Of Dice and Men* is the work at the core of *A Century of Centuries*, the exhibition curated by November Paynter that took place this year at SALT Beyoğlu, which was marked by the hundred-year commemoration of the Armenian Genocide in Istanbul, to this date not recognized by the government of Turkey. As in 2013, when the Gezi Park protesters battled the police and the clouds of tear gas, so it was in 2015 when demonstrators marching in recognition of the centennial of the genocide were followed closely by Turkish nationalists separated only by a very thin police barrier as they passed the Siniossoglou Apartment building that today houses SALT Beyoğlu. Paynter was primarily interested in works imbued with the memory of temporal transformations that continue to shape our present moment here and elsewhere.

But “transformation” is not strong enough a noun to denote the temporal gaps being addressed here. A transformation is merely a conversion from one symbol or function into a different one of similar value, whereas a transition implies a change in morphology, a crossover. A moment of transition is one in which the validity of certain concepts or symbols that guide us through the structure of reality begins to fail, thus we are expected to build new concepts based on knowledge of the past and wild guessing about the future. The transition is not a temporal unit but a leaped second; an adjustment that corrects time.

The installation as *if nothing has ever been said before us* (2007–2015) by Dilek Winchester, another local artist living on the islands of Istanbul—a place of exile and imprisonment in Byzantine times and later a place for minorities—takes on the polyglossic nature of Turkey in the early-20th century, rescuing cultural forms that have been buried in oblivion after the language and alphabet reforms in Turkey led to a rather violent and merciless process of homogenization and unification, which begot many of Turkey’s distinctively authoritarian and intolerant traits. Winchester’s investigation looks into Karamanlidika—Turkish written in the Greek alphabet—and Armeno-Turkish—Turkish written in the Armenian alphabet—and reveals buried chapters of Turkish literary history, where the first novels in modern Turkish were written by minority authors, using their own alphabets, but never registered in the official literary history.

In as *if nothing has ever been said before us*, Winchester explores the ideology of identity in relation to language, the title of which is based in the writer Ögüz Atay’s 1971 novel *Tutunamayanlar* (*The Disconnected*): “We are knocking on your doors with an emotion and arrogance unparalleled in world history and without fear of seeming like those who are concealed and behave as if nothing has ever been said before them.” The phonetic transcription is in Turkish but the alphabets include Armenian, Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic, all used extensively by the Ottoman population until the language reforms. As varieties of historical time are embedded in language, Winchester addresses the political consequences of linguistic policies and their long-term effects on the physical location of pasts: do they still shed light on us?

On the same floor, Hera Büyüktaşçıyan, Winchester’s neighbor on the same island, constructs a dialogue across time that complements the former’s investigation on Karamanlidika and Armeno-Turkish with a poetic utterance traveling far across eras. Profoundly engaged with the history of Greeks and Armenians in Istanbul, it is not a place of diaspora or exile for Büyüktaşçıyan but the epicenter of cultural and linguistic history of centuries. The artist travels in time and place between Byzantium, Constantino-

ple, Venice, the Prince Islands, and Istanbul, and further back to a Babylonian cuneiform text of the epic of Atrahasis, also known as the tale of Noah’s Ark. *Destroy your house, build up a boat, save life* (2014–2015), titled after a quote from the Babylonian text, builds an imaginary boat and a boat of imaginaries that make reference to the fragility yet durability of memory through gestures and symbols. Not unlike Winchester, Büyüktaşçıyan digs out an archaeology of invisible symbols, erstwhile erased from Istanbul’s long history of exiles and persecutions.

Rolled carpets act as an oblique metaphor for the suspended home, the condition of rootlessness; the shift of cultural forms, transition from one religion to another and ultimately between eras, the exile of the Christian minorities of Istanbul and nowadays the status of Syrian refugees who wait in legal limbo in Turkey and attempt to reach fortress Europe on boats with little else than the clothes they are wearing, in the same way that the once impoverished Europeans reached for Constantinople, many centuries ago. Grounding the metaphor and connecting it to the site, Büyüktaşçıyan unveiled as a part of the work a ceiling painting at the Siniossoglou Apartment, where the Greek minority once lived. Docks (2014), presented as a structure with moving planks, completes the idea of transition through mental and physical spaces: is there no safe ground? Moving between different histories of the city, the artist draws a map of permanently unstable lines.

Returning from the islands and the obscurities of the previous century to present-day Istanbul, Yasemin Özcan tackles article 301 of the Turkish penal code, which took effect 10 years ago and makes it a criminal offense to insult the state or government institutions. In *threehundredone* (2008), Özcan reacts to the prosecution by the state and subsequent assassination of Armenian-Turkish journalist Hrant Dink—an icon for freedom of speech—in 2007. The artist produced a necklace bearing only the numbers 301, working with Armenian craftsmen in one of Istanbul’s traditional craftsmanship centers, protesting the article almost silently, considering broader aspects of gender, justice, and freedom in Turkey. Other artists in the past have also been taken to court for infringing upon this article, most notably Hale Tenger’s case in the 1990s when she was prosecuted for insulting the Turkish flag in one of her signature installations.

Specially commissioned for *A Century of Centuries*, and lively articulating the preoccupations of the exhibition, is *Trailer* (2015), a lecture-performance by Eriç Aslanboğa, Natalie Heller, and Bahar Temiz. It offered a real-time look into how memories are organized and therefore how elements of the past can be gathered

and re-organized: Where exactly are we when we remember? Is this a personal space or one we share with others? Navigating the no-longer and not-yet-of-consciousness, as they relate to broader frameworks that include historical and social knowledge, how do we merge different temporalities into a consistent seamless whole? While the question is not answered by the performance, the artists involved turn to movement from theoretical knowledge and attempt to create something such as movement or dance scores based on memories, which are also part of an extended web of political events and interruptions in the flow of consciousness: revolution, upheaval, dictatorship, freedom.

November Paynter’s eye and focus in selecting the artists for the exhibition expanded into a larger question about the nature of our historical consciousness, far beyond Turkey, to include Russian collective Chito Delat’ with their performance-installation *The Excluded. In a Moment of Danger* (2014) addresses forms of political organization of subjects under different forms of oppression, subtle and otherwise, and Kapwani Kiwanga’s installation ... *rumors Maji was a lie* (2014) based on accounts of the 1905–1907 uprising in the African continent against the Germans le by a spiritual medium, resonate strongly within the exhibition, but it is difficult not to be overpowered by the loud volume of the conversation between Turkish artists, especially bearing in mind the erratic nature of contemporary art in the country, where it is very difficult to find meeting points between the practices of artists living in the same city; something consistent with the transformative moments that Paynter sought after.

Other works in the exhibition include Judith Raum’s *eser* (2014–2015), documenting German colonialism in Anatolia; Jumana Manna and Silke Störhke’s *The Goodness Regime* (2013), a film about the foundations of ideology and national self-image in Norway; Maha Maamoun’s videos about Egypt’s visual history; and Shilpa Gupta’s *Untitled* (2013–2014), dealing with geographical tensions between India and Pakistan. As a generalization, all the works in the exhibition investigate the becoming of our present world not in terms of causes, effects, and consequences, but under the light of how untold or obscured histories—be they visual, cultural, political, linguistic—can affect profound transformations in how we relate to immediacy or the past or not, and whether that will cause us to be derailed from the present into a frenzied state of suspended judgment where we are unable to move between past and future, between fiction and fact, between history and myth.

Almost hidden in plain view, lying quite anonymously in the middle of the exhibition, was the work that encapsulated the exhibition best. Dilek Winchester’s hermetic *Negative Epiphany* (2015) is a series of black prints made by overexposing paper, developed in traditional printing techniques and presented alongside vintage cameras from 1900–1915. The prints are not metaphorical; they stand blackened in lieu of photographs that have been shot somewhere, but that cannot be shown in the exhibition. Does this refer to images that we forgot or to objects that disappeared? To things that are not present or that have not been imagined? The work does not reveal much—a vault with indecipherable documents. The transmission of knowledge does not occur as an uninterrupted consciousness, therefore it is imperative to excavate, and to let objects speak for themselves, rather than to accommodate them.

It seems as if the central question of *A Century of Centuries* is not one of personal or even collective narratives, but what happens in politics and in artistic production when different moments in time pose themselves simultaneously as starting points of historical knowledge and as political futures. Our concept of history, as it stands today, is far removed from the way in which our ancestors looked at their narrated lives, and belongs to the 18th-century Enlightenment, in which the determinations for human experience were laid out rationally, removed from experience itself. It is a politico-philosophical concept. Historical time, should there be one, is bound up with our social and political circumstances and no longer anchored in a metaphysical hierarchy. To locate this time with precision is not merely a function of knowledge, or even of orientation, but of discovering how to move between different eras without being under the illusion that one or the other determines the whole.

What are the markers between one era and the other? Say, if you want to discuss the dividing line between the 19th century and the 20th and the 21st, what key events or places would come to mind? At the turning point between reality and belief, this long century placed between the imperialism of Bismarck’s Germany in the 1860s and that of corporate interests in the Middle East and elsewhere in 2015, is one and the same century punctuated by some of the most defining humanitarian crises of the modern era: the Armenian genocide in 1915 inaugurating the era of crimes against humanity and the indiscriminate slaughter of Syrians and Iraqis in 2015, which effectively ended that era together with international law and the international treaties enshrined to protect refugees all over the world from the horrors of genocide.

Not surprisingly, we are living in a very similar momentum, part and parcel of the same unfinished century: at the gates of a promising new world, propelled by economic and scientific growth, significant constitutional reforms and liberalization of the legal apparatus, reduction of poverty, and a fragile world peace. All of this paired with unspeakable humanitarian crises, the threat of an impending war, and the destruction of the middle classes. In order to “finish” this century, to move into the new one and pick up on the sublime that Didem Pekün was offering us in her work, it is necessary to think up forms of the future in which the current system of social and political organization will not be a “necessary evil” or an “inescapable circumstance” for those wanting to live in a democracy. It takes more than good judgment to walk into the future. It also takes imagination. *A Century of Centuries* imagines in reverse: it looks at the past as if it had shed light on the future.

## Unfinished Centuries

### Arie Amaya-Akkermans

The circumstances were perhaps special on the early afternoon of May 31st, 2013 in central Istanbul, when disproportionate use of violence by police forces, in response to an environmental protest, escalated into one of the major popular uprisings in the history of Turkey, a country not particularly skilled at handling dissent peacefully. Yes, the circumstances were exceptional, as the reality of violence brought Turks from all walks of life together in an episodic moment of participatory democracy, albeit only in the form of contestation and not of agreement, which turned the country upside down. The complex set of relations dictating contemporary urban life means that a protest movement for the environment today is also about architecture, about housing, about inequality, and ultimately about the public and political domain.

Journalistic comparisons to Occupy Wall Street, the Arab Spring or May 1968, did very little to clarify what this moment of transition was or could have been. How do you address a moment of transition when you are profoundly immersed in it? This question haunted Turkish artist Didem Pekün, observing the uprising from London as a distant spectator, and then arriving back in Istanbul to take part in the protests that lasted for months and that still echo profoundly in the political consciousness of the present moment in Turkey, marked by increasing political uncertainty and the possibility of next door’s war in Syria penetrating Turkey’s porous border. Where do the borders of reality meet the horizon of what is visible to us?

These moments of convulsion that all those involved in the protests remember to a degree now seem further than they really are, as if they were part of a political cosmology erasing all previous histories yet so deeply embedded in them. The protests spread quickly nationwide, and in the unexpected solidarity that is born as a consequence of losing the objective world, very few people in central Istanbul slept that night and witnessed the hundreds of protesters marching from one side of the Bosphorus Bridge to the other at 4 AM, as we broke into tears from both shock and excitement. And that was only the beginning.



Hera Büyüktaşçıyan, *Destroy your house, build up a boat, save life!*, 2014–2015 and *Docks*, 2014, Courtesy of SALT and the artist. Photograph by Mustafa Haznedar.

Didem Pekün had begun her ongoing project *Of Dice and Men*, already in 2011 during an anti-austerity demonstration in London, two years before the events of Gezi Park. Upon returning to Istanbul, the artist’s lens was met with raw footage from iconic moments of the Gezi Park protests, juxtaposed by a pre-existing visual monologue, staged between London and Istanbul, in which the artist reflects on the possibility of the everyday, existing alongside so many different

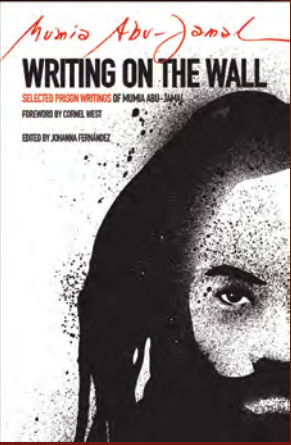
forms of violence. Referring to a cultural unconscious, the momentum of Gezi is not an interruption by the final episode of a cycle of accumulation: global tension and uncertainty. The work is executed, albeit poetically, in a radical social realism operating a suitable model to subvert the possibility to dismiss this historical accumulation merely as apocalyptic fiction.





*This issue is dedicated to Chris Burden and Sammy “the mick” Winston*

NEW AND FORTHCOMING FROM CITY LIGHTS PUBLISHERS



**Writing on the Wall**  
Selected Prison Writings of Mumia Abu-Jamal  
Mumia Abu-Jamal  
Edited by Johanna Fernández  
Foreword by Cornel West  
Paperback | ISBN: 9780872866751 | \$17.95 Available Now

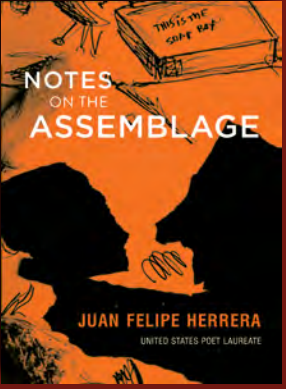
Mumia Abu-Jamal's essential perspectives on black experience, race relations, freedom, justice, social change, and the future of American society.

*Writing on the Wall* is a selection of more than 100 previously unpublished essays that deliver Mumia Abu-Jamal's essential perspectives on community, politics, power, and the possibilities of social change in the United States. From Rosa Parks to Edward Snowden, from the Trail of Tears to Ferguson, Mumia addresses a sweeping range of contemporary and historical issues. Written mostly during his years of solitary confinement on Death Row, these essays are a testament to Abu-Jamal's often prescient insight, and his revolutionary perspective brims with hope, encouragement and profound faith in the possibility of redemption.

"Revolutionary love, revolutionary memory and revolutionary analysis are at work in every page written by Mumia Abu-Jamal. . . His writings are a wake-up call. He is a voice from our prophetic tradition, speaking to us here, now, lovingly, urgently. Black man, old-school jazz man, freedom fighter, revolutionary—his presence, his voice, his words are the writing on the wall."

— from the foreword by Cornel West

NEW AND FORTHCOMING FROM CITY LIGHTS PUBLISHERS



**Notes on the Assemblage**  
Juan Felipe Herrera  
Paperback | ISBN: 9780872866973 | \$14.95  
Hardcover | ISBN: 9780872867109 | \$19.95  
Available in September 2015

A fresh, new collection of poetry by Juan Felipe Herrera, published as he assumes his post as the nation's first Latino Poet Laureate!

*Notes on the Assemblage* brims with the exuberant vision and hard-won wisdom of a poet whose life and creative arc have spanned chasms of culture in an endless crossing, dreaming and back again.

"A visually acute, punch-in-the-gut collection that shows off both his craft and his heart. Would even more tightly than his previous collections. . . . As always, Herrera's signature language is immediate, visceral, in the moment, sometimes razzzy-jazzy, and compacted to create intensive feeling. Urgently written and important to read, even if Herrera weren't in the Library of Congress limelight."

—Library Journal, Starred Review

"Juan Felipe Herrera's family has gone from migrant worker to poet laureate of the United States in one generation. One generation. I am an adamant objector to the Horatio Alger myth of pulling oneself up by the bootstraps, but Herrera's story is one of epic American proportions. The heads carved into my own Mount Rushm<sup>ás</sup> would be Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Frida Kahlo, El Chapulín Colorado, Selena, and Juan Felipe Herrera. *Notes from the Assemblage* further carves out Herrera's place in American letters"

—David Tomas Martinez

NEW AND FORTHCOMING FROM CITY LIGHTS PUBLISHERS

CULT  
aimee friberg exhibitions

FRANCESCO IGORY DEIANA  
*haptic render*

September 11 - October 30, 2015  
Opening Reception Friday 9/11 7-9PM

CULT | Aimee Friberg Exhibitions  
3191 Mission Street San Francisco CA  
Gallery Hours: Weds- Sat 12 - 6PM  
cultexhibitions.com | 415-800-6604



photo credit: Daniel Dent



**LIGHT WAVES**  
photo imaging  
Since 1985



**SERVICES**

- Traditional Type - C Prints up to 48 x 70 inches
- Lightjet Prints up to 48 x 120 inches
- Professional C-41, E-6 and B&W Processing
- Optical & Digital Contact Sheets
- Professional Custom & Economy Film Scanning
- Mounting & Display Services
- Retouching & Image Manipulation
- Archival Pigment Prints

San Francisco - 130 Russ St. CA 94103 - 415.431.9651  
Hours: M-F 8:30AM-6:00PM Sat 10:00AM-2:00PM  
Oakland - 4810 Telegraph Ave. CA 94609 - 510.922.8487  
Hours: M-F 9:30AM-6:00PM

[www.lightwavesimaging.com](http://www.lightwavesimaging.com)



Born in San Francisco — on Kearny Street, 1938.  
Raised in San Francisco — on Market Street, since 1979, and still open into 2016

Introducing our new baby!  
Opening a second San Francisco store supporting the  
Fort Mason Center arts and culture community,  
and the public, in September 2015



**FLAX** art & design | [FLAXART.COM](http://FLAXART.COM)  
Born and raised in San Francisco. And here to stay.  
MON-SAT 9:30am-7pm 1699 MARKET 415.552.2355



**BLICK**  
art materials



**FOR ALL YOUR  
ART SUPPLY NEEDS,  
PICK BLICK!**

**VISIT US IN SAN FRANCISCO!**

**979 MARKET ST**  
(BETWEEN 5TH & 6TH) 415-348-8600

**149 NEW MONTGOMERY ST**  
415-777-6920

**1930 VAN NESS AVE**  
415-409-1359

**10% OFF** ENTIRE PURCHASE OF \$50 OR MORE

Blick Art Materials, LLC. In-store promo only. Valid at Blick and Utrecht locations. Coupon must be surrendered at time of purchase; no copies. One coupon per day. Valid on non-sale, in-stock items. Not valid on previous purchases or with any other discounts or promotions. Not valid on phone/mail/internet orders, or purchases of Service, Wacom, CAMEO cutting tools, Artograph light boxes & projectors, gift cards or school kits.

**BLICK**  
art materials

VALID 9/1/15 - 10/31/15

**BLICK ART MATERIALS**



Oscar Lakeman 'Self Portrait'

**deep lake art gallery**

**150 Paintings, Sculptures and Art Objects  
Created by 100 Artists from 31 Countries**

A Private Collection at Lake Tahoe, NV

[www.deeplakeartgallery.com](http://www.deeplakeartgallery.com)





PUBLIC GRAND OPENING

# THE BIG BASH

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2015  
7:00 - 11:00 PM

---

INAUGURAL EXHIBITION

## RESONATE

SEPTEMBER 12 - 26, 2015

CURATED BY  
Amy Cancelmo & Dana Hemenway

FEATURING PROJECTS BY

- Jeremiah Barber
- JD Beltran & Scott Minneman
- Lizzy Brooks & Susa Cortez
- Kevin B. Chen
- Congratulations Pine Tree  
(Kate Rhoades & Maysoun Wazwaz)
- Seth Curcio
- Christian Davies
- Amy Ellingson
- Hannah Ireland
- Kari Marbøe
- Ramekon O'Arwisters
- Shipping + Receiving  
(Torreya Cummings, Audrey Nieh, H.R. Smith)
- Stairwells  
(Sarah Hotchkiss & Carey Lin)
- Kate Stirr
- Stephanie Syjuco
- Amber Jean Young

SAVE THE DATE !

### ART AUCTION 2015

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2015  
Featuring 150+ works by Bay Area Artists!

# CHECK OUT OUR NEW SPACE

MORE SPACE FOR ART CLASSES, EXHIBITIONS, STUDIOS

## 1131 MISSION STREET SAN FRANCISCO, CA

**Root DIVISION**  
ROOTDIVISION.ORG 415.863.7668

# Art in America

**MICHAEL BRENNAN: ART IN AMERICA**  
October 10-November 7, 2015  
Reception: October 10, 7-11 PM  
White Walls Gallery, 886 Geary Street, San Francisco  
whitewallssf.com

(IMAGE: MIXED MEDIA ON PANEL BY DAVID BALL 2015)

# Amor Fati

PRESENTED BY 111 MINNA GALLERY

SEPTEMBER | New Work by David Ball, Jeremy Nichols & Alex Gardner  
Opening Reception Friday September 4th, 5pm-Late (through 9/26)

OCTOBER | Painting, Photography & Sculpture by Alec Huxley + Recent Paintings by David Lyle  
Opening Reception Fri. Oct. 2nd 2015, 5pm-Late (through 10/31)

111 MINNA ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105 (415) 974-1719 111MINNAGALLERY.COM





**You're either part of the solution or part of the problem. - Eldridge Cleaver, San Francisco 1968**