Antonio Cataldo

Curating Labour. Troubles with Gender and Dispossession in the Exhibition Space

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Antonio Cataldo

Curating Labour. Troubles with Gender and Dispossession in the Exhibition Space. A Circular Movement on Historical Traces

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2 —— Acknowledgment
4 —— Imprint
8 —— Abstracts
14 —— Introduction

42 —— PART 1.
LOCAL NORWEGIAN FEMINIST PRACTICES IN THE 1960S AND 1970S: *THE ARTISTS' SITUATION* (1971), AN EXHIBITION BY AINA HELGESEN ON IMMATERIAL WORK

43 —— (1.1) The artist claims to be a worker in the Western world; introduction to the historical shift in discourse of the 1960s and 1970s
45 —— (1.2) In and out of Norway during the 1960s
47 —— (1.3) The political awakening in France and Southern Europe; the feminist discourse; Beauvoir and the existentialist movement
49 —— (1.4) The concept of need and subsistence within the existentialist movement in the post-war period; how need becomes connected to the financial during the 1960s capitalist expansion
52 —— (1.5) The concept of labour and transubstantiation in Sartre
53 —— (1.6) Helgesen's existentialist ideas meet the Marxist-Leninist theories of the Gras group
56 —— (1.7) Abstraction itself is a product of historical relations
57 —— (1.8) How the investigative process into *The Artists' Situation* began
59 —— (1.9) The exhibitory moment: An exhibition of charts and graphs
62 —— (1.10) Lacan and the field of vision
65 —— (1.11) Beauvoir's concept of aesthetics
67 —— (1.12) First conclusions

72 —— PART 2.
UNKNOTTING THE EXHIBITORY: PROBLEMATISING PATRIARCHAL EXHIBITION-MAKING IN THE FAILURES OF THE AVANT-GARDES WITH A DIGRESSION INTO THE FIELD OF VISION, AROUND AND ABOUT LIVING ART, EPHEMERALISATION, AND ANAMORPHOSIS

73 —— (2.1) Work and intoxication
79 —— (2.2) The notion of welfare in Scandinavia through a reading of Jørgen Nash
81 —— (2.3) The return to magic
84 —— (2.4) Who is "I": What is an institution and deontic relationships
87 —— (2.5) *Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!* (1974–78), a series of feminist exhibitions and a book with Ann Christine Eek
91 —— (2.6) The exhibitory moment: Nine stories of a struggle in ten chapters
98 —— (2.7) Shaping a self-positioning through the process of anamorphosis; sexuality in the field of vision
101 —— (2.8) The spirit of the time is in the air: The dematerialisation of the art object.

110 —— PART 3.
A CURATORIAL MATERIALIST APPROACH: THE FORENSIC EXHIBITIONARY COMPLEX

111 —— (3.1) The document replacing the art object
113 —— (3.2) The popularisation of the document
116 —— (3.3) From object-based to document-based art
122 —— (3.4) The use-value of art
124 —— (3.5) Prefiguring an international division of labour
126 —— (3.6) The aesthetics of administration
128 —— (3.7) An esoteric genre of spectacle
133 —— (3.8) Second time around
136 —— (3.9) Are the secondary texts the primary texts?
138 —— (3.10) Are the secondary texts a media conglomerate?
139 —— (3.11) *New Documents*: The everyday re-enters the museum in the form of photography
141 —— (3.12) Piecing together the artwork
143 —— (3.13) The exhibition space becomes the space of the forensic

148 —— PART 4.
TRANSITIONING FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE:
TOWARDS CURATORIAL PROJECTS

149 —— (4.1) An alliance of bodies reclaiming the right to appear:
Introduction
151 —— (4.2) Materialising words, performing textiles:
Fashioning unruly stories (on finding archival traces
on modernity's ruins—feminist approaches through
the work of Marianne Heier and Franz Petter Schmidt)
157 —— (4.3) Trembling institution (about the work of the
queer-feminist platform *FRANK*)
166 —— (4.4) Gender, I'm in trouble (about the performance work
of Harald Beharie and Louis Schou-Hansen)
180 —— (4.5) What new internationalism? (on attempting
to claim a transnational public space through a reading
of Geeta Kapur).

194 —— PART 5.
CURATING AN INSTITUTION: PRACTISING FORMS
OF ASSEMBLY THROUGH EXHIBITION MAKING

195 —— (5.1) The exhibition space as the non-conformant body:
An introduction
199 —— (5.2) Displaying the politics of inactivity
212 —— (5.3) The missing image
220 —— (5.4) Let's talk
233 —— (5.5) Anger, love, and silence: Caring for emotions
in the exhibition space
252 —— (5.6) Some conclusions

266 —— CONCLUSIONS
CURATING BETWEEN THE NO-LONGER
AND THE NOT-YET

294 —— BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABSTRACTS

Part 1.
Local Norwegian feminist practices in the 1960s and 1970s: *The Artists' Situation* (1971), an exhibition by Aina Helgesen on immaterial work
This chapter explores the theoretical, aesthetic, and sociopolitical conditions connecting the work of feminist sociologist, and eventually curator, Aina Helgesen from throughout the 1960s in Norway to international preoccupations regarding building meaningful and novel expository practices that come closer to the socioeconomic conditions of artists. The shifting notion of labour is analysed through academic references influencing French students at the time (Karl Marx, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir, among others) to reconstruct a framework around Helgesen's curatorial strategies. Moreover, it gives an overview of how her thinking process intersects seminal artists' collectives within the country at the time (such as the Gras group) to create a critique of artistic strategies, crossing over with and giving rise to an alternative notion of curatorial labour.

Part 2.
Unknotting the exhibitory: Problematising patriarchal exhibition-making in the failures of the avant-gardes with a digression into the field of vision, around and about living art, ephemeralisation, and anamorphosis
This chapter counters the discussion initiated in the previous one to give a larger geographical perspective on curatorial practices that were becoming prominent during the same years in greater Scandinavia, and the more widely known experimental practices in continental Europe and the US. It looks into the notion of artists taking a leading role as exhibition curators, attempting to expand power within the art system as a whole as well as to subvert display systems and communication channels within expository practices.

Part 3.
A curatorial materialist approach: The forensic exhibitionary complex
This chapter looks into the document's role in substantiating dematerialised forms of exhibition making. Traversing aesthetic and political concerns, the document as the travelling exhibitory site prefigures the birth of the intellectual class (Antonio Gramsci's notion of the "organic intellectual"), coming closer to the working class. The materialist curatorial role is retranslated here as the archivist or the chronicler, trying to make sense of the fragments left behind by artists' or world events. In such a process, the "media conglomerate," used as part of Happenings and other Conceptual Art movements during the 1960s and 1970s, arises to potentially define a new curatorial approach. It is at the intersection of a complex fabricated

reality that curatorial materialism (against other forms of exhibition making) takes a fundamental role in giving sense to the artwork by deploying an intermedia approach. Today, we can look at forensic practices to position the materialist curator's role both inside and outside its institutional role.

Part 4.
Transitioning from theory to practice: Towards curatorial projects
This chapter presents observations, presentations, and other texts commissioned during the research period by external entities, touching upon small- and medium-sized institutions' role in revendicating a different history and temporality. This includes topics such as how temporary institutions destabilise the work of museums and large collecting bodies, defining a transnational public sphere, and working on issues of equality and solidarity.

Part 5.
Curating an institution: Practising forms of assembly through exhibition making
From August 2018, under my directorship, the Oslo-based institution Fotogalleriet (Norway's photography kunsthalle, and the oldest institution of its kind in the Nordic region) developed a new set of programmes aimed at unveiling the feminist strategies of the institution since its inception in 1977. Fotogalleriet commissioned a new generation of artists to produce works and launch historical investigations. The subject of investigation was artistic positions that had either fallen into oblivion or not been brought to the forefront of discussion within the institution, based first and foremost on positions of provenance and gender. In this final chapter, I collect writings about the non-conformant body as the site of trauma, problematising curating, which at times co-opts representation as an inherent act of violence, while curators look for exhibition making's egalitarian aspirations under the current predicaments of exhibiting. It concludes with a number of reflections about curatorial materialism, including queer and radical feminist thinkers, artists, and practitioners, to analyse, among other concerns, how feelings—a set of principles instrumentally manipulated during modernity—have been fictionally made atavistic to comply with the political economy of governance of our time, encapsulating one single view as universal in order to subjugate diversity, and thus shaping the space of representation—namely the exhibition space—to a univocal purpose.

Let's Talk About Images, 3 November 2018–19 January 2019.
Photo: Julie Hrnčířová/Fotogalleriet.

Eline Mugaas, Delphine Bedel, and Tine Semb in conversation as part of *Let's Talk About Images,* 3 November 2018–19 January 2019. Photo: Julie Hrnčířová/Fotogalleriet.

Bouchra Khalili, Marianne Hultman, and Antonio Cataldo in conversation as part of *Let's Talk About Images*, 3 November 2018–19 January 2019. Photo: Julie Hrnčířová/ Fotogalleriet.

Let's Talk About Images, 3 November 2018–19 January 2019. Photo: Julie Hrnčířová/ Fotogalleriet.

INTRODUCTION

The radical moment of the 1960s and 1970s was pivotal within the arts for subverting predetermined art historical categories as well as shifting the meaning and substance of the artwork in connection to the changing role of labour within the renewed imperialist and capitalist ambitions of Western societies. As labour took on novel immaterial forms, with upward trends in outsourcing, the arts critically mirrored this process within and outside the exhibition space.[1] This research project looks at the formation of curatorial labour as a "migratory" role in continuous formation, including by "outside" practitioners such as feminist sociologist Aina Helgesen in Norway (where I have been based for the past decade), who, in an exemplary and underrated exhibition held in 1971, in Oslo, both devised strategies for the display system (i.e., the exhibition) and challenged the notion of what is to be considered an artwork.[2] In her seminal exhibition *Kunstnerkår* (*The Artists' Situation*, 1971), involving several local artists whose identities were mixed in favour of creating a joint work, Helgesen presented the precarious conditions of the artistic community of the region "curated" into a temporal, spatialised format, shaking the preconceived expectations of the viewer. The exhibition had a twofold intention: first, to highlight art historical formation through both artistic and expository labour, by dissecting and showing the overall display format which facilitates artistic interventions and curatorial narratives; and, secondly, to assert the expanded state of things and of the world: social unrest, national and international labour movements demanding more political rights for underprivileged classes of workers, including artists, and unreported subjectivities within the art infrastructure at large.[3] Focusing on

1 ——— Within the arts, I refer to Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009). Regarding the migration of labour, see also Joseph Ferrie and Timothy J. Hatton, "Two Centuries of International Migration," *IZA Discussion Papers*, no. 7866 (Institute of Labor Economics: December 2013).

2 ——— Little information is available in writing or images regarding this exhibition. I am conducting material reconstruction together with Aina Helgesen, through interviews and archive research. A little pamphlet from the time reports essential findings. See Aina Helgesen, "The Art Situation in Norway," 1971, translated and republished in English in 2014 in the context of the exhibition *Unwoven World: Beyond the Playable Plane*, which I curated at Office for Contemporary Art Norway, Oslo. Following his departure from his role as director at Kunsthalle Bern in 1969, the forefather of contemporary curating Harald Szeemann effectively became a freelance curator. Szeemann's Agentur für geistige Gastarbeit aligned his own practice to that of a migrant worker. See Joanna Szupinska, "Grandfather, a History Like Ours," in *HSz: As Is / As If*, ed. Julian Myers and Leigh Markopoulos (San Francisco: California College of the Arts, 2010), 31–41.

3 ——— From an Althusserian perspective, one could say that the

the material conditions deeply rooted in the struggle "for bread-and-butter," she unveiled exploitative conditions at work not only outside but within the arts.[4]

Helgesen's sociological research intersected concurrent feminist claims coming from neighbouring countries such as Sweden, where in the capital city collectives such as Group 8 held heated discussions throughout the 1970s to push questions concerning work for all, shorter working days, accessible childcare, abortion rights, and the right to pain relief during child birth, among others.[5] Its activities were varied, ranging from targeted actions, manifestations, and demonstrations to musical theatre and discussions. Here, in Stockholm, artist Ann Christine Eek, who would later move to Oslo, worked together with writers Kajsa Ohrlander and Ann Mårtens on an enquiry into women's conditions, culminating in a book and exhibition titled *Arbeta—inte slita ut sig!* (*Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!*). The project concerned the need to document and transform the increased demand put on workers by corporations and legitimised by state regulations. The stories of nine women's everyday lives, particularly their "double work," became part of a touring exhibition shown in Stockholm and Malmö in 1974–75, reaching Oslo in 1978. These four practitioners' research—driven in particular by visual propositions pushing the space of representation to accept the unknown, the unspoken in the realm of the arts—intersects in their various works, eventually merging in the pivotal 1975 exhibition *Kvinnfolk* (*Women*) at Kulturhuset in Stockholm.

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superstructure (political-legal (law and the state) and ideology (various ideologies: legal, religious, and political) cannot exist independently of the *infrastructure* (economic base, "unity" of productive forces and relations of production). Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 2009).

4 ——— Elke Krasny argues how "the late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed the emergence of a new type of work that radically transformed the art world's production, distribution, dissemination, study, and reception of art." On the one hand, independent curating was crucial to "transforming modern art into contemporary art," while, on the other, many independent curators "shaping this transformation were feminists." See Elke Krasny, "Curatorial Materialism: A Feminist Perspective on Independent and Co-dependent Curating," *OnCurating*, no. 29 (May 2016): 96–107.

5 ——— Tina Harr, "Historien om Grupp 8 – det gör de i dag," *Expressen*, 3 March 2014, https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/historien-om-grupp-8--det-gor-de-i-dag/.

As the feminist approach of both Eek and Helgesen—one that activates an exploration of history formation both vertically and horizontally within the state apparatus—has deeply affected my curatorial practice, I look here towards finding a larger, paradigmatic context to frame their work within the changes formulated during those years, and especially during the 1960s, questioning how these radical ideas could potentially be retransferred, curatorially, into an exhibition space today.[6] The research is also directed towards repositioning the attributes of the curator from those of a power figure to those of a more "organic intellectual" working to facilitate, and not to take, the space of the artist or others in the aesthetic space of appearance, the exhibition space. To do so, I retrace the formation of the term "curator," as well as different struggles of recognition, including artists exercising the right to appear in these ongoing struggles for definitions, mirroring ongoing demands in the bourgeois public sphere (the street, the square, the pavement) to reach legislative political determination. This performativity of aesthetics and utterance taking place outside parliamentary modes of written and spoken contributions provides no less a call for justice.

The term "curator," according to art historian and cultural critic Beatrice von Bismarck, crystallised as a job description after 1945, declassing artists and scholars who now maintained a "lower position" in the art world system.[7] The term expanded as art became more discursive and attuned to context during the 1960s, both through the rise of immaterial production such as installation, Happenings, and performance art as well as with

6 ——— Helgesen's position contains a clear aim to rethink societal structures of inequality. Influencing the distribution of values and benefits (welfare) in society is part of a political activism, conductible to feminist political activity in two different ways. In very practical terms, some organisations, on the one hand, aim their activities directly at specific societal groups in need of establishing medical and other basic structures of support while, on the other hand, being concerned about lobbying for maternal and child welfare reforms, for instance. One could argue that these are, in fact, maternalist politics, as they address the relationship between indirect and direct, or "*horizontal* and *vertical* political activity, [...] in order to improve the welfare of poor women and children," or as lobbying for other needy groups in society. See Eirinn Larsen, *Gender and the Welfare State: Maternalism—A New Historical Concept?* (Bergen: University of Bergen, 1996). See also Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, "Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880–1920," *American Historical Review* 95, no. 4 (1990): 1076–1108.

7 ——— Beatrice von Bismarck, "Relations in Motion: The Curatorial Condition in Visual Art—And Its Possibilities for the Neighboring Disciplines," *Frakcija*, no. 55 (2010): 50–57.

the increasing availability of easily reproducible documentation via photography in the expanded field; the event became the primary experience, rather than the artworks on display. Dematerialisation, an epic social process, began to delineate new contours in the capitalist mode of production and within the arts. Clearly, the "curatorial" in this era came to define a new set of material relationships between concepts of labour, value, and class, where a cultural hegemony is inscribed (not explicitly) under the ruling bourgeoisie, using cultural institutions to maintain the ruling classes' power.

Curator and writer Paul O'Neill describes the shift to curator-as-auteur as being famously exemplified by the case of the exhibition maker Harald Szeemann and his *Großausstellung* (great exhibition) approach, in which artworks are commissioned, selected, and drawn to a central concept to provide new interrelationships through mere juxtaposition.[8] As Szeemann blurs the domains of art and curatorship, he also embodies a new figure within a bourgeoisie enterprise system where the means of production belong to their capitalist owner, who can direct the enterprise's production or entrust that task to a salaried director.[9] Szeemann, in fact, inspired generations of curators (including curator-artists) to explore the role of such a subject position in the contemporary world, a power-based profession which has been constituted and retransmitted, in part, according to curatorial studies scholar Dorothee Richter, on Szeemann's self-staging.[10] When he resigned the Kunsthalle Bern directorship amid public controversies for his allegedly provocative programme in 1969, Szeemann began a phase of reflection on himself as a professional figure. This led to a seemingly unprecedented gesture: the foundation of an agency of which he was the sole employee, which he named the *Agentur*

8 ——— Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2012).

9 ——— One could draw a simple parallel to see how this is reflected in the larger social conditions of salaried work where the enterprise hires "unskilled workers" and other staff who are not workers (but managers and skilled and supervisory personnel) as wageworkers. "Wageworkers are individuals who, since they do not possess the means of production, cannot produce anything with 'their own means' [...] and, consequently, can sell only *the use of their two hands* to the owner of an enterprise possessing the means of production." Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (London: Verso, 2014), 154.

10 ——— Dorothee Richter, "Artists and Curators as Authors—Competitors, Collaborators, or Team-workers?," *OnCurating*, no. 19 (2013): 43–57; Dorothee Richter, "Artists and Curators as Authors—Competitors, Collaborators, or Team Workers?," in *Cultures of the Curatorial*, ed. Beatrice von Bismarck et al. (Berlin: Sternberg, 2012), 229–50.

für geistige Gastarbeit (either Agent for Spiritual Guest Labour or Agency for Spiritual Work Abroad, according to different attempted translations).[11] It is important to note here how the curatorial role has become, even in Szeemann's words, "migratory," confounding mass movements of people in search of shelter and food with more privileged forms of intellectual work moving beyond the servitude of one single nation state (modernity's dictatorship monitoring the movement of people and goods).[12] The "curator" left with no institution "institutionalises" himself to become an "enterprise" (impresario) at best, or a freelancer (independent), aligning himself to precarious work as designated by the capitalist system (I would say in Szeemann's case only conceptually, and mostly for strategic reasons).[13] In Szeemann's dry gesture of pretending to take on the more general condition of immigrant workers in Western Europe (called *Gastarbeiter*) struggling for their daily sustenance and acceptance in their community of arrival, much has been read yet little has been critically addressed through his actual curatorial work.[14] Namely, one should

11 ——— Marina Biryukova, "Reconsidering the Exhibition When Attitudes Become Form Curated by Harald Szeemann: Form versus 'Anti-form' in Contemporary Art," *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 9, no. 1 (2017): 1–12; Richter, "Artists and Curators as Authors—Competitors, Collaborators, or Team Workers?."

12 ——— In the German-speaking world, *Gastarbeit* speaks about formalised "labor migration" recruitment through a "program of importing foreign workers [temporarily] by signing a labor recruitment treaty" with another nation. "The first and most obvious came in 1955, [...] by signing a labor recruitment treaty with Italy." Subsequent agreements were established with Turkey, Spain and Greece. See Rita Chin, *Guest Worker Question in Post-war Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 30. This is one of the accounts used to create a parallel with Szeemann's self-designated title, though no further explanation is given of how the precarious situation of the guest workers should be paralleled with Szeemann's freelance position. *Gastarbeit* in Szeemann's case does not describe a seasonal worker gaining a temporary visa to work in another country, exploiting someone's labour force as belonging to the proletariat, a social class where belonging is based only on one's labour-power. See Max Rosenberg, "Harald Szeemann and the Road Back to the Museum," *Getty Research Journal*, no. 11 (2019): 107–32.

13 ——— Christian L. Frock defines Szeemann's 1960s Agentur für geistige Gastarbeit a one-man enterprise, as one of his slogans promised. Christian L. Frock, "From (Starry Eyed): Vision to Nail," *Fillip*, Spring 2007, 6–19. Daniel Buren critiqued Szeemann, the original prototypical independent curator, for "us[ing] artworks like so many brushstrokes in a huge painting." Quoted in Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Mind Over Matter: Interview with Harald Szeemann," *Artforum*, November 1996, 74–79.

14 ——— Rainer Ganahl insists that the revolution in mobility, and Szeemann's new way of curating and intersecting with new American art,

speak about appropriating both the means of production through his curatorial work as well as the space of appearance, that is, the political space of self-determination, where people can constitute their subjectivity and their normativities through a complex performance of assembling for the right to the image and all the technologies engaged in the definition of the right to appear, the right to have rights.[15]

I briefly navigate these Szeemannian roles in order to outline the mood of the era, to sketch the context where other subjective positions and struggles started to emerge. The first commission for the Agentur für geistige Gastarbeit took place in Norway at the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter with a project titled *Vår verden av ting—Objekter* (*Our World of Things—Objects*, 1970), an exhibition drawing a historical trajectory from Marcel Duchamp's readymades, through Surrealism and Pop Art, and plunging into the present day.[16] Among more historical objects, the exhibition included works by German Fluxus and Happening artist Wolf Vostell and American Fluxus artist and avant-garde composer George Brecht. We should consider here—perhaps in contradiction with, but mostly adding to, O'Neill's and von Bismarck's arguments—that the formation of a curatorial position was still struggling against an artist-subject position, but that these relations remained permeable, although the art system privileged this new impresario role.[17] In an interview with journalist Petra

"would not have been possible without the jet revolution." Rainer Ganahl, "When Attitudes Become—Curating," *Manifesta Journal*, 2006, 32–45.

15 ——— The modernist politics of industrialisation, with its outsourcing and outlawing, thereby establishing imperial global actors with predetermined economic structures, supported the creation of a growing class of precarious people now dependent on job security. See Sofia Näsström. "The Right to Have Rights: Democratic, Not Political," *Political Theory* 42, no. 5 (2014): 543–68.

16 ——— *Our World of Things—Objects* was exhibited at the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Høvikodden, from 11 September to 11 November 1970. The concept originated at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, and the collaboration with the Kunsthalle Nürnberg brought the involvement of Szeemann. See Tominga Hope O'Donnell, "Space as Curatorial Practice: The Exhibition As A Spatial Construct. *Ny kunst i tusen år* (1970), *Vår Verden av Ting—Objekter* (1970), and *Norsk Middelalderkunst* (1972) at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter" (PhD diss., Oslo School of Architecture and Design, 2016), https://www.academia.edu/28429224/PhD_thesis_Space_as_Curatorial_Practice_the_exhibition_as_a_spatial_construct_2016_.

17 ——— The contemporary meaning of "curator," as a term, is often attributed in retrospect to the moment of the 1960s and 1970s. See Von Bismarck et al., *Cultures of the Curatorial*. Szeemann called himself an "exhibition maker." The primacy of the artist over that of the curator (here I use the term in its contemporary meaning) as author is not formalised through the practice of those years, not as a vocabulary; the terms are

Kipphof, in the German weekly *Die Zeit* in 1972, Szeemann defines as part of the curatorial work a wide-ranging list including travel, research and being "administrators, sensitive art lovers, writers of premises, librarians, managers, accountants, animators, conservators, diplomats", in a role close to that of an entrusted salaried director or managerial consultant.[18] If this work is certainly more complex than curating as "a two-stage process: a selection of artists [...] [for exhibition and] an organic development of work by the selected artists in the exhibition space,"[19] which interestingly and unwillingly resembles a division of tasks in a Fordist production chain—it is still far from showing the mechanisms guiding the working conditions pertaining to the exhibition space in itself. These structures continue to replicate patriarchal dictates as univocal and ontological givens, including predefined subjects and identities. The patriarchy of the white cube not only determines the meaning of what is being exhibited (the norm) but also shapes behaviour and forms specific subjectivities that move from the exhibition space outwards; the white cube serves as an aesthetic "training centre," first deceiving the eye and consequently normalising the body. One could argue that Szeemann not only maintains but "exports" the same unequal structural conditions of the exhibition space through his mobility, and only unconsciously brings the subversive nature of the "event" as a less stable category of display within the already consecrated spaces of the arts.[20] Operations of shaking the very constitu-

still porous: they work in juxtaposition within a nascent art world trying to escape designated exhibition spaces as core to the system. O'Neill assigns a change in understanding of the curator's role to the 1980s. The title, previously attributed to the carers of institutional collections, goes now to somebody becoming an author engaged with the critical experimentation of the exhibition as a form. Formally the curator's position (as much as the artist's) is recognised primarily as that of an "author." See Beatrice von Bismarck, "Relations in Motion"; Ambra Gattiglia and Hyo Gyoung Jeon, "Paul O'Neill: Curated Cultures and the Curator-as-Artist," *Afterall*, 22 July 2013, https://www.afterall.org/article/8400.

18 ——— Harald Szeemann, *Blick zurück fast ohne Zorn. Interview von Petra Kipphof*, *Die Zeit*, 27 October 1972, cited in Pietro Rigolo, *Immergersi nel luogo prescelto. Harald Szeemann a Locarno, 1978–2000* (Milan: Supernovae, 2013), 112 (my translation).

19 ——— Pablo Lafuente, "Introduction: From the Outside In—'Magiciens de la Terre' and Two Histories of Exhibitions," in *Making Art Global (Part 2): 'Magiciens de la Terre' 1989*, ed. Lucy Steeds et al. (London: Afterall Books, 2013), 13.

20 ——— "The words 'museum' and 'art'," wrote Szeemann in his plan, "imply the idea of viewing objects and material property. ... *documenta 5* is not, in the first instance, a place for accumulation of objects, but a process of events rather that refer to one another." See Harald Szeemann, "First Exhibition Concepts," in *Harald Szeemann. Individual Methodology*, ed. Florence Derieux (Zurich: JRP|Ringier Kunstverlag, 2007), 93.

tion of such hierarchal expository systems were, in fact, happening with Happenings, actions, Fluxus, and the Situationists, which turned against the art establishment, collecting institutions, and their ruling system.[21] Within this context, artists at times take an allegedly identical leading role (the curatorial) as *Ausstellungsmacher* (a maker of exhibitions). In such a naming, curator and critic Hans Ulrich Obrist finds more than semantics at stake.[22] I would read even further into these semantics, as in such wording the curator is invoking the idea of a maker-creator of all existence. Not by chance is Szeemann defining himself "simultaneously [as] archivist, conservator, art handler, press officer, accountant, and above all, accomplice of the artists," which role equates to what, in retrospect, has been called and popularised as the space of the curatorial.[23] He defiantly glorifies the idea of self-sufficiency. As if he does not need anyone else, as if he "never depended upon" artistic and other relations or upon institutions and maintenance—including cooking, cleaning, coordinating, and secretarial work—to sustain himself and to prosper. We are not meant to know about the material and immaterial structures of support that enabled him to live a full life. Not about his class or provenance. He originates from the current state of the arts "naturally." We do not understand how he became individuated, nor why curating should be the base of art relations or who those relations are for. He has, from birth, already been setting an agenda alone. There is no dependency or social assignment—only autonomous decision.[24] Such a univocal claim with universalistic views has grave consequences for what happens to the potential of developing a diverse space of representation. Why and for whom do we present, open, write, and instigate debate? How do we define and claim our curatorial function in relation to other functions in the space of representation?

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21 ——— "That was both reactionary against, and inspired by, contemporary society." See Margaret Sherer, "A Network of Experience: Community Building and Social Restructuring in Fluxus" (MA thesis, Washington University in St. Louis, 2016), 2, https://doi.org/10.7936/K79C6VQV; Stewart Home, *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class War* (Edinburgh: Aporia and Unpopular Books, 1991).

22 ——— Hans Ulrich Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating* (Zurich: JRP|Ringier; Dijon, France: Les Presses du réel, 2011), 99.

23 ——— Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*, 99.

24 ——— I am borrowing here important critiques formulated around the idea of the individual and individualism in modern times as a political subject through the work of Judith Butler, where I am attempting to retranslate such critique in the aesthethic and curatorial fields. Judith Butler, "Non Violence, Grievability, and the Critique of Individualism," in *The Force of Non-violence* (London: Verso, 2020), 27–65.

It is in such respect, in antagonism and opposition to a unidirectional approach to individualist curating, that it is important to take into account a different kind of exhibition making, a "curatorial materialism," one that is a critical investigation into the conditions of curatorial production, including self-organised productions and the infrastructures allowing curators, artists, technicians, builders, educators, intellectual producers, government officials, sponsors, donors, supporters, and publics alike to come together. Moreover, there is the need to become manifest, to reclaim representation as a heavily occupied (one could go so far as to say colonised) political space (by the bourgeois, defined as public space), and to consider which space we are given for appearance when particular bodies are not given such a right, and hence remain politically irrelevant and unrecognised (and here with "particular bodies" I also mean the consequent presence or lack of objects entering the space directly, connecting to people who are denied such privilege).[25] We should pay particular attention to the law and national jurisdictions; scientific, aesthetic, and academic categorisations defining what a body is, human and non-human; and what has been considered a person and a non-person in different historical times.[26] It is here that early feminist curating, still under-

25 ——— Krasny, "Curatorial Materialism."

26 ——— The discussion around bodily alliance remains quintessential to demanding a political space. Despite a wish to move away from such a category because of the danger that these spaces exclude fragile, isolated, or suffering bodies, "body functions not as an abstraction, in Marx's terms, but rather as one of the many incarnations of an ever more pervasive vital matter" (Marina Vishmidt, "Bodies in Space: On the Ends of Vulnerability," *Radical Philosophy* 2, no. 8 (Autumn 2020): 33–46). We need to acknowledge that for the many for whom citizenship or asserting their rights is not a given, their bodily claim in a physical space is the only possibility of asserting their presence. Such a right can be articulated, as I'll clarify in the last chapter, through a reading of Judith Butler and the surface. We should not intend to use the street only in its literal meaning but mostly and primarily in the street's or square's role as the symbolic public space par excellence. Accessibility to public space is given through an intersection of technologies, where the street and the square are only single nodes in a complex network. In this sense, the body itself should be considered a surface, which works in alliance with other apparatuses. Other bodies (physical and represented) access the street or are represented by other bodies on the street. Only by accessing such a space of visibility—the public space of agency—can we claim space and make demands. Despite their vulnerability, a bodily presence may be the only proof of recognition and existence under the law. Here, I also direct readers to Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Absentees: On Variously Missing Persons* (New York: Zone Books, 2021). Heller-Roazen formulates an important distinction between "the person" and "the non-person" as (dys-)functional categories of the law. Besides biopolitical studies and preoccupa-

rated and underinvestigated, proves helpful in defining new relations and independent productions and in reconsidering and transforming these given socioeconomic structures and categories, including the determination of the (re)production of relations of power.[27]

In this research project, I analyse a number of radical exhibitory strategies which could have potentially influenced Aina Helgesen's curatorial thinking (directly or indirectly, in an Hegelian Zeitgeist where the reverberation of ideas loom larger than mere encounters), including exhibitions and events largely modulated by "artists" (Helgesen was appointed as curator and researcher by an artists' union, Unge Kunstneres Samfund (UKS, Young Artists' Society), in Oslo, in which we can read the formation of what cultural theorist Elke Krasny later defined as the curatorial materialist approach).[28] I draft thoughts around a number of less and more

tions, he clarifies that the existence of a human as a subject of political preoccupation and political agency is given by being an active subject of the law. Unfortunately, and because of this inextricable representation of the body into the law, its physical assertion is fundamental in extricating policies of agency and presence to assert demands, today through the politics of citizenship. Such predicates are deeply engraved in the Western system. Even literature, as Heller-Roazen demonstrates, has been a site of exploration of the law's paradoxes and possibilities.

27 ——— Krasny, "Curatorial Materialism."

28 ——— "The seventies locate its radical notions not so much in the art as in its attitudes to the inherited 'art' structure of which the gallery space is the prime icon. The structure is questioned not by classic resentment but by project and gesture, by modest didacticism and phasing of alternatives." See Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 77. In 1969, Tommaso Trini used the term "museographical emergency" to define the problematic "generated by the introduction of artworks with a process-oriented dimension into the museum context," due to the fixity implicit to the museum concept. Paul o'Neill, "The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s): The Development of Contemporary Curatorial Discourse in Europe and North America since 1987" (PhD diss., Middlesex University, 2007). See also Tommaso Trini, "The Prodigal Master's Trilogy," *Domus*, September 1969, n.p. Irene Calderoni further argues the case for the fundamental step the 1960s took in displacing the institutionalised exhibition space, such as the museum, with impermanent works "commissioned" solely for the purpose of exhibition, and consequently reinforcing the authorial role of the curator: "Multiple aspects, ranging from display techniques to catalogue design and from advertising strategies to the artist-institution relationship, rendered these shows [*January 5–31, 1969*, Seth Siegelaub, New York, 1969; *Op losse schroeven: situaties en cryptostructuren*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1969; *Spaces*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1969; *Information*, Museum of

widely known exhibitions in Scandinavia to create a context of readability for positioning these disruptive practices, including the role that small, medium-sized, and temporary institutions play in maintaining an oppositional role to the establishment. The exhibition *Destruction of the RSG-6* (with Guy Debord, J. V. Martin, and Michèle Bernstein) at Galerie EXI, Odense, in June–July 1963; an event held by the group Co-Ritus (led by artists Jørgen Nash and Jens Jørgen Thorsen) at Galerie Jensen, Copenhagen, in December 1962; and the exhibition *Piero Manzoni* at Galerie Køpcke, Copenhagen, in June–July 1960, all pushed the limits of the exhibition space, addressing to a certain extent the dematerialisation of labour and structural issues of power, and proposing other societal organisational forms, literally attempting to make the material conditions available to the public and to make the public the conscious producer of these conditions.[29] Guided by performance as a more open-ended form of gathering bodies around the space of appearance and representation, Fluxus tropes come to be equally present and relevant in the region, firstly in Copenhagen through the DUT music festival as early as 1962 (through Danish musician Jørgen Friis Holm, German Denmark-based artist Arthur Køpcke, and Danish artist Eric Andersen, among others), and through others' efforts largely choreographed by George Maciunas, who acted as impresario (paradoxically the same title often applied to Szeemann) of the informal Fluxus group.[30]

Modern Art, New York, 1970; …] innovative with respect to traditional shows. In most cases, the works did not preexist the shows, but were created for and within them, with relevant consequences for the status of both the work and the exhibition medium." See Irene Calderoni, "Creating Shows: Some Notes on Exhibition Aesthetics at the End of the Sixties," in *Curating Subjects*, ed. Paul O'Neill (London: Open Editions; Amsterdam: De Appel, 2007), 65.

29 ——— According to Jakob Jakobsen, the idea behind the Co-Ritus event in Copenhagen, in 1962, was that the public should become participant. The room contained art materials instead of artworks. Jakob Jakobsen, "The Artistic Revolution: On the Situationists, Gangsters and Falsifiers from Drakabygget," in *Expect Anything Fear Nothing: The Situationist Movement in Scandinavia and Elsewhere*, ed. Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen & Jakob Jakobsen (Copenhagen: Nebula; New York: Autonomedia, 2011), 215–75.

30 ——— Maciunas devoted himself so extensively to organising, producing, and managing events that, in retrospect, we could say he acted as a curator staging the presence of Fluxus locally and internationally. See Julia Robinson, "Maciunas as Producer: Performative Design in the Art of the 1960s," *Grey Room*, no. 33 (Fall 2008): 56–83.

A curatorial materialism assumes in this context an avant-gardist's take on exhibition making. It is a laboratory transforming the conditions of production and distribution of art and the very idea of labour.[31] The exhibition is seen as only a moment of the political call for justice, at times closely aligned to activism.[32] The administering of the experience of art by selecting and reflecting on what is made visible under precarious living conditions contextualises and frames production, the distribution of funds, collaborations with the press, and working with politicians and other government bureaucrats, and it also acts as an intermediary between given power structures. In such a process, some artists take a leading voice or role, beyond the locus of the artwork (the historically defined domain of the artist), to encompass what today is defined as a "curatorial" role. This is equally a way of questioning the very structure determining the meaning of art, and therefore redefining the curatorial undertaking (the representational space as a space of struggle concurrent to other domains of exploitation), spinning criticality, and challenging overwhelming and at times inaccessible structures of power, where the curator is not a univocal and unifying voice but rather a node propagating precarious positions within society.[33] In the argument presented throughout the enusing chapters, the term "avant-garde" assumes different signifiers to adjust to different historical contexts and periods. Different uses and connotations for the same term may appear contradictory. However, a contextual reading gives the term meaning according to the related contextual positions. Despite early avant-garde movements soliciting full artistic autonomy, they also always urged social change, which is central to the thesis presented here and continues to make them relevant to this day. With successive decades and lessons learned from earlier avant-gardes in the post-war era, later, reinvigorated avant-garde movements brooded upon the autonomous status of art and partially repudiated such autonomy and turned away from their predecessors, pointing to their failures. Especially in the 1960s and the brewing student movement, avant-garde groups wished to move beyond the exhibition space as the sole locus of

31 ——— Roger Rothman, "Fluxus, or the Work of Art in the Age of Information," *symplok*ē 23, no.s 1–2 (2015): 309–25.

32 ——— David Banash, "Activist Desire, Cultural Criticism, and the Situationist International," *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*, no. 19 (2000): 2–17.

33 ——— Though this position has been cleared when it comes to artists taking leading roles. See, regarding Fluxus: Robinson, "Maciunas as Producer"; and regarding Happenings and the Situationist International: Jon Erickson, "The Spectacle of the Anti-spectacle: Happenings and the Situationist International," *Discourse* 14, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 36–58. Curating was still challenging its own positioning to be able to accept such mixed roles. Here one can attempt to update von Bismarck's arguments reported in Bismarck, "Relations in Motion."

signification (autonomy) and the only place to provoke change by extending into and appropriating the street.[34]

As dematerialised practices germinated around the world during the 1960s and 1970s, artists unveiled extreme politics, such as with Tucumán Arde (Tucumán Is Burning, 1968) in Buenos Aires and Rosario, Argentina, an intervention in mass communication staged by the Rosario Group, generating a circulation of "*counter-information* within the public space, addressed to a mass spectator outside the limited art circuit."[35] With the shutting down of sugar mills in Tucumán, known to be one of the deepest economic crises in history, malnutrition and poverty escalated under the ruling of the local dictatorship at the time. Tucumán Arde represents a situation where artists fully move into the realm of social justice struggles and see the possibilities of collaborating with workers and unions to spearhead demands for drastic structural changes of conditions within society.[36] It is

34 ——— Movements like Dada, De Stijl, Surrealism, Constructivism, and Futurism pleaded a social change from within the institution of art, eventually leading to more significant societal changes as holders of aesthetic representations of more extensive behaviours in society. Later movements such as the Situationist International and Tucumán Arde continued using the exhibition space to make their claim. They addressed the limitations of the physical space of art in their quests for social change and the need to take the street and to involve the workers in such a battle. The autonomy of art in its "consecrated cathedrals" was undoubtedly affected in this process. Such fictional division between historical periods and decades—which may at first sight appear as a dichotomy in the development of my argument—has more nuance and complexity than is first glimpsed. Therefore, each instance of avant-gardism must speak for itself. One can read in each movement a genuine affection for society, which is why we continue to study them. Today, avant-garde movements are still central to inspiring change, taking into account the historical context from which we work. They show how specific transgressive tactics may be subsumed into the system, becoming less effective and demanding ever new strategies for real affection. Maintaining each movement's ambiguity in the writing of this work, with its achievements and failures, is essential to the overall argument, as is the seeking of revolutionary strategies. Adherents saw in their collective movements a dissipation of art into life, and therefore an understanding that art would become redundant after the revolution. Art historian and critic Claire Bishop notes some of these movements' participatory aspirations; see Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), 103.

35 ——— Ana Longoni, "Is Tucumán Still Burning?," trans. Marta Ines Merajver, *Sociedad Journal*, no. 24 (2006): http://socialsciences.scielo.org/pdf/s_rsoc/v1nse/scs_a03.pdf.

36 ——— Lucy Lippard apparently misunderstood Tucumán Arde as the total dematerialisation of art, because she missed their more theatrical presentation and staging; in fact, the Rosario group understood their

here that forms of antagonism, opposition, dialogue, and art's negotiations can be found. A key cultural negotiator in Argentina during those years, Oscar Masotta, was an artist deeply invested in Lacanian theories, especially during the last part of his life, drawing particular opposition to knowledge as part of "spoliation."[37] In his anti-Happening movement, he mediated the anaesthetised performances of composer La Monte Young in events Masotta staged from New York to Buenos Aires, to address the struggles of the contextual political situations; these events included Happenings such as *To Induce the Spirit of the Image* (1966) at the Instituto Torcuato di Tella, Buenos Aires. The very violence of the labour conditions within the society of the spectacle was performed live in front of the eyes of the spectators: cultural and other elites, those managing the means of exploitation.[38] Both audience and performers were submitted to pitiless procedures through the manipulation of light, sound, and smell.

As I alluded earlier, there is an important and underrated strand in exhibition histories of the curatorial triumph of the individual curator, which would become prominent in the 1990s, something that was prefigured in the late 1960s and beginning of the 1970s with the likes of Harald Szeemann and his by now landmark exhibitions *When Attitudes Become Form*

work as a collective and as new forms of practice involving art, information, and tension. See Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers*, 136–37. The group also included radical feminists like artist Graciela Carnevale, who in her best-known piece padlocked her unsuspecting audience inside a gallery space.

37 ——— Such spoliation deploys labour-power to a commodity with a particular value thanks to the use of erudition in the ruling system. In *La logique du fantasme*, Jacques Lacan sets in opposition use-value and "jouissance-value." *Jouissance* is only thinkable for Lacan if something is subtracted from it. In *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan notes that surplus-value comes from the socially necessary labour-time over and above the labour-time affected in order to maintain labour-power. This labour is paid in the same way as any other commodity: surplus-labour pays for a bonus of *jouissance*, a surplus-*jouissance.* Lacan also notes that the key to exploitation involves reducing labour-power to a commodity that has a particular value, and that such an achievement, which Marx calls "spoliation," is allowed by knowledge. See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*: *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, book XVII (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2006), 92. Artist Dora García has dedicated a four-year study to the work of Oscar Masotta, "repeating" his landmark performances and commissioning research about his work to a number of curators, academics, and other practitioners. Some of the outputs of her projects are collated in Dora García, ed., *Segunda Vez: How Masotta Was Repeated* (Oslo: Oslo National Academy of the Arts and Torpedo, 2018).

38 ——— Inéz Katzenstein, "The Happening as Political Exorcism," in García, *Segunda Vez. How Masotta Was Repeated*, 83–101.

at Bern Kunsthalle in 1969 and documenta V in Kassel, Germany, in 1972, as well as with, for example, Kynaston McShine's *Information* at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1970. Such exhibitions renewed curatorial strategies aimed at drawing attention to the impromptu exhibition space as a politicised site for critical discussion, though they mostly failed to unveil the darknesses belonging to the field.[39] In Debord's words, "critical in its content, … art must in its form be self-critical."[40] Masotta pointed out in his writings an art proposition which we should retranslate as a paradigm for curatorial materialism: 1. It situates the artwork on both a contemporary and a historical level of significance; 2. It opens new aesthetic possibilities while simultaneously airing the sociopolitical conditions; 3. It reveals something fundamental about both the art system and the economic system into which the art system is inserted; and 4. It calls into question the limits of the exhibitory space, while pointing out the need to overcome it.[41]

Through exhibition making and new curatorial undertakings, we can read the peculiarity of the 1960s in the era's flirtatious interrogation and manipulation of information media, which we might describe as the new bourgeois public sphere, which served as the base of production of new areas of invisible labour—something that has intensified in our days.[42]

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39 ——— See the transcripts of Seth Siegelaub in conversation with Bartomeu Marí, MACBA Auditorium, Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art, 29 November 2010, https://img.macba.cat/public/uploads/20101122/siegelaub_eng.pdf; Lauren van Haaften-Schick, "Conceptualizing Artists' Rights: Circulations of the Siegelaub-Projansky Agreement through Art and Law," *Oxford Handbooks Online*, March 2018, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935352.013.27.

40 ——— It is also worth noting that this exhibition catalogue ends with graphs as a visual aesthetic and representation. Guy Debord et al., *Destruktion af RSG–6. En kollektiv manifestation af Situationistisk Internationale*, exhibition catalogue (Odense: Galerie EXI, 1963), 11.

41 ——— Oscar Masotta, "After Pop, We Dematerialise," in *Oscar Masotta: Segunda Vez, Cahier No. 2*, ed. Dora García (Oslo: Oslo National Academy of the Arts and Torpedo, 2017), 8–19.

42 ——— In 1972, Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt published a book in German titled *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung* (The Public Sphere and Experience) to address the structural changes happening within the public sphere and the mass media—in particular the media cartel. They noticed a wider restricted access of workers in their existing organisation to channels of communication, affecting forms of counterpublicity against the bourgeois public sphere. By studying the roles of mass media, Kluge and Negt call for proletarian publicity to intervene within mass media as the new public sphere determining visibility and representation, and hence ruling the new "urbanity" of struggles for rights and the definitions of citizenship, belonging, and equality. They state: "The characteristic weakness of virtually all forms of the

These new spaces had to be reconverted and appropriated into a theme to be analysed self-critically because of the extended power of mass information: an "intermedia" exhibitionary form from which to learn and devise new strategies of diffusing and distributing "curatorship."[43]

Working in an area of activity that sits in a hybrid of genres, these practices should be readdressed again today, because they continue to exist every time one speaks about a singular work (existing beyond its objectual form), complicating the material conditions of possible exploitation. They could bring forward the idea of curatorial materialism as a carefully produced and manipulated media conglomerate—a complex understanding of intermixed material whose fundament is the perceptual and temporal experience overcoming the objectual singularity; an ambivalence of inscriptive technologies and representational media, of which language is only one of the surrounding writings.[44] We have witnessed an increased return to the streets lately, not only for people to reclaim basic rights, but to be "visible" and to have the right to "appear," especially when this is denied by the lack of political rights, which mostly today, is deter-

bourgeois public sphere derives from this contradiction: namely that the bourgeois public sphere excludes substantial life-interests and nevertheless claims to represent society as a whole." See Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, "The Public Sphere and Experience: Selections," *October*, no. 46 (Autumn 1988): 60–82 (this was the first excerpt published in English of the original German book).

43 ——— It is Dick Higgins, co-founder of Fluxus, "polyartist," poet, scholar, theorist, composer, performer, and publisher of the Something Else Press, who in 1965 restored the term "intermedia" to the English language, giving it a new dimension to expand traditional modes of art making, and open new art forms beyond given boundaries. See Steve Clay and Ken Friedman, eds., *Intermedia, Fluxus and The Something Else Press: Selected Writings by Dick Higgins* (Catskill, NY: Siglio, 2018). See also Dorothee Richter, "Artists and Curators as Authors—Competitors, Collaborators, or Team Workers?"; Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003); Alexander Alberro, *Abstraction in Reverse: The Reconfigured Spectator in Mid-Twentieth-Century Latin American Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago, Press2017); Maria Bremer, "Modes of Making Art History: Looking Back at documenta 5 and documenta 6," *Stedelijk Studies*, no. 2 (Spring 2015).

44 ——— Dorothee Richter and Barnaby Drabble, "Editorial: Curating Degree Zero Archive. Curatorial Research," *OnCurating*, no. 26 (October 2015): 4–8. Richter and Drabble sketch and sustain an idea that "contemporary curating exists as a media conglomerate; the production of meaning is achieved through a combination of artworks, photographs, commentary, publications, design, gestures, music, film, press releases, websites, and interviews. It is situated in a specific political and cultural context."

mined through citizenship; such demands "are constituted and supported through a complex interplay of performance, image, acoustics, and [...] the technology engaged in these productions."[45] In such cases, we should redefine media not only as "reporting" what is happening, but in its possibility of redefining the hegemonic system of representation, and who are the people, their rights, and therefore, who is represented. In the arts, what has been largely addressed is how ephemeral practices have been digested by the voracious machinations of the art market after their first powerful inception and ambition.[46] What remains to be studied is how to strip the ideological rupture erupting through the arts in overindustrialised societies across the Pacific and the Atlantic, which today results in powerful anaesthetised versions in our self-claimed democracies, and in their spaces of political and aesthetic representation.[47] The question still remains today how to assert forms of curatorial materialism within a larger (and militarised) public sphere overtly defined by a complex media conglomerate intersecting the exhibition space's reach. A conjunctive discussion of art and labour is deemed necessary to continue unravelling the origins of the division of labour. One needs to draw a systematic division between productive and reproductive labour within and outside the arts, to continue unravelling the automation of the hierarchical care of objects, emotions, and people, and to point out the aesthetic strategies impinging on social reproduction.[48] The challenge today is exactly how to use the intermedia at our disposal to keep producing experience (not the "authentic," but simply experience without hiding the system producing it), in light of the "exhibitionary complex"—that is, the intersection of economic and political interests that constitutes and produces, according to sociologist Tony Bennett, an apparatus correlative to the art world that strategically presents itself as self-evident, transparent reality.[49]

At the intersection of a search for forms of equality pursuing classless, genderless, unsubordinated, non-normalised subjects, we can develop new thinking around a curatorial materialism that takes its distance from the *beau monde,* providing answers to and propositions about our own

45 ——— I am referring here to Judith Butler's claim about the right for bodies to appear in public space at the intersection of use of media technology and pavements, squares, and the like. See Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 20.

46 ——— Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity.*

47 ——— Seth Siegelaub, in conversation with Jo Melvin, in *From Conceptualism to Feminism: Lucy Lippard's numbers shows 1969–74*, by Cornelia Butler et al. (London: Afterall Books, 2012), 250–62.

48 ——— Krasny, "Curatorial Materialism."

49 ——— Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," *New Formations*, no. 4 (Spring 1988): 73–103.

worldly condition with precarious lives, preventing the intrinsic transcendence of the autonomous artwork to not speak about the here and now, the situatedness of the producer, and all the actors involved in exhibition making, to reclaim it as a politicised sphere of action for catalysing change. A need to persist with these revolutionary and subversive curatorial practices—including looking into non-professionalised forms of knowledge and grassroots networks, and a more radical curating—demands looking back as much as looking forward into the difficulty of simply or directly bringing these ephemeral strategies back into display. If we look at more contemporary projects, such as *Segunda Vez* (*Second Time Around*, by Dora García, 2014–18), Migrant Workers' Video Collective (Song Yi, 2016–), *Dance with Farm Workers* (Wen Hui, Wu Wenguang, Song Dong, and Yin Xiuzhen, 2001), *A Haunted Biscuit and the Spectre of the Glorious Past* (Cihad Caner, 2018), and the *Speak2Tweet* project (Heba Y. Amin, 2011–), they all have attempted to question the overdefined space of representation determined by exhibition strategies only and limited by mainstream and patriarchal curatorial models, while at the same time strengthening the power of art to reach beyond its designated audience and location. The space of curating (instead of curating in a space) becomes the site for production of the fleeting, factual "evidence," in an attempt for art to move away from a sphere of autonomy and become *útil* (useful).[50] Curatorial materialism is still the realm of the potential, col-

50 ——— Following the Argentine Revolution of 1966, artists mobilised against the military dictatorship's repression. Eduardo Costa, a founding member of the art group Arte de los medio de comunicación masivo, had a credo that art should not belong to the elites. He visited New York between 1966 and 1971, encountering the Happening movement and the artist Scott Burton. The performances he conducted with Burton were recorded under the *Useful Art Manifesto*, written in English. Cuban artist Tania Bruguera has more recently cited this manifesto as inspirational to her Immigrant Movement International, an organisation advocating for the rights of migrants across the world. See Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, *Del di Tella a "Tucumán arde." Vangardia artística y política en el 68 argentino* (Buenos Aires: El Cielo por Asalto, 2000); Lorena Verzero and Yanina Leonardi, "La aparente resistencia: El arte Argentino entre la ética, la estética y el compromiso (1968–1973)," *Iberoamericana* 6, no. 23 (2006): 55–75. Since Immanuel Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* the concept of the autonomy of the aesthetic judgment has been central to Western aesthetic philosophy, disconnecting cognitive contemplative experience from the object's utility. Theodor Adorno, brings autonomy into the art object and in the production that art sets in motion as a societal motor for freedom. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London: Continuum, 1997), 225. "*L'art pour l'art* is … in need of a defense." Theodor W. Adorno, "Letters to Walter Benjamin," in *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 1977), 122. See also Murray W. Skees, "Kant,

lecting particles of a fragmented and precarious body, which could restitute, in a teleological absence, an image of the artwork (or of reality), both available for critique and projecting yet-to-be-recognised bodies in the space of appearance and representation.[51] Particularly by coming closer to the making processes of García's *Second Time Around*, I became aware of the possibility of working trans-institutionally, of defining what I would call a trans-institutionality, that is, the possibility to work across existing institutional platforms and beyond institutional practices of determined times for commissioning and developing projects. Instead, different temporalities, alliances, and collaborative processes of agential reappropriation can be imagined. Projects can and should become nomadic to gain their own identity, moving between exhibitions, books, digitally accessible materials, and moving images, intersecting with the politics of the street, of what is happening at the threshold of the institution's architecture—to bring the struggle of the street inside the purified exhibitory space. We can create the possibility of new institutions by crossing given spaces and times. In this study, for this reason, I rely on art historian and critic Geeta Kapur's applied concept of the transnational public sphere in the field of aesthetics through a reading of the Venice Biennale curatorship. Kapur contends with the deterritorialisation of people and cultures and the "miracle of electronic communication." There are coercive and liberatory forces in these transnational, transcultural contested spaces centred around forms of violent control. Here, a large part of the world population lives on the fringe of national jurisdictions. If we recognise such an exilic condition, we should also face the ethical and aesthetic responsibilities that come with it.[52] Finding meaningful forms of curating (including moving away from normative curating) in such a trans-sphere is to construct a new grammar of the discourse of our contemporaneity in a process of both negotiation and confrontation with the adversary forces at stake.

Adorno and the Work of Art," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 37, no. 8 (2011): 915–33.

51 ——— Borrowing from the field of architecture, law, and scientific disciplines, a vocabulary could be drawn for analysing and interpreting the work of art as a scattered entity whose unity or meaning can be read only through a forensic analysis of its remains. See Gareth Knight, "The Forensic Curator: Digital Forensics as a Solution to Addressing the Curatorial Challenges Posed by Personal Digital Archives," *International Journal of Digital Curation* 7, no. 2 (2012): 40–63; Eyal Weizman and Tina Di Carlo, "Dying to Speak: Forensic Spatiality," *Log*, no. 20 (Fall 2010): 125–31.

52 ——— Geeta Kapur, "Curating across Agonistic Worlds," in *InFlux: Contemporary Art in Asia*, ed. Parul Dave Mukherji et al. (New Delhi: Sage, 2013), 159–212.

Over the course of the last three years, while holding the post of Artistic Director at Fotogalleriet in Oslo, a space dedicated solely to the presentation of photography (image making) as a critical art practice, I transferred the research I had conducted in previous years, and partially collected through this research project, into the locus of the exhibition space, by dematerialising the objects of display (the expectancy of an exhibition space) and starting a programme which brought the artistic (not *the art*, but the intrinsic *revolutionary potential of* the art) "on view." I started a new curatorial undertaking through a weekly series of discussions entitled *Let's Talk about Images*,[53] constituting a platform for debating the role of images within our society, in the framework of the exhibitionary complex (the sphere of action of the institution), to show how simple gestures of disavowal may provoke artistic experience (indeed, a curatorial strategy I learned from Aina Helgesen and Ann Christine Eek). The labour—the usually hidden item deployed in the making of the exhibition—became the focus of knowledge production. The altercation of "staged" weekly conversations, the lack of visual material, and the presentation of the very emptiness of the exhibition space showed the very conditions of the white cube, in its material conditions of lighting and as the overall machine affecting our perception (especially so in the absence of the artwork). This programme revealed and reflected on the void—so sought after in the 1960s—within the exhibition model as a critical space for reflection itself.[54] All this came about through research into strategies to articulate the hidden (or given) agenda of art, itself being questioned through the critical discourse of the 1960s and deployed in turn in the dis-

53 ——— The programme launched on 1 November 2018 and ran until 19 January 2019. It included artists, curators, and practitioners Heba Y. Amin, Terje Abusdal, Khaled Barakeh, Delphine Bedel, Marianne Hultman, Bouchra Khalili, Eline Mugaas, Andrea Lissoni, Elise By Olsen, Maria Pasenau, Tine Semb, Simon Sheikh, Sara R. Yazdani, and Knut Åsdam.

54 ——— Irene Calderoni argues that a radical shift happened in the 1960s when installation art identified with its medium, erasing the distinction between the architecture and the work of art, which become a single entity. This can be seen in works such as Lucio Fontana's *Ambiente Nero* (1949), Yves Klein's *Le Vide* (1958), Arman's *Le Plein* (1960), and Claes Oldenburg's *The Store* (1961). Calderoni writes: "Space and time, architecture and theatre: it is between these poles, and within the precarious balance of these dimensions as well as in the hybridization of these 'other' genre that the museographical challenge, posed by art at the end of the 1960s against traditional exhibition structures, unfolds." Therefore, new curatorial and artistic challenges dictated by the time are present and in need of further exploration. See Calderoni, "Creating Shows," 66.

play systems of the visual arts, where exhibitions came to be interjected with actions deemed to craft a different framework for an active participation in the making and rewriting of history from below.[55] This is nothing necessarily new if one thinks of critical discourse being a natural part of the arts; however, if we think about the white cube itself becoming the exposition of critical thinking, revealing its own forms of exploitation and segregation, then this opens up a different sphere of action. As exhibitions cater to certain expectations and utopias, projecting them onto an audience considered a near-monolithic receiver of content, they also recklessly follow the economic and political interests that constitute and produce the "exhibitionary complex."[56] Therefore, when thinking in terms of the exhibition space, and specifically of Fotogalleriet, we attempted to address how the discourse is not separated from its lived representation. For me, as a practising curator, it was a reflection on this moment of the 1960s that made me articulate a materialist curatorial stand within the art world, and find my roots as a subject coming from an underprivileged class and location.

The curator is a figure in and of potency, from whom various forms of curating ensue. The curator "plays" with the regime of representation, in the sphere of aesthetics, projecting a political space and predetermining the space of policy making. This figure has the potential to open and give

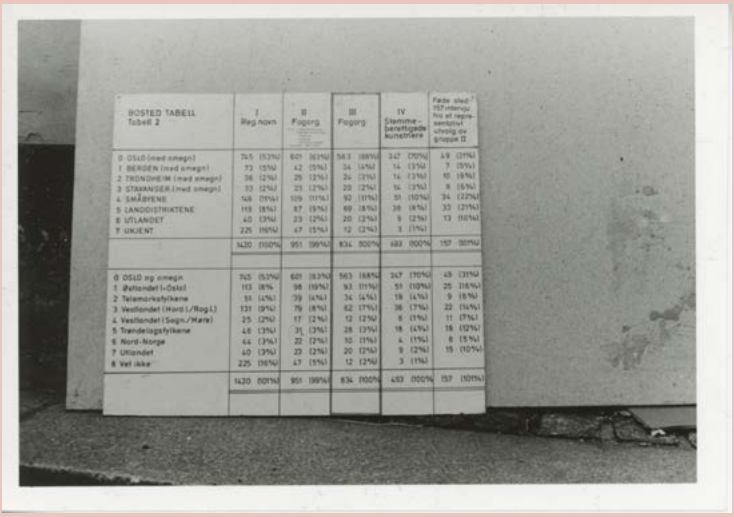
55 ——— There was a double movement in the 1960s and 1970s: an escapism from museum structures and predominant art forms and the rise of exhibition making, which brought personalities like Szeemann to lead exhibitions like documenta 5: *Questioning Reality—Image Worlds Today*, producing unconventional formats. This exhibition put on display, alongside works of art, science fiction images, political propaganda, military insignia, banknotes, and vernacular objects. The works of seventy contemporary artists working with performance, installation, and process art were gathered within a section entitled "Individual Mythologies." The overall structure and presence of artefacts other than art challenged the idea of "high art" as well as established Szeemann as the main authorial voice. See Claire Bishop, "What Is a Curator?," *IDEA: Area + Societate*, 2007, http://idea.ro/revista/en/article/XOgqVhIAACIAfKxj/what-is-a-curator. On the other hand, artists started adopting new strategies of being present within and outside the canonical art spaces. Fluxus impresario George Maciunas's newsletters, the boxed cards of Fluxus editions, the Something Else Press pamphlets, and Oscar Masotta's Happenings and writings crossed a number of spaces. La Monte Young's performance in churches provide another example. Curating assumes a more complex meaning, encompassing a number of dissident strategies apart from institutionalised systems.

56 ——— Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex."

access to unregistered and unrecognised bodies.[57] Today, still other forms of intersectional (non-pure, non-institutional) curating are still to be recognised as valid forms where curatorial power is at stake.

Since the collated material in this thesis was written over a period of five years, with a number of revisions, I have tried to maintain some agonistic thoughts and references to a more canonical art history, which were present at the beginning of my thinking. I further decided to include them to show a transition of thinking from the initial phase of my investigation to the end. Today I find some of these references redundant at best—at times "toxic"—and I feel one can very well live without them; however, I enjoy their hovering in the background almost as a trophy of an intellectual battle as such, in which they explicitly become outdated and disposable. Counter-writing given histories is also a practice of cleansing from such pollution, which has constrained our ability to breath freely.

57 ——— I feel there is a need for further translation of the concept of grievable lives within the aesthetic field—lives not considered of worth because they are unregistered as lives—as part of contesting patriarchal discrimination. Here I lean upon Butler, who formulates such concerns within philosophical, psychological, and ethical dilemmas, related to moral psychology. See Judith Butler, "Why Preserve the Life of the Other?," Tanner Lecture on Human Values—Interpreting Non-violence, Yale University, 30 March 2016, YouTube video, 1:11:24, posted by YaleUniversity, 30 June 2016, https://youtu.be/40YPnzv5JzM.



BOSTED TABELL Tabell 2	I Reg.navn	II Fogorg	III Fogorg	IV Stemme-berettigede kunstnere	Fødte sted - 157 intervju hvs at repre-sentativt utvalg av gruppe II
0 OSLO (med omegn)	745 (53%)	601 (63%)	563 (68%)	347 (70%)	49 (31%)
1 BERGEN (med omegn)	73 (5%)	42 (5%)	34 (4%)	14 (3%)	7 (5%)
2 TRONDHEIM (med omegn)	36 (2%)	25 (2%)	24 (3%)	14 (3%)	10 (6%)
3 STAVANGER (med omegn)	33 (2%)	23 (2%)	20 (2%)	14 (3%)	9 (5%)
4 SMÅBYENE	169 (11%)	109 (11%)	92 (11%)	51 (10%)	34 (22%)
5 LANDDISTRIKTENE	119 (8%)	87 (9%)	69 (8%)	38 (8%)	33 (21%)
6 UTLANDET	40 (3%)	23 (2%)	20 (2%)	9 (2%)	13 (10%)
7 UKJENT	225 (16%)	47 (5%)	12 (2%)	3 (1%)	
	1430 (100%)	951 (99%)	834 (100%)	493 (100%)	157 (101%)
0 OSLO og omegn	745 (53%)	601 (63%)	563 (68%)	347 (70%)	49 (31%)
1 Østlandet I-Oslo	113 (8%)	98 (10%)	93 (11%)	51 (10%)	25 (16%)
2 Telemarksfylkene	59 (4%)	39 (4%)	34 (4%)	18 (4%)	9 (6%)
3 Vestlandet (Hord.l./Rog.l.)	131 (9%)	79 (8%)	62 (7%)	36 (7%)	22 (14%)
4 Vestlandet (Sogn./Møre)	25 (2%)	17 (2%)	12 (2%)	6 (1%)	11 (7%)
5 Trøndelagsfylkene	48 (3%)	31 (3%)	28 (3%)	18 (4%)	18 (12%)
6 Nord-Norge	44 (3%)	22 (2%)	10 (1%)	4 (1%)	8 (5%)
7 Utlandet	40 (3%)	23 (2%)	20 (2%)	9 (2%)	15 (10%)
8 Vet ikke	225 (16%)	47 (5%)	12 (2%)	3 (1%)	
	1430 (101%)	951 (99%)	834 (100%)	493 (100%)	157 (101%)

Unknown Photographer, *Kunstnerkår* (The Artists' Situation), 1971.
UKS Archive (1921–1998), The National Archives of Norway (Arkivverket).

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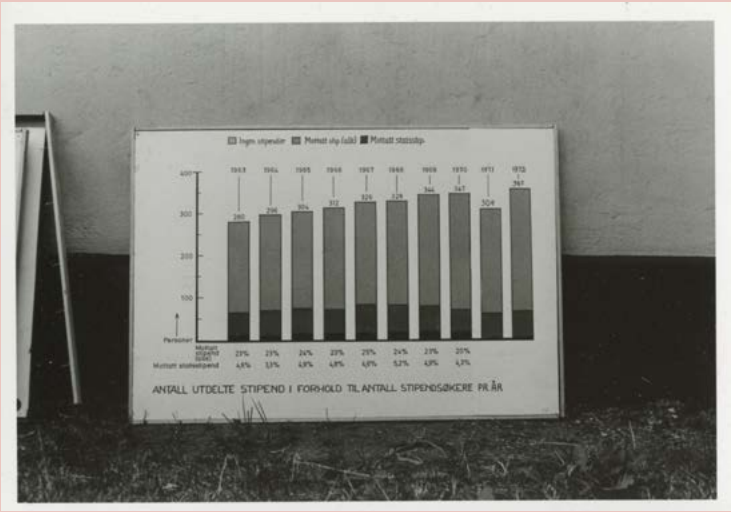
UKS Archive (1921–1998), The National Archives of Norway (Arkivverket).



Unknown Photographer, *Kunstnerkår* (The Artists' Situation), 1971.
UKS Archive (1921–1998), The National Archives of Norway (Arkivverket).

Part 1.
Local Norwegian feminist practices in the 1960s and 1970s: *The Artists' Situation* (1971), an exhibition by Aina Helgesen on immaterial work

How can we curate an exhibition that embodies art labour and represents class inflictions as its actual content? What is its form and which kind of action or movement does it spearhead? What does it mean to see only indexes that expound layered societal contradictions? Should we not reconsider art's autonomy, and what art's "value" is? How is action transmitted, and how are artistic practices consequently being narrated? And what kind of "curatorial intervention" does this allow for?

(1.1) The artist claims to be a worker in the Western world; introduction to the historical shift in discourse of the 1960s and 1970s

During the 1960s, a major turn affected artists and the concept of the artwork within larger Western societal structures, including the institution of art. A shift occurred in the meaning of the artist as a "professional" category within the systemic politics of the post–World War II era—capitalism's golden age of economic expansion. In the US, artists pushed for their practices to be understood within the realm of workers, to align themselves with blue-collar labourers and consequently to expand the potential agency of revolution from within.[58] This aesthetic repositioning of artists as intellectual labourers implied a reinterpretation of the role of art subsumed in a professional category, with its ensuing implications in financial terms.[59] Some historians have come to define that phase as a

58 ——— Julia Bryan-Wilson has argued that in the turbulent moment of the Vietnam War, artists intervened, "through their activism and art making," to redefine their position. "Their urgent plea suggests that *art work* is no longer confined to describing aesthetic methods, acts of making, or art objects […] but is implicated in artists' collective working conditions," and against the capitalist art market through groups such as the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC), founded in New York in 1969, and in the New York Art Strike against Racism, War, and Repression, inspired by AWC. See Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

59 ——— Corina L. Apostol, "Art Workers between Precarity and Resistance: A Genealogy," in *Art Workers: Material Conditions and Labour Struggles in Contemporary Art Practice*, ed. Minna Henriksson et al. (Tartu: Greif, 2015), 103–18.

collective period of intoxication and a moment in which a total worldview in a truly Western European perspective was claimed, in the genuine Renaissance tradition. This should perhaps be read also within a moment when anti-imperialist ideologies took hold within the more extreme factions of student- and minority-based organisations in Italy, France, Germany, Japan, and the US. The adherence to the "war" on/against imperialism spearheaded resistance movements that took urban guerrilla activity as a necessary model of a serious revolutionary movement. One of the central revolutionary art movemvents of the twentieth century, the Situationist International (SI), fuelled intoxication—metaphorical and literal—in private and public settings. People felt poisoned by the spirit of the time yet also found refuge in alcohol and drug experimentation to exit the determinacy of life offered to them; simultaneously, the SI operated as a sectarian exclusion based on ideology. "Intoxication" has a double sense here, referring both to a bodily affection of the wrongdoings of the coloniality of minds and bodies by state powers and to an active search for self-destruction in antagonism with the bourgeois ideology of life. Guy Debord, SI co-founder and its chief theorist, was "famously an unapologetic alcoholic."[60] The Scottish novelist and SI member Alexander Trocchi, was "a heroin addict who explicitly explored his addiction through literature."[61] Enlarging the sphere of experience through the exaggerated use of poisonous substances, they move away from a lobotomised life captured in the image of the spectacle. Importantly, in "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action," Debord attacks a worldview, which "must be changed," where "the spectacle is *capital* to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image," and spectacle is the materialisation of worldview.[62]

Europe was sitting in a great moment of liberal growth, or Americanisation, due to the US waging new wars across different geographies of the world, in order to defeat the spread of communism, which progressed into further exploitation of newly formed nations and economies.[63] In the Eastern European countries, Western Europe "became the basis of exchange

60 ——— Alastair Hemmens, "'Beau comme le tremblement des mains dans l'alcoolisme': A Cavalier History of Drugs and Intoxication in the Situationist International," in *Literature and Intoxication: Writing, Politics and the Experience of Excess*, ed. Eugene Brennan and Russell Williams (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 173.

61 ——— Alastair Hemmens, "'Beau comme le tremblement des mains dans l'alcoolisme'," 173.

62 ——— Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), aphorism 34, 24.

63 ——— Andrew Ross and Kristin Ross, *Anti-Americanism* (New York: NYU Press, 2004).

of pervasive economic and cultural contacts," for instance.[64] In the Scandinavian context, where workers' unions historically played a major organisational role, labour and macroeconomics were up against new modes of supply and demand, of national and international markets, where the redefining state apparatus and its macroeconomics became one and the same process of social construction. Such processes can be traced back to 1958 when the European Economic Community (EEC), through the Treaties of Rome, came into force, and the first goods were exchanged following common tariffs for six countries: Belgium, France, the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. The European Free Trade Association, founded in 1960, served as an alternative trade for a number of Western European countries who had not joined the EEC yet, including the Nordic countries.[65]

(1.2) In and out of Norway during the 1960s

The wave of movements spreading throughout Scandinavia during the 1960s liberated art from institutionalised forms of oppressive governance which was pivotal in inspiring structural change worldwide.[66] While in 1962, a report was issued about the authors' critical financial stand, which was crucial in pressuring the ruling Labour Party of Norway to take action and invite a number of representative artists across the arts' fields to eventually define and create the institutional basis for artists' grants in 1964, such an immediate achievement didn't help the many.[67] The article "Art for Food and Clothing" told that story, while the *Barter Exhibition* acknowledged the dramatic conditions that artists' were living under.[68] Unable to fulfil their basic needs, they offered their work in exchange for essential tools and items for survival.[69] The Norwegian artist Morten Krohg champi-

64 ——— Lars Mjøset, "The Long 1960s in the Nordic Countries," in *The Nordic 60s*, ed. Maaretta Jaukkuri, exhibition catalogue (Helsinki: Nordiskt Konstcentrum, 1990), 19-21.

65 ——— Mjøset, "The Long 1960s in the Nordic Countries."

66 ——— Jack Stevenson, *Scandinavian Blue: The Erotic Cinema of Sweden and Denmark in the 1960s and 1970s* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010).

67 ——— Grants were released from the newly created Norwegian Culture Fund and its advisory body, the Norwegian Arts Council. See Susanne Rajka, "Norway in the 60s: Image of a Decade," in Jaukkuri, *The Nordic 60s*, 158–59

68 ——— Rajka, "Norway in the 60s: Image of a Decade," 158–59.

69 ——— Rajka, "Norway in the 60s: Image of a Decade," 158–59.

oned the need to liberate the artist from the myths and romantic notions created by bourgeois society to make the artist harmless; under such a predicament, the actual working conditions of the arts cannot be seen and are not measurable as in other fields. He set a call for artists' wages.[70] At the turn of a new decade, which promised more redistribution of wealth and less gender discrimination within and outside the country and its many varied communities, through better living standards for all, financial predictability and educational platforms across the entire country, the difficult situation of the artist went hand in hand with a contestation of a conformist concept of art, where these values had not broken the besieged towers of representation.[71] Despite Norway seeming insular from the turbulence surrounding Scandinavia and southern Europe, constant updates came from artists like Kjartan Slettemark, who moved between Oslo and Stockholm, and via the Second Situationist International and the Co-Ritus group, establishing their connection between Bergen and Copenhagen.[72]

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70 ——— Rajka, "Norway in the 60s: Image of a Decade," 158–59. Morten Krohg had already addressed the disparities and inequalities of the art world in Norway in an op-ed in *Dagbladet* on 3 April 1971, arguing for the recognition of a factual divestment in cultural politics in the country from previous years. The article, titled "Kunstnerens forhold i vårt samfunn" (The Artist's Relation in Our Society), reveals a concern that "in a capitalist society, the value of money is the only relevant measure of the value of art." I think this is important background information, and so I here quote Krohg's article at length (my translation):

> "It is only natural that art, in a society where it is a symbol of the special position of privileged classes, has as its only relevant measure: the value of money. There is little point in facing this unpleasant reality of changing the appearance of work. It just means changing the look of the product—its design. Art has little significance in the service of rebellion as long as the renewal and change it represents are the result of the existing social elite's demands for fields of investment for intellectual ingenuity, aesthetic fuss, and capital. [...]
>
> The position of visual art falters in the face of an accomplished solemnisation, with three starting points: 1: Continuous habituation to myths and beliefs, which forms the basis for a lasting, constant conception of culture, with a main emphasis on aesthetic fine art. 2: The maintenance of a constructed economic value that indicates which social classes the art is intended for. 3: Separation of art and artists from the rest of society, through depoliticisation of production and production conditions. [...]
>
> Changes in the social and economic conditions of exploited groups are part of a change in the power relations in society. An assessment of the visual artist, the conditions of the visual artist, show that he [masculine pronoun maintained] belongs to the proletariat.

71 ——— Rajka, "Norway in the 60s: Image of a Decade," 156.

72 ——— Rajka, "Norway in the 60s: Image of a Decade," 160.

(1.3) The political awakening in France and Southern Europe; the feminist discourse; Beauvoir and the existentialist movement

It was during these turbulent years of realignment of artistic, political, and economic interest in Norway that a pivotal alliance brought together, for the first time, the voice of a sociologist and that of underground artists. Artists' unions and artists' spaces championed a new language to bridge art and politics, and to entangle abstract financial values with the language of the visual arts. Aina Helgesen, a student of social economy and social psychology in Montpellier, France (1964–70), and no doubt affected by existentialist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir's principles, as entrenched by Jean-Paul Sartre's own theories and circulating among French students at the time, campaigned for artists' organisations and unions to reconnect them to their original histories.[73] In close dialogue with young artists, Helgesen was instrumental in recuperating historical modalities to push forward a new understanding of the arts that, from textual, became performative, visual propositions.[74] In line with historical figures such as the artist Christian Krohg (1852–1925), who had trained as a lawyer, and who became a driving force in the organisational work of artists at the turn of the century, Helgesen once again made a reality of a visual language which could be turned into political action.[75]

Helgesen foregrounded the artistic and cultural milieu using Sartre's lesson regarding action and praxis, together with the feminist aesthetics that Beauvoir had instilled within the French students' *stimmung* (mood).[76] In

73 ——— Aina Helgesen, "The Art Situation in Norway." The text was first published as its own pamphlet in Norwegian to accompany the exhibition *The Art Situation in Norway*, at the UKS, Oslo, in 1971.

74 ——— Aina Helgesen, in conversation with the author, 5 February 2017. I have conducted and recorded a number of interviews with Helgesen over the past several years.

75 ——— Arne Martin Klausen, *Kunstsosiologi. Om kunstens stilling og funksjon i samfunnet—hos oss og i fjerne kulturer. Enn innføring* [Art sociology: On the position and function of art in society—Here with us and in remote cultures. An introduction] (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1977).

76 ——— As I go deeper into the argument, it becomes clear to the reader how these concepts coming from the French ideologists were retranslated into the artistic milieu.

The Second Sex (1949), Beauvoir had already declared that "every concrete human being is always uniquely situated."[77] She points out modes of separation that are regrettably inscribed in our vocabulary and which history uses to objectify relations ("*homo*" for "humanity," as a good example of a first contradiction). If one relates to the category of "other" as present from the beginning of time and in ancient mythologies in relation to a "self," such separation of recognition, which we take for granted in our cultures, certainly cannot be applied to gender identities.[78] In this antagonism, "a fundamental hostility to any other consciousness is found in consciousness itself; the subject posits itself only in opposition; it asserts itself as the essential and sets up the other as inessential, as the object."[79] Beauvoir asks why this relation of being "inessential" was not provoking a reciprocity of recognition so as to contest male hegemony, for instance, in its ruling governance; she inscribes this coercion as pre-existing even proletarian and class issues, and therefore calls for a "we" as a verb to prompt action. Claiming the plural "we" by bringing class and gender potentially together, Beauvoir invites a large collective body to oppose such a defined category of the "other."[80]

One can read how Helgesen translates these lessons into practical strategies through a detailed analysis of the working conditions of the artists within the entire country of Norway by means of creating such a counter-community of a "we"; she made herself present to gather voices, and produced a collection of information which is shared across the entire field of art. Helgesen highlights economic and gender inequalities as paradigmatic challenges proving how discriminatory practices are structural impediments to being recognised within an artistic milieu.[81] This is a societal problem to be addressed, not a singular problem as it is through appearing as a "we" that we can stand in opposition to the dictates of the constructed given "other."

77 ——— Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009), 24.
78 ——— Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 25.
79 ——— Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 27.
80 ——— Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 28.
81 ——— Helgesen, "The Art Situation in Norway."

(1.4) The concept of need and subsistence within the existentialist movement in the post-war period; how need becomes connected to the financial during the 1960s capitalist expansion

The exhibition *Kunstnerkår* (*The Artists' Situation*) was presented at Unge Kunstneres Samfund (UKS, Young Artists' Society) in 1971 by Aina Helgesen to provide a national survey on artists' demographic data from around the country. The exhibited charts presented the economic and social situation of Norwegian artists. Instead of compressing the findings into the space of the page in a written report and sharing it with authorities and the like, Helgesen decided to enlarge and present these statistical analyses in the form of an exhibition, with its powerful spatial construct. She elevated herself to a curatorial role, offering an overview on the actual situation which directly intertangled the exhibition as the site of opposition. The singular claims emerging from the research were drawn, framed, and installed to include certain colours, such as gold, and other mimicry strategies of the exhibitionary complex to foreground for viewers the actual artistic conditions which were the bases for the artworks' coming into display. The sociologist becomes curator, and the entire exhibition machinery is subsumed and made functional to the cause, its structure and claims made alive through not only exhibition visits but also a symposium and other talks that strengthened the findings.[82]

Mimicking the financial world's language that creates separation, Helgesen here deploys a process of reciprocity to bring back a topical discussion, able to extrude theories into practical matters. In collecting material on how the artistic profession came to be characterised by risk with large investments (such as the long periods of education, deprivation of time for family life, continuous commitment to long working hours, and the

82 There is still some additional research to be done. Recently, UKS scanned some of the images from the exhibition, as part of the institution's preparations for its centenary. Information is still scarce, and just as I am conducting interviews with Aina Helgesen, some of the artists active during that period may help filling the gaps. Unfortunately, since March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has made in-person contact with this generation of practitioners highly precarious.

invasion of other spheres of life), Helgesen exposes how these efforts are not always rewarded as expected. In addition, the artist's weak position in the labour market, with a lack of proper and stable income or work, makes alternative income essential for survival.[83]

Helgesen demonstrates how the artist's way of life is still entrenched in a high degree of romanticism, surviving only in opposition to standardised social and economic functions dictated by a bourgeois life. In her analysis, Helgesen is particularly interested in breaking up these preconstituted categories; to also show how motherhood, for instance, is used and misused to exclude—in a Darwinian, selectivist and biased thinking. She points out how women not only have to fulfil societal expectations of safe and good parenting but also have to maintain recognition of their artistic profession without the former affecting the latter, and with the scarce means at their disposal.[84]

Here it is important to read how Sartre and Beauvoir had come to use subsistence and need as important categories of investigation for understanding alternative modes of being in relation to the subject's formation.[85] This primal thinking came to form a basis of the existentialist movement, at the heart of an intellectual European society grossly affected by World War II. Sartre, its major exponent, had lived through Germany's invasion of Poland and the launching of France into the "Phoney War." After the Fall of France, in June 1941, Sartre was imprisoned in a German war camp for nine months, where he worked on his essay *Being and Nothingness*. When he was released, he returned to an occupied France in which a resistance group among French intellectuals was beginning to form. The police state censored any form of public expression considered "subversive." Through the removal of freedom, Sartre believed himself to have become truly free.[86]

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83 ——— Helgesen, "The Art Situation in Norway."

84 ——— Helgesen was campaigning for the recognition of art as a profession, where the artist as a worker deserves equal treatment and recognition, as any other professional, and gender equality being a necessary part of such a process of acceptance. See Aina Helgesen, "Kvinnliga konstnärers villkor i Norge 1969" [Female artists' conditions in Norway 1969], in *Kvinnor som konstnärer* [Women as artists], ed. Anna-Lena Lindberg and Barbro Werkmäster (Stockholm: LT's Förlag, 1975), 173–202.

85 ——— Sartre writes: "Need is a function which posits itself for itself and totalizes itself as a function because it is reduced to an empty gesture, functioning for itself and not within the integration of organic life. And this isolation threatens the organism as a whole with disintegration—the danger of death." Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, vol. 1, *Theory of Practical Ensembles* (New York: New Left Books, 1976), 81.

86 ——— Sartre would argue: "Never were we freer than under German occupation. We had lost all our rights, beginning with the right to speak.

Understandably, Beauvoir had argued that, from the very beginning, existentialism defined itself as a philosophy of ambiguity.[87]

It is at the intersection of such ambiguity that one may formulate a more complex understanding of oppression and exploitation, one that perhaps forms an emancipation that necessarily needs to start from a conscious understanding of one's own conditions in order to be able to overcome them. By outlining the structural conditions and parameters of artistic success propagated by the hegemonic institutions of art, Helgesen makes visible the means of production behind the material work of art—something that is rarely shown. In doing so, there is a call for justice exercised by more precarious bodies in their right to appear and the inherent discrimination of institutions that deem themselves to be egalitarian, such as the museums with their golden frames (as used in the UKS exhibition), where successful artists are ultimately celebrated. Helgesen clearly calls for a new language, one that cannot be formed in the museum. In the generation of new forms of artistic expression, art needs to exit the "protected" (read: enclosed) space of the museum and seek a more equal space for the presentation and function of art within society.[88]

We were insulted to our faces every day and had to remain silent. We were deported *en masse* as workers, Jews, or political prisoners. Everywhere—on the walls, on the movie screens, and in the newspapers—we came up against the vile, insipid picture of ourselves our oppressors wanted to present to us. Because of all this, we were free." Jean-Paul Sartre, "Paris Alive: The Republic of Silence," *Atlantic*, December 1944, 39–40.

87 ——— "It was by affirming the irreducible character of ambiguity that Kierkegaard opposed himself to Hegel, and it is by ambiguity that, in our own generation, Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness,* fundamentally defined man, that being whose being is not to be, that subjectivity which realizes itself only as a presence in the world, that engaged freedom, that surging of the for-oneself which is immediately given for others. But it is also claimed that existentialism is a philosophy of the absurd and of despair." Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1976), 9–10.

88 ——— Vinnie Nørskov, "Museums and Museology in Denmark in the Twenty-First Century," *Nordic Museology*, no. 1 (2018): 89–95.

(1.5) The concept of labour and transubstantiation in Sartre

In the first volume of *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre is preoccupied with understanding transubstantiation of materiality from inorganic to material life through labour.[89] Pursuing the structure of need and its intelligibility, Sartre starts with the individual before moving to social relations, encompassing a dialectical discussion. By pointing to a perspective based on matter, the dyad of individual/nature leads inevitably to scarcity, when nature as materiality, is the primary unity manipulated by the humans. Like need, scarcity consolidates the practical field.[90]

Through the totalising concept of praxis, this theory might open up the possibility for a complete inversion in the conception of the role of aesthetics within society. From a bourgeois perspective, the writings on aesthetics of Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schiller "presupposed the completed evolution of art as a sphere detached from the praxis of life," that is, as autonomous.[91] It might be equally important to articulate how this role might be intertwined with everyday life and the institution of art. Contrary to Jürgen Habermas's formulation of art occupying a special position among the forms of the absolute spirit, art does intersect with tasks of economic and political governance, in addition to satisfying residual needs which cannot be met in society.[92] Art can shape principles for its "progressive

89 ——— "The meaning of human labour is that man reduces himself to inorganic materiality, in order to act materially upon matter and to change his material life. Through transubstantiation, the project that our bodies engrave in the thing assumes the substantial characteristics of that thing, without entirely losing its original qualities. Thus it comes to possess an inert future, within which we shall have to determine our own future. The future comes to man through things, to the extent that it has come to things through man." Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, 1*: 178.

90 ——— "Scarcity can be seen, in the abstract, as a relation of the individual to the environment. Practically and historically, that is, in so far as we exist in particular situations, the environment is a ready-constituted practical field, which relates everyone to collective structures." Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, 1*: 177.

91 ——— Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Micheal Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984), 26. See also Jeffrey Barnouw, "The Morality of the Sublime: Kant and Schiller," *Studies in Romanticism* 19, no. 4 (1980): 497–514.

92 ——— Jürgen Habermas, "Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism:

distanciation from real-life contexts, and the correlative crystallisation of a distinctive sphere of aesthetic experience," as we have come to learn from Modernist thinking; art in its autonomous sphere can reach such autonomy only by means of detachment from need and labour, correspondingly, "the praxis of life."[93]

Such a claim of the avant-garde had to be renegotiated in light of the new sociopolitical conditions arising from the corporate expansion of the post-war period and the boom of Western economics, which Helgesen was attempting to tackle specifically in the Scandinavian context.

(1.6) Helgesen's existentialist ideas meet the Marxist-Leninist theories of the Gras group

I would argue there is a resonant thinking around scarcity as a powerful force, which brings Helgesen close to a given community: that of artists conditioning the unity of a group, which, taken collectively, could organise itself to react as a force field in the expression of quantitative facts.[94] This is no longer a class which considers itself detached from the working class, but now actually identifies itself with other workers confined within a national system that determines their living conditions. Yet they work as an independent force that needs to be both recognised and remunerated for providing critical thinking within its system.

Following informal discussions while travelling back and forth from France to Norway, in 1969, upon the invitation of UKS and its chair Stanley Stornes (and later, in 1970, chair Rune Brynestad), Helgesen and the UKS board started working on the jubilee exhibition which was to celebrate the first fifty years of the founding of the artists' society.[95] The com-

The Contemporaneity of Walter Benjamin," *New German Critique*, no. 17 (1979): 30–59.

93 ——— Here I am reworking Peter Bürger's words in order to find a new aesthetic claim that moves beyond art as a pure separated sphere. See Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 3.

94 ——— Sartre uses a paradigmatic example of quantitative value related to the individual unit and to society which I think is pertinent to recuperate in this case. See Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, 1*: 173–75.

95 ——— The board consisted of Stanley Stornes (chair), Jørn Nilsen, Rune Brynestad, Olav Starheim, and Magne Austad.

mittee included Olav Starheim, Eva Lange, Per Kleiva, and Rune Brynestad. Kleiva was a painter and graphic artist who had been an active member of the Gras group, a collective of artists who shared a workshop from 1969 to 1973. Their common starting point was the desire to awaken political commitment through a new language adopted for this purpose. This activity mainly consisted of creating silkscreen prints imbued with Pop Art reproducibility and Marxist-Leninist ideals.[96] Gras also identified with international avant-garde attitudes and Scandinavian "Situationists" such as Jens Jørgen Thorsen, whose primary intent was to attack the establishment—where museums were often their primary target.[97] Along these lines, Morten Krogh, one of the most vocal members of Gras—who, in 1969, became director of Oslo's Kunstnernes Hus (the Artists' House), one of the largest non-collecting art institutions in the region—quoted the *Futurist Manifesto* on a famous TV programme in Norway, stating that museums should be burned.[98] From such an oppositional standpoint, Gras adopted very specific insubordination tactics within the arts, and it later affirmed it had "used" UKS as a strategic "platform" for art and politics, as they understood the need to siege an institution to be able to catalyse change.[99]

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96 ——— A comprehensive study of Gras and its radical ideology is given in Nora Ceciliedatter Nerdrum, *Bildene er mitt våpen: En analyse av GRAS-gruppas silketrykk med fokus på ideologi* [The pictures are my weapon: An analysis of the GRAS group's silkscreen printing with a focus on ideology] (master›s thesis, University of Oslo, 2007). See also Jon Ove Steihaug, "Kunstpolitikk på norsk—70-tallet revisited" [Art politics in Norwegian—The 1970s revisited], *Kunstkritikk*, 19 August 2004, https://kunstkritikk.no/kunstpolitikk-pa-norsk-70-tallet-revisited.

97 ——— Harald Flor, "Politisk grobunn for billedmessig mangfold" [Politically fertile ground for visual diversity], introduction to *Gras-10 år etter* [Gras 10 years after]," exhibition catalogue (Oslo: Hammerlunds Kunsthandel, 1983).

98 ——— "Krohg's time at the helm of the institution was short-lived. He had to resign after, on the TV programme *Epoke*, he polemically stated that one should burn down the National Gallery in Oslo and Henie Onstad Kunstsenter in Høvikodden, as well as close down Kunstnernes Hus in Oslo." (My translation). See "Kunstnernes Hus 90 år: Anekdoter fra husets historie" [Kunstnernes Hus 90 years: Anecdotes from the organisation's history], accessed 16 January 2021, https://docplayer.me/187407714-Kunstnernes-hus-90-ar-anekdoter-fra-husets-historie.html.

99 ——— "In line with the pragmatic line chosen, it became clear to the members of Gras that changes could not be made directly through Gras but had to be initiated through already existing organisations. UKS served as a platform. Over the course of a few years, all members of Gras had either been a member of the board or the jury of UKS. Arne Sørensen, Asle Raaen, and Bjørn Melbye Gulliksen were chairman before and during the Gras era. The steering of the institution continued after Gras was dissolved: Gras member Eva

Read in this light, it is not surprising that, in lieu of a conventional presentation of artworks, an idea was put forward for the main exhibition on the occasion of UKS' fiftieth jubilee to not draw works from the institution's history, nor from artists who had championed it, nor simply to exhibit the "new." Instead, as part of the organisation's actual operations, the idea was to chart the financial situation of artists at the time. The exhibition's curated spatial form, precisely translating scarcity (of means, of representation, of diversity of artists based on their income) into a work of art. In a new world projected towards internationalisation, whose rhythm was increasingly being dictated by financial abstraction, Helgesen, the curator of the exhibition project, used the same economic language affecting the social and political conditions of analysis in the platform of display. This curatorial strategy prompted thinking about how such a new financial system affects spatial and temporal concepts, as well as the writing of art and art's future within it.[100] Helgesen demonstrated that one cannot think outside history. It is within a given contextual historical moment from where one speaks to its modes of representation, where one can claim a position within history, so that "historicising simultaneously and necessarily is dehistoricising" (unwriting what has been written by power, to overcome a subjugated position). At the same time one positions the very aesthetics of representation of such moment as "a meta level from which this determination can be made."[101]

Lange served as chairwoman of UKS in 1974–75 and Gras member Egil Storeide in 1976–77; later Marit Wicklund also sat for a period as chairwoman." Flor, "Politisk grobunn for billedmessig mangfold." My translation.

100 ——— Fredric Jameson famously notes that "finance capital sustains and underpins postmodernity as such." See Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983–1998* (New York: Verso, 1998), 149.

101 ——— I am here drawing on a formulation developed by Peter Bürger to claim that this alternative view on a curatorial methodology, through the very process of reading history, also changes the way in which historiography is shown and made available. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 16.

(1.7) Abstraction itself is a product of historical relations

Karl Marx formulates, in the introduction to the *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, that labour is exemplary of the most abstract categories, and precisely because of this abstractness it reflects the very social relations of an epoch. Therefore, we should always read work as expressive of the times.[102] Marx contends that perception, as deception, is the guiding principle of consumption. We need to read the production conditions as historically construed for that perception to become possible.[103] In the monetary system, he says, wealth is still interpreted as money, but the connection between labour and wealth is lost when we do not know which economic governance is underpinning such relations.[104] Professor of philosophy Roberto Nigro, in elaborating on the Marxist tradition, clarifies how all work can be defined as abstract labour. In short: "Work is the unit present in all commodities," and it is the "common substance required in order to produce something."[105] Such theory allows us to excavate and individuate work and its value, trace the global labour force, and denounce forms of exploitation. Geographical dispossession locates labour in low-wage countries. Migrations occur for many reasons, including wages and contextual forms of discrimination, religious, sexual, racial, and otherwise. Work continues to be a hegemonic struggle for territorial claims and over resources. Because of this "indiffer-

102 ——— "The example of labour strikingly shows how even the most abstract categories, despite their validity—precisely because of their abstractness—for all epochs, are nevertheless, in the specific character of this abstraction, themselves likewise a product of historic relations, and possess their full validity only for and within these relations." Karl Marx's *Grundrisse*, quoted in Beverly Best, *Marx and the Dynamic of the Capital Formation: An Aesthetics of Political Economy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 74.

103 ——— "The need which consumption feels for the object is created by the perception of it. The object of art—like every other product—creates a public which is sensitive to art and enjoys beauty." Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (Rough Draft), trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1993), 92.

104 ——— Marx, quoted in Best, *Marx and the Dynamic of the Capital Formation*, 74.

105 ——— Roberto Nigro, "Alienation, the Social Individual, and Communism: Marx in the 21st Century," *OnCurating*, no. 30 (2014): 44–52.

ence" in production (under the global predicament, things can be produced everywhere), care in societies to treasure work retains an emancipatory power.

Helgesen was trying to expose and bring the theory of abstract labour into the exhibition space through the display form—something that had not been done before. She did so by devising a curatorial strategy to not only address but unveil the prioritised part of the system that society was resting on and, from there, all the needed interconnections for envisaging alternative forms of production relations within the arts.

(1.8) How the investigative process into *The Artists' Situation* began

Helgesen, who started the research endeavour for the UKS exhibition when she was twenty-four, and who later went on to found novel pedagogical institutes such as a higher institute of art education in the northern city of Trondheim, began the investigative work from scratch, due to a lack of statistics available on the particular living conditions of artists in Norway.[106] If census and statistical analysis had been used for other professional categories, artists were not included in the sample.[107] There was already suspicion of scarce means among artists, and of available governmental funds for the arts being used primarily for administrative purposes.[108] The central platform for the sale of artworks to public and private entities was through acceptance into the Høstutstillingen (National Salon of Fine Arts), whose jury was managed by the Bildende Kunstneres Styre (BKS, Board of Visual Artists). Helgesen's investigation started by making contact with BKS and its sister agencies in Finland, Sweden, and Denmark.[109]

106 ——— Aina Helgesen, in conversation with the author, 28 January 2017.
107 ——— Helgesen, in conversation with the author, 28 January 2017.
108 ——— Helgesen, in conversation with the author, 28 January 2017.
109 ——— According to Helgesen, Konstnärernas Riksorganisation (Swedish Artists' National Organisation) was the only one to give access to the information it had collected through current research being done with artists in their country. Helgesen, in conversation with the author, 28 January 2017.

Helgesen collected the data through artist' interviews conducted across the entire country. To complement the interviewee form, she obtained additional information from other institutional sources to achieve qualitative research and find corresponding counter-evidence, providing a proper system of comparison. The analysis was mainly based on the medium of painting and included as artists' expenditure items such as art materials and studio rental, for instance.[110] The picture that emerged was more alarming than anyone could have possibly expected, showing that the majority of artists were living in extremely precarious conditions; in terms of pure economic profit, the majority was working at a loss; their expenditures were higher than their incomes, and most artists depended either on other jobs or on their partners or families for subsistence. The research found that 80 percent of artists had an income deriving from elsewhere, mainly a second job. It also was found that 10 percent of the artists shared 50 percent of all income available for artists in the entire country, while the remaining 90 percent shared the other half. As of 1 April 1970, 834 people were artists (registered members in at least one artists' organisation) out of a population of 3,790,000.[111] The average age was fifty; 70 percent were men and 30 percent women; and 90 percent had education from within the art field, with an average of five years of study.[112] For the UKS exhibition, Helgesen prepared drawings and statements to chart the enquiry, with the help of the UKS board (all artists)[113] and through the use of, among other tools, the first electronic calculators which, in turn, gave the exhibited materials a specific visual form. The exhibition, given the title *The Artists' Situation*, opened on 29 October 1971, on the first floor of the UKS space in Christiania Torv on Rådhusgata, and was preceded by an exhibition of fifteen prints of Edvard Munch borrowed from the collection of the City of Oslo. *The Artists' Situation* was presented as both a spatial construct with large deployment of diagrams drawn mostly on millimetre paper and as a discursive programme. Helgesen gave the keynote address, followed by discussions among the artists present. What emerged from the exhibition was a sense of empowerment for artists, who

110 ——— 157 artists were interviewed. Helgesen, in conversation with the author, 28 January 2017. Similar information is reported in the exhibition pamphlet. See: Helgesen, "The Art Situation in Norway."

111 ——— 42.33 percent of this number is the working population. Most of the statistical data is given in the exhibition pamphlet. See: Helgesen, "The Art Situation in Norway." Further information is also given in a transcription of Helgesen speech on the occasion of the exhibition opening, and stored in the UKS Archive (1921–1998), National Archives of Norway, Oslo.

112 ——— Helgesen, "The Art Situation in Norway."

113 ——— More comparative research would be needed. Helgesen, in conversation with the author, 28 January 2017.

had previously and secretly felt shame, thinking their poor economic situation was a private matter; such perspective was overcome when they understood that this was a common situation shared by many.[114]

As part of this process of abstract analysis and pointing to the statistical situation of artists, the millimetre paper reappears, enlarged, as the background pattern in the pamphlet that accompanied the exhibition.

(1.9) The exhibitory moment: An exhibition of charts and graphs

In documents from the UKS archive, *The Artists' Situation* is repeatedly called an "information exhibition." The exhibition consisted of, among others, thirty framed posters (approx. 100 x 70 cm each) and four larger banners (approx. 200 x 120 cm each), in addition to a map of Norway of approximately two metres in length. Thanks to a document in the archives, dated 9 May 1972, addressed to Galleri I in Bergen and signed by the UKS Chairperson Rune Brynestad who gathered information as the exhibition would have travelled subsequently there, we get a full overview of the material in the exhibition which is otherwise only available through sparse photographs.

"The Stipend Situation" was depicted in two posters mounted on a portrait of the culture minister.[115] *"Who Are We / What Are We" was illustrated in two posters: the first showed a comprehensive list of kunstforeninger (artists' associations) and their mandates; the other, the number of members, age, and gender as of 1 April 1970. "Where Do Artists Live" was illustrated by a Norwegian map on which the artists' locations were marked with nails. This was followed by a chart listing the criteria used for registration in the* kunstforeninger. *Education was demonstrated with a poster reporting the kinds of education the artists had and the duration of art education, in addition to a comment on the general situation concerning school. "The Artists Economy" was illustrated in five posters presenting:*

114 ——— Helgesen, in conversation with the author, 28 January 2017. Similar information is reported in the exhibition pamphlet. See: Helgesen, "The Art Situation in Norway."

115 ——— From the correspondence with Galleri I in Bergen, it is clear that Finn Graff's portrait of Culture Minister Kjell Bondevik was quite well known in the field. From 1963 to 1988, Graff worked as an illustrator and political cartoonist for *Arbeiderbladet*.

1. The Registrable Economic Basis.
2. Successful Artist's Budget.
3. How Much Does It Cost for an Artist to Hold a Solo Exhibition.
4. Comments to the Artist's Budget.
5. Income.

"The Atelier Situation" was presented in one dedicated poster with relevant statistics and suggestions for improvement of conditions. "The Activities" provided a poster that illustrated the artists' possibilities to make a cultural offer through exhibitions, through a map of Norway's exhibition spaces, galleries (including private ones), and kunstforeninger. *"The Development of Art Sales" was presented in a poster in permanent and nominal Norwegian krone (the development of prices in two curves from 1890 to 1970). "The Elderly Artists" issue was dealt with in a separate poster.*[116]
*Two excerpts from state budgets from 1971–72 were mounted in "two pompous gold frames speaking [their] own clear language." A "*provoplakat*" closed the exhibition to give viewers the opportunity to write their own comments on a separate poster.*[117] *This was reported as unsuccessful, and eventually people were asked to insert a note in a dedicated box.*[118]

A seminar was arranged by Eva Lange, Per Kleiva, Olav Starheim, and Rune Brynestad and moderated by Kleiva on 30 and 31 October 1971. It opened with a speech by Helgesen titled 'The Visual Artists' Work Situation' and also involved group work and workshops. Seminar attendees included representatives from the municipality of Oslo; artists' unions from across Norway; political party and parliament representatives; the art academy and musicians' and authors' unions; and artists from all over the country. Other contributors included Konstnärernas Riksorganisation (KRO, Swedish Artists' National Organisation), which introduced the second day with a lecture by KRO's chairman Georg Suttner titled "The Visual Artists' Situation in Today's Sweden" as well as an orientation on Konstnärcenter (The Artists' Center, a nationwide organisation of independent regional associations) in Sweden through artist Björn Sjöstedt.

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116 ——— In Norwegian, the titles read "Hvem er vi – hva vi er," "Hvor bor kunstnerne," "Utdannelse," "Kunstnernes økonomi," "Arbeidsplass," "Aktivitet," and "Kunstomsetning."

117 ——— *Provoplakat* merges the words *provo* (meaning "political agitation to provoke responses from authorities, and common in the leftist vocabulary of the 1960s and 1970s, referring to political mobilisation) and *plakat* ("poster" in Norwegian).

118 ——— UKS Chairman Rune Brynestad, letter to Svein Rønning at Galleri I, Bergen, 9 May 1972, UKS Archive (1921–1998), National Archives of Norway, Oslo. Here I have reported in italics my translation of relevant pieces of the letter for describing the overall exhibition.

The *Artists' Situation* exhibition travelled throughout 1972, going to Trondheim (Trondhjems Kunstforening, 26 April–14 May), Bergen (Galleri I, 25 May–11 June, arranged by Morten Krogh and Björn Melbye Gulliksen, supplemented by further material, and clearly steered by the Gras group), and Stavanger (Bildende Kunstneres Forening, 19 September–8 October, through John Onarheim). The exhibition also visited Folkets Hus and the Munch Museum in Oslo in 1971, and excerpts of Helgesen's speech at UKS were published in *Arbeiderbladet* and the magazine *Kunst og Kunstnere*. For touring purposes, the posters were numbered. The leaflet accompanying the exhibition in Oslo was made to be circulated, and hosting spaces were asked to make sure that people could "take home" part of the exhibition, in particular by stencilling the economic graph with the summary of all the numbers collected in the exhibition. From the documentation in the archives, it is clear that it was a struggle to make the exhibition physically travel despite high interest (the exhibition consisted of four crates: two small crates and two flat cases). Support was sought from the Norwegian Arts Council, Norwegian Ministry of Culture, and municipalities of Bergen, Trondheim, and Oslo.

The fact that the viewer would encounter Edvard Munch's work (a member of UKS during his lifetime) before arriving to *The Artists' Situation* is undoubtedly symptomatic of setting a tone of both criticality in financial terms and of abstraction of life in capitalist terms. Munch's work largely features landscapes and interiors, and he gradually increased the use of abstraction as a loose form with sharp textures of dark areas, muted earth tones, and pure pigments. This suggestion of motifs, of abstracted landscapes, interiors, and ghostly humanity is assuredly essential when considering the primary claim posited by Helgesen, especially in terms of layered signifiers—literal and metaphorical ones. If the role of artworks, according to philosopher Theodor Adorno, is to "detach themselves from the empirical world and bring forth another world," such a declared autonomy of art risks to be self-consolatory, rejecting the secularisation of art coming with the refusals of the 1960s and 70s, which has made it so that art can exist within and beyond what is self-evident in these works, including the status of the artist they represent.[119] We need to question what autonomous art means in a moment of a liberalised economy, where the artist comes closer to the worker, in Helgesen's take.[120] The usefulness and the uselessness of art are part of the dichotomy of such an encounter.

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119 ——— Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London: Continuum, 1997), 80.

120 ——— Peter Osborne, "Theorem 4: Autonomy—Can It Be True of Art and Politics at the Same Time?," *open! Platform for Art, Culture and the Public Domain*, 1 May 2012, https://www.onlineopen.org/theorem-4-autonomy.

Philosopher Theodor W. Adorno famously describes art's "double character" as both autonomous and social, to express the contradiction at its core.[121] *The Artists' Situation* interconnected these two moments in the exhibitory beyond the binary; one condition cannot exist without the other, the empirical without the aesthetic. Adorno saw in art not a moment of communication but a moment of resistance to society (taking a step back, withdrawing to reflect).[122] A similar principle is at play in Helgesen's exhibition. Instead of accepting the "reality" of art as such, it negated art through its form (including the "art for art's sake" principle). Art, a practice distilled from functional and practical interests, is supposed to hibernate in bad times (or for the bad times). It is not enough for art to set itself apart from the struggle of everyday life; works are received not as single entities but within institutional frameworks and conditions that largely determine their function. It is in the historical context, in these frameworks and conditions, where we can act in resistance, drawing from the praxis of life with its institutions, and move beyond it.

(1.10) Lacan and the field of vision

Calling into question the perspectivalism established in the history of painting, primarily constructed during the Renaissance, Jacques Lacan, in his chapter "The Line and Light," claims that the use of anamorphosis in painting in those very centuries shows that painting is not, in fact, a question of "realistic reproduction of the things of space"[123] but, rather, one of how the subject is "caught, manipulated, captured in the field of vision."[124] In *The Ambassadors* (1533), the painter, Hans Holbein the Younger, assuming the observer's (our) deambulation as part of defining the field of vision—in itself unstable as we are constantly part of the picture—positions in front of the characters, and in between us and them, a floating object *"to catch in its trap"* us, the subject. The argument is that "as subjects, we are literally called into the picture, and represented there as caught."[125] Besides, the allegorical and symbolic elements at play in the picture point to the "vanity of arts and science." Our perishability is represented anamorphically through the likewise anamorphic skull. In a Freud-

121 ——— Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 225.
122 ——— Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 252–53.
123 ——— Jacques Lacan, "The Line and Light," in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (New York: Norton, 1978), 92.
124 ——— Lacan, "The Line and Light," 92.
125 ——— Lacan, "The Line and Light," 92.

ian tradition, the subject's geometrical vision moves into relation with desire. Vision, for Lacan, is a trap that works like a screen where light operates like a thread: "How can we try to apprehend that which seems to elude us in this way in the optical structuring of space?"[126] The "deceptiveness of perception" tells us that vision is not the visual.[127] Light fills the eye, and it necessitates organs as mechanisms of defence.

The second example that Lacan uses to explain geometrical vision is his memory of being at sea for amusement in his early twenties, as a young intellectual, and riding in a small boat of fishers, who, in their precarious lives often took risks to make meagre profits. In one of these excursions, a young person everyone called Petit-Jean notices something on the water's surface: a small sardine can that Lacan traces as evidence of the canning industry that the fishers supplied. Petit-Jean says to Lacan: "*You see that can? Do you see it? Well it doesn't see you!*"[128] Lacan, who did not immediately understand the meaning of Petit-Jean's affirmation, probably due to a class difference, later interprets this state of being "out of place in the picture;" he is out of place as much as the sardine can—they are both a stain—as in turn, metaphorically the cannery company does not see the fishers' struggle for life: "The picture, certainly is in my eye. But I'm not in the picture."[129] For Lacan, there is a picture, a screen defined by light and a vanishing point. It does not mean that the subject is always situated and legible in a complete, geometrical overview, but instead that there exists a phenomenal domain enabling us to apprehend the subject. It is a process of mimicry to situate oneself in the picture "as a stain;" not adapting but, rather, being inoperant[130] to the resulting demands.[131] Mimicry, disguising, taking other forms, has sexual affinities in natural phenomena. Notably,

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126 ——— Lacan, "The Line and Light," 93.

127 ——— "The essence of the relation between appearance and being which the philosopher, conquering the field of vision, so easily masters, lies elsewhere. It is not in the straight line but in the point of light—the point of irradiation." Lacan, "The Line and Light," 94.

128 ——— Lacan, "The Line and Light," 95.

129 ——— Lacan, "The Line and Light," 96.

130 ——— I am indirectly and loosely referring here to the Agambian term of "inoperativity." Though close in etymology, the English "inoperative" is far from *opera:* Italian for (art)work. For Agamben, the word "inoperativity" denotes no *opera*, no (art)work, either in the sense of an ongoing activity or the production of a finished product, though there is a potency for production or action. See Giorgio Agamben, "Work and Inoperativity," in *The Use of Bodies*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 245–48. See also Leland de la Durantaye review of the English edition of the book written on 26 January 2016 on the Boston Review, https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/de-la-durantaye-agamben/.

131 ——— Lacan, "The Line and Light," 98.

Lacan acknowledges that imitation reproduces both an image and a function.[132] The gaze always triumphs over the eye in the dialectical relation between the unconscious and the organs.[133] To gain a perspective means to produce an image, subjectivity, which doesn't necessarily mean to be the central perspective of the image, but the stain and the diffused subject, both producing and being part of the screen.

In establishing alternative strategies for the production of subjectivity and the positioning of the self, Helgesen through *The Artists' Situation* inscribes the exhibition beyond the field of the perceptible, but via twisting the means of production so that the system "sees me," as Lacan addressed. Helgesen's exhibition precisely addresses that vision is not the same as the visual. We need to overturn, reframe, challenge, and disrupt the visual world to avoid Lacan's "tunnel vision." Entering the field of vision means rethinking paradigms of education (apprehension), consciousness (being part of the picture), and how class and sexuality are inherent in these aesthetic processes' formation and perpetuation. For Helgesen's visual exhibitory framework, information is a fundamental part of the struggle for visibility and recognition. The picture (normalised artistic production) certainly is in my eye, but I (the artistic subjectivity I am speaking from: my class and gendered perspective) am not in the picture. If "I" am not in the picture, as for the fishers in the canning industry, "my" struggle is not in the picture, which means that the material conditions of production are left unacknowledged as part of entering the field of vision. It equally means that the aesthetic experience does build trauma determined by the given normality of the picture. These are fundamental questions of unveiling the power of the aesthetic field through feminist perspectives, which I investigate later in the thesis (see chapter 2.6). Curating clearly is, for Helgesen, a way of unveiling these otherwise concealed truth-building processes.

132 ——— Lacan, "The Line and Light," 100.
133 ——— Lacan, "The Line and Light," 103.

(1.11) Beauvoir's concept of aesthetics

Beauvoir is convinced that the most optimistic ethics all began by emphasising the failure involved in the human condition; "without failure, no ethics."[134] As much as never stagnating in a defined identity, Beauvoir poses that the relation between every person in the world is penetrated with human meanings at the centre of theory. Since the Enlightenment and its pursuit of values based on empiricism and rational thought,[135] the use of language has been seen as fundamental to reaching individual freedom. One is not free if one cannot *will* oneself free. This position resides,

134 ——— Simone de Beauvoir, "The Positive Aspect of Ambiguity," in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 1947, trans. Bernard Frechtman, Marxists Internet Archive, https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/ambiguity/ch03.htm.

135 ——— "Enlightenment reiterates mythic sacrifice by striving to sacrifice it. But as a result, it unwittingly mimics the fatal compulsion which it intended to overcome. Only by 'working through' the sacrificial trauma that drives rationality—a working through which Adorno and Horkheimer characterize in terms of reason's reflexive commemoration of its own natural history—can reason renounce its pathological compulsion to sacrifice and thereby become reconciled to the part played by nature within it" (Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and extinction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 33). We rely on an idea of rationality from the Enlightenment. In an attempt to destroy superstition, Enlightenment "reinstates myth." Because we continue to rely on language, experience happens through historical mediation and memory considered on patterns of logic and rationality. However, Enlightenment marks that point when the subject of cognition does not express objective knowledge but becomes the object's knowledge of itself. Here, other forms of knowledge have been continuously proposed to overcome pure verbal processes in a temporal and spatial transcendence provided by images and aesthetic forms of expression. Throughout the thesis, it has been essential to challenge accepted notions of Enlightenment, knowledge, and rationality to think about other experience forms. Art proves to be one of the most critical exercises in experimenting and welcoming other forms of knowledge production and recuperating rituals that the secularisation of the Enlightenment had deemed to surpass. Adorno pays particular attention to feelings in the arts as a unique form of knowledge: "It is true that theory, through insight into universal social mediation, has conceptually surpassed solipsism. But art, mimesis driven to the point of self-consciousness, is nevertheless bound up with feeling, with the immediacy of experience; otherwise it would be indistinguishable from science, at best an installment plan on its results and usually no more than social reporting" (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 259).

for Beauvoir, not in the linguistic but in the aesthetic realm. Our connection to representation and imaging, can never be "outside of time" and society even in "detached contemplation," as we are always projecting into a future.[136] Contemplating the world's ruins with "tranquil curiosity"—including metaphorical ones, like the poor conditions where one stands—is attesting to historical works in a position of withdrawal, "a way of fleeing the truth of the present." The intellectuals' and the artists' responsibility is not to contemplate the past in the present moment but to determine, through contemplation, actions and set forth a project. To express this project, which is already set in the future, according to Beauvoir, the artist must be "situated in this world" as the victim or the perpetrator, as a clearly defined actor in the story.[137] "To *will* freedom" is a form of action and the realisation of freedom's engagement with the world.

If art should reveal the "existence as a reason for existing," it should also reveal the "transitory as an absolute." It is a parallel that Beauvoir makes with the transitoriness that has been transmitted as the very history of art which cannot be univocally read or "revealed." It is a movement towards freedom, concretely. Artists, as well as workers, have to understand this word "freedom" differently, and reclaim the present. Oppression is justified by power as based on nature—as if wealth, for instance, were a natural fact. But "*stealing* from the worker" the product of one's labour presupposes the word "theft" as "a social convention which authorises this type of exploitation," Beauvoir says.[138] Such is the reason why art must reclaim a project, a clear positioning, within the community it addresses.

In these changing social conditions, Helgesen asserts and vindicates art's substance, its transitoriness, and its responsibility to *will* freedom. In the process of abstraction from actual reality, of making all labour productive in its natural and economic sense, and making the two coincide, a system of truth ensures the justification of the very inequalities it perpetuates. For Marx, capitalist societies strip all objectivity from labour, turning it

136 ——— Beauvoir, "The Positive Aspect of Ambiguity."

137 ——— "If the creator simply projects into the work of art a subject as the matter of this work any subject may thus be admitted, a massacre as well as a masquerade and this aesthetic justification betrays the author's aim. If a writer wants 'to communicate the horror inspired in him by children working in sweatshops; he produces so beautiful a book that, enchanted by the tale, the style, and the images, we forget the horror of the sweatshops or even start admiring it.' If death, misery, and injustice can be transfigured to our delight, it is not evil to have death, misery, and injustice." Beauvoir, "The Positive Aspect of Ambiguity."

138 ——— Beauvoir, "The Positive Aspect of Ambiguity."

into "absolute poverty:" it is not a shortage but rather exclusion from forms of wealth. Here, we should claim labour not as an object but as an activity; not "itself value, but as the *living source* of value."[139] Marx, first, and Beauvoir later, sees a form of freedom in art because the worker has a *specific* relation to labour.[140] The specificity of labour in art is not abstract, irrelevant, mechanical, or disjuncted in its matter from its form. I believe it is at this intersection of demands that Helgesen grounds the power to deem oneself free, through processes, visibilising the actions of art, substantiating protest, action and activism, to assert a change within the same means of economic production, thus allowing the transitoriness of art to be maintained through its form and specificity.

(1.12) First conclusions

As Marxist political theorist Fredric Jameson elaborates when analysing Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, "generosity, cooperation and the like are not false or fictional, but they are not features of human nature either—there is no such thing as human nature. They are, rather, other forms in which our freedom negates that initial fact of being."[141]

Therefore, forms of freedom are forms of reciprocity that can be achieved only in opposition to exploiting standardised needs. In 1970s Norway, spreading intersectional knowledge accross different marginalised communities of artists brought a larger understanding of the artistic conditions and a new phase of history thus began. Referencing her work through the exhibition, Aina Helgesen, in the pure spirit of transitoriness, has recently said, "You can learn from history, but you can't copy it."[142]

I feel it is important to mention here that currently important work is being brought forward by a generation of artists in Norway through reclaiming their own histories and genealogies, embodying curatorial roles only for a transitory moment so as to let history be shaken and move differently. Such is the case of Eline Mugaas, for instance, who first made me aware of Helgesen's archives. Mugaas, together with Elise Storsveen, has been instrumental in recuperating a series of artistic positions which

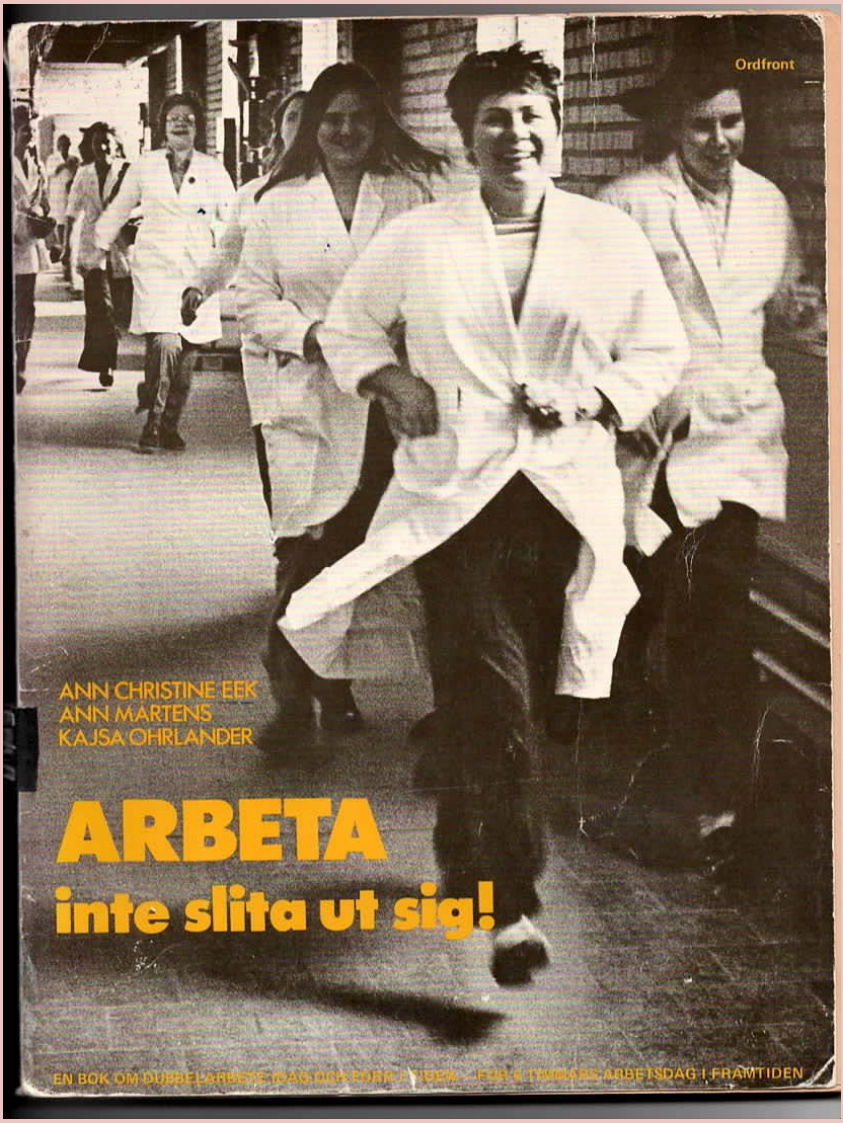
139 ——— Marx, *Grundrisse*, 296.
140 ——— Marx, *Grundrisse*, 297.
141 ——— Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (New York: Verso, 2009), 228.
142 ——— Helgesen, in conversation with the author, 28 January 2017.

somehow had fallen out of Norwegian history.[143] I consider this movement initiated by these artists to be extremely important, as it calls for a multiplicity of histories to conflate and to renarrate genealogies of different pasts, voicing manifold positions and demonstrating that art goes beyond an idea of the genius as preserved in museums through material objects. Art history should pay respect to artists and art professionals who have engaged their everyday lives to embed art in extended communities and who have not given curating a celebratory, nor a flirtatious, economic and social power. Rather, it must initiate complexifying and layering discourses outside the overtly celebrated cathedrals of art, a discursive space long held by museums. Without artists (at times, curators) like Mugaas and Storsveen with their trembling institutions, shaking history would not be possible.

To conclude with a note on real political affectations of the arts, the exhibition *The Artists' Situation* was visited by influential authorities. It thus became the start of a discussion on artists' economies, but also initiated a larger understanding of forms of deconstructing power within the country's infrastructure.[144] The overall project set the basis for what would eventually become the Kunstneraksjonen-74 (Artist Action 1974), an interdisciplinary artistic coalition based on a three-point manifesto of demands for better economies and a better redistribution of wealth within the arts, made by cultural practitioners to the state. These requests were met in part in 1976, with proper payment for artists' work, increased funding, and guaranteed incomes for art workers.

143 ——— Eline Mugaas and Elise Storsveen collaborated with Kunsthall Oslo on curating a major survey addressing the impact of second-wave feminism on its art production. The exhibition *Hold stenhårdt fast på greia di: Norwegian art and feminism 1968–89* was held 8 March — 21 April 2013 at Kunsthall Oslo. Its long-lasting impact was reported by Artforum, with a review by Ina Blom in the magazine's January 2014 issue. In 2017 they received the prestigious Ulrik Hendriksen's Award for their novel perspectives on the local art scene. The book *Hold stenhårdt fast på greia di: Norwegian art and feminism 1968-89* came out in 2019, published by Kunsthall Oslo.

144 ——— The cultural sector was included under the Ministry of Church Affairs and Education (Kirke- og undervisningsdepartementet) in Norway until the 1980s and did not have a separate ministry.



Ann Christine Eek et al., *Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out! A book about double work today and in the past, for a 6-hour workday in the future.* Stockholm: Ordfront, 1974.

Part 2.
Unknotting the exhibitory: Problematising patriarchal exhibition-making in the failures of the avant-gardes with a digression into the field of vision, around and about living art, ephemeralisation, and anamorphosis

What happens when an exhibition loses its form? Especially following the failure of the avant-gardes, which aimed to change the world, not just its art? How can one still search for revolutionary forms that are collective and creative, in which life is lived differently from its imposed banalisation? Could we still think today about the exhibition as a "constructed situation," enabling the formation and entrance of new subject positions in the representational sphere? A space which, in inscribing a set of rules, allows for a propulsory and antagonistic thinking?

2.1 Work and intoxication

Shifting geopolitics and migratory production within the secondary sector has been prevailing over post-war bourgeois society, enhancing discussions about the meaning of both economic "boom" and crisis. In particular, an economy of penury (translating as an economy of waste) deriving from the United States, reached Europe and resulted in a profound change in the nature of capitalism, classes, and the concept of work.[145] A new dimension embracing the legitimisation of cheap workforces outside Europe brought about a new phase of the colonisation of everyday life. The commodification of all aspects of life and the militarised domination of other peoples and lands, disturbed the established order's moral and social bases—that is, the family and schooling systems, religion and sexual taboos, the army, the judiciary system, the press, and traditional politics. The street became the centre of these heated discussions, starting with groups like CoBrA in Europe where, for instance, Constant, one of its co-founders, through writings such as *For an Architecture of Situation* (1953) and projects like New Babylon (1956–74), claimed a complete new architectural transposition of daily reality.[146] Spinning from the idea of creating situations, Constant—who was also one of the theoretical drivers behind the Situationists alongside Guy Debord—was immersed in the

145 ——— Nigel Whiteley, "Toward a Throw-Away Culture: Consumerism, 'Style Obsolescence' and Cultural Theory in the 1950s and 1960s," *Oxford Art Journal* 10, no. 2 (1987): 3–27.

146 ——— The New Babylon envisioned by Constant was a mix of the heteropian metropolitan cities brought about by industrialisation and "a collective, social project [,…] nothing more than the projected framework for the construction of situations and the decor for a life of leisure." Technology, automation, and freedom from work and private property would be the base for such architecture experiment; the new city would embody the "parable" of the past and the ambitions of the future "modern city." Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 122.

Provo movement in Amsterdam, counting on the experience of drugs such as LSD "to create new situations" and imaginations that otherwise seemed impossible.[147] A search for portable city environments and advocacy for endlessly shifting landscapes—resulting in total "disorientation"—was necessary for the Situationist International to complete a transformation in order to raise consciousness of neglected desires through a panoply of revolutionary actions. To organise games was the SI's "entire program, which is essentially transitory. Our situations will be ephemeral, without a future: passageways. The permanence of art or anything else does not enter into our considerations."[148] The Situationists took their beliefs to the letter with the intervention "hostility at the separation of art and poetry from everyday life and their demands for experiences disallowed by existing society."[149] Following a straightforward reading of Debord's "Theory of the Dérive" (1956), one could create new situations in the city by, for example, linking up parts of the city and neighbourhoods that were otherwise spatially separated. It is a reading of the urbanism of the modern city doctrine, and its creation of class divisions, provocation of deep inequalities, and generation of the idea of "the outcast"—the one not serving a productive purpose in the city's ideology—as the first witness of the aesthetic experience. The city, if only structured around rational and functional mobility, systematically dehumanised people by making them function only for the profit of capital. In this sense the Situationists sought, contrary to Surrealism, not to search for intoxication as something "sublime" and transcendental, outside the everyday life of society, but a concrete practice of self-destruction over time to counter the anesthesia of the mediated society of the spectacle.[150] The SI could be seen as the first fully acknowledged art movement to take to the street.

If Lettrism, the avant-garde artistic and literary movement that emerged in post-war France via the influence of Futurism and Dada, had railed against consumer society's banality, it did not necessarily mean its mem-

147 ——— Henri Lefebvre, "Henri Lefebvre on the Situationist International," interview and trans. by Kristin Ross, 1983, *Not Bored*, http://www.notbored.org/lefebvre-interview.html. Originally published in *October*, no. 79 (Winter 1997).

148 ——— Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 7.

149 ——— Sadie Plant, *The Most Radical Gesture. The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age* (London: Routledge, 1992), 3.

150 ——— Alastair Hemmens, "'Beau comme le tremblement des mains dans l'alcoolisme': A Cavalier History of Drugs and Intoxication in the Situationist International," in *Literature and Intoxication*, ed. Russell Williams and Eugene Brennan (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 173–84.

bers were attacking the institution of art per se, nor was it a self-destructive movement. In a leftist tradition meant to spearhead a class revolution, motivated by the writings of Marx and Engels, Lettrism used surprise attacks, perhaps most famously by painting graffiti on the façade of the publisher Gallimard and interrupting public lectures and performances. It not only aimed at challenging society at large—and, within it, the institution of art—but also lashed its most substantial criticism at the avant-gardes that had made themselves the standard-bearers of rejecting established forms and conventions.[151] Images, utterances, hieroglyphs, musical notes, scribbles, and particles smaller than words—letters—created works that challenged dominant mannerisms of interpretation. Lettrism rejected the efficacy of language as coherent, casting individual words as mere letters and sounds to prove its brokenness and artificiality. It turned to darkness and light in cinema, with black-and-white images, and voice-overs, as in Debord's early film *Hurlements en Faveur de Sade* (*Howlings for Sade*, 1952).

Art historian Frances Stracey traces the notion of "constructed situations" back to this film.[152] At the film's beginning, a voice utters: "The art of the future will be the overturning of situations or nothing." Later, another voice declares, "a science of situations is to be created, which will borrow elements from psychology, statistics, urbanism and ethics. These elements have to run together to an absolutely new conclusion: the conscious creation of situations."

A more rigorous formulation is elaborated in the first issue (1958) of the journal *Internationale situationniste*. "Situationism" is defined as "the theory or the practical activity of constructing situations"; and, consequently, those engaged in constructing situations: "a collective organisation of a unitary atmosphere, a game of events."[153] Debord developed a methodology aimed at revolutionising life and radically transforming habits dictated by

151 ——— During those years, the term "avant-garde" was under scrutiny in relation to acknowledging and rejuvenating art tactics or push them even further; for example, the experiments of Dada, Surrealism, and their predecessors in splintering "art" and "life." Rejection of the terminology was part of a search for new words to replace old ones no longer applicable to certain practices. See Karen Kurczynski, "Expression as Vandalism: Asger Jorn's 'Modifications'," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, nos. 53–54 (2008): 298; David W. Seaman, "Letterism: A Stream That Runs Its Own Course," *Visible Language* 17, no. 3 (1983): 18–25.

152 ——— Frances Stracey, *Constructed Situations: A New History of the Situationist International* (London: Pluto, 2014), 8.

153 ——— "Definitions," trans. Ken Knabb, *Internationale Situationniste* #1, June 1958, Situationist International Online, https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/definitions.html

consumerist society.[154] Such interventions spanned across architecture, actions and cinema. The word "spectacle" was used instead of Marx's "commodity" to signal the historical moment of post-war consumer societies, characterised by a shift in labour from factories to the newly developing service and leisure industries, increasingly dependent on the use of mass-media communications for the sale of their services. Through Situationist interventions, the passivity principle of the spectacle was to be broken. Here one could reflect of the paradoxical duality of scarcity/abundance, produced by the new consumerist society brought forward by North American society,[155] as well as power relations of the few over the many, between the newly constructed notions of "developed" and "developing" countries.[156] Ultimately, the city determines who has the right to appear in public space and which activities within it are legitimate. The exhibition is a membrane to the street and its politics.

Industrial development also meant a struggle for independence in neo-imperial politics, where geopolitics devised north and south signifiers in technological terms. Within the intertangled capitalist world, the Situationist International exhibition of 1963, *Destruction of the RSG-6*, with contributions from Guy Debord, J. V. Martin, and Michèle Bernstein, took place at Galleri EXI, Odense, and "demonstrated an art explicitly aligned with political activism and aiming beyond itself."[157] Debord describes *Destruction of the RSG-6* as "anti-nuclear" and "anti-Nashist."[158] A space evoking the atmosphere of an atomic fallout shelter was constructed in homage to the group of British activists who, one month prior to the exhibition's opening, had revealed the British government's secret plan to pro-

154 ——— Guy Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action," June 1957, Situatoinist International Online, https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/report.html

155 ——— Frances Stracey has argued that to understand the formation of the Situationist International in order "to construct a new revolutionary praxis of life, requires recognising failure as its point of departure[:] the inability of preceding avant-garde movements to achieve a revolution of life through art, and, moreover, the decay of avant-gardism in the post-Second World War period into decorative and theatrical forms of radicalism." See Stracey, *Constructed Situations.*

156 ——— Daniel Yergin and Joseph Stanislaw, eds., *The Commanding Heights: The Battle between Government and the Marketplace* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 88–90.

157 ——— Cathy Turner, *Dramaturgy and Architecture: Theatre, Utopia and the Built Environment* (New York: Springer, 2015), 152.

158 ——— Debord et al., *Destruktion af RSG–6. En kollektiv manifestation af Situationistisk Internationale*, 10.

tect its officials in the event of a nuclear war. A pamphlet created by the English protest group Spies for Peace, which drew attention to the sites of these nuclear bunkers, was distributed. In *RSG-6*, the visitor passed first through the atomic shelter environment, complete with sensory assault via blue light, siren noises, the smell of deodorant, and the taste of medicine, to then enter a zone evoking "the direct negation of this type of necessity."[159] Here visitors were invited to shoot air rifles at images of political leaders. Slogans, directives, and "thermonuclear maps" (large paintings by Martin depicting the world after the outbreak of World War III) hung on the walls. The last room presented a series of sculptures by Bernstein made out of toy soldiers and paintings by Jan Strijbosch.[160] Although it was clear that the political efficacy should have happened outside the exhibition space, eventually getting rid of its entire infrastructure, the exhibition still departed from "the existing means of cultural expression, from cinema to painting."[161] If the cultural imaginary for the SI is a totalitarian regime, it still contains agitational forces that can shake the present: the images produced by the cultural society enter the unconscious and affect the role of representation, even in the very apparatus of apprehending oneself. The role of the cultural imaginary is therefore ideological in forming subjectivity and in the role it gives to fantasy. Such is the reason, why, the exhibition space needs to be eventually dismantled in the SI's eye, and with it the concept of the white cube, as it constitutes the basis for the acceptance of cultural imaginaries. As part of a movement, in the SI, though, disagreements were not the exception.

Until the 1961 Situationist International conference in Gothenburg, all the group's positions on the role of art within society were aligned. For the Scandinavian branch, it was art that was important, whereas they considered the French section to be too close to Marxist theories.[162] An internal disagreement escalated as some members "were highly sceptical of the idea of the proletariat as the driving force of history," while for others, the sphere of art was the ideal site from where to launch an "attack on the grey world of post-war bourgeois society."[163] For the whole Situationist project, a coherent critique of the society of the spectacle meant that artistic work could not constitute the base of such oppositional revolution (though film

159 ——— Debord, "The Situationists and the New Forms of Action in Politics and Art."

160 ——— Turner, *Dramaturgy and Architecture*.

161 ——— Debord, "The Situationists and the New Forms of Action in Politics and Art."

162 ——— Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, *Playmates and Playboys at a Higher Level: J. V. Martin and the Situationist International* (Berlin: Sternberg, 2014).

163 ——— Rasmussen, *Playmates and Playboys*.

had remained a grey zone in the discussions). A call was made for using the term "antisituationist art." Nash disagreed with the sentiment that all forms that were not situations—including painting and other traditional art forms—should not be pursued, for fear of cooptation, led him to fracture from the main group and to the foundation of the Second Situationist International, with a base in his farm at Drakabygget in Sweden.[164] This scission problem is core to the interpretation of the Situationists' understanding of the role of art within society and its revolutionary potential. Was generating and living art in itself enough to institute a change? Or should art instead launch an immediate attack on society—liberating people from a spectator's role and battling with bourgeois culture, the entertainment industry, and modern technology in order to create a different world? The former was Nash's position, for whom art represented a subversive force capable of shaking the foundations of a sterile, boring, bourgeois existence, while Debord interpreted art as a practical critique—"art or war"—part of a ruthless class struggle after the collapse of the first proletarian offensive.

Co-Ritus tried to break the barriers of art by making it "superfluous" yet integrated in everyday life. As part of the larger Situationist International movement in the nordic region, it included Jørgen Nash, Asger Jorn, Jørgen Thorsen, Hardy Strid, and a number of members of Gruppe SPUR who could not return to Germany. The idea of the group was participation and play, beyond the group's members.[165]

For their exhibition at Galleri Jensen in Copenhagen in 1962, Co-Ritus kept the room empty. It was up to the audience to use the available material "to build a special collage over the course of the exhibition."[166] Moreover, the space was to be used for the performance of poems and music. In its manifesto, Co-Ritus asserts: "We say: from our point of view art is happening in the space between. In the space between people, in the space between the sublime and the banal. It is the functioning of art we want to change. It is here and now it is happening."[167] Using performative strate-

164 ——— "The Fifth SI Conference in Goteborg," in *Situationist International Anthology*, rev. and expanded ed., ed. Ken Knabb (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), 114–17.

165 ——— Anneli Fuchs, "New Phenomena: Danish Art and the Danish Art World, 1960–72," in *The Nordic 60s*, ed. Maaretta Jaukkuri, exhibition catalogue (Helsinki: Nordiskt Konstcentrum, 1990), 110.

166 ——— Fuchs, "New Phenomena," 110.

167 ——— Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Jørgen Nash, and Hardy Strid, "Co-Ritus Manifesto," ca. 1962, trans. Jakob Jakobsen, Scandinavian Situationism, http://scansitu.antipool.org/6105.html.

gies in the streets, such "manifestations increasingly took on the character of demonstrations."[168] In this respect, such actions became an instrument to understand art not in its autonomous function but as lived action.[169] The group fought to kill a sense of "cultural isolation" by focusing on spirituality. Such strategies brought politicians closer to them, along with the press, with public debate at the centre of their work in public space. To show their intersection of critique to the entrapment of the workers in the capitalist system of production and the need to be freed by the constrictions of the spectacle that capital sustains, in 1966, they included in their exhibitions spinning dolls "to symbolise the shift work of industrial workers."[170] Organised with a certain degree of Actionism, Co-Ritus's exhibitions intermixed lectures and organised discussions, and resulted in the publication of books and periodicals in order to expand the frame for active participation.[171] An interest in social engagement had the goal of preventing exploitation of the newly won leisure time of the middle class, and preventing its passive spectatorship. In this way, one could argue that the art somehow exited its autonomous space.

(2.2) The notion of welfare in Scandinavia through a reading of Jørgen Nash

Nash explained in a 1963 interview that, although "the Scandinavian version of the welfare state had won the social sympathy of the Situationists," and it was true that working hours, for instance, had "been made shorter," the unexpected consequence of these new regulations was that "free time had risen."[172] He pointed out intrinsic contradictions both in western and

168 ——— Fuchs, "New Phenomena," 110.

169 ——— Knut Ove Arntzen, "Art Is Pop. Co-ritus Is Art: Artistic Strategy in Scandinavia Action Art in the 1960s and 70s. With Some Aspects of Postmodern Recycling," in *Whatever Happened to Sex in Scandinavia*, ed. Marta Kuzma and Pablo Lafuente (London: Koenig Books, 2011), 378.

170 ——— Knut Ove Arntzen, "Gruppe 66, Co-ritus og kunsten som samhandling" [Group 66, Co-ritus and the art of interaction], *Kunst Plus*, no. 1 (2011): 8–11, https://monoskop.org/images/8/88/Arntzen_Knut_Ove_2011_Gruppe_66_Co-ritus_og_kunsten_som_samhandling.pdf. My translation.

171 ——— Arntzen, "Gruppe 66."

172 ——— Jørgen Nash and Jens Jørgen Thorsen, "Art Is Pop—Co-Ritus Is Art—Divided We Stand. Co-Ritus" (interview), 1963, trans. Jakob Jakobsen, Scandinavian Situationism, http://scansitu.antipool.org/6304.html. Originally published in *Aspekt*, no. 3 (1963).

eastern countries about artistic and human freedom. Monolopy was manipulated in different ways in capitalist or communist societies: while, in theory, in the latter, the workers own the means of production, there is no space for people who disagree with such ruling, or for difference of expression. Meanwhile in the former, cultural entrepreneurs "are controlling the publishing houses, film production, newspapers and art exhibitions." Nash claimed that "spiritual intelligence" should make use of the artistic means of production, and that they should not be controlled by cultural entrepreneurs or commissioners who are part of an "enormous control apparatus."[173] Recognising Co-Ritus as *avant-garde*, it was necessary, for Nash, to explore the potential of artistic development which would have contributed to move past the mass production and the lobotomy of consumption, including of art. Such liberation had to come through a new society. In such a conundrum of progress in novelty, the existing power relations built between people created a condition of survival over living. Instead of "forced labour," he contended, human beings should be given "full time for play."[174]

The aesthetic field lives in the interstices of free time for the workers moving through the cityscape, and it is seen as the locus of potential liberation. It is only obvious, then, that such debate will arise: Where does art belong in this system? Does it belong to the capitalist entrepreneur or to the worker? Which interests are artists (and art institutions, as the supporting system for the arts) serving? Which sphere of life is art supporting: the practical or the spiritual one? Is all art bourgeois, or can it serve other bodies? To change art, should we change its institutions? What is the meaning of play and ritual within an otherwise strained life under capital exploitation? Should these discussions remain local or have an international scope?

Free (or leisure) time is a contested category of these years; it is a space supposedly provided by a new phase of capitalism, whereby machines partly liberated workers from their practical tasks, therefore giving them more time to "enjoy" (or to have access to) life in general. Paradoxically though, through Nash, and through other cases studied in this chapter, we can see there was a clear unravelling of a society within a society (a different treatment reserved for different people, according to their provenance), with disparate interpretations of "free time" and different "enjoy-

173 ——— Nash and Thorsen, "Art Is Pop—Co-Ritus Is Art."

174 ——— J. V. Martin, "Antipolitical Activity," in *Cosmonauts of the Future: Texts from the Situationist Movement in Scandinavia and Elsewhere*, ed. Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen and Jakob Jakobsen (Copenhagen: Nebula; New York: Autonomedia, 2015), 97–101.

ments" of such a concept. The achievement of shorter working days in Scandinavian countries, for example, was in practice less considerate of the arduous living conditions in urban environments (the Situationists' contested space), forcing less affluent families to live in small apartments or to undergo long commutes between home and work. In reality, the concept of free time, celebrated as an achievement for the majority of the populace, applied to only a tiny section of the population. Means of production and communication remained in the hands of the few. For the rest, such freedom was no less than a projected spectacle. Debord's society of the spectacle was thus caught in a double entanglement, by being subjected to strenuous working conditions while the people's real condition was mystified through the new imperial commerce of desire diffused through mass media (moving images pervading public and private space).

(2.3) The return to magic

In Denmark, Galerie Køpcke, which opened in 1958, became an international meeting point and the foremost centre of debate.[175] Piero Manzoni, alongside a cluster of other international artists, including Dieter Roth, Robert Filliou, and Daniel Spoerri, executed some of their most important works here.[176] These incoming artists were especially characterised by their effort "to include reality in a direct way and to bring 'life' into art."[177] They mostly worked with ordinary, everyday objects, including garbage and scraps. Collages and assemblages filled space to form immersive environments. The nature of the material and the random form of the works marked an important break with the "high culture" that was otherwise exhibited in purified (and anesthetised) forms. The artists working art Galerie Køpcke worked with ordinary material to break the distinction between the fine art relegated to the white cube and other forms of artistic expression. Garbage, and even excrement became the signature of such freedom that art should pursue: Spoerri stamped store items with the words "Attention— Oeuvre d'art," and Manzoni canned his faeces and presented it as *Artist's Shit* (1961). Although Galerie Køpcke broke conventional display patterns and created a foundation to enlarge the sphere of what could be considered art, the press did not acknowledge its exhibitions.[178] How the curation of the artwork can redefine the form and

175 ——— Fuchs, "New Phenomena," 109.
176 ——— Fuchs, "New Phenomena," 109.
177 ——— Fuchs, "New Phenomena," 109.
178 ——— Fuchs, "New Phenomena," 109.

"nature" of the art institution is key to these years, as are the people behind such small and critical institutes who steered the presence or lack of representation within the aesthetic sphere. Forms of immaterial art, including "branding," sound, and music, were used as tools for breaking barriers and to open debate both within and outside the given cathedrals—museums. Private matters (literally things such as food and excrement) entered the public sphere as the cultural and aesthetic sphere and intersected with the definition of power.

Fluxus artists were invited to Copenhagen as early as 1962 by Det Unge Tonekunstnerselskab (DUT, the Young Musicians' Society). A Fluxus festival, titled *Musik og Anti-musik, det instrumentale teater, 6 pro- et contragrammer* (*Music and Anti-music, the instrumental theatre, 6 pro- and contragrams*), was held at Nikolaj Church, featuring Nam June Paik, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Emmett Williams, Arthur Køpcke, Wolf Vostell, Robert Filliou, George Maciunas, and Jørgen Friisholm. They introduced—probably expecting scandal—new technology developed in general scientific advancement, but not necessarily meant to be used within the accepted conventions of art or music. They also betrayed expectations of the space for such presentations. The displacement that Fluxus created—Fluxamusement—called for art as a practice which if detached from institutional value and commodification, could be so elusive from protocols of individual property.[179] Maciunas's claim of the non-professional status of the artist aimed to demonstrate that "anything can substitute art and anyone can do it."[180] Once a defined set of rules has been established, one may contribute to any project. Understanding the need to shift control, and concurrently the power over definition implicit in the curatorial role, Maciunas also took on the role of curator of the Fluxus movement by marking the movement's entrance into crucial aspects of the definition of the arts.[181]

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179 ——— Fuchs, "New Phenomena," 110.

180 ——— George Maciunas, "Fluxmanifesto on Fluxamusement," 1965, George Maciunas Foundation Inc., http://georgemaciunas.com/exhibitions/flux-labyrinth-fluxus-gag/fluxmanifesto-fluxamusement-1965.

181 ——— George Maciunas organised the most significant Fluxus festivals and edited and produced a large body of Fluxus publications and multiples. Dorothee Richter points out that Maciunas' organisational activities resemble those of a curator because he acted as a "meta-artist." She writes: "In retrospect, Maciunas' role as organiser, arranger, presenter, funds procurer, public relations agent, and namer bears a remarkable resemblance with that of the independent curator, who emerged as a new actor in the cultural field from the 1970s and 80s. In his capacity as Fluxus organiser (and chief ideologist), Maciunas anticipated not only the attribution of creativity, the meaning-giving acts of establishing connections and recontextualisation, but also the authoritative gesture of inscriptions and exclusions." In her view, Maciunas

Questions of authority, authoriality, and uncovering a legacy of excess—what's left unbound by the norm in terms of the positioning of curatorial or other practices—have been fundamental in guiding my theoretical investigation and practical work. It has also been essential to individuate what had shaken the arts establishment within Scandinavia (both mainstream and minor institutions) and yet-to-be-acknowledged practices. "Fluxus sought to engage the world beyond the normative art world," writes Fluxus artist Ken Friedman.[182] Fluxus represents a unique attempt to shape an irreverent community that enabled a cacophony of experiences, forms of freedom, and acceptance of shortfalls of art and life.[183]

Fluxus critiqued the carrying values of the white cube, which rested on the artist-genius figure, the artwork's uniqueness, and the author's intentions (which at that time was reaching its peak), as well as the passive contemplation of the sole experience of art. Where could this contemplative experience under Fluxus remain, however? How could an active contemplation define an experiential space, and why?

According to Jürgen Habermas, art has replaced that sacred space that bourgeois society has chiefly rejected.[184] Subsequently unsatisfied needs include finding a human position in nature beyond means-ends rationality, allowing imagination to be spontaneous.[185] Art does not take on economic or political tasks but "satisfies residual needs."[186] With the case of Manzoni, we notice a movement of liberation of art from objectification in a physical space, demanding new forms of community and curation. "Living art" beats the tempo of the issues of the time. It is 1961, and Manzoni puts people on pedestals with the *Magic Base* (1961), transforming them into works of art. In Herning, Denmark, that same year, he puts the entire world on an inverted *Magic Base: Base of the World*. The entire planet is an expanded work of art. It becomes clear that art establishes and

produced meaning and exercised power in the same way as a contemporary curator. See Dorothee Richter, "Artists and Curators as Authors: Competitors, Collaborators, or Teamworkers?," *OnCurating*, no. 19, (2013): 43–57.

182 ——— Ken Friedman, "Fluxus Legacy," *OnCurating*, no. 51 (2021), 109.

183 ——— For more research on the political shaking of structures pursued by Fluxus, see Margaret Sherer, "A Network of Experience: Community Building and Social Restructuring in Fluxus" (MA thesis, Washington University in St. Louis, 2016).

184 ——— Jürgen Habermas, "Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism: The Contemporaneity of Walter Benjamin," *New German Critique*, no. 17 (1979): 30–59.

185 ——— Habermas, "Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism," 42.

186 ——— Habermas, "Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism," 42.

replicates rules: art is a mechanism of reification of the "spiritual" (per Habermas) inclusion or exclusion; or a reminder of the human need for transcendence. Works like the *Magic Base* provide access to these missing rituals by questioning the bourgeois institution of art via its habits.

Once the entire world had been turned upside-down on a pedestal's bearing surface, why are we still so tightly bound to rituals? Why do we need art? Furthermore, what are its institutions, or an institution in general? How are we to understand the social formation of reality in our societies if we don't first understand their smallest nucleus, institutions?

(2.4) Who is "I": What is an institution and deontic relationships

Philosopher John R. Searle suggests that, contrary to common thought, there is no long ontological tradition of understanding what institutions are. Even language has been taken for granted. If we take language for granted, we already take institutions for granted. Language structures the reality for how we experience it through cognitive perception. Searle states: "I believe that unless an animal can symbolise something as having a status, which it does not have in virtue of its physical structure, then the animal cannot have institutional facts." He calls language such a form of symbolisation.[187] The role of institutions is not to "constrain people" but, instead, to create "a special kind" of power relationship: from rights to obligations and documentations—that is to say, "*deontic powers*."[188]

Today, the concept of magic is still uprooted and suspended, deemed to be uncultured. The concepts of work and leisure—and within it, play—came to be heavily debated as either oppositional or interconnected in terms of values, during the middle of the last century. While all of these terms, practices and conceptions were under threat, the concept of art continued to depend on the same institutions and institutional meanings that had been determined by the petite bourgeoisie's ruling norms, codifying constitutive rules as crucial elements of the deontology of the present. There is equally a need to analyse this phenomenon. Art—an institution,

187 ——— John R. Searle, "What Is an Institution?" *Journal of Institutional Economics* 1, no. 1 (2005): 1–22.

188 ——— Searle, "What Is an Institution?," 10. Emphasis in the original.

like religion, also based on the notion of "collective acceptance"—still marked a continuum complying with certain social practices that enthusiastically endorse separation. Institutions provide structures within which one can "create institutional facts," asserts Searle.[189] Within modernity and its evolutionist language and symbols, institutional facts have evolved out of so-called natural facts, upon which we continue to rely. For instance, the idea of "a biological family consisting of parents" and their biological children is an institution fundamental to capitalism's exploitation of the people and the acceptance of its derivative social norms. Underlying such ideas of biology are elaborate "formal and informal institutional structures, involving the statuses of the mother, the father, and the children," assigning roles and categories required for the functioning of an intricate inter-institutional system.[190] It is within these institutional realities—resting on property, a financial system, community governance, and the assignment of power through status and education—that we handle how we can act in a society.[191] Searle affirms that "without the recognition, acknowledgment, and acceptance of the[se] deontic relationships, your power is not worth a damn."[192]

Also in deontology—in private property, contractual agreements, informal relationships, to name a few—truth establishes itself first and foremost through the claim of an "I." It matters who the "I" stands for and who it represents in establishing an institutional relation in the human capacity for action: an "I" presupposing a majority that mirrors it. It is essential to acknowledge that a majority consensus based on deontological relations continues subsuming the non-consenting minority. It equally presupposes an active "I" as a subject and the equality of the contracting subjects. There is only a tacit understanding of such equality, though. To be considered part of such humanity (or society), "my" life needs to be regis-

189 ——— Searle, "What Is an Institution?," 21.

190 ——— I'm intersecting Searle's argument on institutions with gender theorist Judith Butler's studies on gender, where she references Simone de Beauvoir to assert that "any gender, is an historical situation rather than a natural fact." Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 520.

191 ——— I am rereading Searle's argument here to bring it in a different direction. He believes that institutions provide humans with deontological powers, but he fails to explicitly assert that deontological powers are also given through institutions with a determination relating to gender and provenance, therefore working also as repressive machines. Searle, "What Is an Institution?"

192 ——— He continues: "It is only worthwhile to have money or a university degree or to be president of the United States if other people recognize you as having this status, and recognize that status as giving desire-independent reasons for behaving in certain ways." Searle, "What Is an Institution?," 11.

tered as worthy of such relation, acknowledging my very life on the same level as both a universal and an individual subject. However "I" cannot be uttered by all people in the same way, especially not for those living on the margins of institutions or relations (or forced outside them) and who have no power to speak for themselves or others, due to systemic discrimination—the ones who cannot participate in the constitution of this reality, and who also do not have a choice to think about (counter-)institution and (counter-)relation building. In the aesthetic sphere, such symbolic power and status are transferred to an object, giving immediate political and institutional recognition to certain groups of people instead of others, and defining their lives' (and afterlives') worth. Because some lives are not registered as lives with the same political rights of others in the sphere of appearance, and because institutions precede subjects, such (governing) institutions work first and foremost as repressive (and exclusionary) machines, inevitably privileging certain lives over others, and not necessarily "enabling" deontic powers independently from institutions. Some lives are deemed worthy of asserting their positions, while others are simply not. It is naive to believe that "when I am engaged in collective action, *I* am doing what I am doing as part of *our* doing what we are doing."[193] Such a statement already presupposes an equality. If status actually functioned as the glue that holds human societies together, then one could agree with such an argument (though it would be equally a totalitarian argument—taking the part for the whole and excluding antagonistic positions). After all, one may say, we live between "collective beliefs and collective desires."[194] We accept statutes and participate in their approval. Nevertheless, we are not always given the tools to understand that these are not necessarily conscious choices nor has one ("I") founded or participated in accepting key governing institutions. Status is one of the ontological conditions on which exclusion is created. To be given a status, one needs already to have a status—that is, the possibility to participate in the making of such a status (for example, citizenship—including the museum as making the citizenship of objects). We accept as a human quality the assignment of function to objects. However, objects cannot perform function in virtue of their physical structures alone, but rather in virtue of the collective institutional assignment or acceptance of the object (or person) as having a certain status. A function is part of institutional culture, and its unspoken rules accord with that status. One is not told nor taught to undo institutions (perhaps that is why the arts are often considered ground-breaking: because they speak about institutional undoing). Such "collective intentionality"—an intent directed at objects and states of affairs in the world, including "beliefs, hopes, fears, desires, and emotions in general"—can signal a direction, certainly, but one highly charged and

193 ——— Searle, "What Is an Institution?," 6. Emphasis in the original.
194 ——— Searle, "What Is an Institution?," 6.

qualified by its institutional context (that's what we should read and emphasise: a dominant ontology determining the very institutional context and culture, creating intentionality). The investigation of art and the sphere of representation cannot, therefore, focus on only a tiny part of that more significant problem within society. Because institutions build a social reality, including aesthetic autonomy and determination, they participate in and create a meaningful representational sphere. They create inclusion and exclusion, which are crucial in organising meaning. In the art world, the curator has the task of organising such meaning visually. Our bourgeois institutions continue to pretend to have a universal claim, yet they primarily consist of forces coming from (and representing only) a few privileged positions. There is a need to bridge these spaces for belonging and claims from different representational spheres and multiple "I's."

(2.5) *Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!* (1974–78), a series of feminist exhibitions and a book with Ann Christine Eek

The aesthetic field is a great bearer of both the oppression and the emancipation machines, which together with educational systems close or open doors for such procedures to take place. A shift in the concept of work—material, conceptual, and artistic—is essential to catalysing change, in rethinking an entire modality of governance at the height of the age of capital. Such was the claim of a number of artists who became active in the 1970s and 1980s, especially photographers who had committed to a new turn, one that took a less instrumental view on images read only univocally through textual descriptions in the more or less ideologised space of newspapers, to move instead towards empathy as well as feeling and self-expression.[195] In Stockholm, Christer Strömholm's photography school was a nodal point of encounter in Scandinavia for a new generation of artists to come forward with new aesthetic and political

195 I reported on such movements for liberation from the space of the newspaper and the magazine page in a longer essay titled "Sufficient to Have Stood, Yet Free to Fall: Intermittent Thoughts on Free Photography," in *100 Norwegian Photographers*, ed. Ina Otzko (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2019).

claims. Sadly, even here in a region known today—and especially in the 1960s—as a territory of emancipation, most of his students were still men. Agneta Ekman and Ulla Lemberg were among the few women who attended the school at that time, as did Ann Christine Eek, who together with two journalists published an important book titled *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!* (*Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!*).[196] This textual and visual work is completely in line with the political commitment of the time, where the image is largely the bearer of the message.[197] It includes the life experiences that the project's subjects—female workers Therese, Anniki, Karin, Barbro, Ellen, Alice, Gullbritt, Agneta, and Ingalis—told to the authors. Eek took the images while Ann Mårtens and Kajsa Ohrlander developed the text. The book deals mainly with the stories of the nine women and details their income, age, job, location of residence, size of house, rent, number of children, relationship status, and everyday life, and particularly their double work: each has the main responsibility for their homes and children as well as a job outside the household. Through this book work, the three authors identified a paradigmatic trend where women carried the sole responsibility for raising the coming generation and where most of them had to work an extra job outside their domestic engagements to make ends meet. These discussions bring forward an interesting paradox of the capitalist machinery. Society, the authors claim, is constructed as if there are no children.[198] The work situation forces people to give it their all, no matter the amount of overtime, work shifts, long workdays, commuting and travel time, exhausting labour, and so on involved. The authors and participants of *Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!* address a societal dysfunction whereby factors of production impair emotions, relations, and care for children. They argue for both men's and women's rights to have time for children, community life, politics, and culture. "Nobody wants to wear themselves out!" recites the back cover of the book, which came out in 1974. A small exhibition was held at the bookstore Oktober in Stockholm that same year, and the poster images eventually became part of the exhibition *Kvinnfolk* (*Women*) at Kulturhuset in Stockholm, which opened its doors to the public on 14 February 1975. The

196 ——— Ann Christine Eek, Ann Mårtens, and Kajsa Ohrlander, *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!: En bok om dubbelarbete idag och förr i tiden, för 6 timmars arbetsdag i framtiden* [Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out! A Book about Double Work Today and in the Past, for a 6-hour Workday in the Future] (Stockholm: Ordfront, 1974).

197 ——— Iréne Berggren, "Kvinnliga fotografer intar scenen" [Female photographers take the stage] *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift* 15, nos. 3–4 (1993): 85–94.

198 ——— I am paraphrasing a sentence that appears as a statement by the three authors on the back cover of the book in its original Swedish language.

poster images were later shown at Malmö Konsthall during the autumn of 1975, from 11 September to 19 October, and they additionally toured as a poster exhibition across Sweden. Finally, they reached the Norwegian capital as a photography exhibition in early 1978 at Fotogalleriet, where Eek's images were framed for the first time.[199] The main question asked with each iteration was: *Who is benefitting from this system?*

In 1971, Kajsa Ohrlander had already published the book *22 timmars arbetsdag* (*A 22-hour Workday*), in which she begins to deal with the "free time" and "free labour" one "gives" the company one works for, beyond the eight or eight-and-a-half hours per workday actually measured.[200] In big cities in Sweden, she states, one works extra overtime, and both providers (her focus is on nuclear families) work double, "often for the same real income one of them had ten to fifteen years before or of people not living in cities."[201] It is customary in these situations that the family providers should use up twenty-two hours of every day "in order to achieve the necessary means to feed, clothe, and take care of their family."[202] Commuting (an average of three hours) and breaks (an average of an hour, and instrumental to "recharging batteries" for "performance") are not counted as working hours. In addition, people are obliged to take extra shifts to be able to support themselves in the city and pay their bills. Ohrlander importantly points out how women's labour has been instrumental to balancing the unpredictability of supply and demand in the region, making them part of an "extra supply chain"—concurring with what Anarcha-feminist Silvia Federici, as I touch upon in the next pages dedicated to her analysis, concurrently defines as a form of "primitive accumulation"—that also includes people with disabilities and foreign workers.[203] As Ohrlander states in the book, it is not by chance that both unions and the government called women a "labour reserve."[204]
Discussions on equal pay for equal work were ongoing in the region. Group 8, a feminist organisation founded by eight women in Stockholm in 1968, was a militant feminist movement that took up issues of childcare and a six-hour workday. It also created a sense of political activism

199 ——— The research of both Helgesen and the larger work of the exhibition *Kvinnfolk* (*Women*) in Stockholm are discussed in Anna Lena Lindberg and Barbro Werkmäster, eds., *Kvinnor som konstnärer* [Women Artists] (Stockholm, LT, 1975).
200 ——— Kajsa Ohrlander, *22 timmars arbetsdag* [A 22-hour workday] (Stockholm: Gidlund, 1971).
201 ——— Ohrlander, 22 *timmars arbetsdag*, 33.
202 ——— Ohrlander, *22 timmars arbetsdag*, 33.
203 ——— Ohrlander, *22 timmars arbetsdag*, 89.
204 ——— Ohrlander, *22 timmars arbetsdag*, 93.

through the use of media, making sure, for example, that women columnists and writers were hired at the two major newspapers in Sweden—*Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet*—thus allowing feminist voices to reach everyone. Group 8 also sponsored housing solely for women, to help protect, strengthen, and empower the female population. It additionally published the magazine *Kvinnobulletinen* (*Women's Bulletin*) every month starting in 1970, covering various feminist issues such as sex work, unionism, women in the workplace, heterosexuality, and homosexuality. The group started as "a small internal circle that gathered to read and discuss women's literature, government studies, and reports on women's conditions," before becoming a stronger outreach organisation.[205] Ann Christine Eek has recently recounted how her concurrent work was influenced by Group 8.[206] *A 22-hour Workday* was among the reasons Eek, as a photographer and artist, was brought into contact with its author, Ohrlander, and Ann Mårtens later joined the pair to produce *Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!* At the time of making the exhibitions, Eek was part of Saftra, a photo agency founded in 1967 by Kenneth Gustavsson and Anders Petersen that focused on reportage and documentary intersecting with socially critical photography. Documenting people's everyday lives, rather than being part of an ideological movement, seems to have been an essential motivation for Eek, who continues to refuse to pledge allegiance to radical leftist movements from that time, but declares her affinity to the people, and especially the women, with whom she sought out relationships.[207]

One function of the *Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!* project seems to have been to bring concrete cases to Ohrlander's claims from *A 22-hour Workday*. Visual testimony of precarious lives obtained the necessary attention and offered visible proof of capitalistic oppression on people in general, and women in particular. We move inside people's homes and we learn all about their private matters, with their desires and denials determined mostly and foremost by their socioeconomic background and gendered position. As with the artists in Helgesen's 1971 UKS survey of the precariousness of the artists' economy and the disparity among the few and the many to achieve a liveable life, the actual conditions of workers are immediately revealed to show a systemic failure and a purposefully driven gap

205 ——— Kerstin Norlander, "Kvinnokamp" [Women's Struggle], Umeå Universitet, 1970, https://www.umu.se/sidan-68/tema-1-kvinnokamp/kvinnokamp.

206 ——— Ann Christine Eek, "Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out—A Life in Black and White Photography," interview by Anna Tellgren, *Conversations on Photography*, ed. Antonio Cataldo (Heidelberg: Kehrer, 2021), 91–108.

207 ——— Eek, "Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out," interview by Tellgren.

between people—and not a set of conditions that have accidentally arisen. The private is made public as part of a quest for change.

It is interesting to note how a synchronous movement of Marxist revisionism was taking place during those years as a way to explain issues of gender-based oppression in the field of work. Silvia Federici, in her epochal book *Caliban and the Witch*, mentions how a number of inspirational works produced at the beginning of the 1970s addressed the housework movement, where women were inscribed as the producers of labour-power and unpaid work in the house, a subordinated oppression she considers a residue of feudal relations and proper to capitalist ideology.[208] For Federici, unpaid work is essential to the capitalism machine, where women's labour appears as a "natural resource."[209] In capitalist ideology, according to her and following Marx, there is a principle of "primitive accumulation" on which production relations are based, where we should reinsert women as a subjugated subject, which is absolutely instrumental for such primitive accumulation of capital to happen. The gendered division of labour, including the persecution of witches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was an important step in establishing a system for the colonisation and expropriation not only of land for capitalist development but of bodies as part of the looted material and natural resources.[210] It is at the intersection of primitive accumulation and the appropriation of the means of production that feminism finds alliance with the proletariat struggle, Federici says. She adds that one should be suspicious of Michel Foucault's theory of the body, because in his analysis of discipline and power, he collapses the body as if universal, as if ungendered by capital for reproductive reasons into an undifferentiated whole.[211]

(2.6) The exhibitory moment: Nine stories of a struggle in ten chapters

The photobook has been an important medium for guiding alternative forms of critique, exposition, and circulation, circumventing the heteronormative and not always accessible exhibition space. I addressed such preoccupations through the exhibition *Le Book Club*, which I co-curated

208 ——— Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Automedia, 2004), 7.
209 ——— Federici, *Caliban and the Witch,* 97.
210 ——— Federici, *Caliban and the Witch,* 12.
211 ——— Federici, *Caliban and the Witch,* 16.

with Norwegian artist Nina Strand and Paris-based duo Anna Planas and Pierre Hourquet in the early months of 2020 at Fotogalleriet, Oslo. In late 2020, I also co-curated a conferenced titled *Photography Bound: Rethinking the Future of Photobooks and Self-Publishing,* with professor and artist Adrià Julià. As I have researched and asserted during these events,[212] the photobook is a body in transition because of its ability to pervade diverse locations and times (not simply the commonly available official exhibition space). Its transient movement tests the exhibition space's political architecture and colonial patriarchy. To hold a photobook is to journey—politically, sexually, geographically, corporeally—radically transforming the travelling object and the receiver. The photobook looks for new contexts, communities, and nationalities and to contest borders.

Such thinking was pushed forward by two concurrent projects: *Let's Talk About Images* (2018–19), which I organised at my arrival at Fotogalleriet. They were a series of addresses in lieu of exhibitions, along with a number of commissioned conversations, which I launched immediately, and was aimed towards a book, *Conversations on Photography* (the book was published in 2021, but the work began in 2018). These two projects were greatly inspired by a number of discussions, including with curator Delphine Bedel, who participated in *Let's Talk About Images* in a conversation with Eline Mugaas and Tine Semb. Bedel, a contributor to the travelling exhibition *How We See: Photobooks by Women* (2018–2019), set to promote an overlooked, history of women's, contribution to the field worldwide, had

212 ——— Dedicated to the photobook as an exhibition space of its own, the exhibition *Le Book Club* was divided into different, weekly chapters during the period of 15 January to 16 February 2020, and it contained interventions from a number of practitioners, including, and among others, Zines of the Zone, Wolfgang Tillmans, Christophe Daviet-Théry, Sara R. Yazdani, Marie Sjøvold, Nadine Wietlisbach, Fin Serck-Hanssen, Julián Baron, Carmen Winant, Librairie Yvon Lambert, and David Horvitz. From 13–15 October 2020, I also co-curated a conference titled *Photography Bound: Rethinking the Future of Photobooks and Self-Publishing*, with Adrià Julià, professor of photography at the University of Bergen, to address how photo-based books and self-publishing are a vital emancipatory motor of discussion bringing communities across space and time together, which included, among other speakers, Terje Abusdal, Abdul Halik Azeez, Heidi Bale Amundsen, Delphine Bedel, Bruno Ceschel, Paul Gangloff, Erik Gant, Hans Gremmen, Roberto Figliulo, Cosmo Grossbach, Sohrab Hura, Kay Jun, Aglaia Konrad, Moritz Kung, Silja Leifsdottir, Hailey Loman, Catalina Lozano, Vijai Patchineelam, Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, Vijai Patchineelam, Anna-Kaisa Rastenberger, Mette Sandbye, Ursula Schulz-Dornburg, Ahlam Shibli, Æsa Sigurjónsdóttir, Ina Steiner, Niclas Östlind, Stanley Wolukau-Wanambwa, Antonio Zúñiga, Anne Lise Stenseth, Tom Klev, Henri Terho, Annika Thörn Legzdins, Klara Þórhallsdóttir, and Tine Vindfeld.

spoken in Oslo about how women had shaped the field of photography since its start and their contribution still remained unacknowledged. She addressed the responsibility of bringing back these essential elements of history into educational and visual narration. Bedel eventually contributed to the *Photography Bound* symposium and its interrelated book (2020–2023). Ann Christine Eek seemed a pillar reference as she had been an important voice in the Scandinavian feminist history bridging Stockholm, Oslo, and possibly beyond—at the very inception of Fotogalleriet—by having contributed to the programme with *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!* (Work – Don't Wear Yourself Out!, 1974 [1978]). The exhibition plunged beyond the visual into its reach, as it became an active site of discussion for challenging normative and biased premises for presenting how predetermined societal functioning—its very unquestioned governance—in itself confines people in gendered and class positions. The exhibition's predicaments travelled far and capillary, as she points out in the interview for *Conversations on Photography*; even the posters made it to study groups across Scandinavia. While the book became a testament and an easier travelling exhibition, it also constituted a proof of a condition, that though seemed to concern the few, it represented the many—the majority of society. Eek reported her frustrations of the hierarchical gendered roles in the photographic field, and actively sought to collaborate with people who had worked sociologically on such issues, which led to the content of the exhibition and the book. What is immediately visible in the book is mostly the workers' category, but the invisibility she refers to, also points at the very field in which she is active, making the exhibition, the book, and other aesthetic tools relevant in addressing a number of intersecting societal and representational levels. Equally *Arbeta*, sought to have a sociological approach by meeting the very people who were the subjects of oppression of intensive labour and its unrealistic conditions, and the expectations of gendered and class determinations. Retelling the travelling story curated through exhibitioning, pamphleting and bookmaking in reaching audiences which were not exhibition goers, and breaking down the white cube "walls" of these bourgeoisie places was part of rethinking the space of art and its incredible pitfalls. Such had also been the dream of a number of avant-garde movements described in previous subchapters: chiefly the Situationist movement across Scandinavia, and other experiments in the artistic field allowing freedom of discussion otherwise concealed in other spaces.

The *Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!* publication starts with defining the "double work" women are unconsciously (and unwillingly) subjected to and why the historical achievement of the eight-hour workday needs to be re-evaluated in more general terms. In the mid-twentieth century and

still today, working hours have hardly become what workers at the turn of the century intended them to be when they demanded "eight-hours of work, eight-hours of rest, eight-hours of leisure."[213] The right to participate in society and culture and to inform oneself through reading and spending time with one's friends and children had, by the 1970s, disappeared. The book's case for a six-hour workday begins with a case study in the second chapter, titled 'Shareholders Need Young Women.' Here we learn about individuals by coming into contact first with Therese, twenty-one years old and a metalworker, who asserts: "We stand there and work like robots."[214] Therese, who previously lived with Uffe and has a one-year-old child, recounts her personal story by unveiling factory managers' and owners' dark strategies: "They don't want us to sit together, think together, or talk with one another. That would build too much fellowship; and there would be too much solidarity."[215] She lingers on that thought and reveals that Uffe and herself never had time for each other, leading to them parting ways, and, to an even more unmanageable situation as a single mother. She asks: "Is it the demand for the right to work, or the right to freedom, that is fulfilled today?"[216] She points to such an "impossible combination."[217]

The third chapter, titled "Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out," focuses on Annikki, a forty-year-old health-care assistant, who claims: "I love my work." Annikki is married to Reino, a pipefitter. They have three children and a foster child (ages three, six, fifteen, and nineteen). They live in Älta, in a five-room apartment (counting bedrooms and living room, per the Scandinavian standard). In contrast to Therese, who has a very monotonous workday, Annikki feels she is independent in her work and has a much more interesting routine. The book's authors chose her to show that women are in need of more rewarding jobs. "We want a good job," says Hildur, a shop assistant in her thirties, while Karin, a twenty-nine-year-old student, states, "Knowledge is power" and "my interest will become my work."[218] She is married to Lasse, has two children (seven and two), and lives in Uppsala in a three-room apartment. Though she begins with a very hopeful statement, it soon becomes clear that their life is more precarious than she initially wants to admit: "I have had to risk a lot. But what I do has always been stimulating. I think that I am incredibly privileged

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213 ——— Eek, Mårtens, and Ohrlander, *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 11.

214 ——— Age, profession, civil status, city of residence, size of house, and monthly rent are all stated at the beginning of each chapter, together with a portrait of the person we encounter. A headline summing up their main claim, in first-person, is also immediately presented.

215 ——— Eek, Mårtens, and Ohrlander, *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 15. All translations from this book were made for this thesis by myself and Nora Fremmerlid.

216 ——— *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!,* 27.

217 ——— *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!,* 31.

218 ——— *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!,* 45.

because it is my interest that will become my work." She takes out a large student loan for every semester of study, and it is uncertain if by the end of her education she will get the job she is training for. She ends up noting: "Being unemployed is being worthless."[219] As it turns out from the book positioned in the time she was speaking, there were half a million unemployed women in Sweden, out of a total population of eight million, making another reality readily available. "Shareholders and directors do not want just any woman," and not just anywhere. They are looking for "young, healthy women."[220] The book directly points out to gendered unemployment and to the fact that because this is gendered unemployment it is not considered a state crisis: "These numbers do not shake society. But they would, the book states, if instead it were half a million unemployed men."[221] We could refer here back to Silvia Federici, as in the previous subchapter, where a spatial and reproductive division of labour is created in the very assessment of what is considered labour. In addition, in a Butlerian sense, we should also question the rule of law defining labour not only through labour itself but by acknowledging whose body and life is registered and "worth" living.[222]

In "Come to Social Services," chapter four of *Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!*, a history of social benefits is reported. It includes the story of Barbro, a shopworker and a single parent with a one-year-old child who lives in a two-room apartment in Stockholm, who says that "there are no emergency benefits."[223] She needed to go on social benefits when she was on parental leave. "You need to book a time" to speak with the agency, and one needs to report everything, including how you are going to make a living in the future. Barbro has a phone and a TV, both considered a luxury. She asks, "Are these social benefits for the children or for the landlords?"[224] Such discussion continues in chapter five, "The Time Has Come to Demand a Right to Have Children," where we encounter forty-year-old

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219 ——— *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 52.

220 ——— *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 53.

221 ——— All the data summarised here comes directly from the book; I report it through translation. *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 53.

222 ——— Philosopher Judith Butler directly addresses the issue of precariousness and when a life can be worth of value within certain given mechanisms of the nation state and its violence. Technically, under nation state policies, for a life to be worth living, or registered as a loss, it needs to be "registered" under certain parameters. The parallel here is that without the state having registered the women's labour force as a force in itself, but only man as a labour force, their precocity cannot be registered and therefore structurally acknowledged. Judith Butler, *Frames of War. When is Life Grievable?* (London & New York: Verso, 2016), 27.

223 ——— *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 59.

224 ——— *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*

single mother Ellen, working as a waitress and living half on benefits and half on salary. She is a hotel porter with a twelve-year-old, and lives in Stockholm in a two-room apartment. She has always felt lonely in her profession. Most people are completely alone as single parents, she tells us. When her child was little, she was single. She kept a slower pace of life, working a seven-hour workday but living in economic hardship. She asks: "Can we afford to have kids?" According to her, the time has come to demand the right to have children, because the required conditions to do so are not provided.[225]

Alice, thirty-five, is a map draughter married to Jan, and lives in Stockholm in a four-room apartment. Her story about the problems with daycare is part of chapter six, "Children to No Avail." Not only do parents not have time to look after their children—neither do the staff working at the daycare, we learn.[226] Continuing presenting statistical facts of 350,000 children of parents working, and 1/3 of spaces available in daycare, they ask: "Is daycare for the children or for the men in power?"[227]

"A Demanding Work Situation" titles chapter seven, where we come into contact with Gullbritt, a thirty-four-year-old childminder married to Hasse, with whom she has two children (eight and thirteen years old). She lives in Stockholm in a five-room apartment. She works home and explains how heavy it is both emotionally and physically to take care of kids. Gullbritt must constantly make trade-offs between what is required of her in her work and what is required of her as a private person.[228] It is important to add here, that these claims help to support redefining accepted definitions at the time of "sphere of the private," as we learn from feminist thinking and through Silvia Federici. Rejecting the given normativities of these "body politics," is a refusal to accept the body itself as the place of such confinement.[229]

"The Fight against Loneliness" is the subject of chapter eight, addressing how urban society's structure determines this status quo. The book examines the structure of households in Sweden, primarily dedicated to single households and speaking about a solitude which moves from the architectural logics of the state, to urban planning, buildings, and workplaces, reflecting the real infrastructural governance of bodies. The chapter asks, "Have families ever been lonelier than they are today?"[230]

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225 ——— *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!,* 73.
226 ——— *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!,* 94.
227 ——— *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!,* 100.
228 ——— *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!,* 107.
229 ——— Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 7.
230 ——— *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!,* 116.

Many people fight to stay in the place where they feel at home—often meaning privileging smaller cities and extended family structures—claims "Stay All Together and with Others," the ninth chapter. Here, we encounter Ingalis, a thirty-eight-year-old factory worker, saying, "We help each other."[231] She is married to Bengt, unemployed. She has three children (sixteen, seven, and five). They all live with Ingalis' parents. It becomes clear that this form of extended family, unlike the standard nuclear family, creates forms of solidarity impossible to maintain in the spatial setting that the city's urbanity creates. It clearly indicates, indirectly, for whom the city is designed, an integral part of feminist revendications of these and coming decades. She affirms that if they were to move, "We would be social cases—I am sure of it."[232]

The last chapter of the book is titled "A Chance for Real Love," strongly advocating for a six-hour workday. This is proposed as the real and only chance at equality in the workplace. The authors write: "Only when society's responsibility for children is imposed by law, and when the municipality and state are required to administer part of the child's upbringing, will women be able to dare to fully invest in a job."[233] The current situation, the book insists, is that employers dictate an interpretation of equality that violates the right to have children.

This photobook, *Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!*, clearly contributed to an understanding of curatorial strategies of moving in between exhibitions as expanded spaces of knowledge exchange—beyond a physical allocation—which has become part of the curatorial strategies that I brought back into the space of Fotogalleriet. Such is the reason for analysing its context and sociological approaches so tightly in these pages. The infrastructural analysis it creates, move hand in hand with the other project analysed in chapter 1, *The Artists' Situation* by Aina Helgesen. We can read in Eek's sociological approach, including providing numbers and statistical research, a number of intersecting similarities of methodologies that can be defined as feminist strategies that enter the curatorial sphere and curatorial materialism.

231 ——— *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 127.
232 ——— *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 133.
233 ——— *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 142.

(2.7) Shaping a self-positioning through the process of anamorphosis; sexuality in the field of vision

In the struggle for equality and emancipation, contesting the social sphere's ontological givens, the exhibition space has been less visible (less contested) and therefore much less questioned as a space asserting gender imbalances and gender formation; this in turn cemented the ruling power of modernity's exhibitionary complex coming into effect. This process occurred through large museums and fairs alike from the nineteenth century on, as well as through the far-reaching power of the filmic form, shaping the aesthetic sphere and looming larger than any physical architecture of the exhibition palaces, through the film medium's more nomadic and popular form of projection and accessibility. In the 1970s, critical theory entered the visual arts field via psychoanalytic analysis of the subject as part of a formal analysis of cinema.[234] To understand the function of the imaginary ("visual and illusory") in the formation of identity, the gaze of cinema emerges as ideologically motivated by a society based on the male gaze. The male is the only subject. The spectator is gendered.[235] As curators became mediators between the artwork and publics, a new museological practice critically examined society and proposed a new image of the world. Symptomatically, it's also worth mentioning that the landmark article by Linda Nochlin rhetorically asking the question "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," was published during those years, in 1971.[236]

234 ——— The most important figures of this movement are Christian Metz, Jean-Louis Baudry, Jean-Louis Comolli, Laura Mulvey, Peter Wollen, Colin MacCabe, and Stephen Heath. They used Lacan's theory of the mirror stage for the formation of the subject and politicised it from a Marxist perspective. The social aspect of this analysis examined the psychological effects of ideology. Cinema provides a necessary illusion of completeness and deception. See Todd McGowan, *The Real Gaze: Film Theory after Lacan* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 2.

235 ——— McGowan, *The Real Gaze*, 4.

236 ——— Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," in *Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness*, ed. Vivian Gornick and Barbara Moran (New York: Basic Books, 1971), 480–510.

More recently, humanities scholar Jacqueline Rose spearheaded a revisionist account of psychoanalysis, questioning its assimilation into literary methods, which infused them with phallocentric dogmas born of certain readings of Lacan and Freud.[237] The cementing of identity is first and foremost politically motivated. Reading Lacan through Louis Althusser's concept of ideology, Rose explains further the relation of feminism and cinema through psychoanalysis. Feminism is a movement of recognition of gender inequality. The film medium perpetrates dual sexual identities and their consequential hierarchy in visual pleasure: one is the subject and the other the object.[238] The ideology machine continues to be effective because it works on these primordial drives. Psychoanalysis is the field where we can understand the persistence of these "oppressive social norms."[239] A biologically predetermined and socially assigned role have in common the image of passivity they produce: the woman, who receives a "natural destiny."[240] We need to add a "dimension of risk" in the normalised discourse to counter such an image formation.[241] In this process, one could attack theory itself as the product of a masculine fantasy and call for the dissolution of (knowledge) institutions and, consequently, the destruction of language.[242] Rose reasons against the undoing of institutions because what we have come to know as the unconscious can be used as a defence against a language otherwise frozen in "fixed, institutionalised meaning." Sexuality, because it "unsettle[s] the subject, is a break against the intolerable limits of common sense," she says.[243] In creating the difference in this system an image emerges: the woman. The image of such separation proposes a definition of what is not a "man" and consequently excess. Excess is what man needs to give up to fit such a category. Here Rose identifies a form of potentiality that this systemic imbalance has underestimated and unwillingly produced and that the unconscious enables us to speak about.[244]

Freud journeys into childhood and adult sexual life through a visual space. He hovers over moments when perception falters and is troubled by anatomical differences. In such cases, pleasure is registered as excess and

237 ——— Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 2020), 3.
238 ——— Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 220.
239 ——— Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 6.
240 ——— Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 7.
241 ——— Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 3.
242 ——— "To confront language at the point where it undoes itself, pushing against that illusion of safety through which alone it can function, uncovering the psychic forces which sustain that illusion but which equally put it at risk." Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 59.
243 ——— Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 4.
244 ——— Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 219.

functions as a mechanism of predestination, by witnessing a destiny based on experiencing the acts of others. Here, each time, we encounter a "problem of seeing", of vision. Because this relation is visual, sexuality is grounded in memory and history; it is mostly not about the content of what we see but in the relation of the viewer and their growing knowledge of the subject matter. Rose writes: "As if Freud found the aptest analogy for the problem of our identity as human subjects in failures of vision or in the violence which can be done to an image as it offers itself to view."[245] These images—or fantasies, "archaic moments of disturbed visual representation"[246]—shake our knowledge of the past, our certainties. A presence of these traces remain, although we are not aware of it. Rose again: "Piles of cultural artifacts bring back something we recognise but in a form which refuses any logic of the same."[247] It is an acute problem of vision. Modernity tends to read these images as pure signifiers through language without confessing that we apprehend meaning through a language that already contains a sexual polarisation. It seems to be at the intersection of these psychoanalytic concepts of the unconscious and sexuality—specifically where the relationship to language seems to be lost—that Rose finds a link to psychoanalysis to develop her understanding of ideology as being determinative of the mechanisms that produce transformation within society, because through such mechanisms we recognise that something is left in excess, moving the unconscious away from "a functionalist account of the internalisation of norms."[248] Going back to the unconscious is, in this sense, a source of imaging. Optics (and therefore vision) is a quintessential phenomenon to analyse in the formation of the subject, that is, its power of identification and representation.

It is here that I find both allegiance to and resonance with the artistic approach (and I would argue curatorial work) of Ann Christine Eek, foregrounding the paradigmatic lives of nine, yet also countless, women. In the act of constructing (artistic, photographic, and unconscious) images to undermine their previous perceived status through both repetition and insistence—by putting pressure on "something hidden but not forgotten"—she causes them to enter the realm of representation, and brings them into focus by "blurring the field of representation where our 'normal' forms of self-recognition take place."[249] Something about these images is left in excess. It appeals to our unconscious to rework our given optics. Decisively informing a whole strand of artistic production of the

245 ——— Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision,* 227.
246 ——— Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision,* 227.
247 ——— Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 230.
248 ——— Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 7.
249 ——— Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 228.

visual image, photography and psychoanalysis simultaneously move into practices of critique, alerting processes and undoing and rewriting institutions for the understanding of subjectivity and for feminism alike.

Excess in my curatorial practice means giving space to the unacknowledged. The normativity of the home, architecture, and urbanity hold incredible pressure upon my curatorial work while directing an institution that is positioned at street level and on a laneway that intersects a capital's city centre. The excess, what doesn't fit societal standards or an active refusal and challenging of the norm, is part of a disconnect between a lived reality and representation. One testifies to what the exhibition space proffers every day at Fotogalleriet. Its large windows open onto a park populated with petty crimes, drug use, studentship, parenthood, the cult of the body, and varied life: the potentiality and the systemic imbalance the institution contributes to maintaining. Producing performative actions "to fill the gap" as part of programming and working closely with neighbouring institutions has been part of keeping that excess in active operation and acknowledging the institution's unconscious (what's not immediately recognised) as a curatorial task.

(2.8) The spirit of the time is in the air: The dematerialisation of the art object

It is tempting and perhaps appropriate to draw here, while thinking about the work of both Aina Helgesen and Ann Christine Eek, a parallel with the dematerialisation of the art object proclaimed by curator Lucy Lippard in those same years.[250] In 1969, Lippard told sculptor Ursula Meyer:

> The new dematerialised art … provides a way of getting the power structure out … and spreading it around to wherever an artist feels like being at the time. Much art now is transported by the artist, or in the artist himself [*sic*], rather than by watered-down, belated circulating exhibitions or by existing information networks.[251]

250 ——— However, there is no proof of Helgesen or the UKS board having knowledge of Lippard's work at the time, though there was active work with the international field. For example, on 1 June 1971, UKS hosted a solo exhibition of Clevon Pran, a painter from Alabama who was educated at the Art Institute in Chicago.

251 ——— Lucy Lippard, interview by Ursula Meyer, 1973, Art Theory, https://theoria.art-zoo.com/interview-with-ursula-meyer-lucy-lippard.

Education for Lippard—as similarly for Helgesen and Eek, who in the following years attempted to find multiple forms for the permanent display and circulation of the artwork through books, posters, leaflets, and portable exhibitions (i.e., irreducible to one single object of value)—becomes part of a process of liberation of capitalist determinacy. She says, "Objects aren't very important for me anymore. … I am trying to reaffirm the concept of art and creativity in the face of Marxist doctrine. … For me the formation of the thought is already sculpture."[252]

After returning from a trip to Argentina to sit on an art prize jury in 1968, she radicalised her thoughts, primarily through contact with the Rosario Group and their mixture of conceptual and political ideas. Lippard started approaching exhibition making entirely differently, whereby curating the circulation of thought predominates over the circulation of objects. Dematerialised art would travel from country to country via free airline tickets, for instance.[253]

Lippard has become well known and a pivotal figure, including for my curatorial practice, in regard to breaking free from objects. It's not the art object making ideas circulate, but images. Such a turning point and claim of her practice makes small institutions and less financially demanding curating possible. It also makes it possible for works of art outside the canonised space of the museum to have a value and recognition otherwise denied outside these patriarchal spaces of exposition. For me, working in a small institution (and likewise for feminism), Lippard's thinking is fundamental to overcoming otherwise apparently unreachable public realms.[254]

The early Conceptual artist Marcel Duchamp certainly had a major influence on Lippard's development of these ideas.[255] The 1950s to 1970s were

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252 ——— Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966–1972* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), xvii.

253 ——— Lippard, *Six Years*, ix. She eventually realised four portable exhibitions, with the first one initiated at the Seattle Art Museum's World Fair annex, and each of which was named according to the population of the city in which it originated: 557*,087* in Seattle, WA, US (1969); *955,000* in Vancouver, Canada; *2,972,453* at Centro de Arte y Comunicación in Buenos Aires, Argentina (1970); and *7,500* at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, CA, US (1973–74).

254 ——— Lippard is also one of the references used by Elke Krasny to define curatorial materialism and feminist independent curating to create an alternative to mainstream and museum practices, inaccessible for non-canonised positions. See Elke Krasny, "Curatorial Materialism: A Feminist Perspective on Independent and Co-dependent Curating," *OnCurating*, no. 29 (2016): 96–107.

255 ——— Lippard, who had been a librarian at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, witnessed the historicisation of Duchamp's work

the years in which Duchamp himself was rebuilding his own historiography and constructing a truth process along with it, often referring, in numerous interviews, to "objects turning into artworks," objects which had already been present in the artist's studio.[256] Lippard seems to have

in the US, occurring from the 1950s through the 1970s. Christian Berger asserts that Lippard and John Chandler, in their article "The Dematerialization of Art" (*Art International* 12, no. 2 (1968): 31–36), "do not deliver a consistent framework or theoretical explanation for what they referred to as 'the dematerialization of art.' Instead, they first situate their observations on the art object's imminent obsoleteness in an evolutionary model drawn from the composer and music theorist Joseph Schillinger's (1895–1943) *Mathematical Basis of the Arts* (1943), then argue for the importance of Dada and the work of Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) as precedents, and close by claiming an 'ultimate zero point' of art that would always be pushed further" (Christian Berger, "Wholly Obsolete or Always a Possibility? Past and Present Trajectories of a 'Dematerialization' of Art'," in *Conceptualism and Materiality: Matters of Art and Politics*, ed. Christian Berger (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 15–53). In her early career, shortly after graduating from Smith College, Northampton, MA, in 1958, Lippard worked as a page at the MoMA Library. In 1960, Lippard resigned but continued to spend a lot of time at the museum, conducting research and translations and compiling bibliographies. Starting in 1969, as a leader of the Art Workers' Coalition, Lippard participated in demonstrations against MoMA. See "Modern Women: A Partial History," *Modern Women: Women Artists at the Museum of Modern Art* (mini site), MoMA, 2010, https://www.moma.org/interactives/modern_women/history/#lexicon21.

In 1973, Lippard contributed to the *Marcel Duchamp* exhibition catalogue, jointly sponsored by MoMA and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. MoMA curator Kynaston McShine asked Lippard to write a text for the catalogue, and she responded with a readymade text. See Lucy R. Lippard (collated by), "The Romantic Adventures of an Adversative Rotarian: or Allreadymadesomuchoff," in *Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Anne d'Harnoncourt and Kynaston McShine (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1973), 117–24.

256 Duchamp said, for instance, "in 1914, even 1913, I had in my studio a bicycle wheel turning for no reason at all. Without even knowing whether I should put it with the rest of my works or even call it work" (Marcel Duchamp, "I Propose to Strain the Laws of Physics," interview by Francis Roberts, *Art News*, December 1968, 46, 47, 62–64). He refers similarly to *Sculpture for Travelling* (1918), which consisted of "coloured bathing caps cut into various lengths" and strung up like strings in his studio. The work benefitted from the "elasticity of the material," which would remain a "(sculptural) memory" and, therefore, act as a constant reminder of the readymade object. "[It] could be packed into his suitcase for travel, as indeed did happen from New York to Buenos Aires in 1918, then in August 1919 on a return trip from New York to Paris." It is through "sculptural memory" that Duchamp rebuilt his

embodied this Duchampian lesson, mostly in an attempt to free herself from preconstituted forms of exhibition determined by the narrowness of a place such as New York, which by the 1970s had once again cemented itself in secluded institutionalised forms. She writes: "Decentralisation and internationalism were major aspects of the prevailing distribution theories. … In the sixties, however, New York was resting in a self-imposed, and self-satisfied, isolation, having taken the title of world art capital from Paris in the late fifties."[257] Consequently, the "easily portable, easily communicated forms of Conceptual Art made it possible for artists working outside the major art centres to participate in early stages of new ideas." These are Lippard's words, not mine.[258]

Certainly, this lesson comes from Dadaist practices which had been imported to the US through Duchamp. As theorist Walter Benjamin notes, "The Dadaists attached much less importance to the sale [exchange] value of their work than to its uselessness for contemplative immersion."[259] As for Lippard's approach to writing on Duchamp, her poems were a "word salad" containing the waste products of language.[260]

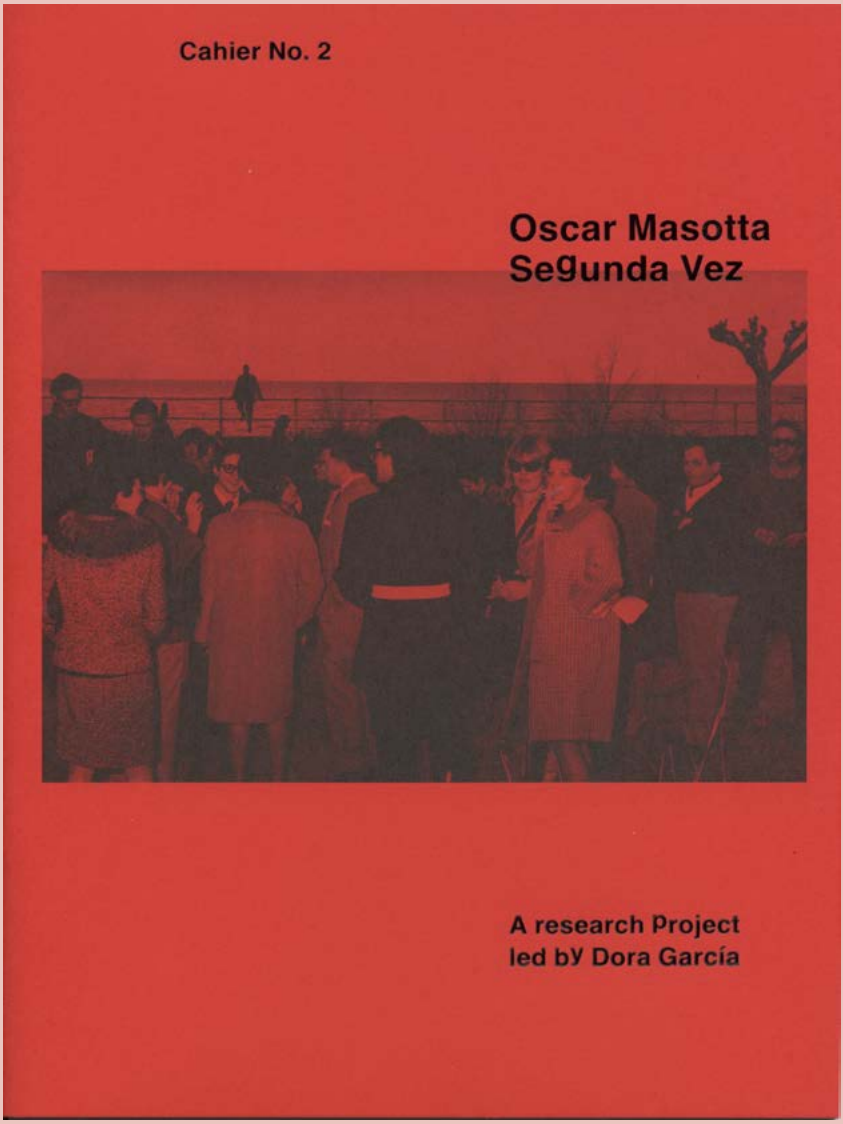
artistic genealogy, by constructing chronological moments which did not necessarily correspond to exhibitory ones, but rather to his artistic practice and everyday praxis in his studio. See Marcus Moore, "Marcel Duchamp: 'Twisting Memory for the Fun of It' or a Form of Retroactive Interference? Recalling the Impacts of Leaving Home on the Readymade," *Memory Connection* 1, no. 1, (2011): 393–402.

257 ——— Lippard, *Six Years*, xviii.

258 ——— Lippard, *Six Years*, xviii.

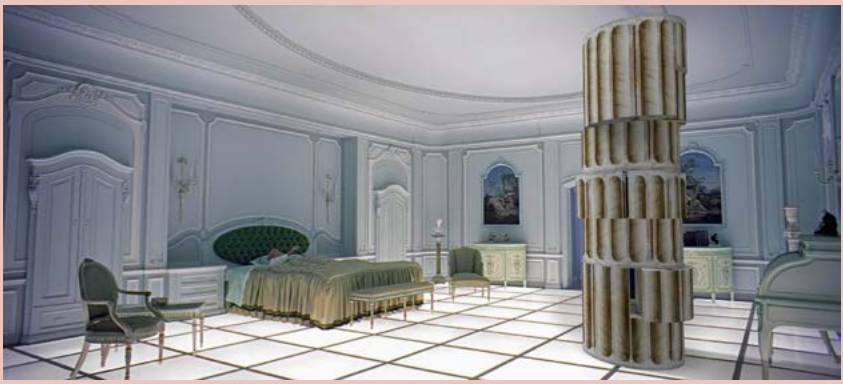
259 ——— Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 1–26.

260 ——— I am referring for instance to Lippard's approach to the 1974 MoMA exhibition catalogue on Marcel Duchamp. Benjamin had used "word salad" to describe the Dadaist approach of his "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."



Dora Garcia, *Oscar Masotta: Segunda Vez, Cahier No. 2.*, Oslo: Torpedo Press & Oslo National Academy of the Arts, 2017.

Andreas Angelidakis, *Softwalks* (installation view), 20 January–18 April 2021.
Photo: Julie Hrnčířová/Fotogalleriet.



Andreas Angelidakis, *Advertisements 4 KION (space odyssey),* digital collage, 2020.

Part 3.
A curatorial materialist approach: The forensic exhibitionary complex

Why did the document become a fetishised site of experimentation in the post-war period? How did the document enter the exhibition space during these years, and in which forms? What curatorial strategies are connected to it? How does this exhibitory practice shape a different understanding of the art object? How does this movement express a different idea of labour? Does this exhibitory form speak the voice of the subaltern?

(3.1) The document replacing the art object

Using documents as a tool of imaginative expression was central to the arts of the post-war period. The creation of documents and techniques for managing them through collecting, archiving, arrangement, contextualisation, and manipulation was core to key artistic movements such as CoBrA, Lettrism, the Lettrist International, the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, Heatwave, Council for the Liberation of Everyday Life, and Enragé Lettrism.[261] Within these movements, the discursive aspect of art making took a dominant role in developing, presenting, and disseminating the makers of such documents. This attitude reached a peak during the 1960s and 1970s, with Conceptual Art, Minimalism, and Happenings, as part of a continuous attempt to destabilise—through artistic intervention—institutionalised, factual records. In tandem with the new flow of information brought forward by the technological changes of the 1960s, enabling, for example, high-quality recording to be more readily available, a theory of interruption was formulated to overcome epistemological thresholds. During these years, Michel Foucault—who would further develop this theory of obstacles to knowledge in the field of history—argued for a much needed disruption in collating documents for the sake of historical claims, and for the creation of a theory of suspension in the "continuous accumulation of knowledge."[262] By way of questioning these categories, with their constructed historical continuities, Foucault queries disciplinary formation: "What is a science? What is an *œuvre*?

261 ——— I am here reading and referring to the following documents of the pre-Situationist archive, which in one way or another back my claim that documents took a prominent revolutionary and artistic role in the debates of these years: "Pre-Situationist Archive," Situationist International Online, accessed 31 March 2021, http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/presitu/presitu.html.

262 ——— Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

What is a theory? What is a concept? What is a text?"[263] It is important to note that Foucault's argument against the accrual of knowledge is meant to reveal that accumulation is made up of more fallacies than constituencies—a search for stable structures which denies abandonment to the natural irruption of events. In a word, the subject position contends with the document.

The document should no longer be historiographically considered an inert material that enables a unity of relations. This one-way reading simply converts documents into monuments.[264] A new theory on the value of the document should be formulated.

It is not by chance, then, that Walter Benjamin's work of his last years, including the *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (written in 1940), came into the English-speaking world (1969) during the same years Foucault was reporting a similar predicament: "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism."[265] Querying the document, which is purportedly institutionalised evidence, means examining an ongoing process of seizing power from the subjugated classes designed to expropriate them of their rights.[266]

Foucault's and Benjamin's theories had a great impact on the reconsideration of the role of simple "things" (documents that had ended up in archives) that, once framed or presented as evidence (statements), mobilised from their state as mere "things" to give rise to "events." To construct history, one needs to destroy the first statement that had given rise to events.[267] By entering the disciplinary institution, documents transform

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263 ——— Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 5.

264 ——— Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 7.

265 ——— Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 253–64.

266 ——— Marx attacked the substance of the revolutionary eighteenth-century American and French political documents proclaiming the fundamental "rights of man" in liberty, equality, security, and property. Marx objects that these supposed rights are rooted in a conception of the human individual as having interests that can be defined without reference to others, as potentially always in conflict with others. The rights-bearing individual is an "isolated monad … withdrawn behind his private interests and whims and separated from the community." See Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," 1844, Marxists Internet Archive, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/index.htm. Originally published in *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, February 1844.

267 ——— Sigrid Weigel, *Body- and Image-Space: Re-reading Walter Benjamin* (London: Routledge, 1996), 36.

their status from a noun to a verb, from stasis to action: "a document" versus "to document." As I will show later on in my argument, the document assuming such a prominent role in the field of culture in general and art in particular, and becoming more meaningful in the 1960s and 1970s, defines "the space of the document" as the only space where the performance, including utterance, occurs in the arts. Increased dependence on the document as a noun (and documentation as an act of substantiating a verb) becomes instrumental in attaining status within culture, even though the camera is the ultimate stage for the produced image. Images are not constatives but performatives.[268] Art used as alternative evidence—a strategy that also finds its historical inception during those years—can be connected to many of today's practices and the research being conducted to transform material things that allegedly have no value, either in court or in other institutional settings, into documents of proof, factual matters. The trial space for gathering research and further evidence is via exhibitions, as sites of experimentation, which although they have no legal value in courthouses still represent a space of viable acceptance. I believe this is the effort structured over the past decade by, among others, members of Forensic Architecture, the independent research agency based at Goldsmiths, University of London.

(3.2) The popularisation of the document

As media historian Lisa Gitelman recently demonstrated, the popularisation of the document that took place in the 1960s was somehow both technologically unprecedented and unexpectedly successful. Haloid—which

268 Performance theorist and critic Philip Auslander analyses the documentarian and theatrical tradition of performance documentation to evidence the ontology of performance and document concerning the actual artistic event. He eventually comes to equate images that document performances to verbal statements instead of descriptions of how events occurred. Performance documents are not constative but themselves performative. The act is what constitutes the document as such, he asserts. The act itself produces "autonomous performance" and "states that it occurred." "[T]he traditional view sees performance documents as constatives […] I am suggesting that performance documents are not analogous to constatives, but to performatives." Philip Auslander, "The Performativity of Performance Documentation," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, no. 28 (September 2006): 3.

changed its name to Haloid Xerox in 1958 to reflect its belief that the company's future lay in xerography—introduced the first automatic Xerox copier in 1960 (the 914 model), which was a large office machine weighing 650 pounds (295 kilograms).[269] Documenting and the uses of documents were at times confused or conflated during this period: "to Xerox" was to affirm the item copied as a document, to electronically read that document during the duplication process, and to produce a copy (a record) for personal use.[270] Gitelman cites two major events as paradigmatic of this shift: the Pentagon Papers, a 7,000-plus-page top-secret Vietnam War report photocopied by Daniel Ellsberg in 1969 and shared with the *New York Times* in 1971; and John Lions's "Commentary on the Sixth Edition Unix Operating System" of 1977, documentation on a rare kernel[271] compiled for students of the University of New South Wales in Australia and "shared" for many years only through photocopies passed among generations of students and researchers. The *New York Times*' decision to publish the Pentagon Papers both outraged sections of the public for its content and brought up questions about the role of the press in publishing state secrets. Ellsberg's actions—for which he was prosecuted at trial on felony charges—brought questions on the meaning of "sharing" into the public realm. While awaiting trial, Ellsberg documented his account of the ensuing events in *Papers on the War*, published in 1972. As he writes in the book's introduction: "In releasing the Pentagon Papers, I acted in hope I still hold: that truths that changed me could help Americans free themselves and other victims from our longest war."[272]

Despite their interest in the Pentagon Papers, neither newspapers nor the state spoke of the papers as "Xeroxes," but rather used the word "copies," focusing primarily on the papers' linguistic meaning. Gitelman also argues that Ellsberg applied an "editorial approach" to the photocopying process, which ultimately gave the Papers a specific style and a "constructed" meaning.[273] To demonstrate the popularisation of the new Xerox machine among students at the time, Gitelman digs into the overall operation of the "multiples" that Ellsberg produced to ensure the leak could not be eas-

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269 ——— Lisa Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2014), 83.

270 ——— Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge*, 102.

271 ——— A kernel is a central component of an operating system. It manages the operations of computer hardware, including memory and processing time, by acting as a bridge between applications and data processing.

272 ——— Daniel Ellsberg, *Papers on the War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968), 41.

273 ——— Four volumes on diplomacy were not copied, and an effort to cut out the words "TOP SECRET—Sensitive" wherever he could was made. Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge*, 89.

ily halted, in the event he was caught. Thus, Ellsberg's photocopying happened not only through the use of a friend's office at the RAND Corporation but also at commercial Xerox shops in New York City and Cambridge, Massachusetts, near Harvard University, which had just come to be known as the "Sunset Strip of copying."[274]

The word "document," and with it, "copying" and "editing," was undergoing a factual transformation of meaning. Harvard students had begun transferring entire Harvard libraries into homemade copies, a process not dissimilar to contemporary downloading of digital libraries. Here Gitelman's argument indirectly (since she never uses the word) demonstrates that the document had become a counterculture tool of dissidence and resistance towards state apparatuses as repressive machines. Copying allowed a different mode of possessing, sharing, manipulating, and distributing documents that did not exclusively belong to state apparatuses for the purpose of creating a singular truth. A new mode of using documents was opening up, as availability grew to new scales. The inner sphere of specialised institutions entered people's homes and other private spaces, which came to be part of this "archive fever."[275] Trespassing of institutional knowledge to facilitate home archiving could be seen as a modus operandi to question the production of truth, through this massive availability and sharing of information. As historian Elizabeth L. Eisenstein explains in the preface to *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, it was only between 1968 and 1971 that the first preliminary studies were published to collect scholars' responses to the distinct historical consequences of the communications shift perpetrated by Johannes Gutenberg's press.[276] She notes the late arrival of such a study, and how the term "print culture" continued to be used, even in her book, in a specific, insular, Western sense.[277] The study focuses on the impact of printing on preserved documents. In doing so, it already privileges erudition as a form of knowledge. Eisenstein claims that, regarding this "unacknowledged revolution," historians, contrary to academics from other fields, have always based their research on cultures

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274 ——— Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge*, 91.

275 ——— Ellsberg's case was eventually dismissed in 1973 on grounds of government misconduct. I'll come back to the concept of "archive fever" as developed by Jacques Derrida later in the thesis to further question archives as tools of power that establish ontological truths.

276 ——— Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), xi.

277 ——— Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, xiv. Here post-Gutenberg developments in the West are considered while setting aside "pre-Gutenberg developments in Asia." And "[n]ot only earlier developments in Asia, but also later ones in Eastern Europe, the Near East, and the New World have been excluded."

that have left written records behind. From a modern utopic perspective, the printing press also promoted and celebrated the freed-up time left to people who, instead of having to focus on transcriptions, now had more scope to compare documents and find errors. In achieving a stable form, the "preservative powers of print" barred "the wisdom of presenting views that were still in flux."[278]

The great dilemma of these Xerox years seems to have been how to manage this greater availability of information leaving state institutions and entering the private sphere, where their original unity could now be questioned, dismembered, edited, and then reinjected into the public sphere. It marks an attempt to create alternative institutions. Private space turns into a counter-institution, potentially constituting other ensuing truth forms. Such a prevalence of the document independent from an authorised and located location (the library, the courthouse, the university: part of the ideological state apparatus for normalising knowledge) subscribes to the arts, in conceptual and dematerialised forms, challenging the stability of its acknowledged and permanent media in such institutions' stable collections. The chance given to a constant reconceptualisation of material culture, independent from public institutions, turns knowledge into more volatile and unstable forms.

(3.3) From object-based to document-based art

During the post-war period, when modernism on the other side of the Atlantic was preoccupied with influencing the shift of canons and the shift of centres of power, the prevailing ideology of autonomous art in Europe was being challenged concerning its objectification. American critic Harold Rosenberg offered a counterpoint to autonomous art in 1952, in the essay "The American Action Painters," by proposing an indivisibility of the artist from the artwork, and therefore questioning the role of the art object as a static object of representation. The canvas became the site of action—the event itself—not a picture.[279] Rosenberg argues that the proponents of Abstract Expressionism relocated the artist's concern from the medium to the purpose, allowing the dialogue to move beyond

278 ——— Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, xii.
279 ——— Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," *Art News*, December 1952, 22, 23, 48–50.

representation. In refusing sketching as a separate act from painting, along with all such previous divisions in painting, the object itself, as much as the search for an aesthetic pleasure, had lost importance. According to Rosenberg, the *act* of painting had become an equal matter in the artist's existence, marking the indistinguishability between art and life. An inscription of the action into the artwork—including "inception, duration, direction," and, I would also add, labour—mirrors a process of concentration and relaxation of the will, passivity and awakeness (as signs of experience), retransmitted to the observer on an intuitive level, without the prejudices delivered by history, symbols, or canonical knowledge.[280] In this new reading, and by an act of transference, one could say that the canvas, more than representing a site of transcendence, became a document "registering" the artist's life (and work), as well as his approaches to it. It is extremely important to note here how *gendered* such an intersection of art and life is, that is to say, the presentation of the intersection of art and life in the exaltation of the artist as one single model and form-of-life: the male genius. Rosenberg's proposal of freeing oneself to witness the event (and therefore minimising the medium of art) was undoubtedly a precursor to several of the art movements that followed Abstract Expressionism in the US and elsewhere (thanks also to the ambassadorial propagation of US culture through the "soft diplomacy" of the Central Intelligence Agency during the Cold War era), which would come to monumentalise the role of the document over the following years. It seems logical, then, that when an exhibition like *Information* came to be presented at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, under the curatorship of Kynaston McShine, in 1970—addressing a culture "considerably altered by communication systems such as television and film, and increased mobility"—documents had by then become an accepted mode of exhibition. The document was the medium that rapidly connected and transmitted new thinking across long distances and national borders, enabling art to move beyond its confined physical space of exhibition and historical reception.

One of the participating artists, Joseph Kosuth, who presented, among other works, *One and Three Chairs* (1965), said at the time that "art had become as 'serious' as science or philosophy," disciplines whose witness-

280 ——— Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters." Rosenberg later expanded this concept as it applied to the 1960s: "Art communicated through documents is a development to the extreme of the Action-painting idea that a painting ought to be considered as a record of the creative processes rather than as a physical object." Harold Rosenberg, *The De-definition of Art: Action Art to Pop to Earthworks* (New York: Horizon, 1972), 59.

ing is not present in the act of its making but deferred: "It is interesting or it isn't, just as one is informed or isn't."[281] Kosuth is convinced that Conceptual Art offered the potential for the artist to come down from the pedestal, to retire from "being a high priest," and to reduce art to its "propositions" to investigate the function of art in general.[282]

Questioning the concept of labour (and leisure) was undoubtedly the (unspoken) undercurrent of the artistic interventions in *Information*. Pervading concepts of landscape "abuse" and the transformation of work and land were transliterated into both immediate and undisclosed meanings of labour through the artworks, including in Siah Armajani's stacking of all the digits between zero and one into a massive column, representing the 28,571 hours of printing time required to make visible one computer's activity during such a period; George Brecht's unrealised proposals to move mountains and islands, *Two Translocation Projects (for the physical world map)* (1969–70); Michael Heizer's earthwork *Displaced/Replaced Mass* (1969); the *Art & Project Bulletin*, founded in Amsterdam in 1968; and the ordinary-looking platforms, placed in various sites around Copenhagen as well as New York, including near the museum, *Platform Project* (1970) by Danish artist Stig Brøgger.[283]

While *Information* seemed to open novel practices of commissioning and displaying artworks in the world, as the introduction to the catalogue states, "much of the work [was] already well known in Europe."[284] A coun-

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281 ——— Joseph Kosuth, "Introductory Note by the American Editor," *Art Language* 1, no. 2 (1970).

282 ——— Kosuth, "Introductory Note by the American Editor."

283 ——— All of these works were included in the exhibition *Information* held in MoMA, New York, from 2 July to 20 September 1970. An ongoing aim of mine is to find more examples of this process of conceptualisation of labour and outsourcing of labour abroad.

284 ——— A number of exhibitions and other materials are equally cited as precursors, including Germano Celant's theorisation of Arte Povera, *50 Jahre Kunsthalle Bern: 12 Environments* (*50 Years Kunsthalle Bern: 12 Environments*), Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland, 1968; *Op Losse Schroeven: Situaties en Cryptostructuren* (*Square Pegs in Round Holes: Structures and Cryptostructures*), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1969; *When Attitudes Become Form*, Kunsthalle Bern, 1969; *Verborgene Strukturen: Museum Folkwang Cryptostructuren* (*Hidden Structures: Museum Folkwang Cryptostructures*), Essen, Germany, 1969; *Plane und Projecte als Kunst* (*Plans and Projects as Art*), Kunsthalle Bern, 1969; *Poesin maste göras av alla! Förändra världen!* (*Poetry must be made by all! Transform the world!*), Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 1969; *Konzeption* (*Conception*), Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen, Germany, 1969; and *49 three-part variations using three different kinds of cubes: 1967–68*, Bruno Bischofberger, Zurich, 1969. See Kynaston McShine,

termovement of experimentation was first conducted in Europe and elsewhere, and subsequently imported to the US.[285] What is equally interesting in the loose formulation of the exhibition concept of *Information* is the allusion to a disbelief in art for art's sake, secluded within the walls of a museum, which is particularly notable when considering the turmoil in the surrounding political and governing spheres.[286]

The museum is trembling, but also stepping back, as if the aesthetic sphere is not complicit with forms of power and repression, and not capable of stronger repercussions in society at large; as if the violence stands outside and it doesn't start from within the exhibitory machine participating in the ruling system. It may also be due to this reason that artists

introduction to *Information*, exhibition catalogue (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1970).

285 ——— Among the suggested readings that likewise stand as precursors to the *Information* exhibition catalogue are: Germano Celant, *Arte Povera* (New York: Praeger, 1969); Garrett DeBell, ed., *The Environmental Handbook* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970); Ernst Fischer, *The Necessity of Art: A Marxist Approach* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963); Joseph Kosuth, *Function* (Turin: Editions Sperone, 1970); John McHale, *The Future of the Future* (New York: George Braziller, 1969); Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1962); Morse Peckham, *Man's Rage for Chaos: Biology, Behavior, and the Arts* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967); Jurgen M. D. Ruesch, and Gregory Bateson, *Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968); Tamatsu Shibutani, *Improvised News: A Sociological Study of Rumor* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966); Martin Shubik, ed., *Game Theory and Related Approaches to Social Behavior* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964); George Steinar, *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman* (New York: Atheneum, 1967); and sHarold Rosenberg, "The Art World: De-aestheticization," *New Yorker*, 2 January 1970. Some of the references overlap with Lucy Lippard's book *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966–1972* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

286 ——— In McShine's words: "The material presented by the artists is considerably varied, and also spirited, if not rebellious—which is not very surprising, considering the general social, political, and economic crises that are almost universal phenomena of 1970. If you are an artist in Brazil, you know of at least one friend who is being tortured; if you are one in Argentina, you probably have had a neighbour who has been in jail for having long hair, or for not being 'dressed' properly; and if you are living in the United States, you may fear that you will be shot at, either in the universities, in your bed, or more formally in Indochina. It may seem too inappropriate, if not absurd, to get up in the morning, walk into a room, and apply dabs of paint from a little tube to a square of canvas. What can you as a young artist do that seems relevant and meaningful?" McShine, *Information*, 138.

came closer to embodying the social role of workers, mimicking forms of salaried retribution and addressing more primordial forms of art and work. It is an act of dealing with structures and their reconstruction, as well as interrogating the basis of the institution of art itself to recompose the grammar of art.

Kosuth would say: "Art before the modern period is as much art as Neanderthal man is man. It is for this reason that around the same time I replaced the term 'work' for art proposition. Because a conceptual *work* of art in the traditional sense, is a contradiction in terms."[287] If the reader is able to surpass the Darwinian reference that Kosuth's statement carelessly unleashes, what is at stake in his formulation is the emphasis on the word "work." Contrary to his attempt to pre-date art before art, art, as much as work, is an open and unresolved category, especially when artworks come together in the exhibition space, where their production relations have not been made explicit. What do we usually know about all the labour that goes into each singular "artwork"? About all the material conditions necessary to produce and bring it into exhibition? Moreover, what do we know about the material conditions producing and sustaining the very architecture (the building, the white cube) that monumentally (mostly) provides viewership conditions, asserting its importance through its violent, dominating physicality, internally and externally? The artwork's dematerialisation—its physical disappearance—allows us to ask these questions without hesitation and provides us with the tools to investigate the undisputed self-legitimacy of the art space itself, such as with the museum.

In the construction of modernist ideals of progress, work has been defined as a distinctly human experience.[288] Hannah Arendt also sees in the inventive and imaginative (industrious) individual the possibility to rise above economic necessity, manipulating the world towards the "human artifice" of architecture.[289] Work is the real and symbolic space both for exploita-

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287 ——— Joseph Kosuth, *The Sixth Investigation 1969* (Cologne: Gerd De Vries, Paul Maenz, 1971), n.p., proposition 14.

288 ——— Under the influence of John Locke and Adam Smith, labour became key to the modern economic systems based on property ownership. See Karen I. Vaughn, "John Locke and the Labor Theory of Value," *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 2, no. 4 (1978): 311–26. The authors referring to philosopher and physician John Locke, commonly known as the father of liberalist thinking, make clear that Locke clearly intended with labour the appropriation of natural resources and that "[a]nytime any human effort, no matter how trivial, is expended in purposeful action, it is defined as labor," 313.

289 ——— Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 139.

tion and for political resistance, shaping social identity and social definition, "perceptible and imperceptible" social relations. The hyper-rationalisation of work, with its racialised and gendered profiling, makes the question of work urgent—who works and who does not—and likewise what cultural value may be attributed to this visible and invisible human activity. If work is an historically situated cultural concept, these changes are certainly signalled—if not guided—by aesthetic representation. In the technologisation (automatisation and consequent dematerialisation) of labour, a primacy on procedures and protocols heightens the frustration of bodies and senses. Moreover, it furthers the (by now given) dichotomy of work and worklessness. Drawing attention to the inescapable issue of work, art historians Valerie Mainz and Griselda Pollock have studied the emergence of the modern concept of the worker and the working class in relation to the aesthetic field, in its presentness and in its absence. In *Work and the Image*, they project and study work in pre-industrial periods in an attempt to define the character of modern, capitalist society, and how that came to define our current Western identity.[290]

The forms of labour behind artistic production have rarely been at the centre of display. Work and image are fundamental issues behind my curatorial process, as I mostly programme immaterial and discursive events in an effort to individuate the material conditions for logics of production and exposition, before the events' temporal presentation.[291]

290 ——— Valerie Mainz and Griselda Pollock, *Work and the Image*, vol. 1, *Work, Craft and Labour—Visual Representations in Changing Histories*, and vol. 2, *Work in Modern Times—Visual Mediations and Social Processes* (London: Routledge, 2018).

291 ——— In its digital and physical iterations, *Let's Talk about Images* are examples of programmes I curated to address some of these issues. See https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/222118/let-s-talk-about-images/ and https://www.fotogalleriet.no/en/exhibitions/lets-tal-about-images-2-1-0. I also paused the publishing programme The Nordic Photobook Dummy Award to look into its productions structures, where artists lamented a sizeable financial risk to reach final publication. We held discussions and conferences in its place, including P*hotography Bound: Rethinking the Future of Photobooks and Self-publishing*, organised by Fotogaller-iet and KDM – Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design, University of Bergen, 13–15 October 2020. See https://kmd.uib.no/en/Calendar/seminar/photography-bound-rethinking-the-future-of-photobooks-and-self-publishing-copy.

(3.4) The use-value of art

Could we go as far as to say that with the tech impulse of the 1960s, documents assumed a new commodity form? Equal to other commodities, are documents not brought to express social relations "whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses"? "A physical relation between physical things"?[292] A phantasmagoric form of relation between things attaches itself to the products of labour. Marx defines such a relation as fetishism, which is perhaps a redefinition of social relations through the artwork. Because artists are unable to directly satisfy their wants with the products of their own labour, they indeed create "commodities," even in the form of documents.

And in this process, do exhibitions represent a platform of exchange between commodities? How does a certain corporate and state terminology enter into the artistic work? How does the very bureaucracy itself come to be mirrored in the artistic work?

Suppose one reads and mirrors the Conceptual work of Michael Heizer's *Displaced/Replaced Mass* (1969), and outsources the labour to create it beyond the borders of the US (a typical Western imperial and colonial strategy of the epoch: looking for production sites where labour is "cheaper"). In that case, the mobility connected to artistic production assumes a different sense and sensibility through metaphorical or unconscious representation, as much as through prompting works to be readily available as travelling documents (instructions). Inside a society increasingly dependent on abstraction, work continues to be a measure of the labour force. A concept, a practice, an autonomous sphere that once inhabited (or transferred) is "contaminated" by societal forces, incorporating its very production system. The question is, where does the artwork remain in this power game of forces? According to Marx, when things are not the product of labour—like immediately available natural resources like the air—we can "use" them; it means that something can be used without having been produced by human labour and therefore turned into a commodity. Also, when things are produced for ourselves, they are

292 ——— "In other words, the labour of the individual asserts itself as a part of the labour of society, only by means of the relations which the act of exchange establishes directly between the products, and indirectly, through them, between the producers." Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, 1867, Marxists Internet Archive, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch01.htm

not commodities. A commodity has always a use value and a social value, when it is produced for others.[293] As art cannot extricate itself from these social relations of production it is situated in a determined historical moment and class struggle. Unveiling these productions of relations is the hidden agenda of the "documentisation" of art during the 1970s. Tellingly, Michael Heizer's *Displaced/Replaced Mass*, by mimicking the exploitation and commodification of the landscape in the US in the past centuries, attempts to avoid "transferring" the use of this labour of society to "others," and instead holding the production of such work—the labour—in its uselessness for "ourselves."

Marx also invites us to understand that the quantity of labour spent does not determine a commodity. The labour that gives value is "homogeneous human labour," and is historically determined.[294]

A new system of value created by international capitalism gave rise to a new kind of society, a new world vision, which, in the mid-1970s, digitised stock exchanges, boosted telecommunications growth, and allowed global capitalism to work on an export-based subcontracting system.[295] As Gayatri Spivak demonstrates, this movement gave rise to the new world order's subaltern, a new form of territorial imperialism and division of labour, and dislocation.[296] A group of Western countries generally invests capital in "Third World" countries with an entire system of administration created through laws and standardised education systems to maintain these subordinate positions. According to Spivak, telecommunications is instrumental in maintaining cheap labour on Western-determined peripheries, thanks to an absence of labour laws.[297] Spivak in part developed her theories of the subaltern by reading the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci.[298]

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293 ——— Marx, *Capital*.

294 ——— Marx, *Capital*.

295 ——— "Under this strategy, manufacturers based in developed countries subcontract the most labour-intensive stages of production, for example, sewing or assembly, to the Third World nations where labour is cheap. Once assembled, the multinational re-imports the goods—under generous tariff exemptions—to the developed country instead of selling them to the local market." Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Contracting Poverty," *Multinational Monitor* 4, no. 8 (August 1983): 8.

296 ——— Gayatri C. Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 277.

297 ——— Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 275.

298 ——— In 1926, Antonio Gramsci began drafting a paper in response to an article published by the political magazine *Quarto Stato* that analysed the "problem" of Southern Italy. The publication's young editors had

(3.5) Prefiguring an international division of labour

Gramsci identifies in the subaltern a particular condition of being subjected to the ruling hegemony which does not allow an active citizen participation in society, the definition of its history and therefore of basic and equal political rights.[299] The word comes from the military system to express hierarchical positions of power. Gramsci became interested in studying the subaltern classes as one possible way to make their voices heard, instead of relying on the rhetorical and historical narrative of the state.[300] To study the subaltern's history, Gramsci designed a plan in six

asserted they were aware of the problem and its proposed solution. Gramsci soon apprehended that the simple directives of the Communist Party—located in the Northern part of the country—were forming "extreme opinions and violent protests on paper, without the [news]paper rebelling." To formulate a revolutionary strategy (or a strategy for the revolution), Gramsci came to configure a theory based on an analysis of the peasantry's life and its distance from the politics of the city, and, therefore, the lack of connectivity between different subalterns. He argued that Southern peasants were in an even lower condition than the Northern capitalist proletariat, and that solidarity between these classes was required. In non-advanced capitalist countries, there is an endemic opposition between the city and the countryside, between the worker and the peasant. The peasants ignore the idea of the modern liberal-capitalist state. They do not conceive of economic and political institutions or of historical categories that had a beginning, and that have undergone a process of development, and therefore that can dissolve once the conditions for higher forms of social coexistence have been created; institutions are instead considered "natural" and perpetual categories. Gramsci called for a solidarity between the peasant and proletariat classes, against the Northern bourgeoisie that had subjugated the South (and the Northern proletariat), reducing it to exploitable colonies. He considered the movement of historical-political economy in Italy within what can be seen as an allegory that prefigures an international division of labour. See Antonio Gramsci, "Some Aspects of the Southern Question," 1926, Marxist Leninist Archive, http://marxism.halkcephesi.net/Antonio%20Gramsci/1926/10/southern_question.htm. Originally published in *Selections from Political Writings (1921–1926)*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978).

299 El Habib Louai, "Retracing the Concept of the Subaltern from Gramsci to Spivak: Historical developments and new applications," African Journal of History and Culture, 4 (1), 2012: 5

300 "The subaltern classes by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a 'State': their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society, and thereby with the history of

steps: methodological criteria for historical research.[301] These phases represent a process of development in which a subaltern group passes from a position of subordination to a position of autonomy. Identity formation and its exploitation processes were ascribed to a new history that came from below and was yet to be written. The circulation of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* in the 1960s and 1970s ensured a future to conceptualise both the subaltern, histories from below, and critical and educational theory and research in cultural studies.

Gramsci, often considered the Marxist sociologist par excellence, also asserts that the prevailing matrix of power is less often exercised through force than consent. Unquestioned worldviews (universalising concepts manipulated through educational institutions) held by hegemonic machines that appear spontaneous compromise subordinate groups and secure their assent.[302] Fighting a "war of position"—an ideological struggle to create a new and more just set of understandings—required mobilisation on the basis of collective forms of critical consciousness. For Gramsci, an emancipatory cultural politics could change the course of history and allow a more suitable existence.

Gramsci points out an important lesson in history and especially written history: it's always the same people who have the right to speak. What's at stake in this cultural battle between different classes of people (or people with different provenances) is a fundamental understanding of who has the right to speak. Gramsci aimed to develop intellectual strategies and practical implementations to support the social mobility of ostracised groups, whose existence not only is always at stake but whose very right to speak and articulate their struggle is prevented from entering the public sphere of discussion. We can draw important lessons from Gramsci, if we attempt to translate his arguments into the field of curating, about bridging solidarity and creating platforms of solidarity to change the very structures that enable certain voices to come to the fore, to speak their truth. Within the aesthetic field, the history that has yet to be written is tasked to curating, as an influential sphere of the hegemonic machines that produce state narratives.

States and groups of States." Antonio Gramsci, *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (Chennai: Orient Longman, 2004), 52.

301 ——— Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 52.

302 ——— "Hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise in equilibrium should be formed—in other words, that the leading group should make sacrifices." Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 161.

I will come back to how Gramsci's thoughts have influenced my practice in detail in chapter 5, where I return to the concept of provenance and the necessity of the "organic intellectual" for the yet-unknown to enter the acknowledged representational sphere.

(3.6) The aesthetics of administration

In 1989, art historian Benjamin H. D. Buchloh devised a theory on an "aesthetic of administration" that he saw as pervading the unconscious of all artistic production after 1969. According to Buchloh, any historicisation of the movement had to question art historical paradigms exclusively based on objects as the base of an artistic practices as its parameters of production.[303]

A linguistic dilemma had haunted the production of art since 1913, with the appearance of Duchamp's readymades, which he summarises as "a conflict between structural specificity and random organization."[304] The readymade represents, according to him, a desire of real correspondence assigned with a visual structure via perceptual data, and a meaning assigned to an object as if it had none of its own. These works play on an unsolved conflict of the "reliability of information," by questioning which inscription follows or precedes the linguistic entity. Traditional modes of artistic production are displaced (via Duchampian speech acts) and complexified by Robert Morris's *Document (Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal)* (1963), where the "literal negation" goes further.[305] By the late twentieth century, the artwork, leaning upon the readymade as its originator of meaning, had become "the ultimate subject of legal definition."[306] The institution of art is there to attest to the validation of the artwork as a document. Through this operation, all visual judgment, the base of expertise for traditional art, becomes void. Aesthetics veers into "a legal contract, and an institutional discourse."[307] In Buchloh's argument, the aesthetic experience loses its hegemony over the visual as well as its perceptual

303 ——— "Conceptual Art now instated the prohibition of any and all visuality as the inescapable aesthetic rule for the end of the twentieth century." Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October*, no. 55 (Winter 199o): 105.

304 ——— Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969," 111.

305 ——— Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969," 117.

306 ——— Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969," 117.

307 ——— Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969," 118.

autonomy. Buchloh uses the examples of Piero Manzoni issuing certificates for "turning" people into works of art, or Yves Klein performing the sale of an empty space. Legal language and "administrative style" enter the visual presentation to erode the visually significant autonomy traditionally assigned to the object as performing utterance.[308] Negating the legitimacy of the visuality alone and by the artist performing authorship not as a solid presence but as a temporary contractual societal agreement, Buchloh identifies in this art historical turn a privilege given to the administrative, the legal and the institution more than the artistic intention alone.

Buchloh's argument may be misleading regarding the power the object (or the document in its place) still maintains in the aesthetic sphere. The object may be eroded, yet the document is not: the paradigmatic figure exemplified in the document continues to be the one who has the power to speak as the institution evermore is central in the very possibility of articulating a voice, of speaking, and having the right to speak. Additionally, the artistic subject, whose status and position is attached to the object, has not been challenged or disintegrated.

In the post-war condition, an embattled culture industry and the last stand of autonomous art, along with the rise of a newly established class—the middle class—which effectively assumed power in the 1960s, came together with a model of tautology and an aesthetic of administration. Class identity, per Buchloh, came to be structured around administering labour and production, and distributing commodities, rather than producing them.[309]

According to Buchloh, the use of this administrative vernacular "managed to purge artistic production of the aspiration toward an affirmative collaboration of forces of industrial production and consumption."[310] Using an aesthetic of operations embedded in the abstraction of late capitalism, expropriating and displacing workforce, production, and geographical locations as immediately evident, the artists mimic the same system of violence that in reality holds the institutional system of representation. It is from here that their instrumentality emanates with conditions of cultural consumption and forms of ideological control.[311] A crucial attack occurs on the art institution as the site of co-option and subordination. Here, art cannot be divided by other spheres of life nor considered less responsible in the processes of creation and the perpetuation of exploitation and dispossession of both objects and people.

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308 ——— Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969," 118.
309 ——— Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969," 129.
310 ——— Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969," 142.
311 ——— Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969," 143.

The intellectual (including the artist) recognise themselves as part of the new subjugated class of the 1960s capitalist turn, by being subsumed into spaces of power as a diffused worker. Therefore, this new workforce's massive production and exploitation must become a new object of study, whose voice(s) come from below. Philosopher Franco "Bifo" Berardi might come in handy here, in order to explain the alliance of the intellectual with the proletarian class at that time. Such an alliance was not only "in solidarity" with a different class, but an act of subsistence and survival of the general intellectual class provoked by the new diffused academic system.[312] In this reading, the artist, as well as the intellectual, can no longer be considered a universal category, but a complex subjectivity.

(3.7) An esoteric genre of spectacle

In 1962, philosopher Susan Sontag wrote a text analysing a phenomenon that had emerged recently in New York: "a new, and still esoteric, genre of spectacle."[313] She continues by describing such occurrences as "a cross between art exhibit and theatrical performance,"[314] which took place in lofts, art galleries, backyards, and minor theatres in front of small audiences. At times, bodily movements were accompanied by words, sounds, flashing lights, and smells. These were the events Conceptual artist Allan Kaprow named "Happenings" in 1958, "designed to tease and abuse the audience."[315] In 1961, Kaprow wrote that Happenings had been largely rejected by theatre devotees due to both their "uncommon power and primitive energy" and their "derivation from the rites of American Action Painting."[316] The very term gives an idea of impermanence and unrepeatability. These happenings were aimed to be as unstructured as possible, and contrary to other artistic forms, to have as little limitations as possible in terms of duration, as well as in terms of narration, to allow emotions like fear, or the unpredictable to "happen," including failure. They

312 ——— "The meaning of those movements was the emergence of a new historical alliance. It was an alliance between mass intellectual labor and the workers' refusal of industrial labor." Franco Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), 29.

313 ——— Susan Sontag, "Happenings: An Art of Radical Juxtaposition" (1962), *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Picador, 1966), 263.

314 ——— Sontag, "Happenings," 263.

315 ——— Sontag, "Happenings," 265.

316 ——— Judith Rodenbeck, "Madness and Method: Before Theatricality," *Grey Room*, no. 13 (2003): 55–79.

are art, not life, though, points out Sontag in her 1962 text. Part of the growing movement of ephemeralisation that was spreading across the world,[317] the Happening was a new take on the exhibition as a form, and on its formulation of meaning. Moving beyond set parameters concerning the object, these formal concerns emerge out of the traditional visual arts. Due to its open ended nature, alongside the confounding of art and life, the Happening also claimed to put authoriality into question.

"One must uphold a modernist disciplinarity, a separation of mediums, to follow this argument," asserts art theorist Judith F. Rodenbeck.[318] The strong divide between the world of the arts and their designated spaces of reception, segmented between theatre, dance, and the visual arts, assumes a disconnectedness and a specialisation no different from the one demanded by labour within the liberal market.[319] Kaprow's collaborative performances moved art out of the confines of museums and into everyday spaces; this performance practice focused on the everyday "task" rather than "acting," highlighting the economics ruling everyday life. In canonical art history, Jackson Pollock's Action Painting—to which Kaprow makes direct reference—is the natural antecedent of performance in the visual arts (through the act of labour: dripping and splashing on the canvas).[320] It was allegedly Meyer Schapiro, Kaprow's teacher at Columbia University in New York, an art historian and promoter of Abstract Expressionism, who prompted Kaprow's understanding of the market and its capitalisation of the arts, and supported him "to extend the activity of art production out of the studio and off the gallery wall into found environments."[321] Such an attempt to utilise the city as an urban theatre of social labour in order to inhabit the in-between nature of life in its architectonic givens, radicalises the idea of the readymade which moves beyond the linguistic, accepted art institutional confinements argued by Benjamin Buchloh, turning art into a boundless, collective, aesthetic experience, and an open-air critique. Composer John Cage, Kaprow's other

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317 ——— Sontag, "Happenings."

318 ——— Rodenbeck, "Madness and Method," 58.

319 ——— Rodenbeck questions Happenings as a closer descendent of the Living Theatre's experiments in improvisation. Rodenbeck, "Madness and Method."

320 ——— Kirstie Beaven, "Performance Art Painting and Performance," Tate, accessed 25 March 2019, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/performance-art/painting-and-performance.

321 ——— William Kaizen, "Framed Space: Allan Kaprow and the Spread of Painting," *Grey Room*, no. 13 (2003): 81; Bruno Peter Roubicek, "Performing Social Labour: Digging, dwelling and the city" (PhD thesis, Birkbeck University of London, 2017), 110. http://vufind.lib.bbk.ac.uk/vufind/Record/575077.

formative teacher, equally empowered the everyday and its connection to the European avant-garde of the early twentieth century. The found object implies "the found word, noise, or action, it also demands the found environment."[322] Happenings' alogical structures relied on organisational methods despite deploying chance: time intervals and choreographed signs kept the audience together.[323] The audience is, within the space of the Happening, an additional *objet trouvé*—not "actorly subjects" (as they are "doing," not "acting")—somewhat mirroring the exploitative, non-specialised, alienated labour typical of modernity, as well as its divisions.[324]

18 Happenings in 6 Parts, cited as one of Kaprow's first public, groundbreaking Happenings, was presented at Reuben Gallery in New York in the fall of 1959. With a tightly scripted score, Kaprow created an interactive environment.[325] That September, while Kaprow was preparing this Happening, and Fred W. McDarrah, who was to photograph the event in October, followed the development of the piece and shot images of Kaprow transforming the space of the gallery. One can read in these pictures and portraits a larger construction of the public event and, moreover, how Kaprow interpreted and understood the power of media apparatuses in disseminating the image of the artist within the larger reception of the artwork. In a legacy to Pollock's media portrayal by photographer Hans Namuth, Kaprow seems to have wanted to mirror such a process of slowly constructing an image of "the artist at work."[326] As much as in the highly

322 ——— Allan Kaprow, "Manifesto," in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 81.

323 ——— Rodenbeck, "Madness and Method," 68.

324 ——— Rodenbeck, "Madness and Method," 69.

325 ——— The audience was provided with three cards stapled together instructing how they would participate in the performance. As the title suggests, the performance consisted of six parts where a bell signalled the beginning and end of each segment. The cards also indicated when one could change seats or move to the next room—when the bell rang twice. The different rooms were separated by sheets of plastic with paint and collage on them rendering them semitransparent. The audience was a big part of how happenings to "became props." Paul Schimmel, "Leap into the Void: Performance and the Object," in *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object*, 1949-1979 exhibition catalogue (Los Angeles, Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998), 61. Other sources included "ballet and calisthenics (notated by Kaprow using stick-figure diagrams); [...] recorded test tones, sound effects, speeches, electronic music, old experimental tapes (cut-ups of Kaprow's cut-up audiotape compositions), as well as sound produced on site; [...] and slides of body parts, scrawled word fragments and interjections, children's art, and close-ups of collages." Rodenbeck, "Madness and Method."

326 ——— Pollock was the subject of a film directed by Hans Namuth in 1950,

mediated act of Pollock's drippings on the canvas,[327] which established an image of the artist performing labour before the media lens, Kaprow's event was extended in time and retransmitted through a mediated act,

when Pollock completed the work *Number 29* (1950), painted on glass and made to demonstrate his technique for the film. The artist himself played the lead role. (Pollock's success was also supposedly scripted by others, including Clement Greenberg, MoMA, and the Central Intelligence Agency; see Manfred J. Holler, "Artists, Secrets, and CIA's Cultural Policy," 2002, https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.596.7152&rep=rep1&type=pdf.) "Despite an apparently near-total lack of talent," writes Kirk Varnedoe, curator of the 1998–99 MoMA retrospective *Jackson Pollock*, which subsequently travelled to the Tate Gallery, London, in 1999, Pollock "formed and held onto the notion that being an artist would be his life." Varnedoe continues: "After 1950, when photographs and films of Pollock painting were widely disseminated, imagery of process became inseparable from considerations of the final product." The catalogue accompanying the retrospective is obsessed with Namuth's photos and films. Varnedoe reminds readers that the photographs themselves are divided in allegiance, at times focusing on Pollock from ground level, at other times looking down from overhead to better view the prone canvas. The preceding quotations by Varnedoe are cited in Lane Relyea, "The Photogenic Splat Jackson Pollock Retouched. The Legacy of Hans Namuth," *Frieze*, March–April 1999, https://www.frieze.com/article/photogenic-splat-jackson-pollock-retouched.

327 The widespread use of photographic media was completely instrumental in building Pollock's practice as iconic, as numerous theorists have reported. Francis O'Connor attributes an important power to the two films and to the approximately 500 still photographs of Pollock taken between 1950 and the end of the artist's life in August 1956. He says that Namuth's images "not only record the artist at work but, in certain instances, have come to symbolize the aesthetic roots of an entire school of American painting." They "make explicit Pollock's famous and seriously misunderstood painting technique," as they reveal the real work space in which Pollock was operating, enabling a proper analysis, for instance, of terms like "dripping" as unsuitable to describe a process which should be called "pouring" instead. See Francis V. O'Connor, "Hans Namuth's Photographs of Jackson Pollock as Art Historical Documentation," *Art Journal* 39, no. 1 (1979): 48–49. In the book *Assemblage, Environments and Happenings*, Kaprow, prior to his written essay, arranged "Step Right In," a large series of black-and-white photographs and text. It starts with a Namuth photograph of Pollock at work in the studio, whereby, "[through the photograph,] Pollock the man and Pollock the work become one." See Kaizen, "Framed Space," 81–107. We can also clearly trace an approach connected to ritualistic forms, psychoanalysis, and the symbolic as derived from anthropology. See Catherine M. Soussloff, "Jackson Pollock's Post-ritual Performance: Memories Arrested in Space." *TDR: The Drama Review* 48, no. 1 (2004): 60–78.

which was otherwise at risk of becoming potentially invisible or reducible to one single object. McDarrah's photographs serve—one could assert—to instate an imagery of a continuous Happening. The photographic, considered a static medium by Conceptual artists, becomes here, for Kaprow, a tool to represent a scattered movement, mediating an idea of an ongoing *happening*. It also perpetrates the idea of the artist at work, labouring, moving, interacting, and ever present in setting "the action" in motion. Similar to what the canvas could not by itself restitute in the work of Pollock, which instead found its form in its reliance on in-built media imagery, Kaprow finds presence within the new art world's space in the intermedia, the document, due to the alleged absence of a determined object of exhibition.[328]

Because the Happening aimed to be so close to life, an apparatus was needed to surround and build it as an orchestrated act. This practice brings the televised present, the teleological, far closer and incorporates a new need for the arts to work across a number of media to reach the *public*. The exhibition space in itself "changes" its form, or "dematerialises," thanks to these devices, as the conglomerate of recording devices is what constitutes the artwork (or makes up for the artwork).[329]

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328 For the Reuben Gallery event, Kaprow is portrayed in front of a fruit shop in New York. He leans upon stackable and nestable crates, as we see a number of other tools which may all be preparatory elements for a Happening. The preparation of the performance and the performance itself intermix, as one becomes "the documentation" of the other, together with the artist's notations, in an unsolvable and planned intricacy. It is also reported that Kaprow was not keen in presenting these environments in museums because of his awareness that museums create a separation of art from life. See Julie Reiss, *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 29.

329 I argue that this media conglomerate is what allows the experience of the piece today as well as at the time, the exposition of which determines its understanding in both historical (at the time) and present terms. The ensemble of all the scattered media—of this constellation—could potentially draw the piece together. The Happening and the media records are inevitably intertwined and indissoluble. Here I also rely upon research and assertions regarding the inevitable ensemble of these scattered media in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh and Judith F. Rodenbeck, eds., *Experiments in the Everyday: Allan Kaprow and Robert Watts—Events, Objects, Documents*, exhibition catalogue (New York: Columbia University, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, 1999).

These issues of a televised present, on the one hand, and the media conglomerate rendering visible aesthetic acts, immaterial artworks, and the intersection of theatre, performance, and the idea of repetition (as if we always need to refer to an original: in itself a patriarchal act), on the other, are questions I have discussed with artist and professor Dora García. On 20 March 2019, Kunstnernes Hus Cinema invited me to engage in a conversation with the artist following the Oslo premiere of her latest work, *Segunda Vez* (*Second Time Around*) (2014–18). From here, I attempted to retrace her interest in the Happening, both in her own work and through examining the movement's history.

(3.8) Second time around

In March 2014, contemporary artist Dora García became invested in the work of *happenista* Oscar Masotta (1930–1979), an author, psychoanalyst, artist, and central figure of the Argentine avant-garde in the 1950s through the 1970s. Masotta, an eccentric figure who wrote the first book about Pop Art released in Argentina without ever visiting the countries where the movement was emerging, based his theories concerning the shifting dematerial conditions of the visual arts on black-and-white documentations of Pop Art works; that is, on a mediated knowledge through "poor" image reproductions. Through this, he proposed a semiotic theory on the movement. Masotta asserted that a direct exposure to Pop Art was not necessary for the effects of the movement to be felt, as such work conveys that "Pop painters have shown to what extent the plastic arts reproduce 'symbols' and not 'things'."[330] Masotta followed a similar line of criticism, as developed by art critic and historian Hal Foster, that Pop demonstrates that the world is "nothing but an image."[331] In a political economy promoting flatness of life and images, the artwork is the end of subversion and a disruption of vision. The artwork, according to Masotta, is no longer a sign but a codex, a type of construction of another nature.

Between January and April 1966, and again at the beginning of 1967, Masotta travelled to New York and found proof of his thesis as well as a correlation with a new movement that was being born in Argentina: Arte de los medios de comunicación de masas (Art of the Mass Media). Contrary to North American Pop Art, the Argentinian avant-garde inscribed

330 ——— "Los pintores pop han mostrado hasta qué punto las artes plásticas reproducen «símbolos» y no «cosas»." Oscar Masotta, *El "pop-art"* (Buenos Aires: Columba, 1967), 14 (my translation).

331 ——— Hal Foster, "Death in America," *October*, no. 75 (1996): 36.

itself in the circuit of the advertising codex (the mass media) to produce in the same circuit (which has different rules than the art world) as other materials and other audiences (what Masotta calls an "indeterminate audience": an audience not informed of the artistic character of the experience).[332] Arte de los medios de comunicación de masas was born in 1966, following a seminar led by Masotta that stimulated three of his friends—Eduardo Costa, Roberto Jacoby, and Raúl Escari (two students of sociology and artists, one a writer and poet)—to launch an "experiment." They invented a fact (*hecho*) that had not actually occurred and gave it a unique materiality produced only through its mass circulation, through its inscription in the mass media. They sent a press release describing in detail this occurrence that had not happened, and through the complicity of multiple people,[333] had themselves photographed in different sites and situations that reconstructed the similarity of the story that was circulating. Arte de los medios de comunicación de masas was a short-lived experience (1966–67), yet it opened up a series of new patterns.

In a 1966, Kaprow referred to Argentina as a country of *happenistas*. Even if the Happenings actually made there were few, word of them spread through the daily newspapers, such as *La Nacion* and *El Mundo*. According to Masotta, the prevalence of the Happening also allowed the public to take the political situation in Argentina less seriously.[334]

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332 ——— Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, "After Pop, We Dematerialize: Oscar Masotta, Happenings, and Media Art at the Beginning of Conceptualism," in *Listen, Here, Now!: Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde*, ed. Inés Katzenstein (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004), 163.

333 ——— *Happening para un jabalí difunto* (*Happening for a Dead Boar*, 1966) was a collaboration between Masotta, Costa, Escari, and Jacoby which relied on many personalities, among others Lea Lublin and Marta Minujín, to "sustain the game." See Daniel R. Quiles, "Dead Boars, Viruses, and Zombies: Roberto Jacoby's Art History," *Art Journal* 73, no. 3 (2014): 38–55.

334 ——— In the same year that "Kaprow christened Buenos Aires a 'city of *happenistas*,' he collaborated with Marta Minujin and Wolf Vostell on *Three Country Happening* (1966), a simultaneous event in three cities: New York, Buenos Aires, and Berlin. Meanwhile, the Argentine trio of Costa, Escari, and Jacoby were devising their *Total Participation Happening* (1966), for which press releases and photographs of a Happening that never took place were given to various Buenos Aires newspapers. *El Mundo* (circulation 300,000) bought the story and ran it." See Juli Carson, "Aesthetics of Repetition: A Case for Oscar Masotta," *X-TRA*, Spring 2012, https://www.x-traonline.org/article/aesthetics-of-repetition-a-case-for-oscar-masotta/.

For the first Happening (or anti-Happening)[335] that Masotta orchestrated, he contracted approximately twenty theatre extras between the ages of fifty and seventy and "obliged" them under a work contract to stand on a platform lit by a strong white light while subjected to an acute, perturbing sound for the duration of one hour. Of course, this was an unbearable situation. The public could leave after five minutes, or could stay for the entire hour while covering their ears, but the extras had to submit themselves to this treatment in exchange for a salary. When the public, indignant, asked Masotta what the meaning of the Happening was, he reiterated again and again that it was an explicit act of "social sadism", which meant placing oneself within the work system and producing an alienating situation, making evident that, in exchange for a salary, people submit themselves to alienating conditions, including or nearing the conditions of police torture.[336]

Over several years, Dora García repeated this and other Happenings, initiating a series of restagings.[337] She decided to film her re-creations of the

335 ——— The anti-Happening is distinct from the Happening in that it aims to show the paradox of Happenings beginning from the relation that Happenings create with objects. It aims to critique how the lack of mediation of the Happening in turn requires "a great deal of mediation of objects and events" by the non participant receiver who is still subjogated by mass-media communications. See Roberto Jacoby, "Against Happening" (1967), quoted in Longoni and Mariano, "After Pop, We Dematerialise," 164.

336 ——— Longoni and Mestman, "After Pop, We Dematerialise."

337 ——— The first Masotta Happening that Dora García repeated was *El helicóptero*, at the Tabakalera, Donostia–San Sebastián, Spain, in 2015. It served as the first episode documented for the film *Segunda Vez. Para inducir el espíritu de la imagen* took place in March 2016 at the art research centre Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, Buenos Aires, also made for the film, with the suppport of Inés Katzenstein, then director of the institute. In 2017 García repeated *Para inducir el espíritu de la imagen* a second time in Mexico, for the exhibition *Oscar Masotta. Theory as Action*, held 27 April–20 August 2017 at MUAC – Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City. Curated by Ana Longoni, it included works by Oscar Masotta (1930–1979), Eduardo Costa (b. 1940), Raúl Escari (1944–2016), Roberto Jacoby (b. 1944), Alberto Greco (1931–1965), César Jannello (1918–1985), Marta Minujín (b. 1943), Edgardo Giménez (b. 1942), Dalila Puzzovio (b. 1945), Charlie Squirru (b. 1934), Rubén Santantonín (1919–1969), Raúl Stoppani (b. 1935), Emilio Renart (1925–1991), Luis Wells (b. 1939), Tucumán Arde (est. 1968), Dora García (b. 1965), Cloe Masotta (b. 1977), Andrés Duque (b. 1972), Carlos Masotta, Pierre Bal Blanc (b. 1965), Guillermina Mongan (b. 1979), and Un Faulduo (est. 2005). Her intervention in the *Theory as Action* exhibition was not part of the film. The first filmed repetition of *Para inducir el espíritu de la imagen*, in

three Happenings that Masotta had organised in October 1966—*El helicóptero* (*The Helicopter*), *Para inducir el espíritu de la imagen* (*To Induce the Spirit of the Image*), and *El mensaje fantasma* (*The Ghost Message*). No documentation of the initial performance was available at the time. Details were known from Masotta's detailed descriptions in "After Pop, We Dematerialize" and "I Committed a Happening," both published in 1967. García then scripted and repeated these three Happenings.

Dora García's investigations around Masotta, eventually titled *Second Time Around*), are incredibly important to viewing, from an artistic perspective, the potential to address material processes of history formation in the act of repetition. Curating is not extraneous to such procedures, as it deals with the repetition of certain gestures and habits, some more conscious than others in the exhibitionary machine. Some exhibition gestures and choreographies (hanging, mounting, displaying, distancing, contextualising the art object) represent an ontology of the exhibition as a structure we have learned to repeat in its happening, in the making and experiencing of the theatricality of its demands. I see in this potential demand that arises the second time (when we repeat these rules of research, preparation, installation, display, promotion, and experiencing the final curatorial display) always to be the first one, including in curating. We must move away from what is given in what we know, and we must try to relearn anew what we thought we already knew. Curating should give institutions the possibility of renewing habits and questioning their construction of truths.

(3.9) Are the secondary texts the primary texts?

Rodenbeck observes that "any examination of ephemeral works is necessarily conditioned by the artefacts remaining—photographs, scripts, anecdotes; such apparently secondary texts bear uneasy witness to crucial aspects of the works they describe."[338] I would add that these arte-

2016, happened exactly 50 years after the first one, in the same place (Instituto Torcuato Di Tella), although, by then, the research centre had moved locations. Where the Happenings were repeated, people involved in the research determined that *Para inducir el espíritu de la imagen* first happened in 1966 and *El helicóptero* in 1967.

338 Judith Rodenbeck, "Foil: Allan Kaprow before Photography," in Buchloh and Rodenbeck, *Experiments in the Everyday*, 60.

facts, like these texts, though apparently secondary, are what produce the work, as is the case for *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*. Such artefacts not only bear witness to the work but are also the primary agents of how the work lives and lived, is framed, grounded, prescribed, positioned, and made, and how it launched the original performance. Like signs expressing meaning, they produce a new sense in a specific combination, like words in a sentence.

Kaprow often explicitly called for photographs of his Happenings.[339] In the same year as *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* was performed, he planned with sculptor Charles Frazier a three-day event: *Gas* (1966). Enlisting the help of a producer at CBS television, Kaprow was able to work with local police, fire departments, and businesses to produce the event. The resulting documentary was televised, and critic Harold Rosenberg and collector Robert Scull responded with a commentary that goes as far as to say that the medium had become the message, hinting at a new connection between the art press and the museums, galleries, and other distribution and educational mechanisms, which had now been obliterated as the single significant channel for the presentation and life of the work.[340]

If we ask how much the original performance draws from the original texts, if the script describes the performance, or if the Happening is performing the script, we stick to the idea of an "original" (a hangover of modernity, which these "dematerialised" practices attempted to perturb and disturb). If we ask such questions, we refute the very idea of the Happening, whose final aim was to perform an idea and for the artist to disappear from the equation slowly. In ensuing years, Kaprow tried to get rid of his portrait and his presence as a performer, from whose position the (institution of) art was framed, as he makes clear in "Performing Life" from 1979.[341] The presence of the audience as a public, which he began to acknowledge in 2001, was in itself a leftover of the avant-garde theatre, and

339 ——— Jill Dawsey, "The Uses of Photography: An Introduction," in *The Uses of Photography: Art, Politics, and the Reinvention of a Medium*, ed. Jill Dawsey (La Jolla, CA: Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 14–89.

340 ——— "Whether art is made as a package or as an antithesis to the package, it takes on the character of the package in its mode of transmission to the public, that is, through the communications system of the press, including the art press, the museums, galleries and other distribution and educational mechanisms." Harold Rosenberg, "Art and Its Double," in *Artworks and Packages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 21.

341 ——— Allan Kaprow, "Performing Life," in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, 195–98.

"performed" everyday life even without a given architectural institution whereas the artist continued to dictate to the public their rhythm and their presential gestures. Even the experience of the present became a command of the artist. Kaprow asserts: "The Happening seemed to me a new art form. [...] But soon, even experimental Happenings appeared saddled with the art history they would replace."[342] That is why he moved away from Happenings, towards an art of simple living, a knowledge of oneself.[343]

(3.10) Are the secondary texts a media conglomerate?

Kaprow's carefully produced and manipulated media conglomerate as a complex intermix of material would be further developed and built up by and through Fluxus practices, crossing between the two movements through "documentarians" such as Peter Moore, Manfred Leve, and George Maciunas. These primarily perceptual and temporal experiences overcame the singularity of the objectual form through photography and other such forms of documentation, due to their multipliable nature, representing the overall contextual discussion of meaning coming from these scattered ephemeral statements. An ambivalence of inscriptive technologies united these projects. Text-based scores underline a technological language's profusion: brief, logical, without conjunctions. The challenges today, as much as at the time, are how to intertwine this mediascape (or media conglomerate) to produce experience (not the "authentic," but simply experience); how to create *happening*, as presentness, a perpetual present;[344] how to form relations between autonomous subjects; and how to

342 ——— Allan Kaprow, "On the Way to Un-art," preface to the expanded edition of *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life,* xxvii–xxix.

343 ——— Rodenbeck, "Madness and Method," 72. With time, Kaprow's activities became increasingly dispersed, private, and wilfully undocumented, in what he called "un-arting." See Kaprow, "On the Way to Un-art."

344 ——— Art critic and art historian Michael Fried speaks about time and duration in studying the difference between theatre, sculpture, and painting. He claims a "presentness and instantaneousness" in sculpture and painting, which is superior to theatre because they produce a continuous, self-demanding knowledge. The "perpetual creation of itself, that one experiences as a kind of instantaneousness: as though if only one were infinitely more acute, a single infinitely brief instant would be long enough to see everything, to experience the work in all

produce the audience as a subject through an aestheticised presentation in the art institutional context.

If the Happening and Conceptual Art transfer the iterative principles from industrially produced objects encountered in the institution to mechanically reproduced images and signs, including language, typically encountered on the page and in the informational context of the mass media, then a media conglomerate should barely vitalise (in feeble forms) the idea and its experience.

García expresses similar preoccupations, asking if the second time is not always the first time. In making reference (to the past or otherwise), we inevitably recreate meaning, referring only feebly to something we know in its entirety with little certainty. She dismantles the idea of authenticity and tradition in terms of society's norms: we should constantly challenge and reinterpret symbols through the presentness of knowledge. The dematerialisation of the artwork in the Happening brings the argument to its excess: because we do not have an object to rest upon, we need to recreate its presentness by repeating its demand and reconstituting its system of meaning.

(3.11) *New Documents*: The everyday re-enters the museum in the form of photography

It is symptomatic that the close-to-life practices of the Happening, in trying to escape the museum space to encounter improvisation, arose in tandem with everyday life entering the museum space through experimental photographic practices, as frozen in photographic stills. In 1967, MoMA organised an exhibition titled *New Documents* (the original working title of which was *The New Document*). Its curator, John Szarkowski, focused on the work of three young photographers: Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander, and Garry Winogrand. As Szarkowski explains in his introduction, "Their aim has been not to reform life, but to know it."[345] Feelings

its depth and fullness, to be forever convinced by it." Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkley: University of California Press, 1995), 145.

345 From the introductory text in the exhibition space. See Gerry Badger,

enter the exhibition space and are inserted behind the camera as potentially affecting vision and reception. Up until these photographers' entry into the foremost museum of modern art, photography was still purporting to present evidence and truth. The now famous images by James Agee and Walker Evans were presented and accepted as truth-telling of the migrant workers in the American South (today, we know they rather captured the divide between the ones creating the images and those under observation). According to the history of photography, August Sander, Lewis Hine, Aaron Siskind, Helen Levitt, and the like exposed particular subjects and worldviews. All conveyed alleged forensic objectivity and factuality. Their art was "a tool for social reform," according to Szarkowski.

MoMA subsequently curated the first major retrospective of Diane Arbus's work in 1972, a year after the artist passed away, garnering the highest attendance of any exhibition in the institution's history to date. Millions viewed the travelling exhibition between 1972 and 1979. Arbus' work even reached the recently born photography kunsthalle Fotogalleriet in Oslo in 1978 (legend has it, the artworks arrived in the back of a car).[346]

It is symptomatic to see that still today there is little study about the relation between the small- and medium-sized institutions in their relation to museums, both from a financial perspective and in terms of power relations; in addition, there is a lack of questioning of how the canonised space of the museum still needs smaller institutions' acceptance to arrive capillary through their soft power and their ideological perpetuation to the many; equally, such mainstream histories fail to identify how much kunsthalles needed, in their first years of existence, to play with the accepted narration of major museums, in order to qualify—"to be valued"—as an accredited institutional art form. In a similar way, photographers, decades before, had to be accepted by museums first, in order to pledge for a wider recognition of their medium as an independent artistic form, before they could question the medium itself. If museums have been part of a national

"The Legacy of Robert Frank," *British Journal of Photography* 166, no. 7890 (December 2019): 87.

346 ——— No documentation of this exhibition is available. Fotogalleriet's archives report that Diane Arbus's works were on display at the institution in April 1978. Word of mouth has it that the works travelled in the back of a car, but no confirmation of such a claim exists. One of Fotogalleriet's founders, artist Dag Alveng, recounts that the exhibition arrived from Camera Obscura, an exhibition venue for photography in Stockholm, which opened a month after Fotogalleriet. See Dag Alveng, "A Field of Norwegian Photographic Art Takes Shape," interview by Susanne Østby Sæther, *Conversations on Photography*, ed. Antonio Cataldo (Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2021), 41–54.

mandate registering the transition of power from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie, to educate the masses and to constitute the "new citizen" (like the hospital and the prison, these modern institutions were shaping people, here aesthetically, in the ways in which one should dress, behave, speak, and learn their history), then the mandate of a kunsthalle like Fotogalleriet, one would think, is to present the contemporary. More like a biennial than a museum, the kunsthalle attempts to make sense of what is happening *now*. Images have their grammar, and they are pretty telling. There was a significant struggle in the 1970s when art photography prompted the birth of non-collecting institutions, such as Fotogalleriet, to allow practitioners to move away from "traditional" work as newspaper reporters (or page fillers) to the exhibition space, and to be recognised as and qualified with the status of "artist." Here, photography claimed to be a personal means of expression instead of an "objective" tool instrumental in illustrating newspapers' words. In the context of Norway particularly, as well as in cities like London in 1971 with the opening of the Photographers' Gallery, one can understand that Fotogalleriet was creating opposition to what existed in Oslo.

These were the late 1970s, a time when revolutionary and reactionary movements such as the Red Army Faction in Germany and the Red Brigades in Italy, but also the Indigenous revolts of the Sámi peoples in Alta, were taking place in the Western world, and when the youth were rebelling against nation states and their international imperialism, their co-opting of "the citizens" as an uncritical mass and in their name perpetrating violence against other peoples and cultures. Newspapers were, and still are to a certain extent, an ideological apparatus of the state, with little means to speak other truths. Photography, before this shift surrounding the medium and the rise of the kunsthalles and their ilk, either reported "reality" or ascribed to "pure" art, as defined by the museum. There was nothing in between. We cannot understand such shifts, even today, without understanding the material conditions guiding these processes within society at large.

(3.12) Piecing together the artwork

Joseph Kosuth, in his early works from 1965, *One and Three Chairs, One and Three Brooms,* and *Clock (One and Five)*, uses a combination of objects, photographs, and enlarged photostats of dictionary definitions. These presentations address the idea of representation itself via photographic

and linguistic means.[347] For Kosuth, photography is the "performative," because it is a "temporal operation entering what is presented as a static, tautological structure." In his 1965 work, the photographic is part of a document which is at the same time a protocol constantly repeating the act of installing, hanging, lighting and documenting the piece so to create a continuous "site-specific" temporal dimension.[348] Beyond the triangulation of material for the exhibition, Kosuth inserts another element—the "production instructions"—drawings of sort that dis-enable, in theory, the objectification of the contextual presentation; these instructions are not to be exhibited, therefore further dematerialising and neutralising via the multiplication of the instructions any possible appropriation, and reinforcing the idea as the site of the artwork.[349] These temporal arrangements with which the act of rephotographing "certifies" the event gives the artwork a feeble presence in its specific context, as well as un-values the artwork in its reiterative exhibitions.[350] Through their notational system, these projects relocate photography as a temporal, performative media. Photography is used as a ubiquitous means of responding to time, and though relegated to fixedness, it reconfigures itself to perpetuate shifting-ness and ungraspable positions of the intellect.

A forensic methodology pertains to these practices as an investigative technique that detects the object, as in a laboratory (or at a crime scene). The reconstructed light in a photograph should correspond to the exhibition space's actual light for displaying the same object. Like at a crime scene, all the details should be forensically observed. The replication should follow a particular method, which should not betray the instructions, which we cannot see. In such a Kosuthian search for performing the idea, though, as in the space of the museum, the surrounding institutional infrastructure should almost disappear to provide a space as coldly detached as possible, to let the object arise as the unique trope of truth. It is in such a notion that the structure encapsulating, trapping and defining meaning disappears, alongside curatorial materialism.

347 ——— Liz Kotz, "Language between Performance and Photography," *October*, no. 111 (Winter 2005): 3–24.
348 ——— Kotz, "Language between Performance and Photography," 13.
349 ——— Kotz, "Language between Performance and Photography," 14.
350 ——— Kotz, "Language between Performance and Photography."

(3.13) The exhibition space becomes the space of the forensic

Today, exhibition spaces continue to be considered emancipatory sites of contested thinking, as documenta 14, held in 2017, once again reminded us with its practical claims. An expanded forum for public programmes, and a number of exhibition devices including publications, digital outreach, and ephemera, reached beyond a given physical location, calling for different forms of justice departing from the aesthetic field, including explicit comments on financial gambling among nations playing with the everyday lives of entire populations.[351] documenta 14 reconnected and pointed out explicit intersections of economic and political interests that constitute and produce the "exhibitionary complex"[352] as a way of "creating" reality. Establishing a second physical location in Athens—in addition to its historical location in Kassel, Germany, and in the immediate aftermath of the heated political, financial, and humanitarian relations between Greece and Germany[353]—gave rise to a complex matrix of social and aesthetic relations questioning ritualised forms of representation (including people gathering on the street in protest to visualise dissent). The exhibitions came to intersect and magnify the work of mass media, avoiding being co-opted in a streamlined thinking and contributing to shaping alternative political demands.[354] It is here made clear that the object is no longer the sole site of evidence (and of critique). The exhibition is the collection of particles of a fragmented body which potentially could resti-

351 ——— Besides local venues for the display of artworks and online and physical publications, documenta 14's Parliament of Bodies programme was clearly staged for an extended audience (including digitally present or deferred) beyond its immediate physical reach. It further employed gadgets and massive advertisements in both Athens and Kassel, and spurred a collaboration with Greece's Aegean Airlines to schedule a short season of flights between Athens and Kassel.

352 ——— I am referring here to the theory of Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," *New Formations*, no. 4 (Spring 1988): 73–103.

353 ——— Following the financial crisis of 2007–08, Greece faced a government debt crisis widely known in the country as Η Κρίση (The Crisis), followed by a series of sudden reforms and austerity measures that led to mass impoverishment in the country. The crisis led to a loss of confidence in the Greek economy and to rising costs and loans owed to other Eurozone countries, particularly Germany.

354 ——— Lawrence Weiner has said that language in the 1970s changed from communication to information: "the work itself is information." Lawrence Weiner, interview by Michel Claura, *VH-101*, Spring 1971, 65.

tute, in a teleological absence, an image of reality through material and immaterial work made available for critique. If we use Louis Althusser's terminology here, the intrinsic violence between the "repressive state apparatus" and the "ideological state apparatus"—which the exhibition itself may come to represent—is also the very object and site where the emancipatory struggle is carried out. Therefore, the exhibition makes critique in the cultural field powerfully move beyond physical borders.[355]

The exhibition space is the potential site for gathering neglected knowledges that have been dismissed by governmental subjects and state police and for bringing objects and their interrelated subjects within the space of appearance and representation. If fingerprints, the tracking of internet activities, and media representations have become a defining feature of contemporary culture (similar to how photographic evidence was used and misused in the nineteenth century for the identification and prosecution of revolutionary subjects), then this complex set of media surveillance we are now facing enters in a capillary fashion into the exhibition as a form. The materialisation of alternative, counter-, and speculative proof that escapes—willingly or unwillingly—courthouses enters more literally into the exhibitionary complex through forensic organisms, such as, for instance, organs like Forensic Architecture (FA).[356] FA "develops evidentiary systems" in relation to specific humanitarian cases connected to non-governmental organisations and human rights lawyers to uncover these stories and investigations, through which they try to make visible activities that are kept hidden in an overload of images where everything seems available for viewing. This counter collection of data—undertaken by members of the FA group, which includes not only architects , but specialists accross digital development and image making—addresses the way in which architecture, as a topographical object with teleological functions, serves as evidence of violations of international humanitarian law. Its findings are to be used in political and media forums.

In Roman times, forensic referred to the physical presentation in public by the contending parties to provide evidence in the forum. As such it gathered professionals with an institutionalised rhetoric belonging to these fora, and it may have entailed the presentation of material objects or arguments.[357] And in this, the forensic is close to the practice of curat-

355 ——— Dorothee Richter, "Exhibitions as Cultural Practices of Showing: Pedagogics," in *Curating Critique*, ed. Marianne Eigenheer et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2007), 47–52.

356 ——— Founded in 2011, Forensic Architecture is a research agency based at Goldsmith, University of London.

357 ——— "Forensics" refers to the speech of *objects.* In forensics, a translator is

ing.[358] Such a forum—like the exhibition, we could say—is an operative space, where the public is reinstated as opposed to the audience. Forensics is "the materialisation of the event, … the construction of a forum, and the performance of the object within it."[359] In this sense, curating, as much as exhibiting and the exhibition as a form, is not only the (re)writing of history but also a constant construction of its very forums.[360]

Despite new documentarian forms arising to bring evidence, including new imaging technologies, these procedures continue to ask how to make the object speak for the bodies that the object is deemed to represent.[361] They bring witnesses; they are a testimony. In such an interpretation of curating, curatorial forensics is essential as a non-self-explanatory method at work. A teleological practice informs the artwork coming to the art space both as a documentary and a propositional device, in and outside the exhibition space. Objects, in such a view, are productive and representational things. Making the exhibition space gain the status of (or literally be recognised as) a court becomes a challenge of maintaining art institutions as the site of reconciliation of the politics of gender, identity, and class, in order to build new environments and distributed forms of knowledge.

needed to bridge the object to the forum. "Prosopropea" describes this speech on behalf of things. See Eyal Weizman and Tina Di Carlo, "Dying to Speak: Forensic Spatiality," *Log*, no. 20 (Fall 2010): 125–31.

358 ——— Weizman and Di Carlo, "Dying to Speak: Forensic Spatiality," 126.

359 ——— Weizman and Di Carlo, "Dying to Speak: Forensic Spatiality," 126.

360 ——— Thomas Keenan speaks about shame as a force, a feeling, that articulates knowledge through action. It becomes significant in a social network, through the exposure to others under their gaze, and part of a process of publicity. Thomas Keenan, "Mobilising Shame," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, nos, 2–3 (Spring/Summer 2004): 435–49.

361 ——— Weizman and Di Carlo, "Dying to Speak," 125.

Shine Utopians by Harald Beharie and Louis Schou-Hansen. Dansens Hus, Oslo, 7–10 November 2019. Still from video documentation.
Performers (from the left): Amie Mbye, Guro Ørbech Olsen, Torbjørn Kolbeinsen, Irene Theisen, Hans-Petter Rode, and Heidi Steen Jensen.

Shine Utopians by Harald Beharie and Louis Schou-Hansen. Dansens Hus, Oslo, 7–10 November 2019. Still from video documentation.
Performers (from the left): Amie Mbye, Dávvet Bruun-Solbakk, Louis Schou-Hansen, and Harald Beharie.

Shine Utopians by Harald Beharie and Louis Schou-Hansen. Dansens Hus, Oslo, 7–10 November 2019. Still from video documentation.
Performers: Heidi Steen Jensen, Harald Beharie, Elise Nohr Nystad, Anne Panda, Amie Mbye, Irene Theisen, Dávvet Bruun-Solbakk, Guro Ørbech Olsen, Christin Bassøe Jørstad, Hans-Petter Rode, Torbjørn Kolbeinsen, and Louis Schou-Hansen.

Shine Utopians by Harald Beharie and Louis Schou-Hansen. Dansens Hus, Oslo, 7–10 November 2019. Still from video documentation.
Performers (from the left): Magnus Sparsaas, Hans-Petter Rode, Heidi Steen Jensen, Anne Panda, and Louis Schou-Hansen.

Part 4.
Transitioning from theory to practice: Towards curatorial projects

(4.1) An alliance of bodies reclaiming the right to appear: Introduction

A large part of curatorial work is maintaining active conversations with the wider artistic field and finding allies in the current and historical search for recognition, as I assert in the introduction of the thesis. As I strive to demonstrate a practical form of trans-institutionality, I weave thoughts around the alliance of bodies in the right to appear, initially developed due to external text commissions and which subsequently prompted a deep reflection on and affectation of my curatorial practice and theoretical investigation. My historical and academic research ran in parallel with my curatorial work. There was inevitably a parallel of conversations around bodies and appearance in the sphere of representation that informed my practice, and the other way around. This section pays homage to the developments of these thoughts in detail. It is also a section that allows understanding a movement from theory to practice without losing focus on either, and yet opening up to more concrete reflections on a particular approach from my perspective to curatorial issues. In the overall thesis, I address, research, and point out that curatorial work is not just about exhibition making but also about influencing curating by thinking and writing. Discursive practices are part of a curatorial undertaking. These discussions were fundamental in bridging and bringing concrete examples of such intellectual, collective movement. I draw from art historian and critic Geeta Kapur to introduce the concept of the transnational public sphere in processes of international aspirations while defining alternative and unstable institutionality. Kapur thinks about cruelty, control, administration, identification, nationality, and the intrinsic possibility of an in-between condition. In leaning upon a transitional realm, I address possible revived structures of curating: the process of confronting the aesthetic powers at play, which find forms of freedom and alliances beyond the locus of the local.

Marianne Heier and Franz Petter Schmidt's exhibition *Aktiv materie (Active Material)*, held in 2019, allows me to think about the material conditions for feminism in Norway through clothing production and the aestheticisation of life in small workers' communities. It furthers the situatedness of curating and performing archives and offers evidence to unleash previously unevoked narratives.

Through the queer-feminist platform FRANK (2012–20) in Oslo, run by artists and educators Sille Storihle and Liv Bugge, I practically demonstrate how undiscussed gender issues are dependent on institutional structures or the lack thereof. I come to lean upon FRANK to define the importance of a tremulous, trembling institution, one that disorients prescribed paradigms, creating the possibility to argue for a needed counter-community. In line with historical feminist salons, FRANK reclaimed private spaces as public spaces and possibly confronted mainstream narratives, slowly deconstructing them. FRANK decomposed truth-telling through curating events at unexpected times and distances. My encounter with and the entire community built around this tremulous institution greatly influenced my curatorial practice and theoretical understanding of sexualities. It also contributed, as I explain, to shaking the canonicity of art and institutional infrastructures locally and internationally, as FRANK's practice loomed large beyond physical confines.

Harald Beharie and Louis Schou-Hansen and their *Shine Utopians* developed a multifaceted and complexly constructed space for the performance held at Dansens Hus, Oslo, in November 2019 to make claims on art, education, and the aestheticisation of the gendered body. I study Harald & Louis's performance to analyse further the space we are given to appear. Usually, this space is understood politically as the square or the parliament, as agents of political change. Together with their work, I argue that exhibition spaces and our curation are no less a space of appearance. Here, we fight for equality and filter a different perception of what bodies can be.

(4.2) Materialising words, performing textiles: Fashioning unruly stories (on finding archival traces on modernity's ruins—feminist approaches through the work of Marianne Heier and Franz Petter Schmidt)[362]

In February 1915, the revolutionary feminist thinker Alexandra Kollontai migrated to Norway, in exile from Russia via Sweden. Her radical thinking made her a palpably undesired guest. It was in the Scandinavian capital of Christiania (a.k.a. Oslo), on 8 March that same year, that she tried to organise an international working women's demonstration against the war. That autumn saw her embark on a journey to the US, delivering lectures as part of a five-month tour, during which she visited eighty-one cities. After returning to Norway, specifically Holmenkollen, in the spring of 1916, she then headed back to her "liberated" Russia, following the 1917 October Revolution.[363] She took the post of minister of social welfare, becoming the only woman in the cabinet and the first woman in history to be recognised as a member of government.

Kollontai's political consciousness had arisen early in her life, particularly in connection with women textile workers, for whom she fundraised and leafleted, especially during the eruption of mass rioting in the St. Petersburg area in 1899.[364]

When we think about the last decades of the nineteenth century, we mainly focus on Europe and the US in their critical expansion of economic growth through the so-called Second Industrial Revolution. New technical inno-

362 ——— Marianne Heier and Franz Petter Schmidt initially commissioned a version of this text to accompany the exhibition *Aktiv materie* (*Active Matter*), curated by Harald Solberg and held at Bomuldsfabriken Kunsthall, Arendal, Norway, 27 April–2 June 2019; the exhibition and the text later travelled to Sandefjord Kunstforening, Norway, 5 September–4 October 2020.

363 ——— Barbara Evans Clements, *Bolshevik Feminist. The life of Aleksandra Kollontai* (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1979).

364 ——— Clements, *Bolshevik Feminist.*

vations, including large-scale mechanised tools for manufacturing and increasingly advanced machinery in steam-powered factories, boomed throughout the 1870s. In the textile industry, this progress occurred in apparel, where electric-pedal sewing machines (whose numbers more than doubled), created what has become notoriously known as the sweatshop system—implicating a new struggling class of domestic workers (mostly women). Wool combing, which had long defied mechanisation, was automated, and the throstle frame, dominating the scene until the 1860s, was slowly superseded by the ring spinning frame.[365]

Though not the centre of the Industrial Revolution, it is less than coincidental that 1870 marks an important year in Norway too, with the foundation of the Ålgård Uldvarefabrikker (Aalgaards Woollen Fabrics) at the waterfall in Ålgård, by means of the Haugian entrepeneur Ole Nielsen. Nielsen carefully chose the waterfall at Ålgård both because it delivered the necessary power required for operating the factory as well as for its location in one of the country's most important sheep districts. In just a few decades (out of fear of competition), Nielsen created a system of shares allowing his enterprise to grow quickly enough to purchase five other factories in 1916. This new company, De Forenede Ullvarefabrikker (United Woollen Factories), was a "modest" conglomerate merging Ålgård Ullvarefabrikker, Nydalens Fabrikker in Nord-Trøndelag, the woollen department at Hjula Væverier in Oslo, and Grorud Textilfabriker with Skauger Fabrikker at Drammen, in addition to Fredfos Uldvarefabrik in Vestfossen; Nydalens Fabrikker had already become part of Ålgård Ullvarefabrikker before this merger.[366]

The life of the United Woollen Factories runs parallel to the life of a specific economic period in Europe and in the Western world at the peak of its capitalist and colonial expansion, specifically in its movement from the Second Industrial Revolution to the globalisation of the 1990s. It is the moment in which the "capitalist dream" is fully realised in Western countries, through the manufacturing of goods outsourced overseas, using cheap production labour in what were defined by "developed" countries as "developing" countries, while maintaining only the tertiary sector at home. The United Woollen Factories is paradigmatic of an arc of time in Western history and ambition, as well as of a sector of industry that con-

365 ——— Gertjan de Groot, "Foreign Technology and the Gender Division of Labour in a Dutch Cotton Spinning Mill," in Gertjan de Groot and Marlou Schrover (eds.), *Women Workers and Technological Change in Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London & New York: Routledge, 2017), 52–66.

366 ——— Egil Werner Erichsen, *De Forenede Ullvarefabrikker* (Oslo, Grøndahl & Søns, 1947).

structed specific ideologies, classes, and subaltern gendered conditions—which today we simply call the fashion industry (as its sphere of influence reaches well beyond apparel). The United Woollen Factories is an exemplary case of ideological industry in Norway, undoubtedly yielding profits while trying to escape the mere darkness of goods production; in the Haugianist spirit, it had to reinvest a number of values into the local community. This pioneering corporate social objective was an integral part of the policies of the industry, and laid the foundations for schooling, sports, culture, and religion in Ålgård. Today we should probably call this, in Foucauldian terms, the discipline of fashion (the discipline of industrialisation), as merchandise production came hand in hand with a number of interconnected institutions disciplining the "body" of the workers' community. This is testified to here by the total population of Ålgård, which in 1898 counted 592 persons, of which 246 were employees of the factory—meaning the entire community was implicated in the industry (either directly or indirectly).[367]

As we move into this "history" today, we'll first look precisely at 2017, when Marianne Heier and Franz Petter Schmidt, first intervening in Ålgård, started to connect the different shades of this industrial disciplining body by recuperating "traces" of the past and imposing them on Norway's contemporary textile industry—precisely addressing its alleged absence. Through performative elements they speak about a loss (disavowal).

Marianne Heier developed a performance in front of Ålgård's outlet (shopping malls are the cathedrals of today's capitalism). She pieced together leading feminist texts critical of the textile industry and of women's conditions within it, highlighting the industry's obsession with gendered exploitation and the role of the contemporary consumer as a full-time, unpaid worker, complicit and inextricable from the exploitation of the self and the other. Her rioting—giving voice to intermixed figures who had real political intention—can only be rehearsed in her performance as a meme (a masquerade), as this is the only understandable language of democratic expression today, where public speech has been replaced by tweets and tele-appearances. Likewise, Franz Petter Schmidt's work speaks about the same absence (disavowal), the one related to a lost *in situ* knowledge connected to these local enterprises and their very matter of production—fabrics of a specific tactile taste—retaining a contextual specificity which has quickly gone "out of fashion" (and "out of technology"), to follow a globalised, streamlined attire.

367 ——— Sigurd Grieg, *Norsk Tekstil II* (Oslo: Tanum, 1950).

This first toil returns in *Aktiv materie* (*Active Material*) at Bomuldsfabriken Kunsthall in Arendal, where a number of intricate "documents" are simultaneously brought together: a re-enactment of Heier's live performance in Ålgård, and its subsequent recording; recent images taken by Fin Serck-Hanssen of the remainders of machinery at the Sjølingstad Woollen Mill[368] (in a "four-eyed" work with Schmidt); rolling waves of textiles from Sjølingstad Woollen Mill; emergency blankets; the labourious study of fabric technologies by Schmidt; and "lost" fabrics and techniques repurposed into use through a "new collection" sampled by art and fashion design firm HAiK W/. This archival material from Norwegian textile factories fallen into disuse is a testimony, alongside manifestos and counter-manifestos, of fashion, feminism, and workers' movements in Europe, the US, and beyond, together with a number of other recent video-recorded and live performances by Heier.

This is a cohesive "scream," and in itself a manifesto. The exhibition space becomes an agora, where history is put on trial—in formal terms, "to examine" evidence, as well as in terms of testing the performance of history.

What should we take out of 200 years of the fashion industry determining the performance of our habits? What does it mean to rehearse this history? To bring all these phantoms together? To produce anew allegedly "surpassed" textiles? How do we reach a different form of knowledge by accessing and witnessing all these overlapping documents—where even the contemporary productions and reproductions of both words and fabrics constitute evidence for such a story to be retold? Does this story have explanatory potential? What standards of enquiry would have to be met if performed behaviours were to be recognised as socially legitimate ways of understanding the past?

The performance of history trumps official written history and entrepreneurial structures, and suggests a re-evaluation of old questions. In this act of rehearsing, performing, remaking, and "wearing" documents, Heier

368 ——— Sjølingstad Woollen Mill (Sjølingstad Uldvarefabrik) mirrors a certain history of fraternalism with the United Woollen Factories. Established in 1894, it produced yarn and fabrics, until 1984. Today it operates as a living museum, where part of the machinery can still be used to produce small batches of textiles and serve for training. Schmidt has a longstanding relation to this mill, and has developed a number of works there, contributing to the recuperation of knowledge connected to the production of historical textiles that had fallen out of fashion. The Sjølingstad Woollen Mill forms part of the Vest-Agder Museum, a union of cultural heritage museums in the county of Vest-Agder in Norway.

and Schmidt establish new indices of readability. They bring out something that has at times been named the "optical unconscious," a revelation of spaces rising from below the calm surface of the known, provided by technologies and offering claims "of opacity, of repetition, of time."[369] The re-enactment of a textile, and the re-embodiment of voices struggling for emancipation (being possessed by them), is demonstrative "evidence," equal or superior to photographs from the archive. It opens up the possibility to excavate and retell overlapping stories of the United Woollen Factories, the Sjølingstad Woollen Mill, the Bomuldsfabriken, and other textile factories in Norway (similarities which bring solidarity). Similar to old photographic documents, these frozen-in-time textiles and performative acts are an index maintaining the possibility for a ritual to be rehearsed, re-enacted, to enter in direct dialogue with the now. Rather than a commitment to the medium as such, this effort should be understood as being primarily part of a larger attempt to represent social relations, often those historically recorded through photography only. It is the suppression of the photograph in service of the possibility of reperforming the material that constitutes both the work's politics and the critique of history as such. In its continuous reference to an impossible original (as both Heier and Schmidt multiply the number of documents), the very method of representation is displaced (that is how history is currently retold).

These enunciations by Heier and Schmidt are aesthetic tools creating a mimetic proximity to the material world, both to its physical landscapes and to the power relations that create them. Performing words and performing textiles entails the understanding of institutional technologies of suppression, as well as the social realms that allow for institutional appearance and disappearance (in Louis Althusser's reading). This means the works cannot be locked into a narrative and a linear trajectory from an image to a copy, but only read as a process of institutional unbuilding. It means questioning interrelated institutional technologies that have enabled this production to happen; technologies that still underlie our very societies; it means the understanding of herds, feeding procedures, food patterns, environmental conditions, and so on and so forth, which become the narration of an entire community, the current state of affairs, the way to look at our society and, accordingly, a nation state. Their work, as a loose referent to things and events, can be constantly retranslated anew, entering and exiting these specific situations with porous borders.

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369 ——— The optical unconscious is formulated as an interpretation of the visual field in relation to Lacanian theories brought into the visual arts to make visible logical relations of visuality which through maintaining an opacity, still filter something known, a dialectical relation which is not binary nor polarised. See Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1996)

Performance is often thought of as an ephemeral practice, as taking place only in the here and now, giving evidence of past behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes; but in this case it becomes material evidence. This impossible archive (as the new material is interspersed with documents, records, ruins) sustains an ongoing enquiry, an *anti*-historical repertoire of performed acts. Performing this "archive" (or these material documents) is a liberatory act freeing the force that structures embody in relation to social claims. It is testing the desire of our "democracies" for disciplining stability. The physical mechanics of re-enacting these words and materials keeps the opportunity to dissent from organisational infrastructure alive; it is a practice, an episteme, and a politics that goes beyond the explicit topic.

The tension between "high" and "low" (in terms of how documents are interpreted and classified) usually mobilises a number of normative exclusions, replete in this expository work which brings together factory and home, industrial scale and domestic dimensions, assembly line and outlet. Where photography is engaged in its offering of social detail, these performative acts are a deception unframing differences (of gender, class, and origin). The documentary elements are converted into mobile words and objects, where social detail is both recorded and, equally, absorbed by the performative act, which makes it trembling and unstable; the real element of a revolution to come.

Such is the power of stories which matter more than history, as they foster energetic movements of people which can and should eventually provoke real change.

(4.3) Trembling institution (about the work of the queer-feminist platform FRANK)[370]

During the summer of 2019, I spent much time with Paul B. Preciado—figuratively, as we weren't physically together. Actually, when I told him in a bookshop in Venice in May 2019 that we were supposed to meet and we never did, he penned a surprising inscription for me in *Terrore Anale* (*Anal Terror*), which further deferred any material rendezvous. "Real encounters happen through books" is handwritten on my copy of his book. "Anal Terror," a companion essay to the Spanish translation of Guy Hocquenghem's *Homosexual Desire*, was first published in Italian as a standalone book. It ridicules the constructs of modern science that invented the gender categories in which we are still trapped today, by recuperating and questioning, among others, early scientific tropes describing women as fish and men as bicycles. These symptomatic paradigms unavoidably overdetermine understandings of production and reproduction to accompany the capitalist ideology at the basis of modern society. Preciado playfully asks: How can fish reproduce themselves with bicycles, if such was the dawn of a new civilisation?

Arts as a legal theatre

An obsession with the functional body drawn through the theories of Sigmund Freud—which marks the genesis of psychoanalysis's great emphasis on physiology and Western medicine—is turned on its head in order to redirect the castration complex from the penis to the anus. The "male"—understood as an interconnected self-affirmation and popularisation of phallocentrism—has in effect been the real subject of the castration complex, of the anus. That is, the male is the impossibility of being fully open to pleasures and to experiencing sexuality in all its complexity. It is in this way that Preciado dismantles a binary construction, in the refusal to oversimplify human sexuality to such a minimised, functionalised degree. In the past two centuries, for governance reasons, narrow parameters have been established to lead us into normalisation through such institutionalised forms as the nuclear family. These forms have been contextualised

370 ——— An extended and more personal version of this text, was published in the anthology on the queer-feminist platform FRANK: Sille Storihle, ed., *FRANK* (Oslo: Torpedo, 2021).

through the unique economic model under which our bodies speak and are subjected to the architectural determination of capitalism.

How loud can we speak in such a context? How excessive can we be? How deep do we hide? How do we get the "right" job, the "right" salary, the "right" life in this milieu? Should we all today live in this sterile, nonsexualised, pixelated image? Or, to put it another way: Is this the society we want to be part of? Or are other forms of coming together possible? Can we tremble together? Can we learn subjective and institutional perspectives from first-hand experience? Is a deconstruction of the forms of private and public life conceivable? What about the establishment of other forms of openness and dialogue for reimagining a porous community that maintains its internal, undeterminable relations as a whole, within and beyond the financial determinations that society presets?

Calling on the arts to be a legal theatre for questioning what is given and to originate aesthetic and political desires that can resonate into the future under new conditions is what Preciado more recently staged with the Parliament of Bodies (POB).[371] The POB is a form of gathering in an art-institutional setting to challenge traditional and regulated forms of democratic politics that are otherwise connected only to citizenship and nationhood and that discard other forms of connectivity.

I first encountered such practices in Oslo through the work of FRANK[372]—a "trembling institution," one whose feeble (read: non-institutionalised) presence disclosed and manifested discontinuities and apertures to devise a discourse for desires otherwise condemned by history to silence. Its unique form as an entity living between the private space of the household, of what is usually understood as intimate—what matters only among friends, family, and lovers—and the institutional setting of the arts, that is to say, what is allowed to become and is accepted as public, was a way of coming together that did not rest on commonplaces but on common

371 ——— The PoB was originally conceived as part of the public programme for documenta 14, in Kassel, Germany. In acknowledging the paradoxical nature of transforming institutional structures and economies from within, the PoB has since transformed into a constitutionless, stateless institution seeking bonds with other institutions to prompt a critical and political discourse.

372 ——— FRANK was an Oslo-based platform (2012-20) "established to nurture art and critical discourse revolving around gender, desire, and sexuality." (From their website). The platform was largely run by artists Liv Bugge and Sille Storihle. They collaborated with a number of co-curators on a number of times, and presented in various locations across the world, challenging hegemonic discourse and its given norms.

grounds. Relationships were generated and woven together by sharing with others phantasmagorias, forms of affection and the possibility of resisting systemic truths. FRANK placed the form of the gathering (both a fully political and pre-political parliamentary form) into contemplation, learning and sharing to reinvest a locality with new imaginaries and poetics, and shedding light on unrecognised lives. A form whose watchwords were destined to be "opacity" and "orality."[373] If gender, desire, and sexuality—the centre of FRANK's political claim—is "performing the trouble," such claims of representing or of being represented by others are made to resist the univocal logics of industrialisation, capitalism, and governmentality.[374]

Beyond binary and coherent identities: "Quakeful thinking"

I was registered as a male on my birth certificate, so I continue to live under the pronouns of he/him/his. I have "feminine" gestures, and on first meeting I am more often than not identified by others as gay. I have never had sex with "men," and therefore, by exclusion, I am labelled as heterosexual. I have never found in this category, though, a true representation of myself, as it would mean accepting its current given meaning, as well as respecting its interconnected behaviours of conformity and subordinations of power.[375]

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373 ——— Édouard Glissant articulates the commonplace as a relational moment of dependence (in French *lieux-communs*, as two interconnected words) to articulate something which is already publicly known, common, and which becomes both spectacular and banal when repeated. See Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

374 ——— Here, I am clearly reflecting on the theories of gender performativity developed by Judith Butler. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

375 ——— Despite wanting to move beyond binary categories, I still ought to maintain a binary terminology throughout the thesis to respect and acknowledge powerful practices, such as feminism, which were fundamental in recognising bodies otherwise not given full agency under certain jurisdictions and historical periods. While some of these rights have been fully achieved primarily in Western countries, several genders remain unrecognised, and it is not an open discussion in our societies, either. Therefore, we need not forget and recuperate antecedents or concurrent struggles from which we can learn. We should also acknowledge such struggles and movements through the fundamental reading offered by Donna Haraway: "This … is an argument for *pleasure* in the confusion of boundaries and for *responsibility* in their construction. It is also an effort to contribute to socialist-feminist culture and theory in a post-modernist, non-naturalist mode and in the utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis, but maybe also a world without end." Donna

These coherent identities are politically constructed under an economic regime that impedes any proliferation beyond the binary frame.[376] Language, instead of easing human contact, is the source of misunderstanding and even violence, as research in cognitive neuroscience has recently demonstrated. Language allows us to deny what our bodies are experiencing.[377] Language is a form of vulnerability.[378]

Analysed from this perspective, we find a problem not only of representation[379] but of how language as such affects the space of the "we," of a prelinguistic encounter between individuals. A critical investigation of sexuality therefore requires an analysis of "the *effects* of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin."[380]

The most standardised forms of sexuality (the bicycle and the fish) are icons for predicting movements and behaviour.[381] As such, "unstable" definitions

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Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York, Routledge: 1991), 150.

376 ——— Butler has developed an entire analysis of the problematics of hegemonic heterosexuality building a binary opposition. See Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 33.

377 ——— Departing from the recently discovered mirror neurons, discovered by the psychobiologist Vittorio Gallese, and ensuing theories around them, Paolo Virno demonstrates that language itself is a deterrent to the immediacy of emotional life within the "we-centric space" (a space of the "we" created by mirror neurons, which activate empathy among individuals at first sight). See Paolo Virno, *An Essay on Negation: For a Linguistic Anthropology* (London: Seagull Books, 2018).

378 ——— Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

379 ——— See Peggy Phelan, "The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction," in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 146–66. See also Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 519–31.

380 ——— Butler, *Gender Trouble*, ix. Emphasis in the original. Butler continues: "The notion of 'sex' made it possible to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures, and it enabled one to make use of this fictitious unity as a casual principle, an omnipresent meaning: sex was thus able to function as a unique signifier and a universal signified."

381 ——— For Michel Foucault, "the body is not 'sexed' in any significant sense prior to its determination within a discourse through which it becomes invested with an 'idea' of natural or essential sex. The body gains meaning within discourse only in the context of power relations." (Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 117).

are the designated enemy of the epistemic regime of presumptive heterosexuality under which we live. Language, in commonplaces—the spaces where our power of advocacy should be the strongest—is poor, inadequate, and standardised to make it coincide with what the norm wants us to enunciate. Moving across political and financial fields, our precarious labour goes hand in hand with our precarious words, which we can speak only in opposition, through practices of reappropriation.[382] Language not only reflects but also enacts the power relations in society.

Is not art's function, however, to propose language as shock, antidote, non-neutral, through which the problems of the community can be restated? Is it not where the articulation of a collective consciousness, trying to be, finds expression?

It was not until the FRANK platform became active in Oslo that I became aware of the possibility of articulating such a lack of perspectives related to sexuality. In their locality, FRANK's initiatives served to scatter processes for creating a common space for a collective subjectivity in search of these nomadic desires to find ground as part of a process of social conjunction, and to express affective and political solidarity that does not rely on conventional codes or marks of belonging. Through FRANK I came across the work of Catharine Hermine Kølle (1788–1859),[383] as well as of Marie Høeg (1866–1949) and Bolette Berg (1872–1944), radical individuals who broke the continuity of history during their lifetimes and continue to maintain the potential to break that same continuity today. Kølle is the first known Norwegian woman to adventure on foot through Europe,

382 ——— "Feminist analyses have greatly contributed to our understandings of how gender matters for the study of the 'global assembly line' and its implications for development processes. These analyses have a long history, starting with Ester Boserup's early concerns of how industrial development could potentially marginalise women. Subsequently, as export oriented industrialisation seemed to erase women's industrial 'marginalisation', feminist studies evolved into the rich literature on labour 'feminisation'." Alessandra Mezzadri, "Class, gender and the sweatshop: on the nexus between labour commodification and exploitation. *Third World Quarterly*, 37(10)," 1877–1900. See also Ester Boserup *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (London: Earthscan, 1970); and Guy Standing, "Global Feminization through Flexible Labor," World Development 17, no. 7 (July 1989): 1077–95, and Cristina Morini, "The Feminization of Labour in Cognitive Capitalism," Feminist Review, no. 87 (2007): 40–59.

383 ——— It was through FRANK that I came across Kølle. FRANK organised a salon with Karen Røise Kielland, who, in the summer of 2011, walked from Norway to Venice, Italy, over a four-month period, following the footsteps of Kølle, who walked the same path in 1841.

from Norway to Italy, alone. She is described as a practical person, bringing with her only the essential: an umbrella and a gun for protection from animals, and materials to paint watercolours. Høeg was a photographer known for her commercial work, and perhaps less known, or maybe not at all, for portraying the private moments of her and her partner Bolette Berg's life. These historical figures express a nomadic desire through the practice of both their lives and their work; they create multiple directions beyond our present and our given genealogies and expose how bodies that should have been imprinted upon by history have forces and impulses with multiple directionalities and are nonconformist, precisely destroying a given history for the sake of linearity. They show that art is not polished and finished but rather an unregimented flow able to reach the collective unconscious. They practise a "quakeful thinking," making the other tremble and trembling with the other, to move away from historical dispossession and give way to the possible reparation of imaginaries.[384]

Safe space and counter-community

When the distinction between the individual and the collective has been blurred, when crowds are involved in automatic chains of conduct driven by proxy patterns and other avatars' behaviour, the need to find a community of proximity is an enormous and all-encompassing task. It provides long-term meaning and motivation in one's life, as well as fulfilling day-to-day life purposes. If you do not belong to the mainstream, then you *do* belong to a counter-community, in private and in public life; such is the coming community that stands against historical fallacies and questions what is "valorised," why, and for whom. It is a community that breaks the silence. It is an unorthodox family, one that comes together in the same house not through relations of blood, DNA, or imposed genealogical lineage, like a tree with roots and determined growth, but rather through a rhizomatic concatenation of belonging, of bodies converging on a path they share provisionally for a time. FRANK is the subject and object of political dissidence, of collective existence, of an enunciation that brings about self-consciousness to understand a collective unconscious, a "we" expressing light and darkness, self and other, solitude and solidarity; a chain of bodies transferring knowledge on behalf of the ones who cannot otherwise do it. They share a path for a time, trembling together.

I still vividly remember when, in 2012, word spread in town of a new "entity" in Oslo.[385] Rumour had it that someone was opening their house every

384 ——— I am borrowing the term "quakeful thinking" (*la pensée du tremblement*) from Glissant in *Philosophie de la relation: Poésie en étendue* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009), 55–56.

385 ——— FRANK later on in its activities connected itself directly to previous

now and then and inviting people to join discussions, presentations, screenings, and their form-of-life—which promised so much more than an artistic experience. And that is when, by actual word of mouth—probably because of my staunch non-Facebooker status—I got an address and a time, and I entered this time capsule a few blocks away from where I used to work. I climbed some flights of stairs into a Kafkaesque room, with chairs, a screen, and numerous escape corridors that reminded me more of a labyrinth than of any possible getaway. It was a sensorial experience I would not repeat again until the following year, when I was brought unknowingly to Ilya and Emilia Kabakov's atelier in Moscow. That night, in Oslo, I sat in a trance in front of Los Angeles–based artist Wu Tsang's captivating work *Wildness* (2012).

Wildness is an audiovisual portrait of Silver Platter, a long-running nightclub that has catered to the Latino LGBT communities of Los Angeles since the early 1960s. The bar itself becomes one of the main characters, capturing generational tensions and the peaks and valleys of the lives of individuals who are united by their forced marginalisation. Again we have a family that is not constituted by blood but has been pushed together under the same roof by outside forces. The film was recently released, and when speaking about it after the screening, Wu was overcome with emotion.

How could one not be strained? Are we not all looking for a safe space? One where we can be and rest for a moment, or for a long time? How could one not tremble together with them? Living in between, transiting to find recognition, their community, or a community, at least. I think that was my first encounter with FRANK, and ever since then, I have considered it an entity, a living substance that is more than people or its organisers, manifesting during these encounters as a séance. An event. An apparition.

I returned to several of these apparitions throughout the years to witness erotic tapestries, images of lives long gone yet so close to us, brought back from the archives, and the power of words and images coming together in this coming community.

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forms of aggregation, referring to Høeg's Den Selskabelige Diskussionforening (Sociable Association for Discussion) from more than a hundred years before. In the summer of 2014, FRANK gathered a small number of practising artists, activists, and thinkers from different fields and countries to point back at Den Selskabelige Diskussionforening, founded in 1896. The gathering was held in the Lofoten islands and hosted by artist Elin Már Øyen Vister and her artist-run association Røst AiR.

Trembling institutions

FRANK is a tremulous, or to put it better, a *trembling* institution, one that disorients prescribed paradigms, creating the possibility of arguing together for a necessary counter-community of desire and sexuality. Under the mainstream processes of domestication and containment, life would be a walking nightmare without destructuring facts and replacing them with other imaginaries, a legitimate search for a continuous decomposition of unstable positions. To make such a multiplicity of stories reach the surface, we are tasked with acting on a collective memory, with reconstituting forms of dispossession and injury—physical as well as mental. An imaginative reconstruction needs subjective and intuitive memories that are anchored to trembling institutions like FRANK, whose lifespans are just a few moments or a few years. It is a journeying through time and space. It is an exploration reaching for the multiplicity in our bodies, awaiting awakening. It is through such trembling institutions that new territories are reached and covered, and that the possibility for new political claims is created.

FRANK prepared the ground in Oslo for a quakeful thinking regarding sexuality and desire, with the potential to induce political and civic actions and anticipating a needed reparation of our imaginaries—changing and exchanging among ourselves by means of friction and being with the other. Thoughts need to tremble to not repeat systemic truths. To tell stories, our stories. A trembling institution is one that resonates with both individuals and institutions, a profusion retranslating the knotted and passionate nature of our collective experience. A new grammar of affects to be externalised. Space is left open once this trembling institution ceases to be, but in this interregnum, a great variety of regenerative symptoms appear.[386]

386 ——— In this last sentence, I am, paraphrasing Antonio Gramsci, who in the *Prison Notebooks* from the 1930s identifies the decadence of his historical moment: "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born." It is in these moments of passage that we should read the symptoms of what will later appear, hopefully a coming revolution. See Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del Carcere*, book 1, *Quaderni 1–5* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977), 311. English translation quoted from *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci,* ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), 276. In the Italian original, Gramsci says "*fenomeni morbosi*," literally "morbid phenomena."

Soft curating

There are many fundamental issues that FRANK posed as a unique institution of the tremulous sort, questioning the unspoken gender binary characteristic that we encounter in the exhibition space. Though the patriarchy of the white cube is self-evident, we continue to pay homage to the same genealogy of art history and consequently of curating, with geniuses allocated to both spheres. The ambition to unapologetically speak from a perspective that puts gender at the centre of the visual realm served as a powerful motor, not only as an artistic gesture but also as a curatorial gesture, demanding that the very structures of exhibiting change. My proximity and allegiance to FRANK were fundamental to thinking about what a coming community may mean, as a curator, in terms of formulating demands and imaginaries when creating institutional structures beyond the ones we know. My experience with FRANK helped me define curatorial power and how space for knowledge production can create financial and other conditions of alliance with existing institutions, maintaining institutions' porous and independent status yet in a position where communities can be ready to meet and touch each other's thoughts. They show a form of soft (or tremulous) curating, where curating actively produces and makes available archives of knowledge otherwise resting only in informal networks and not breaking the norm dictated by mainstream culture. FRANK unleashed for me the possibility of curating to bear witness to networks of independent thought and to mobilise new forms of knowledge to come to the surface. Art and life merge in a joint struggle for diversity in order to survive, away from a one-dimensional line of thinking and aesthetic representation.

(4.4) Gender, I'm in trouble (about the performance work of Harald Beharie and Louis Schou-Hansen)[387]

Studying the genealogy and historicity of gender should be a mandatory step for scholars and students, of any age, who are convinced that the first task on humanity's agenda is emancipation from and finding alternatives to capitalist society. Such claims were prominent among Marxist intellectuals in the 1960s and 1970s as they sought to uncover untouched ground of exploitation and resistance, by revising claims of why and how gender categories had become valuable to the political economy, and what these categories had really been directed towards. Why shit, the anus, perversion, and polymorphism related to the body and sexuality—elements not serving reproduction, which under capitalism means not serving reproduction of the labour force for the market—were secluded and hidden, together with death, in the reign of moral evil.[388] In order to rethink the ethics of social change leading to different congregations of communities or societies, one cannot but discuss the body as the primary site leading to such a change. That is to say, one cannot underestimate the influence that a motivated notion of "normal" sexuality, with its stereotyped gender impositions and divisions, has had on specific forms of economic govern-

387 ——— Harald Beharie and Louis Schou-Hansen initially commissioned a version of this text in conjunction with the premiere of their *Shine Utopians* piece at Dansens Hus, Oslo, 7–10 November 2019. Beharie and Schou-Hansen were choreographers, part of the dancers' team, and the curators of the overall *Shine Utopians* event, which integrated several discursive events before the performances, where I participated by moderating one of the conversations at the invitation of Karmaklubb*, a nomadic queer club concept and discursive platform.

388 ——— In 1977 philosopher Luciano Parinetto wrote a book titled *Body and Revolution in Marx. Death, devil, anality*, still not translated to English. Bringing together a number of issues including the persecution of the body as such under Christianity to "purify" it, and by studying the bourgeoisification of society through capitalist absolutist institutions—also expounded to binary categorisations of Good or Evil—the author demonstrated that everything not at the service of reproduction—shit, ass, perversions, polymorphism, anality, and homosexuality, together with death—suddenly was classified as evil. See: Luciano Parinetto, *Corpo e rivoluzione in Marx. Morte diavolo analità* (Milano: Moizzi, 1977).

ance and the consequent imparting of regulatory frameworks upon bodies under customs of educational systems supported by alleged scientific claims.

The space of appearance and the right to appear

When I met Harald & Louis in October 2019, they had only recently graduated from the academy, and they were genuinely worried about gender stereotypes continuing to be cast upon the students' body (an individualisation working both on the student body as a whole and on the singular body of each individual student). They claimed that there was no reason in dance, for instance, for the body to be gendered, for enduring the imposition of such biological divisions, coming from the Enlightenment and continuing on into the everyday lives of students today, not only in the way their bodies were trained, modelled, but also in the way their bodies were *thought*, in order to almost and literally fulfil a representational task of society that they thought they would have escaped by entering a free space of appearance such as that of academia—a space for research which should not be monist or unitarian. The "space of appearance," a term coined by philosopher Hannah Arendt, is, according to her, created anew wherever individuals gather together politically. It is the space of the *polis*, where political decisions are being made by an encounter among equals.[389] Still today, we cannot deem all spaces where people meet as spaces of appearance. One could argue that "in certain corners of the internet and among certain sexual subcultures, invisibility shapes subjectivity and enables various forms of power."[390] The unequal distribution of power and resources, in organised and unorganised places in the interstitial architecture of society, forces unacknowledged bodies who are in need of visibility, or bodies who have been forced to invisibility, into the same space—even when they may have differing alterities. Such a brief and momentary alliance gives rise to a highly vulnerable but presentness space of appearance, which finds an actuality through the performance of such right of speech and action, together. Such brief moment, for Arendt is a sort of trembling, momentary institution and the very manifestation of the space of appearance—which is potentially always present. She acknowledges that this momentarily available institution may not always actualise itself; in such case, to be deprived of such right, for Arendt, is to be deprived of reality.[391] Gender theorist Judith Butler later questioned and complexified such a claim about the space of appearance—that is, being democratic and suffi-

389 ——— See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

390 ——— Xavier Marquez, "Spaces of Appearance and Spaces of Surveillance," Polity, 44, no. 1, 6-31.

391 ——— Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 198–99.

cient to create equality—through introducing the idea of the right to appear, because Arendt's formulation assumes that such space is always there and publicly accessible, meaning everyone is already equal. Not everyone has equal rights, especially when it comes to the right to appear (one could think about citizenship as the most obvious example). Butler argues that, instead, our current systems determine how certain lives are deemed worth living, while others are not; such mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion from such a space are not "natural," as we are made to believe, but rather they are determined by a lack of applicability of rights, by a lack of proper systemic recognition of a "right to have rights" which is universal and not contextual. She shows us the other side of the coin to reveal how it is the very system of public accessibility that denies the equality of positions. Such a system of unrecognition is equally gender based, and makes it so that certain lives are more vulnerable than others—precarious lives that at times encounter precarious genders.[392] If the academy is a space whose function is to generate a community of memory, both to open up and to preserve the words and deeds of a *polis*, of its citizens, from oblivion and the ravages of time, to leave a testament for future generations, is not its task also to create the utopic—what we long for but have not yet reached—to aspire, to create the structures to serve equal rights, including the right to the image? Why, then, are some bodies encapsulated within a "male" label, Harald & Louis pondered, and why do they remain a structural support for a labelled "female" body—one presupposed to be strong, the other delicate, one masculine, the other feminine, one strong and virile, the other vulnerable—without the possibility for the two to be confounded or simply entangled, instead associated with evolutionist organic principles and biological claims, which, forcibly marked on a student card (similar to a passport in replicating structures of surveillance and power), stand as an economic and governance determination as to which subjectivity one can be? The frustration and violence they felt in submitting their bodies to these ongoing labels, replicated through an educational system promising a free space for thought, and their uncertainty about what possibilities existed to remove the gendered body from such a constitution of the self, was still one of the main ongoing struggles they had with academia, which, in turn, they thought—with great fear—they were likely to bring into the outside world as professional choreographers and dancers. Should not instead such change start from the academy, as the space of the thinkable and possible (which in turn means a space where one can think the unthinkable and the impossible, the utopic, the equal)? And that is what this text is perhaps about: Should we not further analyse the institutions we create, their borders

392 ——— Judith Butler, *The Force of Non-violence: An Ethico-Political Bind* (London: Verso, 2020).

and thresholds, and how they belong not only to the sphere of thought but also to the sphere of politics, effecting deeds and actions, the right to look, the right to the image and to image, the sphere of aesthetics—in short, a world of perception heavily affecting in turn the space of appearance, "where I appear to others as others appear to me," not merely like other living or inanimate things, but, in the words of Arendt, explicitly?[393]

A reclaimed presence against a determinist biological appearance

As a cultural producer not specialised in dance, I was quite surprised to be called into such a conversation by Harald & Louis. I came to understand only later their silent claim. Dance certainly exacerbates something that perhaps is liquefied in other visual art forms (most often such an aspect is cast in a higher degree of invisibility, in the work itself; thus, in fields other than dance, one's body does not immediately encounter gendered prejudice when it enters through the academy's institutional doors). The effect of this liquefication is that, in most visual arts fields, we cannot claim gender divisions as something immediately visible and discriminatory (or incriminatory: accusing, charging, calling to account with regard to a cause), as the site of ideological thinking about which we are not immediately conscious—yet not meaning that it is in fact less present or less normalised. A residue in the space of academia, Harald & Louis identify that, though one does not need to discuss it every time one enters a room, one is immediately divided and identified on the basis of how one will biologically perform (yes, for the possible, in the future tense) based on one's immediate biological appearance—not a reclaimed presence ("explicitly," for Arendt) but rather a prejudicial narrative. I do not come together with others in an act of speech and action to gain a subjectivity. I am not performing. I am being choreographed. This is an act of interpellation which is at once incriminatory and discriminatory, because it expresses something more formal and more grave: it conveys a destination or a goal of motion determined not by one's will to perform, not by a coming as an equal into a space of appearance, but rather by someone else who has decided a priori not only who am I and what I represent, but also my future—that is, how my subjectivity will perform—based solely on how my body is read. (In following such a formulation, one could go as far as to say "my body" is considered, in such an instance, a public property, in the sense of "publicly labelled for a publicly determined use.") There is no construction of a subject if I am not shaping the perception of myself as an equal with others.

393 ——— Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 198–99.

Unitarian and totalitarian: The separation created by the autonomous work

In the extended art field, we have been taught to look at the work first, to its aesthetic claim, separated from the artist that is the producer of its meaning (Immanuel Kant).[394] The artwork, the *oeuvre*, should speak for itself, have an end in itself. What surrounds the oeuvre, if the oeuvre is not autonomous, is considered at times not only superfluous but a failure of the work itself. It is in this separation between the artist (the human) and the artwork (the object), in this ideological make-believe independent life of one from the other, that a false pretence is built for the work to appear genderless and classless, universal; yet in this assumption and reprojection onto the work, there is an intrinsic impediment to raising a critique on gender politics. It is in this purported abstraction that gender makes its utmost incriminatory and unconscious mark. As philosopher Michel Foucault has remarked, "geometry alone must be taught in oligarchies, since it demonstrates the proportions within inequality."[395] Because if we were to rethink such a claim from education, such a division within the oeuvre's autonomy (including from the artist), upon seeking and establishing its situated perspective (the one coming from the producer), would cause us to unveil and oblige us to uncover a whole biography behind the work itself: the genealogy of its author(s) as a constitutive part of the work that is, on many levels and at the same time in its particular and universal claims, situatedness. At once we would understand that no separation really exists between the two, the oeuvre and the producer, one being a higher reflection of the other and their common will, only to create further degrees of readability and transcendentality, but grounding us in a somewhere, where that somewhere, that particular view, is a constitutive part of what I'm looking at: at how someone is looking at the world, and at what is being claimed, that is, speech and action in the space of appearance. We would gain some form of equality because I would have a consciousness of the other's perspective. The work is the centre of such a politically motivated gathering, and of struggles for equality. Such an address has also been part of feminist strategies' claims requesting to unveil and acknowledge the material conditions permitting autonomy as a valuable sphere for speech and action, in granting rights and permissions, while attending to the very boundaries for certification, both inside and outside the space of art—therefore addressing citizenship and equal

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394 ——— The autonomy of art has entered the common art vocabulary and is traditionally traced back to Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, first published in 1790. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* (London: Macmillan, 1914).

395 ——— Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," in *Untying the Text: A Post-structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (London: Routledge, 1981), 55.

rights within it. Even when being granted such certifications at entry in these spheres of power, such as the white cube, one risks for gender politics to be frozen as it is, as if emancipation has been achieved and the struggle of recognition is over and therefore can be relegated to the past. The artwork, in what is considered its highest space of acceptance—for example the museum—is given a certification that the very struggle has happened in a past, as if that issue no longer is a condition of the present. Speech and action, in feminist methodologies, rules against universal claims to maintain a needed porosity and acknowledgement that equality can only be equality if it always remains in the tension between struggles and aspirations, continuing to challenge canonisation of any sort—dangerous concepts of unity and, therefore, ideology. [396] Impeding the ability to continue to reflect on why and how the artwork arrives into a container, to project within it a popularised and universal life—the structures of power behind which are ongoing sites of negotiation. Why are some artworks brought inside a space and provided time and context for reflection, while others are cut out, abandoned to a more precarious life? These may seem to be minor issues if one thinks about such positions not affecting other spaces of appearance, the *polis*—which also literally was defined by defence walls. That is, if one does not see such a space of representation as having real effects outside the space of the academy or the particular educational institution. And it is for this reason one should ask: Is such a space of appearance only possible for non-living beings (the object) or for the temporarily performed, or are certain bodies (material and immaterial) entering and being granted citizenship as an indelible right—some artefacts gaining the right to speak and the right to appear—while others remain precarious bodies, becoming lives which are not grievable? For Butler, the "right to have rights is one that depends on no existing particular political institution." It is not a given of a particular organisation, laws, or pregiven natural order. That right "comes into being" when it is exerted "by those who act in concert, in alliance."[397] Even if nation states, the very defining system of order and classification of bodies try not to recognise some of these bodies and marginalise them, making them "unreal," they resurface in public space. Does this representational space, the right to have rights, not start from here, from the very place where we learn about the thinkable and the possible (and with it the unthinkable and the impos-

396 ——— Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry, "How to Be Seen: An Introduction to Feminist Politics, Exhibition Cultures in Curatorial Transgressions," in *Politics in a Glass Case: Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions*, ed. Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 1–21.

397 ——— Judith Butler, "Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street," transversal texts, September 2011, https://transversal.at/transversal/1011/butler/en.

sible, the utopia of equality, of education), from the container, from the educational structure that should provide an idea of the right to have rights, independently from citizenship, implied in the concerted action of acting together? If one looks at academia through these lenses, one can easily see how gender roles are a constitutive part of the very institutional choreography of education, in the humanities as much as in the scientific fields, because before one even learns about form, one is captured by its divisive container, whereas behaviour is segregated and propagated as departing from biological constrictions reinforced by contended Darwinian truths of evolutionary reproducibility (the arts have their own Darwinian truths). Representation continues to be dual and polarised at best, if not simply the assumption of one single dominating gaze and point of view—unitarian and totalitarian, biologically determined.

Shame, witnessing, and the "I": Production and reproduction of the norm

I am not speaking in this context as an expert of dance, but as a witness of the societal partitions built around a gendered identity and body normativity that foster ideas of function constructed around, in my case, a penis, as an allegedly active reproductive machine, interconnected to a shame for its malfunctioning if it does not fulfil its ultimate evolutionist credo—whose only aspiration in the age of capital is the systematic breeding of a nuclear family: the one and only accepted, smallest working atom of a Westernised view of a globalised world and society. Under the idea of a global condition, we are made to believe there is one world, one paradigm and one systemic law. Shame, in my educational world, as apprehended from the age of four, when I moved to Southern Italy with its heavily patriarchal and immovable divisions casting inescapable shadows—a feeling reinforced through religious injunctions—made it clear that no escapades were ever going to be possible, not even regarding ideas of an afterlife, and especially not in a small society whose centuries of exploitative powers reproduced no other but the pauperism of the poverty of experience (guided by a domineering middle class). Such a ruling petite bourgeoisie did not necessarily take down or open up existing barriers following the feudalist reach that came from the city aristocrats in the post-war period, but only cemented its structures by delaying a future redistribution of the wealth of experience—something that could be achieved only by following the unrooting of ancient practices and traditions, including the final eradication of the world of magic with its witches and warlocks under the imperative to modernise (meaning "normalise"), through reproductive machines regulated by the new impending state apparatus, centralised in the North and slowly de-plebicising the South by deeming it retrograde (read: "unindustrialised").

Gendering has been therefore key in projecting, reproducing, and maintaining such a class system, and has operated as a functional machine whereby social mobility is to be sought or achieved only if fitting the new standards of the family nucleus, with smaller and larger loans and so on and so forth, in a series of policies reinforcing one ideology and assimilations—of language, habits, traditions, and even memories (or memorabilia, the arts). Education primarily served such molecular systems; it was firstly instrumental in creating an idea of a nation. These are the historical processes whose formation one only suddenly understands, but where antagonism in the face of them is still not always thinkable as a social demand or right, but only as an individual choice at best, or at the cost of exile—meaning leaving your immediate society behind—at worst. The latter is not only my migratory choice, but a more widespread phenomenon proved by the depopulation of small- and medium-sized towns, not only in Southern Italy but just as much in the non-urban centres of the rest of continental Europe. The role of reproductive work in demarcating gendered social spheres (public and private: such a division is still at work), together with the economic definitions of productivity and unproductivity transferred to biological conditions, as such valued as market forms according to biological assignations institutionalised under the state's control, is part of banning the desiring body. The biologically based criminalisation of our bodies is part of a hidden social contract, part of the untold. Focus on your penis and not your anus. Do not have sex, or otherwise maintain high sexual desire for the sole purpose of reproduction; be virile and monogamous; refuse other forms of sexuality; do not masturbate; do not acknowledge other forms of desire; do not go against the reproductive self of "nature," of what is "natural" (the unnatural belonging to the realm of the laughable, most often presented as the monstrous). As if nature's only purpose is reproducing itself; as if nature, which we have learned to separate from culture, is aimed only at self-preservation through simple reproduction. This still remains to a certain extent the belief of an ideological scientific view. Such is the setting around a body treated as public property, turning it into a commodity serving the interest of a higher aim—that is, to succumb to the capitalist modes of production. The body cannot be used for anything other than an alleged origin reconducted to a presumed Mother Nature. In fact, we have learned that there are only families, and families constituted by fathers and mothers, and nothing else in between. The in-betweenness is unfit, a remainder, that which does not fit into what is supposed to be productive.

Primitive accumulation: Degrading genders for the sake of capital

I am returning here to Silvia Federici and the concept of primitive accumulation—addressed in chapter 2.5—as to reinstate the violent division of bodies according to their gendered assignations. Federici reconducts the formation of capital from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries as being gendered on a central axis of social organisation and control, demonstrating how violence against women, for instance, is congenital to capitalism's formulation. A return of the most violent aspects of primitive accumulation—which has accompanied every phase of capitalist globalisation, including the present one—demonstrates that the degradation of gender is a necessary condition for the existence of capitalism in all times.[398]

Something is unavoidably missing: bodies coming together in alliance; bodies that have nothing to share except being together. When bodies come together, they bring alliance beyond representation, beyond politics, beyond other forms of determined aggregation, simply demanding space for a different mode of being, a different kind of society—a society less based on segregated structures, one standing for love, solidarity—and to occupy space and time outside any immanent need, citizenship without the constriction of land. The question is, therefore, how can we reach a space of equality under these given conditions? How can we move from repressive technologies of power to recognising more mobile forms of interdependency connecting varied bodies and their reciprocal need for subsistence, maintenance, and life in general? How might it be possible to formulate equality on the basis of such relations that define our enduring social existence as living creatures? How can we make a collective claim on society through which we could imagine freedom and justice? How might it be possible to reclaim a different presence for bodies and objects that supports a space of appearance, a space for not assimilating, not being subsumed, not being consumed and discarded before our bodies awaken a conscious subjectivity?

Reclaiming visibility in the space of appearance

I think that is the question behind Harald & Louis's piece *Shine Utopians*, which was presented, following our initial discussions, in November 2019 at Dansens Hus in Oslo, where they gathered a number of bodies in a place, to possibly gain a space of appearance, literally, by coming together and becoming visible. The stripped-down theatre revealed its maintenance structure in full, whereby windows regained their role as transparent membranes to the outside; the stage returned to being a floor; and no dis-

398 ——— See Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004).

tinction was made between the audience, the performers, or the people charged with the theatre's upkeep and providing food and beverage to performers and audience alike. Finally, a branching platform invited the display of the body of the audience as a living object, as the central act on stage equal to the act itself. Initially Harald & Louis had not wanted to schedule a time for the performance but rather to simply take over the theatre space for the overall period allotted to them, a month or so, and for the performance to be ongoing, open to constant visitation, so that there would be no rehearsal and no show, but instead the piece, the oeuvre, would be in a sort of perennial preparation, inviting over and over, or over and again, bodies to come in, to congregate, to join a molecular movement, in an attempt to find both synergy as well as forms of aggression and antagonism.

Upon entering *Shining Utopians*, one found that the usually dark cube of the ready-for-the-magic-to-happen theatre space was stripped bare (in direct opposition to its usual appearance): "pure light." Imaging is not created in darkness, but by the persistence of movement on the retina; an aggregation of colour produced by body movement. Your untrained body lays down, stands, sits. Nothing is about to come; everything is already there. You are part of an aggregation from beginning to end. You are intertangled into the conjoinedness, within which you need to recognise that you are performing, that you have an active role, even if simply standing still or sitting. You become aware of your own potentiality, because usually you are simply called in to testify, in darkness, to the event that is about to happen. Such is the role of the spectator. Standing in a grey zone. I am here, but I am not participating. Here, as performers shape themselves into different aggregations, as they push themselves to find new forms of being together without exhausting themselves; you are not the object, but you are a participating subject. You are a body in an entangled multispecies future. I figured, during the performance, that if I ever were to witness paradise by following the Christian tenets imposed on me—one of the unfortunate utopias of equality—I would see something similar. Pure light, subtle and unexpected movements; nothing happening, yet something constantly changing; as in Dante's vision, one follows an arresting light, and one moves together with other bodies though standing still, equidistant.

Body, member, the head, corporation: The gendered corporeal transferred to institutional functioning

When I started looking into the history of dance, and the formation of its institutions, I found, unsurprisingly, that its dictates come from Louis XIV. The Sun King established the Académie Royale de Danse in Paris in March

1661, the first of many royal academies later founded throughout Europe, in order to "improve" artistic standards. The story goes that thirteen experts met regularly to deliberate, to be emulated, and to test and teach skills, while being encouraged to invent a notation system that codified positions of feet, arms, and the body. Penalties were introduced if procedures were not followed, and fines were given to practitioners to prevent attempts at deviations from the academy's professional standards. These self-defined and elective experts, became the "pure" subject and the object of their own elected ruling, to be subsequently inflicted to others. "The king required that they pass aesthetic judgment upon every weekly choreographed dance, both social and theatrical, before it could be either taught or performed in Paris or in the suburbs."[399] Such take, according to dance historian Maureen Needham, was quite a unique shift in the field, and by stiffening the formal modalities and modulations of what dance could be, therefore determining its very content, and potentially leading to forms of censorship. Other leading theoreticians read into these encoded questions a control over pleasure, representation, and accessibility.[400] By studying this period during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we can also learn that few states were as obsessed as France with the body, to the point that body metaphors entered the general language and the political discourse. "Corporation," "body," "head," and "member" all came to be prolifically used in legislation, public speeches, and more. Dance similarly occupied a large role at Versailles. Everyone danced. This was part of a "technique of power," attests Foucault, one of the scholars of the period, as part of, in his words, "discipling bodies." What is more obscure, apparently, is Louis XIV's reasoning for performing regularly between 1651 and 1668 accross genders. As dance represented order, as well as power over representation, the body of the king stood for its terrain and divine duality, with the individual and society merging together within such a figure, where the prosperity of the person reflected the prosperity of the nation and, correspondingly, "his" and its fertility. Dance and its high performativity should not be considered a marginal space of entertainment but clearly a space of politics, where politics are played, in the space of representation. For representation to work as power, the visible should be readable and should, reciprocally, be read as an image.[401]

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399 ——— Maureen Needham, "Louis XIV and the Académie Royale de Danse, 1661: A Commentary and Translation," *Dance Chronicle* 20, no. 2 (1997): 176.

400 ——— Georgia J. Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure: Louis XIV and the Politics of Spectacle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 47–48.

401 ——— See Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 13.

Paraphrasing Mark Franko, a "war" of positions was at stake with the establishment of the Académie Royale de Danse. Franko is concerned with the intrinsic royal ostracism of burlesque ballets, a form of dance in court ballet popular in the 1620s that was openly political and disruptive of traditions. Here bodies did not move geometrically according to patterns and proportions or follow symbols of social stability and political harmony; instead, they engaged in play, were open to chance. Whereas choreography is a plan, performance is unpredictable. Franko addresses how burlesque ballets contested—even put at stake—monarchical power by questioning its ordered representation. For him, the *letters patent* coming to dictate the newly established academy of dance addressed how people should be trained and how they should move. This educational diktat was, for Franko, a measure meant to prevent "the unsettling return of burlesque performance. It is both aesthetic and ideological power."[402] Power exists only as a representation. Performing across genders was practised in burlesque ballets to also serve as an open critique of power. Franko notes as in the period of Louis XIV such burlesque ballets disappeared, and he asserts that, perhaps, the king performing across genders is more of an appropriation of the space of critique than a critique in itself.[403] He was not subverting stereotypes but, in reality, only emphasising the self-sufficiency of the king's body, its absolutism, one could add. There is an enormous difference in performing accross genders as a way of examining gender constructs as a result of religious and moral teachings, versus such practice defining attributes assigned to gender conformation based on the contemporaneous medical knowledge and understanding of physiology. Transgressing codes of food consumption that conform to the societal prescriptions of the masculine and the feminine paradigms have also been studied elsewhere.[404] Here the body politics impersonated by the king are still reproductive. He stands on his own, intransigently self-sufficient. He pretends he does not need any other. He pretends "never depended upon parents or kinship relations, or upon social institutions" to prevail and thrive.[405] He pretends he does not depend on sexuality, sustenance, or tangible and intangible support structures for a liveable life. He pretends his social function is cast and pre-emptively independent of society. Such is the fiction we have been taught to believe and that we leave unquestioned through the sphere of representation.

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402 ——— Mark Franko, "Double Bodies: Androgyny and Power in the Performances of Louis XIV," *Drama Review* 38, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 71–82.

403 ——— Franko, "Double Bodies," 73.

404 ——— See Sylvie Steinberg, *La confusion des sexes: Le travestissement de la Renaissance à la Révolution* [Gender confusion: The travesty of the Renaissance to the revolution] (Paris: Fayard, 2001).

405 ——— Judith Butler, "Non Violence, Grievability, and the Critique of Individualism," in *The Force of Non-violence* (London: Verso, 2020), 37.

Urban space and choreography as *natural* spatial organisations

Of course, we have also come to know that "the revolutionary republicans despised these monarchical rites and abolished them," though they "created new rituals in which bodies played just as important a role."[406] New inscriptions come to the body in a culturally determined and controlled manners, through new textual and ritualistic performance to generate a genealogy and legacy of our contemporary body politics, in which such mechanisms continue to be at play. Within the arts, ideas of the public sphere converge in such an unresolved category. Accessibility to the arts for all is today thought to be a given, at times because institutions are publicly funded, or self-define themselves as public, or because entry is given in exchange for a small fee. However, in the arts, as in the sphere of politics, the public sphere can emerge only under certain conditions. For Arendt, there is no space for freedom, which is an ontological given, if we do not create the democratic conditions for experiencing freedom, meaning the institutional conditions under which such freedom can be experienced. Freedom of the mind is an illusion for her, revealing a totalitarian state unleashing itself over bodies. That space of freedom needs to be built and protected in the maintenance of public space, where freedom is exercised; it appears when people meet in public space—the polis.[407] If, as we have seen, dance functioned, and still continues to do so, as part of the organisation of a public sphere of representation, we should be able to analyse how it can open and make space, and structure support for what is cut out, what is unacknowledged. Exclusion from such a public sphere is justified and "naturalised" through a social space of representation presented as a substantial unity that must be protected from conflict. This was the take of Louis XIV, which continues to reach us, diluted, in our own times. Performance, as Harald & Louis demonstrate, is more intrinsically "burlesque" in the sense of open ended, tactical confrontation, approximation, and irony towards "naturalised" choreography. Like urban space, choreography pursues a spatial organisation presented as the *natural* order of things. It is exactly these concepts of *natural*, biological, social, and evolutionary modernities that are in need of being deconstructed as affecting our understanding of individuals—only functional to produce a marginality, of what does not fit into these constructed categories, where some lives become grievable and some others remain ungrievable. The asymmetry and proliferation of differences in advanced industrial societies magnifies a surplus of meaning of the social—that there exists some-

406 ——— Sara E. Melzer and Kathryn Norberg, *From the Royal to the Republican Body. Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1998), 2.

407 ——— Hannah Arendt, "What Is Freedom?," in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Viking, 1968), 143–71.

thing more in such a pretend unity—thus making it difficult to attempt to fix these differences as what we call society, as a stable category. Situations of antagonism inevitably develop in society when the presence of others makes one not be completely oneself. Antagonisms are not internal but external, because of society's impossibility of constituting itself as one single self; otherwise, that single self would be absolute.[408] As it becomes clear—because everything penetrates its own limits, and prevents it from becoming an objective reality—a society should never be one, a unity. And it is here that we have the possibility to keep a struggle for a more equitable society alive. If dance functions as part of organising a public sphere, consequently it contributes to keeping open such positions. "Equality is thus a feature of social relations," but only if we consider its boundaries porous, interdependent relations, instead of taking society as a "unity."[409]

Bare space

Harald & Louis curated and presented a theatrical space stripped of its spectacular constructions. *Shine Utopians* opens up the possibility of beginning to think again of institutions as a bare space, a space of potential, a space where we can deal with the unknown, more than cement the known. A space for learning new tactics for training—to untrain rather than to train the body. This is why, in Harald & Louis's piece, simple gestures repeated over and over again find new concatenations of meaning. They hint at the potential of our bodies as molecular transitions of form, meaning, and encounter, in constant movement, pushing determined boundaries. A cultural determination is broken apart, by re-engaging these bodies in collective and individual movements. By performing collective movements, the trained body provokes the untrained body, the educated body demands a negotiation. Antagonism. Uneasiness. They invite us to rethink the ethics of gestures through constantly shifting the borders of the body. Not only is the body of the dancer put in question, but also the body of the institution as a unity. The dancer's body as well as the institutional body are in their potentiality, that is, in their inoperative mode; they do not long to produce only the perfect gesture, but instead show what gestures in an assembly can lead to. A revolutionary potential is embedded in these orgiastic bodies, whose lustful demands are together put forward for an audience ready to participate. A question thus arises effortlessly: Can freedom and equality be taught?

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408 ——— I am drawing this argument from Oliver Marchart, who rereads Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* from 1965, to address how external forces are threatening given social systems, and exploring their limits and limitations. Oliver Marchart, "On the Final (Im-)Possibility of Resistance. Progress and Avant-Garde," *Acta Phil.*, XVI, no. 2 (1995), 159-172.

409 ——— Judith Butler, *The Force of Non-violence* (London: Verso, 2020), 45.

(4.5) What new internationalism? (on attempting to claim a transnational public space through a reading of Geeta Kapur)[410]

I close this chapter by opening the floor to further analysis for "unstable institutionality,"[411] the trembling and momentaneous space of appearance, a topic that I'll retread in the conclusions. In the various typologies of curatorial functions, it is worth studying the biennale curator, endowed with a higher degree of autonomy as part of unveiling structures of potentiality and invisible infrastructures of power. This relatively irregular, unstable figure is not restricted to a specific tradition and negotiates a value system outside traditionally established ideological and economic pressures. New kinds of events and curating emerge. The practice of biennale curating, especially after the end of the Cold War period, not only escapes traditional notions of curating but creates new domains of thought. To delve into the argument, I will make a few points regarding the Venice Biennale, an event I have been engaging in for at least the past ten years in different capacities.[412] It is not only because of my personal engagement, though, that I write about the Venice Biennale, but because, as I'll address further during the course of my argument, the Venice Biennale seems particularly relevant when speaking about narratives ensuing from national ideologies, within and outside national borders. The Venice Biennale is probably the only art event in the world that is still based on national representation, and therefore it can truly be said that it aims to be inter/national from a historical perspective while retaining the mod-

410 ——— A version of this text was presented during the seminar *What New Internationalism?*, Litteraturhuset, Oslo, on 28 April 2016, which included a keynote presentation by Ruth Noack and other contributions from Tominga Hope O'Donnell, Kjetil Røed, Adriana Alves, and Anawana Haloba.

411 ——— In the section "Conclusions: Curating between the no-longer and the not-yet," I analyse in-depth Carlos Basualdo, "The Unstable Institution," in *Curating Subjects*, ed. Paul O'Neill (London: Open Editions; Amsterdam: De Appel, 2007): 39–52.

412 ——— I was employed at Office for Contemporary Art Norway, in various positions, including that of curator, from 2010 to 2018. In 2015 I was co-curator, with curator Katya García-Antón, of Camille Norment's *Rupture* in the Nordic Pavilion at the Venice Biennale.

ernist concern of building a space of negotiation between specific nations. Rather than commenting on the world at large, it is important to address the formation of the idea of international as a word with wider political reverberations, specific affects and effects.

The history of the Venice Biennale is an important reference point when thinking about how the hegemonic dynamics of the world were construed in the European landscape of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with sovereign countries, their supposed independence, interdependence, hierarchies, alliances, dominances, betrayals, and conspiracies, the taking shape of a certain formation of new Western concepts of citizenship, migration, borders, cultural elites, their movements across territories and communities, markets, tourism, education—all matters that directly and indirectly started with terms such as "internationalism."

In the case of the Venice Biennale, "internationalism" points backwards towards London's Great Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations in 1851 (it is important to provide its name in full), the first international world fair, which set the standard for Britain's industrial production and design in both an artistic and scientific sense. Visited by over six million people, the exhibition was integral to the popularising of spectacular events for large crowds, and in setting the pace for greater modernity to enter every aspect of human life, from the texture of the cityscape through the proto-functional architecture of the Crystal Palace, to a new abstraction in interiors by proposing a harmony of colours and technology of patterns. In the wake of the Industrial Revolution and with the rise of capitalism, the exhibition publicised itself as a celebration of commercial liberalism and free trade among nations, promoting the British political and social model, as well as progress through technology, machinery, urbanisation, and scientific discovery. By demonstrating the East India Company's exploitation of the wealth of the empire in terms of the raw materials that it was unable to produce itself, it unwittingly admitted to Britain's dependence on other lands.

I am looking backwards at this exhibition instead of forwards, because these events allow one to re-examine the very meaning of "internationalism." The arrival of "international" as a new English word came in 1789, when Jeremy Bentham used it in the field of law to define how the bourgeoisie could move capital across borders, a mercantile preoccupation.

It is important to retrace these lines connecting Venice back to London, and then forward towards an international modernism that passed through Germany, and then moved on to New York, because such change would

not have been possible from within the arts alone. It needs to be considered within a larger ambition of the time: to redesign the world according to the modernist paradigm that would outline, embrace, and project an image of progress, a concept that was in itself in formation, and in need of dissemination.

Then we could ask, what kind of space for internationalisation does the International Art Exhibition of the City of Venice open when it replicates the machinery of a "world marvel"?

It was not the first time that Venice had attempted to reinvent itself and attract the attention of the "world." The events that took place in Venice at the end of the nineteenth century, of which the Biennale was to be the most successful of all, were set in place as a reminder of the cosmopolitan gaiety for which the city was once famous. At the pinnacle of its prosperity in the mid-fifteenth century, the cosmopolitan character of Venice was pronounced in all aspects of life, with large Greek, Armenian, Muslim, Turkish, and African populations within the city, and with Jewish communities.[413] Over 3,000 merchant ships were trading, and many of them could have been easily converted into warships or for military transport; a reserve of up to one hundred war galleys was harboured in the Arsenal—nowadays one of the two main exhibition venues of the Biennale.[414] But when the city lost dominion over the Adriatic Sea, Venice changed tack and began conquering Europe with charm. The city became a playground for Europe's upper crust. Venetian art was unapologetically daring and colourful. The nunneries had a role far from their given expectations, hosting performances before public audiences, and moving across and beyond gender diktats. The role played by the extensive duration of the Carnival brought visitors from everywhere and probably supported the amplification of these practices.[415]

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413 ——— Francisco Apellániz, "Venetian Trading Networks in the Medieval Mediterranean," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, August 2013, 44(2), 157-179.

414 ——— Louis Sicking, "Naval Warfare in Europe, c. 1330-c. 1680," in T. D. J. B. Tallett F. (ed.), *European Warfare, 1350-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 236-263.

415 ——— Nunneries, as the article surveys, had been a known site of entertainment from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century. See: Christine Scippa Bhasin, "Prostitutes, Nuns, Actresses: Breaking the Convent Wall in Seventeenth-Century Venice," *Theatre Journal*, March 2014 (66), no. 1, 19-35.

In order to understand the extent of the worldly project embarked upon by Venice in 1895, it is important to throw light on the context of Italy at the end of the nineteenth century.[416]

Firstly, one has to acknowledge that, as part of the Italian nationalist movement, the desire to be one of the world's leading modern countries led to extensive industrialisation in the North since the 1890s. The alpine railway tunnels of Semmering (1848-1854), Mont-Cenis (1857-1871), and Gotthard (1872-1882), connected Italy to their neighbour countries rail systems, and, as considerable "international" investment was pouring into businesses, the Italian state supported infrastructural heavy industry—car factories, steelworks, and shipbuilding.

Secondly, it is essential to look at the internal demographics of the country's unification a few decades earlier, when the capitals had been centralised from the South to the North, as I alluded to already in chapter 3. Investment in international relations mattered more than national investments in infrastructures—not my words, since I am paraphrasing the philosopher Antonio Gramsci during those years. He contended that this continued and constructed a North-South divide within Italy characterised by a colonial relationship with a racialised dynamic, pursued through a displacement of capitals to the North.[417]

What matters here is the attempt to trace parallels between the nation-building process in Venice and those in the foremost centres of modernity (London, Paris, Berlin, and later New York), and how that very modernising principle implied the deletion of native (Indigenous) identities within territory brought under one sovereign country by military force.

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416 ——— Although the Venice Biennale Foundation's polity wishes today, in rewriting its history, to align itself to phenomena such as the Secession in Munich, an artist-led disjointment to move away from paternalistic and conservative policies. See "Biennale Arte: History," Venice Biennale website, accessed 7 February 2021, https://www.labiennale.org/en/history-biennale-arte. As the Biennial National Artistic Exhibition (the fair's first name in 1893), the national aspect was stressed over the international one.

417 ——— Antonio Gramsci, "Some Aspects of the Southern Question," 1926, Marxist Leninist Archive, http://marxism.halkcephesi.net/Antonio%20Gramsci/1926/10/southern_question.htm. Originally published in *Selections from Political Writings (1921–1926)*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978). See note 286.

As an event unique at this time—not in its international format,[418] but in its focus on fine art (the model is the same, but not the genre)—the Venice Biennale was part of a cultural agenda put forth by the city council and, by extension, the state, to use tourism and culture as part of the economic regeneration and nation-building ambitions of Italy. The excuse was the celebration of the silver wedding anniversary of King Umberto and Margherita of Savoy.

What is also interesting to note is that, although claiming to be embarking on a "world enterprise," for more than fifty years the "international" world in which Venice was interested was very small, differing little from Italy's primary alignment of trade and commerce.[419]

"Were it not for the force of custom," as Bentham puts it, the term "international," as first set into action by the Great Exhibition, "would seem rather to refer to internal jurisprudence."[420] What the Great Exhibition had already revealed was exactly this delicate interdependence of nations, and the need to establish a scale of each nation's importance globally by demonstrating the advancements that could be reached through technology and the capitalist process of production.

As a platform for modernist capitalist ideals, with the ambition to represent the world at large, the Venice Biennale is still today a battleground of outgrown and dying world powers that have not all found a definite form.

In 2015, eighty-nine countries participated in the Venice Biennale, an increase from just fifty-nine back in 1999, and the popularity of the Biennale continues to grow. Therefore the event still seems to represent the besieged fortress of modernism's ideals. No example of this could be more pertinent than New Delhi–based Raqs Media Collective's intervention *Coronation Park* that same year, where sculptural elements spread across

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418 ——— The format is the national participation inaugurated by the London World Exhibition. The genre is the kind of artefacts shown.

419 ——— Today we imagine European nations as a set of determined territories. Italy came to be unified and a sovereign territory in 1851, Germany in 1871, the French Republic in 1870, the Kingdom of Belgium in 1830, the Kingdom of Denmark in 1814, and the Kingdom of Netherlands in 1815, the Kingdom of Sweden in 1814, Switzerland in 1848, the Soviet Union in 1922 (prior to that, the Russian Empire in 1812), and Austria-Hungary in 1867; the Kingdom of Spain and Kingdom of Great Britain have been the most stable, since the eighteenth century.

420 ——— It was Bentham who first coined the word "international" in a book published in 1789. See Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (London: Athlone, 1970).

the historical space of the Giardini, referencing the site that hosted the coronation of King George V and Queen Mary as emperor and empress of India in 1911.[421] In Raqs' words, no matter how strong the forces of power seem today, in time inevitably they decline, and so *Coronation Park* is talking about the fear of "the inevitability of abdication."[422] Seen in this light, the Giardini pavilions become phantasmagorical monuments to world powers—of yesterday but also of tomorrow, a space for destruction and recognition, which is also a space for provocation to think about a possible future.

Because of the very investment that such a space holds in terms of local and foreign politics, with state representatives, embassies, and civil servants operating in a fictionalised and miniaturised worldly space, the possibility of performing a political intervention presents itself. Such a gesture was enacted by the Mexican artist Gaston Ramirez Feltrin, when in 2003 he participated as a Biennale artist even though not authorised or invited. Ramirez Feltrin, born in Tepic, and who lived for many years in Venice, was one of the "invisible workers" of the Biennale. He gathered discarded materials and built a pop-up structure that he called *Favela Pavilion* so as to initiate a shantytown in the surroundings of the world's powers. In the same year, with *Stateless Nation*, Alessandro Petti and Sandi Hilal situated themselves between the national pavilions in the Giardini, presenting enlarged travel documents and passports of Palestinian refugees in order to question social, political, and spatial relations between people, state, and territory beyond the liberal notion of citizenship.

In 1968, when the Situationists threatened guerrilla acts at the Biennale, Lawrence Alloway—one of the first art historians to look at the Biennale's history and its larger logics—defined the Venice Biennale as objectless, not in the sense that there are no objects, but in the sense that even if the artwork, the object, is present, it is a movable concept within the context of the exhibition. He goes so far as to say that independently of the single exhibitions being hosted in each pavilion, the entire machinery becomes

421 ——— One could go so far as to look at the perfect alignment of the pavilions along the alleys of the Giardini, which *Coronation Park* emphasised somehow. The UK, France, and German pavilions are triangulated at the very top of the hill, and the Russia, Switzerland, and Scandinavian pavilions open up on to the US pavilion, defining their historical role as played from the twentieth century onwards and during the two World Wars.

422 ——— Giulia Crisci and Monica Narula (Raqs Media Collective), "All That Falls: A Tale of Monuments," *Roots & Routes*, accessed 7 February 2021, https://www.roots-routes.org/all-that-falls-a-tale-of-monuments-by-giulia-crisci-and-monica-narula-raqs-media-collective/.

an assembly of information with a communicative purpose.[423] That is, independently of single artworks being presented at the Biennale, the overall structure is an aesthetic signifier that determines what is acceptable in aesthetic terms and in attributing it a value (which of course becomes a financial value, too). Even though the pavilions present a "vivid array of national self-images," according to Alloway the exhibition has "a structure, and hence a message, as much as the art that it shows." This message reinstates aesthetic principles determined by the most powerful countries.[424]

Such a disapparation of the object—a ghostly presence, or a present absence—occurred in 2015, when the Syrian collective Abounaddara asked a seemingly simple question that is, in fact, one of the most complex questions of our time: Who has the right to the image? Claiming censorship, they withdrew from the Biennale before it even started, instead continuing to produce and independently distribute weekly video clips,[425] dispatches from Syrian life in all its hues and complexity, that they diffused via digital means in order to deconstruct a unified, normalised version of how reality is portrayed, presented, and mediated all over the world,[426] even—and especially—in a territory of war such as Syria.

It is therefore fitting to quote art critic Geeta Kapur's *Global Visions* of 1994: "Here is a strength and a problem: the need to negotiate with powerful cultural elites … and the inevitability of measuring success in terms of the positions gained in the control of culture and the media that attends to it. If the aim is to turn the centre-periphery model inside out, then the positions may change but not the model. We should continue to question the

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423 ——— Alloway coined the term Pop Art and was equally interested in how art integrates consumerist culture. See: Lawrence Alloway, *The Venice Biennale, 1895-1968: From Salon to Goldfish Bowl* (Greenwitch, CT: New York Public Society, 1968), 14.

424 ——— It is very important that it is understood there is an aesthetic canon to which new and upcoming countries have to adhere to in order to be accepted by the leading world countries (the UK, France, Germany, and the US). Alloway, *The Venice Biennale*, 17.

425 ——— From April 2011 onwards, the Abounaddara collective, a group of self-taught filmmakers in Damascus, has been producing one short documentary every Friday and launching it on the internet. Their work is a kind of "emergency cinema"—like "emergency healthcare, only by way of cinema," in the words of Charif Kiwan, spokesperson for the collective. See Christy Lange, "Emergency Cinema: How the Anonymous Film Collective Abounaddara Represents Daily Life in Syria," *Frieze*, 18 March 2016, https://www.frieze.com/article/emergency-cinema.

426 ——— Abounaddara specifically refers to the role of news agencies here.

radical import of this."[427] Kapur's words have the urgency of a military campaign—in this case the attempt to march upon an art world that is denying the useless purposefulness of art.[428]

In a different text, though, Kapur addresses the potential of art events like the Venice Biennale to fully access a transnational public sphere. In the wake of 1989, a regained independence and interdependence of regions, nations, and cities, local cultures, electronic communications, and new mass migrations brought about the term "*transnational transculturalism*."[429] "Transculturalism," we learn from Kapur, "is not, however, a matter of free choice." Nevertheless, she sees in this movement a "liberatory" potential. Within the tension of what happens in the emergence of post-colonial civil societies and globalisation, we need to study what political theorists call a "transnational public sphere." Translation is part of this "transcultural aesthetic," where diasporic artists are essential to negotiating discussions otherwise repressed in the larger society.[430] I would add here that the curator is the actual mediator of such a transnational public sphere, who negotiates the space between different traditions and finds points of connection and networks for an alliance of speaking together. Kapur posits the struggle outside national borders, with their primacy on tradition and origin, instead of focusing on an idea of citizenship which is transnational. This follows the idea of an enlarged public sphere permitted in the in-between of the liminal confines of the states, attempting to find a new understanding of what such governmental and unexplored space can be for the formation of subjectivities.

What's worth noting is that Kapur seems to individuate a new form of sovereignty in this transnational public sphere, where a new subject position can be formed through the curatorial. She also questions "art's sovereignty within and without the institution of art:" to move beyond given preservation structures (museums) by focusing instead on the production and discussion of art as the actual motor of change.[431]

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427 ——— Geeta Kapur, "A New Inter Nationalism: The Missing Hyphen," in *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts,* ed. Jean Fisher (London: Kala Press, 1994), 39-49.

428 ——— I am indirectly quoting Theodor W. Adorno, "Functionalism Today," *Oppositions*, no. 17 (Summer 1979): 32–41.

429 ——— Geeta Kapur, "Curating across Agonistic Worlds," in *InFlux: Contemporary Art in Asia*, ed. Parul Dave Mukherji et al. (New Delhi: Sage, 2013), 159–212. Emphasis in the original text.

430 ——— Kapur, "Curating across Agonistic Worlds."

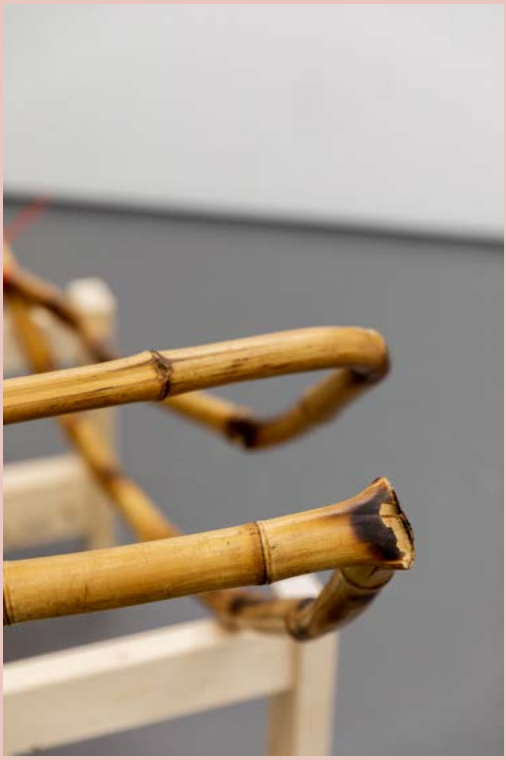
431 ——— Kapur, "Curating across Agonistic Worlds."

Raqs Media Collective, Gaston Ramirez Feltrin, Alessandro Petti and Sandi Hilal, and Abounaddara are all actual recent examples of gaining a fleck of dust from the vast terrain occupied by world powers, by shearing through their screens and gaining access to transnational public spheres. The continuous absorption of new nation states that, decade after decade, have gained momentum on a global financial scale has allowed Venice, as in previous centuries, to reinvent itself as a "world marvel." If we would agree with Alloway on objectlessness, we must deny the importance that the physical presence of artworks still maintains in the material definition of claiming space in these large world events, and agree on the fact that information matters more than the object itself (curatorial materialism). Kapur provides a more complex reading of what these world events have created for people, for whom these spaces initially were not thought; they have provided the possibility for expanding the realm of the symbolic and therefore of representation so that such processes could be partly and successfully achieved, through the very material presence of objects speaking for their people and the transference into these transnational spaces of their projected desires, traumas and legacy, within an augmented aesthetic sphere. For this reason, the Venice Biennale remains important for future development, not only of the arts but also for showcasing the world's dynamics and inequalities, and providing a safe space for cross-addressing societal issues otherwise hidden under national agendas and global matters.

Maria Pasenau, *Pasenau and The Devil* (installation views and details),
30 August–12 October 2019. Photo: Julie Hrnčířová/Fotogalleriet.

Maria Pasenau, *Pasenau and The Devil* (installation views and details),
30 August–12 October 2019. Photo: Julie Hrnčířová/Fotogalleriet.

Daisuke Kosugi, *A False Weight* (installation views and details),
1 November–14 December 2019. Photo: Julie Hrnčířová/Fotogalleriet.



Daisuke Kosugi, *A False Weight* (installation views and details),
1 November–14 December 2019. Photo: Julie Hrnčířová/Fotogalleriet.

Khaled Barakeh (with Terje Abusdal, and Sara Rundgren Yazdani in conversation) as part of *Let's Talk About Images*, 3 November 2018–19 January 2019.
Photo: Julie Hrnčířová/Fotogalleriet

Let's Talk About Images 2.1.0. Graphics by Herman Breda Enkerud, commissioned by Fotogalleriet, 2020.

Marthe Ramm Fortun, *LOOK AROUND IN JOY,* 2019.
Photo: Julie Hrnčířová/Fotogalleriet

Installation views of *Looking into (our) Archives*, 2–25 June 2017.
Photo: Istvan Virág/Fotogalleriet

Part 5.
Curating an institution: Practising forms of assembly through exhibition making

(5.1) The exhibition space as the non-conformant body: An introduction

This last chapter addresses the non-conformant body as the site of trauma, problematising curating which sometimes co-opts representation: an inherent act of violence. At the same time, curators look for exhibition making's egalitarian aspirations under the current predicaments of exhibiting. I focus on the curatorial work I developed in the past three years (2019–21) at Fotogalleriet in Oslo, to bring forward observations, notes, and research developed in this period. It concerns small- and medium-sized institutions, revendicating their role to enable different histories and temporalities to arise. It includes a reflection on how small- and medium-sized institutions (and temporary, trembling institutions, as addressed in chapter 4) destabilise the work of museums and large collecting bodies, giving rise to new forms of curating. An equal claim is made on Fotogalleriet to be a *kunsthalle*, meaning a public institution that depends on public support and has a public remit and, therefore, that holds a social responsibility.[432]

In 2019, I curated the first solo exhibition of artist Maria Pasenau, born in 1994, whose work addresses issues of normativity, the body and its portrayal as the site of unleashing otherness and the possibility of being. She produced an artist's book for the exhibition, for which we invited several contributors to address their perspective on her work from a personal

432 In such a claim, there is more than words: there is accountability. Small- and medium-sized institutions have a heavy responsibility, especially in Norway, to fulfill demands regulated by the artists' unions when it comes to artists' exhibitions in their spaces regarding duration and honorariums. Moreover, Fotogalleriet is part of the Association of Norwegian Kunsthalles, which sets ethical and good practice guidelines. Fotogalleriet's annual budget, as a public institution, is public information. As a public-funded institution, Fotogalleriet is accessible to all. We have made this clear through public statements and others to reinstate such availability, which does not only come from "good heart" but under the institution's very statutes and mandate. Revendicating such principles is part of restoring institutions' democratic power and ambition by "giving them back" as sites of dialogue. Such status of public institutions should be intrinsic, but it is our responsibility as cultural workers, to make it extrinsic. Because of this, the material conditions for the equal and free use of these institutions are the same given in Scandinavia to citizens as for education, health, and other public services.

view.[433] Amid the coming to power of European right-wing movements and their attempts to appropriate women's rights to their bodies, I lean upon Pasenau's work to reflect on the term "new." Michel Foucault defines the lack of novelty in the field of vision affecting images and imaginaries when a liberal administration of the self enters the political sphere (the "rationalisation" of practices of living—in his words, the "biopolitical").[434] Simple gestures and modest and alternative forms of life (the great fear of governance) sometimes provoke shock. To appear, to be seen, "the body must enter the visual and audible fields, a public space."[435] The personal, obscenely penetrated by the capitalist market through images, is once again the sphere that requires liberation, where one can find a potential emancipatory motor for change.

The overwhelming technological advancement, new disembodied forms of life, spaces of intimacy, and material bodies have escalated the aesthetic and conceptual experience of the "image sphere," as life only appears "worth living where the threshold between waking and sleeping" meet in this flux.[436] Through her images, Pasenau emphasises the need for a different understanding of space and time (technology plays a significant role in understanding these categories) and a liberated intimacy for our times. Self-portraiture, a natural part of modern life and identity formation, with the creation of alter egos transmitting a perfect image, is the search of the subject's life. Highly interconnected with sexuality, it continues to be a "ritualised repetition of norms." It is such binarity of contraints that gives rise to "a domain of the intelligible, and consequently of the unthinkable [and the] abject." Bodies form according to these aesthetic means through an attack on privacy.[437] It becomes clear that the digital age has affected

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433 ——— The artist's book and exhibition catalogue Maria Pasenau, *Pasenau and the Devil* (Oslo: Fotogalleriet, 2019) includes contributions by Elise By Olsen, Kristoffer "Cezinando" Karlsen, Bjarne Melgaard, and Stina Högkvist.

434 ——— Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 317.

435 ——— "We have to ask why, if this is so, the body is itself divided into the one that appears publicly to speak and act, and another, sexual and labouring, feminine, foreign and mute, that [is] generally relegated to the private and pre-political sphere." Judith Butler, "Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street," transversal texts, September 2011, https://transversal.at/transversal/1011/butler/en.

436 ——— The term "image sphere" is used by Walter Benjamin in "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia," 1929, Generation Online, http://www.generation-online.org/c/fcsurrealism.htm.

437 ——— We learn from art history that intimacy is not historically situated in jurisprudence but in art. The right to secrecy means the right to freedom for the weakest. Intimacy derives from the aesthetic field of painting, particularly with regard to Leon Battista Alberti, who

intimacy and the private realm. Therefore, I claim private and public space produces images, eventually reaching the exhibition space and demanding curatorial work and display.

I develop these preoccupations in relation to the curation of Maria Pasenau's exhibition by reading curating itself as a form of freezing politics while bringing the artwork into the exhibition space. Then, I bring a parallel reading with a subsequent exhibition I curated at Fotogalleriet with artist Daisuke Kosugi, questioning bodies' functionality in our overdriven capitalist politics, where non-normalised bodies lose their position in society through the architecture of the body's urbanisation. Here, in Kosugi's work, a family matter becomes the motive to analyse more extensive societal infrastructures for exclusion, with uncanny parallelism between the house, considered to be a private sphere, and the exhibition space, considered a public space. If curating means "*curare*"—both curing and care—then its task indicates acting in solidarity by carrying a weight together.

Working as the artistic director of an institution devoted to the life of images, I claim that curatorial practice should revolve around speaking the yet-unknown: the missing image. A missing image speaks about the unrecorded or the misrepresented, which continues to be absent for one too many reasons. To unveil curatorial questions on exhibition making, the institution needs to transgress its given limitations of a space that continues to be dominated by the very logic of the nation-state formation and its oppressions—the patriarchal nuclear family.

Whereas digital infrastructures were the site of analysis of intimacy formation for Pasenau's exhibition, during the Covid-19 pandemic, curatorial strategies looking for a transitional space outside the physical space of encounter became an unwilling reality. Issues of material production and immaterial labour, previously made invisible in the exhibition space through digital and other technologies, became even more hidden in the digital exilic condition of the years 2020–21. Cure, instead of curation, became the obsession of our time. Art lost its social function and urgency,

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established modern painting as a concept in itself in the fifteenth century. He also asserted the "right" of looking on the inside and the outside world from a privileged position, which until then had been reserved to God. Such contemplation, as in Foucault liberal rationalisation, appropriates the body—its intimacy—granting right to the human invasive gaze to scrutinise the interior. Freedom and certain forms of opacity, in such novel take are forever gone. I draw this argument from Gérard Wajcman, "Exposed Intimacy, Extorted Intimacy," *The Symptom*, no. 8, 2007, Lacan Dot Com, posted Summer 2012, https://www.lacan.com/symptom13/exposed-intimacy.html.

prompting questions about why we even do what we do. Driven by Salonul de proiecte's work with students and their expository programme in Bucharest—who proved to be influential Fotogalleriet collaborators in 2020–21, a troubling period—I analyse Fotogalleriet's engagement with curating in the digital sphere.

The politics of emotions, which had entered the institution through a collaboration with artist Dora García, became prominent during these months. All sentiments focused on curing while non-conformant and migrant bodies drifted into the mediatic unknown—the invisible. The nuclear family structure, which has come to dominate Western and other societies, silenced these non-national, non-conformant bodies under the aegis of a new global crisis. In the words of FRANK, whose work I analysed in the previous chapter, "Rage is a terrible thing to waste"—and it's from there we need to restart our curatorial work.[438]

As the first research conclusion for the overall investigation, I wrote "Anger, love, and silence: Caring for emotions in the exhibition space" (chapter 5.5). In that text, I retrace historical formations of emotions in the exhibition space that from the personal became universal. Emotions—a state of mind academia has taught us to stay away from since the Enlightenment—have served as a powerful tool for the repression and infantilisation of otherness. I demonstrate the importance of regaining a relation to emotions and their role in our lives in exhibition spaces through a reading of feminist literature.[439]

438 ——— "Rage Is a Terrible Thing to Waste" was the title of a video programme that the FRANK collective curated for the Manifesta 10 On Board seminar at the invitation of the Office for Contemporary Art Norway, where I worked on programming at the time. The first screening happened at the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, on 8 October 2014. Subsequent screenings happened in other sites in St. Petersburg in the same period, and again the following year.

439 ——— It seems unavoidable and historically due in these times of global unrest to rightfully demand social justice to question categories such as universalism and the Enlightenment. In the world of their reason, they have projected knowledge as univocal, resting on apparent objective criteria. Instead, they fostered forms of societal discrimination and colonialism, including of the mind. Political theorist Achille Mbembe denounces universal knowledge dictated through the academic model and the Enlightenment, calling instead for *pluriversal* knowledge through a "knowledge production that is open to epistemic diversity." See Achille Mbembe, "Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive," 2015, Platform for Experimental Collaborative Ethnography, https://worldpece.org/content/mbembe-achille-2015-%E2%80%9Cdecolonizing-knowledge-and-question-archive%E2%80%9D-africa-country.

(5.2) Displaying the politics of inactivity[440]

"I can't unsee this." This is not a philosophical quotation, but an eight-year-old child's immediate reaction while visiting the exhibition of the rather explicit photographer Maria Pasenau.

Kids and teens are some of Fotogalleriet's most beloved audiences and the ones for whom exhibition spaces will probably not look like the ones we have today, where hierarchies are still perpetrated through aesthetic forms. For them, as well as for us, whose intimacy is lost for the sake of being always public, a deconstruction of the exhibition space can mean deconstructing our understanding of how we experience art in order to challenge our vision, instead of normalising it.

I here tackle some of these issues, contextualised in a much broader perspective to analyse curating and exhibition spaces as we have inherited them today. First, I problematise the word "curator" to recuperate the violence inherent in such a word. To rethink such a practice today and its potential, we need to first acknowledge its problematic past ("*Curare* is a death-in-life practice"). Second, I focus on the historical construction of the exhibition space to reflect on the theatricality of modernity and its need to normalise its ideology. I am not attempting to create further separation but to demonstrate that we cannot speak about the institution of art outside society. Working in a publicly funded institution, I reclaim a public responsibility towards society as a whole ("The exhibition space as the locus of pure observation"). In the third part, I go into my curatorial practice to connect the programme to more extensive societal preoccupations that are too broad to be overlooked. I clarify how I have worked

Further, Mbembe calls upon forms of infantilisation institutionalised through "psychology about peoples and emotions, and other false knowledge inherited from the nineteenth century," Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, trans. Laurent Dubois (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 42. As I will develop and show later in this chapter, several feminist academics equally reclaim a revision of emotions from an intersectional perspective because these categories and exclusion constitute binary and universal subjects as the only possible and valued subjects.

440 A version of this text was presented during the conference *Curate Your Context: Methods on and of Curating*, Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris, on 16 November 2019.

with artists, mainly through the production of new works, and how curating does not enter as an end product of display but instead challenges the artwork's physical apparition and hopefully supports its revolutionary potential.

Curare is a death-in-life practice

The modern notion of curating is often associated with "taking care."[441] In this reading, the curator is designated as a guardian or spiritual guide, beginning in the late fourteenth century. In records of the Church of England, "*curare*" is first used in the 1550s to describe a paid "deputy priest of a parish," in charge of underage people or individuals that according to society could not take care of themselves (a forced group of outsiders to mainstream society). Since the 1660s, the term comes to designate work with book collections and museological matters.[442] The moment in which the above-mentioned use of the word "curate" takes shape corresponds to the transformative centuries in which European missionaries played a large role in ferociously evangelising populations of the Americas, as part of a savage colonialism.

As part of this process of cultural appropriation, I propose that today we look back at the word "curator"—a noun which has come to define the person in charge of a museum, a zoo, or other place of exhibition—to re-root it in the Spanish *curaré*,[443] a word that came into use in Europe during the sixteenth century to describe the poison that Indigenous Peoples in Central and South America put on their arrow tips in order to "seize" their victims. In an attempt to draw affinities, we would also acknowledge the violence of "curare" as a looted practice of managing death-in-life.

Probably the first written information on curaré, the poison, is from Pedro Mártir de Anglería, who at the end of the fifteenth century referred to the preparation of a poisonous substance in the Antilles.[444] Curaré (also called urara and woorali), the aqueous extract of a tree that grows in the Guianas and northern Brazil, was deployed by local populations for hunting

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441 ——— One could use different etymological sources, but this is one of the most accepted roots of "curating." See, e.g., *Online Etymological Dictionary*, s.v. "curate (n.)," https://www.etymonline.com/word/curate.

442 ——— *Online Etymological Dictionary*, s.v. "curate (n.)."

443 ——— Anne H. Soukhanov, *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992).

444 ——— María Susana Cipolletti, "El tráfico de curare en la cuenca amazónica (Siglos XVIII y XIX)" [Curare trafficking in the Amazon basin], *Anthropos*, no. 83 (1988): 527–40.

and protection.[445] Upon entering the bloodstream of its victims, it causes complete paralysis of all the nerves of motion, and possibly death, by preventing the affected body's ability to breathe.[446]

This mysterious compound slowly came to define a generic poison with specific anaesthetic properties, and was then imported to the western hemisphere.[447] When it entered the laboratory—the medical institution—modern physiologists availed themselves of the paralysing property of this drug to keep animals they desired to vivisect absolutely motionless, but not allowing them to die by losing their power to breathe. They made a hole in the windpipe of the animal, and through a small pipe steadily pumped wind into the lungs via machines.

The peculiarity of curare—though—is that while it completely paralyses the nerves of motion, it does not affect the nerves of sensation; actually, it makes them more alive to pain.[448] The Victorian and Edwardian anti-vivi-

445 ——— *Strychnos toxifera*, among other plants.

446 ——— If ingested in moderate quantities it did not cause paralysis; and animals killed by means of such weapons were eaten with impunity. *First Series. "My Doctor Tells Me": (and Second Series "My Friend Tells Me")* (London: Victoria Street and International Society for the Protection of Animals from Vivisection, 1893).

447 ——— Curaré is a poison used in a number of Indigenous communities in South America, including the Siona, Witóto, Karijóna, Bara-Makú, Witóto, and Kofán (in what is currently known as Colombia); Canelo (Ketchwa), Kofán, Quijo, Shuara, Coaiquer, Kafán, Quijo, Canelo, Waorami, Achuara, and Shuara (in Equador); Lamista Quechua (Lama, Chazuta), Yagua, and Koto (Orejone) (in Peru); Yagua (Peba), Makú, Jarauára, Yamamadi, and Tikuna (in Brazil); and Waraú (in Guyana). See S. William Pelletier, *Alkaloids: Chemical and Biological Perspectives* (Berlin: Springer, 2012), 17. Curaré was reported again in 1731 in the pages of the Jesuit priest Joseph Gumilla on the natural history of the Orinoco river region; in *Plantae Surinamenses* [Plants of Surinam] by Carl Linnaeus's Swedish pupil Jacob Alm; and *Histoire des Plantes de la Guiane Francoise* [History of the plants of French Guiana] by Fusee Aublet, published in 1775. As the existence of South America became known in Europe, the pace of scientific explorations and of such "discoveries" quickened—and the paralysing effects of curaré samples grew. Obtained in Peru in 1742 by the French scientist and explorer Charles Marie de La Condamine, curaré demonstrations were undertaken in Cayenne, French Guiana, and later in Leiden, Holland. Using Surinam plants, Johann C. D. von Schreber was, in 1783, the first person to describe precisely which plant species make up curaré. See: Robert A. DeFilipps, *Medicinal Plants of the Guianas (Guyana, Surinam, French Guiana)*, (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, 2004).

448 ——— *First Series. "My Doctor Tells Me": (and Second Series "My Friend Tells Me").*

sectionists movement in the nineteenth century defined this procedure as "death-in-life practice," providing a powerful symbol and propaganda tool to describe the totality of the animals' suffering.[449]

The exhibition space as the locus of pure observation

The dehumanising medical separation of the patient's body from the patient's person (as in vivisection procedures) is what philosopher Michel Foucault termed the "clinical gaze" in 1963. According to Foucault, in order for the human and the animal body to be desecrated, the subject of scrutiny had to lose its holiness, and secularism had to begin. A scission had to happen between the religious and non-religious institutions maintaining authority over the sick body.[450] Modern medicine—whose date of birth is fixed in the last years of the eighteenth century—focused on more than the "mere knowledge of specific medical cases;" it is the self-establishment of a movement and a field. Scientific knowledge "grouped all experience around the play of a verbal unmasking that was not simply its form of transmission, theatrically retarded."[451] In a tautological way, medicine testified the experience of itself as a discipline.[452]

If we look into these medical transformations, and how their theatrical practices consequently transferred to other fields of knowledge, we can look at how, as modernity grew, the French Revolution turned objects previously belonging to the church and the aristocracy into artworks to be exhibited in museums.[453] Here the objects became devoid of "function"—instead made the locus of pure observation. Rather than physically destroying objects, as happened in previous violent revolutionary moments, a new way of dealing with dethroned items of the past was offered. In this

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449 ——— The immense distress caused to animals was thus actually realised in this period. See Greg Murrie, "'Death-in-Life': Curare, Restrictionism and Abolitionism in Victorian and Edwardian Anti-vivisectionist Thought," in *Animal Death*, ed. Jay Johnston and Fiona Probyn-Rapsey Fiona (Sydney: Sydney University, 2013), 253–76.

450 ——— It was not that this had not been done before (desecrating bodies), but the theatricality of building such a medical discipline implied its popularisation, and its communication, through creating its own legends and making them known. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (Abingdon, UK: Taylor & Francis, 2003), 43.

451 ——— Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, 62.

452 ——— Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*.

453 ——— Of course, as the first instance, we are speaking about the Louvre Museum in Paris here. See Boris Groys, "Art, Technology, and Humanism," *e-flux journal*, no. 82 (May 2017): https://www.e-flux.com/journal/82/127763/art-technology-and-humanism/.

process, art itself, according to the art critic Boris Groys, comes from a "modern form of iconoclasm."[454]

What is key here is that Groys assigns the objectivisation of things to human beings. He compares this new protection for art objects to the sociopolitical care which was, in tandem, being instilled in the human body through the entrenchment of human rights, where "use" becomes a contented category.[455]

The question thus becomes: Where does the revolutionary potential of art, and consequently of curating, reside in this new institutional setting (in what we can also call the exhibitionary complex), which we continue to inherit to this day? Is curating the act of maintaining a theatrical threshold of separation from the world of politics? What political remit do we gain through these "anaesthetised" presentations of artworks, and *who* is protected and anesthetised in this process?

If we follow Groys's argument here, the function of such spaces is to make art objects easily accessible to the gaze of the visitor. The curator administers this space in the name of the public, because an individual artwork cannot assert its presence by itself.[456] The art object "is originally sick, helpless" as it has no "vitality, energy, and health."[457] Health personnel is there to guide the public into the very theatre of representation of the medical facilities.[458] Groys concludes, "Curating cures the powerlessness of the image, its inability to show itself by itself."[459]

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454 ——— The French Revolution brought about a secularism whereby the abolishment of God was replaced by the contemplation of material objects. "In other words," writes Groys, "the French Revolution introduced a new type of thing: defunctionalized tools. Accordingly, for human beings, becoming a thing no longer meant becoming a tool. On the contrary, becoming a thing could now mean *becoming an artwork*. And for human beings, becoming an artwork means precisely this: coming out of slavery, being immunized against violence." Groys, "Art, Technology, and Humanism."

455 ——— In this new logic, human bodies could not be "killed, violated, enslaved," or such is the generic prescription assigned to this new era by the ideals of the French Revolution. Groys, "Art, Technology, and Humanism."

456 ——— As a representative, the curator safeguards the public character of the exhibition space, meaning, we assume, that this institutional space becomes almost a parliamentary assembly. Groys, "Art, Technology, and Humanism."

457 ——— Boris Groys, "From Medium to Message: The Art Exhibition as Model of a New World Order," *Open*, no. 16 (2009): 58.

458 ——— Groys, "From Medium to Message."

459 ——— Groys, "From Medium to Message," 58.

If we take this metaphor literally, there are of course a number of others who require acknowledgement in this newly defined clinic—from technicians to cleaners, to all the people surrounding the institutional set up and building; that is to say, the workers. Where do all these other operative forces, material and immaterial, human and non-human infrastructure, through which such a process as *curing* is made possible? How are they given presence and visibility? It seems as though to accept the role of the curator within such a prescribed structure means to acknowledge curating as a means of normalising subjects.

In a Derridean sense, though, the object brought to public judgment—and, by extension, curating as a mediating tool (at least in my view)—could be considered as working like a *pharmakon*, as both poison and remedy, recipe and potion, introducing all of its ambivalence into the discourse.[460] Philosopher Bernard Stiegler recuperates Jacques Derrida's commentary on Plato's *Phaedrus*, as laid out in Derrida's essay "Plato's Pharmacy," to define the pharmakon in relation to the current state of affairs, where the future is under unprecedented urgency. In Stiegler's terms, the pharmakon is a "transitional object" carrying the feeling of why life is worth living; it is what gives individuals sovereignty, autonomy, and heteronomy.[461] It is at once what allows "care to be taken and that of which care must be taken." As such, this object always has the ability not only to engage in curative projections but also to enhance poisonous processes (addictions, melancholy, self-destructive drives). Care is to be given to paying it the necessary attention.[462]

Curating, in Stiegler's view, or by extension of its reading, is a pharmacological question of finding forms of protection and learning from this transitional object, as well as of regaining trust from the result that arises from the loss of care.

If we were to read this proposal through the lens of curare (the drug), would curating mean providing this doubled-edged role of opening up all the necessary space for the artwork by instituting artificial breathing, which is awaiting its revolutionary potential to be released? Where normative

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460 ——— Jacques Derrida "Plato's Pharmacy", in *Ibidem, Dissemination* (trans. Barbara Johnson) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 71.

461 ——— For Stiegler, the pharmakon is the primary object connecting the mother to the child through a transitional object. See Bernard Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living: On Pharmacology* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), 2.

462 ——— As the first pharmakon is the origin of the work of art, "its power is *curative to the immeasurable extent* that is also *destructive*." Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living*, 4.

sanity, decorum, and cleanliness are displayed, and the ludic, violent, obsessive, and neurotic are potent? And, once this moment of stasis is finally completed, the artwork and its symbolic system of power can be destroyed, to eventually testify that the next violent revolution has happened, and a new historical moment can begin.

It is here I find that curating is a *means*, not an end.[463] That is, it is not an end in itself, as Groys asserts, but merely a tool to maintain the artwork in its potency. Curating, contrary to the artwork, can be *used*.

Curating is a means not an end

In the past months we have witnessed a worldwide raising of discontent, with people coming to the streets in protest in Hong Kong, New York, Chile, and France, for that matter, because of growing inequalities and lack of representation. Museums and large art institutions have reached the paramount impossibility of dealing with such struggles, when class, gender, and race discrimination prescribe them to reflect the complexity of their peoples, as well as their problematic historical holdings. The widening gap between the rich and the poor is equally reflected in the fact that smaller institutions are being squeezed out of new urban developments, all while public authorities give an impression of advancing the new, while risking the suffocation of critical voices.[464] I demonstrated a public antagonism towards museums recently in Oslo by coming out in the press to address such unbalanced funding redistribution and financial retribution.[465]

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463 ——— I refer here to Giorgio Agamben's take on the subject. "If politics today seems to be going through a protracted eclipse and appears in a subaltern position with respect to religion, economics, and even the law, that is so because, to the extent to which it has been losing sight of its own ontological status, it has failed to confront the transformations that gradually have emptied out its categories and concepts." See Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010), ix.

464 ——— Margaret Carrigan, "How These Small Galleries Are Surviving Despite Wave of Closures," Artsy, 21 July 2017, https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-small-galleries-surviving-despite-wave-closures.

465 ——— Antonio Cataldo, "Verden blir mindre. Investeringen i de store kunstmuseene er en investering i turisme, ikke kunstfeltet" [The world goes small: Investing in large museums is an investment in tourism, not in the art field], *Subjekt*, 30 October 2019, https://subjekt.no/2019/10/30/a-investere-i-store-kunstmuseum-er-ikke-en-investering-i-kunstfeltet/.

As the artistic director of Fotogalleriet, Scandinavia's oldest *fotohalle,* I find myself within an exhibition space that, together with the photographers' union and the Norwegian Association for Fine Art Photographers, formed a vocabulary for photography and for the medium to be freed.[466] Of course this was no French Revolution, but simply a refusal to accept what the establishment was offering;[467] something we are called upon to reflect on in different ways today, when shopping mall museums are becoming a reality for an art which is overcommercialised and patronising, and that prompts the same inequalities already at work in society at large. Groys points out the fact that "today, the museum presents not a universal history of art but, rather, its own history, in the chain of events staged by the museum itself."[468]

Upon my arrival at Fotogalleriet, I found it necessary to stop the institution's pace of and focus on exhibitions, to instead consider both the inside and the outside of the institution as a physical architecture determining meaning, while inverting the expectations of the white cube, a patriarchal space whose significance is often predetermined. So we held talks in lieu of exhibitions, and "froze" our library.

If the body of the art institution is a body in crisis—*krisis*, in Stiegler's terms, means "decision"[469]—then to rethink how architecture affects our bodies, and how a different take on the space would determine a different demand for art to live, we determined we would focus on such a body in transition, as both a subject and an object of analysis of institutional programming. We chose artists who intersect the materiality of architecture and the immateriality of their imagery, and focused on fostering new artistic productions, revindicating the original meaning of a kunsthalle,[470]

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466 ——— SNL, a Norwegian-language online encyclopedia, reports that Fotogalleriet played a "significant role in the understanding and institutionalising photography as an artistic medium in Norway." https://snl.no/Fotogalleriet. My translation.

467 ——— The establishment's refusal in the institution's history is reported by several of its funders and contributors. See Dag Alveng in Conversation with Susanne Østby Sæther, in *Conversations on Photography*, ed. Antonio Cataldo (Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2021), pp.41–54.

468 ——— Boris Groys, *In the Flow* (London & Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2018), 19.

469 ——— Stiegler clarifies the genealogy of the "crisis of spirit" in modern times in a chapter titled "Apocalypse without God." Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living*, 9–26.

470 ——— "The kunsthalle emerged in Europe in the nineteenth century as a means to present temporary exhibitions of art and science. [… I]t was conceived as an alternative to the museum since its very beginnings," [... originating with] the goal of educating the public rather than preserving art for the ages." See John Zarobell, *Art and the Global*

and, in terms of curating, on addressing this space of support, to accompany the artwork in finding its exhibitory form.

When artist Maria Pasenau took over the institution in August 2019, she boarded up the windows.[471] On the visible side of the window, she left several casts of her crotch (a sculpture), on which a poem was chiselled, reading: "The day i was born/ i bord in to this boring word, / i left all i knowd/ was forsed, / put in to this clinical shit hole."[472] In many ways, the tone of the exhibition was a departure from Fotogalleriet's historical programming. Pasenau, one of the youngest artists to have entered the collection of the National Museum in Oslo, refused to present her images within a white cube. The hanging was low and dense. Thoughts interspersed. Visitors were able to sit down on the floor and find a relation with the images, and even hide and lock themselves within the exhibition architecture. A box within a box within a box (or a womb).

Wencke Mühleisen, a professor of gender theory and an artist who lived in artist Otto Muehl's AAO commune in Austria in the 1970s, brought attention to how, in the 1960s and 1970s, "a worshipping of an aesthetics of negativities, refusal, and failings was dragging artists into the streets like zombies."[473] In looking for new forms of subversion, it was "easy to run into the body again: Everything began with the body. Everything ends there as well."[474] Especially when the "structure of the subject implodes."[475]

Economy (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 81. The author, Zarobell, also quotes the following: "A kunsthalle puts things up for evaluation and discussion and deliberately provokes clashes between rival positions. It does not present art history, but contributes to it." Gerald Matt, "The Vienna Kunsthalle: its future in the Museum Quarter," *Museum International*, LIII, no. 1 (2001), 46.

471 ——— I curated the exhibition *Pasenau and the Devil* by artist Maria Pasenau, which took place at Fotogalleriet from 31 August to 12 December 2019.

472 ——— What we may here perceive as typos are in reality part of Pasenau's vernacular English: "In school, she stood out for having dyslexia. In the first grade, she got a tutor she describes as absolutely awful. Because Maria enjoyed writing and creating her own stories and the teacher forced her to correct all the errors in the sentences—'I started to cry, because then the story wasn't how I wanted it to be any longer. So, I sat at home with my mom in the evenings and changed it back. I wanted to tell the story in my own way.'" Pål Vegar Hagesæther, "Maria Pasenau (24) lager kunst av sin egen kropp" [Maria Pasenau makes art of her own body], *A-magasinet*, 30 August 2019. My translation.

473 ——— Wencke Mühleisen, untitled lecture (Fotogalleriet, Oslo, 21 September 2019). This talk was delivered in the context of the seminar *Freedom of Artistic Expression in the Digital Age* at VEGA SCENE, Oslo, with contributions by Mühleisen, Tore Slaatta, the White Pube, and Maria Pasenau, and moderated by Danby Choi.

474 ——— Mühleisen, untitled lecture.

475 ——— Mühleisen, untitled lecture.

Pasenau's art can constitute an answer to this question (Mühleisen's take, not mine).[476]

We know very well how such disciplining of the body is morphed through the exhibitionary complex, by showing itself more than concealing.[477] But how can exhibitions really move our senses? Creating meaningful discussions about the taboos of our always-public beings, left with no intimacy and no attention?

As much as architecture produces gendered spaces, in capitalist-driven societies it also reproduces ableness, generating subjectivities by manipulating movements and predicting bodily experiences. Architecture prescribes a one-way identification with the sick, differently-abled, vulnerable, or exhausted, by creating and dividing such categories and reinforcing them through class and accessibility, and determining how bodies are distributed when they change over time in our relation to time and space.

Philosopher and feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz emphasises that the theories and practices of modern architecture in Western society refer to "epistemic domains where the body's neutrality, transparency, and universality is all assumed."[478] Mind and consciousness have been at the heart of subjectivity-formation studies. Grosz instead holds that identity and knowledge formation are corporeal. We need to move away from the synchronicity that equates the body to a machine and architecture to societal order,[479] serving functional and reproductive politics. Human bodies are a

476 ——— A group of eighty-year-old ladies from Bærum (the municipality in Norway with the average highest level of education and income), whose wanderings are usually confined to the National Museum and the Munch Museum, visited the exhibition, after an appeal by the daily news (*Dagsrevyen*)—a privilege we almost never have at Fotogalleriet, as small institutions do not usually receive attention from such large news outlets. These women were shocked by what they saw: "I had no idea when I was waking up this morning I was going to speak with you [as reported by Annika Hagstrøm, my colleague and former head of mediation at Fotogalleriet] and my friends about how I experienced my period, my body changes, menopause, and the importance of masturbation." Another added: "It's kind of a little bit liberating." They wanted to challenge themselves. Throughout the exhibition period, my colleagues on the mediation team also hosted kids aged eight to twelve, as well as teenagers.

477 ——— Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," *New Formations*, no. 4 (Spring 1988): 73–102.

478 ——— Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion. Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (London: Routledge, 1995), 83–84.

479 ——— Functionalism and machine aesthetics held their influence in modern architecture. The machine's arrival was of such revolutionary signifi-

material part of a universal flow. They become ill, age, and dissolve in the flow of material processes. The body, conceived in classical terms, is constituted as self-sufficient: before and beyond socialisation or culture.

What if we observe such an abstractedness of how our bodies slowly disengage from their day-to-day architectural routines?

Daisuke Kosugi's new film *A False Weight* (contemporaneously presented in exhibitions at Jeu de Paume in Paris, CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux, and Museo Amparo in Puebla, Mexico, in parallel to its presentation in Oslo) is an experimental production that shows an interplay between Masanori Kosugi (b. 1951) and Toru Iwashita (b. 1957).[480] In the fall of 2017, Masanori, Daisuke's father, is diagnosed with an unusual and incurable brain disease. The illness affects the body's movement and balance before eventually inhibiting speech, cognition, and mobility. As a construction engineer, Masanori lived by rational and constructive ideas, which he also implemented on his body in the form of bodybuilding. As the symptoms continue to develop, Masanori tries to fight the disease with rehabilitation and the use of prostheses. Toru Iwashita, a butoh dancer, performs Masanori's daily routines in a repetitive pattern. What at first glance is perceived as the depiction of a normal retirement becomes the backdrop of the portrait of a syndrome. The dance conveys the loss of control over one's own body. Throughout the production, Masanori worked with Iwashita on details of his movements, and how the body feels in scenarios portrayed in the work.

The film explores a domestic space which is a public space in the sense that architecture historian, theorist, and curator Beatriz Colomina defines it, meaning modern architecture bringing a "publicity of the private."[481] Architecture is another tool of control and publicness, a functionalist structure that doesn't affect just objects (buildings and design). Bodies need to fit the requirements of productivity and reproductivity of the given economic system (including a nuclear family system). "The politics of space are always sexual, even if space is central to the mechanisms of the erasure of sexuality," Colomina argues.[482] The body, a pre-formed, fixed,

cance that Machine Age became an architectural term. Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity. Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 156.

480 ——— At Jeu de Paume, the exhibition was curated by Laura Herman as part of the Satellite 12 programme, and co-produced by Jeu de Paume, CAPC, and Museo Amparo.

481 ——— Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 8.

482 ——— See Beatriz Colomina, Introduction, in *Sexuality and Space*, ed. Beatriz Colomina (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University School of Architecture, 1992), n.p.

and known entity, is standardised (invariable, normal, vigorous, and healthy) in architects' practices, necessarily leading to the production of the standard-fit design. For this reason, to accompany the film in the exhibition space, Kosugi produced *Recliner* (2019), a bamboo version (with clear burn marks on the parts being curved) of Charlotte Perriand and Le Corbusier's iconic modernist chaise longue, LC4. The chair was initially designed to follow the standard body's natural shape. By replacing the industrial steel tubes with organic bamboo, and with a highly unstable and "burnt" material, Kosugi questions the idea of the universal body of the chaise longue—the same kind of body that the seemingly functional apartment in the film portrays. Underpinning the exhibition is the propagation of an engineering aesthetic based on the idea that pure design can produce similarly standardised human beings (healthy, unageing, asexual). Such essentialism has its roots in classical theories where the body, in naturalistic terms, is the cause and motivation for the design of cities to replicate order, harmony, and proportions (for example, the Vitruvian depiction of bodies in geometric proportions in decontextualised, one-dimensional architectures).

Kosugi was inspired by Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Commerce Quay, 1080 Brussels* (1975) and *No Home Movie* (2015)—an influence that is immediately visible in the film. As viewers, we learn how to see, step by step, each scene in a socioanalytical way. Kosugi uses a technique which he calls "crop time." Everyone is a little bit annoyed by the amount of time the first sequence takes. And this is how we can come closer to understanding the frustration of differently abled people. They can perform tasks, but it takes longer. In our capitalist-driven societies, we are given a time frame within which to perform. Even when we watch the film, we may feel we do not have the time. Paradoxically, we constantly feel that we need to help the other, because we do not have time, not realising that there are different concepts of time and that we are imposing our own. Differently abled bodies can perform their tasks but in a different time. This is "crip time."

At Fotogalleriet, the exhibition was not accessible from the main entrance (as it is not immediately wheelchair accessible), but only from the backyard. Inside the space—as much as with Maria Pasenau's show—the movement was circular. The screen was a bit low. Betraying expectancies.

How does it feel to enter from the back door? That you have gone the wrong way? Does it feel less accessible?

A critic in a review was not so happy about having to walk in from the other side. Not the usual way. But how must one feel when one is always using the other way?

Colomina studied the entrance as a meaningful concept of its own in modern architecture, especially for how Le Corbusier envisioned it. She contends: "To *enter* is to *see*. But not to see a static object, a building, a fixed place. Rather, architecture taking place in history, the events of architecture, architecture as an event."[483] She argues that the right to privacy has become the right to remain "out of the picture," which means not only away from the press but also away from credit reports and medical records. That is being out of public view. Without fear of explicitly referring to sexual organs and sexuality when reading Le Corbusier's strategies for thinking in terms of buildings and visibility, Colomina addresses key issues often hidden behind architecture's universalist claims. She is bringing back functionality and the politics of visibility and archiving that buildings create. The entrance, presupposing gendered ableness, is not only part of the modernist architectural "spectacle" of enabling or concealing access but also of creating an image of accessibility and visibility. Provenance (the commissioner) is vital in her study.

In line with Colombina's take on reading architecture as a site of information and communication, in order to be able to fully understand its presumptive predicates, and to deconstruct such locus of exhibiting and curating as being monolithically tied to a physical space being the only trope of circulations, and in order to open up to disruptive practices—that since the 1970s had challenged art making through every means possible by disengaging with the monological truth coming from the monumental architecture of museums—I also engaged in forms of curating which would traverse these interstices and find new homes in temporary curatorial appearances in the space for instance of photobooks. Such practices, inherited by feminist takes, as explored in chapter 2, guided such dematerialised thinking. The exhibition space, the white cube, envies, as the patriarchal locus of recognition, other forms of freedom that are more fragile, seductive, proletarian, sharp; or such is a claim we made for the beginning of Fotogalleriet's 2020's programme with artist and editor Nina Strand and designers Anna Planas and Pierre Hourquet (Temple Office), to acknowledge other forms of display and resistance, with a lower architectural threshold. Photobooks and zines are able to travel fast and far, escaping the world of normality and normativity. We are looking at the photobook and the zine as a body which is able to permeate different

483 ——— Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 5.

spaces and times, bringing undefined change in its migratory movement that challenges the political architecture of the exhibition space.

Through this new form of programming, we have seen a considerable difference in our publics and the becoming public of the institution, its availability crossing time and space.

If curating means *curare*, acting as a *pharmakon*—that is, maintaining the revolutionary potential of an artwork—it also means acting in solidarity, in the sense of carrying a weight together, by supporting the bodies that are in danger, human, non-human, and more-than-human ones. It means taking care as well as cleaning up the mess after hegemonic structures collapse, or prove themselves useless for the majority.

Can we really bring the artwork to public judgment in our time of crisis, to reinject vital fluids into the space of assembly, which perhaps the exhibition space is? What kinds of actions can we spearhead to stand in solidarity, to write grassroots histories?

Borrowing a sentence from artist Bouchra Khalili describing the work of writer Jean Genet—who did not speak for the people he stood in solidarity with—and attempting to retranslate such a practice into the field of curating, in order to see if curating can be reimagined to reinvent institutions that "bear witness to those whose words [still] remain unheard or are silenced."[484]

(5.3) The missing image[485]

Tom Sandberg, a photographer and one of Fotogalleriet's co-founders, in 1977, speaking to the press on behalf of the working group about the reasons behind the institution to come, stated: "We are art world realists. Impressions through film and photography are a daily diet for everyone,

484 ——— Bouchra Khalili and Hendrik Folkerts, "Twenty-Two Hours: Bouchra Khalili and Hendrik Folkerts in Conversation," *Mousse Magazine*, June 2018, 241–47.

485 ——— A version of this text was presented in the context of an event series titled *Positions in Nordic Photography*, Fotografihuset, Oslo, on 25 September 2020, at the invitation of curators Jonas Ekeberg and Lisa Bernhoft-Sjødin and as part of a double presentation with Anna Tellgren, curator of photography at Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

but nonetheless, many in this country have an immaterial relationship with photography as art. It is that which we will try to correct."[486]

I find such a comparison of images to food quite fitting, especially in our neoliberal era of consumption, where image-related disorders are directly interconnected to or provoking eating disorders, due to unhealthy images, genetically engineered images—allergies, abstinences, and intolerances triggered by the immune system, reacting significantly to images that "hurt us" on a bodily level.[487] I lean on Sandberg's claim here, as it may help us rethink our institutional habits concerning image consumption. As he points out, we assume the visual language of images as given, instead of analysing the role of images in the constitution of institutions.[488] Institutions *enable* images, because they create power, "a special kind of power." His question, simplified, would be: Images master us, but do we master them? We incorporate food into ourselves, but do we understand what we are eating?

486 ——— "Vi er kunstverdens realister. Inntrykk gjennom film og fotografi er daglig kost for alle, men allikevel har mange her i landet et likegyldig forhold til foto som kunst. Det er dette vil skal prøve å rette på." Sissel Keyn, "Kunstens realister får sitt eget galleri" [Artist-realists get their own exhibition space], *VG*, 13 August 1977. My translation.

487 ——— Guy Debord attempted an analysis of how capitalism brought about a "constant *decline of use-value*, giving rise to a new form of poverty" and survival, running "alongside the old poverty." He writes: "The dictatorship of the bureaucratic economy cannot leave the exploited masses any significant margin of choice because it has had to make all the choices itself, and any choice made independently of it, whether regarding food or music or anything else, thus amounts to a declaration of war against it. This dictatorship must be enforced by permanent violence. Its spectacle imposes an image of the good which subsumes everything that officially exists, an image which is usually concentrated in a single individual, the guarantor of the system's totalitarian cohesion." Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), aphorism 64.

488 ——— A more accurate comparison may be made here in order to draw from Sandberg's claim as an artist working within the visual field and pushing for institutional novelty and change, and the need for new institutional models, and to understand the philosophy of institutions and how they create habits, normativities, and other forms of formal and informal power relations. For a more accurate reading on the role and self-referential power of institutions, I refer the reader to John R. Searle, "What Is an Institution?," *Journal of Institutional Economics* 1, no. 1 (2005): 1–22.

Institutions define habits (and a status), of *how* we get accustomed to certain ways of seeing (of looking), directly shaping interconnected ontological givens—rights and duties, as the first examples of their polarities.[489] It is in this setting that class and other forms of belonging are shaped and projected as universal social realities giving way to "desire-independent reasons for action."[490] Meaning basically that we are often inactive towards what the institutional system projects on us. The "it is as it is" of the status quo leading to commonplaces such as that there are too many images in the world already—uttered, for instance, even by someone who is considered a pivotal figure in the history of photography: Robert Frank.[491] These are constructs mostly aimed at keeping us from finding the right image, and from giving us a "right to the image."

Upon assuming my position at Fotogalleriet, I immediately launched a weekly programme of conversations titled *Let's Talk about Images*, to delve into questions regarding the absence of images, the absentees in images, the image of the absentee, and what images can do. Cultural hacking, the construction and negotiation of identities in relation to normative power structures, movements of solidarity, feminist perspectives, asserting presence through the absence of words and objects, who has the power to speak, victims and bodies in techno-utopian visions, creative storytelling, and narrative rifts were all performed in the emptied space of the institution, the white cube of the patriarchal bourgeoisie. We opened the possibility of the institution inverting its own given expectations, in an anthro-

489 ——— Searle refers to these markers as "deontic powers": "By creating private property, governments, marriages, stock markets, and universities, we increase the human capacity for action. But the possibility of having desires and satisfying them within these institutional structures—for example, the desire to get rich, to become president, to get a Ph.D., to get tenure—all presuppose that there is a recognition of the deontic relationships. Without the recognition, acknowledgment, and acceptance of the deontic relationships, your power is not worth a damn." Searle, "What Is an Institution?," 11.

490 ——— "The answer, which again is essential to understanding society, is that institutional structures create desire-independent reasons for action. To recognize something as a duty, an obligation, or a requirement is already to recognize that you have a reason for doing it which is independent of your inclinations at the moment. By creating institutional reality, we increase human power enormously." Searle, "What Is an Institution?," 11.

491 ——— I find it symptomatic that Frank's words were reported in a widely distributed magazine such as *Vanity Fair*. See Charlie Leduff, "Robert Frank's Unsentimental Journey," *Vanity Fair*, 17 March 2008, https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2008/04/frank200804.

pophagia of sorts.[492] In dialogue with local and international artists, we analysed the work of Syrian artist Khaled Barakeh and Norwegian visual storyteller Terje Abusdal, both working to reshape a country's image (providing the "missing" image). Barakeh's work attempts to reclaim the right to a different image, when a territory of war is expropriated by the right of its people to represent themselves—their image literally owned by media outlets only. Abusdal's work equally attempts to present a multilayered image of a country, Norway, by showing a weathered landscape also scarred by violence and informed by occupations, migrations, and immanent geopolitics, setting this against its mainstream image of utopian flatness as peacemaker. Abusdal goes back to a moment in time too close to be forgotten and yet too painful to continue to be acknowledged, namely World War II as unravelled in the Finnmark region. Landscape, a charged concept, is made devoid of its "nobody's land" label, equally depicted in Romantic paintings and early photography attending to an alleged uninhabited, vacant, and deserted land, to strategically serve the ideology of the dominant culture, while in fact being the territory of Indigenous populations and of a number of untold stories of belonging and exploitation. These ghosts (impossible images)—past and present—come back in Abusdal's photographs, as both human and non-human witnesses; the survivors of World War II, who decided to stay behind despite the destruction of their land, cattle, and belongings, are surperimposed alongside projected traces of the Syrian population arriving from the border town of Kirkenes in 2017. Their portraits could be identified by facial recognition technologies and provoke inescapable retaliations by their homeland regime on their loved ones who were left behind.

The missing image: this is the hidden matrix of a curator. A missing image makes space for the unrecorded, as well as that which has been represented but that, for one too many reasons, is now absent. Making space for the institution to transgress its given limitations is the exhibition, a space dominated by the very logics of the nation state's formation and oppressions. I believe that was also Sandberg's call, to move away from the documentarian space of the page and into the democratic tensions of the arts.

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492 ——— The idea of the white cube stems from a basic rule where "The outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light. … The art is free […] 'to take on its own life.' The purpose of such a setting is not unlike the purpose of religious buildings—the artworks […] are to appear intact over the passage of time and its vicissitutes [… so] that the work appears already belongs to posterity—that is, it is an assurance of good investment." For a full account on the role of the white cube, I refer to the seminal book by Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

How these practices of art institutions resist normalisation is the ultimate role of institutions—not to constrain people as such, but rather to create new sorts of power relations.

When we opened the first solo exhibition of Maria Pasenau, a self-taught artist—whose work I have addressed in the previous subchapter—it was to bring experiential and visual claims to the space, connected to the body as the site of trauma. Pasenau brought to the exhibition space a sociality of emotions, or missing emotions—unexpressed emotions—which question cultural social practices determined by our market-driven society, unconsciously reaching our bodies.[493] In a culture where our feelings are constantly being manipulated and we are constantly being told what we should "feel" or "not feel," do or not do, which ideas of success to pursue or not pursue, Pasenau's practice conveys a search for freedom, through her images, that I have rarely experienced, which connects people through missing images. Trying to find images that escape the stronghold of mainstream movements and false ideas of happiness, Pasenau provides the possibility for a different institution to be—one of such material encounters.

In providing annotations to Pasenau's work, artist Bjarne Melgaard ponders whether he should rather write about tears and about different reasons why one cries or is unable to cry. He asks, "Does grief make it possible to finally navigate around the landscape we call our lives?" We learn that when he asked Pasenau what the content of the photographs was, she told him that it was just a form of documentation of when she "felt so damn bad for a while," which makes him wonder if sadness can simply escalate at times, and one just "feels worse and worse and worse."[494] Actually, he confesses, he gets "happy when people tell him they are depressed." In one of such shared downspiralling moments we learn that he got a message from an author commenting on his work by saying that his work "was really just one long crisis." And then he asks: "Does [also] Maria feel that her life is a long crisis?"[495] This is something we have all probably felt, because of what we are constantly asked to be, and the consequent failure we feel. There is something extremely powerful in admitting such shame, inadequacy, because it is actually an acknowledgement of society's wrongdoings—past and present—on our collective bodies, and therefore it absolves individual guilt, we learn from feminist theorist Sara Ahmed. In saying no, we feel shameful, we express affection for others, we express

493 ——— I curated the exhibition *Pasenau and the Devil* by artist Maria Pasenau, which took place at Fotogalleriet from 31 August to 12 December 2019.

494 ——— Maria Pasenau, *Pasenau and the Devil*, artist's book and exhibition catalogue (Oslo: Fotogalleriet, 2019), n.p.

495 ——— Pasenau, *Pasenau and the Devil*. (My translation).

forms of discomfort, but we also take distance from a given collective other which we have not chosen but it has been cast on us, with the potential to catalyse new thinking. "In showing my shame in my failure to live up to a social ideal, I come closer to that which I have been exposed as failing," writes Ahmed.[496]

"Emotions accumulate over time," and they also become alienated, as for any other capitalist process, producing their own invisible labour, and are erased in favour of consumers' value as every other commodity in capitalist societies. This is a lesson not only from Marx but from Maria, too.[497]

If we turn given paradigms around, the ones claiming that emotions are either inside or outside the body, to instead say that they are actually circulating, that they are signifiers with a real effect, we could understand emotions as a contagion, and images as contagious—meaning they have the power to affect and shape other imaginaries. A different food. Such feelings and images become "sticky," saturated with affect, as the "sites of personal and social tension."[498] Emotions and images constitute therefore a movement, and that is what Pasenau guides us through.

Rightfully, Bjarne Melgaard also attempts a speculative alignment of Pasenau's practice to Viennese Actionism, not by chance but because in such practices the body is the ultimate site, the image of dissent. Trapped, we could say, in its biopolitics especially under moments of extreme control and returning fascisms, the human flesh is a site of suffering and shame in response to specific political climates. For Günter Brus, Otto Mühl, Hermann Nitsch, Anna Brus, Johanna Schwanberg, and Valie Export, the body is perhaps the site of repressed memories of Nazism in the stagnant conservative culture of post-war Austria; obtuse Catholicism and bourgeois compliance to liberalism; the Vietnam War resurfacing in aestheticised forms through their skin. For Pasenau, it is the new conservative turn of politics. The body rebels because it is captured and co-opted by a nation state under whose violence and entanglement this indiscernible belonging perpetrates violence. It is here that the nakedness of the body moves in tandem with blood-sacrifice rituals, together with the artist's

496 ——— I am retranslating here some of Ahmed's claims on shame into a different but still meaningful context. See Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 102.

497 ——— Karl Marx links capitalists with the poor in their "boundless drive for enrichment" and "passionate chase after value." Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1976), 254. Ahmed explicitly cites Marx in her introduction. See: Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 11.

498 ——— Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 11.

flesh turning into art-object simulacra as the site of critique. Genuinely shocking images against images of shock. Seeking action instead of reaction. Pasenau is not asking for our sadness, which in return would make us feel justified through what could be called "co-suffering," ensuring that what we feel sad about remains "the object of 'our feeling'," following Ahmed's thinking process.[499] It is not the mandatory tasks that we need to accomplish. Remaining in this disconcertedness is to reposition the institutionality of feelings, and how they come out to inhabit our bodies and to travel through images, in today's "image sphere."

The individual's memories of emotions are part of an intersubjective, symbolic system grounding ideas of collective memory in society through verbalisation, narrativisation, and visual images' representation. It is essential to understand how memories and emotions are exchanged, amended, taken or rejected. Anglicist and cultural scientist Aleida Assmann formulates how institutions such as "the family, the neighbourhood, the peer group, [...] the nation, and culture" become meaningful for identity processes and forming a "we." "We" presupposes "shared practices and discourses", for feeling inside or outside of these groups. A collective group adopts a shared history, she claims.[500] Anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli reminds us that it is also imperative to keep in mind anti-colonial practices pushing for greater attention on methods that foreground an intersectional engagement with gender, class, sexuality, nation, and disability. These axes of identity, often excluded by academia, shape knowledge production in more ways than one. Moreover, new technologies, even of archiving emotions and building institutions, renew some of the gaps already present in knowledge systems assigning positions of power.[501] Emotions, or the alleged lack of emotions, in academic knowledge equally shape history and the formation of such a "we." To look at it through the lens of "what sticks" from a theoretical perspective was, for me, a guiding principle through the reading of Sara Ahmed. Ahmed asks, through emotions and their manipulation, what it is that becomes a salient effect "in such collective transference." What gets stuck and unstuck. What engenders new and more adhesive forms of sticking. "Adhesion involves not just sticking to a surface but giving one's support and allegiance."[502] A conscious and theoretical approach to emotions foregrounds the possibility

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499 ——— Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 21.

500 ——— Aleida Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory," *Social Research*, vol.75, no.1, (2008), 49–72.

501 ——— Elizabeth Povinelli, "The Woman on the Other Side of the Wall: Archiving the Otherwise in Postcolonial Digital Archives," *differences, vol.*22, no.1 (2011), 146–71.

502 ——— Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 100.

for multiple histories and institutionalities, including archives, to emerge, instead of cemented legends and truths.

By investigating memories and emotions, while looking at the presentness of Fotogalleriet as an active space of production of both, I was looking back into histories of production and "value" for a forthcoming book on the institution's life. It was here I came across other missing images, memories, and remembrances connecting bodily traumas and escaping the singular subject, "sticking" in between subjects and society. Bente Geving, a Sea Sámi artist, repeatedly prompts a reflection on bodily memory, both personal and collective, as well as brings forth discussion on events, realities, and societal aspirations. During the summers of 1985 and 1988, she thoroughly studied the lives of Anna, Inga, and Ellen, eventually leading to her first solo exhibition at Fotogalleriet at the end of 1988. These three sisters belonged to the last generation who fluently spoke Sámi (in the process of assimilation, their children were forced to learn Norwegian). They maintained a leading role in their families and in their society, embodying the life cycle, courage, and identity of a people. Geving photographed them at a late stage in their lives, when "Ellen … has forgotten everything, but she remembers singing and dancing."[503] Returning often to the theme of recollection and forgetfulness as a compilation of forbidden habits reconstructed in the everyday objects and the organisation of one's home, Bente's photographic series associate sequences where feelings are rarely self-evident. Involuntary memory erosion articulates an experience where the loss of tradition is the loss of history.[504]

When we look at the work of Geving we see an intergenerational trauma—her work attempting to capture this impossible image. Memories, which have been stored in this circular emotional movement, reappear through the body and the body of the image recurrently.

503 ——— From the press release for Bente Geving's solo exhibition *Anna, Inga and Ellen*, Fotogalleriet, Oslo, 29 July–30 October 1988. My translation.

504 ——— Sigrid Lien points out to the many histories that photography as a medium hold, and the impossibility of reducing them into coherent narrations. See: Sigrid Lien, "The Aesthetics of the Bear Hunt: Contemporary Photography in the Ecology of a Sámi Museum," in *Uncertain Images: Museums and the Work of Photographs*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards and Sigrid Lien (New York: Routledge, 2016), 122–140; Torild Gjesvik, "Minne," in *Glemte Bilder*, by Bente Geving, exhibition catalogue (Horten, Norway: Preus Museum, 2005), n.p.

Photography is about leaving an impression; it is an act of perception and cognition as well as an emotion; it is about how objects impress upon us, and can effect feelings, can be a mark on the surface as well as perform a collective experience. And because of this function, we continue to be in a need of new images to readjust our diet, to understand what we are eating and why, and not only to consume pre-packaged food; we "feel" what we eat.

(5.4) Let's talk[505]

On 15 December 2020, I met with students of the National University of Arts in Bucharest and the Centre of Excellence in Image Studies at the University of Bucharest. We reflected on digital programming strategies, taking Fotogalleriet as a case study. Usually such month would be a time of the year for celebrations, for thinking about the kind of year we've just had—moving from the nostalgia of the past into making concrete prospects for the incoming future. Yet 2020 was a turning point. It is difficult to let it go, because the ways in which our habits have been affected will have long-lasting results. It was a year of losses, metaphorical and literal ones, and these lacerations will take a long time to heal. It was also a year where capitalism's desire has reached its maximum profitability, under the paradigm of collective safety through which new normative choreographies have been imposed on us: consume, do not gather; speak, do not talk; complain, do not protest.

Under these conditions, while emotions are skyrocketing and mental balance is under pressure, what happens to art? Why would we even need to talk about art during this time? And what is the role of exhibition spaces during these times of crisis? Is democracy still to be debated in some "public" spaces even while we have no right to congregate, to take collective actions?

Such disciplining of our bodies through telecommunications technology has reached maximised popularity these days. Informal discussions, the movement of ideas, are hovering below in underground secrecy, a constipation of the individual body, as much as the basis for new totalitarian-

505 A version of this text was presented for a digital workshop with Salonul de proiecte, Bucharest, on 15 December 2020, on the occasion of the collaborative archival and exhibition project *The Photographic Image between Past and Future*.

isms coming. It was important to state clearly that if we simply accept such dichotomies of "comprehension," or cause and effect, we are supporting ideas of "global conquest and total domination," according to political theorist and philosopher Hannah Arendt. We are determined by an idea of the invincibility of the human being, without resisting to the commonplaces of reality, in the face of incoming fascisms.[506] The reality we live in is not new, yet we cannot find escape in the present or in the past, nor can we forget it, while awaiting for an anticipated future which is not there yet. Yet we should still feel the "shock of the experience."[507]

During the second wave of pandemic "confusion" in Oslo, resulting in the second wave of Covid-19 regulations, the Fotogalleriet, as many other art destinations, yet again, was facing closure for an indefinite time, with an exhibition that had just opened. At the same time, shopping malls (the reign of consumerism) were still open, gathering hundreds of people in queues for Black Friday. Museums and cultural events drastically shut down. Under capitalist predicaments, fast fashion is more necessary than art. No doubts and not even a paradox: it speaks of our time when culture is a superfluous yet needed decoration to the cityscape and is seen as part of an economic system—of society—only if it sustains growth and it is part of its sellability. There is no danger to putting an institution on hold, to putting culture on hold for a day, a month, or a year, because if tourism is not growing, then capital is not moving—and art can wait. Culture is not seen as vital (counter-)information to rethink the normative structures we are constrained within, and how we got here, nor is thought as a place to shape and summon these growing, unprocessed, collective emotions.

Feminist Marxist political theorist Silvia Federici posits these developments and crises in a historical manner to give an understanding of the predictability of the state of things, by saying that what we are witnessing today is not an unforeseen catastrophe but an orchestrated profit-driven machine whose signs have been there for years, at least from the 1970s with the inception of the neoliberal phase. Since then, we have witnessed a careful dismantling of all the infrastructures that have been most important for the reproduction of daily life, including lack of a proper budget for healthcare, a general divestment of social services, and the double-edged impact of overworking: on the one hand, a rise in unemployment and, on the other, an extension of working hours and working days, reducing the time for self-care while increasing the use of fast food, the consequent debilitation of our immune systems, the deterioration of the quality of the

506 ——— Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland, OH: Meridian Books, 1958), viii.

507 ——— Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

air, and so on and so forth, broadly affecting and intersecting all global systems we know and are part of.[508]

Therefore, in order to rethink the possible and how actions can influence a different historical futurity, we need to reevaluate the infrastructural systemic past in which we are living. "We don't want a theory of innocent powers to represent the world," says technology theorist Donna Haraway, nor to act "in terms of Global Systems, but we do need an earthwide network of connections, including the ability to partially translate knowledges among very different—and power-differentiated—communities."[509]

Since the 1960s and 1970s through a certain strand of the arts, as I have shown in chapter 1, chapter 2, and chapter 3, a space for registering tensions accross communities and contributing a debate between the everyday life and the role of art within it, which could not have been otherwise negotiated, has been actively opened through the role played by small- and medium-sized institutions, and through dematerialised practices that maintained a feminist perspective. When the Fotogalleriet team sent out a message to simply revindicate presence beyond our physical space, by sharing the staff's (private) phone numbers and inviting people to call us and get in touch, it was not an act of generosity, but, quite selfishly, one born of believing that art institutions' power in general was under attack.[510]

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508 ——— Silvia Federici, "Corona Virus: A Health Crisis or a Political Crisis?" (livestreamed lecture, Kunstinstituut Melly, Rotterdam, 18 September 2020), YouTube video, 1:47:24, https://youtu.be/W--GpXpWOf0.

509 ——— Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575–99.

510 ——— On Monday, 9 November 2020, while facing a new wave of lockdown in Oslo, I, together with my colleagues at Fotogalleriet, decided to distribute a message through our newsletter channel and social media, inviting people to contact us despite our physical location being temporarily closed. The board supported the message, and our contacts (telephone numbers and emails) were made public. The same message was printed and pasted to the Fotogalleriet main entrance. The core of the message read as follows: "The intimacy of our conversations related to small and large societal questions gets lost in the coldness of digital space. Here we can only speak formally conjuring up an atmosphere of division where we are literally boxed in screens. To counter this we invite you to call and ask us any questions you may have regarding images and more: what do they want, how to install them, or how they affect your life, love, work and beyond. To keep finding motivation and feedback amidst this period where a great number of physical exhibitions, projects and public presentations are temporarily closed, you can simply reach out to us to hear a friendly voice. We want to see you, more formally, in our digital gatherings, but you can also count on us

It was a call to awaken ours and others' consciousnesses by recognising a larger systemic crisis. "What's happening? Let's talk!" Let's talk, at this time when our ability to keep a space of "antagonism" feels under siege and we stand divided. When we wrote, "The intimacy of our conversations related to small and large societal questions gets lost in the coldness of digital space. Here we can only speak formally conjuring up an atmosphere of division where we are literally boxed in screens," this was a message of frustration and a way to reclaim the public sphere even when that seemed completely unrealistic and impossible due to the governance of surveillance under which we were unexpectedly placed. It was a request for building that space of appearance, whose possibility in the physical space is given by the encounter of people coming together in order to claim it.

A month later, following the delivery of this message, an artist and colleague called me. I had not spoken with him for a while and I was happy to hear from him, up until the moment he said he was recording our phone conversation for a conference to be held digitally the next day. He had some "questions" around the publicness of an institution, and why institutions were still getting receiving funding; he asked if institutions were still working, and the kind of work institutions had done over the past year.

"I cannot but speak about the institution I know best and that I'm responsible for," I answered, and so we went on to speak about a number of things, including changes in budgets for artists in a pandemic year. What surprised me most was the question about the institution's message being part of a "Relational Aesthetics" project (as it apparently reminded him of such practices), as if we had gotten a special Covid-19 grant to realise it. I was uncertain what to answer. I pick up the phone every single day, and we do not get a special grant every time I or anyone on our team answers a call or an email from artists, colleagues from other institutions, or our publics. One can imagine my surprise, as I came to think that, under the Duchampian umbrella and its inception of the avant-garde, that "everything can be art" which continues to prevail in the art world today, we tend to forget that this trope matters very little to the outside world (espe-

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to help combat these challenging times in a more personal way. … Fostered by what we know how to do best, and through our daily love and care for people, art can act as an engine driving civil society, where we can collectively challenge structures of inequity in a climate of social dissonance. … [W]e are invested in our public responsibility to find different forms of collectiveness, which cannot be limited by the restriction of not meeting physically. We are already imagining programmes for the future and we welcome propositions, formal and informal thoughts, in order to come together with a common desire for change, and also, simply, just to hear from you.

cially in such a critical sociopolitical moment, when culture is not the centre of any discussion), including the coming together as a collective of cultural practitioners to defend one's space and work as such.

Nicolas Bourriaud's book *Relational Aesthetics* was translated into English in 2002. At the time, I was a student and came to study with a number of people associated with Relational Aesthetics practices, including Molly Nesbit, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Pierre Huyghe, who gave lectures and presentations at the school I attended.[511] I had dissected the book then. In it, Bourriaud says:

> We feel meagre and helpless when faced with the electronic media, theme parks, user-friendly places, and the spread of compatible forms of sociability, like the laboratory rat doomed to an inexorable itinerary in its cage, littered with chunks of cheese.[512]

One may think he is speaking about today, but he is actually speaking of the abstraction, and the abstract processes of, the 1990s.

Much has been read into what Bourriaud wrote in such an epochal book ("epochal" meaning here "of our epoch"). At the time, though, he was referring to the fact that relations had become reified as the site of consumerism (although I'm not sure what was new in such a claim, if not that it testifies to an art world that attempts to be less and less dependent on a physical space for its performance). He was speaking of the pleasure sellable through consumer goods and gained through separational channels that Guy Debord had defined as "spectacular representations."[513]

Bourriaud was asking if such lost relationality—unmediated by goods or commodities—could still be possible by being generated through the space of art, within the art world, or through the artwork, moving away from traditional forms of art historical representation. His claim is for an extended context of art in its social space (basically moving beyond the object). In the 1990s—in the spirit of the information age and widely available digital technologies—he recalls practices of people's interaction with social systems and open-ended circulation and the mutation of objects, with an absence of dividing walls, shifting from the artist's body and with

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511 ——— From 2003 to 2006, I was enrolled in the Exhibition Studies programme at the Iuav University of Venice, where Tiravanija was a professor.

512 ——— Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon, France: Les Presses du reel, 2002), 8.

513 ——— Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 9.

a focus on the interaction with the audience; his exhibitions were made for people to sit, talk, listen to music, and engage in everyday activities.[514] The only problem is that in reclaiming (or in not claiming) that there was no past to these practices—in terms of its desired immaterial and revolutionary forms of challenging the exhibition space and the space of art as such, that they had not claimed a "unitary" form in the exhibition space—Bourriaud continues to reproduce the very capitalist means of exploitations he was seen as criticising, where he denies gender, provenance, and class as vital elements of performing the exhibition space (in presence or in absence of such bodies).[515] Bourriaud does not speak of such practices as valuable for the unveiling of the structures of exploitation—the invisible work behind exhibition making—which had been part of a long tradition of feminist art practices since the 1960s. His work hovers over pure aesthetics to be subsumed and summoned in the exhibition space only.

What was discovered under the days of pandemic would be a fragility that is not universal but rather contextual to specific sections of society, specific institutional structures. So, Fotogalleriet's message was a call to an art system which may feel divided, disempowered, and under a great deal of vulnerability, affecting small and medium-sized institutions.

As a counterpoint to Bourriaud, and to claims of Relational Aesthetics, it is important to bring into the discussion the work of Mierle Laderman Ukeles, specifically *Maintenance Art* from 1969. Ukeles is an artist whose relation to the idea of process in Conceptual Art, for instance, has been defined as relating to domestic and civic "maintenance." Connecting the "high" cultural status of art and the "low" status of the routines of maintenance, which still underlie divisions of care, she showed how art can literally disappear before your eyes, as we continue to praise the norm. Working against such an easy understanding, Ukeles decided to recode *all* her activities as art, and that is how we know of her groundbreaking work. As part of the *Maintenance Art Performance Series* (1973–74), she performed *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance Outside* on 23 July 1973 at the Wadsworth Atheneum, in Hartford, Connecticut, literally working at the threshold of the museum.

In this particular performance Ukeles addresses our power to redefine through performativity and labour the confines of our work and the definition of the art space as an active sphere of action and normativity, where certain bodies are accepted under certain conditions, while other are

514 ——— Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 28.
515 ——— Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 19.

granted other permissabilities, determining gradation of people and things, including in the formation of subjectivities. She even said that during the days of the Vietnam War, when institutions were viewed as corruptible, many artists chose to do most of their work on the street, as dematerialising their art meant being unrestrained and not owned by the very powers which were perpetrating violence home and abroad (I maintain the implicit dialectic of home referencing the idea of nation), and I read this with great respect and admiration.[516] Such action is not decentring the power of institutions but actively seeking and working for inclusivity in the sphere of representation, by recognising the political dimension of cultural projects.

The message we sent out as Fotogalleriet—which was not by an artist, was not a piece of art, and was addressing a different threshold, making a great difference to reclaiming such a powerful sphere for art to occupy, and a different institutional vulnerability—was not Relational Aesthetics in the terms we commonly know, as formulated by Bourriaud.

Curatorial practice in the time of pandemic

Fotogalleriet is gendered, as, contrary to the patriarchal space of the museum, where a kunsthalle has a modest budget, modest power, and a great deal of fragility. Our maintenance is more porous, less divided, less hierarchical—inevitably because of how vulnerable we are. Such vulnerability is exposed in moments like the year 2020, when we have just been set aside, meaning we are not the centre, so to speak, of anyone's preoccupations.

So, on 3 April 2020, as the world was shaking under our feet, and it felt more fluid than solid, and we witnessed a deceleration of cultural and social life, we publicly said we felt a duty to continue analysing what is happening *now*, at this moment, and the effects the produced (or unproduced) images are provoking on us.

Because we sit on the margin of cultural life—as small and medium-sized institutions—we are also the ones keeping critical discussion active, generating new thinking, and fighting for democratic processes within and beyond the arts. "Instead of taking a break," we said, "feeling under siege,

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516 ——— Mierle Laderman Ukeles, quoted in Helena Reckitt, "Forgotten Relations: Feminist Artists and Relational Aesthetics," in *Politics in a Glass Case: Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions*, ed. Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 133.

or meditating on our past nostalgically, we continue conversations with artists and we make their work available to extended audiences."[517]

In such spirit, we launched new programmes that could address such collective emotional thinking together and institutionally. *Let's Talk about Images 2.1.0* was a series of what we called "exercises in thought," unfolding over eight weeks, for the mind to bring order to all sensory data, whatever its nature may be, and thus make experience still possible.[518]

We did not want to turn digital—this was very important, in order to not be subsumed into a new given world order we had not asked for, where labour is moved into the private sphere to maximise profit and resources.[519] Facing the impossibility of occupying the physical space, we planned to hijack the only available platforms at our disposal at that moment to continue to maintain discussions. Nomadism was part of planning to maintain freedom and independence. This was equally a move to avoid political claims of redundancy and offering the power to somebody else to put us on hold. In turn, it was a strategic move to support the artists' economy the best we could, by continuing to do what we could do—that is, share with others different worlds, other forms of being, and hopefully keep affecting thinking.

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517 ——— The sentence is part of a Fotogalleriet newsletter distributed through the institution's database and social media on 3 April 2020.

518 ——— I curated *Let's Talk About Images 2.1.0*, a programme running for eight weeks from 16 April to 12 June 2020. Participating artists, commissions, and contributors included Anahita Alebouyeh, Bjarne Bare, Herman Breda Enkerud, Philip Di Salvo, Katalin Erdödi, Håkon Hoffart, Vilde M. Horvei, Manuel Pelmus, Anushka Rajendran, AA, RG/the Society of the Friends of the Virus, and Salvatore Vitale. The production was coordinated by Fotogalleriet's Una Mathiesen Gjerde and Håkon Lillegraven, graphics and digital communication by Herman Breda Enkerud Fotogalleriet's Niels Munk Plum, with the further advice of Fotogalleriet's Arash Shahali.

519 ——— The redomestication of labour into the private sphere hints at important discussions for the emancipation and recognition of unwaged work central to socialist feminists' discussion during the late 1960s and into the 1970s. One should re-theorise what today's "domestic labour" means within a framework of Marxist political economy. Such an analysis would provide a foundation for understanding new forms of intersectional subordination. Departing from the changing meaning of domestic labour and its literature could bring new relevant discussions to issues of class exploitation and primitive accumulation. Such early domestic labour theorists' unfinished projects still deserve further attention. I refer here to, for instance, Lise Vogel, "Domestic Labor Revisited," *Science & Society* 64, no. 2 (2000): 151–70.

Let's Talk about Images 2.1.0 was a #stayhome art programme. The programme took place from 16 April to 7 June 2020. The participating artists were published on the institution's Instagram account every Monday. Artists, curators, and journalists from seven countries participated: Norway, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, India, and the US. The participants were: Manuel Pelmus, Katalin Erdödi, Anushka Rajendran, Salvatore Vitale, Philip Di Salvo, Vilde M. Horve, Bjarne Bare, A. A., R. G., Anahita Alebouyeh, Håkon Hoffart, and Anders Eiebakke. The entire Fotogalleriet team worked as a production team to commission and realise within a short period of time discursive and artistic interventions to foster awareness around relevant topics and to challenge habits determined by the pandemic. We can adapt curatorial thinking to digital platforms that are not necessarily designed for such purpose and attempt to give voice to artists in an otherwise oppressive regime. New artistic expression forms ensue under strained societal conditions by maintaining a critical voice and pushing the given limits.

Excercises 1–8: Conspiracy theories, surveillance technologies, racism, family ideals, memory, and empowerment

We launched *Let's Talk about Images 2.1.0* with artist Manuel Pelmus. Pelmus accepted the offer to conceive a new performance based on previous work concerning the economy of presence, value production, and strategies of disappearance. His acclaimed solo piece *preview* (2007), where his presence is discernible only through his voice describing movements made by his body behind a veil of darkness, was merged with *Borderlines* (2019), for which he returns to his own memories of border crossings or borders falling, from the Berlin Wall coming down to Eastern European countries re-entering continental powers in Europe.

Personal experiences speak about hegemonic powers, which give us the freedom to move, or not, where we, as individuals, count too little in the randomness of such decisions. Pelmus's (hi)stories aggregate notions of visibility and invisibility, moving between different politics of representation, from East to West, from visible borders becoming invisible, and from outside into the body. Such confining within national borders does not always feel like protection and safety, depending on one's own set of privileges, beliefs, and even sexual identity. It exposes the power to speak—if any—for some. Citizenship assumes a new meaning and a potential threat.[520]

520 ——— Here I should acknowledge my migrant worker condition—though one may argue a privileged one—in a land where non-native labourers constitute nearly 20 percent of the population. The immigrant population comprises 221 countries and autonomous regions, where 25% are from one of four migrant groups: Polish, Lithuanians, Swedes, and

Curator Anushka Rajendran addressed this further. She said, on 22 April 2020: "From a position of isolation, it may seem as if we are all equal—the virus does not discriminate. However, as the Indian doctor Jagadish Hiremath pointed out: 'Social distancing is a privilege—it means you live in a house large enough to practice it.'" Rajendran, who was to curate Colomboscope, Sri Lanka's only festival platform for contemporary art and interdisciplinary dialogue, was unable to complete that project due to the pandemic. She discussed that context, alongside issues of "interpollination"—simply meaning organisms trespassing human-built borders as micro-agents travelling through the air, and therefore questioning how limited human views are—and how the openness of language and poetry can lead us to more-than-human perspectives.[521]

The idea of "the nation" returned strongly to justify a number of "necessary" actions, including prohibiting gathering for demonstrations, severe immigration procedures, and prioritising the rights of national citizens (most often in favour of Western countries and other elites); under the pandemic, the concept has been made more visible, and more violent,

Somalis. See *Statistics Norway*, https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/innvandrere/statistikk/innvandrere-og-norskfodte-med-innvandrerforeldre. According to a report from Statistics Norway, 2020 saw the lowest number of people immigrate to Norway since 2005. It also registered a decline in the number of refugees granted residence. See Frazer Norwell, "How did Covid-19 affect immigration in Norway in 2020?" *The Local*, 25 May 2021, https://www.thelocal.no/20210525/how-did-covid-19-affect-immigration-in-norway-in-2020/. One needs to understand what can happen when you move and do not belong, or when your "privileges" can be revoked on any given day, sometimes without much explanation, and become an object of inclusion or exclusion. One is not considered an active subject (a citizen), but a worker whose rights are regulated according to the availability of work and not according to legal rights as a human body and a human being. Hannah Arendt distinguishes between the nation and the state: "The state, far from being identical with the nation, is the supreme protector of a law which guarantees man his right as man, his rights as citizen and his right as national. [The legal order] is not affected through the number of nationalities which are protected within the framework of its legal institutions." See Hannah Arendt, "The Nation," in *Hannah Arendt: Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 210.

521 ——— The 2021 edition of Colomboscope was inspired by Cecilia Vicuña's poem "Language Is Migrant": "Language is migrant. Words move from language to language, from culture to culture, from mouth to mouth. Our bodies are migrants, cells and bacteria are migrants too. Even galaxies migrate." Cecilia Vicuña, "Language Is Migrant," 2016, Poetry Foundation, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2016/04/language-is-migrant.

including in Europe.[522] This was among the reasons why we invited Switzerland-based artist Salvatore Vitale to speak about his long-running research-based project *How to Secure a Country* (2014–19).[523] Much like Norway, Switzerland is known for being one of the safest countries on earth, and a prime example of efficiency and efficacy—including preparing for moments of pandemic. State and private actors ensure this valuable commodity—safety—which is as much a basic need as it is a billion-dollar business. Vitale invited us to witness a photographic livestream of an invisible military facility in the Swiss Alps. Titled *ABC—Attitude/Behavior/Code* (2020), the work combines archival images from Swiss biomedical facilities and texts from official national pandemic protocols to reflect on the nature of invisible threats and what we are willing to sacrifice to neutralise them.

Security is based on experiences, which rely on emotions. Military and bureaucratic tasks become managing our emotions, infrastructurally and representationally. Humans are the weakest link in the security equation. They are unpredictable, and their emotions even more so. Changing human behaviour through technology provides valuable forms of control for nations.

Another invited artist, Bjarne Bare, spoke about nature as the invisible enemy of capitalism.[524] Bare addresses a gripping stillness through his

522 ——— Hannah Arendt had advised against the troubling association of nation and state leading to totalitarian regimes of governance. See Hannah Arendt, "The Nation," 206–211.

523 ——— *How to Secure a Country* was presented as an exhibition curated by Lars Willumeit and held at Fotomuseum Winterthur from 23 February until 26 May 2019. The book project features essays by political scientists Jonas Hagmann (ETH Zurich), Philip Di Salvo (Università della Svizzera Italiana), and Roland Bleiker (University of Queensland, Australia) "provide an analysis of the structure of the Swiss security system and a view on the politics of photography. Lars Willumeit, curator and social anthropologist, discusses attitudes, behaviours, and codes in 21st-Century statehood." (From the artist's website). See also *How to Secure a Country. From Border Policing via Weather Forecast to Social Engineering—A Visual Study of twenty-first century Statehood*, eds. Salvatore Vitale, Lars Willumeit (Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2019).

524 ——— Bare brought to our attention the use of the word "mono-technologism," addressing how, since the Enlightenment, after the decline of monotheism, the cult of a single god was replaced by the cult of technology as part of a promise to reach a higher level of immunity and immortal life. See Yuk Hui, "What Begins after the End of the Enlightenment?," *e-flux journal*, no. 96 (January 2019): https://www.e-flux.com/journal/96/245507/what-begins-after-the-end-of-the-enlightenment. He also pointed out that while the environment seemed to

work, and that standing still does not create friction. The standstill is the tyranny of the photographic lens, which has given way to linear perspectivism with one single vanishing point. He proposes a discover of new forms for navigation, as well as new temporal perspectives, through what Bare calls a conjunctive concatenation of details—an emotional understanding in contrast to a logical construction of the world; empathy instead of intellect; a nomadic desire instead of an idea of belonging.[525]

The Society of the Friends of the Virus spearheaded a counter-view to the pandemic, giving full agency to the virus. Beginning in mid-March 2020, the Society distributed a series of political writings through different epistolary forms.[526] For Fotogalleriet, it launched *Contagious New York*, a video diary in five chapters.[527] Here, Annie Chambers, a former Black Panther Party

recover during the pandemic, the enemy is now fighting back. At least this was, in a very Christian way, philosopher Slavoj Žižek's reading of the viral epidemic as a message from nature: "What you did to me, I am now doing to you." Slavoj Žižek, *Pandemic!: COVID-19 Shakes the World* (New York: Polity, 2020), 81.

525 ——— Antonio Cataldo, "Falling into the Image," OSL contemporary, 2020, http://oslcontemporary.com/exhibitions/bare-bjarne.

526 ——— "Dear Virus, We want to write to you this communication, as a short note of thank you. To our human companions on this planet, such a gesture would appear a betrayal, since at this very moment you have been declared as an enemy of humanity. Not since the events of September 11 has there been such unanimity and propagation of fear and the mobilisation of uncritical construction of an enemy toward relinquishing further power to states and exposing our most intimate details. … But as the Society has neither a great trust in the state nor in the Capitalist 'Community' enterprise we also try to see and perceive how we may embrace your arrival. For years we have been told that an illness, malady, disease is above all a carrier of a message. Sometimes that message is simple, to stop, to rest, to change fully (in the severest of cases) our habits, the way we live, our foods, our diets, our form-of-life." *The Society of the Friends of the Virus*, vol. 1, Centre Parrhesia, March 2020, http://centreparrhesia.org/vol_1_society_of_the_friends.pdf.

527 ——— Annie Chambers asserts: "You know, I tell them no, the law wasn't made for me. If this is the law, who made the law? And where did I come in to help make that law? You know, if I wanna talk about my civil rights, wouldn't I have a right, or somebody like me to help make the law, help make the laws of this country? No people look like me made any laws. When they talk about the constitution, nobody who looks like me was up there making no constitution. … So it's not for me, but I say treat me like a human being—that's what I want to be treated like, a human being … When they were making the laws of this country nobody who looked like you made no law, so why are we giving credence to that? Stand up and say "treat me like a human being." The full film is available at http://centreparrhesia.org/nyc/.

member based in Chicago, speaks from an interview in 2006 to denounce the violence of the capitalist system preceding the pandemic. "It is the law written by nobody like us," she says, "for which I have no equal rights."[528]

Anahita Alebouyeh turned her gaze inwards. She shared her artist's manifesto to suggest how "the artist" may move forward. Through satire and humour, Alebouyeh aims to suggest new ways of looking at and processing our immediate surroundings. She also points out a poetic change in these cultural phenomena, focusing on what occurs when they are translated and performed in a new context.[529]

Håkon Hoffart's work took the form of a digital installation consisting of images, sculptures, and videos, channelled through a content farm. In Norway, Hoffart pioneered the idea of the internet as a habitable space (beyond its given function), when, in 1997, at the age of thirteen, he created an interactive website with Javascript games, an image gallery, discussion forums, and the world's first "internet café," where one could eat virtual food on the internet. Håkon's world reached 800,000 unique hits in 1998. So we found inspiration in our conversations with him about the suburbia of the internet, its caves, and the underworld of the yet-unknown.

For the final week of the programme, we "screened" *The Park* (2020), a project by Anders Eiebakke which addresses the most monolithic work of public art in Norwegian history: the Vigeland Park.[530] Still referred to in City of Oslo cultural policy documents as "one of the most successful works of public art in the city's history," the Vigeland Park, studio, and subsequent museum were first proposed by Norwegian sculptor Gustav Vigeland in 1914. Construction began and continued over three decades, including during World War II, with Vigeland's vision continually evolving in scale and ambition. Even today, the park is one of Oslo's most visited and iconic locations, but its history and Vigeland's life are seldom critically examined or discussed. The film *The Park* addresses essential issues related to conspiracy theories, surveillance technologies, racism, family ideals, memory, and empowerment, all associated with producing an aesthetic realm and ideal heavily dominated by a normative body built on the model of functionality and "purity." The site of the park becomes an unspo-

528 ——— The interview is part of "Variatio V" of the video *Contagious New York*, video, 17:06, June 2020, http://centreparrhesia.org/nyc/.

529 ——— Anahita Alebouyeh, "Hi, My Name Is Anahita," Facebook video, 5:21, posted by Fotogalleriet, 20 May 2020, https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2652564731731053.

530 ——— The Viegeland Park is the largest sculpture park in the world featuring the artworks of just one single artist; they count over 200.

ken monument to the Holocaust. It calls for a different history to be told and made accessible.[531]

To conclude—as we all continue to witness a very fragile public space for discussion worldwide—analysing as well as providing alternative images is of a political nature, and the clear task of culture is to shape our present condition.

Exploring images as a free tool of personal expression is inscribed within institutions like Fotogalleriet and their mandates, and, as such, the aim is in no way ever concluded: it is an aspiration that guides us ever forward.

(5.5) Anger, love, and silence: Caring for emotions in the exhibition space

Is love an emotion? Is anger an emotion? Are these pulsations? Or are love and anger organising principles, both private and political? What would the consequences be if they were to be treated like deals, authorisations, equirements, and culturally determined givens?

A bit of background to perform a position

I am a creature of a certain moment in time, of post-1960s life in Southern Italy, and one allowed to enter higher education systems despite my origins.[532] I was born in the centre of the country, home to a dialect which came to dominate the entire peninsula's ruling by the nation state. My parents were migrants from the South, a land expropriated during the unification of Italy; it's also a place "conflicted" by a multiplicity of languages—hugely

531 ——— Eiebakke worked closely with historians and other relevant people to find material revealing the closeness of Vigeland (1869–1943) to the Nazi regime. The main gate of the sculpture park also served as one of the main pickup points for people from Oslo sent by the regime to concentration, prisoner-of-war, and other work camps. The entire work is available at the artist's website at https://www.anderseiebakke.no/monday.

532 ——— It is only after the 1968 students' movement that children of the working class and lower classes could enter higher education, especially universities, more organically and with structural support. See: Corrado De Francesco, "The Growth and Crisis of Italian Higher Education during the 1960s and 1970s," *Higher Education* 7, no. 2 (1978): 193–212.

flattened and dismissed as dialects, while in fact survivors and bearers of spoken Latin, ancient Greek, and other "lost" languages.[533] My parents' migration was guided by the so-called dream of a better life, escaping the consequences of decades of political policy that impoverished peasant life, agriculture, and local livelihoods; they left the South behind in favour of the strong industrialisation policies that advantaged the ruling North.[534] Their complacency regarding that life did not last long, and when I was still a small child, they went back to farm life, in a form of both co-option and resistance, stranded between two worlds: the decadent industrial model (soon to decline) and the bypassed peasant livelihood (unsustainable under the newly designed state of things).

As an outcast child, ostracised for my class belonging, I carry with me into adulthood an inherited trauma.[535] The roots of my critical interest in the machinery of aesthetic affectation of vision, perhaps derive from some of those very early formative experiences in an upbringing of insults, of being abused on the street for the way I spoke and moved, my effeminacy,[536] for my parents being abused because of their low level of education, and for a local Southern society enraged by unfulfilled promises and aspirations and scarred by vicious alternating dominations, branching out from city

533 ——— Antonio Gramsci, "Some Aspects of the Southern Question," in *The Southern Question* (Toronto: Guernica Editions, 2005), 27–72.

534 ——— Though Gramsci writes in the late 1910s about the detrimental national state advancement policies, in practice the effect of the unification was still a reality in the 1980s. Gramsci, "Some Aspects of the Southern Question."

535 ——— I'm leaning on William Grier and Price M. Cobbs here, who brought to attention fundamental psychiatric research regarding how provenance and class give rise to inherited trauma, by examining mental illness and the psychic stresses engendered by discrimination. They equally demand a more localised knowledge against the universal knowledge projected by privileged subjects. See William Grier and Price M. Cobbs, *Black Rage: Two Black Psychiatrists Reveal the Full Dimensions of the Inner Conflicts and the Desperation of Black Life in the United States* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992).

536 ——— I refer here to new research on the word "feminism" being conducted by Delphine Bedel. She traced a genealogy of the word going back to 1826, when, in the medical language of the time, "feminism" comes to be defined as a word connecting to "effeminate"; in such a way, "feminism" was formed by mirroring the female body on the male body, as the latter was inscribed with a disease in which the patient showed female attributes in "his" gestures. Bedel presented this research and claim during the digital conference *Photography Bound: Rethinking the Future of Photobooks and Self-publishing*, organised by Fotogalleriet and KDM – Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design, University of Bergen, 13–15 October 2020.

lords.[537] The psychosocial dynamism of the violence of prejudice, regulated by regimes of theoretical discourses, is the seed of my anger today.[538]

What came to be defined as "situated knowledge" by Donna Haraway at the end of the 1980s is what I experienced first-hand by being the object of a social experiment: a "map of tensions and resonances between the fixed ends of a charged dichotomy."[539] Haraway clarifies how the dismissal of local knowledges has also created tension by forcing diverging interpretations and inequalities into the entanglements of knowledge and power. It is also here that Haraway comes to define "resonance," in the sense of bodily vibration registering complex, contradictory, and structuring views, as a positive tool against polarisation and dichotomy.[540]

I start from this line of thought, not by chance, but because I think it is important to reflect on such polarities, which we have inherited consciously or unconsciously, and which have created a grammar determining who has the right and a voice to speak.[541] It is in these processes of visibility and invisibility, of the production of what is thinkable and sayable, that "scarcity" in discourses gains a form of invisible governance.[542] I am attempting both to speak from a situated position as well as to apply a

537 ——— I refer here to processes of stigmatised traumas produced by the utterance of words, causing the internalisation of the barrier created by the insult. "The act of naming produces an awareness of oneself as other, transformed by others into an object." Didier Eribon, *Insult: And the Making of the Gay Self* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 16.

538 ——— Foucault emphasises that his goal is to treat discourses as practices that "systematically form the object of which they speak." Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 49.

539 ——— Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 588.

540 ——— Haraway, "Situated Knowledges."

541 ——— I came back to Pasolini, and his theory of "free indirect speech" as a tool to give voice to people who otherwise may not have one, thanks to the work of artist Bouchra Khalili, who has often reflected on Pasolini in her practice, as well as the role of the witness and the problematic aspect of who is given the right to speak.

542 ——— Foucault places at the heart of his analyses the system that defines, in a given epoch, what is thinkable and sayable. "Instead of studying the sexual behavior of men at a given period … , instead of describing what men thought of sexuality … , one would ask oneself whether, in this behavior, as in these representations, a whole discursive practice is not at work; whether sexuality … is not a group of objects that can be talked about (or that it is forbidden to talk about), a field of possible enunciations … , a group of concepts." Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 93.

situated knowledge and perspective, inherited through a contrarian thinking, to a claim of objectivity, a colonial discourse manufactured out of the technologies of vision, because "one cannot relocate in any possible vantage point without being accountable for that movement."[543]

Archive trouble

During the winter of 2018, while diving into the archives of Fotogalleriet for an upcoming book, I was mechanically and unwillingly pushed to retrace, enforce, and further "construct" a history which had already been somewhat sketched out. Yet, I was still surprised by the discursive absence of women photographers in the recently systematised archive, especially relating to the founding period of the institution in the late 1970s, as well as by a disturbing photograph on the institution's website replicating presumptuous hierarchies of gender.[544] The archive is a "domicilation," a space of "commencement," because it is the physical place where documents are filed for the power of interpretation, in "the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded."[545] The archive is a "house arrest," where the private becomes public (meaning not necessarily available, but not secret either, which is the power of such a consignation).[546] This is the place for establishing and controlling social order through methodologies of perceptions, including what can be reproduced, and what can be forgotten or re-inscribed into visual protocols.[547]

Nonetheless, there is always not only one commencement. With performance artist Marthe Ramm Fortun, we started discussing a visceral affect-based presence in the exhibition space at Fotogalleriet with an intertextuality of "being with" (resonating with the physical space itself, with the other artists), to identify a general narrative where silence—what Michel Foucault would call a "scarcity of discourse"—in educational institutions as well as in art institutions leads to the perpetuation of the idea of the nonexistence of women artists and photographers, making it impossible to get beyond the preliminary despondency of rediscovery and on to an actual analysis of individual practices and their distinct quali-

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543 ——— Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 93.

544 ——— Upon my arrival at the institution, I noticed a picture on the website from 1977 portraying a group of people, naming a few as the founders of the institution; the only woman in the picture had not been deemed visually "independent" from her male counterparts, and instead was "playfully" subjugated to a hierarchy of gendered roles, visually.

545 ——— Derrida traces the archive to the Greek *arkheion*: "the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded." Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression," *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 9–63.

546 ——— Derrida, "Archive Fever."

547 ——— Derrida, "Archive Fever," 15.

ties.[548] With her overflowing energy, Ramm Fortun immediately drew our attention to the possibility of physically transgressing the given borders of the institution, moving into the city's geography, by acknowledging the context of its architectural skin, that is, the institution's pouring onto the streets and into parks. This action was undertaken in order to explore the double life of an institution refusing to "live" the outside, the night, the drug taking, needle using, pissing, drunkenness, fucking—the "otherness"—through its clean normative space, activated only during "office hours." Ramm Fortun was inviting us to imbibe the entirety of the locale in its material presence by simply "crossing" the street and the clock, rebelling against the given white cube—the ghost of a patriarchal past. Instead of relying on her bodily presence—as she usually would in her performances—she mounted a bed-type structure on a pedestal, a supporting structure to be climbed so one could touch the ceiling of the exhibition space, to "measure" the physical space in its bodily distances, and to observe how it constricts the possibility of any given movement, as in a hospital or a mental institution. Or as with any piece of modern architecture itself, its preventing and pre-empting of movement—a mechanism so well reproduced by the exhibition space.[549]

As part of her performance, Ramm Fortun "homed in" on works by Lill-Ann Chepstow-Lusty (a British-born artist "exiled" to Norway in 1980) and Bente Geving (a Sámi artist who used an early exhibition at the institution as part of claiming her Indigenous roots), as well as Astri W. Goksøyr, Cecilie Lønne, and Henny Lie.[550] All linger ambiguously between documentary photography, Conceptual Art, sculpture, and painting. These artists have no common denominator except that they all exhibited at Foto-

548 ——— Ramm Fortun was at the time the acting dean of the Academy of Fine Art at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts.

549 ——— To think it with Foucault: "Transgression, then, is not related to the limit as black is to white, the prohibited to the lawful, the outside to the inside … Rather, their relationship takes the form of a spiral which no simple infraction can exhaust. Perhaps it is like a flash of lightning in the night which, from the beginning of time, gives a dense and black intensity to the night it denies, which lights up the night from the inside, from top to bottom, and yet owes to the stark clarity of its manifestation, its harrowing and poised singularity." Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. D. F. Bouchard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), 35.

550 ——— Marthe Ramm Fortun's intervention started within the exhibition *Women in Three Acts*, curated by Kati Simon, which opened on 14 March 2019. A second performance, *LOOK AROUND IN JOY*, was held at the stroke of midnight on 27 April 2019. A third one is forthcoming. For more, see "Women in Three Acts," Fotogalleriet, 2019, http://www.fotogalleriet.no/en/exhibitions/women-in-three-acts.

galleriet during its first decades and shared an absence of exhibition reviews, demonstrating an external attempt to reduce their expressions as being unmeditated.[551]

If the opening of Fotogalleriet as an institution in 1977 coincides with the establishment of photography as an art form in its own right in Norway, Ramm Fortun asks, then was the problem that the "male artist" could not afford to let the fight for the canonisation of the medium be cramped by women and marginalised voices, already unrepresented in the art world, nationally and globally?[552]

A first performance, titled *When I'm not near the slide I love, I love the slide I'm near*, was held in March 2019, and a second performance, titled *Look Around in Joy*, was held at midnight at the end of April 2019. As of June 2021, a third performance is yet to come, meanwhile supplying time and duration as the material for "transgressive" action.

If a "science of the archive" should include the theory of its "institutionalisation," then it should also investigate the laws ascribing it the capacity to control and perpetrate memory.[553] Ramm Fortun's intervention exposes what I would term "archive trouble," in order to question the series of processes that are woven together to construct discourses of knowledge, precise institutional identities normativised by the collecting of strategic information to constitute a determinacy, and a radical dependency on established photographic authorities such as Edward Weston, Bill Brandt, Helmut Newton, August Sander, and Weegee (all exhibited during the first decade of the institution), without which an autonomous "other" becomes illusory. I am mirroring the jargon of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* because the archive is, like gender, an improvised performance.[554] The archive pretends to have a universal aspect of truth, one equal to that of constructed notions of gender, uncomplicated by factors such as class, ethnicity, and sexuality. The limits of studying archives and democratically participating

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551 ——— This is also Marthe Ramm Fortun's take as noted in an email to the author, 22 February 2019.

552 ——— This is part of an ongoing conversation and the questions that the artist was addressing while preparing the commissioned series of performances for the institution. Some traces of it are registered in email to the author by Ramm Fortun on 22 February 2019.

553 ——— Derrida claims "[t]hat there is no political power without control over the archive, if not memory." The democracy of a society for him can be measured through how much participation is given to archives. Derrida "Archive Fever," 4.

554 ——— Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), viii.

in them for the sake of the politics of memory are on par with the limits on the power to control the law—that is what is undoubtedly expressed in the archives of coercion. The constitutive violence of the archiving is in the preservation of its own memory.[555] Jacques Derrida attempts to produce a death-drive theory of the archive itself, what he names the "archiviolithic," to attest to a revolutionary potential of the archive—that such a drive "leaves no monument, it bequeaths no document of its own. As an inheritance, it leaves only its erotic simulacrum [...] impressions." Because it is a legacy—an impression of pleasure—the archive can never be self-standing memory; it always attempts to take the place of the original but can only be a disintengration of memory, a collapsing of the original.[556]

As the Fotogalleriet team was writing an application for financial support—which went unfunded—with the artist Nikhil Vettukattil, we also came to further analyse the institution's archives in search of a different "trouble," or perhaps to stay with the trouble, or to get in trouble, as Butler so convincingly proposes.[557] We were studying and looking for non-European subjects in the overall story of Fotogalleriet's programming. Not surprisingly, what we found instead were expropriated bodies, objects of representation only, with no actual agency. No memory. By dissecting dozens of boxes, slides, posters, publications, catalogues, internal documents, and visitors' logs, Vettukattil came to assert:

> Norway is no exception to the fact that all nation states promote myths of monoculturalism and monolingualism that are reinforced through a fabricated national identity, forged through imperial history, that intentionally misrepresents the variety and interaction of dialects, languages and cultures within the geographical region. This identity is instrumental in the commodification of national exports for the international capitalist market, where cultures are packaged with branding, flags and trademarks, and high prices reward "authenticity" and origin.[558]

More recently, we continued discussions with Vettukattil, touching upon institutional structures and financial support, and how funding is determinant of the production of culture, especially in welfare-state nations such as those of Scandinavia, where being an artist is deemed a profession

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555 ——— Derrida, "Archive Fever," 7.
556 ——— Derrida, "Archive Fever," 14.
557 ——— Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xxvii.
558 ——— Nikhil Vettukattil, "Politics in the Image of Blackness," *Conversations on Photography*, ed. in Antonio Cataldo (Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2021), 285–303.

and therefore connected to rules of work and restitution and not only considered an act of passion and love.[559] Funding is part of structuring ideas, framing eventual productions, and affecting a politics of vision. As our initial project proposal had by now been discarded by grant-giving bodies and so would never make it into their archives—for not being "approved" and for not seeing the light of realisation—we found ourselves imagining how many projects over Fotogalleriet's five-decade history had been omitted from archives, remaining simply in the memory of some people. Did other struggles for recognition reach the doors of the institution without making it onto its walls? Were these discussions simply absent? Where can we find that other commencement to which Derrida points? Would the archiviolithic be too feeble here to even become a force? Or would the archiviolithic simply take over the entire archive and burn it down with all of its force? How can we "curate difficult knowledge" that should eventually become publicly available through archives when allegedly there are no traces left, if not in absence. Though tangibly this demonstrates the infamous life of archives, which at times capture some historical traces only unwillingly—something Foucault reports on in "The Life of Infamous Men,"[560] asserting that certain people's stories are made visible only through their encounter with the law (the hospital, the clinic, the prison, and, by extension, we could add the white cube); their lives, contrary to aristocratic or bourgeois figures who willingly recount their deeds, are registered precisely by their transgressiveness—such a void is purely left to the original, to memory which is not there and not inscribed. What happens when there are no impressions, no erotic simulacra to be explored in order to structure representation even in a dispersed memory?

A deconstruction of what the archive calls for entails overcoming its limits—limits that have been declared "insurmountable." If the archiviolithic forces destruction and incites loss of memory, what are we then to lean upon?[561] According to Derrida, Sigmund Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929–30), claims to worry about having invested himself in "useless expenditures," in a whole lot of work on archiving technologies whose ultimate aim is unclear to him as most of what he is asserting may be

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559 ——— A general overview is available in Merja Heikkinen, *The Nordic Model for Supporting Artists: Public Support for Artists in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden* (Helsinki: Nykypaino, 2003). On the contemporary relation of the welfare state to the arts, I refer to Marta Kuzma and Peter Osborne, eds., *Art of Welfare* (Oslo: Office for Contemporary Art Norway, 2006).

560 ——— Michel Foucault, "Life of Infamous Men," in *Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy*, ed. Meaghan Morris and Paul Patton (Sydney: Feral, 2006), 76–91.

561 ——— Derrida, "Archive Fever."

already obvious. Derrida, reads into this use of incredible energy with no final purpose in itself, the principle of the death drive that Freud had coined for different reasons.[562] Derrida argues that, in Freud's theory, loss is a form of resistance. The death drive incites resistance everywhere and destroying its own archives is the motivation of its movement.[563]

Likewise, perhaps, Nikhil Vettukattil's claim on Fotogalleriet's archive: a drive of loss, motivating his very writing. Rage. We can hold on to the archive to point out its failures, its crimes, its ongoing repetition of the same, its unchallenged holdings.

Infamous caring: The kunsthalle is a form of archiving in itself

The logic of the repetition of consignment is what allows the archive logic to restart anew. Such destruction, searched by the death drive is in strict polarisation with the pleasure principle, making use of the archive for the creation of images in disguise.[564] It is this resonance, in the ability of the archive to show itself—to create images; to give image—that the work of the archive comes closer to that of a kunsthalle—an eternal possibility for a new beginning. Is not the work of a kunsthalle similar to a death-drive expenditure, to possibly working on this loss expenditure and leaving no traces behind, forced into the institution's presentness?[565] Is it not also here that we can question the ontological status contingent to the bare-institutional condition?[566] Moreover, the kunsthalle is a form of archiving in itself, as it aspires to democratic forms of governance but lives within an unresolvable tension: its memory cannot be fully grasped (contrary to the museum, where memory is constantly reprocessed and histories are either static or in a self-reflective motion).

Kunsthalles—pushing novel understandings of art forward, and contributing to the making and unmaking of these given categories, though with little financial means and precarious personnel—are also "cut out" from larger art histories. Perhaps, then, to analyse these concurrent silencing structures is the real task of a "curatorial materialism."[567] These struggles against this continuous suppression, inflicted first and foremost by social

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562 ——— Derrida, "Archive Fever," 13.

563 ——— Derrida, "Archive Fever."

564 ——— Derrida, "Archive Fever," 11–12.

565 ——— Techniques of material exchange, instruments of communication, but also the property rights, publishing rights, and reproduction rights it institutes.

566 ——— Searle, "What Is an Institution?"

567 ——— Elke Krasny, "Curatorial Materialism: A Feminist Perspective on Independent and Co-dependent Curating," *OnCurating*, no. 29 (May 2016): 96–107.

circumstances of provenance, mirror larger societal structures and views. (Contemporary) art (as a global system) maintains a high threshold while feigning accessibility through its glass-ceiling system.

As much as we have learned ideals of life achievement based on the failures and successes of individual artist-heroes, we continue looking at institutional and curatorial achievements based on the failures and successes of individual institutions and curators, mostly of leading world museums and biennales. In a practical, aesthetic, and theoretical manner, these processes form subjectivities and collective behaviours, silencing what has been defined as and relegated to being "minor"—that is, small institutions, with their own curatorial roles being no less part of this suppressing movement.[568]

Though central to the production of the "new"—because kunsthalles' processes are dedicated to speaking to and about the current moment—they have neither an "obligation" (so to speak), nor the capacity to register such tremors determining historical changes, nor the influence of museums to historicise what has been shaken through these movements. Such is the paradox of being contemporary.[569] The kunsthalle lives within the very moment it needs to support, and therefore becomes concurrent with the artwork; there is no separation between the two. Because the kunsthalle has not overcome the "struggle for daily bread," a true emancipatory role for her is not possible.[570] It is here, though, that new forms of curating have been and are imagined, where one can find forms of assembly, of aggregation, in the exhibition space, assenting to autonomous forms of governance, investigating and challenging the critical conditions of pro-

568 ——— This was partly Ramm Fortun's claim in her performance cycle. Wendy Brown articulates the subversive potential of silence: "Even dreams of emancipation cannot take shape unless the discursively shadowy or altogether invisible character of those subjects, injuries, events, or activities are supplanted with articulation, whether through slave ballads, the flaunting of forbidden love, the labour theory of value, or the quantification of housework." Wendy Brown, "In the 'Folds of Our Own Discourse': The Pleasures and Freedoms of Silence," *University of Chicago Law School Roundtable* 3, issue 1, article 8 (1996): 185–97.

569 ——— Giorgio Agamben's "What Is the Contemporary?" could be useful here to understand that there is an impossibility of capturing your own current moment. It's included in Giorgio Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus? And Other Essays* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 39–54.

570 ——— As I have noted elsewhere in this manuscript and attempted to demonstrate, the kunsthalle has to be considered gendered, in order to reclaim her power to speak from a situated position and, with it, to claim her propulsory emancipatory role within the arts.

duction and the platforms of display, and redefining the structures of governance, production, and support as well as the given ruling relations.[571]

It is in regard to these congregative structures, precursors to or contemporaries of kunsthalle formations, newly born spaces "of becoming" pushed together by adversarial external forces—in absence of or requesting and producing the new—that I have used the term "trembling institutions." With this term, I wish to speak of a temporary coming together of ideas, of opposition, and therefore of ideas of citizenship, of belonging, which come under the umbrella of a physical and a mental space encompassing a period of time of a few hours, a few years, or a few decades, enhancing the formation of aesthetic propositions.[572] The power of such gatherings remains in their indefinable status, in their literal "trembling," as they can always change form and escape what is requested by the norm *to be*. It is a "respectful dissent" as well as a claiming of the right to congregate and disperse.[573] Something happens when subjects come together; independently from their given statuses, a new chemistry arises. Novelist and non-fiction writer Elias Canetti defines five types of congregations, or masses, or crowds: baiting, flight, prohibition, reversal, and feast. What they all have in common, though, is growth, equality, density, and a goal.[574] The kunsthalle is a call for a gathering, a mass finding unison, in spite of holding a unified ideology. Is not the curatorial—"caring for"—articulating these aesthetically minoritised hegemonic forces? Resonating with the vision expounding from these more or less temporary and unstable congregations?

These forces bringing bodies together and inducing them to "tremble"—or making institutional models "tremble"—including curatorial and other aspirations for change, are more often than not guided by emotions; frustration, for instance, in the case of the founding of Fotogalleriet, but also love, anger, and other passions finding support in a temporary mass.[575]

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571 ——— When Elke Krasny uses the term "curatorial materialism," she's speaking about independent curators. One could take this as a hint to bring the argument further to the *kunstalle* space as the work of small- and medium-sized institutions. Krasny, "Curatorial Materialism."

572 ——— Antonio Cataldo, "Trembling Institution," in *FRANK*, ed. Sille Storihle (Oslo: Torpedo, 2021), 82–88; a reworked version of the text is also reproduced in the present volume.

573 ——— Cataldo, "Trembling Institution."

574 ——— Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (New York: Viking, 1962).

575 ——— Frustration because something is missing and there is a need to verbalise or visualise such an absence. I refer here to informal conversations with Dag Alveng, one of Fotogalleriet's founders, who has agreed with my assignation of such a feeling to their collective emotion regarding establishing Fotogalleriet. I also reported the meaning of institutional building processes coming from collective

Emotions "shape the very surfaces of bodies"—one could say both institutional and human bodies—through the repetition of actions over time, and by finding proximity to or distance from others. All actions are reactions, in the sense that what we do is shaped by our contact with others.[576] Though emotions have been relegated to the margins of theory, their presence in the field of theory has been consistent. This is not a manipulation of emotions aimed at luring audiences into the exhibition space, but rather an attempt to catalyse the exhibition form as a sounding board, taking the time and space to analyse what is in the exhibition space and what the exhibition space is.[577] It is here we can ask: What does it mean to literally "care," to "love" an exhibition object, to feel grief, anger, attachment, shock, guilt, pain, anger, depression, or hope towards it. Emotionality—according to Sara Ahmed—is "dependent on relations of power."[578] As such the exhibition space, as a collective site of catering to collective emotions, can be the space where emotions can get "sticky" and "saturated with affect," but also where some of the tensions around feelings and its objects can tremble, be destabilised, temporarily institutionalised and then, de-institutionalised again.[579]

Love as a social emotion

We should start considering, that once we learn that emotions have an object to which they stick—a form of attachment—that this is a form of representation, and for objects, we need to include actual art objects. Although we may say informally, "I *love* this or that artwork," we have been taught that art objects, as museum objects, are the subject of study, not the subject of emotions. The study of "museality"—"musealia," in the terminology of Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský, the "father of scientific museology"—is the museum object, a scientific subject with its own set of meth-

and artistic frustration for missing infrastructures in a semi-public presentation at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter on 10 June 2019, as the artistic director of Fotogalleriet, at the presence of a number of professionals from the field.

576 ——— Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 4.

577 ——— Tony Bennett has formulated a view of the museum as an educational place. Gaynor Kavanagh's *Dream Spaces: Memory and the Museum* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 2000) shifts that view by arguing that our "imagination, emotions, senses, and memories" enter as "vital components of the experience." The volume Suzanne Macleod et al., eds., *Museum Making: Narratives, Architectures, Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 2012) touches upon the museum's ambition to reach the spiritual and emotional side of visitors, and that recognising narratives around identity is central to museums' endeavour (pp. xix–xxiii).

578 ——— Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 4.

579 ——— Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 11.

ods, a specific terminology, and, at last, a theoretical system. This set of specifications has been part of forming a habitus to the content (the actual object), which allows justifying the container (the museum). It is a form of isolation of, and at times alienation to, cultural heritage and living artworks.[580] A museum, for Boris Groys, is that which can only begin "after a collapse of an old social order."[581] Museums collect precisely "from the rubbish pits of history."[582] Documents and objects of the cultic, including of the ones belonging to the people that used them daily, become politically motivated, preventing their destruction. Therefore, museums stand as "the symbolic heirs of old supranational regimes" that supersede the nation state, bearing a representation with "a kind of symbolic universalist empire inside a national cultural identity."[583] Because the museum doesn't distinguish within this "pile of rubbish," it also includes narrations which do not immediately belong to the national, and where what is not normalised is also presented as part of the idea of the nation state. In this way it finds confirmation of the self against other cultures. It is in such a formulation that Groys finds an alliance and "an inner complicity between the museum and the state." It would be a mistake for Groys to consider "the modern museum as a public institution."[584] In the process of implementing reason as the guiding principle of modernity and society turning more secular, the museum works as an archive of objects and a way in which subject formation happens in tandem with registering cultural narratives in the form of images as memories inscribed in these grand museum narrations.[585]

In contraposition to standpoints of objectivity, I lean upon a methodology developed by Kimberley Moulton, a Yorta Yorta woman working and researching in museums in Melbourne, but adopting, in my view, kunsthalle strategies. As a curator, she pushes given boundaries, claiming instead that these relations of affection to objects are real, and not scientifically manufactured. She states: "As an Aboriginal woman working in an institution, my responsibility is not only to my employer but importantly

580 ——— Ivo Maroeviç, "Museology as a Discipline of Information Sciences," *Nordisk Museologi*, no. 2 (1997): 77–92.

581 ——— Boris Groys, "The Role of the Museum When the National State Breaks Up," *Proceedings of the ICOMON Meetings Held in Stavanger, Norway, 1995, Vienna, Austria, 1996* (Madrid: Museo Casa de la Moneda, 1997), 99, http://icomon.mini.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2018/12/The_role_of_the_museum_when_the_national_state_breaks_up.pdf.

582 ——— Groys, "The Role of the Museum When the National State Breaks Up," 99.

583 ——— Groys, "The Role of the Museum When the National State Breaks Up," 99.

584 ——— Groys, "The Role of the Museum When the National State Breaks Up," 100.

585 ——— Groys, "The Role of the Museum When the National State Breaks Up," 100.

to my community. My connection to the collection is both professional and personal, since it holds photographs of my grandparents."[586] Moulton bears witness to a brutal history of dispossession, where grieving the "artwork" condenses the material site of trauma still traceable back to the community and where forms of healing are still possible. She reflects on these objects being "dormant," remaining "asleep" until becoming recharged when they find—or better, are restituted to—the life of their community. Visiting a number of museums all around the world to "touch" and find an emotional relation to museified holdings, Moulton enacts care, with gestures of love, embrace, abandon, and hope for rejoining.[587]

A study about love, we learn from anthropologist Elizabeth A. Povinelli, could start from different standpoints including taking up "sexuality, sovereignty, death and life worlds, and new social imaginaries."[588] Pondering on resonances between Indigenous people of the Belyuen aboriginal community and queer communities in the US, she identifies a collision between "individual freedom and social constraint." Intimacy comes to be the term on which she measures social connections in the formation of identity. Here she defines the "autological subject," the "genealogical society," and the "intimate event" in order to understand the intersection of freedom and constraint.[589] She invites us to consider how in these communities there are still residues and retranslations of discourses and notions of inter-subjective and inter-institutional affection which propels them to function "as if there is such a thing as the sovereign subject."[590] In continuing to accept such Enlightenment-era diktats as true, other practices still remain aberrant. Povinelli defines "immanent dependencies," the moment when one moves away from what one knows, in the act of the encounter.[591] All of these practices and immanences—encounters (appearances in Arendt and Butler's words)—which are centred around intimacy, within and beyond a simple understanding of it in the realm of pleasure, are connected to different forms of redistribution, and it is for this reason that she looks into finding their different grammar of "concatenation" and "trans-

586 ——— Kimberley Moulton, "I Can Still Hear Them Calling," in *Sovereign Words: Indigenous Art, Curation and Criticism*, ed. Katya García-Antón (Amsterdam: OCA & Valiz, 2018), 199. I co-curated (together with curator Katya García-Antón) the original conference *Sovereign Words: Facing the Tempest of a Globalised Art History*, held as part of the Dhaka Art Summit, 2–10 February 2018.

587 ——— Moulton, "I Can Still Hear Them Calling," 210.

588 ——— Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *The Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 1.

589 ——— Povinelli, *The Empire of Love*, 4.

590 ——— Povinelli, *The Empire of Love*, 8.

591 ——— Povinelli, *The Empire of Love*, 6.

formation," to trespassing the commonly known and find a rejection to "sequester, to ghettoise, women's issues, gender issues, and queer issues to a subset of social life."[592]

Since May 2019, I have been thinking further about love as not a private but a social matter, in dialogue with artist Dora García, who started research for a film on Alexandra Kollontai, a major figure of the Russian socialist movement. Kollontai spent close to forty years in Scandinavia, between her youth with her maternal grandparents in Kuusa, Finland, and later through diplomatic positions in Norway and Sweden, where she developed claims of love as a political weapon for emancipatory practices. She elevated matters related to sex and love in the public sphere, positioning them as a relevant part of discussion of the normalising structures within society, which, in the world of politics, are instead wilfully relegated to the private sphere, as private matters, as abashing subjects.[593] For Kollontai, emancipation cannot happen if sex is not troubled together with class. This double entanglement reveals a complex segregation based on provenance and language that supports societal divisions and justifies repression, where gender is one vector and class the other. Not divided, but together.[594]

592 ——— Povinelli, *The Empire of Love*, 12.

593 ——— By providing an analysis of the social bases of women's oppression, Friedrich Engels questions the "normality" of a biological basis providing some first steps towards women's liberation. See Paul Blackledge, "Frederick Engels, Social Reproduction, and the Problem of a Unitary Theory of Women's Oppression," *Social Theory and Practice* 44, no. 3 (2018): 297–321. Alix Holt, in her introduction to the writings of Kollontai, points out to Kollontai's reference to Engels besides propelling for further arguments to be constructed in order to build a more complex and nuanced take on Kollontai and her work on the topicality of women's liberation in her lifetime. See Alexandra Kollontai, *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai*, ed. and trans. Alix Holt (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill, 1978), 26.

594 ——— I'm also referring here to studies on pronouns for claims of universal and particular positions and how the legal framework around such universal claims paradoxically allowed for emancipation of underrepresented groups within society. I find this illuminating when looking back at the historical claims and research of Kollontai. See Amia Srinivasan, "He, She, One, They, Ho, Hus, Hum, Ita," *London Review of Books*, 2 July 2020, https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v42/n13/amia-srinivasan/he-she-one-they-ho-hus-hum-ita.

García, drawing from her reading of Kollontai, affirms that love is a "social emotion," and not a private matter concerning only the love of two people; rather, it describes a social cohesion.[595] Kollontai is critical of Marxist claims of sexual relations being the foundation of society. Sceptical of monogamy, she writes, "The more such threads connecting soul to soul, heart to heart, and mind to mind, the more strongly will the spirit of solidarity be inculcated."[596] Through her legacy, we can read that affective relationships where sexuality has been sharply separated from class are only part of the normativised emotional and psychological realm at the base of social repression. Sexual oppression is political oppression. García's investigation looms large in its aim to understand the direct and indirect contemporary effects of such claims, as brought "to the streets" by Kollontai, who maintained important contradictions in both her life and her writings.[597]

Structurally, I am also indebted to García because she has, through her artistic practice, created forms of long-term inter-institutional work that I believe both challenge and concede existing institutions' immanenent dependencies—encounters—and also create a "civil disobedience" on the border of more formalised roles between the artist, the curator, the technicians, and the other actors involved in the making of art, where the generative process is naturally gleaned and dispersed. Similar to an ecclesia, these projects function as magnetic forces keeping democratic forms of dissent alive and allowing confrontation to shape itself into the expression of participation. Curating in this case does not mean selection, or the directorial creation of a discourse, or bureaucratic management; rather, curating here means finding dialogic encounters, "tak[ing] into account relatedness to the world as a way of producing, including the production of new epistemologies and emergent histories."[598] It also means following

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595 ——— Kollontai writes: "It is time we separated ourselves from the hypocrisy of bourgeois thought. It is time to recognise openly that love is not only a powerful natural factor, a biological force, but also a social factor. Essentially love is a profoundly *social emotion*." (My emphasis). See Kollontai, *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai*, 278.

596 ——— Alexandra Kollontai, "Make Way to Winged Eros," 1923, quoted in "The 'Sex Question' Glass Floweth O'er: The Bolsheviks' Insatiable Thirst for Answers," *College Russian* (blog), 2 September 2008, https://collegerussian.com/2008/09/02/the-sex-question-glass-floweth-oer-the-bolsheviks-insatiable-thirst-for-answers/.

597 ——— Friedrich Engels and August Bebel located the family as the site of economic and sexual oppression. Feminist thinkers have criticised the monogamous family and also assumptions related to a "natural" sexual division of labour. See Jinee Lokaneeta, "Alexandra Kollontai and Marxist Feminism," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28 April–4 May 2001, 1405–12.

598 ——— Krasny, "Curatorial Materialism," 97.

the unravelling of ideas as they happen, jumping in and out of the material conditions of production and its economic relations.

Through the *Mad Marginal* project (2011–), García started, in fact, creating inter-institutional, interlinked works under a research umbrella that has spanned years, institutions, and publications, to create communities of peers, framed to last beyond the usual "commission" of the exhibition. She literally plays on art being capitalised on through the idea of artists as "emotional" subjects, asking: "Are artists crazy? Is being an outsider a requirement for creating truly tradition-shattering art?"[599] By bringing together anti-psychiatric and anti-institutional movements, and redefining what the outsider is, she explores the relationship between radical politics and radical art during the 1970s, and our inheritance of such concepts today. The project has so far moved across institutions in Italy, Spain, Canada, Germany, the US, and Norway, among other countries.

Instead of submitting to the usual institutional pace—moving from exhibition to exhibition—García proposes, equally for the institution, the artist, and the curator, a different methodology for the creation of long-term practices and structures from which we could potentially learn, and perhaps (in my opinion) rethink curatorial labour, curatorial love, and a curatorial materialism, pushing for novel institutional and relational forms. These connectivities also pave the way to finding intersectionalities at the junction between different institutions, as the artwork itself continues to organically live through all the actors involved, in their accord and discord. Similarly, with *Segunda Vez* (*Second Time Around*, 2014–18), a filmic work, and with exhibitions, Happenings, cahiers, and books all based on the figure of Oscar Masotta (1930–1979), García's larger project has "enjoyed" the support of a number of institutions. The Argentinian essayist, critic, artist, and psychoanalyst acts as a catalyst to speak about art, politics, and psychoanalysis. Here, the notion of the event is crucial to thinking about the genealogy of repetition, and for claiming a new methodology for memory.[600] As García asks: "Is it true, as they say in psychoanalysis, that the second time is always the first time?"[601]

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599 ——— Dora García, ed., *Mad Marginal*, Cahier #2 (Berlin: Sternberg, 2011).

600 ——— Juli Carson, "Aesthetics of Repetition: A Case for Oscar Masotta," *X-TRA*, Spring 2012, https://www.x-traonline.org/article/aesthetics-of-repetition-a-case-for-oscar-masotta/.

601 ——— "Dora García: Segunda Vez Open Seminar," Academy of Fine Art, Oslo National Academy of the Arts, 24 October 2017, https://khio.no/en/events/454.

It is through these forms of looking for emerging knowledges in their material, architectural and public dimension that we also look for memories not encoded by state policies and archives.[602]

Anger?

The relation between, love, silence, anger, and who has the right to speak is still to be fully investigated. How can these struggles of provenance surface alongside a tradition of anger? How can Povinelli's theories of intimacy and Haraway's theories of situatedness help us with these problematic processes? Elucidating who is speaking and from what position *is* the very struggle for emancipation and the form of renegotiation for an autonomous political body.

In the 1960s, Pier Paolo Pasolini, the Italian author and filmmaker, was trying to create a cinematographic language in its own right, to narrate stories and history through images—a "pre-grammatical" cinematic language close to the oneiric, the dream, the ghostly, but also based on the position of alliance, to give people who usually did not have a voice the opportunity to enter historical narration through what he called "free indirect speech."[603] It is here, Pasolini claims, that the principal difference between literary work and cinematic work lies, as he attempts to mirror the written language of literature into cinema: direct speech and indirect speech. Images constitute the very grammar of the filmmaker. Images for Pasolini are always materially containing history "which would know an evolution similar to that of words."[604] Originally concrete, images have become abstract: "If the images or im-signs are not classified in a dictionary and if they are not ordered by a grammar, they nevertheless constitute a common heritage."[605] Cinema is, for Pasolini, a way of regaining the very history and symbology of these images as "the author penetrates entirely into the spirit of his character, of whom he thus adopts not only the psychology but also the language."[606] The language which is created is a way of reading and reminding about the world in its reality, but it is not reality, nor it is speaking for, through the other, but it is about constructing a reality for reality to speak for itself.

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602 ——— Erica Lehrer et al., eds., *Curating Difficult Knowledge: Violent Pasts in Public Places* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 2.

603 ——— Pier Paolo Pasolini, "The Cinema of Poetry," in *Movies and Methods*, vol. 1., ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 542–58.

604 ——— Pasolini, "The Cinema of Poetry," 545.

605 ——— Pasolini, "The Cinema of Poetry," 545.

606 ——— Pasolini, "The Cinema of Poetry," 547.

There is a different anger in Pasolini than in Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci speaks in personal terms of his country's history and politics, fulminating against politicians depredating the lower classes—especially in the South—and people who became second-class citizens through the creation of the Italian nation state. He illuminates the hegemonic cohesion that led to a history of exploitation of the South through law and policy making. Pasolini, by contrast, ponders his rage, transforms it into a poetic language vexed with a disappearing world; for him, he was one of the last to be able to catch it disappearing, a world which Gramsci was still fighting for—for the maintenance of a diversity of livelihoods flattened under the ideology of one nation; for Pasolini, this was fading before his eyes.
In similar lines to what Pasolini tried to describe in the visual world of images, in which we have lost historical legacies, cultural theorist and poet Fred Moten asserts that we never talk only for ourselves: we always speak for a community, or through a community. Literally. Each word, each expression of emotion, is an utterance of a collective, irreducible to an individual subjectivity. What one speaks is what one has read, the food one has eaten, the people one has met. For him, therefore, anger is not a singular anger, but a collective anger, for the repressive methods which have been inflicted on an individual, on their community, and on their ancestry.[607]

My relationship to curating certainly cannot be reduced to anger, but it is certainly part of articulating a position motivated by a "for-ness," one that does not simply take the shape of what it is against, though it prompts a political urgency.[608] To find a different relation and direction towards these feelings through material objects, including images, a sense of "care" is needed, allowing us to face and be faced with them, "as if" we are encountering them for the first time. "[W]onder is a passion that motivates the desire to keep looking," we learn from Sara Ahmed; it keeps alive possibilities otherwise denied.[609] Curating is this form of creating wonder, to create a movement of bodies and of emotions, a different pedagogy of affection.

607 ——— Fred Moten spoke on Sunday 14 June 2020 in the context of weekly, ongoing (digital) assemblies organised by 16 Beaver and the Society of the Friends of the Virus. (I am using indirect quoting, as it comes from my personal presential notes).

608 ——— I am here borrowing a position from Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 168.

609 ——— Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 168.

(5.6) Some conclusions

While reviewing institutional models during a recent conversation about building and unbuilding institutions, especially in the field of art and curating, it became clear that a multiplicity of curatorial approaches first need to be acknowledged in order to then dissect "other" ways of curating and to pave the way for more sustainable practices that can guide institutional change. If we consider the birth and canonisation of curating as happening during the 1960s, beginning with Harald Szeemann—the self-proclaimed *Austellungsmacher* (exhibition maker) who gave rise to the notion of "the curator as creator"[610]—we should also identify and distinguish other strands of independent or interdependent curating, mostly driven and reclaimed in feminist terms as a *confrontation* with art world institutions, through a "politically mindful, theoretically alert investigation."[611] The original curatorial strand is still an act of normative power, based on an authorial and authoritative figure following, fostering, and forging new heteronormative views to frustrate the display and experience of art, while the latter feminist versions looks sceptically at institutions, as they have enhanced and popularised split positions, contributing to ideas of marginalisation and otherness. The transformation from maker to creator, from craft to art, grew steadily until the "curatorial gesture" of the 1990s, with its resulting proliferation of discourses and increased professionalisation of curatorial studies, bound especially to the promotion of a Szeemannian figure and his polarising vision.[612] These newly formed authoritarian models, further developed throughout the 1990s and the 2000s, increasingly tribalised the art world, centralising power and art making through curatorial positions at museums and biennales,[613] as well as curatorial summits.[614] Emphasis was placed on the individual and their

610 ——— Bruce Altshuler, *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition: New Art in the 20th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 236. Altshuler also refers to "dematerialisation" in relation to curatorial practices of the 1960s and 1970s, citing projects by Lucy Lippard, Seth Siegelaub, and Harald Szeemann.

611 ——— Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry, eds., introduction to *Politics in a Glass Case*, 1. Dimitrakaki and Perry coined the term "museum materialism" to investigate what it means for feminist practices to enter the hyper-institutionalised space of the museum.

612 ——— Paul O'Neill, "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse," in *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance*, ed. Judith Rugg and Michele Sedgwick (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2007), 13–28.

613 ——— O'Neill, "The Curatorial Turn," 19.

614 ——— Szeemann is also ascribed as one of the founders of IKT International Association of Curators of Contemporary Art, demonstrating his

curatorial narrative in the exhibition as a form of authorial representation.[615] This becomes of particular concern for the way in which art institutions have become dependent on such figures, assuming a certain idea of what it means to be a curator, to work in a public institution, and to produce a public sphere: the idea of the curator as a "capitalist entrepreneur" instead of an "organic intellectual." The capitalist entrepreneur as derivative of new class structures, created alongside globalisation and neoliberal accumulation, in the separation of new social "types," was brought into prominence by such violent developments.[616]

Within the arts, ideas of the public sphere converge in an unresolved category. Accessibility for all publics is still thought to be a given, at times because institutions are publicly funded or self-define themselves as public, or because entry is given in exchange for a small fee. However, in the arts, as in the sphere of politics, the public sphere can emerge only under certain conditions. That space needs to be built. If curating is the "organisation of a public sphere," we should be able to analyse how these figures open and make space.[617] As with mass media, which allegedly defines itself as belonging to a public sphere, hardly any ordinary people have access to these outlets—meaning that, beyond readership, "the people(s)" is the object and not an active subject of such relations of production, or an agent of representation.

Art historian Rosalyn Deutsche contends that exclusions of certain people from the city, and therefore public space, are justified and "naturalised" through a social space of representation presented as having "substantial unity, which must be protected from conflict." Though her focus is on literal evictions in relation to urban-aesthetic discourses in the US, the processes Deutsche takes into account show the effect of exclusionary politics through the formation of cohesive and impenetrable narratives. She argues how conflict, "far from the ruin of democratic public space, is the

interest in creating a power figure with their own set of demands and power role. See also Dimitrakaki and Perry, introduction to *Politics in a Glass Case*, 10–11. They clearly address blockbuster shows, prizes, and biennials as part of an economic growth in which they inscribe neoliberal evolution of the curatorial, with signature exhibitions and the building of literature on the curator as such.

615 ——— O'Neill, "The Curatorial Turn," 14.

616 ——— Oliver Marchart, following Gramscian tropes, shapes a discourse about the formation of the space of the curatorial in the development of the public sphere to define certain interconnected functions. See Oliver Marchart, "The Curatorial Function: Organizing the Ex/position," OnCurating, no. 9 (2011): 43–46.

617 ——— Marchart, "The Curatorial Function: Organizing the Ex/position."

condition of its existence."[618] Looking at the locale of New York City, she observes how, under the false pretences of how art functions in public space, architecture is used to organise an ideology of functions and operative communities presented as "the *natural* product of biological, social, or technological evolutions" of society.[619] It is exactly these concepts of the *natural*, the biological, the social, and the evolutionary, engraved into the project of modernity, that need to be deconstructed and recognised as affecting our understanding of singularities, only functioning within and functional per a specific economic system, that is to say, capitalism. Through capitalism, and its binary model of male/female, nature/culture, soul/body, and so on, marginality is presented in a selective Darwinian process as a given, acknowledging the body solely as a site of commerce, as private property.

A public space (not only in the urban or geographical sense) is the result of debate breaking out among the ones around us. Specifically, debate intended as conflict,[620] or what political theorists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe would call agonism.[621] Studying the failure of historical political mutations and struggles of the 1960s onwards, Laclau and Mouffe praise the incoming phenomena underlying these historical transformations, demanding a theoretical reconsideration of them: the insurgence of minoritised groups and the various ecological and anti-capitalist upraisings. These movements showed "no more than the potential"—only *the potential*, as they say—for a more free, democratic, and equal society.[622] The unevenness within the growing citizen population and the fights for the recognition of their rights magnifies "a surplus of meaning of the *social*" —that is, that there is something more in such a pretend unity—making it difficult to attempt to fix these differences as if what we call society is a stable category.[623] For Laclau and Mouffe, "the multiformity of the social cannot be apprehended through a system of mediations, nor can the social order simply be understood as an underlying principle, because in such a reading of society no revolution would ever be possible."[624]

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618 ——— Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), xiii.
619 ——— Deutsche, *Evictions*, xiii.
620 ——— Marchart, "The Curatorial Function: Organizing the Ex/position."
621 ——— Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985).
622 ——— Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 1.
623 ——— Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 96.
624 ——— Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 96.

Curating can be understood as one of the practices of articulation in the "formation of a discourse," in Laclau and Mouffe's terminology, and following philosopher Oliver Marchart's take on their theories.[625] Here, articulation is intended as a relation among elements, where curating does not arise from logical coherence between the different elements but in their contradictions producing agonistic relations.[626] A situation of antagonism develops when the presence of the "other" does not let one be completely oneself; Laclau and Mouffe present the case of a peasant who cannot be a peasant when an antagonism arises whereby the landowner expels him from his land, for example.[627] There is a negation of a full presence at stake here. Antagonisms, in such cases, are not internal but external, because of society's impossibility of constituting itself as one single self—otherwise that single self would be totalitarianism.[628] As becomes clear, in their argument a "society never manages fully to be a society, because everything penetrates its limits and prevents it from becoming an objective reality"—the dream of modern science.[629] More recently, Mouffe has asserted that it was through "right-wing populist parties that people were able to vent their anger against such a post-political situation [as is widespread in Europe]."[630] The current failure of institutions brings people to the street, because "they feel that their voices cannot be heard through traditional political channels."[631]

Oliver Marchart thinks that antagonism is not something that can be organised as politics as it has rituals with their own dedicated institutions. Such an eruption (antagonism) is unpredictable, and would cause a revolution of sorts and would change the constitution of the public sphere, for him. Therefore, if curating is meant to articulate discourses of antagonisms, curating is, the organisation of what is unpredictable (perhaps it is a form of longing for the revolution?). For such reason, Marchart reverts to Gramsci for answers, as the one who had studied hegemonic relations from a Marxist perspective.

Gramsci speaks about the impediment to growth of the "organic intellectual" in certain strata of the population—within the non-ruling classes, the peasant, the worker, and so on. The new intellectual, for him (as he

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625 ——— Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 105. The emphasis on curating is mine.

626 ——— Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy.*

627 ——— Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 125.

628 ——— Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 125.

629 ——— Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 127.

630 ——— Chantal Mouffe, "Democratic Politics and Conflict: An Agonistic Approach," *Politica Comun* 9 (2016): https://doi.org/10.3998/pc.12322227.0009.011.

631 ——— Mouffe, "Democratic Politics and Conflict."

experimented with through his *L'Ordine Nuovo* periodical), can no longer be based on eloquence—"an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions"—but should instead actively participate in practical life, as a constructor, an organiser, a "permanent persuader."[632] The intellectual, for Gramsci, always has a social function true to the hegemonic powers it serves.

In the curatorial function defined in practical terms by Harald Szeemann as an entrepenurial assignment, the elite and the social realities are not changed or challenged but only enhanced;[633] this is contrary to feminist curating, the politics of which demand a change of the very structures we operate within. The recognition of any education, no matter the level of its labour and its designation as high or low, should be acknowledged as the basis for the new type of intellectual—or curator—to paraphrase Gramsci.[634] It is no surprise that even the word *cura* (care) completely changes meaning in the two readings, the Szeemannian and the feminist. The former is interpreted and creates a tradition—the individual genius curator preserves or prepares collections of objects within a defined space—while the latter interprets its function as taking care, first and foremost, of the bodies coming together in such assemblies and together redefining the means and conditions that articulate a discourse driven by and aimed at changing the relations of power (taking care of objects against taking care of feelings, one could say?). This feminist take on curating defines the curatorial as collective, as organising a collective activity, "performing" an antagonism. Counterhegemonic thought is not individual, as organisation can only be part of a greater collective project.[635] A feminist curator never appears alone (this, perhaps, is Dora García's claim).[636]

Institutions can serve counterhegemonic power too, through anticipating antagonism, to create a porous public sphere, and to produce different organic intellectuals out of the unacknowledged positions and representatives of groups pushed to the margins by the univocal consent culture of the bourgeoisie. I take that this situation is in part the untold story of insti-

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632 ——— Antonio Gramsci, "The Intellectuals," in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 3–23.

633 ——— In their introduction to *Politics in a Glass Case*, Dimitrakaki and Perry assert this in more general terms, not only in relation to Harald Szeemann.

634 ——— Antonio Gramsci. "The Intellectuals."

635 ——— Marchart, "The Artistic Function."

636 ——— Dora Garciá affirmed such preoccupations with collective work and equal power relations between the artists and other figures involved in the making and presentation of the work. Dora Garciá, interview with the author (unpublished), 19 November 2020.

tutions like Fotogalleriet as a free-form space for curatorial experimentation. Independently established in 1977 by a group of artists, practitioners, supporters, and "friends,"[637] it from the start laid a different claim on images and their social function and value within society. In a Gramscian "war of position," we read in the institution's founding statute that its main purpose was to "develop an interest in photography … as a free, personal and artistic means of expression."[638] Consensus existed in society for photography to be subsumed into the larger bourgeoisie's ideology of the newspaper, objectively illustrating through pictures—or reporting—"reality" as a singular, given concept of the state apparatus. Making a different claim and recognising others' skills or techniques proper to photographic production, thinking through images as a different way of producing organic intellectuals, and opening up for a differently literate class (a visually literate intellectual) of practitioners may be an emancipatory task, engineering a powerful antagonism to given positions and producing a common cause for what is missing in terms of forms of representation in the public sphere, where the aesthetic sphere is fully occupied by bourgeois ideology.

We cannot understand such shifts without understanding the material conditions that gave rise to them. In the process of photography moving from the magazine or the newspaper page into the exhibition space, more than an aesthetic demand arises. There is also the unveiling of financial forces trying to unify thought. We should not forget that when photographs first appeared in newspapers, "people clipped them out and pasted them in albums," therefore creating new meaning.[639] Gisèle Freund, one of the first photography theorists we can identify as such, reads a twofold reasoning behind such a movement, claiming that one kind of photography was more invested in social issues (realism) and the other was closer to the arts. Realist photography quickly came to be used for ideological purposes, for instance, enlarging images of leaders in Russia, via Soviet film directors Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin, to "fix" their "image" in people's subconscious. No wonder other artists were trying to escape such a given meaning.[640] We can witness this transition directly in one of the first exhibitions ever held at Fotogalleriet, dedicated to the work of Alfred Stieglitz. His work at Fotogalleriet was, in fact, presented

637 ——— In the first two years of its existence, Fotogalleriet was structured and supported through what was called Fotogalleriets venner (Fotogalleriet's Friends), contributing a modest amount to meet the rent for the institution's building.

638 ——— Fotogalleriet's statutes, as ratified in 1979.

639 ——— Gisele Freund, *Photography and Society* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1980), 194.

640 ——— Freund, *Photography and Society*, 194.

through his commitment to the magazine *Camera Work*, where he was editor from 1902 to 1917, and the Photo-Secessionist movement, which he led, thus literally showing the transition from page to space. Stieglitz was one of the first acknowledged photographers to claim photography as art, and also one of the first to have their work acquired by a museum and shown alongside other artworks produced in already accepted media.

This discussion about page versus space continued thereafter within specifically the exhibition space, especially from a feminist perspective. A year after Fotogalleriet opened, in 1978, the Swedish photographer Ann Christine Eek—for which a close description of her work is given in chapter 2—in describing her exhibition in *Morgenbladet* (one of the leading national newspapers), would state:

> I was starting to get tired of all the superficial images of women in the mass media. Not to mention the superficial, prejudiced, and often denigrating images of women in advertising, men's magazines, and photography journals. My responsibility as a photographer was to penetrate this wall of platitudes and prejudices and to portray the reality for women that I saw around me.[641]

At the time of this interview, Eek had been invited, as outlined in chapter 2, to exhibit *Arbeta—inte slita ut sig!* (*Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!*) in Oslo, after its original showing in Stockholm at the bookstore Oktober a few years earlier, in 1974. The companion book had likewise been released in November 1974, and it was further included in the large *Kvinnfolk* (*Women*) exhibition at Kulturhuset, Stockholm, in February 1975, where large prints of its pages were mounted on cardboard. That exhibition was later shown at Malmö Konsthall in the autumn of 1975, and finally, in 1978, at Fotogalleriet.

I do not intend to insinuate that this kind of antagonist work is in any way concluded, but only to show how the aggregation, through such an institution as Fotogalleriet, claimed a space for battling against such positions as Eek describes in the above quote within society at large, and hopefully opened up a diffent possibility to experience public sphere. As the issue of representation is still hugely unsolved and other new issues are at stake today, I believe that there is a lot to learn and take from these inspiring strategies of trespassing antagonisms.

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641 ——— *Morgenbladet*, 4 April 1978.

There is an entire deconstruction of invented traditions to be carried out within the institution of Fotogalleriet itself after fifty years of work, including a fictionalised and "normalised" mission that has been augmented by the creation of an archive. Archival logics assign, in retrospect, the exhibition programme as the institution's method.[642] We are told very little about Fotogalleriet's background structure, its original intentions and discussions, or the institutional structure organising its antagonistic position.[643] Unveiling the material conditions of this structure as non-cohesive will reveal the potential behind the institution to keep creating antagonism in different ways, and especially through a technical knowledge, first and foremost, guided by a different way of making and producing images, and asking for whom and by whom these images have been made.

642 ——— The entire archive is marked "EXH," meaning you move from exhibition to exhibition, month after month, year after year.

643 ——— Indirectly and tacitly, the archive lays a claim that Fotogalleriet has always been there, that there has always been an artistic director, a board, employees, technicians, cleaners, a landlord, funders. But this has only been the structure of the past twenty years or so.

Dora García, *If I Could Wish For Something,* 3 September–17 October 2021. Installation views (and details). Photos: Julie Hrnčířová/Fotogalleriet

Andreas Angelidakis, *Softwalks*, 20 January–18 April 2021. Installation view.
Photo: Julie Hrnčířová/Fotogalleriet.

Andreas Angelidakis, *Softwalks*, 20 January–18 April 2021. Installation view.
Photo: Julie Hrnčířová/Fotogalleriet.

Andreas Angelidakis, *Softwalks*, 20 January–18 April 2021. Installation view.
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Dora García, *If I Could Wish For Something.* 3 September–17 October 2021.
Installation view. Photo: Julie Hrnčířová/Fotogalleriet

Dora García, *If I Could Wish For Something.* 3 September–17 October 2021.
Installation view. Photo: Julie Hrnčířová/Fotogalleriet

Dora García, *If I Could Wish For Something,* 3 September–17 October 2021.
Installation view. Photo: Julie Hrnčířová/Fotogalleriet

Dora García, *If I Could Wish For Something,* 3 September–17 October 2021.
Installation view. Photo: Julie Hrnčířová/Fotogalleriet

Conclusions: Curating between the no-longer and the not-yet

Throughout my thesis, I have shown how my research and my curatorial practice influence one another. Starting from the curatorial work developed by sociologist Aina Helgesen and artist, writer, and editor Ann Christine Eek during the 1970s, I have developed programmes for Fotogalleriet according to the radical thinking embedded in the historical projects *Kunstnerkår* (*The Artists' Situation*, 1971) and *Arbeta—inte slita ut sig!* (*Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!*, 1974–78). This approach has included (a) involving several artists and contributors whose identities are mixed over time with the aim to create a joint, long-term work that addresses the precarious conditions of previously underrepresented (or misrepresented) bodies within the arts, curated into a temporal and spatialised format, to overcome preconceived notions of art; (b) interrogating the economic consequences of artworks, artists, and people being attributed value—artistic or otherwise—by entering (being curated into) the space of art, especially in periods of economic transition, and studying how the arts are affected directly and indirectly by larger economic and social movements; (c) unveiling the expository labour in foetal art history—before museal and canonical acceptance—by diving deep into the structure of the overall display format (the institution of institutions, the canonisation of the canon through curating); (d) asserting the expanded state of things—what happens on the street—to push the space of appearance and representation to make room for the unknown, the unspoken, in the realm of the arts: to focus on the given material conditions; (e) documenting, transforming, and creating visual propositions through targeted display formats, the validity and acceptance of which rests on the exceptionality of the art space, which in turn enables the longevity of their claims, which is not possible in other realms and disciplines.

It the spirit of historical enquiry and its contemporary application, I developed a new set of programmes at Fotogalleriet starting from the autumn of 2018—coinciding with my appointment as artistic director and curator—that was explicitly aimed at unveiling the feminist character of the institution, which had been stripped down since its inception in 1977, through the progressive institutionalisation of the organisation: the slow cementing of bureaucratic practices resembling larger art institutions' logics (such as museal aspirations), which in my view "betrayed" the core roots of the institution as a flexible entity; its founding mission was to act as a motor of disturbance and a generator of fresh and organic thought, hovering in from other spheres of the public—namely what's happening on the margins of society and art, on the street, in alternative publishing, and in other sites of social unrest and dissent, the yet-to-be-accepted. In the late 2010s, I initiated discussions tackling both the then recent systematised history of Fotogalleriet and the contemporaneity of issues such

as feminism and the queer body, to struggle with the continuous attempt to reveal as false the conception that the only possible base for society are subjectivities first and foremost determined by mainstream norms—the art market, and class and gender, and to uncover how the perpetuation of the nuclear family structures normative logics. These preoccupations slowly unravelled over a long period of time, and these interests intersected and fed on each other (including the before and after of each exhibition period: preparatory applications, meetings, partaking in the artists' work with other practitioners, and the newly made singular works eventually entering public view in the singular exhibition).

The theory was fundamental to entering such complex discussions and to unravelling the practicality of how an institution (in my case, Fotogalleriet) comes to be what it is over forty years of history: from an organic aggregation of people and ideas outside what's given, then normativised into a set pace of practices affecting not only what's on public display but also the everyday lives of the creative and administrative contributors inside the institution, and consequently expanding out into its publics. My theoretical understanding of a number of issues pertaining to the formation of institutions, norms, and canonical perspectives—and within this curating as well as tools for rethinking such ontological givens—was developed through the reading of Elke Krasny ("Curatorial Materialism," which I discuss in my introduction), Simone de Beauvoir (The Second Sex, discussed in chapter 1.3), Antonio Gramsci (Subaltern Social Groups, chapters 3.4 and 3.5), John R. Searle ("What Is an Institution," chapter 2.4), Jacqueline Rose (*Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, chapter 2.5), Dorothee Richter ("Artists and Curators as Authors," for the notion of the curatorial genius, introduction), Silvia Federici (*Caliban and the Witch,* for the notion of primitive accumulation, chapter 2.5), Tony Bennett ("The Exhibitionary Complex," chapter 3.13), Valerie Mainz and Griselda Pollock (*Work and the Image*, chapter 3.3), Édouard Glissant (*Poetics of Relation*, for the notion of orality, chapter 4.2), Judith Butler (*Bodies That Matter*, chapter 4.4), Hannah Arendt (*The Human Condition*, for the notion of the space of appearance, chapter 4.4), Bernard Stiegler (*What Makes Life Worth Living*, for the notion of the pharmakon, chapter 5.2), Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry (*Politics in a Glass Case*, for the notion of gender encased in museal structures, chapters 4.3 and 5.5), Geeta Kapur ("Curating across Agonistic Worlds," for the notion of transnational public sphere, chapter 4.4), Donna Haraway ("Situated Knowledges," chapter 5.4), Eva Illouz (*Why Love Hurts,* for the notion of the political economy behind romantic love, chapter 5.4),[644] Sara Ahmed, (*The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, chapter 5.2), Didier

644 ——— Despite the fact that Illouz's thought acts as background material for my thesis, I want to foreground it here because the reading of Eva

Eribon (*Insult and the Making of the Gay Self*, chapter 5.4), Michel Foucault (*The History of Sexuality*, for the notions of power, knowledge, and transgression, chapter 5.4), Jacques Derrida (*Archive Fever*, for the notion of origin, chapter 5.4), Elizabeth A. Povinelli (*The Empire of Love*, for the notion of intimacy, chapter 5.4), Oliver Marchart ("The Artistic Function," for the notion of the curatorial function, chapter 5.5), and Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (*Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, for the notion of agonistic pluralism, chapter 5.5).

Artist and writer Dave Beech has contended that "exceptionalism is not an economic argument for autonomy."[645] Art is produced in more places than one, and not only based on critical recognition and economic success. We need to realise the enormous possibilities that are still intrinsic to the art system that can't be summoned under a capitalist production logic. Only measuring the art that generates capital engenders a biased reading of its role in society. Nevertheless, there is a need to define and analyse a context—economic and social—from which art operates. Beech's position describes labour within the arts in a novel reading where the power relations and production conditions are not capitalistic per se.[646] For him, artistic labour is not a commodity because it doesn't respond to the same rules of other sectors.[647] I lean upon his definition of labour to complexify my take and create moments of agreement and disagreement with him, especially when it comes to the curatorial field.

The title of my thesis, "Curating Labour" both refers to labouring as moving with difficulty through something and to something still being in the process, and simultaneously signifies the continuous struggle to overcome relations of production that are still unconscious, which is the very struggle preventing bodies from entering the space of appearance[648] (the exhibition as a public space for recognition), which demands constant rethinking and redistribution of aesthetic power, while different bodies move

Illouz, *Why Love Hurts: A Sociological Explanation* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013) was fundamental to the writing of part 5.5 in understanding the generation of gendered positions in romantic love and the subjugation of one given gender over the other.

645 ——— Dave Beech, Art and Value: *Art's Economic Exceptionalism in Classical, Neoclassical and Marxist Economics* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 27.

646 ——— Beech, *Art and Value*, 17.

647 ——— Beech, *Art and Value*, 20–21.

648 ——— The "space of appearance," which I widely addressed in chapter 4.4, is a term coined by Arendt to define the coming together of individuals politically, where decisions are made through an encounter among equals.

within, as well as reach, the exhibition space. In the process of making space for the new in the aesthetic field (the "no longer and not yet"),[649] curatorial work often disappears (falls into the background), is rendered invisible, or aims at staying invisible while favouring other claims (such as the artistic), to protect (and accompany) artistic and other positions as they come to the fore and to bring visual propositions (and arguments) to life.

To avoid situating curatorial positions as ontological givens—"naturally" embedded in the cultural sector—we need to question curating's reaching power and ability to enable the speaking of certain subjectivities instead of others. Labouring (working through the struggles of the exhibition space) and overcoming such struggles (coming to curate or to be curated within an exhibition space) may seem separate, but they are to be read as one and the same struggle where privileges in the exhibition space exclude not only people of different classes and varied provenances but also the possibility of a pluralism of visual propositions entering the discourse of art (such was the case made by *Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!*). In an environment of intensive art production, curatorial labour often doesn't dare to (or can't) unveil the darkest structures of a system of privileges. This was one of the main claims of *The Artists' Situation*: that only a small percentage of artists was rising to the top and achieving artistic and economic success, while the rest—and especially female-identifying subjectivities—were easily excluded over time, not only economically but by disappearing from the canon due to a set of patriarchal rules granting long-term recognition through continuity, genealogical academic writing, and musealisation.[650] Over time, these rules are to be considered economic and societal, and cannot simply rest under the exceptionalism promised by the arts.

649 ——— Such was the "empty space" defined by Arendt to describe the fact that continuity is not the only option in unravelling the state of affairs, but that we also need to recognise that there are things in between, especially in moments of crisis. See Hannah Arendt, "No Longer and Not Yet," in *Hannah Arendt: Essays in Understanding 1930–1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 158.

650 ——— "Citationality is another form of academic relationality. White men is reproduced as a *citational relational*. White men cite other white men: it is what they have always done; it is what they will do; what they teach each other to do when they teach each other. They cite; how bright he is; what a big theory he has. He's the next such-and-such male philosopher: don't you think; see him think. The relation is often paternal: the father brings up the son who will eventually take his place. Patriarchy: it's quite a system. It works." Sara Ahmed, "White Men," feministkilljoys, 4 November 2014, https://feministkilljoys.com/2014/11/04/white-men/. Emphasis in the original.

Unavoidably, in directing Fotogalleriet, the archaeology of knowledge I was excavating through historical positions (some cases rose to the surface more willingly than others, as we still, unfortunately, rest on an idea of art history formation which is heavily Western-centric and undoubtedly patriarchally dominated) entered into the commissioning of new work, or to say it better: set out to find allies, in this historical search and cultural battle. Curating, I argue in my case, is to make space and create the ground on which allies can speak—as one could easily put it in Gramscian terms.[651] This movement from theory to practice influenced my understanding of what it means to be a curator in a more profound sense than I'd ever experienced before. Because my readings had to find the actuality of the present moment—theory could not escape the day-to-day practice of my work—the theory came to inform my very self, moving in a presentness in search of a different future. The administrative intersects with human and financial resources and the very structure of a vulnerable institution. Exclusion and inclusion—even of emotions—were materially measured. Concurrently, the space of curating could not simply remain located within the four walls of the institution but needed to move into the outside world and connect to my claims. Here arose an intensity of work done daily, by finding allies in other institutions and networks of peers within and outside the visual arts, including Nøkkel til byen (Keys to the City), Oslo World Music Festival, and SPACE (Syrian Peace Action Center) in Oslo and Salonul de proiecte in Bucharest, Romania, which brought an incredible amount of curatorial energy into my practice.[652] Some of the

651 ——— I'm taking the argument further to contend that the role previously occupied by artists has been taken over by curators, making space for and protecting artists in their claim process. Where they stood alone, we stand together. "To exhibit is to find friends and allies for the struggle," said Édouard Manet in 1867, cited in George H. Hamilton, *Manet and His Critics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1954), 106. Contrary to the usual practices of his contemporaries Manet, in 1867, at great expense, rented an ample space to mount a significant exhibition, which he organised himself. In the catalogue he articulates his wish to reach the public. I'm quoting his direct words as reported by Hamilton, and curator Ekaterina Degot offers a similar argument: "It is clear that the artists of the early twentieth century, who were basically a self-proclaimed elite, had to find allies in the real elite, at that time financial—their first collectors." Ekaterina Degot, "Questionnaire," in "Contemporary Art Biennials—Our Hegemonic Machines," special issue, ed. Ronald Kolb, Shwetal A. Patel, and Dorothee Richter, *OnCurating*, no. 46 (June 2020): 98.

652 ——— In chapter 5.4, I report some of the conversations with Salonul de proiecte based on a lecture originally delivered for a digital workshop on 15 December 2020, on the occasion of the collaborative archival and exhibition project *The Photographic Image between Past and Future*.

curatorial projects described in this thesis couldn't have reached their full potential, or full theoretical understanding, without such enriching collaborations.[653] They activated intersectional thinking in youth engagement from so-called minorities in the city, indicating material exclusion from the arts, demands for inclusion of more extensive cultural backgrounds and for social justice, and interests in images connecting to more forms (or disciplines) than one. At the same time, similar institutions in the former Eastern bloc engaged with material recollection and institutional building and questioning, thinking concretely about building museums from the perspective of a small institution; this made me question Fotogalleriet's grounding and its future. Indeed a matter of materialist curatorial practice.

Two of the last projects in this period of intensive research (and curatorial practice) were *Softwalks* by Andreas Angelidakis and *If I Could Wish for Something* by Dora García, both presented at Fotogalleriet in 2021.[654]

Andreas Angelidakis is an architect who never built. Architecture in his work stands for an image of infrastructure with its own agency and will—cumulating, moving, and producing ruins.[655] In his world, the physical and digital realms merge through the use of software and hardware in video and sculptural works, turning hard surfaces into soft and differently, sociably experienceable material. Combining these elements, *Softwalks* consisted of a site-specific installation within the urban setting of Oslo's city centre and concurrently circulated digitally. Fotogalleriet was approached as a point of departure, questioning the institution itself as both a physical and a theoretical entity producing a constructed system of meaning through its physical and digital geolocation.[656] Originally—in 1977—a space exclusively dedicated to photography, Fotogalleriet has transformed from a static take (site-specific exhibitionary) to a moving-image take (time-based exhibitionary), therefore forcing us to question its embrace of contextual material and immaterial surroundings (one could think it as a sort of

653 ——— I address these thoughts in parts 5.3 and 5.4. I also speak about curating as a practice of solidarity to "bear witness to those whose words remain unheard or are silenced," in part 5.2.

654 ——— Angelidakis's *Softwalks* was held 20 January–18 April and Dora García's *If I Could Wish for Something* on 3 September–17 October.

655 ——— Andreas Angelidakis, "Letting Go," *Positions*, e-flux Architecture, 25 June 2019, https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/positions/287537/letting-go/.

656 ——— In part 5.5, I point to a curated project for which Marthe Ramm Fortun was commissioned to address the local material presence of Fotogalleriet as an exhibition space by crossing the street and the clock and rebelling against the white cube.

unchosen Situationist *dérive*, because we are constantly "displaced" in the digital world—affecting our perception of the physical world—and forced to make new associations with spaces which are not immediately connected to one another).

To whom does the city belong to? To whom does the street belong? Do we continue needing a physical exhibition space to exhibit photography, and images, if these represent patriarchal statuses only? Where is Fotogalleriet really located? At Møllergata 34 in Oslo (a geophysical location) or on a server somewhere that "I" (Angelidakis or a viewer) can experience from Athens, Greece, or from any another location in the world, fed by millions of data users in Oslo and synchronously manipulated elsewhere—and contributing to building a different understanding and usage of what the institution is? Where does the publicity (the being public) of the institution rest?[657]

Social scientist Leslie Kern has argued that as "industry norms are structured to permit harassment, protect abusers, and punish victims, urban environments are structured to support patriarchal family forms, gender-segregated labour markets, and traditional gender roles."[658] That these questions should be asked is clear and unavoidable, especially for people for whom the urbanity of the city wasn't built.[659] Even though we like to believe that society has evolved and moved beyond the confines of gender, non-conforming bodies are incredibly limited by the social norms of the city, and no less by its exhibition spaces. I was motivated to engage in these conversations and to invite Angelidakis (back) to Oslo,[660] particularly due to the "architecture" he crafted for documenta 14's public programming—collectively titled the Parliament of Bodies—hosted in the Athens Municipality Arts Center at Parko Eleftherias in September 2016. The building housed the military police headquarters during the junta

657 ——— I partly address some of these questions in part 5.4. This project with Angelidakis was developed, by force of circumstances, digitally during the Covid-19 pandemic, which made me heavily question what happens to cultural institutions during times of crisis under capitalist and neoliberal predicament. How can we still demand a place for thought and public space while access to these spaces is being denied by preventive health-regulatory measures?

658 ——— Leslie Kern, *Feminist City: Claiming Space in a Man-Made World* (London: Verso Books, 2020), 9.

659 ——— Kern could also not foresee the incredible crisis connected to access to public space brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, bringing an unforeseen and additional layer of patriarchy to the street and the square.

660 ——— Angelidakis is a Norwegian and a Greek citizen and taught at Oslo School of Architecture and Design for some years in the early 2010s.

(1967–74) and the edifice behind was used as a detention and torture facility. Neither a conference nor an exhibition, participants of the Parliament of Bodies were invited into the headquarters of the former military police into an open space with no formal seating (nor an amphitheatre symbolising the equality of democracy); rather, they faced an "open form."[661] What was transmitted through images beyond the Athens convenings, though, were hard concrete blocks (moving outside its locale through documenta 14's digital public outreach). An in-person visit would instead have revealed that the meeting room consisted of sixty-eight soft blocks, which could take various constellations in line with the variety of storytellings which came to inhabit these spaces. Through *DEMOS* (2016) —the title given to this work—Angelidakis refers to the pillars of Athens: ancient stone steps that one could read as a reference to Greece as the cradle of democracy, and the concrete which could symbolise both the aspirations and the failures of modernity and its architecture.

How can we start a discussion on exclusion, dispossession, and repression based on gender in the exhibition space if we don't question something larger: how gender is a prejudicial and pre-emptive tool affecting our bodies (their pluralism) when traversing the city. Especially while the city has been clearly written around one symbolic patriarchal subject. Isn't architecture an image, travelling and affecting bodies in soft and hard ways?

"Our cities are patriarchy written in stone, brick, glass and concrete," experimental filmmaker Jane Darke writes.[662] Built environments reflect how society is structured, and most often it is structured around the white, male, able body. "Stone, brick, glass, and concrete don't have agency, do they? They aren't consciously trying to uphold the patriarchy, are they?" asks Kern.[663] Perhaps not, but they form an understanding of what's "normal" and "right," and not what's out of joint in this enforced normativity. They structure a grammar we are all made to use, which is naturalised through glass, steel, and cement. But "physical places like cities *matter* when we want to think about social change," Kern continues.[664]And it is from within this position that I entrenched my curatorial choice to ask Angelidakis to address the problematic but also the potential position of

661 ——— I'm quoting here from, "Opening of the First Public Venue and the Public Programs of documenta 14," press release, documenta, 9 August 2016, https://www.documenta14.de/en/news/1611/opening-of-the-first-public-venue-and-the-public-programs-of-documenta-14.

662 ——— Jane Darke, "The Man-Shaped City," in *Changing Places: Women's Lives in the City*, ed. Chris Booth et al. (London: Sage, 1996), 88. Quoted by Kern in *Feminist City*, 13.

663 ——— Kern, *Feminist City*, 14.

664 ——— Kern, *Feminist City*, 14.

the exhibition space within and beyond the physical contours of the city, and it is also the reason why I believe his *Softwalks* intervention was so important in the sphere of the city of Oslo in general and Fotogalleriet in particular. It represents a long-term curatorial choice to demand that we restart from structures (similarly to Helgesen's *The Artists' Situation*). A different kind of labour is at stake in the exhibition space today: to expose the institution, as well as the formation of its publicness (to be an example, to be exemplary). The artist and the curator, labouring around these questions, as I'll explain, are part of a process of unveiling structural dependency on ontological givens when we can't yet imagine the new. When we can't start abandoning forms of labouring (architectures) we already know. What is no-longer and not-yet. These demands are not only artistic but curatorial, allowing us to ask for the long-term work (labour) of an exhibition space and its situatedness. Extending Kern's argument, one arrives from the whole (the city's urban planning) to the singular architectonic building still imparting the same patriarchal meaning. Within it, the individual building shapes curatorial form and its ability to speak (and consequently for whom). The concept of leaving such a determined kind of space was fundamental to the curatorial discussions I had with Angelidakis. Following these tropes and the invitation to work on the architectonic positioning of Fotogalleriet (the situatedness of the building and the building itself as a signifier), the artist even questioned—in some humorous (and no less serious) conversations—if the name "Fotogalleriet" shouldn't be put in a sort of citational form to stress the institutional questioning institutions should always undergo. I believe that all curating today should always maintain a citational form—"curating," quotation marks included. A critical discourse should always be self-critical. In discussing what marks the inside and the outside of the institution—the institution's windows (which again have a powerful digital counterpart)—the question becomes how to deconstruct these patriarchal spaces that the exhibition space represents in a smaller scope: control over body movement and behaviour, and how to move away from such unidirectionality.

Fotogalleriet is positioned near the historical police station and jail of Oslo at Møllergata 19, which became prominent especially in the 1940s and for infamous reasons.[665] Several intellectuals were imprisoned in

665 ——— Møllergata 19 was the address and popular name of the main police station in Christiania/Oslo from 1866 to 1978. During World War II, the occupying German authorities immediately began using the facility. In August 1940, the prison exclusively used as a political prison for opponents of the National Socialist government. After the main police station in the Oslo neighbourhood of Grønland was completed in 1978, Møllergata 19 was demolished. The main building facing Youngstorget was renovated in 1980 to function as part of the government quarter.

these facilities, including Ronald Fangen (1895–1946), Per Aabel (1902–1999), Willy Laumann-Olsen (1904–1973), and Erling Bauck (1924–2004), to name but a few.[666] Erik Skjelnæs, a former waiter at the Theatercafé in Oslo, reports how easy it was to get arrested before the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Norway in 1972.[667] Møllergata street boasted outlets for queer porn, sex shops, and several clubs for the queer community from the 1960s until the 2000s. A park with nocturnal life dotted with drug use and petty crime (the crime of being bodies on the margins of the law) faces Fotogalleriet's exhibition space. Increasingly, the area is under pressure from capital investors trying to render it more uniform through more glass, more cement, more stones—the same materials Darke speaks about as being so pleasing to the patriarchy.

Educator, researcher, and urban planner Deland Chan notes that "planning from below, and 'soft', people-centred work like community outreach, aren't ascribed the same kind of value [as architectonic infrastructure]."[668] "Real" planning is considered extensive in scope, focused on "hard" infrastructural improvements and bringing in heavy know-how. Fotogalleriet is at street level and has four large windows that reveal the entirety of the interior space, translating into an alleged transparency between the inside and the outside. Yet this seemingly porous entrance is no less of a "vertical glass ceiling" for what the institution represents. In modernist thinking, "glass culture" was to completely transform humanity together with steel and concrete structures, encompassing electric lighting, heating and cooling systems, vacuum cleaners, cars, and airplanes, and so oppositional to the ideals of "floating" (as a synonym of transparent) architecture. This ideal took people from closed rooms to glass architecture, "which lets in the light of the sun, the moon, and the stars, not merely through a few

666 ——— Fangen was the first author arrested by the Nazis during their occupation of Norway and detained at Møllergata 19, in October 1940. Only twenty years old, Fangen made his debut as a novelist with the tellingly titled *De svake* (*The Weak*, 1915). Here, probably for the first time in Norwegian literary history, we encounter a person fully aware of their queer sexual orientation, according to biographer Jan Olav Gatland. See "Skeivt arkiv," the Norwegian archive for queer history, https://skeivtarkiv.no/skeivopedia/ronald-fangen.

667 ——— "It spread from mouth to mouth about where we could meet others. I frequented a couple of these private clubs [where one could meet like-minded people], and one of them was at Kampen. The police could suddenly ring the doorbell and take everyone to Møllergata 19." Astrid Renland, Fra kriminell til velsignet av Kirken [From criminal to blessed by the church], *BLIKK*, 21 April 2022.

668 ——— Deland Chan, "What Counts as 'Real' City Planning?," Bloomberg CityLab, 26 March 2018, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-26/the-case-for-a-broader-definition-of-urban-planning.

windows, but through every possible wall, which will be made entirely of glass—of coloured glass," recites German polymath and architecture theorist Paul Scheerbart,[669] reflecting positivist ideals at the turn of the twentieth century that today reach us, unmediated, through common building practices. Walter Benjamin already criticised this purified ideal of space in the early 1930s, saying glass structures engender a culture of erasure, because nothing really sticks to glass. Its surfaces are designed for one to "leave no traces."[670]

Angelidakis's exhibition at Fotogalleriet consisted of the three-channel video work *ScreenWalker* (2021), which occupied the central part of the main room, facing the street. The screens were installed on wooden poles placed around the perimeter of a clearly demarcated circle of carpet on the floor, facing each other. The *KION* (2020) seating system, made of composite foam and resembling pieces of Greek columns, was arranged in a pyramid reaching the ceiling in the small room visible through the other windows, while other pieces of *KION* were dispersed throughout the rooms, like a ruin site. Small 3D-printed sculptures—"antibodies" in Angelidakis's words—sat on several bases hanging on (floating on) the walls of the exhibition space, together with prints of the *KION*s on textile, which imaginatively inhabited various famous modernist dwellings, like Philip Johnson's Glass House (1949). Text interspersed both the videos and the textile works. The lighting in the entire space was inverted, instead coming from below through construction lamps—establishing the idea of the work being an extension of the artist's studio (that is, not an exhibition space, but a space under construction, under thinking, "unstable"). The exhibition was open 24/7 and the videos could be accessed through a QR code posted on the window.[671] *ScreenWalker* made it unclear if one was

669 ——— Detlef Mertins, "The Enticing and Threatening Face of Prehistory: Walter Benjamin and the Utopia of Glass," *Assemblage*, no. 29 (April 1996): 6–23.

670 ——— Walter Benjamin, "Experience and Poverty" (1933), trans. Rodney Livingstone, Atlas of Places, https://www.atlasofplaces.com/essays/experience-and-poverty. Originally published in *Die Welt im Wort* (Prague), December 1933.

671 ——— The text on the window read:
Our doors may be closed, but the exhibition is always open!
Softwalks by artist and architect Andreas Angelidakis is specifically built for Fotogalleriet's space to be experienced from both the inside and outside.
Angelidakis, an architect who has never built, invites you to look around and enjoy a "softwalk"—a walk that happens digitally on the screen as much as physically on the pavement. How do we differentiate and distinguish between the two? Is our body an impediment or a vessel for moving between these different realms?

sitting "in" the videos: because one simultaneously watched a moving maquette of the installation (the entire physical space) on the screen. The staging of on-screen bodies made it hard to discern if the videos had been digitally animated or recorded in a physical scenography. My conversations with Angelidakis are reported in sections of these videos (possibly playing on and criticising the idea of the artist-curator-commissioner dialogue), and he also used our recorded conversations to study the space from afar, in Athens, to gain enough data about it as a discrete digital entity and consequently as a "real" space, to enable him to work on the overall exhibition on the inside and the outside of Fotogalleriet. The street is a fundamental part of this in-out movement, through real-time access through phone technology and other intersecting information taken from satellite imagery, aerial photography, and street maps. The 3D-printed "antibodies," complementing the intersection of different worlds, are both fictitious architectural elements (digital and immaterial, and yet reproduced in fragile materiality) and parts of bodies—one and the same body, indiscernible—attempting to understand what happens when we cross the digital. That is, in digital space, the body is two-dimensional—an image—yet some parts of our body "cross" the screen and remain trapped in its infrastructure: what modernity defines as "monstrous," simply the non-normative body.[672]

KION sits between being an art object and a usable object. People can decide how to use the pieces: these "soft ruins" that reflect the foam furniture produced in Italy during the early days of postmodernism, when architectural design was considered a critical tool; but they are also social tools.[673]

In Angelidakis' work, architecture is an image with its own agency and will. Instead of concrete and immovable structures, he invites you to consider architecture as a speculative and social structure in which we meet and act. Architecture can be soft, subjective; you can even sit on it.
We invite you to softwalk with us from where you stand.
By scanning the QR code on the window, you can experience the sound and video part of the installation.
Please follow Fotogalleriet's social media and website for updated opening times, and do leave us a message or comment. We are eager to hear from you!

672 ——— Under modernity, the idea of the monstrous has been associated with evil or "moral transgression" or is used to symbolise "anxieties of aberration and innovation," especially when associated with the body that economically and sexually does not conform to a productive and reproductive society. See Sibylle Erle and Helen Hendry, "Monsters: Interdisciplinary Explorations in Monstrosity," *Palgrave Commun* 6, no. 53 (2020).

673 ——— Angelidakis speaks about these objects and their relation to postmodernist Italian design in "Letting Go." See note 617.

In *ScreenWalker*, Angelidakis asks: "Do we even know what real space is anymore?" "Do we care?" "Is there any other way to walk?" "Show me a different path so I can lose my way in this vast amount of data."[674] One could take a seat at Fotogalleriet on these "domesticated ruins"—*KION*. Within the exhibition, one could "softwalk"—I came to use this word often as a neologism (and a verb) to signify, following Angelidakis's take, wandering through space and time independently, whether on-screen or physically (definitely the ambition of a Situationist *dérive*). Because we come—through his work—to traverse hard spaces in a soft manner (digitally and physically), these spaces are not hard (cement, glass, steel) anymore. The exhibition didn't exist in a bare manner at Møllergata 34, but rather manifested at the intersection of different locations produced by the usership. Angelidakis has shown over the past decades that we have learned more and more to experience buildings through travelling images (digital ruins, not only physical ruins), and we inhabit the digital space through online virtual worlds, where we meet to talk and create other geographies, bringing these habits back into other spaces, a heterotopia.[675] Over the course of the last year alone, our formerly separated notion of the self—our presumed and unquestioned access to physical spaces—has ultimately merged into a frame of mind where social life and travel have moved into a "new somewhere": an endless multiplication of sites.[676] *Softwalks* traversed and materialised these contemporary ruins—ruins that can come to live in the interior space, and with which one can even play. They never break because they are soft. Sometimes soft stands in for queer, Angelidakis says, and therefore these ruins queer the space.[677] The artist invites us to invert our traditional roles and perspectives of seeing, seating, and spectating through experimentation with multiple non-linear sequences

674 ——— From the video installation *Screenwalker* (2021), a trilogy commissioned as part of *Softwalks* and presented at Fotogalleriet.

675 ——— Angelidakis has tested these ideas for many years by "working at the intersection of digital culture and architectural production." In the parallel realities of these worlds, he treats the internet (with immersive gaming platforms like *Second Life*) as a place giving rise to new ideas and social behaviours. Some of these ideas are collected in Andreas Angelidakis, *Internet Suburbia* (Seoul: Damdi, 2008).

676 ——— I'm of course referring to the incredible amount of digital space we have learnt to inhabit on an increased scale because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The concept of the "heterotopia" is elaborated by Foucault to address certain real and fictional spaces that "have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect." Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics*, no. 16, (1986): 22–27.

677 ——— The reference that "soft" sometimes stands for "queer" comes from the *Screenwalker* trilogy.

(moving in time instead of space). Not by chance he says that these in-between spaces lure us into the psychedelic, the realm in which to trip and explore different domains of knowledge and cultures.[678] Psychedelia is the realm of time.[679]

My utmost curatorial interest behind inviting and working closely with Angelidakis over an extended period came from an attempt to understand situatedness today, as a matter of time.

In postmodernism, being situated, positioned, and in place has been all about space. Time has fallen flat. The "postmodern is all about space,"[680] says literature professor Robert T. Tally, following Jamesonian notions of "hyperspace."[681] If curating means to pluralise forms of care in the space of appearance, it also means labouring through time for that appearance to surface, reinterpreting the site-specificity of the exhibition space as also a time-specificity—situating events in context beyond the physical alone. Because Angelidakis embraces questions of time and space infrastructurally (architecture as a tool for measuring infrastructures), he allows to move the institution, and the curatorial work within it, outside its given geolocational shell to explore different durations and cycles, beyond corporeality.

The inside and the outside, the tension between public space (the street and the square) versus the domestic space (the living room), has also been part of Dora García's latest research under her project *If I Could Wish for Something*—the shared title of her latest filmic work, her multisite exhibi-

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678 ——— The reference to the psychedelic part of the digital also comes quite clearly and explicitly from the *Screenwalker* trilogy, where the association of fully experiencing the digital is explicitly paralleled with taking psychedelic drugs.

679 ——— Angelidakis makes reference to theorists such as the American ethnobotanist and mystic Terence McKenna, who advocated for the use of psychedelic plants. Andreas Angelidakis, in "Digital Artist Talk: Andreas Angelidakis in Conversation with Tominga Hope O'Donnell," organised by Fotogalleriet on 25 March 2021, Facebook video, 53:08, posted by Fotogalleriet, https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=298715674933255&ref=watch_permalink. To qutoe McKenna directly: "Because our maps of reality are determined by our present circumstances, we tend to lose awareness of the larger patterns of time and space. Only by gaining access to the Transcendent Other can those patterns of time and space and our role in them be glimpsed." Terence McKenna, *Food of the Gods* (London: Rider, 2021), 8.

680 ——— Robert T. Tally, *Kurt Vonnegut and the American Novel: A Postmodern Iconography* (London: Continuum, 2011), 8–9.

681 ——— Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983–1998* (London: Verso, 1998), 14.

tion at Netwerk Aalst in Belgium and Fotogalleriet in Norway, and a book published by the two institutions and edited by the artist, all in 2021. For *If I Could Wish for Something*, García departs from the classic Weimar song sung in 1930 by Marlene Dietrich—a translation of the original German title, "Wenn ich mir was wünschen dürfte." Sadness is, for García, the sign of political strength and acquires an even deeper significance when related to women's struggle. The disappointment of women has been going on for so long, and the promise made to them by the revolution (*any* revolution) has remained denied, according to the artist.[682] In this abandonment, sadness turns into a weapon. Instead of victimhood, pain is used as a conduit to recognising others' suffering and the possibility for ethical encounters.[683]

García asked the singer La Bruja de Texcoco, a trans woman known and celebrated for her revival of traditional Mexican and Indigenous compositions, to write an original song freely inspired by Dietrich's 1930s earworm. In the film *If I Could Wish for Something*, La Bruja's song is a soundtrack to the demonstrations which have been altering public space and discourse in Mexico over the past five years. The film follows the writing of the song in an interior space, from where La Bruja speaks and unveils both her singularity and the plurality of demands shouted on the streets of Mexico City, looking for confrontation with militarised space as well as attacking the patriarchy of streets, buildings, and sculptures for how they are built as symbols of repression. It wasn't until I saw García's film that I realised how what's commonly described as vandalism during these demonstrations (because certain symbols are struck) is a search to alter the grammar of the city: the way in which we are channelled, imposed upon to idealise symbols, and subjected to power. We see women whose faces are fully covered in black textile (feminist black-bloc protesters) to protect their identity in this quest (brick is used against brick and fire against protective wood, while steel returns as barriers and the channelisation of protests). Other women confront the police directly and use their phones

682 ——— These thoughts were formulated for the press release of the exhibition and as part of the introduction by myself, Pieternel Vermoortel, and Dora García for *If I Could Wish for Something*, ed. Dora García (Oslo: Fotogalleriet; Aalst: Netwerk Aalst, 2021), 12–23.

683 ——— García makes clear reference to feminist scholar Sara Ahmed, who asserts that this "longing for sadness" stands very far from "the acceptance of defeat." Rather, to the contrary: "I think of how sadness can be an inheritance, a feminist inheritance. I think of all the books that caught my attention not just because of the sadness they expressed, but because of the rebellion they enacted in this expression. It can be rebellious not to be made happy by what should make you happy." Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 62.

as weapons. The technology of recording turned against the technology of surveillance. It is a renaming of the street.[684]

When people gather (and in Mexico City today, particularly women), they demand a bodily recognition: "the freedom to choose over our bodies."[685] In *If I Could Wish for Something*, we see the city's transparent wall protectors and the police's clear shields spray-painted by the protesters, to make their materiality visible. Women protesters stomp off and take down street barricades made of steel. They break glass and attack construction-site signs of (capitalist) progress. Fire and smoke indirectly recall witch-hunting practices, while they chant as if always accused and "criminalised": "We are bad, we could be worse." The evident change of positions and cameras filming remind us, the viewers, of the pluralism of perspectives. "Police, listen, your daughter is in the fight" is a recurring chorus, addressing the paradox of patriarchy as both inflicted and suffered by the nuclear family and family ties.

Protesters assert presence over a city that "isn't really for you," affirming that the right to the street precedes any speech act. The inability of corporate and state media to adequately report simple demands (to treat the protesters like free subjects) is a clear argument for citizen journalism in the film. Techno-media infrastructure has proved effective at registering events from the protesters' perspective, though it remains to be disseminated, transposing the protest scene onto the space of appearance, enlarging the public sphere, and producing increasing networks of bodies acting in concert (on and off the street).[686]

"The very term 'mobilisation'"—we learn from Judith Butler—"depends on an operative sense of mobility, itself a right, one which many people can-

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684 ——— For example, a protester named Erika Martinez recounts how she no longer calls the colonial-style building in downtown Mexico City, previously known as the Human Rights Commission building, by that name; now she calls it the name printed on a banner attached to the front of the building: the Okupa Cuba Casa Refugio (Cuba Occupation-Shelter House). Madeleine Wattenbarger, "Inside Mexico's Feminist Occupation," Al Jazeera, 29 October 2020, https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/10/29/block-feminists-okupa.

685 ——— So it reads on a banner featured in *If I Could Wish for Something*, dir. Dora García, 2021, digital film, 68:00.

686 ——— In chapter 4.4 I analyse at length the idea developed by Judith Butler in "Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street," of a transposition of the public sphere through media for the construction of a public sphere otherwise not given. It is important to maintain Butler's text as a reference here, too.

not take for granted."[687] Butler brings her argument far, but always tied to the basic, saying that bodies' movement is always enabled by a screen—"a surface of some kind"—technically enabling the action to take place.[688] To express the right to action, to manifest, to be visible—the road, the square and the infrastructure of the city are the basic conduits of the protesting mass. "No one moves without a supportive environment and set of technologies," she says of being provided with screens.[689] In García's film, these vulnerable bodies address the failure of their infrastructural conditions, and their plural and performative resistance shows how bodies are acted upon by social and economic policies that determine their livelihoods. The screens of phones, which we see actively participating in the film, are a technology that enhance and mobilise other bodies to join the protest. Similar to Angelidakis's work, the exhibition space is here, in turn, being called to action (interpellated), to function as a surface—asking it to stand as another technology patching together resistance and the possibility for a different future.

In Oslo and Aalst, *If I Could Wish for Something* was shown together with posters specially produced by the artist, installed facing the street on walls blocking the windows—a new screen demanding intimacy for what's to come (what's to be seen inside). Shown alongside the poster were the film *Love with Obstacles* (2020), centred on the legacy of Alexandra Kollontai (1872–1952), a Russian writer and sexual activist who was ambassador to Mexico in 1926–27, and books tracing Kollontai's migration of thought in a number of regions of the world where she was (and her thought continues to be) active, including the Nordic countries, where she dwelt, in total, for forty years of her life. Her writings and unfulfilled legacy continue to fuel feminism in Latin America.

Threatened by any form of dissent, the capitalistic and patriarchal structure of society is perpetuated through the gendered nuclear family. Kollontai explored how traditional bourgeois sexual and family relations could transform once freed from the demands of property and dependence, and she called for a liberation of bodies from cyclically performing a given normativity. Her indignation reverberates in García's overall project and, through the writings of artists and writers Sayak Valencia, Andrea Valdés, Hilde Methi, Agnieszka Gratza, Paloma Contreras Lomas,

687 ——— Judith Butler, "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance," Building Interdisciplinary Bridges across Cultures and Creativities, June 2014, http://bibacc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Rethinking-Vulnerability-and-Resistance-Judith-Butler.pdf.

688 ——— Butler, "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance."

689 ——— Butler, "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance."

Carla Lamoyi, Saddie Choua, and García herself, in the new publication accompanying the exhibition.

Ann Christine Eek had already analysed the trouble brought about by the dictatorship of the nuclear family during the 1970s, and likewise brought her concerns to the exhibition space—this was one of her main claims in *Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!*[690] As García's project shows, Kollontai was effectively trying to move away from this dichotomy of love and gender as a twofold entrapment for women while collectivising reproductive responsibilities and exiting marital contracts.[691] Such concerns undoubtedly required a spatial (urban and architectonic) reconfiguration, for Kollontai, as well as for Eek and for García.[692] We can't envision a different society without transforming the economic and architectural infrastructure determining our mobility as surfaces (screens) enabling mobility.

The overall project *If I Could Wish for Something* lives beyond the physical container of the exhibition spaces, through both a multisite presentation at Fotogalleriet and Netwerk Aalst and the filmic medium (a time-based media, a screen), transforming the two art institutions' into nomadic spaces to debate local and worldly issues critically. It furthermore demanded that this networked alliance form a new politics of love, by suggesting other ways of living together.

Femininity is specifically claimed by La Bruja de Texcoco as a question pertaining to time: circling around the possibility of becoming a composer (of time) instead of remaining its interpreter.[693] "I couldn't give a definition of femininity because it is something I'm living in this process of transition (that never ends)," she says in the film. "Femininity gave me the opportunity to experiment [with] my creativity, especially as a musician. Before I didn't compose, I was just an interpreter." She continues: "My story wouldn't make sense if I wasn't The Witch [La Bruja]. I would just be another interpreter."[694]

Interior space (the home as well as the exhibition space) becomes essential in this discussion—where La Bruja is positioned. It is from here that

690 ——— I analyse the role played by the nuclear family in the performance of the exhibitory in different parts of the thesis, including parts 2.5, 4.2, and 4.3.

691 ——— Alexandra Kollontai, "Communism and the Family" (1920), in *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai*, trans. Alix Holt (London: Allison & Busby, 1977), 258–59.

692 ——— Christina E. Crawford, "From the Old Family—to the New," *Harvard Design Magazine*, Fall/Winter 2015, http://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/41.

693 ——— La Bruja de Texcoco, in *If I Could Wish for Something*, digital film.

694 ——— La Bruja de Texcoco, in *If I Could Wish for Something*, digital film.

she is represented (she herself says to "refer to people … how they 'appear' to you")—inevitably reminding us of Silvia Federici's reflections on witch-hunting in her formative text *Caliban and the Witch*. For Federici, the devaluation of women is spatial, because it starts from the unrecognition of their domestic labour—of their right to conduct economic activities—through a "sexual differentiation of space."[695]

Though Kollontai was central in prompting a feminist consciousness in Norway (in 1915, Women's Day was celebrated with a speech by Kollontai held on Youngstorget in Oslo, close to Fotogalleriet, in a square where battles for emancipations are repeatedly waged), she is still a marginal figure, in some senses, especially when it comes to her radical theories on sexual liberation. Today, within a political landscape in Norway that, as elsewhere, is increasingly endangering women's (and other non-conforming) bodies, speaking about Kollontai through the eyes of these revolutionary movements from around the world can help catalyse a much needed global sisterhood in these struggles. The exhibition space is the site (the screen) for creating a different understanding of time as a reverberatory machine, which doesn't stop the actions in and requests of the square, but retranslates them in the space of appearance, where they can be further mobilised. It makes space tremble through time (duration).

These discussions have not only informed my practice in more ways than one but are also curatorially informing a public space from which an institution speaks, asking for whom, and on whose behalf, we speak. I first encountered the work of Kollontai during research for a piece I was requested to write for an exhibition by the performance artist Marianne Heier and textile artist Franz Petter Schmidt in which they were looking at looms and textile history in Norway, which, of course, as in other countries, is highly charged with issues of (un)regulated labour and the anesthetisation of life. Labour today enters the exhibition space in complex ways, and gender inequality still predominates in this discussion.

Throughout this thesis, I, as a practising curator, have attempted to show both the visibility and the invisibility of curatorial work, as well as the longevity of perspectives that move along a different axis of time. To become an ally in struggles for emancipation, I, like many others, take on an incredible amount of administrative labour, at times working around the clock in order to help projects reach their full scope and completion.

695 ——— Federici argues there was a slow disappearance of women from public space in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Automedia, 2004), 100.

Working from the site of a small institution like Fotogalleriet, with limited funding for production and limited staff capacity (purely in the number of positions), the presentation of the projects I have written about would have never been possible without the labour and support of a number of colleagues inside and outside the institution.

"Even things that are most categorically evident can occasionally seem invisible," wrote Carlos Basualdo more than a decade ago.[696] The Argentinian-born curator refers to an "intellectual conjuring" when things disappear from perception because of their hypervisibility—concealing curatorial intents and work in favour of other details that the critic and the audience foreground in the exhibitionary machine, not paying attention to the "original" curatorial claim. In Basualdo's case, his "frustration" focuses on large-scale exhibitions, which critics condemn for their culture industry complex.[697] He names here the need for an "unstable institutionality," which should be core to the curatorial role, to create a subversive character—with a persistent intent to decentre the canon and, with it, modernity, but always radically exceeding one's role because of the very precarious material conditions where one sits—even when in a position of power for a biennale.[698] There are two paradigmatic notions at stake in Basualdo's argument that I would like to retain for further discussion and to here touch upon in closing my analysis. First, it becomes immediately clear through his unravelling of his argument that the term "curator" is a floating signifier, where the sign does not refer to a concrete presence and neither to its messenger. A substitution is possible as is transmutation. A certain perversity exists in the curator's "present absence," which attempts to look for an "origin," something which Freud would make coincide with childhood or the origin of the law of sense. It is there that perversity begins, etymologically speaking, meaning to be able to turn away, to invert and to overturn oneself or situations.[699] Secondly, in the idea of the

696 ——— Carlos Basualdo, "The Unstable Institution," in *Curating Subjects*, ed. Paul O'Neill (London: Open Editions; Amsterdam: De Appel, 2007), 40.

697 ——— The term "culture industry" comes from critical theorists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. They propose that the culture industry of entertainment is a continuation of factory work and industrialisation and equally a product of capitalism in the annihilation of the senses. See Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1989), 120–67.

698 ——— Basualdo, "The Unstable Institution," 50.

699 ——— "[S]ense, like sexuality," we learn from philosopher Catherine Malabou, "is necessarily perverse" as it continues to navigate and be distorted as a signifier without a fixed meaning. Catherine Malabou, "Polymorphism Never Will Pervert Childhood," trans. Robert Rose, in *Derrida, Deleuze, Psychoanalysis*, ed. Gabriele Shwab (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 64.

"unstable institution" is a tension between the national and the international field, various economic forces and interests, and utilitarian and autonomous demands that automatically, for him, frees the curator "by force" from canonical apparatuses. What's unfortunate in Basualdo's analysis, though, is that he makes no mention of small- and medium-sized institutions doing this job, though they seem to perfectly fit the picture he draws. What escapes Basualdo's analysis unfortunately also escapes the many, possibly because curatorial work in small institutions truly occupies a multiplicity of roles, fleeing, as it does, capitalist logics of production and reproduction.

I take it upon myself to ask, therefore: What about small institutions like Fotogalleriet, institutions whose work sits at the crossroads between theoretical discourses, artistic practices, and curatorial undertakings? Aren't these institutions occupying a subversive curatorial space (at the crossroads of international and national interests)? Aren't these institutions standing in a battleground with the draconian museum's ideology claiming the master signifier and cementing it? Isn't Fotogalleriet a precarious, "unstable" institution, contributing to maintaining the curatorial as a floating signifier? Isn't Fotogalleriet contributing to creating a "durational curating," meaning a perversion of the canonical machine and its curatorship? Aren't institutions like Fotogalleriet fundamental vessels of transformation and a fundamental part of creating the exceptionality of the arts and a real alternative to the culture industry?

The exhibition space is a powerful space for representation. Art institutions still bridge this power from the aesthetic sphere to larger society, demanding new forms of acceptance, equality, and solidarity via curating and enabling the speaking of the yet-unknown in public space. As a public exhibition space for art, Fotogalleriet is a place for representation and image production that influences material inclusion and exclusion. Exhibitions and their curation can bridge a lack of knowledge and vocabulary, or they can provoke exclusion and promoting discriminatory structures and languages. The exhibition space can be used as a space of visibility to address structural shortages, and it can address architecture's function as an infrastructure of hindrance. Architecture, submitted to the power of capital exploitation, tends to be a high threshold, an unscalable wall, rather than organically creating a bridge, a surface or a screen, as in Butler's sense, enabling movement and therefore the possibility of discussion.[700]

700 ——— I have been working at Fotogalleriet since August 2018. Coming from a larger institution with much greater resources, my first years at the institution have been about instituting structures. Not only in a meta-

phorical sense of internal structures and routines, but taking care of structural problems of the building, offices, how people interact with the institution, where, and why. I also now find myself working for an institution that is immediately available on the street and therefore closer to people. Nevertheless, art institutions can continue to act as a glass wall. We need to acknowledge the distance between art institutions and the outside to fill the gap. I have addressed these questions with former and current colleagues. During the first semester of 2020, with Fotogalleriet, I started a conversation with Skeiv Verden (Queer World) to address structural issues related to societal racism and, consequently, the lack of more varied forms of expression, discourses, and representation within the art world, which in turn reflects society at large. As a nationwide interest organization for LGBTIQ+ people with a racialised background, Skeiv Verden works for expanded diversity in representation in society. Its mission is to help produce a society where everyone can live full lives, with the freedom to openly express their sexual orientation and gender identity without fear of discrimination. By giving Skeiv Verden the role of curator, which in the art field has great definiting power, we believe different audiences and demands come together to contribute actively and ask for new measures within and outside the art field. Skeiv Verden's exhibition opened to the public on 21 January 2022. At Fotogalleriet, we consider it part of our social responsibility to challenge the typical curatorial voice (white, heteronormative, middle-class background) and to enable more people to speak their voice. The institution's programme aims to provide an opportunity to reshape a sensory experience in the white-cube space with more significant takeovers to impact how an institution thinks about exhibitions. It also strives to break with structural patterns that are part of the art institution's unconscious: aesthetic normativisation. Unavoidably, the Skeiv Verden discussion addressed, yes, what is on view, and, most importantly, how the very display works as a signifier. Skeiv Verden's curator role, with its leader Bassel Hatoum speaking on the organisation's behalf, is twofold: the first part consists of an architectural commission embracing the exhibition as an overall environment, including the urban context of Fotogalleriet; the second is a series of events engaging activists, artists, and spokespersons for individuals and groups of different backgrounds and disciplines within Skeiv Verden's world, which is in no way uniform and includes asylum seekers, labour immigrants, students, and Norwegian citizens with racialised backgrounds, among others. Skeiv Verden's curatorial role, then, is to help make these groups available and enter into dialogue with a broader public. Working across several disciplines in the politics of acceptance and belonging sets demands for changing the production and distribution of images in a renewed worldwide political turmoil. Several other programmes are upcoming and include changes to the organisation of the institution. These curatorial concerns are historically motivated and informed by the research I conducted. Curating has undoubtedly gained more and more prominence in the last decades as a practice determining what enters the public space of discussion within and beyond art institutions. With an

I don't think one can identify paradigms of curating and curatorial materialism out of a single exhibition; rather, this is accomplished by enduring in one's practice in the process of building dialogues. As I have evidenced in previous chapters, feminist curating cannot be reduced to a singular approach (that's what we blame patriarchal structures for—the inability to recognise pluralism: every single practice counts and is irreducible to a universalism of curating). Instead, feminist curating means a constellation of approaches unveiling a discourse. Such is also the claim of art historians Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry in *Politics in a Glass Cage*.[701]

The exceptionality of the arts rests on a multiplicity of practices, most of which remain under the radar. It is in these minor practices that the potential of the arts and curating remains. We have become so accustomed to star curators that we don't recognise the power of a curating that is less visible, but no less meaningful. We are so used to the discourse taking over (which is what Basualdo ultimately wishes to overturn: the entirety of the exhibitionary machine)—where curating does not work in alliance but as a totalising claim that impedes other meanings from ensuing and devel-

increasing number of curatorial schools and independent study programmes, it acquires ever more importance in specialised discourse. However, it remains in the hands of the few—the few who include or exclude narratives, the ones who hold decision-making power. Art rarely fills the promise of being an immediately rewarding economic sector providing stability. Searching for a pursuable future, many young people, therefore, engage with art too late, largely determined by where one comes from in society.

Inclusion and exclusion are prevalent in society. In the aesthetic sphere, mastered under the aegis of neoliberalism, the curator emerges as a dominant figure when it comes to what enters the visual discourse and what is left out. Curating is a practice, and in its approach and execution, it can advance the future. The Fotogalleriet team has addressed these questions through conferences, collaborations, and establishing a curatorial position with Transcultural Arts Production, Oslo, for people from a stratum of society who usually do not frequent art institutions or believe art instistutions are for them. We launched a Curatorial Fellowship at Fotogalleriet starting in January 2022 to secure continuity in the art field for young practitioners with diverse backgrounds. The fellowship is a network-building and research opportunity through one year of full-time employment, leading to curating an exhibition at Fotogalleriet; the first of these Curatorial Fellowship exhibitions will be held in the first quarter of 2023.

701 ——— Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry, "How to Be Seen: An Introduction to Feminist Politics, Exhibition Cultures in Curatorial Transgressions," in *Politics in a Glass Case: Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions*, ed. Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 1–21.

oping over time. If we can speak of art exceptionality, though, it is only thanks to all the art which exists beyond the mainstream—which is what Dave Beech and Carlos Basualdo assert willingly and unwillingly. There is a need to recognise this becoming "minor" of curating as a way to constantly deconstruct despotic power relations. Because the exhibitionary machine replicates nuclear family norms of productive and reproductive relations, the exhibition space is still a site of labour—both represented and real. Changing the relations of production—including curating as mastering and freeing these relations—can give rise to a true understanding of sexuality and love in time as a political weapon.

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Curating Labour focuses on radical exhibition practices addressing material conditions rooted in the struggle for "bread-and-butter." Departing from underrated exhibition projects in Scandinavia, including *The Artists' Situation* (UKS, Oslo, 1971) and *Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!* (Oktober, Stockholm; Fotogalleriet, Oslo; and other venues, 1974–78), the book foregrounds revolutionary feminist curatorial approaches. It tackles how highlighting labour in the exhibition space seeks to overturn prescriptive societal structures.

Curating Labour claims soft forms of curating and looks into how to transfer these feminist strategies into today's curatorial practices. It analyses the work of small- and medium-sized institutions and their alternative knowledge-building practices, and it problematises curating and the co-optation of representation by collecting writings on the non-conformant body as the site of trauma. While art is produced in more places than one—and especially outside the museum and the white cube—curating rests on such an exceptionality of the arts, which permeates society on many levels, beyond its recognised cathedrals. A central claim of the book is that the exhibition space must remain an active public space if we are to overthrow mainstream norms. Following such a view, the curator should dispute hegemonic tools in the aesthetic sphere to propose new aesthetic forms, constantly upholding the yet-unknown and the yet-to-be-accepted as fundamental motors for emancipation.

Antonio Cataldo is a writer, curator, and Artistic Director of Fotogalleriet, the Nordic countries' oldest kunsthalle dedicated solely to photography as a critical artistic practice. His edited book *Conversations on Photography* (2021) retraces the waves that gave rise to art photography in Scandinavia through dialogues with notable local and international practitioners. Cataldo obtained a Master of Arts in 2006 under the supervision of philosopher Giorgio Agamben in Venice, Italy. Cataldo sits on the board of the Kunsthalles of Norway and the Sandefjord Kunstforening Art Award jury and is a member of the steering committee of the European Assembly of Contemporary Art Centres. Over the last two decades, Cataldo has held curatorial and other positions at OCA – Office for Contemporary Art Norway, Oslo; La Biennale di Venezia, where he also co-curated the Nordic Pavilion in 2015; and Iuav University of Venice.

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