

WE HAVE AS MUCH TIME AS IT TAKES

CALIFORNIA COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

Graduate Program in Curatorial Practice

CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts

NINA BEIER AND MARIE LUND

DAVID HORVITZ

JASON MENA

SANDRA NAKAMURA

ROMAN ONDÁK

RED76

ZACHARY ROYER SCHOLZ

TERCERUNQUINTO

LAWRENCE WEINER

CHRISTINE WONG YAP

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The work of an introduction: We have as much time as it takes

Juror #8: You're alone... It's your right. We want to hear your arguments; we're not convinced. We want to hear them again. We have as much time as it takes.

—12 Angry Men, 1957¹

In its function of professional training, higher education still addresses itself to the young [...] to whom it transmits the competence judged necessary by each profession. They are joined through one route or another (for example, institutes of technology)—all of which, however, conform to the same didactic model... They are, once again, young people who have yet to become 'active.'

—Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1979²

“We have as much time as it takes,” the title of this exhibition, draws not only upon the central themes of the show it names, such as resisting expectations and postponing deadlines, but also alludes to the close collaboration among twelve student curators in its realization. The sentence is a quote from Juror #8, played by Henry Fonda, in the 1957 film *12 Angry Men*. The film follows the deliberations of twelve jurors over the course of an afternoon. Reflecting

the film’s origin as a teleplay, the action focuses on the space of deliberation, with the room as the primary scene. The statement is made near the end of the film, during a pivotal moment in which ten jurors, who were previously convinced of the defendant’s guilt, admit reasonable doubt, amounting to a total of eleven votes for his acquittal. The antagonist, Juror #5, is the lone remaining voice for conviction. Rather than advocating for the defendant’s guilt or innocence, Juror #8 argues simply for the appropriate time to consider. His statement—“We have as much time as it takes”—is less a persuasive argument, and more a tactical threat: make your case, or acquiesce; we can wait. Borrowing this phrase as its title, our exhibition constitutes a similar gesture, eschewing by way of questioning the expectations imposed on ourselves and the exhibition—that it must be performed in a timely manner, that it should be resolved and packaged, and so on—by insisting, instead, on the right not to decide at all.

We are twelve curators, producing a single exhibition collectively. Like the twelve jurors of Sidney Lumet’s film, we have different origins, perspectives,

and voices. Like them, we share a single, confined space of deliberation: twelve individuals around a table in a room—though our discussions, unlike theirs, took place over many afternoons. Selecting this title was a liberating moment in our exhibition-making process. We continue; we prolong the moment of deliberation. Likewise, we envision the exhibition as a pause, and not an event: a delay that pictures the future.

Much of the work we have chosen has been generated from the exhibition’s specific conditions, and from our own interests. Those conditions include: our interest in the multiple modes and forms of the institution; the exhibition’s presentation during the moment of transition from academia to professional life; and the difficult (if ultimately rewarding) process of collective exhibition-making. The show’s strategy is to invert the expectations, as we understood them, that we were asked to meet, highlighting in various ways notions of performance, productivity, and established systems of assessment. We use the word “performance” in the literal, rather than theatrical, sense: meaning the ability to perform efficiently. (Though perhaps there is, for us, still a trace

of the term’s other meanings: the evocation of theatrical enactment demanded by the educational process, in which we play the roles of students and curators simultaneously.)

We have as much time as it takes features ten artists and collectives: Nina Beier and Marie Lund, David Horvitz, Jason Mena, Sandra Nakamura, Roman Ondák, Red76, Zachary Royer Scholz, Tercerunquinto, Lawrence Weiner, and Christine Wong Yap. In their contributions, many of the artists render visible the conditions under which their work, and the exhibition itself, operate. Some of the conditions highlighted, for instance, are the dependency of the art market on surplus value, institutionalized knowledge, and legitimation. The participating artists are unified by an interest in confronting exhibition-making’s historical emphasis on visibility and timeliness—the understanding that an art exhibition’s value should be *immediately* grasped, and therefore (so the presumption goes) be more readily appreciated, understood, quantifiable. By focusing on works that embody circular processes and resist completion, the exhibition relates critically to such demands for definable results

or resolutions. The works in the exhibition often resist fixed materiality—the discourse of “dematerialization,” discussed since the 1960s, is key (on which more later)—but the show is ultimately less a meditation on space or material, and more a resistance to notions of fixity, expectation, and output.

Nina Beier and Marie Lund’s *Autobiography (If these walls could speak)*, 2009, and Roman Ondák’s *Untitled*, 2005, are key works in the exhibition. *Autobiography (If these walls could speak)* is initiated by the actions of gallery preparators, who re-drill, and make visible, the holes in the walls that supported mounts for works in previous exhibitions. Ondák’s contribution mimics the forms and vernacular of institutional signage. The piece consists of an empty gallery space cordoned off by a sign: DEADLINE POSTPONED UNTIL TOMORROW. The work remains unchanged over the course of the exhibition, thereby announcing its own continual postponement. But what is delayed here? Viewer gratification? Or is it more important that Ondák’s work be understood in relation to the lack of apparent works in the gallery, suggesting an open space to be filled (or fulfilled)

at some future time: a space of pure potential?

We have as much time as it takes is staged at the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts. The Wattis Institute is an art institution within an educational institution, the California College of the Arts; the structure of the two institutions compounds the need to mediate among various perspectives, as well as to take multiple histories into account. CCA has transformed many times: from CCAC to CCA, from a guild, to a school, and then to a college. It adopted a new campus in San Francisco alongside its Oakland premises. And even now, CCA’s moment of transition continues; inaugurated in 2003, the Graduate Program in Curatorial Practice is a part of this growth. *We have as much time as it takes* marks the first time that CCA’s Curatorial Practice students have collaborated with the Wattis Institute for their thesis exhibition. The Wattis Institute, known for its experimental exhibition programming, is a unique space in San Francisco. A non-collecting, temporary exhibition space, it emulates the form of the Kunsthalle—the German word gesturing to that model’s origins with European artists’ clubs and

associations. *We have as much time as it takes* assumes a place in this lineage of experimental practice, even as we distinguish ourselves by our collective curatorial process.

Our process has been informed by several texts, which we read while conceptualizing the exhibition, such as *The Manifesta Decade*, edited by Barbara Vanderlinden and Elena Filipovic in 2005.³ We read “Communiqué from an Absent Future: On the Terminus of Student Life,” a vital polemic by Research and Destroy that emerged from the 2009 student protest movement in California.⁴ And finally, we read *The Postmodern Condition* from 1979, in which the French theorist Jean-François Lyotard diagnoses the early stages of the catastrophe those student writers meant to argue against: capitalism’s deleterious effect on knowledge and the university. Although we do not address these subjects explicitly within the exhibition space, the floundering global market and student unrest have been on our mind. We find that increasingly valuable space for ideals, imagination, and open-ended creative experimentation are disappearing from educational institutions—CCA no less than

the California university systems. Everything must have *cost benefit*. Everything must generate capital. An emphasis on production has inserted itself into our curriculum, our assessments, and the way we perceive our very own performance. As Lyotard writes, marking the shift to neoliberal priorities in the 1970s, “universities and the institutions of higher learning are called upon to create skills, and no longer ideals.”⁵

We have as much time as it takes responds to these present social and cultural conditions, and to recent criticisms of the existing system of higher education, as exemplified in the actions and writings of Research and Destroy. The contemporary context might reframe, and reinvigorate, the “dematerialization” of the art object as described in Lucy Lippard’s now-classic writings on Conceptual art in the 1960s and 70s. Many of the pieces in this exhibition put to work strategies that her term first accounted for: the use of text, the strategies of mail art, or practices that work against the privileged status of art objects. In the introduction to her crucial compendium *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972...*, Lippard claims that the

...[A]nti-establishment fervor in the 1960s focused on the de-mythologization and de-commodification of art, on the need for an independent (or 'alternative') art that could not be bought and sold by the greedy sector that owned everything that was exploiting the world and promoting the Vietnam war.⁶

Naturally, Lippard frames her inquiry in terms of a different cultural and political landscape than the one we now face. However, one could draw certain parallels to our present condition: political turmoil, the ongoing battle for civil rights, countercultural movements and social unrest on a global scale. Lippard attempted to identify the shifting interests of artists at the time—even as she encountered critical resistance from the artists themselves. For example, the collective Art & Language pointedly criticized Lippard's idea of "formless form."⁷ They were concerned that her notion of dematerialization might suggest that artists were no longer interested in materials, or that somehow they had become divorced from their materials. We aim to locate our own choices at the nexus, more or less, of this

disagreement. And even as we account for this history, we aim to reuse and repurpose it; these now-familiar art strategies such as resisting completion (whether through action or considered inaction), have become emblematic responses to the reoccurring issues we describe—and in this context such gestures are as relevant now as ever.

REPEAT, REHEARSE, SURPASS

We understand the dematerialized as anti-capital. Artworks that trouble authorship through execution or technique often function in this regard. For decades artists have rewritten these gestures, before they, too, were absorbed into (some version of) the mainstream. As Lippard lamented in *Six Years*, "Clearly, whatever minor-revolutions in communication have been achieved by the process of dematerializing the object... art and artists in a capitalist society remain luxuries."⁸ Can these conditions be undermined through repetitive action—through persistence? When the artist, curator, or student resists generating another product does she undermine the system of compulsory results and surplus? We accept the probability of

failure, even as we recognize that each new effort gambles on some potential.

We have as much time as it takes is not a retrospective; and it is not a revolution. Nor is it a proposed alternative to current curatorial practice. Rather, it is a self-conscious pause. Aware of its many conditions and contradictions, this exhibition seeks to locate itself in a moment of transition: the interstitial moment between student and professional, between production and product. As an exhibition, it must function beyond its role as a step towards graduation; yet it is still beholden to lessons and review, not only from the outside critic but from the professor.

Juror #9: Hey, what's your name?
Juror #8: Davis.
Juror #9: My name's McCardle.
 [pause]
Juror #9: Well, so long.
Juror #8: So long.
 —12 Angry Men, 1957

This is the introduction, a frame for the conversations and exchanges that follow. More than a synopsis, it is an invitation and a formal presentation. It is the place where all that is to come is crystallized. Although dependent on all that it precedes, it yet has to establish the validity of what follows. Here we argue, and we justify. The introduction is a hovering space, a moment to look and to think things through. It, too, is a pause.

NOTES

1. *12 Angry Men* (Written by Reginald Rose; Directed by Sidney Lumet). United Artists, 1957.

2. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 49.

3. Barbara Vanderlinden and Elena Filipovic, eds. *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on*

Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennials in Post-Wall Europe (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press and Brussels: Roomade, 2005).

4. Research and Destroy, "Communiqué from an Absent Future: On the Terminus of Student Life," researchanddestroy.wordpress.com, 2009 (<http://researchanddestroy.wordpress.com/2009/10/04/communiquefromanabsentfuture>), accessed March 25, 2010.

5. Lyotard, 48.

6. Lucy Lippard, ed. *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972...* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), xiv.

7. *ibid.*, 45.

8. *ibid.*, xxi.

Glossary

ARCHIVE: The meeting place of government and memory. It was such a relief when the state started remembering things for us; when, under subpoena, time became style.

AUDIENCE: A sort of statistical measure—each of the fragments carries a certain weight, a drag coefficient, arriving either before or after its double. There is some voting. There is some fighting. There are small fires. There is bargaining, and there are signatures, and then there is what happened.

COINAGE: Every coin was once a ring, a wrung wrong, fragment of king, from which came the power to command bodies and things. As things. They've got you cornered. Those dead hands, that amber.

DEMOCRACY: A series of techniques for the management of conflict, democracy is the expression of asymmetrical relations between groups and, implicitly, state power. The words all come together in one big jumble, detached from the bodies, making a little sense, and so it is necessary, in cases where unity is desirable, sometimes, to treat the situation like a game of luck and strategy, in which the slow unfolding of chance and force arranges things into a sequence with a front and back, a now and then. But this is no political principle, much less a ground, except for those who want to kill freedom over and over again in order to delight in its resurrection.

DISTRIBUTION: This is really the biggest problem of our age. How to assure that nothing arrives at its destination? How can we disassemble our relationship to each other in such a way that no one, not even a person with above-average intelligence and really

nimble fingers, can put it back together without calling customer assistance?

EXHIBITION: It has something to do with lighting, or clearing, or conductive materials. Between the remainders and the places, an arrangement of excitations and inhibitions, roadblocks and accelerators, checkpoints and exceptions. You get people to see stuff by quieting everything else. In this sense, it might be more fitting to call each exhibition an inhibition—of dailiness, of need, of the mercenary relationship to matter and memory and friendship. We often like it when the background overruns the foreground.

ICONOCLASM: It had to be the picture we would miss most. Apocryphal Bakunin, proposing that the militants of the Dresden uprising take the Sistine Madonna from the museum, and hang it on the barricades. We wanted to destroy the museum in the name of life but all that happened was that everything, everywhere became the museum—the destroyed statue become a statue of destroy. It is no longer or no longer only a problem of processes turned to things. Freezing and materialization are just subsets. Processes can punctuate other processes—moving picture, the intelligence of gas. Most likely the mind was never really that great. It is difficult to smash a force, because the prohibition on images is itself a sort of image. You bring that cube with you, white boy.

OPENING: The supreme task of the present is to interrupt all flows, then remove all obstacles to flow. People are like currency. Walls are like doors, and the doors, taken off their hinges, laid end to end, are our royal road. It is very difficult to make a hole inside of a hole: knot, ambidextrous barricade, osmotic membrane. This is sort of like the fraction of a fraction, the meeting of one belonging and another, multiplication as division. “The tactics of ‘walking through walls’ involved a conception of the city as not just the site, but as the very *medium* of warfare—a flexible, almost liquid matter, that is forever contingent and in flux” (Weizman, *Hollow Land*). When the soldiers walk through your house, it is customary to offer them something—a beer, a toy soldier, a bribe or a kick in the face. In film, such a genre is bracketed by, on the one hand, the rooftop chase scene, and on the other, the ground floor chase (with restaurant kitchens a compulsory trope). Do not

be surprised, however, if the plate glass window is stronger than expected.

PARTICIPATION: It counts for 10% of your grade.

REPRODUCTION: To think in terms of abundance and scarcity is to forget about time. Every desire has its avant-garde, cresting the displays, projections, swerves, desperate Craigslist postings, smell of toner. Only after a billion hits or so does a thing become unique. There are speeds, rather, cycles per second, and the non-coincidence of one with its parts creates the not enough of this or that there is too much of somewhere else. Art doesn’t want to be free. It just wants to keep on dying again and again.

SCHOOL: Learning can take place anywhere, but school is sort of special. School is a righteous geometry of chairs, bodies, hallways. School is a serialization; a dispersal of the crowd into first, second, third. It’s mostly involuntary, this knowledge, habit, instinct, above which the philosophical imaginary makes little clicking noises that turn out to be a problem with your bones like having to go to work forever. You eat what you are.

SERVICE: The more unequal a society the more “guard labor” is necessary—in other words, you need more and more workers to police other workers, to make sure people don’t just take stuff, which is great. At first, we thought this was what the Internet was for, and surveillance cameras, and credit cards, but all that wealth has a danger of leaking out, and moreover, certain types of activities can’t easily be replaced by machines, and therefore grow larger as a percentage of total expenditure. How many professional dog-walkers before things just explode?

SPACE: “Outer spAc (ofn simply caLd space) iz d void dat exists beyond NE celestial Bod including d erth. It iz not complEtIE Mt (i.e. a perfect vacuum), bt contaNz a low density of particles, predominantly hydrogen plasma, az weL az electromagnetic radiation, magnetic feLdz, & neutrinos.”

SUSPENSION: It occurs at the crossroads of magic and positivism—*isometric* fragments of enchantment dispersed inside the pure

form of sensible intuition. Most laws are annulments of other laws. I go to my special place. It's where the cops get to beat the shit out of me and my friends. Money is incompleteness—a buying without a selling, or a selling without a buying. It is open on one end, like a piece of art, a communication that never arrives. It does not know where its receiver is.

TOMORROW: An archaism infrequently used since the late 20th century, except by DJs, stockbrokers and military contractors. No doubt its absence in current spoken English can be traced to the vanishing of a certain sentimental notion of time as a deep, almost chemical structure of variegated, involuntary mutation in both organic and inorganic matter, sometimes called change, rather than the contemporary conception of time as the looping, chopping, collage or volatilization of various “samples.” *Le futur n’a plus d’avenir*. The term remained in use within the special jargon of investment bankers, where the ever-branching spread of different types of claims on future revenue (i.e. debt) necessitated fictions of this sort, if only to move the materials and people of the present around in those absurd circles we call “getting shit done.” Eventually, though, with the collapse of the real estate bubble, there emerged a common understanding that “tomorrow” was merely a shadow which the ravenous present, having swallowed all possible pasts, emitted in short flares, something like the way that a black hole maintains the 2nd law of thermodynamics by radiating, as noise, the unholy aura of the matter it has swallowed forever.

VALUE: Sometimes they wondered, because of this lust to do something, anything, if they weren’t just the good fools of the decoy war. Wasn’t the equation between artistic production and capital a bit false? Yes, the rationalized metals, the calculated formlessness, the carrion-feeders of Madison Avenue, these things were the imported pointers which established the homology, and there was no denying the general profit-seeking and cynicism, the rush of cash and fashion, the institutions which wanted to grow and grow, to accumulate. But just as often as not it seemed to be about *storage*, about devaluation, shakeout, deflation or inflation, in any case some kind of emptying, atop which all of the anti-aesthetic grapples and pain-compliance holds were just redundant. It was

about taking wealth out of circulation, about stopping its mad re-injection into the circuits of reproduction by squirreling it away in some blindingly expensive domiciles or outside in the plain air of a false public good or just putting it up everywhere like a celebrity Twitter. It was a way of destroying the too much that meant there was not enough for most, of anything, food or housing, let alone the imprisoned sensuousness one kept trying to expurgate by watching television shows on DVD. In this way it was sort of like those financial instruments one used to wreck an economy, in order to shake loose the barnacles of state spending and regulation. It was too big to feel one way about.

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SAYS 590221 EU 588088 ANOTHER 585422 SATURDAY
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OIL 554728 WORK 551921VERY 547953 MUCH 547529PART
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Elegant obstinacy, meaningless work

I.

When I stand in the office, my limbs slowly turn to wood, which one longs to set fire to, so that it might burn: desk and man, one with time! Time, that always makes me think.

—Robert Walser, “Helbling’s Story,” 1914¹

Helbling is going a bit mad at the office. *Time*. “It passes quickly, yet in all its quickness it seems suddenly to curl up, seems to break, and then it’s as if there were no time at all.” His story is simple. He has a job at a bank. He dislikes work. “A task always frightens me,” he tells us. The Swiss writer Robert Walser gives voice to a character too arrogant, odd, and anxious to be genuinely absurd. He has the “zeal of a hunting dog when it comes to seeking distinction,” but it’s an impulse that takes perverse form. While others in the office are busy with work, he sits at his desk leisurely paging through a small book. His colleagues squint at him askance. He does not read; he is satisfied simply to assume the posture of one immersed in a book. “Elegant obstinacy” is the phrase he uses to describe the effect he’s after.

A sign hangs in an otherwise empty gallery: DEADLINE POSTPONED UNTIL TOMORROW. Something will happen... tomorrow. Is this a notice of work stoppage, a scene that might recall Helbling’s quiet one-man strike? Or does it suggest that work continues feverishly—if not here, then perhaps somewhere else? In 1914, when Walser published “Helbling’s Story,” management was just coming to be understood as a science of total waste reduction.² Obstinacy at the office was one way to guard against efficiency’s intrusion into all corners of the everyday. *We have as much time as it takes* offers us a glimpse of how that workaday world looks now from an artist’s point of view. Transactions,

exchanges, contracts, and conversations are terms that characterize much of the work included. The show is sparse—we might even say elegant—but here elegance has little to do with Helbling’s efforts at what Balzac once described as the “art of animating repose.”³ Though the exhibition’s title, *We have as much time as it takes*, invokes a suspension of limits, it’s the most restrained gestures that rule.

This gets at something paradoxical at play in the work on view, and in the way we tend to think about work today. Taylorism, the science of maximal profit for minimal effort, was not driven by the promise of a world in which leisure might one day eclipse labor. Increased productivity was always its primary aim; time for leisure was necessary only insofar as consumption served as a spur to further production. After a century of the Taylorist experiment, the promise of more for less has led not only to more work, but also to a profound abstraction of time. We “invest” time in work, but also treat it like credit. Forgetting we borrow against the future, we now buck efficiency (and deadlines) for the extension of work-time in endless immersion. Perhaps that’s why, despite the elegant economy of physical and conceptual gesture on display in *We have as much time as it takes*, one still detects everywhere a hint (or more) of Helbling’s time-sickness—though not born of “work avoidance,” but something nearer its opposite. —E.L.

II.

According to the model proffered by social theorist David Harvey, artists are like winemakers in that they work to produce “signature,” therefore monopolizable, goods.⁴ Just as a patch of soil in the Bordeaux region of France is bound to yield Bordeaux wine rather than Burgundy or Champagne, an artist is expected to produce works of a unique style and sensibility. According to Harvey, the artist’s inimitable style is like his or her *terroir*. In turn, it is the job of the curator and the critic to distinguish the monopoly product from the ubiquitous, and the authentic from the merely derivative.

For the gallery world, Harvey’s analogy rings true: galleries continue to operate in much the same way as wine distributors, by acquiring exclusive ownership of unique goods which they then dispense at monopoly prices. It’s unclear, though, how we

should characterize artists’ relationships with museums and other spaces of exhibition, and with the ambiguous figure of the curator. Harvey envisions the art economy as it had been traditionally organized, with artists working in the studio and galleries serving first and foremost as agents of sale. In recent decades, however, the production of exhibitions on-site has become at least as important as studio practice, if not more so; and though galleries continue to serve as vendors of art objects, curators have come to occupy a pivotal role in the economy of art’s production, exhibition, and exchange.⁵ Artists who base their practice on exhibition-making are bound more than ever to organize their working lives around exhibition spaces. Since the labor required for exhibition-making takes artists away from the studio, it’s vital that their investment of time yield some sort of a return, often in the form of publicity. Hence the use-value of exhibitions shifts from spectatorship to speculation: an investment of unpaid labor recouped in the form of future work opportunities—and, at some point down the line, if all goes well, sales, honoraria, and fame.

Of course, the mode of speculative labor I have been describing is hardly unique to the art world. The precariousness of this system of promises and rewards is characteristic of the project-based economy of the so-called “creative class,” where hours are long, free time scarce, and job security a constant anxiety. That art should obey a similar logic comes as little surprise. It is worth registering, though, the degree to which these economic conditions undermine artists’ freedom, and even their basic ability, to produce art when and how they please. Without a place to exhibit and lacking the resources art institutions afford, many artists would have to radically alter their mode of production. It is difficult to imagine how an artist like Tino Sehgal (to choose a not-so-random example) would be able to function without the host institutions around which his projects are based.⁶ Of course, this dependency works both ways: Sehgal’s sensational exhibitions, which often put entry-level museum staff in the role of interpreters, are a source of cheap publicity for his institutional hosts. The best of Sehgal’s work makes visible this network of mutual dependencies and investments. As for the artists selected for *We have as much time as it takes*, I sense in the contractual specificity of their work a reticence to invest in the precarious system of art-institutional work and reward.⁷ In light of the recent

financial crisis, the reasons for this reticence are all too clear. The faith required of investors—faith or folly?—is in short supply, especially for those who have only their labor to give. —D.M.

III.

In 1970, Robert Morris founded the Peripatetic Artists Guild (PAG), a project he advertised in *Artforum*, which cast Morris in the role of a sort of journeyman artist-for-hire.⁸ For \$25 an hour, he could be commissioned to do a variety of things, including “explosions,” “deluges,” “monuments,” “earthworks,” “theatrical projects for the masses,” “artistic diversions of rivers”—in fact, Morris would accommodate himself to any proposition; according to the ad, “No project is too small or large.” More than the service rendered, it was the wage that interested Morris, thus the terms and conditions of his employment are spelled out with lawyerly exactitude:

Sales or fees for any projects are not acceptable. A \$25.00 per working hour wage plus all travel, materials, construction and other costs to be paid by the owner-sponsor. Subsequent sales of any project by the owner-sponsor will require a 50% return of funds to the Peripatetic Artists Guild (PAG) to be held in trust for the furtherance of saleless wage commissions between other artists and owner-sponsors. A contract will be issued for every commission.

To my knowledge, no one ever commissioned the Guild to do anything, though several dozen people wrote to Morris asking about the PAG. Still, the project wasn't a joke: maybe it was Morris's point to foreground the disparity between contemporary conditions of art production and the system of economic reward. Or to insist that art is labor, and to imagine how a different relationship between artist and client might come to displace the monopoly trade of the gallery system. In any event, Morris's attempt at self-reinvention strikes me as attuned to the economics of his day, and to the turn from industrial to post-industrial labor.

Readers will guess that I see the PAG as some kind of a precedent for the projects collected in this exhibition. Many of the artists included in *We have as much time as it takes* undertake tasks akin to those proposed by Morris, performing a host of invented

services (though not for an hourly wage). For example, Zachary Royer Scholz returns repeatedly to the gallery to install and rearrange assemblages made of office supplies (sourced from the administrative wing of the Wattis Institute). Nina Beier and Marie Lund act as archaeologists of the gallery space, marking traces of previous exhibitions. David Horvitz furnishes members of the Wattis Institute mailing list with snapshots from a recent vacation. Still, it is important to register the distance separating Morris's moment from ours. The charm of the PAG lies in its combination of comical implausibility and an earnest enthusiasm for work. Morris was eager to make art into labor, and thereby to make the work of labor as satisfying as possible. But by proposing to undertake any project whatsoever (“No project too small or large”) in the name of the PAG, he effectively delimited labor to the realm of art alone. He failed to take into account the realm of extraneous or supplementary labor, from self-administration to self-promotion, that a peripatetic practice would entail. For the present generation, this extra labor is more difficult to ignore.

“Peripatetic” refers to the activity of walking, or travel by foot, à la Diogenes. The peripatetic traveler packs lightly, carrying the tools of his trade on his back. Much of what he needs, he finds along the way. If artists of the past decade counted on a steady stream of institutional support and international publicity to take them from one project to the next, artists at the start of this decade seem better adapted to the economic and institutional conditions of peripatetic labor. They operate with limited means, requiring little or no support for the production and installation of their works. Often their aims are improvised according to the particular character of the client institution. As I have sought to argue, this return to a more peripatetic mode of art production is not only, and not even primarily, an aesthetic development. The material conditions of the art economy play a major part. So too does the Internet: using electronic means, artists are able to disseminate their work and publicize their activities without institutional support.⁹ It is worth asking, then, whether the peripatetic artists of the present day, armed with instruments of online self-promotion, need invest in art institutions at all. Why not commit fully to the journeyman's way? This seems to me the question posed by *We have as much time as it takes*—posed but left unanswered. It is a question that haunts the art institution

as well: what else, if not publicity, can art institutions offer artists in exchange for their time? And how, finally, should artists and institutions alike respond to Morris's exhortation, tongue-in-cheek then, but now more urgent than ever, that artists demand and receive a working wage? —D.M.

IV.

I go to the artist's website and click on an image. The work I want to see is there, or rather on YouTube, which is where my click takes me. The video is called *Meaningless Work*, by Jason Mena. You can see it too, included in *We have as much time as it takes* or online alongside related music videos by the pop group Men At Work. Mena's piece calls to mind a recent essay by Diederich Diederichsen. In "On (Surplus) Value in Art," Diederichsen describes what he sees as the emergence of two classes of cultural producers: "performance proletarians" and what we might call "auratic artists." On the one hand, he identifies a "deprofessionalized and deregulated culture-industrial proletariat," whose time is valued less as labor proper than as a more informal, promiscuous mode of production—what Diederichsen calls "life force" or "vitality." In this camp, he includes DJs, reality show contestants, and porn amateurs—nearly anonymous workers whose ephemeral attractions offer up "liveliness, animation, masturbation material, emotion, energy, and other varieties of pure life."¹⁰ On the other hand, he points to a resurgent myth of the artist-as-individual, and a flight toward auratic object production in art. Value in art, he claims, is increasingly tied to the renewed perception of the individuality, exceptionality, and even fashion-savvy of the heroic artist.

If Diederichsen's account sees contemporary culture as divided between proletarian-performance and auratic art production, then *Meaningless Work* conflates and inverts these two realms. In the video, Mena shuffles into a classroom containing a bright green chalkboard, three long high worktables, a number of stools, and a sink. The camera is stationary, but the video has been sped up just enough to give the action the comedic, manic quality of silent cinema. Mena performs a series of precise gestures, shoving and pivoting desks from one side of the room to the other, flipping stools onto and off tabletops, and dragging them across

the floor. His measured, slightly speedy gestures retain the feeling of labor without being reduced to a mere display of physicality. He rearranges the room as if deeply immersed in solving a puzzle (a YouTube genre in its own right, it turns out). The video ends with everything situated as it began; Mena's efforts come to nothing. His "meaningless work" is neither heroic nor vitally productive. Exhaustion here is both palpable and parodic.

The title "Meaningless Work" comes from a short essay written by Walter De Maria in 1960. For De Maria, meaningless work refers to any activity that "does not make money or accomplish a conventional purpose." He offers several examples: moving blocks from one box to another and then back, digging a hole, then covering it up—so long as nothing is accomplished, any task can be made meaningless. De Maria writes,

*Meaningless work is potentially the most abstract, concrete, individual, foolish, indeterminate, exactly determined, varied, important art-action-experience one can undertake today. This concept is not a joke. Try some meaningless work in the privacy of your own home.*¹¹

Though he claims that meaningless work "is not a joke," neither is it completely serious (actually, his sense of humor isn't far from Morris's here). Despite his droll tone, De Maria isn't a parodist; his unproductive production is funny without being flip. On the other hand, Mena's video, set in an art school classroom, does hint at parody—but of what? Of work or art? Or both? Perhaps he takes aim at De Maria, Morris, and that generation's obsession with work and workers (now learned dutifully as art historical lesson)? The video's ambiguity speaks to a crucial difference between De Maria's moment and Mena's: caught between auratic production and proletarian performance (and between the gallery and YouTube), Mena's treatment of art as work lacks the mischievous charge of De Maria and Morris's propositions. Even so, his performance is not without provocation. Mena risks his exceptional "auratic" status by sharing the screen with music videos and puzzle geeks. This, I think, is the point: his proximity to Diederichsen's proletarians, for whom the Internet is a primary workspace, shows up the diminishing differences between his working conditions and theirs. For Mena and his peers, art's relationship to precarious labor has become all too evident. The problem they face now is how to delimit the sphere of art without

resorting to the myth of the heroic artist-individual. Or, on the other hand, how to delve more deeply into the vital realm of this new proletariat, without disappearing altogether. —E.L.

NOTES

1. Robert Walser, *Selected stories*, trans. Christopher Middleton (New York: New York Review Book, 1982), 35.

2. See Helen Molesworth on Marcel Duchamp's ambivalence toward work at this moment in "Work Avoidance: The Everyday Life of Marcel Duchamp's Readymades," *Art Journal* Vol. 57, No. 4 (Winter, 1998), 51-61.

3. Honoré de Balzac, *Treatise on Elegant Living*, trans. Napoleon Jeffries (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2010 [1850]).

4. See Harvey, "The Art of Rent: Globalization and the Commodification of Culture," *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (New York: Routledge, 2001). The essay was first presented at the Conference on Global and Local at Tate Modern in London, February 2001.

5. Here, I am invoking a now-canonical account of 20th-century art, which identifies the development of three-dimensional and installation-based art—as exemplified by

Marcel Duchamp, Constantin Brancusi, El Lissitzky, Donald Judd, Richard Serra, Robert Smithson, Helio Oiticica, Louise Bourgeois, and others—with an increased attention to the material, phenomenological, and institutional parameters of the art exhibition. The rise of the modern art curator as a powerful intercessor between artists and art institutions (and, more recently, as a creative agent in his or her own right) has its origins in this shift from studio-based to exhibition-based practice.

6. Since 2007, the Wattis has been hosting an ongoing exhibition of works by Tino Sehgal, organized by Wattis Institute director Jens Hoffmann.

7. To give just one example, Tercerunquinto's first proposal for the exhibition was to stipulate that the gallery space be left half-empty, and that each of the co-curators writes her own exhibition statement.

8. For more on Morris and the PAG, see Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 121-5.

9. It bears mentioning that most if not all of the artists included in *We have as much time as it takes* maintain a website for purposes of self-promotion. We found these websites extremely useful for the purposes of our research and writing.

10. Diedrich Diederichsen, *On (Surplus) Value in Art* (New York: Sternberg Press, 2008), 47-9. Diederichsen's use of the term "attraction" suggests a homology between today's online entertainments and the thrills on view in short films screened at fairgrounds and vaudeville theaters in the early days of cinema, what Tom Gunning and other silent cinema scholars refer to as "The Cinema of Attractions."

11. Walter De Maria, "Meaningless Work" (March 1960) in La Monte Young and Jackson Mac Low, eds., *An Anthology* (Designed by George Maciunas). New York: Heiner Friedrich Editions, 1970 (1961/1965), unpaginated.

over and

again and

STATE OF MOMENTARY INFLUENCE

*Nina Beier and Marie Lund
interviewed by Jacqueline Im and
Josephine Zarkovich*

JACQUELINE IM/
JOSEPHINE ZARKOVICH

There seems to be an interesting shift in your practice, from examinations of the domestic to an interest in institutions of art. What led you to make this break?

NINA BEIER

Indeed, it is possible to detect a switch in the type of situations we have been dealing with. I guess we went quite suddenly from intervening in something like a family dinner, to having to adapt to the situation at established art institutions. But looking at it now, it's apparent that we have always been working with the institution in its many different forms. Our material ranges from cultural organizations like the exhibition, the theatre, or the concert, to more social or collective ones, such as communes, bands, families, and a variety of political groups.

MARIE LUND

Yes, even within the art institution, it is the social structures and the human aspects we address. In an event we did at the ICA in London, *The Witness*, 2008, we asked a gallery attendant to grow his hair and beard for the duration of a six-month exhibition. The exhibition consisted of many different projects and changed constantly throughout, so he was the one who experienced the exhibition as a whole: because he embodied its duration.

JI/JZ

Let's talk about your interest in making visible different aspects of the institution. In *Autobiography (If these walls could speak)*, 2009/2010, museum staff are asked to recall and excavate the holes made during past installations of artworks, that were filled at the end of each exhibition. How do such acts speak to the character or memory of the institution?

NB

As artists we are only invited to be part of an institution for a limited amount of time. We have a window of a month, or maybe even a night, during which we can introduce our vision, before the program continues. We have directly commented on this format in *The Witness* and *Autobiography*. In other cases, such as *The Difference between Humans and Walls*, 2007, we have instead taken advantage of this state of momentary influence. Perhaps an even better example of this is *All the Best*, 2008, in which we temporarily blocked the daily proceedings of the organization by asking that all mail sent to the gallery be left unopened, allowing it to accumulate for the duration of the show.

ML

In *Autobiography* we point towards the history of the space that we, as visiting artists or as an audience, only encounter briefly, but the memory of which is carried by

the space and the gallery staff. Through the ephemeral nature of the intervention, we aim to expose the artificial construction where all traces of the past are erased and the walls are repainted again and again. We want to create an awareness of the narrative of which the exhibition is a part—it being an art space with a long history or a young gallery and its short history—and which could be understood as a movement or a generation.

NB

We aim to bring out the social construction that makes up the particular establishment. We think of the works as rituals for the people who are involved. An integral part of this work is the process of gathering the current employees of the space and asking them to collectively recall as many works as their joint memory and history permits.

J1/JZ

You talk about the artificial constructions that art institutions employ to erase the past. Yet there's something almost humorous about this exposure, too: you are playing with the expectations of the visitor. Do you see your work as having an element of humor, or of the unexpected?

ML

It is not meant to be funny as such, but maybe the simple and actual manifestation of the intervention does allow for a certain open and curious reading.

NB

No, come on. It's funny because it's true.

J1/JZ

We'd like to go back to this idea of ritual—that it is through ritual that one can excavate the past. This seems to resonate with much of your work, whether the history of an art institution, or the reunion of groups in *The Testimony*, 2009, and *The Making of Difference*, 2009.

ML

Yes, we often speak of the events as rituals, and the sculptures as relics. The reunions we have initiated are as much intimate situations between the people who meet and process their common history, as they are about speculating on potential future consequences of the interactions. In this way, the rituals are a link between the past and the future, and the sculptural relics reshuffle existing material and propose new readings.

NB

We say “ritual” because the term represents both the medium and the premeditation of this type of work. The situations we have initiated resemble other kinds of ritual; they consist of prescribed codes of behavior that dictate the social conduct of the people involved, and they are composed with a specific intention to enable, or perhaps force through, a collective processing of a specific episode, habit, or history. Whether the rituals actually function as intended, is not given. We only try to lay out

our objective as transparently as possible, and then take a step back.

J1/JZ

What is the role of the audience in your works?

ML

We often focus on the position of the audience, either directly when they play a part in a situation, or more abstractly when the subjective reading of the work becomes part of shaping the work. *A Circular Play*, 2008/2010 calls attention to the space between the performed and the perceived. Here, the audience is a corner of the triangle which includes the actor and the stenographer.

NB

The whole motivation for exhibiting art must be based on a wish to let go of the autonomy of the work and open it up to its interpretive possibilities. *A Circular Play* is one of the most self-contained examples of our ongoing explorations into the role of interpretation and transmission in the art experience. The majority of our collaborative work depends heavily on our audience. The tension between the viewer and a work of art eventually lands with the viewer, who is left to imagine, identify with, or construe the experience. We try to give as much space as possible to the audience's authority in the work. Along with this basic idea of reception theory—that it is readers, not authors, who make meaning—comes the dialectic between intention and interpreta-

tion. I think that this might be what has led us to the combination of creating these rather dictatorial frameworks for our staged situations, which we then, in contradiction, leave to play out, outside of any control.

J1/JZ

In the relationship between the actor performing Samuel Beckett's 1958 one-act play *Krapp's Last Tape*, and the stenographer taking down the performance, *A Circular Play* carries the idea of endlessness—it resists completion. The actor then performs the stenographer's notes, and so on.

ML

A Circular Play exists in between the performance and the produced material, which then contributes to the production of the next performance. Even though there is a progression, we are interested in the work being almost static with constant exchange between the performed and the perceived. We initiate a process that produces a new situation, material, and understanding. In many projects we have done, and this one in particular, we merely initiate and facilitate the situation, then stand back and watch it unfold together with the audience. We are just as curious as anyone about which direction it will take.

J1/JZ

There is some openness in *A Circular Play*, which unfolds over time, and changes as it passes repeatedly through the

stenographer's notes and the actor's performance. It's like an ongoing rehearsal.

ML

The event does not aim to produce a result, so maybe rather than *rehearsal*, it can be understood as *process* that produces the material by rewriting and repeating. We are interested in placing the process of creation in the stage of presentation and letting the element of perception be an integral part of the work.

NB

This work came from a curiosity about repetition in standard performance formats, and to what degree the exchange between the audience or critics and the performer informs or refines the show over time. So rather than being interested in the idea of rehearsal, as something that takes place before the completion of a work, the work questions the general idea of the possibility of a finished work. The live format is open to influence in a very different way than the still one, an art object, but even the object is constantly affected by its audience and ongoing reinterpretation. This fluctuation is what *A Circular Play* aims to frame. If you look at the performance history of *Krapp's Last Tape*, you see not only changes that Beckett himself made to the script over time, but also the way that the play has been read and understood since it was first published, and this is all continually shifting.

J1/JZ

You often engage the exhibition space and its hidden mechanisms in a way that might evoke self-reflexive or critical art of the past: Mel Bochner's *Measurement Room*, 1968, for example, or Michael Asher's architectural and economic interventions in the early 1970s.

NB

I prefer our works to be understood as a direct response to the situation at hand, rather than in discussion with historical works.

J1/JZ

For *We have a much time as it takes*, you will contribute new iterations of *A Circular Play* and *Autobiography (If these walls could speak)*. Although so much of your practice is about responding to particular situations, you often adapt past projects for new shows. How do you see your work engaging with each new location?

ML

Autobiography relates directly to the gallery, and it will be interesting to see what it will reveal in a space with a long history such as the Wattis Institute. We are also really interested in showing *A Circular Play* again, as this will most likely produce very different material and emphasize the piece's essential character as a process. Many of the works can be understood as methods that produce different outcomes depending on material and context.

NB

As we have established, meaning grows when a work is experienced, and the interpretations differ depending on the context in which they occur. The repetitive process of *A Circular Play*, for instance, enables us to keep our works open-ended enough that they will reawaken in every situation that they appear.

① "So far, no demand has been disclosed for exchange value
 unchanged value of an old coin, pearl or a diamond"
 - KM



① exhibited
 (exhibición) ←————→ ② exposed
 (exposición)

LOCATING

*Sandra Nakamura interviewed
by Nicole Cromartie and
Sharon Lerner Rizo-Patrón*

NICOLE CROMARTIE/

SHARON LERNER RIZO-PATRÓN

Many of your works have assumed meticulous arrangements that take over gallery floors. Copious numbers of coins—150,000 euro cents, 50,000 Japanese yen, or 66,666 Peruvian céntimos—are placed one by one, cumulatively assuming different forms. Why do coins have such a central presence in so many of your works?

SANDRA NAKAMURA

In Peru, the inflation rate in the 1980s was huge. Money became useless as time passed: even by the hour, prices would go up. To illustrate how extreme the economic situation was, it really mattered when you cashed your paycheck—before or after lunch. So when I was growing up, I used to play with money. We had so many coins that were worthless, that my parents would give me bags and bags of coins to play with. My sister and I would set up a fake shop every Sunday at my grandma's house and buy and sell things with all these coins that were actual money, but were worth almost nothing. You could have a kilogram of those and you couldn't even buy bread. For us, they were more like toys. So maybe I like coins so much because they were a part of my childhood. I choose to work with the smallest coin possible because it's something nobody wants. A single penny can't buy you anything, but in accumulation, its value becomes more and more significant.

NC/SL

Money, this abstract economic thing, becomes material. With such high inflation, its highest value comes from it being a raw material.

SN

I have been working on a piece that addresses the issue of value directly. In Peru in 1991, we were forced to switch currencies, as the numbers used were so high and had so many digits that they became difficult to handle. In common speech, when you said five hundred intis, you really meant five hundred *thousand*. So a million Peruvian intis became one nuevo sol. A piece I'm currently working on will show the equivalent in intis of what is now worth one cent. Intis have been out of circulation for almost twenty years. Now that they are worthless as currency, their value is located in the coins' material. They are sold as *chatarra*, scrap metal, for up to 30 nuevos soles per kilogram.

Their worth depends on how we look at them. Now these coins are becoming scarcer as they are bought and molten for whatever use. One person buys them to make shopping carts, and another uses them as material for an artwork. It is interesting to see how ten thousand coins, which together would nominally be worth the equivalent of one cent of nuevo sol, can be bought as scrap metal for approximately three thousand nuevos soles. And then these coins, used to make an artwork,

achieve a different kind of value as art.

NC/SL

There is also something compelling about having pure economic signs—i.e. money—assuming different value as cultural signs, that might later directly interrupt their exchange value. However, beyond their exchange value or culturally added value, coins are also interesting as physical things.

SN

I like the physicality of coins because now you pay for everything online with your credit card, and money becomes invisible. Coins have weight, texture, and design. They make sound, they rust. They circulate among us: we hold them in our hands, get change, carry them in our pockets. Once my installations are finished, all the coins go back into circulation, but for the duration of the exhibition, they become something else.

NC/SL

You select particular histories for your coin works. For this exhibition, how will you decide how to focus your research?

SN

It's intuitive. I just start looking for information. In this case, it starts with the main building of California College of the Arts' San Francisco campus. I ask, "What was it before? Why has it become what it is now? Has it had previous lives?"

All these changes are somehow contained in the building itself. There's some kind of energy in the place, or traces of those histories. Other projects I've done, particularly in Lima, have also started with a specific location or building. The architectural history always points to the social history of the city and of the community using those spaces. In getting to know the history of specific places and buildings, my interest is in the way they form part of our collective imagination of the city.

NC/SL

You have created projects in this series in several cities besides Lima, including Huesca in Spain and Kitakyushu in Japan. And in each location the piece has assumed a different form. For instance, in Huesca the installation manifested in a thirty-five square-meter copper surface, and in Kitakyushu the coins resembled the compact shape of a *tatami*.

SN

I've done those projects in relation to the places I was living and showing the work. They are related to the value of the coins themselves but also to property or land. In Spain, the very first coin installation had to do with the size of the smallest apartment allowed by law. Through my installation, the viewer could visualize the area that a family had to live in. This raised other social issues, like struggling immigrants who live with friends or distant relatives, who have different spatial needs

than a conventional Spanish family.

NC/SL

In that project, there was also an economic exchange. You covered a square meter on the street with coins, and passersby took them away; you were assigning the value of a piece of land by the amount of 1 euro cent coins that fit in a 1 square-meter area, far less than the actual market value of the terrain. Pedestrians took the coins and you simulated a commercial transaction with Huesca's citizens. Why haven't you repeated this gesture or public interaction element in other works?

SN

I continue to have an interest in this type of exchange with individual people, but it has to do with the location and the context in which a work is shown. When I was in Japan, it was difficult to do something like that because, first of all, I don't speak Japanese and the culture is something entirely foreign to me. Half of my family comes from Japan, but for me it was very difficult to break the boundaries of social conduct, especially because I look Japanese. I didn't want to make anyone uncomfortable, especially on the street.

Here in Lima, as you can imagine, doing something like that with coins on the street would be very difficult. Besides the safety issue, my concern has to do with the lack of respect for other people's space and property. The coins would probably disappear before I

could even finish placing them on the ground.

NC/SL

How did you resolve this cultural context with your work?

SN

The first coin project I did in Lima was in 2008, at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Lima. There I used coins in a very different way. I made a wishing machine that threw coins into the lake on the museum grounds. It was a participatory project, in a way, but it was more an offering than an exchange. I was giving the coins away, under the condition that the museum would make them available throughout the show for anybody to make a wish, for as many wishes as they wanted.

NC/SL

These works deal with economic exchange, but they aren't easily saleable.

SN

When I make work here in Lima, after the project is complete, there's nothing left to sell or to show other than documentation. None of my photographic documentation, though, is produced to be commodified. I do not feel comfortable selling photographs of an intervention or installation because their function is just to document a situation, an event, an action. In no way are they artworks in themselves; they have no other use or value than to illustrate what the piece was about. My practice

is not about making or selling objects. It's about experiences and having some kind of exchange and negotiation among specific people, materials, and locations.

For example, *How I wonder what you are*, 2007, consisted of temporarily placing the sign of one of Lima's most emblematic movie theatres in a gallery space. At the end of the exhibition, the sign was returned to its original location and has been there since, as if it had never been removed. I have been asked to name a price for that sign more than once, but I think the people interested in purchasing it do not understand that the sign itself is not the piece. The piece is more than just the sign. It transcends the object to encompass the entire working process: from the preliminary research regarding the evolution of cinemas as an architectural typology representative of the city's recent history and development, to negotiations with the building's owners to obtain permission to use their sign, to the act of removing it from the building's facade and installing it in an art gallery, and finally to its return to its original condition and location in the final moments of the project. I do not see how you could possibly sell or own all those elements.

In the case of coin installations, the coins are returned to the bank and go back into circulation at the end of an exhibition. Up to this point, each installation has been developed for a specific context and has only been shown once. I can imagine if there was

interest in collecting any of the coin pieces, that there would be a negotiation with the individual or institution acquiring it. They could purchase the right to recreate the installation in the appropriate context and be responsible for providing the coins each time the piece is shown, thereby becoming actively engaged in my working process. I wouldn't want anyone to have tens of thousands of coins in storage, unless they are coins that are at risk of disappearing.

NC/SL

How does your work function institutionally and in relation to institutional economy?

SN

Along with time and space (among other variables), I think institutions define the context in which the work will take place. At times, some institutions have had to adapt certain administrative and financial procedures to make my project possible.

To realize the first coin installation at the Centro Cultural del Matadero in Huesca, I asked the institution to lend me 1,500 euro for use as working material. They managed to borrow some money from the city's cultural council under the condition that every single cent would be returned at the end of the show. Then I went to several banks to have the 1,500 euro converted into 1 euro cent coins. In the end, the bank that provided the coins for my installation was one that often sponsored cultural activities

organized by el Matadero. You have to remember that this all took place in a small, rural town in the north of Spain, so there were not nearly enough coins in any of the banks in town. The bank had to place a special order with the Spanish Treasury, who shipped them to Huesca. Following protocol, the coins were delivered and picked up at the end of the exhibition in an armored truck. So far, I have been fortunate to work with institutions that have been sensitive enough to respect my practice and engage in my working process.

- ① Anonymous Giving
- ② Acceptance / Expectation
- ③ The gift is SACRIFICE
- ④ A ROSE IS A ROSE...



WISH YOU WERE HERE

*David Horvitz interviewed by
Jacqueline Clay
and Katie Hood Morgan*

JACQUELINE CLAY/
KATIE HOOD MORGAN

Your projects often use email, blogs, RSS feeds, and social networks, alongside mail, envelopes, and other forms of exchange, as primary platforms. Can you talk about how you developed your web-based practice?

DAVID HORVITZ

I can trace back to the exact moment I began thinking seriously about using the Web in my practice. I didn't study art when I was in college, but I took a lot of photo, video, and art theory classes, and I was prolific in those classes. But I would also do these online things, just for fun. For example, I used to publish my photographs as Craigslist Missed Connections ads. Things like this didn't fit into my classes or my perceived spectrum. But I was friends with my photo teacher, and I would show her these things I was doing online. At one point I had to make a portfolio, and I put all of my photo and video work in it. My teacher asked, "Where is all that other stuff you are doing?" That was when it clicked that that was an essential part of my practice. It later began to dominate my thinking and activities.

JC/KHM

Much of your practice takes place on the Internet in various ways: you share parts of your everyday life on Tumblr and Twitter, or post videos you come across (just today, a YouTube video of someone cooking bok choy).

DH

I liked finding that bok choy video. It wasn't made for a TV show or cooking website, and the cooks weren't famous. It was just a normal family showing people how they cook their bok choy. This is what is great about the Internet. It goes two ways: you view, but you also create what is viewable. Instead of using one resource for information, like a book, there are hundreds of variations. It's folk knowledge. I employ these technologies and communication infrastructures in both my art practice and daily life. A few days ago I was walking through Crown Heights in Brooklyn as the sun was setting. The light made everything look perfect. I came across a lady standing on the sidewalk looking through a box of Bosc pears. I watched her hands as she looked for the perfect one, making a decision as to which she would eat. I described this moment in as few words as I could and tweeted it. I don't know who reads my Twitter, or why, but it's nice to know that this trivial moment was communicated.

JC/KHM

Does this quasi-public elaboration of your practice trouble your sense of privacy?

DH

When you say "trouble," I think of the burden of always being connected, of being in immediate reach. If I have a daily email list of a thousand people, what happens if they all respond to an email? I

can't respond to or even read every response. I use these technologies to create a more direct connection with someone; this is great, but it can also be a burden. This burden is a complicated matter. It is only a burden because it consumes time and puts you on call. Much of my day is spent doing emails for hours. For my 2009 email list I contacted about 1,000 people every day. At one point there were roughly 4,000 people following the blog. Imagine if everyone on the list emailed back their thoughts. This never happened, but it was possible. I like the immediacy, but it can be overwhelming, too.

JC/KHM

Does locating your artistic practice in information networks—in social networking, Twitter, email, and the mail—connect you to previous artists who used the mail system? (On Kawara's postcards come to mind, as does Fluxus.)

DH

I like Kawara's work, but I don't necessarily see the works I do through the mail as being connected to that history. When I use the mail, it's about the distance, the communication, the movement from one person or place to another person or place—about the journey that a letter takes. I don't take my art and then mail it, in those two steps. The mailing itself, the thinking about the distance—that is where the piece is.

I don't really think that much about Fluxus as relating to my art practice. This is not my inten-

tion as an artist—to blur art and life. I relate to On Kawara's work because of its existential and even zen readings. But when people bring up Fluxus, it's usually because of my use of the mail (and email). When I use mail, it is about the communication, the delivery infrastructure, the distance in-between, the postcard, the mailing list, etc.

JC/KHM

In the case of your website there is an additional distance between conception and reception. How flexible are your expectations for the reception of your work? How do you gauge people's reactions?

DH

I have been thinking a lot about what happens when an artist puts their art on the Internet. Immediately their audience goes beyond a strictly art audience. When you put art in a gallery, audiences recognize it as art. When you put art online, there is the chance that someone else, who may not know you are an artist, may stumble upon your work. Using my blog as an example, the work may not declare in an obvious manner, "I am art." This is great because more people see your work, but there are negative aspects also. One is that your work is now viewed as pop culture, and therefore it is viewed less critically. I've received emails saying a new post I made was boring; reading my blog is just entertainment for some people.

JC/KHM

When researching your work we participated in your project *David Horvitz thought about us* (December 10, 2009, 9:56am—9:58am), 2009. This project questions the labor of thinking and our faith in the role of the artist. For instance, we have no way of knowing whether you truly performed this act.

DH

For that ongoing project I send out two emails: one when I start thinking and the other a minute later, when the thinking is done. These emails serve as proof, though I could easily send the emails while thinking about something else. But I didn't, and that is where your faith is needed. The piece exists in my thinking about the viewer, instead of the viewer thinking about the piece. Then, of course, the viewer could think about my thoughts of them. It's also important that the work is open, in that you can't buy the piece in an edition of 10 or 100; you buy it, and it's only for you.

JC/KHM

For this exhibition, your project *Untitled (Bosphorus)*, 2010, involves writing to 100 addressees from the Wattis' mailing list—a laborious task. How will your use of the mailing list connect to your interest in distribution? And why send the piece from Istanbul?

DH

Untitled (Bosphorus) plays with ideas of intimacy and also the

labor, as you call it, of the personal. I hand-write each note, addressing it to an individual recipient. The envelope will arrive unexpectedly without announcing itself as art, and may generate some confusion. The recipients may sit down for a few minutes trying to figure out who I am. They will only figure out what the envelope means if they go to the exhibition, or if they find out from someone else. I am selecting names from the mailing list that the Wattis uses to send out promotional announcements. Using their list for my purposes, my project can be seen as a kind of hijacking or spamming. But I will not send announcements or advertisements; I will mail an image I took last October. The photograph depicts the Bosphorus Strait from a fisherman's boat. I will mail it from Istanbul so the addressee will receive this unexpected photograph from Turkey from someone they don't know.

JC/KHM

How does travel inform your work? Of all the other images from your travels, how did you arrive at the Bosphorus photo?

DH

I can't give you a concrete answer. I was browsing through all my digital photographs, and I chose the Bosphorus one. This strait is a kind of imaginary boundary—it separates European Turkey from Asiatic Turkey. I paid two fishermen to take me out of the Bosphorus and into the Black Sea.

Browsing through my photographs brought me back to that experience, and so I chose one for this exhibition. It was just a simple choice.

JC/KHM

What do you mean by “hijacking or spamming?” And how is the journey of a physical envelope different from an email or phone call?

DH

In a sense, they are all similar in that they all journey from one place to another. One may be through wires or servers as data, and another may be an actual physical object in motion. Both are a movement, and rely on a certain infrastructure. I chose the actual postal mail because of its objectness; a physical thing is transported from one place to another. I’ve done work with email announcement lists and I wanted to go to the predecessor, the postal mail list.

JC/KHM

You are also developing *Untitled (Gift)*, 2010, in which the Wattis sends a gift to another arts institution. You have mentioned that you are interested in the idea of a gift as sacrifice. How do you see your role as an agent between the selected institutions?

DH

I was speaking of Andrei Tarkovsky’s 1986 film *The Sacrifice*, in which a discussion occurs over the gifting of a 17th-century map. One

character says that a gift must be a sacrifice for the one who gives it, for it to be a true gift. I don’t believe that this idea of sacrifice is happening in the gift exchange I propose. There is a work I want to make in the future, which may be very difficult, in which I would coordinate the unexpected and spontaneous giving of a piece from one institution’s permanent collection to another institution or organization. That would be a real sacrifice.

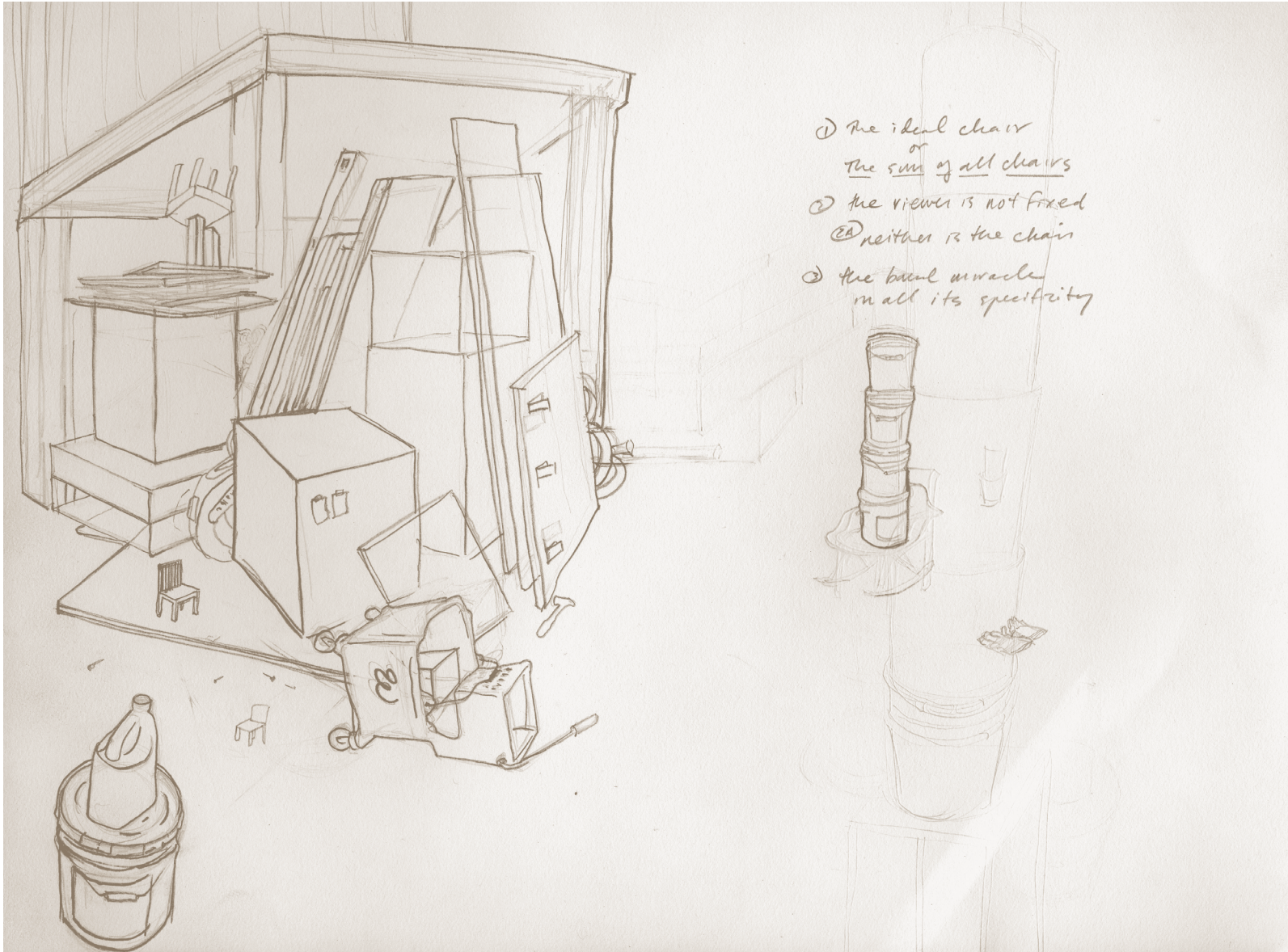
JC/KHM

We have been reading Marcel Mauss in conjunction with this project. He famously asked the question, “What power resides in the object given that causes its recipient to pay it back?” The answer for him is simple: the gift is a toll or duty imbued with “spiritual mechanisms,” engaging the honor of both giver and receiver. Does his theorizing around the gift, as something fundamental to social economies, express itself in this project?

DH

Mauss was writing about gift economies in pre-capitalist societies. What I am curious about in this project is the off-balance that happens when introducing a gift in a non-gift economy, in a professional situation, in a professional relationship. Is something interrupted? Is there something awkward that occurs? When an unannounced gift arrives, how does the receiver respond, if at all?

We don’t live in a gift economy, so I can only imagine how the gift can complicate, for better or for worse, the world we live in right now. A contemporary look at the gift economy is a kind of longing, and a kind of after-the-fact. So, it’s looking at the present, and thinking of alternatives. Mauss describes a gift economy in earlier stages of human society, but the contemporary viewer will ask, where do we go now?



① the ideal chair
or
the sum of all chairs

② the viewer is not fixed

③ neither is the chair

④ the total miracle
in all its specificity

MATERIAL COLLABORATION

*Zachary Royer Scholz interviewed
by Josephine Zarkovich*

JOSEPHINE ZARKOVICH

In your practice you often repurpose found objects such as abandoned couches, office supplies, and other detritus. Tell me about your choice of materials.

ZACHARY ROYER SCHOLZ

I like to work with everyday things. Because of this I've done a fair amount of work with furniture. As a material, it is both ubiquitous and directly evokes the body. It's also incredibly fungible; there isn't much difference between a couch that's been abandoned by the side of the road and a chair by Le Corbusier that's on a plinth at MoMA. The difference is produced by the contexts they occupy. My work is often associated with Minimalism, but I think the closer link, at least materially, would be with Arte Povera. It engages everyday, poor materials. Using quotidian things connects my work to the day-to-day lives of viewers, and forces my work to do what it does well, because it can't fall back on the value of the stuff it's made from.

JZ

Despite your interest and exploration of labor, your sculptures don't always reveal your methods. Is part of your process labor for labor's sake?

ZRS

Through sustained interaction with material I have gained an understanding that I can't produce any other way. I wouldn't call that labor for labor's sake. I am wary

of work about labor. It can become a sort of endurance act that just says, "I am doing this thing for a really long time." I like my work to look effortless. There are so many things that require labor that we don't particularly value. For example, the tiny knit of this sweater that I'm wearing is a better expression of meticulous labor than almost any artwork I've seen. We don't usually recognize the labor embedded in things.

JZ

Isn't there some value, though, that accrues from visible effort?

ZRS

Artwork that reveals the labor of its making has a certain value, but it can short-circuit its own effect by positioning art labor as special. People continue to make this kind of work because it is interesting to see labor in a time when we typically buy, consume, and discard products without ever considering the effort that went into their production. But for this kind of artwork to be successful, it has to make the audience question the significance of that labor. My actions don't need to produce products per se, but they do need to engage the way labor does and does not create value.

JZ

How does this kind of invisible labor relate to your own work?

ZRS

I am interested in invisible labor, but particularly interested in labor

that, like various types of maintenance work, does not produce a clear product. I get up each day, get dressed, make coffee, and make breakfast. I breathe, eat, get undressed, and sleep. All of these activities constitute a kind of work, but they don't really manifest in products. Rather than accumulating value, they sustain a condition that requires that they be continually repeated.

JZ

I am curious about your works' relationship to audience.

ZRS

I like to think that my works have their own identity outside both my authorship and any viewer's experience. I tend not to make small objects or large environments. There's something about that in-between scale that confronts us, like a presence. My works are for an audience, but I want each of my pieces to be a complex entity, not simply to deliver a discrete packet of information. It's a mistake to think that any work is completely dependent upon the viewer, or even the person who made it. The work is authoring itself through repeated interactions. It is a construction that is beyond, but not unrelated to, my intentions, and one that I can't entirely control.

JZ

Rather than a discrete object, the artwork is a part of a larger system of relationships in space.

ZRS

I definitely agree with that. Everything is always affecting everything else. I usually allow some room in my pieces so they can adjust to create dialogue with other works and fit themselves to a particular site. Some of my site-specific works only exist in documentation, or have aspects that keep them from ever existing elsewhere, but most of my works exist in different iterations within different contexts.

JZ

How much do you try to control the work you produce?

ZRS

A couple of years ago, a curator termed the way I work with objects "material collaboration." In the end, it's not that I discover what the material wants to be, but rather, we come to a negotiated agreement. When I make site-specific work, the process is similar. I come to the project with ideas, and then have to adjust this understanding to suit the unanticipated demands and potential that the site presents. Never knowing what the work is going to be ahead of time can be a little nerve-wracking, but the results are better.

JZ

Can you talk about how you often rework older sculptures to produce new pieces?

ZRS

Material seems to cycle through my studio. I acquire objects, deconstruct them, use some pieces and store other parts. Some works exhaust their potential and are just stored as finished work, but other things still possess open possibilities. Pieces of past works become parts of new ones. Works go off to shows, come back, are reworked, and shown again. Unless something is in an exhibition, or has become part of someone's collection, it's up for grabs. Titling this kind of work can be challenging. Does a piece have the same title if it is reworked for a new space? Is it the same piece, or a new one? These questions rub against the way we categorize, document, and define artworks (which for me is the point). In many ways, art institutions operate in the same way that the rest of society does: they make divisions and characterizations that produce stable meanings. My works tend to be about a much less stable, and more contingent, structure of meaning, so they bump up against, even chafe against, these boundaries.

JZ

How will these ideas shape your piece for *We have as much time as it takes*?

ZRS

My work for the show will consist of the material I have in my studio and the objects currently at the Wattis, including material that is in storage and whatever is left over from previous exhibitions.

The work will be constructed from this collective stuff, and so it will reflect the interaction between my practice and the context of the Wattis. If I created it elsewhere, my half of the equation would be roughly the same, but the available material and character of the host space would be different. This fluidity is also temporal. Making this same work, even at the same institution, but at a future date, would be different not only because the material available would not be the same, but also that, time having passed, I would myself have changed.

JZ

How are materials gathered directly from an institution like the Wattis different from those used in your other work?

ZRS

In many ways they are similar. The things institutions throw away are not all that different from what is generally thrown away. In my broader practice I use materials that I happen upon, and that I sense have some potential. However, working with an institution, my materials are constrained by the particular parameters of that institution. The determination of what I use shifts from an idiosyncratic choice to a situational imperative. Also, not only are the things I have to work with limited, but the institution itself is a material that needs to be considered.

JZ

How does your work for this show relate to the Wattis' own economy of objects? What is the difference between things that are present in the gallery versus things that are discarded in the trash or stored in the closet?

ZRS

I particularly like to engage the institutional aspects that visitors never get to see. Gallery space often seems like a neutral blank environment, but behind its clean, white facade are chaotic material flows. These dual aspects are inseparable; the clean finished exhibition cannot exist without the tools and buckets of paint in the back room, or the discarded material from the last exhibition out in the dumpster. We like to think of art objects as contained entities, but each piece of art is attached to this broad set of materials and actions—an ever-growing constellation of shipping crates, moving trucks, constructed walls, and paperwork. In my mind, each work is really all these things together, even incorporating the writing about it, images documenting it, and discourse surrounding it. Without all of this other stuff, what would an artwork really be, anyway? My piece not only combines my ongoing activities with the Wattis' programs, but makes the material economy of both publicly visible. Having an institution display its own detritus is reflexive, but rather than a critique, this shift in position expands the boundaries of display. The graininess of this

expanded field fascinates me because it is at odds with most of the ways we construct stability within the world.

JZ

How does this relate to your larger practice?

ZRS

In my work, I try to engage things that seem very familiar, and open them up to new, and at times unexpected potentials. This hopefully prods us to reconsider how we define the objects around us, and helps us to recognize what we might otherwise take for granted. There is something productive in jarring experiences. I'm not talking about shock value, since we are quite used to being shocked. We have easy compartments for violence and excess, but things that don't make sense disturb us. I'm not talking about puzzles that resolve themselves, but irreducible experiences.

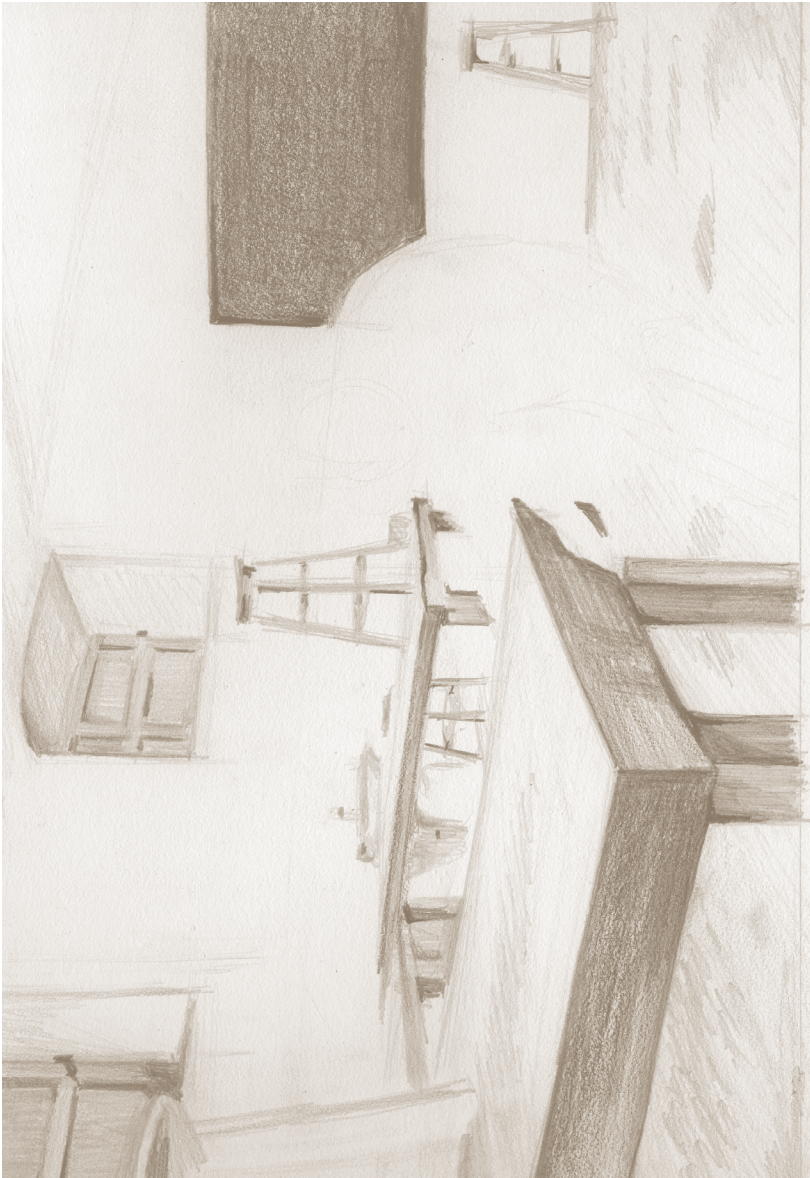
JZ

Becoming aware of the strangeness of things?

ZRS

Yes. In the 1920s, Max Ernst attributed the significance of the miraculous to the rupture that it produces in reality. I think today this kind of rupture is even more important. The significance of a fire hydrant that is three times bigger than it should be is not how strange it is, but the way it calls into question everything around it. It makes us doubt all

the constructions that we previously took for granted. It forces us to touch these things and reassure ourselves that they are in fact what we think they are. Chances are that through this process we will come to a different understanding. But even if we just confirm our previous perception of the world, the act of recognizing and confirming everything will have changed us.



① Meaningful meaninglessness
② Purposeful purposelessness



TWELVE WASTED MINUTES

Jason Mena interviewed by
María Elena Ortiz

MARÍA ELENA ORTIZ

Your practice embraces photography, installation, and viewer participation. Although you work in a variety of modes, works such as *Blind Fields*, 2009, and *Making It Public*, 2009, investigate public space through the use of technology.

JASON MENA

I am interested in displaying what is deceitful in public space and representation. When I use the camera, I extract a fragment or an instant of our surroundings to present the artificiality that is always embedded in an image. The same goes for the world I see beyond the lens.

MEO

In *Language of the Spheres*, 2001–9, a three-piece sound installation, you build a spatial relationship from voices conversing in an obscure language.

JM

Alongside photography, I see sound as another way of investigating space. This comes from my study of physics and astronomy. Everything in the universe has a frequency that can be transformed into some type of sound. Studies of synesthesia, the simultaneous perceptual experience of multiple sensory pathways, show that some people can understand the frequencies of visual stimuli, interpreting them as colors, smells, numbers, or sounds.

MEO

In our exhibition we are displaying one of your first works, the video *Meaningless Work*, 2005. This is documentation of a performance that happened at the Escuela de Artes Plásticas in San Juan, Puerto Rico. What was the performance about? And what changes between the performance and its documentation?

JM

The performance consisted of creating an inaccessible room by closing all visual and physical access, leaving only myself inside. Outside the room there was a group of classmates. After blocking access, I rearranged the tables and stools, making as much noise as possible. Nobody could see what I was doing. I needed to do it this way to render the work meaningless, as the title suggests. To answer your second question, *Meaningless Work* was conceptualized to be a performance only. I consider the video a documentation of the performance that remained after the act. Here, sound is the most important part of the performance. Let's go back to physics. All bodies in a state of motion produce some frequency. Sounds or tones correspond to periodic vibrations that occupy particular movements and intervals in time, which repeat themselves with regularity. Presenting the video as documentation therefore doesn't change my intentions with the performance, inasmuch as both are about understanding sound.

MEO

The sound is the most compelling part for us, too.

JM

My work is influenced by Luigi Russolo's manifesto *The Art of Noise*, written in 1913. He was a major influence in the development of my work, and changed the way I see and hear my surroundings. To this day, a search for correspondence between the senses is central to my practice.

MEO

At the Wattis, we have decided to set the volume very high to overwhelm the gallery. What was nominally pointless will take on a stronger influence over the atmosphere of the space. How do you see this work's role within the context of a group exhibition?

JM

Sound is definitely an overwhelming medium. It can extend far beyond an object's physical parameters; it can taint other objects, or change them by obstructing their presence. Sound can even change an object's physical state, or be used in warfare. In the Wattis, it will depend on each viewer's sensibility I suppose. In this case the sound of *Meaningless Work* may suffocate the space, objects, or simply change the way viewers perceive the other artworks. Still, the overwhelming sound is a curatorial and not an artistic decision. I never specified the volume level.

MEO

Why did you document the performance? Does the use of the camera allow you to bring a certain objectivity to the image or sound being generated?

JM

It was a means to an end. The use of the camera in the documentation of this performance is relevant, but the video was never the focus of the work. I was trying to figure out how the senses worked when performing a meaningless task.

MEO

There is a playfulness to *Meaningless Work*. You are constantly reorganizing the classroom, while prohibiting people from seeing what you are physically doing.

JM

There was some kind of playing around—playing with the objects, playing with space, playing with ideas. I was trying to figure out how everything could fit inside a pre-determined space. As I was moving things around, I questioned what my audience was thinking. I was attempting to connect with them through sounds alone. The things going on in the room had a visual and physical presence to me; the people outside the room, in contrast, had only sound, which has the ability to trigger a visual image in our minds. It was partly about expectation. When I opened the door, my

classmates' and professor's faces were full of disappointment, as if they had been picturing an installation of some kind. The documentation then became evidence that I actually did something inside the room. In that sense it was a joke on them.

MEO

There are other moments in *Meaningless Work* where you seem rather peaceful, like when you stop to view the room.

JM

Before I started moving around the objects, I opened a water faucet and left it to trickle at a very soothing pace. When I started the performance, I went into a kind of hypnotic state or deep concentration. It was as if everything slowed down and things just hovered in space. Only the sound of the water dripping from the faucet helped to establish some type of timeframe. On two occasions I took a moment to reflect—to look at what I had done, and to think of what I had to do next.

MEO

What about the gestures of exhaustion, like when you touch your forehead?

JM

Yes, the expression of hard labor. I was sweating. In reality that is the meaningless work, the labor, for nothing.

MEO

But why did it happen in a classroom? Is there something about the possible parameters set forth by pedagogy?

JM

I did the performance while I was still a student at the Escuela de Artes, in the classroom where I took sculpture class. I decided to use this room because of its minimal setting. It had two different types of objects, one heavy (the table) and one light (the chairs). Back then, the art school was my studio. I was in this classroom every week. This gave me a chance to listen to its acoustics carefully. I never thought about or intended the performance to be seen as a discourse on the educational system, but I do not disregard these interpretations. After all, art schools can become too standardized to fully grasp the creative process.

MEO

You mean that there are certain restrictions put on artists in the educational context?

JM

Art is always in contradiction with the established parameters. Artists always have to promote the opening of a new creative space, one that permits a different way of thinking, hearing, and seeing—one that sets a stage for new dialogue. And although limitations are only relative, the educational

setting, through its norms and bureaucracy, can obscure the ability to perceive.

MEO

The work borrows its title from a 1960 statement by Walter De Maria. Did you picture his phrase meaning something different in San Juan?

JM

I gave Walter De Maria's work much thought before executing the performance. At first, I wanted to actually place some works I considered meaningless inside De Maria's *Meaningless Work* box, but that was a bit far-fetched for me living in Puerto Rico. So I did the next best thing. I went out and did something that would make me feel like I wasted twelve minutes of my life. This made sense living in Puerto Rico. I was seeing how De Maria produced works that related to situations where the landscape, nature, and light would create an intense physical and psychic experience. And yet on the island no one was conscious of their surroundings—or their place in the universe. It was also a negative statement. At the time, I felt that every exhibition I went to, and every conversation I had in the local art scene, was meaningless. We were all wasting our time trying to bring forth a new conversation, a new aesthetics, and a new way to express our circumstances on a very small island in the middle of the Caribbean. Puerto Rico is considered a paradise, filled with

white sandy beaches and crystal blue waters. But the fact is that it's damn hard to be an artist here.

MEO

It seems like more than the universe, you wanted to show a certain art-historical discourse, especially considering that the video takes place in the most prestigious art school in Puerto Rico.

JM

To an extent, I do agree. But I've never allowed myself to feel trapped by the institution.

MEO

There are times, no matter where one happens to be, when one can feel that the art being produced lacks criticality—as if artists are more concerned with *producing* than *making* art.

JM

This is truer today than at any other time. For the past ten to twenty years, no one has been able to pin down art or what it is trying to say. Now, yes, it's all about producing.

MEO

Is your work about the creative process?

JM

Yes—in the video you see my thoughts in action. I'm solving problems. I'm creating something from something else. In general terms, this is what goes on in my everyday process. I can push and

pull, turn around to see an idea or situation from multiple angles. And sometimes, I find the simplest answer is to leave everything back the way it was before.

MEO

Then there's Robert Morris' *Continuous Project Altered Daily*, 1969. Are you rehearsing, or paying homage to, De Maria and Morris?

JM

My work asks some of the same questions posed by Morris, De Maria, and Bruce Nauman. I wanted to put myself in a similar place, in order to understand them as artists, get closer to their work, and most importantly, to experience their processes. I consider *Meaningless Work* my starting point: I was picking up where De Maria left off. It helped me to pose my own questions, on my own terms, and with my own results. It could be considered an homage, but not a rehearsal.

MEO

It's as if you had faith in art's ability to create social change, so you resuscitated some conceptual concerns from the 1960s.

JM

This may be the case. Certainly, Luigi Russolo's manifesto and 1960s art represented a deep impulse for massive social change. They made proposals about society, from a scientific and philosophical approach. Contemporary art lacks that level of criticality.

MEO

Would you say then that the act of social change occurs in your appropriation of work by famous American artists?

JM

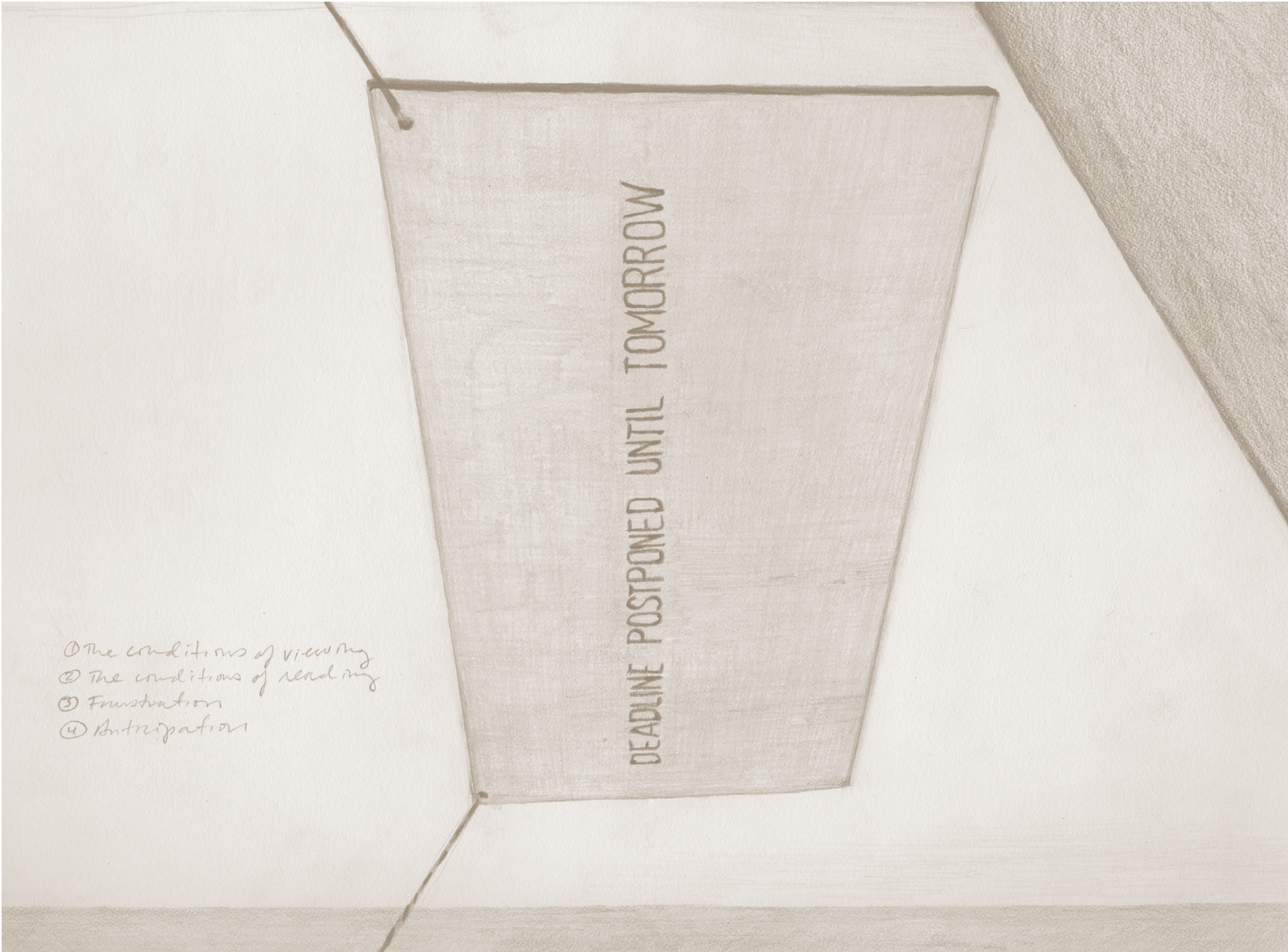
Only insofar as it informs my context. I have always been a fan of artists such as Mel Bochner, On Kawara, Vito Acconci, Lawrence Weiner, and others. However, I looked at their work with the interest of understanding and informing my own culture. I appropriated from those works to fill the gap of what was missing from my situation. In *We have as much time as it takes*, my work will be exhibited alongside that of Lawrence Weiner, a situation that I consider surreal.

MEO

What is meaningless work?

JM

Meaningless work refuses to be defined. At the same time, it lends itself to multiple interpretations. Moving the chairs and tables, pacing back and forth, and entering and exiting the room—all of these actions are monotonous and can be considered meaningless. Our daily lives are full of these types of repetitive and at times ritualistic actions. However, in art even the most mundane actions can acquire significance.



- ① The conditions of viewing my
- ② The conditions of reading my
- ③ Frustration
- ④ Anticipation

DEADLINE POSTPONED UNTIL TOMORROW

*Roman Ondák interviewed
by Kristin Korolowicz*

Deadline postponed until tomorrow

**A 3.6" X 3.6" REMOVAL
TO THE PAPER
OF THE REPRODUCTION
OF THE INTERPRETATION
OF THE WORK
(DONE AS NECESSARY)**

- ① Franklin Gothic Condensed
36 pt.
- ② Email from Seth Siegelman
- ③ PDF by Temporary Services
- ④ Email from the artist -
- ⑤ A kind of openness
- ⑥ A look of necessity

HOW TO TATTOO A PHANTOM

*Lawrence Weiner interviewed
by Arden Sherman*

ARDEN SHERMAN

In an interview with Benjamin H.D. Buchloh published in 1998, you said of your work that “It was possible that I would build it if they wanted, I said it was possible to have somebody else build it, and then I finally realized that it was possible just to leave it in language.” What line of thinking led to this conclusion?

LAWRENCE WEINER

Logic. I came to the conclusion that every painting, every sculpture, every piece of music has content, and the point of making something is to present that content to other people. If they can get use out of that content from language, or from somebody fabricating it, or from me fabricating it, logically it’s exactly the same.

AS

What do you mean when you say “get use” out of an artwork?

LW

It began from a sculptural consideration which understood that removal is the same as addition. Removal is a sculptural process essentially. That seemed to be what interested people in the 1960s—removal as a sculptural function. It’s all very simple: sculpture is about physical realities, and those physical realities become tools that you use to understand your place in the world; that’s the form, that’s the function, and that’s the point of the operation. Art is a very simple observation, which

somebody takes the trouble to show to somebody else in some way, manner, or form.

AS

Who is this “somebody else?”

LW

Whoever looks to art to find out what they want to be doing. Most artwork is basically metaphorical. But if the work is not a metaphor—bravo!—you could put yourself within that context and use it. If it is a metaphor, then you would have to accept the value structure of whoever was putting it out. If not—if someone just gives you a plain fact—you do not have to accept that value. You could determine it yourself.

AS

Is there an aesthetic quality to this? Or does that dimension disappear?

LW

It is usually appealing because there is a use to it. I think it’s all very pragmatic. Your sensuality and the sensuality of the relationship to art is an extremely pragmatic thing; you are just not aware of how to use it. But you get a funny sense that it’s useful—that it’s going to make you feel, that it’s going to give you a buzz.

AS

I’m still interested in your definition of “useful.”

LW

There’s no reason to make art if it’s not useful for somebody else. If

you know what a work looks like before you start, you cannot make it. Art does not come from an artist who sits home alone and creates work only for themselves. That's not art. Art is a conversation with its time, at the time. The problem is that sometimes questions are raised that it takes thirty years to answer.

AS

How would you define creative thought?

LW

Creative thought is when you find yourself posing a question that hasn't been asked before. That is your job as an artist—to pose that question, to place it in the world and let somebody trip over it. Art is the thing that's put in the world that has no place yet. In trying to find its place, it bangs up against the walls. It's like parallel parking—it has to get in the space, and once it's in the space, great, it's art history. It's for everybody to use. And while it's looking for a place, it's for people in crisis.

AS

Parking spaces are predefined, though.

LW

All things are predefined. Art history is predefined. It's that simple. We have to classify everything. Everything must be put into a set of rules. It's a funny thought isn't it? How do you tattoo a phantom? Art is essentially a phantom until it falls into play, and then it can

be taught as history. History is fabulous; you can learn a lot from history. The museum is not at fault. It is the people who run museums who are at fault. Museums are just repositories for things that people have accomplished.

AS

You work a lot outside of that context—in public.

LW

When you put art in a gallery or a museum or an exhibition—you are not making it for yourself; you are making it to communicate with others. Public art is for yourself, because you are part of the public. With public art, you are making something that is your environment—you are going to live in it. It all comes down to you having to make a decision: whether you have something to say that is going to fuck up the whole world, or if you have something to say that is going to fuck up somebody on their way to work. I try to make accessible art, so that any person who comes across a work of mine can conceive of it without having to have terribly special knowledge. You may not be quite sure how it works. But you can visualize it, and from that, you may come up with an answer.

AS

Have you ever built a work and added to it over time?

LW

Of course I change works—it drives people up the wall. Maybe I

made a mistake, or three days later I saw something that obviated my question. The work is what happens with material when it's allowed to rest, allowed to continue to expand. There are people who build works which allow, slowly, over the years, erosion and entropy to take over. You can use that change as a sculptural material—intentionally. When you just accept the change as if it came from the heavens, you are in real trouble.

AS

In your now-famous “Statement of Intent” from 1969, you write:

1. *The artist may construct the work.*
2. *The work may be fabricated.*
3. *The work need not be built.*

Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership.

Your statement proposes a reconstruction of your work. I'm interested to know more about what you mean when you say today that you “cannot re-do things.”

LW

You can re-state things. That's not re-doing it. Each thing has its own time. The basic content had its time.

AS

What about the site-specific qualities of A 36" x 36" REMOVAL TO THE LATHING OR SUPPORT WALL OF PLASTER OR WALLBOARD FROM A WALL, 1968? What turns up when you remove the lathing from a wall in a new setting?

LW

There is no site specificity. In how many different places has this work been shown? Each time it's not a new thing; it's the same thing: a 36 x 36 in. removal. This work is already something, it already exists—it still functions within the same world. It's not new. Perhaps it's new for a generation that comes along that never saw it, but remember they're still part of the same world—it's all a part of the cumulative history. Aren't there poets who you have never read? Or music you have never heard? Of course, but it exists, doesn't it? It's not new just because it's new to you.

AS

What happens if the work never gets fabricated for an exhibition?

LW

It's fine with me. I like it. Because then nobody makes the mistake of thinking there was something special about that particular installation. They get back to the original idea. I like the idea, but I am not going to impose it on other people. Of course there are people who cannot understand artworks unless they see them

executed materially. Let the person who is going to use it decide.

Like anyone else, I have personal likes or dislikes, but it does not mean that they are right or wrong, or better or worse—I like black pepper on my caviar.

AS

Has anyone ever executed A 36" x 36" REMOVAL... poorly? Or missed the point altogether?

LW

It does not take a rocket scientist to dig a hole in a wall. A chisel is enough. And I don't know about "missing the point." It just becomes something else. I did a body of work compiled in a 1992 book that's called PUBLIC FREEHOLD. Then a group of kids rebuilt the PUBLIC FREEHOLD works in France, and others have staged about fourteen shows like that around the world. I had nothing to do with organizing it; they made the work on their own.

AS

The Chicago-based art collective Temporary Services did a series of recreations in 2000, among them A 36" x 36" REMOVAL.... They called it *A Re-creation of A 36" x 36" REMOVAL...*

LW

Yeah, but it's re-creation of a presentation, and that gets back to the idea of the theatrical. You see it all goes in a circle. That is what I meant about being "useful." If a group of people, just at the time when they are supposed to

be questioning the world, use the work that you've made in order to allow them to question the world, ain't that use?

AS

You said that it all goes in a circle. Do you work in circular processes?

LW

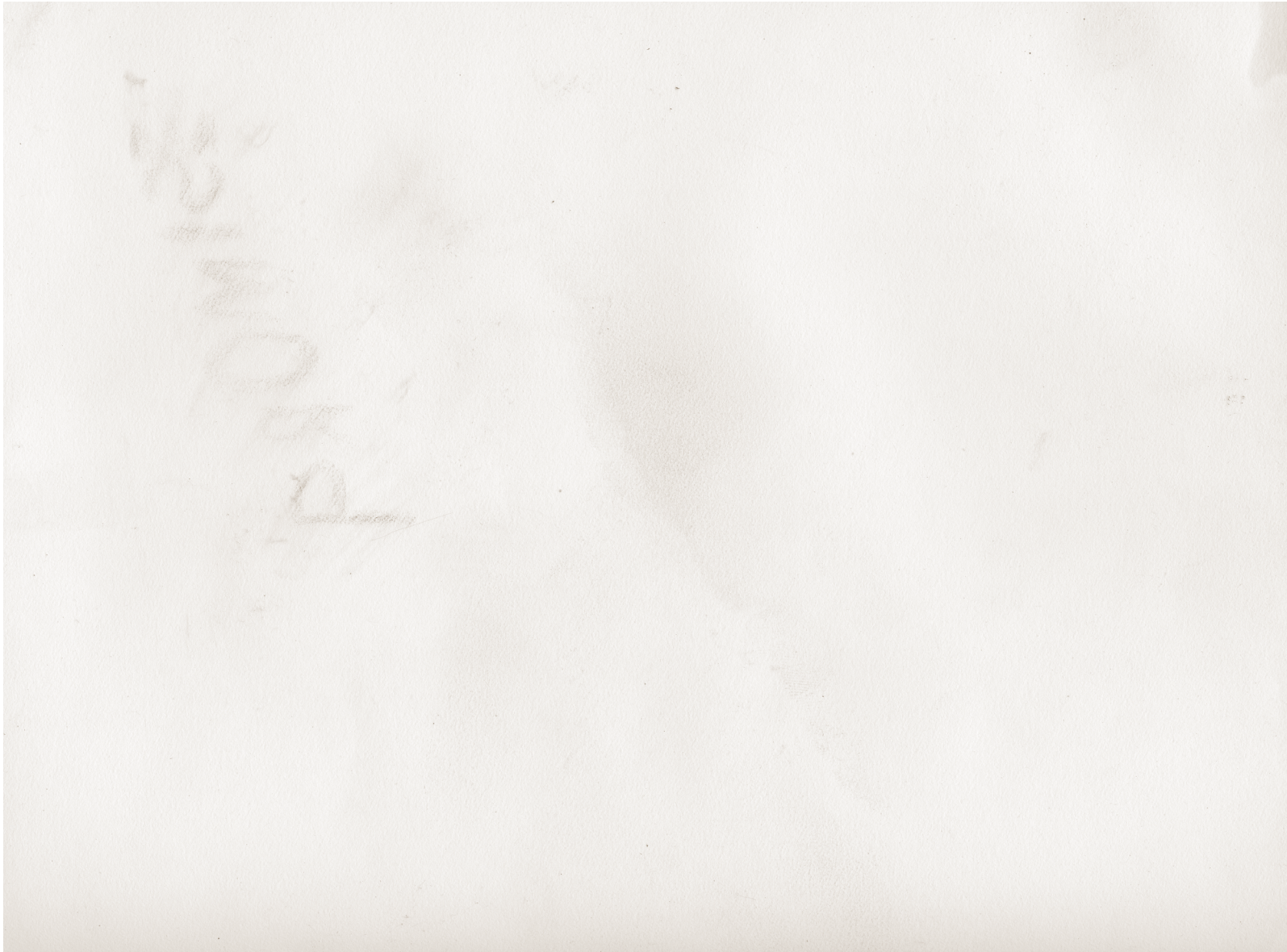
I did a piece that was based on a bullfighting technique. The European community at large does not approve of bullfighting. The bullfighting gesture is graceful but deadly. But what if you took that gesture and turned it around? The reverse gesture flies a kite! The piece I did was in Spain and it goes: "Moved by force from the shade to the sun and from the sun to the shade until a circle is formed."

AS

If you could retrospectively change anything about your "Statement of Intent," what would it be?

LW

All the statement is saying is that things can exist in any of the perceptual levels that human beings use. So, no, there is nothing I would change. As a matter of fact, I would not change anything except for the way anyone can get it. If it worked, I would send it to you using telepathy. I couldn't care less. You've got it if it's useful to you. Maybe someday on the street when I'm buying a pack of cigarettes and milk, you will say "thank you" and walk away.



THE ARTIST REFLECTS

*Christine Wong Yap interviewed
by Emily Gonzalez*

EMILY GONZALEZ

In our studio visit a few days ago, you mentioned your 2009 residency in Manchester, UK—you said it influenced your outlook on life and, by extension, your work. Could you expand on that?

CHRISTINE WONG YAP

Before the Breathe Residency at the Chinese Arts Centre, I thought of pessimism as tied to the mundane, and optimism to the transcendent. But after observing Mancunian temperaments, and slang, I started to think that optimism was also worldly and quotidian. There, the gloomy weather is a constant source of commiseration, and I suspect, pride. I started focusing my attention on the potential of modest expectations. For example, if you expect the endless, gray clouds to dump inches of rain, it's pleasantly surprising when it's merely overcast. So my time there enabled me to test an interesting form of reverse psychology on myself, which liberated me from stultifying uncertainties—existential crises, ecological deliberations at the cash register, and grand artistic aspirations in the studio.

I was also influenced by my reading during that time: books on psychology and happiness. I read Paul Martin's *Sex, Drugs and Chocolate: The Science of Pleasure*, and Philip Zimbardo and John Boyd's *The Time Paradox: The New Psychology of Time*, both from 2008. I read the most optimistic book I could think of, Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*,

2004, and the most hopeless book I could think of, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, 2006. I also read a book on American exceptionalism, Fareed Zakaria's *The Post American World*, 2008, because I was skeptical that America could redeem itself in the eyes of the world. Zakaria posits that it is possible if we embrace our original principles: openness, tolerance, innovation, and so on. Stuart Maconie's book, *Pies and Prejudice: In Search of the North*, 2008, was useful for understanding the Northern English temperament and the divisions of class that have been so important to its history.

Both the reading and the place had a strong impact. My work began to encompass more modest ambitions and everyday pleasures: the *Cheap and Cheerful* information graphic drawings in glitter and neon pen on paper, the *Pounds of Happiness* series of modified discount-shop objects, the *Sorted* gilt and enamel badge of a rainbow behind a rain cloud, and the *Unlimited Promise* installation. "Unlimited promise" is a term used by Zakaria to describe the potential of America. It is highly ambivalent. It suggests grand, soaring potential, as well as potential failure.

While some of these projects are more expressive than my quieter works, there are recurring formal motifs—my use of text, gridded paper, the influence of graphic design, light and dark, and a concern with economic means. Also, all of my work is tied in some way to consumer culture—from

my earliest woodcuts, to the *Pounds of Happiness* installation. Consumer culture is pervasive, and to ignore its presence or seek to transcend its influence seems to me impossible and naïve.

EG

Many of your works can be read as a sort of instruction manual on getting through the ups and downs of everyday life. Are you trying to provide a break from the mundane by highlighting the little things?

CWY

I am fascinated by how we try to ameliorate shittiness. Life is hard. Bad things happen, but so do very quirky, humorous things, like seeing a smiley face in a drop of dried coffee grounds. These incidents lighten my fairly heavy sense of being trapped in a meatspace reality (as William Gibson called it in *Neuromancer*, 1981), characterized by limitations.

EG

Do you think this need to help others comes from your activist background?

CWY

I can't say that my urges to lighten or be generous are activist impulses. Altruism has its rewards. Giving gifts and forming social bonds lends meaning and satisfaction to the giver.

EG

Where does your interest in pop psychology come from?

CWY

It probably relates to growing up in California, the birthplace of many self-improvement ideas. It is pseudo-science, but I see it in a rather positive light, as an attempt to expand the field of psychology from a narrow focus on clinical treatment, towards prevention. Why should psychology only serve people in times of crisis? Popular psychology means to help people learn how to cultivate and maintain their happiness, instead of waiting until they slip into depression.

EG

Going back to *Unlimited Promise*, 2009, which is in our show, do you think the idea is an internal or external feeling? Is promise something that an individual contains or is it placed on her by others?

CWY

I think unlimited promise can be both internal and external, economic and ethereal. It fills a space with light, shadow, and text. It's kinetic, which makes its experience physical, a spinning sensation like a disco ball. But because it's art in space, it's largely psychological—people look and think, and see others looking and thinking—and the individual viewers are meant to ask of themselves what this ambiguous text means, and to question what the subject is—whether it's about the U.S., art itself, or individual potential.

When I recently spoke with Manchester-based performance artist Mike Chavez-Dawson, who

is developing a curatorial project called *Unrealised Projects*, he asked me about the difference between unlimited promise and unrealized potential. I think the difference is subtle: “unrealized” suggests progress, confidence, and obligation. “Unlimited” is merely unrestricted, without self-certainty or hints of guilt or failure.

EG

You have described the objects that you make as “props for the experience” and you care very much about placing these props so that the viewer has to move around the work in order to continue through the exhibition, whether they spend time with it or not. How did you become interested in this sort of experiential aspect of art?

CWY

I've always been interested in social spaces. I was a shy kid; I observed social spaces from a distance. I'm fascinated by how people negotiate who they are and how they are perceived. More specifically, I'm skeptical about the notion that art should provide a transcendent experience. I think this is an unreasonable expectation. I'd also like to complicate the role and responsibility of the viewer. I'm interested in reciprocity, and thinking about how a work of art mediates a relationship between artist and viewer. There's a process of parsing and unfolding in the experience of looking at art that I think is useful.

I made representational work exclusively for several years;

I turned to making objects and installation because I wanted to think about work that embodied my ideas, and existed in the world of things. I still make representational work, and I recognize that the experiences I attempt to create are still very much metaphorical and mimetic. But I think getting viewers to become complicit in the making of the work, to act out their process of perception and to see themselves seeing and thinking about art have become central to my practice.

EG

You have said before that creating light out of dark is of interest to you. An underlying theme of *We have as much time as it takes* is questioning the usefulness of optimistic and pessimistic outlooks on various kinds of production. What makes you feel like you are doing well or being productive?

CWY

There's a common idea that you are what you do. The old-school, studio-based printmaker in me believes that my value as an artist is quantified by sweat equity, by sheer labor. Despite any former accomplishments, future plans or conceptual investigations, I'm only worth whatever level of studio activity I'm currently engaged in. But now I'm shifting my concept of what it means to be an artist. Over the years, I've seen how valuable study and reflection are to my work. It takes me a long time to sort out my ideas. My ideas aren't on anyone's schedule. They have

to simmer. And time tells me if they stick.

Last year, artist Stephanie Syjuco advised the graduating MFA class at UC Berkeley, “Honor your intangible labor in the studio, even when you or others don’t see apparent results.” For me, this means exploring my stupid ideas, reading books, writing a journal, keeping a gratitude list, goofing off. It means living life, being goal-oriented, emphasizing values, and staying optimistic about the art world. Also it means practicing reciprocity by nourishing the artists around me—going to shows, writing about art, and participating in a community.

EG

How do you measure your own performance as an artist?

CWY

I try to celebrate benchmarks, or when I experience something for the first time. First experiences usually result from taking risks and learning new things. It could be a professional benchmark—like exhibiting at the Wattis—to nerdy studio expansion—like buying my first air compressor. It’s a way to notice how I continue to grow. Of course, outside validation is nice. I accept it in all forms. It’s rarely monetary, occasionally social or critical, and often personal. On the other hand, when viewers interact with my work thoughtfully and enthusiastically, that’s reward enough.

EG

A lot of your work shows an interest in binary relationships. Where do you see middle ground?

CWY

I think optimism and pessimism are rich terrains, and are much more than a mere duality. I’d like to think my explorations embrace interdependence, nuance, and paradox. F. Scott Fitzgerald once wrote in *The Crack-Up*, 1945,

...the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposing ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function. One should, for example, be able to see that things are hopeless yet be determined to make them otherwise.

This is an ongoing investigation. I empathize with the work of Francis Alÿs, which is centered on the idea of a constant state of rehearsal. Within individual projects I reach specific endpoints, but in my larger practice, I’m constantly negotiating. For efficiency’s sake, I speak of optimism, but I also mean hope, trust, faith, idealism, openness, generosity, relationships, and happiness—by which, in turn, I also mean pleasure, satisfaction, and the absence of displeasure. Likewise, the opposite of pessimism/cynicism/skepticism might be optimism/hope/trust, but it might also be positive psychology—the cultivation of happiness, cognitive behavior modification, self-actualization, and agency.

Not all binaries are created equal. Some binaries operate quantitatively, like switches, others qualitatively, like a dimmer or a cross-fader. But these are simply conceptual tools. For example, you could think that light and dark cross-fade, as in a Drawing 101 value scale. But in optics, physics, and photography, you’d take a measure of light only. To measure darkness is to ascertain the intensity or absence of light.

Your point of view informs your perceptions. Subjectivity is paramount. Orientation is not always fixed; it can be conditional. When an object has no obvious front or back (imagine a UFO), the direction of movement determines its front, for only as long as it remains in that direction. It’s possible to preserve happiness by commiserating, or to lower one’s high expectations to reveal pleasant surprises. I don’t think anyone’s wholly optimistic or pessimistic; we’re allowed alternately to behave like Pollyanna and think like Arthur Schopenhauer. Binaries are useful, to an extent. The opposite of idealism may be pragmatism, or maybe it is realism. The opposite of pleasure is commonly assumed to be pain, but many hedonists are actually driven by a fear of boredom. So my work involves binaries, as well as interstices and alternatives.

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

Sam Gould and Gabriel Saloman of Red76 interviewed by Nicole Cromartie and Courtney Dailey

COURTNEY DAILEY

As practitioners whose work exists primarily in the public realm, how do you create a situation to get the greatest amount of people engaged?

SAM GOULD

We've developed methodologies over time for our publicly engaged, dialogical practices. There are basically four points: clear frames, horizontal space, generative action, and ephemeral distance. Clear frames develop a space that's very familiar to people: they act as an entrance point; you're on a construction site, you're entering a bar, you're going to a copy shop, or a restaurant. It may be the worst restaurant or the worst business that you've ever encountered but you understand what it is. Familiarity is key.

NICOLE CROMARTIE

But your project for the Wattis, *Counter-Culture as Pedagogy: Pop-Up Book Academy*, 2010–1 is, by comparison, an unfamiliar, hybrid structure.

SG

I don't think so. We talk about it as a traveling bookstore. So people are like, "Oh, it's a bookstore," but it's actually a school. We arrange small classes, small sessions, where people RSVP to an open call that's publicized through various means: word of mouth, flyers, and email. We control the frame through publicity, location, and topic.

GABRIEL SALOMAN

I think it's worth admitting that there's a degree of fraud in that.

SG

Oh, yeah, it's a total fraud. It's a ruse.

GS

But once people are there, we're not doing this thing where we told you it was going to be a candy house and now we're going to put you in the oven. It's not really important that people get the exact experience that they came for. We invite you to this bookstore or construction site, and while we're here, let's talk. And it seems innocuous enough that people immerse themselves in it, because they already feel like it's familiar. They don't know that they're participating until they already are.

SG

Once people get within this frame, we work to level or flatten our authority, and to allow them to make decisions through direct conversation. At the end of a project, we shouldn't be there (though by necessity, we start out directing or facilitating). But through our actions over time, we want to divest ourselves of that role; this is the horizontal space part.

Generative action stems from the feeling that I get in a particular situation, like at band practice or at a political rally. Things might be totally inspiring when you're there, but the minute you leave

that energized space, everything dies. So the idea of generative action is that the activity acts like a battery—it’s the power station that transforms the energy in a room into media, in the widest definition of what media can be: from the Internet, to newspapers, to direct conversations between you and me, even to rumor or myth or disparaging commentary.

Ephemeral distance suggests that this is not the thing you’re after. We are trying to get people to internalize a situation, then transform it into their own thing. This conversation/publication/display is not the conclusion. Those are the four points: pedagogical tools that we use all the time.

GS

We create models for action rather than finished, complete ideas. And the intention is to create a proposition that other people conclude. It’s turning the experience of the art situation into a commons over which we don’t claim ownership. That’s not to say we don’t have proprietary rights to certain things, and certainly we have privileges that other people aren’t going to have. A total horizontality really couldn’t happen unless people took off and ran with it, without us.

SG

Unless people just felt direct authority, and decided: this is mine now. And if that happened, I’d be psyched.

CD

Many of your projects evolve and develop over the long-term, and in multiple places. How can viewers who might encounter the work just once understand your projects in their entirety?

SG

There is no entirety to the project; the project just keeps going. I talk about it in terms of literature: books don’t die. Just because Proust finally stopped writing *Remembrance of Things Past* doesn’t mean that the work is over. The work is there as long as people are talking about it and engaging with it, which is a way that you can define any artwork.

GS

That also explains why we have a blog for every project, and produce as much printed media as we possibly can. There are multiple ways that the work moves through the world and ways that the project can continue to be relevant. We cherish printed matter. Those objects become totemic devices that give us time travel; they give us an opportunity to exist simultaneously in the past and in the present. They allow us to see not only the things that have changed, but the things that have cycled around.

NC

Your practice is not typically gallery-based, but for this exhibition, you’ll have ephemera in the gallery. Why did you decide to do that?

SG

Because we’re punks. It’s funny to us: we fought so long to get out of the gallery and now we’ve reached a stage where people are asking us to come and do projects outside of the gallery. So, inevitably, in our contrarian way, we want to go in.

GS

The new taboo!

SG

The deeper answer is that it pertains to the project. We’re focusing on moments that find their way into so-called mass culture. We can shine a light onto those objects that build up to create the dominant culture. We want to find a way to extrapolate and physicalize our discursive practices in the gallery and illuminate them. We get to say, “Look at this!”

GS

So often, we experience visual work on the Web. Now the gallery is becoming an analogue device. The gallery has more in common with a record player, a slide show.

CD

How does Red76 make work?

GS

Sam develops these initial projects and they expand, depending on what’s appropriate, who can say yes, and who we feel resonates with the project.

SG

There’s a big difference between someone who happens to be involved with one thing that we’re doing, and a real, holistic engagement. So much of what we do occurs “off-stage,” if you will, when we’re just hanging out. The work is based on the affections between all of these people—even feelings of disenfranchisement. There’s been a lot of disaffection and infighting, as in any collaborative project, but it’s always based on friendship.

CD

Who is involved with Red76?

SG

Red76 has always had a transitory nature, and I’m the only constant. Some people participate in one project. For others, it’s like five or six years of collaboration. Gabriel and I have been doing projects since 2002, and we are the main collaborators for the project’s iteration in *We have as much time as it takes*.

GS

Sometimes I send him some photocopies; other times, I fly to the site of the project and spend a month there. The energy is always different.

SG

There are some people who I haven’t done a project with for a really long time, but they’re still part of Red76. By the end of this iteration of *Pop-Up Book Academy*,

there will likely be five more people who act as the public face of Red76. This is another way that it's connected to the concept of your exhibition, wherein it could be really easy to understand that we're doing this *Pop-Up Book Academy*, and that's our contribution to your project. But we see it very differently. We are creating ephemeral institutional structures, and the institution of the Wattis is actually walking into us, rather than us walking into the institution.

GS

Often with a museum, you feel like a hobo that's getting on a train: you take the ride and then you have to hop off. But in this instance, I'd like to think that we're the train and the Wattis is the hobo. At the end of it, they're off on their own journey, but we're still truckin' along.

CD

Who are some of the core, long-term collaborators within Red76?

SG

Dan S. Wang, Zeffrey Throwell, Laura Baldwin, Khris Soden, Mike Wolf, Paige Saez, Jen Rhoads, Dylan Gauthier, and others.

CD

How long have you been working as Red76?

SG

What is today? It is February 17? 10 years, 1 month, and 14 days.

CD

How do you remember that date?

SG

It was important to me. I know where I was. I know where I was when I proposed to my wife; this is not that different. I'm married to this, too.

CD

How has your way of working with each other changed over time? What characteristics have stayed?

GS

We share a desire to understand the complexities of history. Some people turn that research into journalism, but we turn it into projects, as a process of educating ourselves. The projects become a way to focus that research.

CD

Did you know that when you started doing Red76? That it was teaching yourselves as much as teaching others?

GS

We are motivated by our personal desires and curiosities, questions, anxieties, and fears. But we also wouldn't do this if it was just a conversation between ourselves. Wherever it stems from, we need for it to be social, for it to be exoteric as well as esoteric. What's hard is actually making it meaningful for other people, and not just self-indulgent, or self-congratulatory.

NC

Teaching can be one way to move beyond an insular conversation, and it is a key point of your practice. How did you learn to teach?

GS

Self-teaching...

SG

There was real alienation and anxiety for me in school, for a variety of reasons. After a year of college, I decided to drop out because I wasn't appreciating it. My methods are more emotional; they have to do with things that I've gone through. Red76 projects work to actualize that in a public and aesthetic way.

GS

I dropped out of UC Santa Cruz after a year and a half. I looked at school as this ritualized activity that wasn't actually about education. Education was talking to a teacher after class; it was learning about esoteric things with friends outside of school. School was just where we gathered and met. When I dropped out, I was keenly aware of the fact that I lost this shared community. It wasn't that I didn't have teachers, or that I didn't have classrooms—it was that I didn't have a bunch of people who were going through the same experience.

SG

And so we both made a concerted effort to create those communities.

GS

And to educate ourselves.

SG

It was imperative that I couldn't be lazy if I was going to leave school. I went out looking at *everything* as if it were educational. I was going to do things and view *them* as my university.

GS

For me the issue was *how* things were taught. They were taught in this really linear way. What worked for me was setting up weird constructs. I created a cookbook that was thematically based on art movements. Abstract Expressionism: how would I take this idea and turn it into a dish? Or how would I represent this artist and turn him or her into a dish? I did this with Dada, Surrealism. That was the first opportunity I had to teach and create my own curriculum, in the form of a dinner party. By the end of the meal, people were taking paintbrushes and dipping them in sauces and splattering the crepes for dessert: they were making Jackson Pollock crepes. This was better than just telling people that some jackass painted by dripping paint. This was actually experiencing how liberating that felt. And I thought, *this* is an education—actually *being* something, not just talking about it.



① $\frac{1}{2}$ of $\frac{3}{2}$ = 3/4
② $\frac{1}{3}$ of $\frac{1}{5}$ = 1/15

HISTORY WON'T ABSOLVE US

*Tercerunquinto interviewed
by Emily Gonzalez and
Sharon Lerner Rizo-Patrón*

EMILY GONZALEZ/

SHARON LERNER RIZO-PATRÓN

When we invited your artistic collective Tercerunquinto (which is comprised of Julio Castro, Gabriel Cázares, and Rolando Flores) to create a special commission for *We have as much time as it takes*, you proposed *Ejercicio Museográfico* (*Museographic Exercise*, 2010). This provocative proposal required that we, as the exhibition's curators, meet specific criteria—among them, that fifty percent of the Wattis Institute exhibition space remain empty.

But first, can you tell us a little about your previous practices as individual artists, as architects, and as a collective? How did you get together, and why “Tercerunquinto,” which means “a third of a fifth?”

TERCERUNQUINTO

We met in 1996 while studying at the School of Visual Arts at the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León in Mexico. Early on, the group's members changed constantly, according to the specific projects and our particular interests in each one. We did everything: murals, video, performance, installation. We also used to collaborate with another collective called Caxa, which worked mainly on the street and in other public spaces. In retrospect, we were interested in exploring any medium available to us, and measuring its expressive possibilities, its scope. The name Tercerunquinto was given by a friend who is no longer a member. Since 1998, the collective has been just the three of us.

EG/SL

We would like you to elaborate on your process as a collective. As you know, we as a curatorial team worked collectively, planning the exhibition through different stages of discussion and negotiation. How does collective work function for you?

3ER 1/5

Although we are always discussing and trying to define the nature of collective creation, we never arrive at any collective conclusion. It consists precisely in that the three of us think very differently. Perhaps that is the most interesting part of it. What we really like to acknowledge—and seek—is discussion as central to our work; that is the fundamental condition for collective work. We do nevertheless generate consensus for the formal solutions of the proposals. All three of us must be satisfied for the proposal to be made.

EG/SL

When did you start to shift your attention towards institutional functions and the conceptual operations behind the artistic apparatus?

3ER 1/5

It was a natural development (that is, if we wish to understand it as a process gaining complexity in a progressive way). On the one hand, the first works we did had a very basic, semantic interest in the elements that compose a space. Before even talking about a subject like architecture—because that

entails ideological discourses—we were thinking about construction, meaning space in its most basic connotation. Our first works searched for the sculptural capacities of architectonic elements and vice versa, transgressing the most basic spatial system: walls. The work then shifted toward public space, and other reflections were integrated. On the other hand, and in another direction, the work started moving into institutionalized spaces for art: cultural centers, galleries, museums, and so on, which raised questions regarding the pertinence or impertinence of our interventions.

EG/SL

Have there been any impertinent projects that ended up being rejected by the institutions? How do you assess a proposal that doesn't reach completion?

3ER 1/5

Although it has happened very few times, it has occurred in different ways. Sometimes the institutions have explained the refusal by arguing technical impossibilities to develop it. On other occasions, the reasons were presumably budget restrictions, but they were almost never conceptual. We believe that censorship never shows itself openly—it always arrives in disguise. That said, we have never been interested in magnifying a proposal on the basis of it being rejected. We believe that could take us to positions that, on top of being belligerent, would be

pamphleteering in political terms. That would trivialize our work. The fact that somebody declines a proposal does not make it stronger or more interesting. Ultimately it makes us reflect on those fields of difficulty and impossibility. Those situations made us reinforce our positions. On other occasions our own anger, when well-directed, has made us react in very pointed ways, as if clarifying things with a well-directed slap.

EG/SL

In previous projects like *New Langton Arts' Archive for Sale: A Sacrificial Act*, 2008, in San Francisco, and *I Am What I Am*, 2008, at the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham, UK, you created situations that were probably much more than the curators had initially bargained for, such as offering up the institution's archives for sale, or cutting through an exterior wall. How has that kind of disruption of expectations become a part of your practice?

3ER 1/5

We assume completely the critical character that might be integrated into those proposals. We also like to locate ourselves, in a self-critical sense, in the conflicts generated by means of these interventions. We see projects as negotiations, some more tense than others, but reckoning in this terrain of negotiation, an arena where we can, if not define, then at least discuss, all kinds of characters, personalities, profiles, intentions, motivations,

vocations, crafts, and more. It's where art can be discussed in general.

EG/SL

Do you have any particular opinion on New Langton Arts' closing last year? How do you see this specific work in light of what happened?

3ER 1/5

When we presented the proposal to María del Carmen Carrión, then New Langton's curator, we did it with certain conditions. Two round tables of discussion had to take place: a public one, to which people who specialized in archives or were otherwise interested were invited; and a second, inside the institution with the Board of Directors. We had access to those discussions, and the level of polarization really caught our attention. One could say that half of them agreed with putting the archive up for sale, the other half didn't. Among those who agreed, some saw this action as the opportunity to reinvent the institution. Others saw it as a chance to submit to its nature as an institution that had historically taken risks. The people who did not agree with the sale assumed a more conservative position, fetishizing what they considered to be New Langton's most precious capital, its archive (or documented historical memory, as we used to call it).

EG/SL

Was this the first time that you participated in the internal

discussion of an institution of this nature?

3ER 1/5

New Langton was a very interesting experience for us because it allowed us to explore other forms of institutional negotiation for the first time, leaving aside the purely spatial or architectonic dimensions of our interventions. On that occasion, we couldn't distance ourselves from what was very evidently an institutional analysis of sorts: the archive was the beating heart of the institution. To propose that the institution discuss the possibility of selling their most precious capital was the most tempting option for us, as it fell under the idea of confronting them with their nature and vocation as a non-profit space with an institutional history of taking risks with the artists and projects it realized.

EG/SL

You use the term "institutional analysis" instead of "institutional critique." Do your projects work as a sort of therapy for the institutions that accept the challenges inherent in your proposals?

3ER 1/5

Using "institutional analysis" and "negotiation" instead of "critique" locates us as part of the system, not outside of it, pointing at situations. In any given case the therapy would be for all of us, don't you think?

EG/SL

Yes, we probably need it... Increasingly in your work, more conditions are included, as if you are setting the rules of the game. How do you see your role in the system?

3ER 1/5

We play the role of artists and feel completely involved in the game, enjoying and suffering the results.

EG/SL

Is that role neutral? In your most recent exhibition at Proyectos Monclova in Mexico City, *Economía de solidaridad (Solidarity Economy Project)*, 2009, you left all the decisions regarding the handling of the work—its presentation, documentation, and even its aesthetics—to the gallery.

3ER 1/5

Our role could not be neutral. Any position we take, no matter how passive it might be, commits us in an active way. What happened with *Economía de solidaridad* was not a neutralization of our role. Quite the contrary, we wanted to make evident the relationship that is established between artists and gallery—the commercial factor as a focal point in the art system. This relationship can be broadened and made more complex, as in this project. We assumed the responsibility of detaching ourselves from the final stage of the process—creating the aesthetic of the project—as an essential part of it.

EG/SL

Going back to the role of disruption in your work, let's talk about the proposal you made for the Wattis Institute, *Museographic Exercise*. Does this proposal stem from a desire to undermine or challenge us, the curators? Are you responding to the deadlines and other pressures that we impose on you?

3ER 1/5

The proposal wasn't conceived as a response to pressure, not on this occasion. Museography has been a very present practice for us in our work. In Monterrey, we worked installing exhibitions at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, where we helped other artists install their work. It was a very interesting experience because it allowed us to get to explore the guts of a large museum, one that could generate or legitimate, at least locally, important artistic discourses. In that context we could fully consider how curatorial discourses functioned and were constructed. Museography can be a very determinant tool for those effects, although we feel it is somehow subjected to curatorial orders. The museographic is, in this way, like the curatorial's little sister—though perhaps one with a greater presence than this metaphor acknowledges. Think about this for a moment: who says what amount of space there has to be between one work and the other? Which work needs to be by the side of another? Maybe if we start asking ourselves these basic

questions, we might find interesting areas for reflection. We also believe that museographic practice might be invigorated by the introduction of some conflict—by its problematization.

EG/SL

But might this not be oversimplifying? Museographic practices operate on several levels, from very mundane criteria such as the conservation of the pieces, access, and so on, to responding to the needs and requirements from artists regarding their works—and, of course, to the curatorial proposal itself. Those conventions also have a long history and ideology behind them. The curatorial process, too, is deeply marked by the negotiation among artists, works, institutions, and the curators themselves—precisely on this museographic terrain.

3ER 1/5

Of course. And it is not the case that we ignore those many considerations. On the contrary, they are always there and almost always in the same way. We believe that it would be a good idea to address them—to not take for granted this game of relationships that uses the space where art is presented.

EG/SL

The comment you made about museography being curatorial practice's little sister is curious. What ultimately is the difference for you?

3ER 1/5

A phrase comes to mind: “Quien quiere el fin quiere los medios” (Whoever wants the end, needs the means). The phrase mirrors a field in tension, an exercise of power and positioning regarding certain ideas of art.

EG/SL

In conclusion, would you attempt a brief self-critique of your artistic process?

3ER 1/5

We have tried to address this question several times since you sent it to us, and we haven't been able to construct anything really interesting. Although, yet another phrase comes to mind: “La Historia, si se toma el tiempo, no nos absolverá” (History, should it take the time, won't absolve us).

Works in the Exhibition

NINA BEIER AND MARIE LUND

Nina Beier, born Århus, Denmark, 1976; lives and works in Berlin, Germany

Marie Lund, born Hundested, Denmark, 1975; lives and works in London, UK

A Circular Play, 2008/2010
Installation and recurring performance
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artists and Croy Nielsen

Autobiography (If these walls could speak), 2009/2010
Site-specific installation
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artists and Croy Nielsen

DAVID HORVITZ

born Los Angeles, CA, 1982; lives and works in New York, NY

Untitled (Bosphorus), 2010
Photographs, papers, and envelopes mailed from Turkey
Each photograph 4 x 6 in.; each page 8 ½ x 11 in.; each envelope 4 ⅛ x 9 ½ in.
Courtesy the artist

Untitled (Gift), 2010
Framed photograph, flower
Frame 14 ½ x 12 ½ in.
Courtesy the artist

JASON MENA

born New York, NY, 1974; lives and works in San Juan, Puerto Rico

Meaningless Work, 2005
DVD, color, sound
15 min.
Courtesy the artist

SANDRA NAKAMURA

born Lima, Peru, 1981; lives and works in Lima, Peru

A line in the water, 2010
Site-specific installation, U.S. pennies
50 square varas
Courtesy the artist

ROMAN ONDÁK

born Žilina, Slovakia, 1966; lives and works in Bratislava, Slovakia

Untitled, 2005
Plastic sign and cotton cord
Dimensions variable
Courtesy Galerie Martin Janda, Vienna

RED76

Red76 is a multi-artist collective started in Portland, OR in 2000. This project is conceived and executed primarily by two members:

Sam Gould, born New York, NY, 1976; lives and works in Portland, OR
Gabriel Saloman, born Oakland, CA, 1977; lives and works in Vancouver, Canada

Counter-Culture as Pedagogy: Pop-Up Book Academy, 2010–1
Conditions variable, dimensions variable
Courtesy the artists

ZACHARY ROYER SCHOLZ

born Washington, DC, 1978; lives and works in San Francisco, CA

Shared holding pattern, 2010
Mixed media
Dimensions contingent
Courtesy the artist

TERCERUNQUINTO

Julio Castro, born Monterrey, Mexico, 1976; lives and works in Monterrey and DF, Mexico

Gabriel Cázares, born Monterrey, Mexico, 1978; lives and works in Monterrey and DF, Mexico

Rolando Flores, born Monterrey, Mexico, 1975; lives and works in Monterrey and DF, Mexico

Ejercicio Museográfico (Museographic Exercise), 2010
Site-specific installation
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artists

LAWRENCE WEINER

born New York, NY, 1942; lives and works in New York, NY and Amsterdam, The Netherlands

A 36" x 36" REMOVAL TO THE LATHING OR SUPPORT WALL OF PLASTER OR WALLBOARD FROM A WALL, 1968/2010
Site-specific installation
36 x 36 in.
Siegelaub Collection & Archives at the Stichting Egress Foundation, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

CHRISTINE WONG YAP

born Santa Rosa, CA, 1977; lives and works in Oakland, CA

Unlimited Promise, 2009
Foil paper, thread, light, and shadow
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist; produced during the Breathe Residency, Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester, UK

Contributors

JASPER BERNES is the author of *Starsdown* (ingirumimusnoctetconsumimurigni) and *Desequencer* (TAXT). He is a graduate student in English at UC Berkeley, where he is writing a dissertation on experimental writing, art, and labor during the restructuring of capitalism in the 1960s and 70s. He lives in Albany, CA with his family.

ERICA LEVIN teaches in the Graduate Program in Curatorial Practice Program at CCA. She is working on a dissertation at UC Berkeley about politics, temporality, and the news in media art of the 1960s. Her essay, “The Inner Space of Television” is forthcoming in a new collection of writings on Chris Marker, to be published by Editions du Sandre, Paris. She lives in San Francisco, CA.

DANIEL MARCUS is a graduate student in History of Art at UC Berkeley. He studies 20th-century art and philosophy, and has recently published an essay on Picasso’s *Guernica* in *Picasso Harlequin 1917–1937* (ed. Yve-Alain Bois). He lives in San Francisco, CA.

MATTHEW RANA is an artist and writer whose comics, newspapers, videos, and zines deal with economic participation, spatial politics, and historical narratives. His most recent project, “The Autobiography of Ernest Patrick Butler: His Battles with God, Life and Self,” is a 16-page comic book co-authored with Rick Butler, a man who sells crocheted hats at the MacArthur BART station where he lives. Rana lives in Oakland, CA.

JON SUEDA is a designer, teacher, and lecturer. His work has been exhibited internationally. In 2004, he co-founded the design studio Stripe, which specializes in printed material for art and culture. He is also the co-editor of *Task Newsletter*, and the co-organizer of AtRandom events. He lives in Oakland, CA.

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Colophon

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Contributing editors: Claire Fitzsimmons and Leigh Markopoulos

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CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts
Kent and Vicki Logan Galleries
1111 Eighth Street
San Francisco CA 94107
415.551.9210 / www.wattis.org



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1111 Eighth Street
San Francisco CA 94107
www.cca.edu/curatorialpractice