

U N D E R

C O N S T R U C T I O N

D I G G I N G

I N T O

H O L E S

T H E

L

I N S T I T U T I O N A L

L A N D S C A P E

UNDER CONSTRUCTION --- DIGGING HOLES INTO THE  
INSTITUTIONAL LANDSCAPE IS A READER ON FICTION  
AND PERFORMANCE ANNOTATED BY LIVIA ANDREA  
PIAZZA AND HEIKE BRÖCKENHOFF

The collected texts dig holes into our ways of  
thinking art institutions.  
Inspired by plants  
and squids, human artists, anthropologists,  
anarchists and many more, the  
reader  
engages with fiction as a dirty job:  
demolishing  
naturalized institutions and practices,  
and constructing with materials  
that are  
not yet there.



# INTRODUCTION

Through this reader, we look at the institutional landscape as a construction site. It's a landscape made of all the institutions we see and all those we picture in our minds. Many of them are theatres, museums or art schools. Others are the bigger institutions constituting their environment.

We observe them through plans and cross-sections. We can see how deep their foundations lay and measure the thickness of their walls. We can speculate on the best location of the door or get an in-sight on what's the load-bearing beam and what other elements are purely ornamental. We can talk long on the size of the windows and get an idea of the air quality. We can study the emergency exits and discuss the maintenance of the main entrance.

The collected texts, more or less explicitly, dig holes into our ways of thinking institutions. They go underground, into the dirt and the mud.

In this process, we understand fiction as our main tool to engage with the landscape's deconstruction and construction.

Rather than intending fiction as 'non-existing', we focus on the 'fictional' as that which is 'constructed' and thus always constructible otherwise. We owe this meaning also to artists' experimentations in the institutional landscape. The fictional institutions they built were able to challenge our perception of the existing ones and exposed the fiction at their core.

In this sense, the notion of fiction is close to that of performativity as 'reality-making': fiction is a tool to demolish naturalized institutions and practices, and a tool to build using that which is not yet there. Fiction is a dirty job.

Inspired by plants and squids, but also human artists, anthropologists, anarchists and many more, we looked for different images of the (art) institution: a cloud, a hole, a swamp, a garden...What forms and processes emerge in the holes that have been dug?



We enter our institutional landscape through the uncanny being in the world of the *Vampyroteuthis infernalis*, from the eponymous treatise by Vilém Flusser and Louis Bec and we take a look from the side. What we see then are two opposite perspectives on institutions. In *How Institution Think*, Mary Douglas explains how institutions limit our ability to think and imagine; in *Instincts et Institutions*, Gilles Deleuze

understands them as what enables rather than limits human action. The paradoxical conditionality of institutions, unfolding between violence and protection, is the starting point of *The Institutionalisation, Precarity and the Rhythm of Work* by Bojana Kunst, and the jump we do into the 'misty core' of this landscape: the art institution. They could still be *The Fantastic Institutions* pro-posed by Sarah Vanhee for a 'feminisation, colouring and queering of the art institution', with an invitation to think of them as holes in the ground, somewhere to fall down into rather than climb up to, and get a muddy perspective. Some hole digging is performed by the students of the art school in Alasdair Gray's *The cause of some recent changes*, a short sci-fi story on how art can destroy the planet, or to put it nicely, change the world.

Digging can be a singular or a joint effort. Or the chance to go beyond this dichotomy. In *The Soviets of the Multitude: On Collectivity and Collective Work*, Paolo Virno interviewed by Alexei Penzin reflects on institutions as a space for collective action in a post-Fordist world, where the whole is less than the sum of its parts. Such a world we might be sharing with the Vampyroteuthis. In *Its Social Life*, the vampire squid is compared with ants, humans and other animals regarding the creation of super-organisms and the notion of freedom. This chapter reveals the anarchist nature of Vampyroteuthis infernalis. What follows is a human anarchist manifesto for destitution, questioning not only institutions but also instituent practices. *Now and The Coming Insurrection* by Comité Invisible confront us with the limits of our very own attempt of rethinking institutions.



As the holes multiply in our landscape and some unexpected connections emerge through the tunnels, we are immersed into the complexity of its atmosphere. In *The Life of Plants*, Emanuele Coccia looks at reason, creation and performativity as a cosmic force, opening up a reflection on who's part of and who can transform the world. And, we get to imagine art institutions as amphibious beings, connecting different environments and 'becoming other'.

A world of metaphysical mixture made even more complex by Donna Haraway's *SF: Science Fiction, Speculative Fabulation, String Figures, So Far*: can we imagine an art institution becoming world and hosting many different weird creatures and entanglements? For the moment, we tried to decipher a formula of Terrapolis and went back to the perspective of the vampire squids populating it. *Its Art* is performative and intersubjective. It has to do with sex, and it is also an act of violence. It is about immortality, deception and fiction. Through its uncanny similarity with human art, we remember we cannot look from the side, we're in the very middle of it. From the middle, we can under-

stand our art institutions as sites of complexity, as suggested in Silvia Bottirolì's *Art schools as thinking entities*, think our (art) education and the world as reciprocal, and use fiction as a tool to do our dirty job.



We put together the reader thinking that it should perform its title and dig multiple holes in the way we think art institutions.

We annotated these texts focusing on the forms and images they produced in the holes they dug, en-visioning the reader to be not so much about art institutions, rather for them.

In our annotating process, we focused on the concrete questions that came out of our building and un-building: who is part of or has access to the institution? For whom is the institution (which bodies)? What times and spaces does it build? How does it shape reality? How does it re-distribute (the) power...? Can we escape institutions? Can we escape a landscape? Can there be institutions in the ground and in the sky? Can there be an institution without light? Can there be an institution that is radically open? What does it look like....?

We also followed a set of rules:

- ~ Open dialogue (keeping in mind for whom we annotate: dialogue between ourselves but as open as possible to the reader).
- ~ Heike's and Livia's voices should be always distinct (colours).
- ~ Each annotation should be immediately understandable (if the reader opens the reader on a random page).
- ~ No hole digging in the literal sense.
- ~ Annotation can be in the form of images.
- ~ Annotations can be annotated.

Through annotating, we thought and included other institutional practices such as hosting, gardening, becoming other, caring, fertilising/inseminating, protecting,...

They enriched our institutional landscape and, while the actual order of texts represents the very specific tunnels we dug, the reader's structure is conceived as an atlas, openable, readable and ex-plorable from any point.

## BEGINNING AFTER THE END

There are thoughts we can anticipate, glimpsed in the distance along existing thought pathways.

This is a future that is simply the present, stretched out further.

There is not-yet-thought that never arrives—yet here we are thinking it in the paradoxical flicker of this very sentence.

If we want thought different from the present—if we want to change the present—then thought must be aware of this kind of future.

It is not a future into which we can progress.

This future is unthinkable. Yet here we are, thinking it.

Coexisting, we are thinking future coexistence. Predicting it and more: keeping the unpredictable one open.

Yet such a future, the open future, has become taboo.

Because it is real, yet beyond concept.

Because it is *weird*.

Art is thought from the future. Thought we cannot explicitly think at present. Thought we may not think or speak at all.

If we want thought different from the present, then thought must veer toward art.

To be a thing at all—a rock, a lizard, a human—is to be in a twist.

How thought longs to twist and turn like the serpent poetry!

(JARK ECOLOGY - TIMOTHY MORTON)

*Homo sapiens sapiens is a mammal that, having uplifted its body carriage from the ground, has freely dangling forelimbs. As is the case with all mammals, its eyes refract rays of the sun, and the data that it acquires in this way are transmitted from the brain to the hands. Its hands, in turn, transmit this information to its environment by handling it. Thus the human is a sort of feedback loop through which data, gathered from out of the world, can re-enter into the world. But since the human organism (especially its brain) is complex, information is distorted during this feedback process. It is processed by the brain, which coordinates it reflexively and transmits it in a reconfigured form to the hand, by which it is retransmitted onto the world. In this sense, the data that humans cast back into the world represent new information. This new information is likewise perceived by the eyes, processed by the brain, and returned to the world in a restructured form. It is through this process that the human transforms both its environment and itself. In short: human history.*

*To understand this history further, it is necessary to know that the existential focus of mammals is the stomach. The human, no exception, is motivated to transform the world and itself by its stomach. Human history has economic infrastructures that are phenomenologically clear to see: The objects of the world that are altered by human hands are meant, in the broadest sense, to serve digestion. These same objects have hardly any sexual dimension. In fact, human sexual behavior has scarcely changed over the course of its history. It has remained practically animalistic and ahistorical.*

*This anomaly, this suppression of the sexual apparatus by the digestive, cannot be adequately explained by biology*

HUMAN BODY AS AN "INSTITUTION"?  
A SYSTEM?

"HUMANS  
DON'T  
HAVE  
INSTINCTS?"  
(→ DELETE)



alone. It cannot be explained, for instance, as an evolutionary trend in the development of chordate intestines. On the contrary, this anomaly has mainly historical roots. The human male is somewhat larger than the female. Since the beginning of history, it seems as though the male has oppressed the female and has lived, ever since, in fear of female rebellion. Thus have humans managed to lose the entire dimension of female thought and activity. We vampyroteuthes are left with a rather pathological impression of human history, one that can be understood in terms of the repression of sexuality for fear of the female. Human history is a history of affliction.

Humans are surrounded by a mixture of gases called "air." Most inhabitants of the air possess an organ that can cause this gas to resonate. Among humans, these resonances are codified and used, like our chromatophoric emissions, to transmit intraspecific information. Human memory is consequently designed to store information that is transmitted in this way. Compared to ours, however, its memory seems rudimentary, for the human is continuously reaching out for mnemonic crutches. It channels the majority of what it wants to communicate onto inanimate objects, which exist in large number on the relatively infertile continents, and these newly "(in)formed" objects are meant to serve as mnemonic aids.

A peculiar consequence of this blunder is that human history, in contrast to a genuine history such as ours, can be ascertained objectively—it can be established on the basis of these "(in)formed" objects. Not only we vampyroteuthes but even a visitor from Mars could reconstruct human history from these entities. Since it is soaked up by objective matter, human history is not properly intersubjective. It is an utter failure.

Goes BACK to

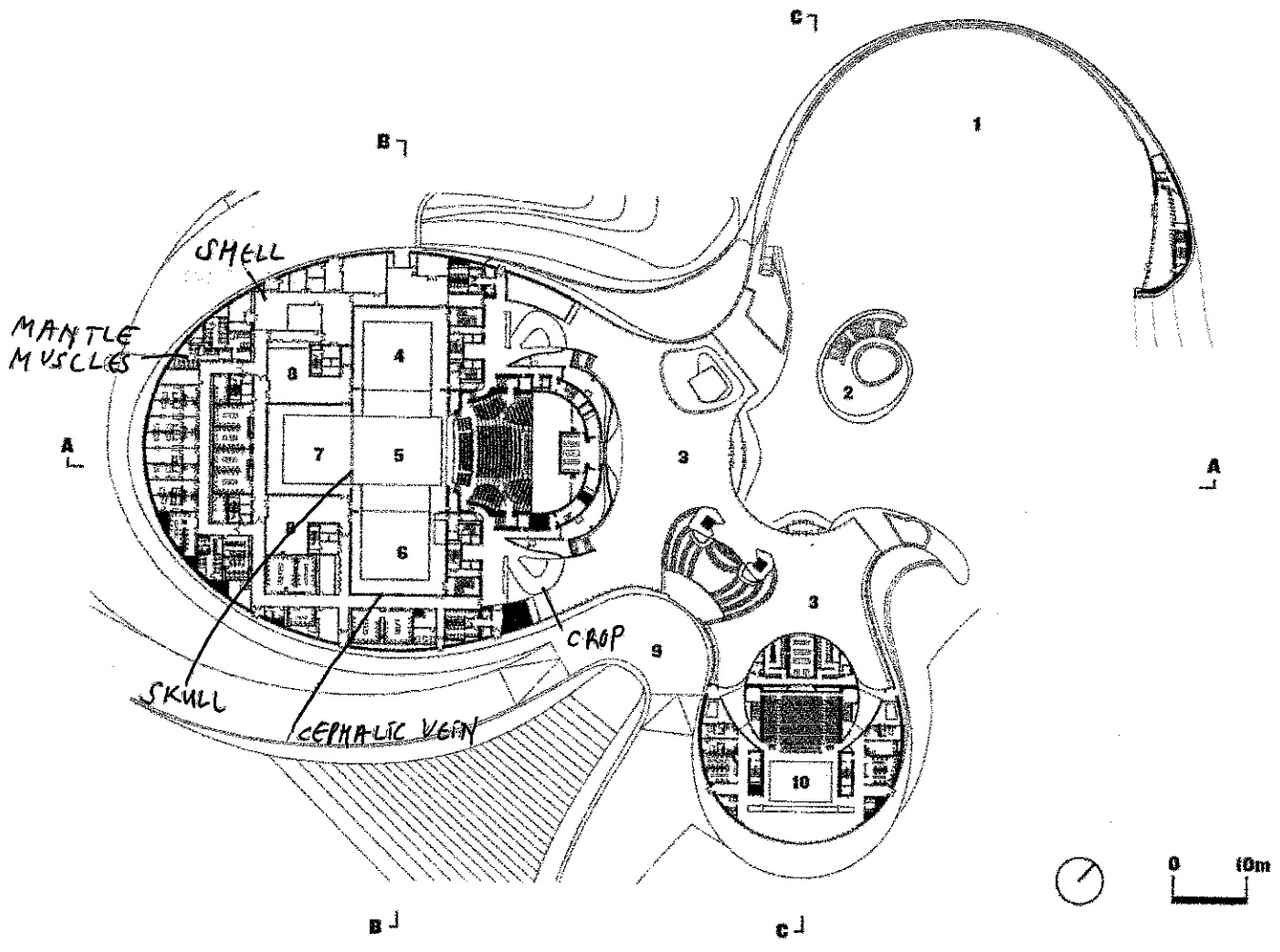
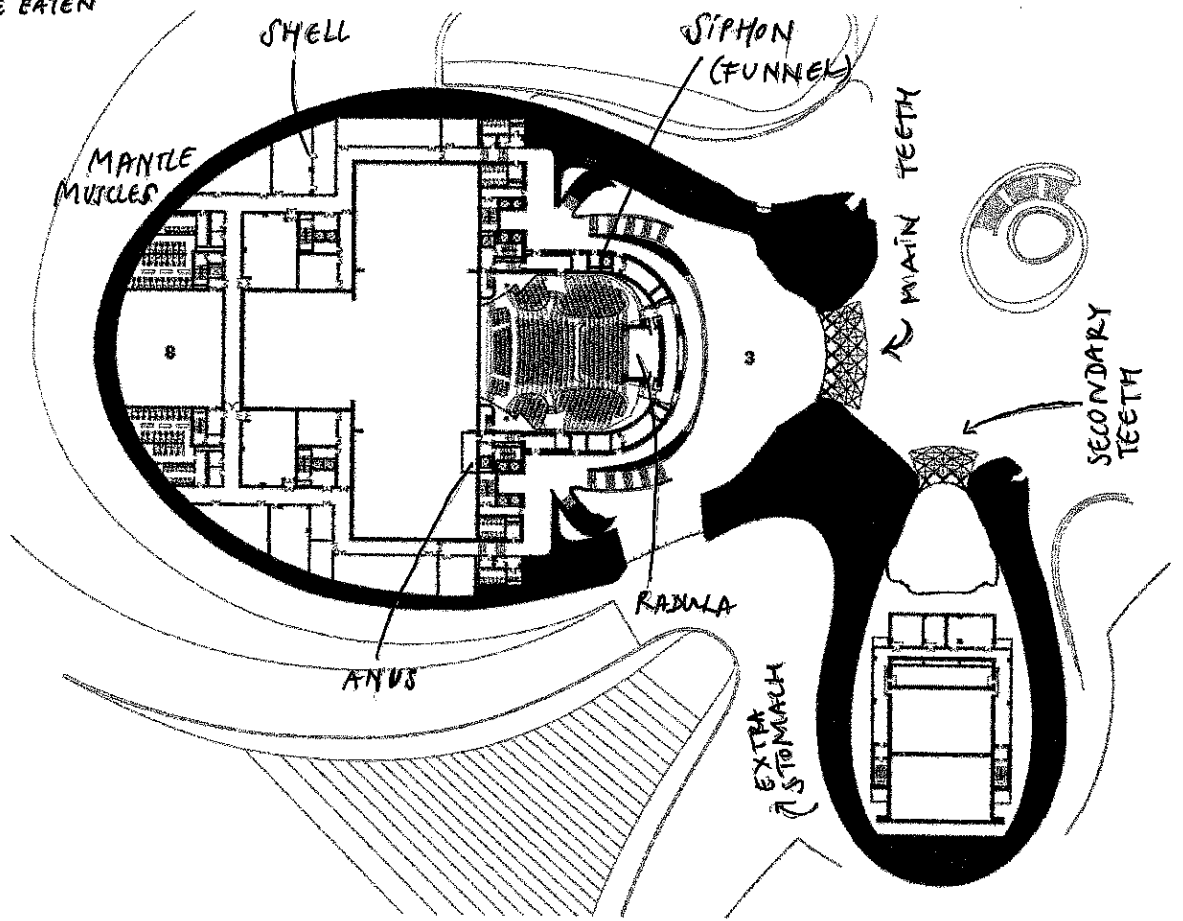
THE VIEW FROM THE OTHER

OLIVIER ZAHM - You analyze every aspect of plants - leaves, roots, flowers - and you extrapolate the notion that plants serve to link together all other forms of life; they're the link between animals, men, the earth, the sky.

EMANUELE COCCIA - Yes. Plants embody life's continuity, not its separation into distinct realms. First of all, plants produce the atmosphere - oxygen - within which all higher animal life is possible. In fact, they're the necessary condition for that existence. It's plants that have rendered animal life possible and have transformed the planet into a planet full of life and forms and living matter.

THE ROLE OF PLANTS

- 1 TENTACLE
- 2 SEA SLUG ABOUT TO BE EATEN
- 3 BRANCHIAL HEART
- 4 BUCCAL MASS
- 5 BRAIN
- 6 CEPHALIC VEIN
- 7 ESOPHAGUS
- 8 STOMACH
- 9 POISON GLAND
- 10 CHROMOPHORES





# How Institutions



# Think

MARY DOUGLAS

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1986

I have chosen to approach solidarity and cooperation through the work of Emile Durkheim and Ludwik Fleck. For them, true solidarity is only possible to the extent that individuals share the categories of their thought.

AND INSTITUTIONS HELP US SHARING...?  
IS LANGUAGE AN INSTITUTION

There is a tendency to dismiss Durkheim and Fleck because they seem to be saying that institutions have minds of their own. Of course institutions cannot have minds.

VS. INSTITUTIONS AS  
THINKING ENTITIES

Emile Durkheim had another way of thinking about the conflict between individual and society (Durkheim 1903, 1912). He transferred it to warring elements within the person. For him the initial error is to deny the social origins of individual thought. Classifications, logical operations, and guiding metaphors are given to the individual by society. Above all, the sense of a priori rightness of some ideas and the nonsensicality of others are handed out as part of the social environment.

AND INSTITUTIONS  
BELONG TO OUR



TRANSINDIVIDUAL  
→ SEE SIMON DONY  
PAOLO VIRNO  
JASON REED

## *Institutions Are Founded on Analogy*

At this point, it is perhaps worth introducing an elementary theoretical distinction from Lacanian psychoanalysis which Žižek has done so much to give contemporary currency: the difference between the Real and reality. As Alenka Zupancic explains, psychoanalysis's positing of a reality *principle* invites us to be suspicious of any reality that presents itself as natural. 'The reality principle', Zupancic writes,

is not some kind of natural way associated with how things are ... The reality principle itself is ideologically mediated; one could even claim that it constitutes the highest form of ideology, the ideology that presents itself as empirical fact (or biological, economic...) necessity (and that we tend to perceive as non-ideological). It is precisely here that we should be most alert to the functioning of ideology.

For Lacan, the Real is what any 'reality' must suppress; indeed, reality constitutes itself through just this repression. The Real is an unrepresentable X, a traumatic void that can only be glimpsed in the fractures and inconsistencies in the field of apparent reality. So one strategy against capitalist realism could involve invoking the Real(s) underlying the reality that capitalism presents to us.

MARK FISHER  
Capitalist Realism  
2009, pp. 17-18

SHOULD WE DIG A TUNNEL  
OUT OF "REALITY" TO  
FIND THE REAL?  
(UNDERGROUND)

→ VANHEE  
→ GRAY

A focus on the most elementary forms of society brings to light the source of legitimacy that will never appear in the balancing of individual interests. To acquire legitimacy, every kind of institution needs a formula that founds its rightness in reason and in nature. Half of our task is to demonstrate this cognitive process at the foundation of the social order. The other half of our task is to demonstrate that the individual's most elementary cognitive process depends on social institutions.



SO AN  
INSTITUTION  
ORGANIZES HOW WE  
LIVE TOGETHER VIA  
RULES?  
CONVEN-  
TIONS?

Minimally, an institution is only a convention. David Lewis' definition is helpful: a convention arises when all parties have a common interest in there being a rule to insure coordination, none has a conflicting interest, and none will deviate lest the desired coordination is lost (Lewis 1968). Thus, by definition, a convention is to that extent self-policing. Whether village A holds its market on Friday or Saturday is indifferent so long as it does not hold it on the same day as neighboring village B. No one minds which side of the road is the rule for drivers, but they want there to be a rule.

What exactly is a rule?

It seems that a rule is a paradox, a seemingly blatant contradiction. In order for a rule to exist, one must claim that it is impossible to do certain things that can be done.

INTERESTING DEFINITION  
SO: A RULE IS A LIE?

The conditions for stable conventions to arise are much more stringent than it might seem. Communities do not grow up into little institutions and these do not grow into big ones by any continuous process. For a convention to turn into a legitimate social institution it needs a parallel 'cognitive convention to sustain it. → A KIND OF IDEOLOGY? A WHOLE SYSTEM?

In the rest of this volume, institution will be used in the sense of legitimized social grouping. The institution in question may be a family, a game, or a ceremony. The legitimating authority may be personal, such as a father, doctor, judge, referee, or maître d'hôtel. Or it may be dif-fused, for example, based by common assent on some general founding principle. What is excluded from the idea of institution in these pages is any purely instrumental or provisional practical arrangement that is recognized as such. Here, it is assumed that most established institutions, if challenged, are able to rest their claims to legitimacy on their fit with the nature of the universe. A convention is institutionalized when, in reply to the question,

A rule is therefore the collective and individual conception (which can transmit rules, such as moral rules) of the *dyadic* possibility and impossibility of possibilities. Some possibilities are doubled – possible *possibilia* – while other possibilities are contradictory – impossible *possibilia*.

TRISTAN GARUA, Form and  
object, 2014, pp. 260-261

"Why do you do it like this?" although the first answer may be framed in terms of mutual convenience, in response to further questioning the final answer refers to the way the planets are fixed in the sky or the way that plants or humans or animals "naturally" behave.

It is at this time fashionable to say that social institutions encode information. They are credited with making routine decisions, solving routine problems, and doing a lot of regular thinking on behalf of individuals. This recent work is very pertinent. However, we find that there are many ways of talking about institutions as organizers of information.

Human rationality is inherently bounded. Institutional organization is now widely treated as a way of solving problems arising from bounded rationality.

ART INSTITUTIONS COULD BE TREATED AS PLACES WHERE PROBLEMS ARE CREATED.

SEE COCCIA

OLIVIER ZAHM – The essence of reason is the seed?

EMANUELE COCCIA – The idea is that reason is not the awareness of something but the capacity to transform, or fashion, the world. The example par excellence of a rational event is when an artisan takes a piece of matter and makes something of it, gives it a form or a function. That is rationality par excellence. If we adopt this perfectly reasonable point of view, then the seed is a force able to draw forth incredible forms from matter. But at that point, reason is no longer just a human or animal faculty; it's a cosmic force.



STORAGE / ARCHIVE

LEARNING FROM

Past experience is encapsulated in an institution's rules so that it acts as a guide to what to expect from the future. The more fully the institutions encode expectations, the more they put uncertainty under control, with the further effect that behavior tends to conform to the institutional matrix: if this degree of coordination is achieved, disorder and confusion disappear. Schotter presents institutions as entropy-minimizing devices. They start with rules of thumb and norms; eventually they can end by storing all the useful information. When everything is institutionalized, no history or other storage devices are necessary: "The institution tells all" (Schotter 1981, p. 139).

This is fine and highly congenial to a Durkheimian analysis. The one snag is that it does not say how institutions ever start and get enough stability to do all of that. Schotter thinks that they develop quite easily from conventions and from other strategies described in game theory. He supposes they develop naturally out of an equilibrium of conflicting powers and interests. Schotter is one among many others who subscribe to this contemporary version of functionalism that assumes in social forces a drive towards equilibrium. However, the anthropologists went through this question in the 1950s and must feel dubious about presupposing any drive for equilibrium. If there is such a drive, its realization is very precarious. Equilibrium cannot be assumed; it must be demonstrated and with a different demonstration for each type of society. Before it can perform its entropy-reducing work, the incipient institution needs some stabilizing principle to stop its premature demise. That stabilizing principle is the naturalization of social classifications. There needs to be an analogy by which the formal structure of a crucial set of social relations is found in the physical world, or in the supernatural world, or in eternity, anywhere, so long as it is not seen as a socially contrived arrangement. When the analogy is applied back and forth from one set social relations to another and from these back to nature, its recurring formal structure becomes easily recognized and endowed with self-validating truth.

Conventions may arise about the division of labor, but they are likely to be challenged all the time unless their justifying principle can be grounded in something other than conventions.

✱ A peculiar consequence of this blunder is that human history, in contrast to a genuine history such as ours, can be ascertained objectively—it can be established on the basis of these "(in)formed" objects.

VILÉM FLUSSER and LOUIS BEG  
Vampyrothentis infernalis, 2012  
pp. 50

FUTURE VIA PROGNOSTICS



The natural distinction of sex specializes women for childbearing and rearing. Pressures of efficiency and the distribution of power may well override individual preferences so as to produce a sexual division of labor, but whenever the coercion relaxes, the principle will be challenged.

female	male
left	right
people	king
DARK	LIGHT
GROUND	SKY

The institutions lock into the structure of an analogy from the body. The more primitive the division of labor, the more the same analogy can be deployed from one social context to another. In modern industrial society the analogical relation of head to hand was frequently used to justify the class structure, the inequalities of the educational system, and the division of labor between manual and intellectual worker. The shared analogy is a device for legitimizing a set of fragile institutions (Shapin and Barnes 1976).

WHE NOT GIVING UP ON BEING LEGITIMATE AND BECOME FRAGILE INSTEAD?

→ VLADIMIR MILER : SETTLEMENT

Fleck insisted that the development of knowledge depends on how the knowledge is expected to intervene in practical life. Thinking has more to do with intervening than with representing (Hacking 1983).

AS IT IS THE CASE WITH FICTION & ART

## FICTIONAL HOW INSTITUTIONS THINK

Fictional institutions are that which blur the solidity of existing institutions: they do not claim their realness, but rather transport the same ideas of institutionality as in the realm of fiction. In a blog article from 2008 entitled *The Fiction of Institutions: The Institution of Fiction* the American journalist Jerry Monaco wrote:

As far as we know humans are the only life form evolved on our planet that has developed flexible and changeable institutional structures, such as states, bureaucratic entities, organised religion, voluntary associations, and, most importantly today, business institutions, such as the modern corporation. Such institutional entities are always a 'fiction.' They are not 'fictional' in a trivial way but 'fictional' to some important extent that says something about human society, history, and how we come to understand and misunderstand the world we have created for ourselves.

In his text, Monaco explains that the use of the word fiction in quotation marks is employed exactly to underline that these institutional entities are not fictional social structures, but that they are social structures created by human beings and treated by us *as if* they were natural.

FICTIONAL INSTITUTIONS!  
Blange-Subbay, Pierre, 2016, p. 43-44

Thus the institutions survive the stage of being fragile conventions: they are founded in nature and therefore, in reason. Being naturalized, they are part of the order of the universe and so are ready to stand as the grounds of argument.

WHICH COULD  
ALSO MEAN  
THAT THEY ARE  
MADE/CRAFTED  
→ SEE COCCIA

Moreover, the effort to build strength for fragile social

How  
FICTIONAL  
INSTITUTIONS  
ACT?

institutions by grounding them in nature is defeated as soon as it is recognized as such. That is why founding analogies have to be hidden and why the hold of the thought style upon the thought world has to be secret.

By using formal analogies that entrench an abstract structure of social conventions in an abstract structure imposed upon nature, institutions grow past the initial difficulties of collective action.

Individuals, as they pick and choose among the analogies from nature those they will give credence to, are also picking and choosing at the same time their allies and opponents and the pattern of their future relations. Constituting their version of nature, they are monitoring the constitution of their society. In short, they are constructing a machine for thinking and decision-making on their own behalf.

ALTER-NATIVES

In the name of feminism, 'Nature' shall no longer be a refuge of injustice, or a basis for any political justification whatsoever!

If nature is unjust, change nature!

LABORIA WRONIKS

XENOFEMINISM - A POLITICS OF ALIENATION

2015

**Fictional** Institutions Remember and Forget

- THE - THE REST
- FORGOTTEN
  - THE FUTURE
  - THE EXCLUDED
  - THOSE IN NEED
  - LOVE
  - PRACTICES OF CARE
  - JOY
  - ...

owed places in which nothing can be seen and no questions asked. They make other areas show finely discriminated detail, which is closely scrutinized and ordered.

**TRANSPARENCY**

**A DIFFERENT KIND  
OF DARKNESS**

Institutions create shaded

**NOT THIS  
OBSCURE ONE**



## *Institutions Do the Classifying*



WHEN THE INSTITUTIONS make classifications for us, we seem to lose some independence that we might conceivably have otherwise had.

\* SEE ALSO FERRY MONACO:  
"The way ancient humans  
misattributed personality  
and agency to natural  
phenomena, we  
misattribute personality  
and agency to  
institutions"  
REFERENCE: see page 52  
of this text



Each period is marked by its own thought style tailored to the concerns of the dominant class. At each period, a particular story of mankind drowns out other multiple, contradictory versions.

WE NEED DIFFERENT STORIES  
OF EARTHLY SURVIVAL  
(TERRAPOLIS, JONNA HARAWAY)

WHAT IS EXCLUDED, LEFT ASIDE, GETS LOST?

↓ Institutions systematically direct individual memory and channel our perceptions into forms compatible with the relations they authorize.

WHAT THEY ALLOW?

For us, the hope of intellectual independence is to resist, and the necessary first step in resistance is to discover how the institutional grip is laid upon our mind.

CAN WE THINK DIFFERENTLY IF THE CATEGORIES  
ARE BASED ON CONVENTIONS (INSTITUTIONAL)  
DEFINE HOW WE THINK?  
HOW TO BREAK WITH THAT? RESIST?

In Durkheim's case the task was to explain the general question of individual commitment to the social order—the issue of solidarity, which is the same as collective action. He found the answer in shared classification.

WIRNO?

WHAT ABOUT  
EMPATHY?  
EMOTIONS?

- THE OTHER'S FACE  
(LÉVINAS) THAT FORCES  
ME TO  
RESPOND  
→ RESPONSIBILITY

→ PRECARIOUSNESS  
THAT IS SHARED

DO I NEED AN INSTITUTION  
IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND  
YOUR PRECARIOUSNESS/  
VULNERABILITY?  
(BUTLER)

That there was once a period of unquestioned legitimacy is the idea that our institutions use for stigmatizing subversive elements.

*Through the use of the idea of Nature, among other things*

To analyze our own collective representations, we should relate what is shared in our mental furnishing to our common experience of authority and work. To know how to resist the classifying pressures of our institutions, we would like to start an independent classificatory exercise. Unfortunately, all the classifications that we have for thinking with are provided ready-made, along with our social life. For thinking about society we have at hand the categories we use as members of society speaking to each other about ourselves.

General Intellect!

AAA!

So...

Exit strategies?

EXACTLY MY QUESTION:

Our minds are running on the old treadmill already. How can we possibly think of ourselves in society except by using the classifications established in our institutions?

ARE THEY WAYS OF THINKING THAT ARE NOT BASED ON OUR INSTITUTIONS? → General Intellect!

BUT ALSO. LANGUAGE CHANGES...



Performance as  
Fiction as  
categorizing as

SO THEY COULD  
BE OTHERWISE?

At the same time as institutions produce labels, there is a feedback of Robert Merton's self-fulfilling kind. The labels stabilize the flux of social life and even create to some extent the realities to which they apply. Ian Hacking has taken up the relation between the label and the reality from cues laid by Michel Foucault's study of the "constitution of subjects." This process Hacking calls "making up people" by labeling them and in various ways insuring that they will conform to the labels (1985).

REALITY-MAKING - YES

WHO IS "NAMED" ?  
→ VISIBILITY / RECOGNIZABILITY

This is not like the naming that, according to nominalist philosophers, creates a particular version of the world by picking out certain sorts of things, for instance, naming stars, foregrounding some and letting others disappear from sight. It is a much more dynamic process by which new names are uttered and forthwith new creatures corresponding to them emerge.

HARAWAY IS EXTREMELY BUSY WITH THAT.

Hacking is drawing a distinction between the effect of description on inanimate objects and the effect of names on humans. A course of injections can kill microbes: "possibilities for microbes are delimited by nature, not by words." However, the contrast is not so clear, for it is not the words that do things to the people. The label does not cause them to change their posture and rearrange their bodies. A course of toxic injections could kill people too. Nor are the microbes less responsive to words than humans. For the fair comparison, the labeling process in both cases is part of a larger constraining action, and in both cases the plants and animals and microbes respond even more vehemently than humans. The individual bacillus may die, true enough, but in a very short space of time new breeds have emerged, not to conform to the labels but to defy them, millions of new bacilli appear, never imagined before, but immune to the attacks mounted against them under the old labels. In the same way as sexual perverts, hysterics, or depressive maniacs, living creatures interacting with humans transform themselves to adapt to the new system represented by the labels. The real difference may be that life outside of human society transforms itself away from the labels in self-defense, while that within human society transforms itself towards them in hope of relief or expecting advantage.

BUT  
WORDS DO  
THINGS  
TO PEOPLE

"DEVILANT  
RESILIENT  
BEHAVIOUR"

WHERE DO WE END UP  
WITH THAT?  
OUR OWN EXTINCTION?  
AREN'T WE CANNIBALS  
AFTER ALL? →  
(VAMPIROTHEMIS INFERNAUS)

As we have already seen, institutions survive by harnessing all information processes to the task of establishing themselves. The instituted community blocks personal curiosity, organizes public memory, and heroically imposes certainty on uncertainty. In marking its own boundaries it affects all lower level thinking, so that persons realize their own identities and classify each other through community affiliation. Since it uses the division of labor as a source of metaphors to affirm itself, the community's self-knowledge and knowledge of the world must undergo change when the organization of work changes. When it reaches a new level of economic activity new forms of classification must be designed. But individual persons do not control the classifying. It is a cognitive process that involves them in the same way as they are involved in the strategies and payoffs of the economic scene or in the constitution of language. Individual persons make choices within the classifications. Something else governs their choices, some need of easier communication, a call for a new focus for precision. The change will be a response to the vision of a new kind of community.

HOW COULD THAT LOOK LIKE?



FICION  
~~REVOLUTION~~  
" COULD ~~ART~~ FOSTER →  
" THE MEANTIME (PIAZZA) / SUSPENSION? "

Something happens to the insides of our heads when a different kind of organization had made obsolete the old classifications by places. The change is not a deliberate or conscious choice. Institutions veil their influence, so that we hardly notice any change.

## IN A NUTSHELL:

This is how the names get changed and how the people and things are rejigged to fit the new categories. First the people are tempted out of their niches by new possibilities of exercising or evading control. Then they make new kinds of institutions, and the institutions make new labels, and the label makes new kinds of people.

There is nothing self-contradictory or absurd in taking a systematic look at the classifications we make of ourselves. The logical difficulties start when we try to develop value-free ideas about the good society.

WE'RE NOT FREE FROM ...

- JUDGEMENT
- CATEGORIES
- VALUES

## *Institutions Make Life and Death Decisions*

*LIKE VAMPIROTHEMIS 30*



A COMFORTING but false idea about institutional thinking has gained some recent currency. This is the notion that institutions just do the routine, low-level, day-to-day thinking. Andrew Schotter, who has so well described institutions as machines for thinking, believes that the minor decisions get off-loaded for institutional processing, while the mind of the individual is left free to weigh important and difficult matters (Schotter 1981 p. 149). There is no reason to believe in any such benign dispensation. The contrary is more likely to prevail. The individual tends to leave the important decisions to his institutions while busying himself with tactics and details.

*DO SHOULD WE GET INTO THE INSTITUTIONS  
TO MAKE THE IMPORTANT DECISIONS BY  
OURSELVES?*

*ENTER VS. EXIT*



Any institution that is going to keep its shape needs to gain legitimacy by distinctive grounding in nature and in reason: then it affords to its members a set of analogies with which to explore the world and with which to justify the naturalness and reasonableness of the instituted rules, and it can keep its identifiable continuing form.

Any institution then starts to control the memory of its members; it causes them to forget experiences incompatible with its righteous image, and it brings to their minds events which sustain the view of nature that is complementary to itself. It provides the categories of their thought, sets the terms for self-knowledge, and fixes identities. All of this is not enough. It must secure the social edifice by sacralizing the principles of justice.

The notion of 'institution' presupposes general rules, but these rules are always invented, made and imposed by people, which is precisely where they differ from natural laws. At one time they originated in the brain of an individual; they have not always been there. This is why, paradoxically, the structure of social institutions also presupposes the possibility of negation, change and disobedience.

If we are ever to think against the pressure of our institutions, this is the hardest place to try, where the resistance is strongest.

For better or worse, individuals really do share their thoughts and they do to some extent harmonize their preferences, and they have no other way to make the big decisions except within the scope of institutions they build.

Also because they have no instincts, they build institutions.

See Deleuze, p. 21

## Instincts and Institutions

What we call an instinct and what we call an institution essentially designate procedures of satisfaction. On the one hand, an organism reacts instinctively to external stimuli, extracting from the external world the elements which will satisfy its tendencies and needs; these elements comprise worlds that are specific to different animals. On the other hand, the subject institutes an original world between its tendencies and the external milieu, developing artificial means of satisfaction. These artificial means liberate an organism from nature though they subject it to something else, transforming tendencies by introducing them into a new milieu. So money will liberate you from hunger, provided you have money; and marriage will spare you from searching out a partner, though it subjects you to other tasks. In other words, every individual experience presupposes, as an *a priori*, the existence of a milieu in which that experience is conducted, a species-specific milieu or an institutional milieu. Instinct and institution are the two organized forms of a possible satisfaction.

There is no doubt that tendencies find satisfaction in the institution: sexuality finds it in marriage, and avarice in property. The example of an institution like the State, it will be objected, does not have a tendency to which it corresponds. But it is clear that such institutions are secondary: they already presuppose institutionalized behaviors, recalling a derived utility that is properly social. In the end, this utility locates the principle from which it is derived in the relation of tendencies to the social. The institution is always given as an organized system of means. It is here, moreover, that we find the difference between institution and law: law is a limitation of actions, institution a positive model for action. Contrary to theories of law which place the positive outside the social (natural rights), and the social in the negative (contractual limitation), the theory of the institution places the negative outside the social (needs), so as to present society as essentially positive and inventive

SEE HARAWAY  
'WORLDS'

\* DOUGLAS

INSTITUTIONS  
AS A SET  
OF TOOLS  
THAT CAN  
BE  
ALWAYS  
ORGANIZED  
A GAIN



#### Observation 6

People are not desiring machines. They are not motorised by their everlasting, insatiable chain of desires. No, on the contrary, they are liking machines. Our instrument, the machine that we are, operates in the world through the simple equation: I like or I do not like. What one likes or dislikes can change and changes all the time.

Capitalism understands this and offers a constant chain of what we could like or not like. We call these fashions.

JAN PIJSEMA  
THE ARMY OF AESTHETICS

(original means of satisfaction). Such a theory will afford us the following political criteria: tyranny is a regime in which there are many laws and few institutions; democracy is a regime in which there are many institutions, and few laws. Oppression becomes apparent when laws bear directly on people, and not on the prior institutions that protect them.

But if it is true that tendencies are satisfied by the institution, the institution is not explained by tendencies. The same sexual needs will never explain the multiple possible forms of marriage. Neither does the negative explain the positive, nor the general the particular. The "desire to whet your appetite" does not explain drinks before dinner, because there are a thousand other ways to whet your appetite. Brutality does not explain war in the least; and yet brutality discovers in war its best means. This is the paradox of society: we are always talking about institutions, but we are in fact confronted by procedures of satisfaction—and the tendencies satisfied by such procedures neither trigger nor determine the procedures. Tendencies are satisfied by means that do not depend on them. Therefore, no tendency exists which is not at the same time constrained or harassed, and thus transformed, sublimated—to such an extent that neurosis is possible. What is more, if needs find in the institution only a very indirect satisfaction, an "oblique" satisfaction, it is not enough to say "the institution is useful," one must still ask the question: useful for whom? For all those who have needs? Or just for a few (the privileged class)? Or only for those who control the institution (the bureaucracy)? One of the most profound sociological problems thus consists in seeking out the nature of this other instance, on which the social forms of the satisfaction of tendencies depend. The rituals of a civilization? The means of production? Whatever this other instance is, human utility is always something else than mere advantage. The institution sends us back to a social activity that is constitutive of models of which we are not conscious, and which are not explained either by tendencies or by utility, since human utility presupposes tendencies in the first place. In this sense, the priest, the man of ritual, always embodies the unconscious of the ritual's users.

How different is instinct? With instinct, nothing goes beyond utility, except beauty. Whereas tendencies were indirectly satisfied by the institution, they are directly satisfied by instinct. There are no instinctive prohibitions, or instinctive coercions; only repugnancies are instinctive. In this case, it is the tendencies themselves, in the form of internal psychological factors, that trigger certain behaviors. Undoubtedly, too, these internal factors will not explain how they, even if they were the self-same factors, trigger different behaviors in different species. In other words, instinct finds itself at the intersection of a double causality, that of individual psychological factors and that of the species itself—hormones and species-specificity. Thus, we ask ourselves only to what extent instinct can be reduced to the simple interest of

PROTECTION  
↳ BOJANFA  
KUNST

↳ PAOLO  
VIRNO

• COULD ALSO  
BE OTHERWISE •

- Douglas ←



the individual: in which case, if we take it to the limit, we should no longer speak of instinct, but rather of reflex, of tropism, of habit and intelligence. Or is it that instinct can be understood only within the framework of an advantage to the species, a good for the species, an ultimate biological cause? "Useful for whom?" is the question we rediscover here, but its meaning has changed. Instinct, seen from both angles, is given as a tendency launched in an organism at species-specific reactions.

The problem common to instinct and to institution is still this: how does the synthesis of tendencies and the object that satisfies them come about? Indeed, the water that I drink does not resemble at all the hydrates my organism lacks. The more perfect an instinct is in its domain, the more it belongs to the species, and the more it seems to constitute an original, irreducible power of synthesis. But the more perfectible instinct is, and thus imperfect, the more it is subjected to variation, to indecision, and the more it allows itself to be reduced to the mere play of internal individual factors and exterior circumstances—the more it gives way to intelligence. However, if we take this line of argument to its limit, how could such a synthesis, offering to the tendency a suitable object, be intelligent when such a synthesis, to be realized, implies a period of time too long for the individual to live, and experiments which it would not survive?

We are forced back on the idea that intelligence is something more social than individual, and that intelligence finds in the social its intermediate milieu, the third term that makes intelligence possible. What does the social mean with respect to tendencies? It means integrating circumstances into a system of anticipation, and internal factors into a system that regulates their appearance, thus replacing the species. This is indeed the case with the institution. It is night because we sleep; we eat because it is lunchtime. There are no social tendencies, but only those social means to satisfy tendencies, means which are original because they are social. Every institution imposes a series of models on our bodies, even in its involuntary structures, and offers our intelligence a sort of knowledge, a possibility of foresight as project. We come to the following conclusion: humans have no instincts, they build institutions. The Human is an animal decimating its species. Therefore, instinct would translate the urgent needs of the animal, and the institution the demands of humanity: the urgency of hunger becomes in humanity the demand for bread. In the end, the problem of instinct and institution will be grasped most acutely not in animal "societies," but in relations of animal and humans, when the demands of men come to bear on the animal by integrating it into institutions (totemism and domestication), when the urgent needs of the animal encounters the human, either fleeing or attacking us, or patiently waiting for nourishment and protection.

TRANS-INDIVIDUALITY?  
→ SEE VIRNO



# general intellect

JOUSLE-BIND

NO ANIMAL INSTITUTIONS?

INTER-SPECIES RELATION

FICTION AND NATURE

FOR WHOM IS OUR ART INSTITUTION?

SEE ALSO RANGIERE ON THE THIRD ELEMENT MAKING EMANCIPATION POSSIBLE

# The Institutionalisation, Precarity and the Rhythm of Work

Bojana Kunst on the core of the art institution

↳ Erase the "real" to build a simpler reality (see below)  
↳ BUILDING FICTIONS

It is essential to consider this misty unconditional core, when reflecting about the process of institutionalisation, especially in relation to the precarity of the human being. Such mist can be described as the dreamy, foggy, steamy matter, or to put it differently, an uncontrollable and wet foam of imagination, which brings people, animals and things together and is actually the perplexing condition of every institution. Perplexing, because it is also a reason why institutions, when established, try to erase their irrational, misty, impossible core and build monuments to themselves in the form of solid spaces, rules of behaviour and protocols, and archival possessions of the past. Because of this foggy imagination in their core, the institutions rationalise their own progress and growth and relate it to the causality of history, they try to systematically control the temporal rhythms in which the future is produced. This misty substance of imagination is then so slippery and ungraspable, that it could be easily compared to the inflammatory dreams, to the phantasmagorias for which, as it was believed at the beginning of modernity (when we actually saw the formation of our current institutions) particularly women and children were sensible: it was

And the images they produce





believed phantasmic imagination could harm their bodies and well being, it could kindle their passions and transform them into hysterics, lunatics and loners. The misty substance of this imagination is so elementary, that sometimes we are even ashamed of it. It seems as if a life must have much more complexity as this misty phantasmic idea, this foggy and slippery proposition: an imagination of living together, the creative invention of forms of togetherness and capacity of formation of distinction, the imagination of support and care; the capacity of taking care of our vulnerability and enabling the ways in which we are actually not alone in our vulnerability.

(CONCEPTUALLY)

VULNERABILITY AS A SHARED CONDITION  
SOME BODIES ARE MORE VULNERABLE THAN OTHERS  
(MATERIAL REALITY)

→ SEE ALSO J. BUTLER

This is why I would like to consider with you today how it is possible to take care of this foggy, imaginative, dreamy institutional core and why it is necessary to talk about the poetic processes of institutionalisation through various forms of engagement, care and persistence. The question then is how it is possible to practice processes of institutionalisation inside this paradoxical knot: here the practice of institutionalisation continuously needs phantasmic imagination and dedication to the impossible, to actually make something possible. These are then poetic processes, which can be placed very close to the performative action, to the engagement with actuality through the invented, artificial and staging procedures: in this sense actuality is not something natural, something which is lying there, but it is also continuously produced through our engagement. At the same time, poetic processes are part of the performative actions of engagement, namely they deal with the invention of forms and particular inclinations in language and subjectivity, they disclose the inventive and imaginative side of being and working together. It is immensely productive for the thinking about artistic institutions (but also institutions in general) when we bring these two processes together – performative action (acting as if) and poetic capacity of invention (imagining as if not yet).

Fiction as continuation L) FICTION IS A DIRTY WORK

↳ SEE ALSO SARAH VANHEE'S IDEA OF INSTITUTIONS AS HOLES IN THE GROUND

PERFORMANCE AS BEAUTY MAKING

by Sonja Levaert

Bartleby's Tragic Aporia

Institutions offer real protection only and exclusively if they use the same secondary conditions that also fuel a threat, if they keep feeding on their openness to the world and the ability of negation, infinite regress and modality of possibility, and, finally, if they demonstrate at all times that they belong to the domain of that which could be something other than it is.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Paolo Virno  
'Il cosiddetto "male" e la critica  
dello Stato', p. 162



HOW TEMPORAL CAN AN INSTITUTION BE?

BE?

I was very much inspired to think further about this imaginary core of the institution, when I heard a lecture in October 2015, in Athens, in Green Park, by Athena Athanasiou. Her lecture was held in an old abandoned theatre, which was taken over by a collective and transferred into the temporal venue, a conference meeting, but also a temporal retreat at the same time for refugees, since the Green Park theatre is located inside the city park, where in 2015, just before the conference, hundreds of people were still sleeping, before moving forward to what, was then, still an open route through the Balkans to the western countries of Europe. So, in Green Park, Athena Athanasiou talked about the paradoxical conditionality of the institutions, the conditionality that we have to take into consideration especially in the present moment, characterised by institutional distrust on one side and institutional failure on the other (both actually coming from all political spectrums). Athanasiou was describing a paradoxical temporal structure of institutions, which also defines our action when involved in the process of institutionalisation, or better to say, our institutional engagement: it is only possible in the persistence between fiction and reality. I still vividly remember Athena's powerful thesis about paradoxical power of the institutions: how they are necessary to sustain human beings and how at the same time they can also be violent, they can destroy human beings. Institutions have namely a complex relationship with the precarity of the human being, they can support us but also take us down by the constitutional violence which intrinsically belongs to every process of institutionalisation; it then inhabits its core in the same way as the imaginative poetic mist I was talking about before. That's why it is crucial to always think about institutions through the specific temporal perspective: even if they are spatially bound, related to houses, shelters, domains, abodes, constructions and platforms, they should not be approached as facts, something which is given and completed, but only as potential processes, space of the institution appears because of the particular temporal constellation of forces. Institution is not a fact, is not an achievement, but a conditionality, which enables the simultaneity between performing the institution and resisting the very process of institutionalisation. It is only possible then to defend the process of institutionalisation, when at the same time performing it as something that has yet to be constituted. Here the poetic side enters into the process of institutionalisation: this process can only be done in a way that at the same time imaginatively and politically works against the very closure of the processes we are in. In that way, said Athanasiou, we have to act in the process of institutionalisation as it would be possible, but at the same time, we also have to be always aware of what do we lose if we win. This position opens a crack in time, a

Fiction as imaginary institution

PROTECTION

COULDN'T THE WORLD

WHAT DOES AN INSTITUTION GET THE CONDITIONS FOR?

NET: SCHOOLS AS THINKING ENTITIES by HELENA COSTELLO

violence

SUBSTITUTED

(v.m.)



ARTISTIC PRACTICE

Vladimir Miller Settlement VIII!

14 September-2 October 2015 / a.pass studio! TOWARDS FRAGILITY!

*(fragile: unstable, disintegrating, malleable, temporary, sketchy, self-sabotage, needs care, gone when not needed, anti-territorial, only there as long as invested in, can't hold)!*

I have some questions:!

**What can be a truly feminist architecture?** One that does not create territory, does not claim, does not exclude. (Will society be different if it builds in another way, or is it the other way around, or are they actually inseparable from one another?). How much of the utopia of Occupy is due to the haphazard conditions of camping and DIY? Should we be sad that it's gone? Or is its ability to disappear its most precious, most pioneering trait? Every social movement must find, claim and hold a space or perish, yes? – become an institution or die.!

But how to **keep on dying?!** WHICH IS NOT THE SAME AS BEING DEAD

Processes of institutionalization are also processes of architectural shifts away from the fragile: from sticks and fabrics to metal and concrete, from sit-ins on the floor to tables and chairs, from open spaces to chambers with doors, from expanding circles to sitting arrangements. All of these we justify with productivity concerns. So maybe the question is: **how to be productive and fragile at the same time?!**

**Settlement** is a collective project Vladimir Miller facilitated over several years on different occasions. The project takes the form of a workshop and creates and inhabits a space full of fragile and precarious structures. Since Settlement starts from a space devoid of habitual work setups, with all materials present considered a common resource, all the structures are built from the necessities of the individual and collective practices of its participants. A kind of a re-start on the physical level and an attempted re-start on the level of the habitual and institutional structures governing our spaces of production. The title is used as a provocation, as Settlement is a space which, over the course of several weeks, tries very hard not to settle.!

Settlement puts a spatial perspective on practice, identifying modes of institutionalization and habit which keep the spaces of artistic production and education from becoming spaces of commoning. These modes of 'settling' are embedded in many things: they are there in the ways the spaces are designed and organized towards stability (supporting habit and the given hierarchy of organization), they are there in the institutionalized processes of access and exclusion, and they are there in our social habits (which structure the most empty and open space imaginable).

Looking at how the spaces of our practice prioritize the habitual, Settlement introduces architectural fragility as a mode of destabilizing practice and the social agreements between the participants. The spaces created within Settlement are make-shift and precarious and therefore never suited to support a certain social constellation or a process indefinitely. That introduces another timing into the space, rendering all structures inherently temporary and unreliable. The habit of regarding products of work as property becomes destabilized, as all structures in the space are short-lived and can become 'material' again very quickly. These and other changes occur through fragility of the built environment and work effectively against the habitual 'settling down'. The transition of a structure back to the common resource through collapse or re-appropriation is always a possibility, producing the common as a constant perspective onto the emerging territories, constellations and rules in the Settlement space.



## AS IF

temporal conditional rupture. To act as it would be possible is also at the core of every engagement in general; not because this would be a kind of individual superpower, a tricky and tactical position of enlightened institutional worker and critical subjectivity, if we go this way, we could soon end in exhaustion<sup>1</sup> and loneliness. This conditionality is rather at the core of engagement, which is always already, and engagement with others. The temporal quality of the process of the institutionalisation belongs to the specific common practice, which is at the same time always incomplete, unforeseeable, rather a "co-existential history of surprising itself". (Athanasίου, *Becoming Engaged, Surprising Oneself*). The institutional practice is related to the opening of "space and time which comes into being precisely through producing its own agents" (Athanasίου, *Becoming Engaged, Surprising Oneself*) and this is only possible because this practice is already a common practice from the start, protecting the common precariousness of being. Nevertheless, at the same time, the threat of violence is always there, originating in the erasure of this common pre-condition of every activity.

An alienation of precarious bodies appearing here

TOGETHER WITH

the chance to think about instituent practices of time

SEE ALSO VIRNO ON COLLECTIVE/INDIVIDUAL TRANS-INDIVIDUAL

1 WHICH IS NOT THE SAME AS TIREDNESS (WHICH CAN BECOME A SHARED CONDITION) (AND LEAD TO SOLIDARITY INSTEAD OF LONELINESS)

### THE LIFE OF PLANTS

\* the space or to the set of factors or resources that are *immediately* related to the living subject. To recognize that the world is a space of immersion means, on the contrary, that there are no real or stable frontiers: the *world* is the space that never lets itself be reduced to a house, to what is one's own, to one's digs, to the immediate. Being in the world means to exercise influence especially outside one's own space, outside one's own habitat, outside one's own niche. It is always the totality of the world one lives in, which is and will always be infested by others.

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EMANUELE COCCIA

→ SEE BYUNG CHUL HAN "BURNOUT SOCIETY"

Why is it so important to be reminded on this temporal dimension of the process of

## GORAN SERGEJ PRISTAJ

...relations of production. He would say that social production is only apparently the production of things; in reality it is the production of a social relation, i.e., the reproduction of the relations of production."<sup>5</sup> The tendency to reproduce artistic labour as an alternative to the production of artworks, with the (c)aim to destabilise a fetish of objects, has actually turned into a fetishisation of process where the so-called free, non-alienated artistic work became a usable good, thereby erasing a difference between artistic production (*poiesis*) and reproductions of modes of production. Because they represent processes, art insti-

## ANTI-PRODUCTION OF ART



institutionalisation, to think about the conditionality that defines processes of being and working together? And how this relates to the artistic institutions, especially to the ones, which are characteristic today for the field of performance, choreography and the visual arts, in which many freelance and flexible, nomadic artists are working today? Something perplexing is happening with the precarious work of those artists, which can be especially well observed in art institutions, particularly the ones, which are not related to the historical model of national institutions, but appeared together with the late capitalist economy from the 1990s onwards, supporting mostly contemporary performance practices. Institutions that produce and support dance and performance are still somehow inheritors of the specific politic and economic situation in the early 90s and I would even state, they didn't change much since then, even if their conditions changed a lot. Those houses and spaces mostly arise from a particular situation in Europe in the beginning of the nineties, a situation which resulted from the economic growth, the fall of the Berlin Wall, neo-liberalism, internationalisation and the overall economisation of production and creative imagination, rise of the creative and attractive cities and discovery of the East (and South) of Europe. This model, which was somehow directed to support the international, engaged and daring practices through international collaboration and co-production, providing support to nomadic, highly educated, internationally based artists, is nowadays deeply questionable and full of paradoxes. This is because of the changed economic and ideological situation, caused by overall governmental precarisation. Isabell Lorey used this notion to describe the process of governing through continuous precarisation that establishes social links, structures, relations and dynamics in society precisely with the production of a pertinent feeling and fear of insecurity. (Lorey, Isabel (2015). *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious*) In this sense the very daily reality of the art institution is also governed by precarity – with the incredibly accelerated, regulated and evaluated process of production, where it is only possibility to self-produce continuously in between battles with politicians, marketing processes and continuous self-invention. At first glance, such an institution looks far from being closed, bound to space in a traditional sense, but flexible, continuously searching for young and inventive artists, producing concepts, intervening in the surrounding, etc. However such a mode of production should be thought of in relation to the fear of insecurity: art institutions are not exceptions from governmental precarisation, but so deeply involved in its normalisation that in many cases they became an utter example for it. The art institutions themselves are deeply embedded in the constant use of vulnerability as a main social capital today: not only that many of them work with a

SEE PRISTAS

AND AUDIENCE

And precarious institutions too



# GORAN SERGEJ PRISTAŠ

## ANTI-PRODUCTION OF ART

Institutional binding of an artist's *praxis*, coupled with accountability for her work, creates a specific ecology, where the artist becomes less and less presented by her artworks, and more by and with her labour, stretching into different social practices and temporalities. The consequence of that is the fact that the artist does not have any time left to actually engage in her art. Or, if we put it differently, the artist does not have any time left whatsoever, because there is none left at their disposal. At least, not with the time as we know it. The artist has an application, a formula, and a regime of abstraction that enfolds her labour and sets it in a relation with the capital, concretising it in a project to which projective time<sup>1</sup> is "the general equivalent".

Above all, the old thesis that performance is ephemeral and volatile and subversive to time no longer applies: time has disappeared into expanding performance. Practices, practical education, dwelling as labour, workshops, laboratories, exchanges of methodology and knowledge, consultations, performance lectures, research, newsletters, diaries, documentation, archives. All of these former forms of production and reflection today shape our ways of performing, dispersing and atomising artistic labour, only to make it seemingly more transparent, organized and useful.

This atomisation of the artist's work is symptomatic for various cultural institutions whose mission is no longer the production of art, but rather the reproduction of consumer relations with a work of art. Art institutions no longer figure as disciplinary instances whose task is to take care of artists and the production of artworks just like the milk industry, whose purpose is not to produce the best, but rather the most wanted yogurt. Contemporary performing arts institutions (including festivals, galleries and museums that present performances and curated conferencing) today no longer produce works of art in order to present them to the public, who then have the opportunity to valorise it; rather, valorisation itself is being reproduced and exchanged. The *curatorial turn* in performing arts, i.e.

<sup>1</sup> Kunst, Bojana. *Artist at Work, Proximity of Art and Capitalism*, Winchester, UK, Zero Books 2015



CONCURRENCE

very badly paid or voluntary workforce (and paradoxically this especially goes for the ones who are the most stable and can use their symbolic value for even greater exploitation), but they also work under extremely vulnerable and unstable conditions, which demand the constant implication of protection measures. To protect their own vulnerability they have to continuously reach out, develop themselves as social places and continuously give a new form to the glittering force of human productivity. The result is that most of the time they function as logistical and production knots for many simultaneous projects, which have to continuously compete in terms of cleverness, cunningness and tactical strength, but at the same time also nourish the values of collaboration and friendship among cultural agents and the surrounding society.

ART INSTITUTION AS LOGISTICAL BRAINS

I desire art institutions that take care of the people who work there, care of every one who is there, care of every one involved with the institution.

(S. VAN HEE)

[WHO WAS WORKING ON INFRASTRUCTURE?]

> SEE: FRED MOTEN  
MICKY THE REBEL-LATOR

Therefore today, institutions mostly offer the infrastructure of support for the practices of art, which also demand different modes of organising and inventing working processes, these are art practices that are closely related to the poetics of invention: but these institutions themselves are today in a very peculiar situation. On the one hand, they are under threat to protect themselves as much as possible and on the other, they have to endure somehow and sustain their own progressivity, develop experimentally, etc. What I mean by that is, that we are living in the time, when with the one swing coming from the populist and nationalistic cultural "reformations" on the march throughout Europe, such institutions could be erased; and there are currently many places in Europe where this is going on. This also shows us, how problematic the idea of the progressive institution is, on the kind of shallow foundation this idea is built, as if the progression would be an argument today, where progression is actually one of the main ideological falsehoods of neo-liberalism. So institutions are continuously under pressure to produce and provide evidence of their "social and political" value to fight the pressures coming from financial cuts and cultural reforms and with that turning themselves into a good and obedient cultural agent. However the infrastructure they offer can be actually used and developed further if there is space for the persistence in the mist, for the foginess of imagination

INSTITUTION AS SPACES OF PERSISTENCE IN OBSCURITY

THE RECREATIVE INDUSTRIES  
ALWAYS CORRESPOND TO  
EXERCISES IN FRAGILE TEMPORARITY  
OF HEDGING BOTH OUR LABOUR FORCE  
AS IT DISENTANGLES ITSELF AWAY FROM  
CAPITALIST FORMS OF REACTION BUT ALSO  
TO EXPERIENCE OUR CONSTITUTIVE  
DIFFERENCE NOT AS SOMETHING TO BE  
MERELY MANAGED BUT AS THE TRUE  
SOURCE OF PLEASURE FOUND IN THE "CREATIVE  
FUNCTION" OF THE  
BODY POLITICS.

VALERIA GRAZIANO  
"RECREATION AT STAKE"  
2019



and opening up new processes. Institutions should today enable a persistent and demanding fight in the field where values are produced and where imagination is not yet colonised; so it should become something that is opposed to the transparency and logistical and spinning managerial evidence of success (a crucial institutional criteria of evaluation nowadays). Such awareness about the contradictory process of support and violence inherent to the institution, is especially important at a time of immense distrust in the institutions, at a time of populism which is deeply intertwined with processes of de-institutionalisation, <sup>AS</sup> ~~resulting in~~ the destruction of the forms of social support, care and common infrastructure. So this is the real power of unconditional conditionality, of the crack in time opened up in the process of institutionalisation: the appropriate time for the scrutiny of institutional operations should be exactly a time when they are also thoroughly endangered: because this is the only way they will not be protected in the sense of keeping them as they are. Therefore the institutions with which we work should not be defended as monuments to freedom and experiment, but invented anew inside the utterly changed political and cultural circumstances. The scrutiny also cannot come from the outside, but is rather a power of the poetic and inventive action, a persistent working towards impossibility, which opens new forms of imagination and being together.

How can we free the institution from the image we put it in?

SEE VIKNO AGAIN

IS THERE AN OUTSIDE OF INSTITUTIONS?

CRISIS AS A CHANCE

→ WHAT AN INSTITUTION SHOULD BE FOR.

The poetic capacity of invention also has much to do with a particular rhythm, and rhythm is, at least in theories of poetics, crucial for poetics and poetry, because it is related to the subjectivity of the language, to its distinction, which can only be a distinction in common. Perhaps this could be one way of thinking about the poetic capacity of invention in the relationship to the institution; how this poetic action can change the rhythm of work and the ways in which we operate and organise ourselves through work, how we organise ourselves inside the foggy mist. I don't want to propose slowing down and similar pieces of advice, etc., even if this is a much desired wish of many cultural operators and artists. Something else is at stake here: the need to develop imaginative temporal forms of working, which would have the power to resist the flexibility and precarity of contemporary work: Instead of framing and disseminating (which figures today as a better word than selling) the work would rather be dealing with infrastructural care, support, some kind of groundwork on

TOWARDS NEW INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

HOW TO

...CULTIVATE THE MIST

..BUILD THE TIME

SARAH. VANHEE

||||| This hole can be any size

large or small

to put your head in so you don't have to see for a while  
to sink your ass in so you can stay steady for a while  
a hiding place - hiding things or animals or people  
a protective shelter - a sanctuary

THE FANTASTIC INSTRUCTIONS



foundations, where it is possible to stand and occupy the place or time for some fixed period of time. How would it be possible to change the temporal rhythm in a way that it would not depend on future applications and evaluations, speculations about the precarious future, to change the rhythm and resist the fear and continuous need for protection? In this sense it is necessary to work imaginatively and resist the closure of the institution as a possibility, and perform the process of institutionalisation in a way that has yet to be constituted.

There should be a radical shift in a temporal dimension of production, fighting the project logic, however at the same time allowing a multiplicity of proposals and imagination, through which modes of work and thinking are enabled, supported and also sustained. This can be only possible if this process is understood as a conditional persistence (a dedication to what is yet to come) with ideas, political imagination and proposals, a dedication to movement in the present time, which is not the time <sup>actually is the only time we have</sup> dedicated to the acceleration and enumeration of projects and ideas about them. It is rather a dedication to openness towards the present time, which includes something restorative and re-establishing along something unfinished and incomplete. In this sense the process of institutionalisation is not to take care of the past (and freeze it), but also not about pushing it on the future (and leave ruins around), but much more about a difficult process of giving change to the present – visible between the repetition of the past and imagination of the future. **HOLES DIGGING IN TIME**

Maybe this is exactly what many of the artistic attempts of institutionalising, thinking differently, trying different modes of living together, do today and why there is such a need for bringing back fantasy and imagination when thinking about the institution: this proposal trying to bathe and take place in this fragile foam, is a poetic proposal. Poetic in the sense that it ~~tries to~~ makes the production itself visible, how something comes into being, disclose and not yet hold this in eternity, which is so crucial when thinking about the temporal frame of the institution. New attempts at institutionalisation should open up this process as a poetic process, a process that is not only an invention, but a specific production of form, a generation of the visibility of production, of bringing something into being. The institution kind of establishes and makes visible the distinction of the form in which people could live together. The foginess of institutionalising also opens up the institution to a very special idea of spatiality, which is not so much related to the construction of the house, with the transparency of the spaces and their organisation (rooms, venues, cafes, corridors

SEE AGAIN COCCA

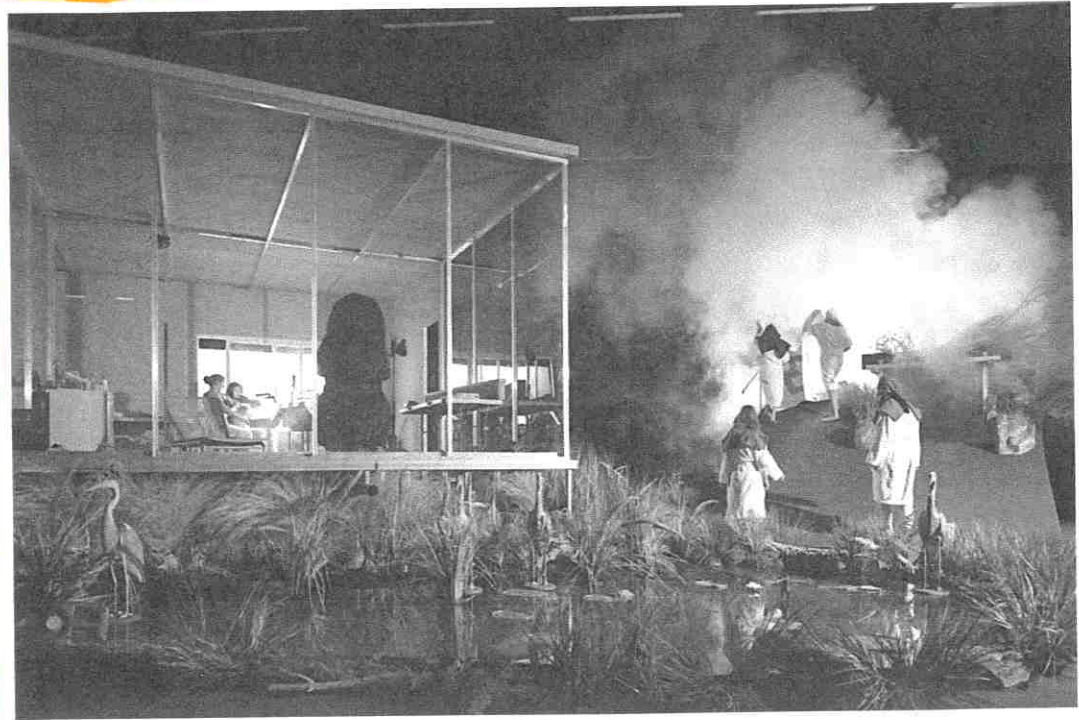
S. VAHÉE ↗  
The holes in the ground are also holes in time.

THE WORLD

etc.), but belongs much more to the ungraspable cloud, a swamp maybe, garden, a kitchen, a forgotten space or time, sometimes with no light, often in semi-darkness or even underground, flat, dispersed and mutable, nevertheless not immaterial, very much connected to matter. Only in this way can the misty core be continuously revealed and not hidden in the procedures, which fix the temporality of action into a specific kind of causality. Only in this way can the institution exist as a conditional and not as a fact, the institution should namely never be understood as an achievement, but it is a complex rhythmical loop between acting as if and imagining that which is not yet.

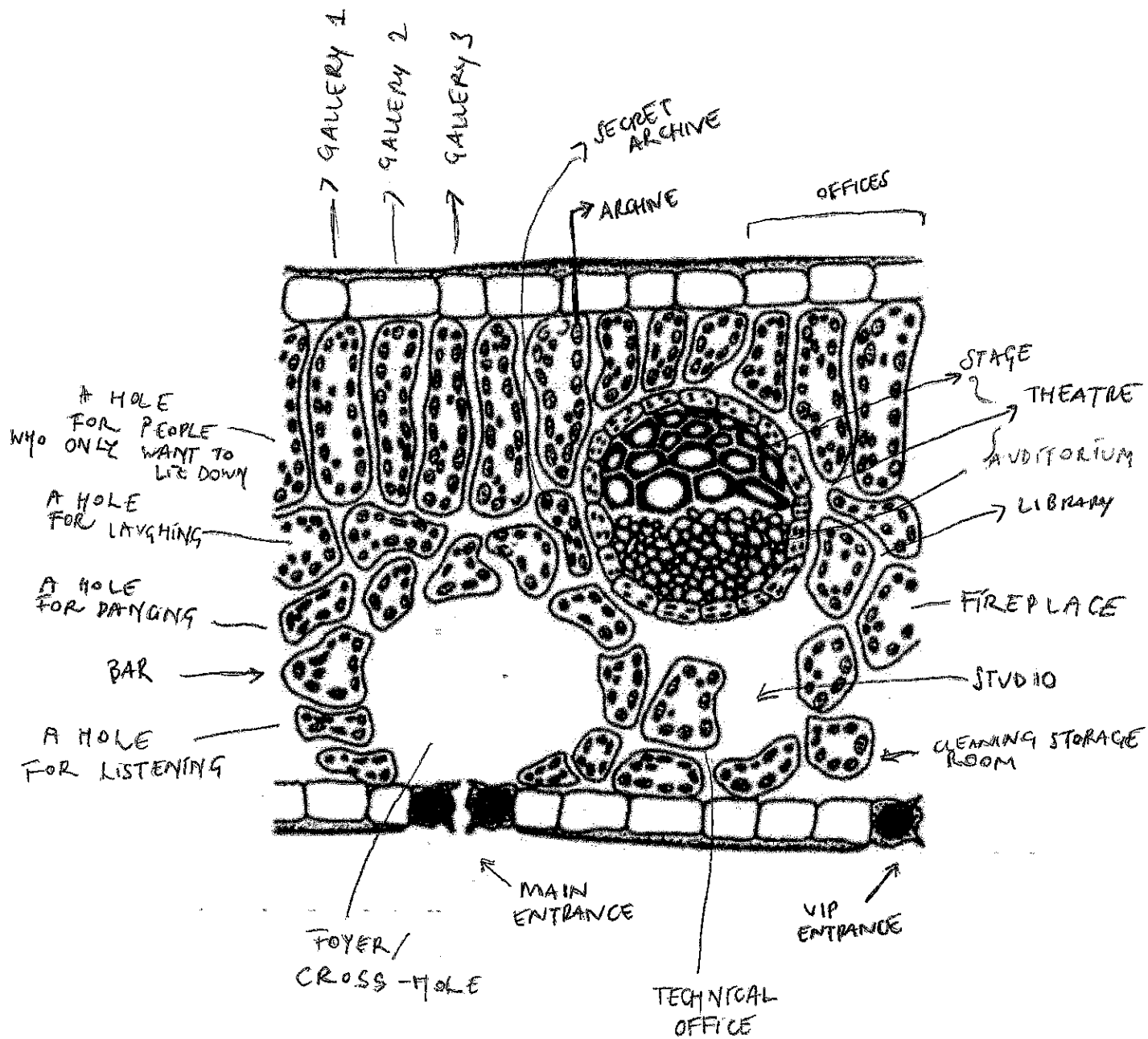
LIKE THE GIANT MOUNTAINS IN THE PIC

RATHER THAN WHAT IF



SWAMP CLUB  
Philippe Quesne, 2013







# The Fantastic Institutions

Sarah Vanhee on the art institution as a hole in the ground

LECTURE PERFORMANCE  
OR "A TEXT THOUGHT TO  
BE READ ALOUD"  
GIVEN AT THE CONFERENCE  
"THE FANTASTIC INSTITUTION"  
AT BUDA (KORTRIJK, 2017)

no crazy things, don't

amazing statement for me here is th  
f the corporations, quite cont  
ite funny in relation to the  
ments of the ir

I don't think we need the fantastic institution. We need a plurality of institutions. I like to think of this plurality of institutions being connected to different and heterogeneous forms of living and being. Living and being before presentation or representation.

One of the reasons why I chose to be an artist is because I don't want to be only one person, I don't want to be confined to only one reality or only to the dominant realities proposed to me, I want to be able to use my intuition, intellect and power to invent or invite other realities.

And host them.  
How to host other realities?

I think every person should have the right and the access to the creation and imagination of different realities via art. And every person should have the possibility of being more than one person. Some weeks ago a study got published that in Flanders, one out of two people who are employed think their job is not workable and that in the near future they will not be able to keep up any longer because of too much stress, not enough motivation, physical or mental exhaustion, the impossibility to combine work and family life etc. This means in one of the richest regions in Europe half of the people who have a job find their job reality unbearable.

7

WHO IS PART & HAS ACCESS  
TO THE INSTITUTIONS?



SHOULD ART / ARI INSTITUTIONS PROVIDE...

board meeting, for instance

In 2013 I started the project Lecture For Every One, a series of surprise interventions into different gatherings where I share a text about the world's state of affairs and the ways we live together. People were sometimes shocked and angry by my intervention but mostly they were touched, appreciating the cut in their daily life reality where usually there is no time to pause, to imagine, to reflect or to care. One manager at this high profile insurance company in Talinn for instance, gave us as feedback: "LFEO is very different to the life in a corporation and all the bullshit that goes on in corporations. Fake stuff. Fake people. People playing roles they think are necessary to play. LFEO makes you think of how far from real life a corporation life can be. These big glass houses are filled with hypocrisy and with boring people. I often think - he continued- about how Kindergardens, schools, universities are producing the grey mass, the work force. This society system pushes people to become those who pay taxes, don't do crazy things, don't complain, which is good for the system."

one of the spaces produced by art

The most amazing statement for me here is that I as an artist "bring the real life" into the "fake" life of the corporations, quite contrary to the populist idea that artists live in a bubble, and quite funny in relation to the current demand for art to engage more with real life. The statements of the insurance-guy were often repeated by other people in various environments.

On another instance I had a talk with a taxi-driver in Paris, who was driving me to a theatre. He said "it's such a pity people don't go to theatre any more; society just wears them out. They don't have the mental space any more for it." And he explained me that in his memory 20 years ago more people would go out in the evening (I could not verify this) but now people are simply too tired to go anywhere, they cannot insert another activity in their dense family planning, and buying tickets to the theatre for two plus a babysit is too expensive. **FOR WHOM IS THE INSTITUTION?**

There you go then as an art institution trying to reach audience numbers, targeting groups according to race, gender, class, selling the art works as an event in the hope that with a nice glass of wine and a catchy image it will all feel a little less demanding. But people are just tired.

We cannot speak of institutions unless we speak of the world. see also VIRNO, pp.51

Etymologically *institution* (from Latin *instituere*) means to establish something long term, with a clear role in society and culture, with values beyond the now.

**BUT ALSO:** to start something new  
to shape the beginning of something

you MEAN? [INITIUM]?  
SEE HANNAH ARENDT



An institution is not a business and can never be run as a business.

Now I would first like to address some elements for great art institutions and then share with you a very rough sketch of phantasmagorical institutions.

### Three desires for great art institutions

I will mainly refer here to the publicly funded arts institutions in Flanders, since that's the situation I know best.

WE ARE TALKING OF

BUT I COULD APPLY  
TO MANY OTHER PLACES

(1) The subsidized art institutions today in Flanders are generally conservative white male hetero patriarchal vertical structures. The progressive politics presented on the programs on their facades do not even remotely correspond to the interior politics. There seems to be a tacit mutual agreement on this hypocritical attitude by almost all parties involved with the institution: board, directors, employees, artists, audience. Working inside these structures and complying with them takes away most of the potential political capacities of the work. I would suggest the existing institutions – the ones that have a little bit of resistance left towards their own ongoing neoliberalization- could attempt to engage in a process of transformation towards a feminization, colouring and queering of the institution. Parallel for instance to what Laura Roth and Kate Shea Baird describe when they argue for a feminization of politics. → "LEFT-WING TOTALISM AND THE FEMINIZATION OF POLITICS" ON ROARMAC.ORG

They put forward three points. First, gender equality in institutional representation and public participation. Second, a commitment to public policies that challenge gender roles and seek to break down patriarchy. Third, a different way of doing politics, based on values and practices that put an emphasis on everyday life, relationships, the role of the community and the common good.

We could translate these points towards the politics of the art institution.

If we think of feminizing the art institution the first paradigm to be questioned is "art" itself. This would mean a de-linking from preconceived ideas, unwritten rules, protectionist policies and a widening of the understanding of what art is. It would mean shifting focus away from the known aesthetic categories, giving up white privileges, as well as re- defining the meaning, importance and role of professionalism within the arts.

that  
LIMIT  
OR  
ALLOW?



SEE ALSO  
VIAYO

Therefore:

The times where revolutions will be made by streamlining what all people should think and do, are over. The future revolutionary force will be much stronger and much more sustainable as it will be based on personal and individual perspectives that produce the will to change for a best thinkable world, that will change how we want to live together into something radically else. The modern revolutionist operates alone, based on the knowledge of not being alone, but being together alone. The future common will do without gluing ideologies. No management, no leaders, no one ideology. It will be an army of individuals, of which the army of artists can play an initiating role in opening up unexpected perspectives. The new common is immanent and invisible. It is not a tool, just a given. The new common will, however, be together, and they will be interested in the gestalt that might emerge from a collective gathering.

Instead of working on the monument that is called Me, that operates in the clouds of beliefs and ungrounded convictions. Instead of expressing themselves, showing to themselves that they can do it. Writing a novel, making a movie, a painting or a dance solo, in order to prove to themselves that they can do it. They better forget to reproduce themselves under the capitalistic conditions. As Foucault said: "Self-interest is non transferable and in-exchangeable" It only separates!

Therefore:

They better sit together to find that which only they can think/do in that specific constellation, by embracing laziness (meaning how to avoid operating under and in capitalist conditions) and doing nothing else than sit and talk and think together in pure curiosity about what might be produced. To be common without a goal, not even the goal to be common.

CASE WE ARE TIRED...

JAN RITSEMA - THE ARMY OF ARTISTS

Concretely some axes should be re re-balanced with regard to feminizing, coloring and queering the art institution, such as:

precarization versus protection → BOJANA KUNST

consumers versus citizens

the individual<sup>3</sup> versus the communal<sup>5</sup> → JAN RITSCHE & VIRNO (TRANSINDIVID.)

the importance of style<sup>1</sup> versus the question of aesthetics

publicity versus communication

review versus critique

representation versus imagination<sup>2</sup>

competition versus support

the notion of taste versus the notion of quality *tricky one!*

an open closure versus a closed openness *CAN THERE BE AN INSTITUTION THAT IS*

the fashion<sup>1</sup> of the moment versus a sustainability encompassing past and future etc. *RADI-CALLY OPEN?*

*because society needs imagination<sup>2</sup>. This, by the way, is the difference between fashion or trends and art. Fashion, if it wants to sell, cannot afford to be too far ahead of its time, while art has not yet completely given up its right to a visionary sluggishness, at the risk of being perpetually unmarketable and ethereally un-contemporary.*

*PASCAL GIELEN - INSTITUTIONAL ATTITUDES*

*RE-HEARSING RESISTANCE*

With the rising of the extreme right and the all-devouring power of corporate capitalism and orchestrated fear, it would be a historical failure from art institutions now not to be resilient. Now is precisely the moment to practice resistance, which means doing things differently, proposing and developing alternatives. This means an engagement from all of us involved. For if we all stay as individuals<sup>3</sup> just doing our jobs, obeying an unquestioned hierarchical structure, we will quickly be blown away. But when we work critically and collectively from a deep trust, in practical collaboration, with radical inclusiveness and real involvement, we will be weaponed and have more chances to survive. "We"<sup>6</sup> will then probably also be a different "we" than "us" who are sitting here today. How to not just stand by and watch.

**I desire a feminisation, colouring and queering of the art institutions. I desire art institutions that practice alternative politics instead of presenting art programs about alternative politics.** *METOO, CHECK!*

(2) This is a very brief point and it has to do with precarization versus protection. Or: look for the pain inside your own institution. The 50 pct of employees for whom the job is unbearable are also working inside art institutions. Tendentiously this means overproduction by an undermanned team working for underpaid artists. Alongside with the feminization of the art institution, comes the importance of caring for every

*INSTEAD OF ARTIST VS. ART INSTITUT.*



human being who is in some way connected to the institution.

AND OTHER SPECIES? (HAKAWAY)

I desire art institutions that take care of the people who work there, care of every one who is there, care of every one involved with the institution.

in which another kind of social cooperation is allowed to temporarily become the predominant logic: to experience of the presence of others as a source of pleasure.

VALEHA GRAHAM  
"RECREATION AT STAKE"

(3) There is some violence in the relations the art institution produces and we have grown used to it. Staff working for the institution seems to be constantly fighting: fighting for money, fighting to be original, fighting to get things done in time, fighting to defend arts place in society, fighting for audience, fighting for legitimacy which often means fighting for the pretension of being unique which often means fighting with other institutions. The people working for the institutions feel like they do everything for art and the artists. Meanwhile the artist feels like she's the last one on the ladder. The one who has to hold up her hand and be happy if she gets something. Paradoxically the main reason why this art institution at all exists and its core function is supposed to be supporting the artists. What if we would pause for a moment and re-think this function: to support artists? How does the institution do that? If I say there is a violence in the relations the institution produces, I don't solely mean the above mentioned collective suffering, I also mean there is a fundamental political question about how this support takes place, mostly in the form of "offering" and "giving". Because maybe the artist does not want to "receive" certain things but could suggest herself how she would like to be supported by the institution. Not only to be able to practice her art in a good way but also how she thinks this art could resonate with the world. Hardly ever any art institution has asked me what I would need. As an open question. Not in the sense of what I need in terms of studio or technical means or budget... No. What do you need as an artist to be able to perform your artistic practice now in this world, and how could we work on this together? How would it be if we stop thinking of the institution as a brand, but consider it as a tool, a devise for usage?

Do you expect?  
OR TO SUPPORT ART?  
WHICH IS RADICALLY DIFFERENT?

There are some good examples in that direction, I had the luck to experience some. The relations change when projects can develop through an open, eye-level dialogue instead of a giving-and-taking directed to filling out streamlined formats. But more often, when I challenged the institution to work as a a tool it turned out to be very difficult, because most institutions struggle to function outside their usual patterns. of thinking and performing.

HOSTING EXCHANGE

STAND ?  
ARTISTS THINK ABOUT HOW TO SUPPORT THEIR INSTITUTION



How to re-distribute the power?

# I desire more art in non-violent art institutions.

Now I move to the phantasmagorical side of this story:

It's mainly a rough image, like a dream.

WHAT IS OUR IDEA OF INSTITUTION IF NOT A SOLID + STABLE BUILDING?

Movements or organisations don't please politicians, buildings do. Our art institutions today mirror the dominant powers. All this uprightness all this straightness all this visibility all this representation all this pride all these facades. When I think of all the exhausted, uninspired, stressed and demotivated sleepwalking people, when I think of all the fearful, divided, badly informed people with or without job, with or without papers, I can imagine they don't feel any need or cannot bring up the courage to walk up fancy stairs to find enlightenment in the temples of art.

Maybe it would be nicer for them and for us if we could just fall down, give in to gravity tumble or stumble or jump or slowly sink into a hole in the ground

IF WE COULD JUST FALL DOWN AND FALL AND FALL AND FALL

This hole can be any size large or small

- to put your head in so you don't have to see for a while
- to sink your ass in so you can stay steady for a while
- a hiding place – hiding things or animals or people
- a protective shelter – a sanctuary
- a fireplace
- a cave
- a trench, a place to shoot from
- a void to rest in

TO PAUSE

holes can be there spontaneously or planned long in advance dug by one person with a shovel or an entire construction team

- there can be very specific holes like
- a girls only hole
- a hole for people who want to do
- a hole for people who only want to lie down

(FEMINIZATION)

CAN THAT BE INSTITUTIONS IN THE GROUND?

## CROSS-HOLES ?

OLIVIER ZAHM – You speak next of leaves and roots. You analyze the life of plants in two respects: underground and in the sky. You make us aware that plants maintain the link between earth and sky, from root to leaf.

EMANUELE COCCIA – Well, plants are the only living beings to live simultaneously in two contrary environments: underground and in the air. In the case of amphibious animals, we speak of living beings that can pass from one milieu to the other, in succession. Whereas any plant lives simultaneously in two different milieus, which are structured around completely different forces. The aerial part, for example, has an anti-gravitational tropism, whereas the underground part reinforces gravity because it goes downward, toward the center of the earth, to seek out water and minerals.

OLIVIER ZAHM – Do plants establish a cosmic link between earth and sky?

EMANUELE COCCIA – Plants are double. They're aerial and subterranean. They're amphibious. They're the mediating agent between earth and sky. And the link in question is, of course, photosynthesis: plants' ability to transform solar energy into biomass, into living matter. Life on earth is possible thanks exclusively to that energy source on earth, which is also the chief energy source on earth. We always forget that the foundation of our existence is extraterrestrial: it comes from the sun! The foundation of all life on earth is that extraterrestrial star. Plants are the beings that terrestrialize the sun. They convey sunshine on earth. They render that extraterrestrial force terrestrial, and thus establish a link between extraterrestrial space and the earth. This is something that we manage to do with solar panels, but plants do it with their own bodies, and their own aesthetics, their own forms.

RPLE: COCCIA ON PLANTS BY OLIVIER ZAHM



a hole for listening  
a hole for laughing  
a hole for dancing  
a hole for healing a hole for painting  
a hole for fighting –  
a groove  
for rapping  
a crater for objects – or one object  
a furrow for stories  
a vacuum for nothing  
a nook like a tomb

a chamber that lifts unheard voices – I think I once visited such a hole already, at Teatr.doc in Moskow, I sat in a cellar there squeezed together with many other people engaging with a sober play sharing the daily life reality of living under repression.

a hollow without people  
an abyss with only smoke  
a fissure for madness  
a crack for failure  
a pit for everything that is there already and we don't need anything more  
a cavern for how to get the billions from the one percent  
a ditch for looking back  
many chinks for the unnamed unknown  
of course there can be cross-holes

You don't have to be seduced to go into a hole,  
you just fall in there, or maybe you're being gently pushed in there.

It's clear that there is no place in those holes for the artist or the curator as individual stars anyway no individual star artist or curator would like to hang out in a hole. There are no prizes to win there, no prestige, no decorum. A hole in the ground is not a job opportunity or a career step, it's a commitment.

There are parties, there is celebration.

A hole for what we lost.  
A hole for the forgotten.

CAN THERE BE INSTITUTIONS WITHOUT UNDER THE COVER OF DARKNESS?  
Borrowing a word from Benjamin, art might make reality once again incomplete. It is only in the incomplete that the darkness could be nurtured and the unsettling doubt on the world as we know it could rise, nurturing a form of imagination that has consequences on reality. It is an undoing more than a doing and yet, what is left it's not a void: art fills with potentiality the gaps it creates and gathers us around an incomplete real, where to experiment with imagination and its consequences.  
LIVIA PIRAZZA

TO IMAGINE

TO CARE

TO REFLECT

OF COURSE THERE CAN BE CROSS-HOLES

FOR CONTRIBUTION WORKER  
... AND A DIRTY WORK!



A HOLE TO DIVE INTO, TO LISTEN...

A HOLE WITHOUT LIGHT...

#### *The Vampyroteuthic World*

Seawater is largely impervious to the cosmic rays that bombard the earth. Nearly all of such rays are absorbed by the water surface itself, sunlight by the first 300 meters or so. The great bodies of water are immersed in eternal night, and only the bioluminescent organs of its inhabitants puncture the darkness. This eternal night is, however, incredibly noisy. Seawater is an excellent conductor of sound, and the speed of sound waves accelerates even more in increased concentrations of salt and in higher water pressures. The intensity of sounds depends, incidentally, on whether they are emitted horizontally or vertically. The eternal night reverberates with an incessant noise that would be deafening to us.

In the holes the new does not exist

(UN-CONTEMPORARY)

Holes are run collectively...When you enter the hole – no matter who you are – you are first an apprentice. You learn from every one present in the hole: builders, cleaners, communicators, thinkers, spectators, dancers, writers, translators etc. – of course every one has more than one role. You observe and you help till you understand the politics of the space, then you can participate. For some holes you need a long apprenticeship, some holes you will understand in 10 seconds.

SCHOOL AS A HOLE IN THE GROUND

A hole does not always have to be open it can be a 24/7 but maybe some holes only open once a year. When obsolete a hole can be covered or filled and it can also be re-opened. One can be a hole-hopper or a long term resident.

CAN THERE BE AN INSTITUTION FOR 5 MIN.

The holes go more or less deep into the ground. There is the potential to get in contact with other holes through underground corridors like moles. There is no gallery map however. Moles don't see much, our skills of reception and listening will be strongly developed in the holes.

OR PANTS (JEL COCCIA)

CAN WE EXIT THROUGH THE HOLE?

Since we are in the ground, we will be closer to the dead. We will be close to the past and to our collective memory. The holes in the ground are also holes in time.

If those holes now sound like a sort of subversive escapism, an underworld, disconnected from "reality"; we can maybe think back of the insurance employee I mentioned in the beginning, the one who described corporations as fake and art as the real world.

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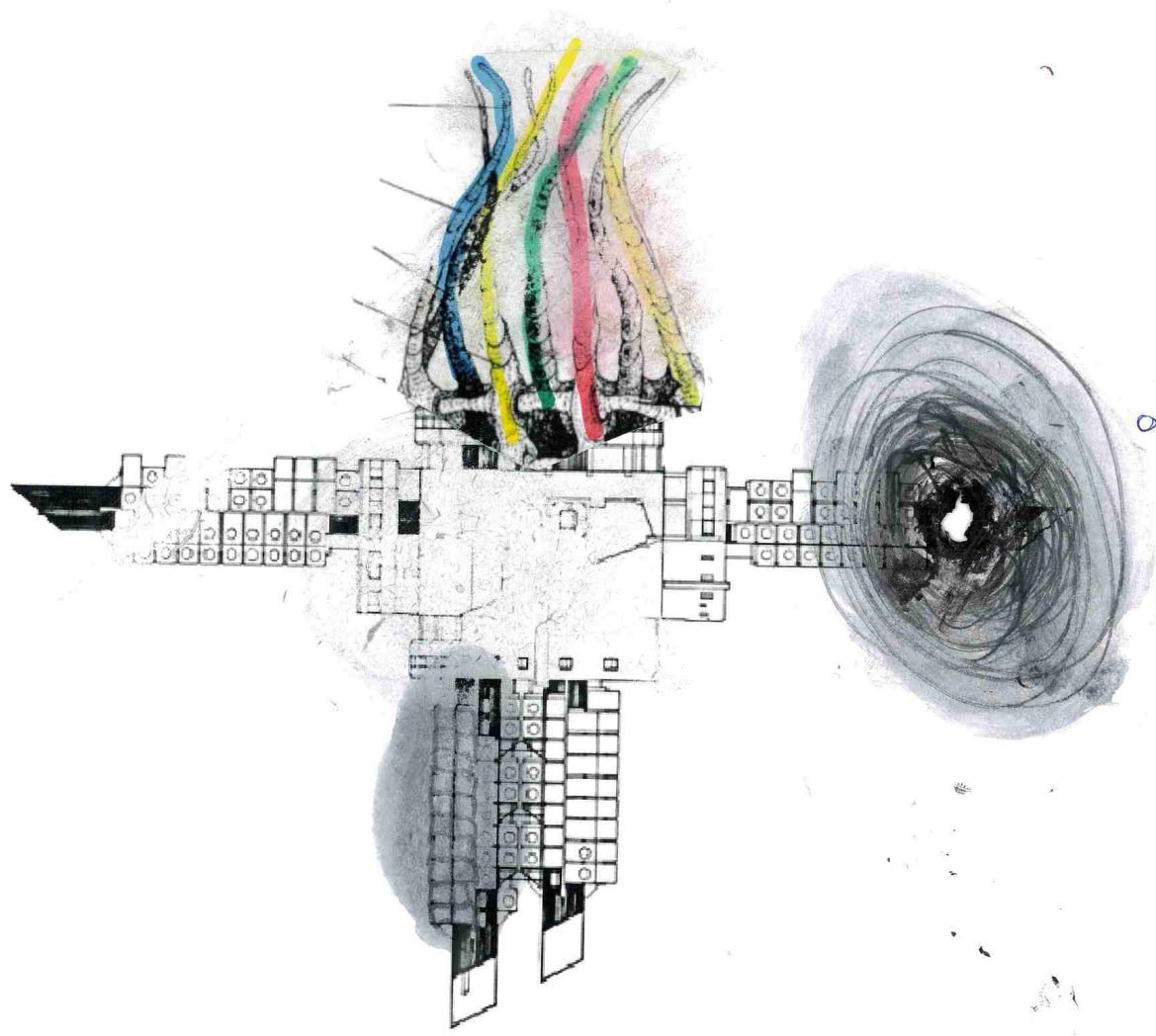
SEE ALASDAIR GRAY "THE CAUSE OF SOME RECENT CHANGES"

Sarah Vanhee



## About Perspective: Art Institution

This text was a contribution on [The Fantastic Institution](#), a symposium of Kunstencentrum BUDA on the role of the art institution. Kunstenpunt / Flanders Arts Institute publishes texts and talks in the framework of its R&D trajectory 'Perspective: Artist', in which we search for ways to strengthen the role of the artist. More information on this trajectory via [Joris Janssens](#).



what kind of  
artschool is this when  
there are no  
water colours?



# THE CAUSE OF SOME RECENT CHANGES

— Alasdair Grey<sup>A</sup>

The painting departments of modern art schools<sup>1</sup> are full of ~~discontented~~ <sup>HAPPY LOVE</sup> people. One day Mildred said to me, "I'm ~~sick~~ <sup>PLAYING</sup> of wasting time. We start work at ten and tire after half an hour and the boys throw paper pellets at each other and the girls stand round the radiators talking. Then we get ~~bored~~ <sup>INSPIRED</sup> and go to the refectory and drink coffee and we aren't enjoying ourselves, but what else can we do? I'm tired of it. I want to do something vigorous and constructive."

I said, "Dig a tunnel."

"What do you mean?"

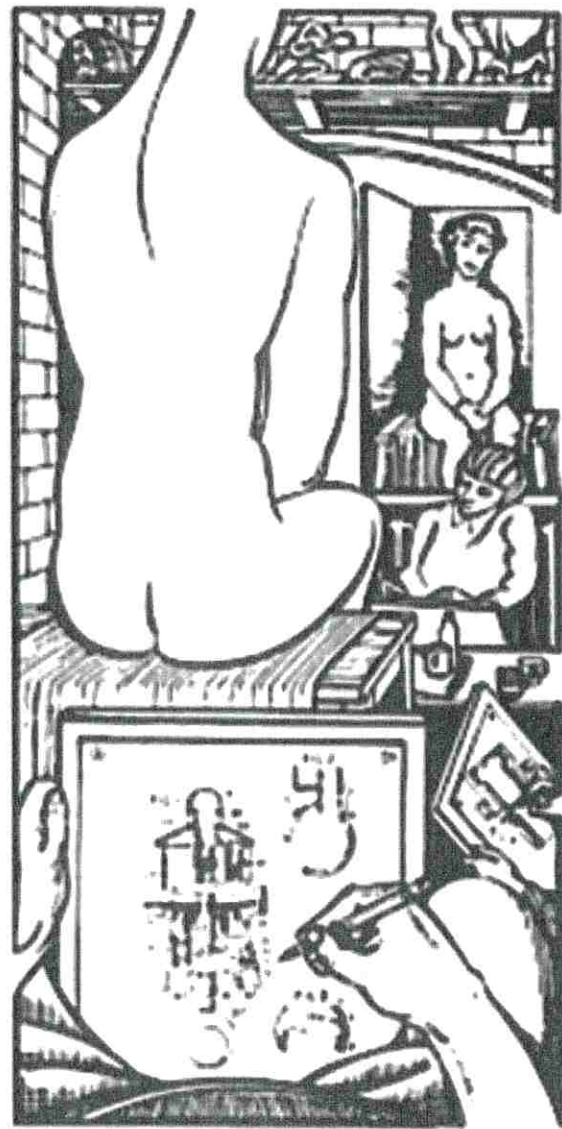
"Instead of drinking coffee when you feel ~~bored~~ <sup>INSPIRED</sup>, go down to the basement and dig an escape tunnel."

"But if I wanted to escape I could walk through the front door and not come back."

"You can't escape that way.

The education department would stop your bursary and you would have to work for a living."

"But where would I be escaping to?"<sup>2</sup>



→ Taking pre-given routes is no escape  
→ Choosing between pre-given options is not freedom  
→ (EMERGENCY) EXIT → sounds so much longer!  
→ TUNNEL DIGGING

<sup>1</sup> SCHOOL DERIVES FROM GREEK σχολή, ORIGINALLY MEANING LEISURE.

<sup>2</sup> TO VAMPIROTEUTHIS ART SCHOOL!

WHAT ABOUT LEARNING?



NOT SO SURE ABOUT THAT!

"That isn't important. To travel hopefully is better than to arrive."

My suggestion was not meant seriously but it gained much support in the painting department. In the seldom-visited sub-basement a flagstone was replaced by a disguised trap-door. Under this a room was dug into the school's foundation. The tunnel began here, and here the various shifts operated the winch which pulled up boxes of waste stuff, and put the waste into small sacks easily smuggled out under the clothing. The school was built on a bank of igneous quartz so there was no danger of the walls caving in and no need of pitprops. Digging was simplified by the use of a chemical solvent which, applied to the rock surface with a handspray, rendered it gravelly and workable. The credit for this invention belonged to the industrial design department. The students of this department despised the painters digging the tunnel but it interested them as a technical challenge. Without their help it could not have reached the depths it did.

CONSTRUCTION - BATTER

CONSTRUCTION - TRICKS

COULD THIS BE HAPPENING AT THE BAVHAUS?

INTERDISCIPLINARITY

In spite of the project's successful beginning I expected it to fail<sup>3</sup> through lack of support as the magazine, the debating society and the outing to Linlithgow had failed, so I was surprised to find after three months that enthusiasm was increasing. The Students' Representative Council was packed with members of the tunnel committee and continually organized dances to pay for the installation of more powerful machinery. A sort of tension became obvious throughout the building. People jumped at small sounds, laughed loudly at feeble jokes and quarrelled without provocation. Perhaps they unconsciously feared the tunnel would

↳ INSTITUTION AS A SPACE FOR (COLLECTIVE) ACTION

3 TO SEE ALTERNATE ENDING - IN CASE OF FAILURE AS A COLLECTIVE PROJECT - CONSULT ESCAPISM.CC AND IMAGES OF LEANNE WINDSMA



### How do you decide where to make the tunnels and how big to make them?

I start by making one hole. Then I inspect the soil, and it really depends on how dry it is, how stony it is, how safe it is. If it's really, really hard, the tunnel can be shorter. If the soil is firm, I can go for it and make it longer. I get really excited about it. Now they're all about the same length, between 2-4 meters.



A tunnel in Berlin. Photo courtesy of Leanne Wijnsma

"Escape is an action triggered by the paradox of freedom. Littered with choices, our society offers an apparent freedom. Video streamed on demand anytime, even the most bizarre questions answered via online search, products you weren't yet aware of you needed recommended specifically for you. Escape is a response to this world in which everything seems possible, in which we are always connected, always available. The digging is a basic act to escape and to disconnect. The act itself is an important experience, digging the soil to find fundament and autonomy. Escape is an urge to do something really banal yet essential. The tunnel doesn't lead to freedom. You'll see that the tunnel ends just a few meters from where it starts. The choice to dig however becomes the freedom itself."

THIS IS A MUCH BETTER WAY OF TRYING WHAT I WAS NOTING TO DO WITH MY STORY!  
humans have no instincts, they build institutions.

### How did you get the idea to dig these tunnels?

It wasn't really an idea. It was more of an instinct, a mood. I was researching a lot

RELEASE!  
"INSTINCTS & INSTITUTIONS"

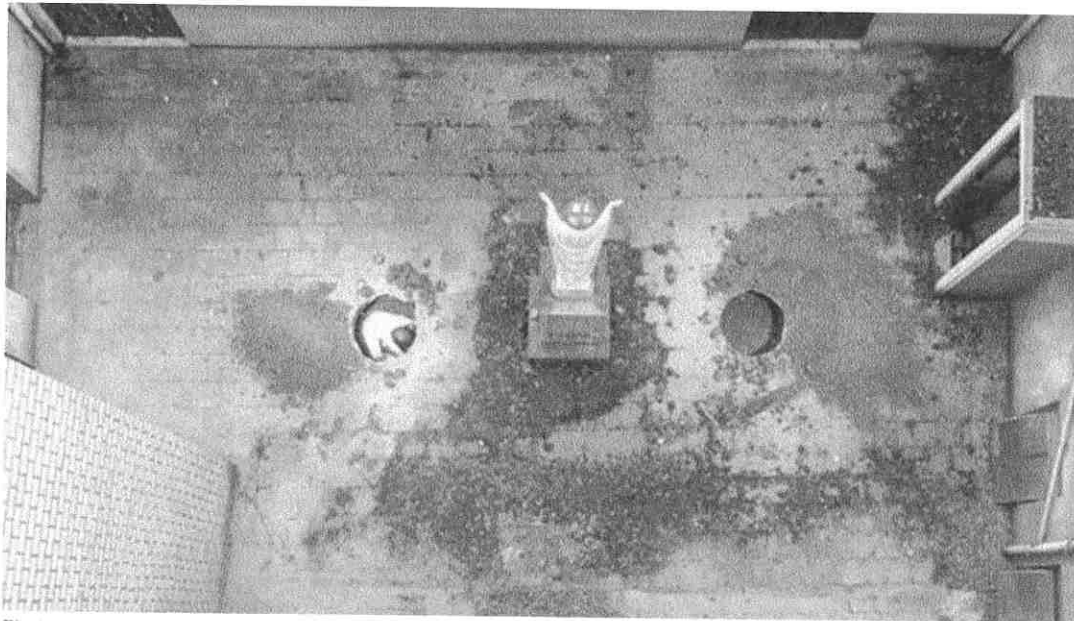


Photo courtesy of Leanne Wijnsma

**Leanne Wijnsma** is digging. A trained designer living in Amsterdam, Wijnsma has been digging tunnels with her bare hands for two years, in the city center and all around Europe. After a day of digging, Wijnsma refills her tunnels with dirt and goes home. Her ongoing project, *Escape*, stems from the familiar desire to get away from our computer screens and the human instinct to go into the earth. This year, Wijnsma will invite others to go tunneling with her in Amsterdam, as a form of modern therapy. VICE spoke with Wijnsma to learn more about her artistic practice, her decision to move to the woods (and then move back), and her affinity for digging holes in the ground.

SEE ALSO EMANUELE COCCIA  
ON ROOTS: THE  
DEEPER INTO EARTH  
THE CLOSER TO  
THE STARS

SEE ALSO SARAH VANHEE



open a volcanic vent, though things like increase of temperature, water seepage and the presence of gas had been so far absent. Sometimes I wondered how the project remained free from interference. An engineering venture supported by several hundred people can hardly be called a secret. It was natural for those outside the school to regard rumours as fantastic inventions, but why did none of the teachers interfere? Only a minority were active supporters of the project; two were being bribed to remain silent. I am sure the director and deputy director did not know, but what about the rest who knew and said nothing? Perhaps they also regarded the tunnel as a possible means of escape. One day work on the tunnel stopped. The first shift going to work in the morning coffee-break discovered that the basement entrance was locked. There were several tunnel entrances now but all were found to be locked, and since the tunnel committee had vanished it was assumed they were inside. This caused a deal of speculation.

OPPOSITION STUDENTS-TEACHERS

ALLIANCE TEACHERS-STUDENTS

COULD WE CONSIDER TEACHERS & STUDENTS AS ALLIES / "COLLABORATORS" ?  
 → VAN HEE  
 → B. KUNST  
 → J. BOTTIKOLI

- We are all on the same boat

Students always assumed not to be part of the institution  
 ASSUMPTION BASED ON STUDENT LACK OF AGENCY

I have always kept clear of mass movements, so on meeting the president of the committee in a lonely upper corridor one evening, I said, "Hullo, Mildred," and would have passed on, but she gripped my arm and said, "Come with me." She led me a few yards to the open door of what I had thought was a disused service lift. She said, "You'd better sit on the floor," and closed the gates behind us and pulled a lever. The lift fell like a stone with a noise so high-pitched that it was sometimes inaudible. After fifteen minutes it decelerated in violent jerks, then stopped. Mildred opened the gates and we stepped out.

Maybe it would be nicer for them and for us if we could just fall down, give in to gravity tumble or stumble or jump or slowly sink

In spite of myself I was impressed by what I saw.

- VAN HEE

We stood in a corridor with an arched ceiling, asphalt floor and walls of white tile. It swept left and right in a curve that prevented seeing more than a mile in each direction. "Very good," I said, "very good indeed. How did you manage it? The fluorescent lighting alone must have cost a fortune."

Mildred said gloomily, "We didn't make this place. We only reached it."

At that moment an elderly man passed us on a bicycle. He wore a peaked cap, an armband with some kind of badge on it and was otherwise naked, for the air was warm. As he passed he raised a hand in a friendly gesture. I said, "Who was that?"

"Some kind of official. There aren't many of them on this level."

"How many levels are there?"

"Three. This one has dormitories and canteens for the staff, and underneath are the offices of the administration, and under that is the engine."

"What engine?"

"The one that drives us round the sun."

"But gravity drives the world round the sun."

"Has anyone ever told you what gravity is and how it operates?"

I realized nobody ever had. Mildred said, "Gravity is nothing but a word top-level scientists use to hide their ignorance."

I asked her how the engine was powered. She said, "Steam."

"Not nuclear fission?"

"No, the industrial design boys are quite certain it's a steam engine of the most primitive sort imaginable. They're down there measuring and sketching with the rest of the committee. We'll show you a picture in a day or two."

"Does nobody ask what right you have to go poking

→ How institutions think

MINY  
BUILDING  
INSTITUTION

Because of  
this line  
we already  
know we  
are in  
a institution

How  
institutions  
perform



about inside this thing?"

"No. It's like all big organizations. The staff are so numerous that you can go where you like if you look confident enough."

Power  
and  
fiction

I had to meet a friend in half an hour so we got into the lift and started back up. I said, "Well, Mildred, it's interesting of course, but I don't know why you brought me to see it."

She said, "I'm worried. The others keep laughing at the machinery and discussing how to alter it. They think they can improve the climate by taking us nearer the sun. I'm afraid we're doing wrong."

"Of course you're doing wrong! You're supposed to be studying art, not planetary motion. I would never have suggested the project if I'd thought you would take it to this length."

She let me out on the ground floor saying, "We can't turn back now."

I suppose she redescended for I never saw her again.

That night I was wakened by an explosion and my bed falling heavily to the ceiling. The sun, which had just set, came up again. The city was inundated by sea. We survivors crouched a long time among ruins threatened by earthquakes, avalanches and whirlwinds. All clocks were working at different speeds and the sun, after reaching the height of noon, stayed there. At length the elements calmed and we examined the new situation. It is clear that the planet has broken into several bits. Our bit is not revolving. To enjoy starlight and darkness, to get a good night's sleep, we have to walk to the other side of our new world, a journey of several miles, with an equally long journey back when we want daylight.

It will be hard to remake life on the old basis.

WHEN ART  
INSTITUTIONS  
TRY TO  
SHAPE THE  
WORLD...



Sometimes I look across  
the very near horizon  
at other chunks  
of the old globe.  
It seems likely  
that the accident resulted  
from a chance remark  
of mine.

It will teach

me

~~THAT I HAVE NOTHING TO  
teach my mouth~~

~~TEACH THEM.~~

~~shut,~~  
in future..

SEE  
RANCIÈRE:  
THE  
IGNORANT  
SCHOOL  
MASTER



How to  
teach  
something  
we don't  
know  
and we  
cannot  
know?

See Rancière  
& Botivoli

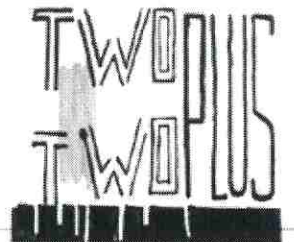
→ FUNDAMENTAL  
QUESTION FOR THE  
ART SCHOOL TODAY  
(AND UNIVERSITIES!)

# The Soviets of the Multitude: On Collectivity and Collective Work

Paolo Virno is one of the most radical and lucid thinkers of the postoperaist political and intellectual tradition. Of all the heterodox Marxist currents, *postoperaismo* has found itself at the very center of debates in contemporary philosophy. Its analytics of post-Fordist capitalism refer to Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, to Heidegger and his *Daseinsanalysis*, to German "philosophical anthropology," and to Foucault and Deleuze with their problematization of power, desire and control apparatuses. Subjectivity, language, body, affects or, in other words, life itself, are captured by this regime of post-Fordist production. These "abstract" concepts and discourses have entered the reality of contemporary capitalism and become fundamental to it, as real, functioning abstractions. Such theoretical suggestions have launched enormous polemics over the last two decades.

Collectivity and subjectivity are two poles of the contemporary "culture industry." Virno proposes to rethink the meaning of this Adornian notion. "Culture industry" is a model for the whole network of production in the post-Fordist economy in which each subject-producer is a "virtuoso." In fact, in the actual conditions that have led to the disappearance of the standardized molds of the industrial Fordist epoch, there has been a profusion of performances without any pre-established scripts. This is one of the reasons why contemporary art provides the quintessence of virtuosic practices: the subjectivity of the contemporary artist is probably the brightest expression of the flexible, mobile, non-specialized substance of contemporary "living labor." However, there is still the need to identify its antipode, which classically is the collectivity.





To outline the opposite pole of subjectivity, I questioned Paolo Virno about the use of the term “multitude”—as a new political articulation of labor that avoids a repressive unification in the One (the State, nation, or a cultural “grand style”)—in order to understand how it is possible to think its mode of unity, how new forms of micro-collectives work and how one might explain their explosive proliferation and creativity.

It is particularly interesting for me to ask the following questions not from a post-Fordist position, but rather from the post-socialist world, being myself part of a collective initiative that works in a space between theory, activism and artistic practices. In the post-socialist zone, new forms of labor (as well as poverty, extreme precariousness and anomie), which replaced the Soviet *ancien régime* under neo-liberal slogans with furious, destructive negativity, presented themselves as urgent or necessary components to the “transition to free market and democracy.” We witnessed the atomization and fragmentation of post-socialist societies, the horrifying violence of “primitive accumulation” (Marx) in the 1990s, followed by the violence of “primitive political accumulation” (Althusser) as the rebirth of some mutant form of a repressive State in the 2000s. Maybe we should break up forever with the historical past of State socialism with its pompous glorification of monumental collectivity. However, is it really

the case that, in the end, State socialism has to become the “communism of capital,” to use Virno’s words? Virno’s contribution is especially pertinent to understanding whether these new developments are forcing us to recall those revolutionary political institutions after which the Soviet Union was named: the soviets, or workers’ councils, which served as tools for democratic self-organization. This is the context in which we finally came to discuss “The Soviets of the Multitude.”

AP: *Re-thinking the collective or “collectivity” occupies an important place in your theoretical work. In A Grammar of the Multitude, you speak of the necessity for a new articulation of relations between the collective and the individual. That would mean blurring the borders between the individual and the collective, private and public in contemporary post-Fordist production, understood as a “broad-based experience of the world.” You take as a point of departure Gilbert Simondon’s conception of the collective as something that is not opposed to the individual but, on the contrary, is a field of radical individualization: the collective refines our singularity. Recalling Marx’s notion of the “social individual,” which presupposes that the collective (language, social cooperation, etc.) and the individual coexist, you elaborate quite a paradoxical definition of Marx’s theory*

*un comité?*

(ART) INSTITUTIONS

as

A (FIELD OF)

RADICAL [= ROOTS in THE SKY (COCCIA)]

- OTHERNESS

- RE-SET OF RELATIONS

- CO-HABITATION

- MIXTURE

- PARADOXES

- CHIASM



## NOTES

1—Lev Semyonovich Vygotskij (1896–1934) was a Soviet psychologist and internationally-known founder of cultural-historical psychology. Vygotskij was a highly prolific author. His major works span six volumes, written over roughly ten years, from his *Psychology of Art* (1925) to *Thought and Language* (1934). The philosophical framework he provided includes not only insightful interpretations about the cognitive role of tools of mediation, but also the re-interpretation of well-known concepts in psychology such as the notion of internalization of knowledge.

as a “doctrine of rigorous individualism.” On the other hand, taking into account contemporary forms of labor, you propose the model of the individual “virtuoso,” which, as it seems, does not presuppose any other dimension of collectivity with the exception of the situation of public performance itself. Can we think of the realm of the collective as just a background, or a pre-individual material involved in a kind of teleology of individuation, or is the collective just a passive audience? Is the collective deprived of any constituent, affirmative or creative function? Could you clarify the place of the collectivity in your thinking?

PV: I owe a lot to Lev S. Vygotskij’s thoughts on the collective, on the relation between the collective and singularity.<sup>1</sup> His main idea is that the social relation precedes and allows for the formation of the auto-conscious “I.” Let me explain: initially there is an “us”; yet—and here lies the paradox—this “us” is not equivalent to the sum of many well-defined “I’s.” In sum, even if we cannot yet speak of real subjects, there is still an inter-subjectivity. For Vygotskij, the mind of the individual, rather than an incontrovertible departing point, is the result of a process of differentiation that happens in a primitive society: “the real movement of the development process of the child’s thought is accomplished *not* from the individual to the socialized, but from

the social to the individual.” Gradually the child acquires the collective “us,” which we can define as an *intersychical* dimension, turning it into an *intrapsychical* reality: something intimate, personal, unique. However, this introversion of the intersychical dimension, this singularization of the “primordial us,” does not happen definitively during childhood: it always repeats itself during adulthood. Experience is always measured—either in an insurrection, a friendship, or a work of art—through the transformation of the intersychical into intrapsychical. We constantly have to deal with the interiority of the public and with the publicity of the interior.

This means that the human nature cannot be defined through the observation of a single member of its species, of his own perceptions, affects and cognitions. Instead, the human nature consists of a set of relations established between a plurality of individuals. To be more precise: instead of connecting given singularities, this “set of relationships” *constitutes* these single individuals as such. Human nature is located in such a thing that—not belonging to any individual mind—only exists in the relation between the many. To speak of human nature means to develop a *philosophy of the preposition “between.”* I understand your objection regarding the “virtuoso”: in this case transindividuality, the collective dimension, *seems* to remain in the background, reduced to being the stalls of passive

JEE  
 / "proposition  
 for walking  
 through  
 ourselves  
 populated by  
 others"  
 A. Vujanovic,  
 "performances that  
 matter"



spectators, that in the maximum can applaud or boo the performance they are seeing.

But is that really the case? Maybe not. Let's try to consider *l'artista esecutore* (the performing artist) through Vygotskij's eyes. The audience—with its habitudes, competences and emotions—constitutes the *interpsychic* ambit, the preliminary "us" that the *virtuoso* introverts, turning it into something *intrapsychic*, singular. The virtuosic execution stages this transformation. If we think of contemporary production, we must understand that each individual is, at the same time, the artist performing the action and the audience: he performs individually while he assists the other's performances.

In those factories in which cognitive work is predominant and verbal language constitutes the main productive instrument, the "public" is made of other *virtuosi* who, in their turn, head for the stage. At the end, what the single producer executes is the "score," be it either collective or transindividual. In fact, this "score" is made of social cooperation, of the set of relations that define us, of the faculty of language, and so on.

AP: Contemporary philosophical thought proposes critical models for understanding collectivity, reintroduced under the name of "community" (Jean-Luc Nancy, Giorgio Agamben). This thought

*deconstructs politically dangerous essentialist representations of community as One (a unified political body, the Leader, the State). At the same time, by introducing the logic of multiplicity and singularity, this thought confronts the vision of singularities as active and productive forces, considering them as a kind of static "being-together" of passive existences exposing themselves one to another. How does a political thinking that elaborates the concept of the multitude relate to this "community" discourse?*

PV: The thought of "community" carries a basic defect: it neglects the principle of individualization, that is, the process of the formation of singularities from something all its elements share. The logic of multiplicity and singularity is not sufficient, and we need to clarify the premise, or the condition of possibility, of a *multitude of singularities*. Enouncing it as a provocation: we need to say something about the One that allows the existence of many unrepeatable individuals. The discourse about the "community" prudishly eludes the discourse about the One. Yet, the political existence of the "many" as "many" is rooted in a homogeneous and shared ambit; it is hacked out of an impersonal background.

It is with respect to the One that the opposition between the categories of "people" and "multitude" clearly emerges. Most importantly, there is

CHI AS MUS

ART IS ALWAYS COLLECTIVE

General INTELLECT

→ HOW CAN INSTITUTIONS HELP US TO EXPERIENCE THAT?





And for  
the art  
institution?

a reversion in the order of things: while the people tend to the One, the multitude derives from the One. For the people, the One is a *promise*; for the "many," it is a *premise*. Furthermore, it also mutes the definition of what is common or shared. The One around which the people gravitate is the State, the sovereign, the *volonté générale*. Instead, the One carried on the backs of the multitude consists of the language, the intellect as a public or intersubjectual resource, of the generic faculties of the species. If the multitude shuns the unity of the State, this is simply because the former is related to a completely different One, which is preliminary instead of being conclusive. We could say: the One of the multitude collimates in many ways with that transindividual reality that Marx called the "general intellect" or the "social brain." The *general intellect* corresponds to the moment in which the banal human capacity of thinking with words becomes the main productive force of matured capitalism. However, it can also constitute the foundations of a republic that has lost the characteristics of stately sovereignty.

In conclusion, the thought of the "community," even if laudable in many respects, is an impolitic thought. It takes into account only some emotional and existential aspects of the multitude: in short, a lifestyle. It is obviously important, but what it is fundamental to understand the work and the days

of the multitude as the raw matter to define a well-rounded political model that moves away from that mediocre artefact of the modern State, which is at once rudimentary (regarding the social cooperation) and ferocious. What is fundamental is to conceive the relation between the *One* and the *Many* in a radically different way from that of Hobbes, Rousseau, Lenin or Carl Schmitt.

AP: Your argument related to our subject also develops on the level of the critical appropriation of concepts in German "philosophical anthropology" (Arnold Gelen, Helmut Plessner). As you say, what we nowadays call "human nature" is the basic "raw material" for the capitalist production. "Human nature" interpreted as a set of "bio-anthropological invariants," as a kind of potentiality referring to the faculty of language, to neoteny as the retention of juvenile traits in adult behavior, to "openness to the world" (i.e. the absence of fixed environment), etc. You state that these anthropological invariants become sociological traits of a post-Fordist labor force, expressing themselves as permanent precariousness, flexibility and the need to act in unpredictable situations. Post-Fordist capitalism does not "alienate" human nature, but rather reveals it at the center of contemporary production, and by the same

SEE ALSO  
"RISK SOCIETY"  
(BECK)  
AND BOJANA  
KUNST





move, exposes it to apparatuses of exploitation and control. Former ways of easing the painful uncertainty and instability of human behavior through ritual mechanisms and traditional social institutions melt into air. How does this new moment change the specificity of collective work today? Is it possible to speak of the collective dimension as a practice of self-organization, mutual aid and protection without any institutional framework? Can we say that this collectivity is now forming in the context of life outside of the sites of production, in the space of "socialization outside of the working place"?

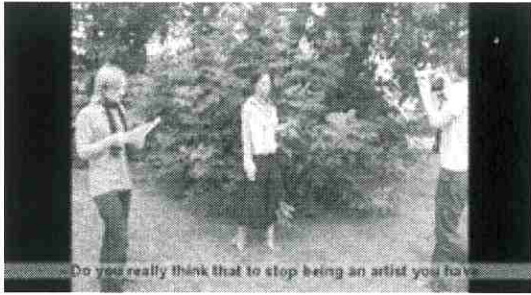
PV: Let us agree on the use of the word "institution." Is it a term that belongs exclusively to the vocabulary of the adversary? I don't think so. I believe that the concept of "institution" is also (and perhaps mainly) decisive to the politics of the multitude. Institutions constitute the way in which our species protects itself from uncertainty and with which it creates rules to protect its own praxis. Therefore, an institution is also a collective, such as Chto delat/What is to be done?<sup>2</sup>

The institution is the mother tongue. Institutions are the rituals we use to heal and resolve the crisis of a community. The true debate should not be between institutional and anti-institutional forces; instead, it should identify the institutions that lay beyond the

"monopoly of the political decision" incarnated by the State. It should single out the institutions that meet the "general intellect" referred by Marx, that "social brain" that is, at the same time, the main productive force and a principle of republican organization. The modern central state is facing a radical crisis, but it has not ceased to reproduce itself through a series of disturbing metamorphosis. The "state of permanent exception" is surely one of the ways in which sovereignty survives itself, indefinitely postponing its decline. The same applies to what Marx said about joint-stock companies: these constituted "an overtaking of private property operated on the same basis of private property." To put it differently, joint-stock companies allowed the overcoming of private property but, at the same time, articulated this possibility in such a way that they qualitatively reinforced and developed that same private property. In our case, we could say: the state of permanent exception indicates an overcoming of the form of the State on the same basis of its "statuality." It is a perpetuation of the State, of sovereignty, but also the exhibition of its irreversible crisis, of the full maturity of a past statal republic. So, I believe that the "state of exception" allows us to reflect on the institutions of the multitude, about their possible functioning and their rules. An example: in the "state of exception," the difference between "matters of right" (de jure) and "matters of fact"

2—Chto delat/What is to be done? ([www.chtodelat.org](http://www.chtodelat.org)) was founded in 2003 in Petersburg by a group of artists, critics, philosophers and writers from Petersburg, Moscow, and Nizhny Novgorod with the goal of merging political theory, art and activism. Since then, Chto delat has been publishing an English-Russian newspaper on issues central to engaged culture, with a special focus on the relationship between a re-politicization of Russian intellectual culture and its broader international context.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



(de facto) is so attenuated that it almost disappears. Once more, the rules become empirical data that can even acquire a normative power. Now, this relative distinction between norms and facts that nowadays produces special laws and such prisons as Guantanamo can suffer an alternative declension, becoming a “constitutional” principle of the public sphere of the multitude. The decisive point is that the norm should exhibit not only the possibility of returning into the ambit of facts, but also to its factual origin. In short, it should exhibit its revocability and its substitutability; each rule should present itself as both a unit of measure of the praxis and as something that should continuously be re-evaluated.

AP: *On an empirical level, the specificity of contemporary production saturated by “mass intellectuality”—both in mainstream currents of business and cultural industry, and on the side of alternative or resistant political and cultural forms—consists of the formation of relatively small collectives, workgroups, research teams, organizational committees, various collaborations, initiatives, etc. They have definite and more or less long-term tasks like realizing a project, preparing a publication or a conference, designing an exhibition or, on the other hand, organizing a social movement with regard to this or that pretext, initiating protests*

LEFT(S<sup>I</sup>)  
TOUGHT

*around this or that event, etc. How would you locate this proliferation of micro-collectives in a broader context of recent developments in post-Fordist production?*

PV: Micro-collectives, workgroups, research teams, etc. are half-productive, half-political structures. If we want, they are the no man’s land in which social cooperation stops being exclusively an economic resource and starts appearing as a public, non-stately sphere. If examined as productive realities, the micro-collectives you mention have mainly the merit of socializing the entrepreneurial function: instead of being separated and hierarchically dominant, this function is progressively reabsorbed by the living labor, thus becoming a pervasive element of social cooperation. We are all entrepreneurs, even if an intermittent, occasional, contingent way. But, as I was saying, micro-collectives have an ambivalent character: apart from being productive structures, they are also germs of political organization. What is the importance of such ambivalence? What can it suggest in terms of the theory of the organization? In my opinion, this is the crucial issue: nowadays the subversion of the capitalistic relations of production can manifest itself through the institution of a public, non-stately sphere, of a political community oriented towards the *general intellect*. In order to allow this subversion, the distinctive

≠ naturalize  
itself

LIKE  
COMMUNES?  
SEE COMITÉ  
INVISIBLE





features of post-Fordist production (the valorization of its own faculty of language, a fundamental relation with the presence of the other, etc.) demand a radically new form of democracy.

Micro-collectives are the symptom—as fragile and contradictory as they may be—of an exodus, of an enterprising subtraction of the rules of wage labor.

**AP:** In the contemporary “creative industry,” collective work often takes the paradigmatic form of “brainstorming.” It consists of the discussion and production of both ideas and solutions, even if a considerable part of them are rejected after critical examination, though this work sometimes opens the door for unexpected innovations. In the conditions of Fordism, massive collectivities—organized through a strict disciplinary division of labor—produced the well-known effect of the multiplication of separate productive forces of workers (“the whole is more than the sum of the parts”). Maybe it would be possible to make a (disputable) assumption: under the conditions of post-Fordism, collective work can be organized through “subtraction” when the result of the work is inferior to the sum of the collective effort. This becomes a sort of exception, an unexpected innovation (“the whole is less than the sum of the parts”). On the other hand, if not considered in terms of products, such collective

*work produces a feeling of strong subjectivity and strength, valorizing each member of the collective. What is your opinion? Would it be possible to connect this “subtractive” mode of functioning with the disappearance of a measure for work in contemporary production?*

**PV:** That’s the perfect way of saying it, that in post-Fordism, “the whole is less than the sum of the parts”—I will repeat this expression from now on. It is a formula that correctly expresses the copiousness of social cooperation regarding its economical-productive finality. We are currently witnessing a phenomenon in collective intelligence that is identical to what happened thirty years ago in Italy, with the Sicilian oranges, when tons of fruit were destroyed in order to keep prices high. But this comparison only works to a certain extent. Nowadays, the quota of collective intelligence that is thrown away in the production of goods is not physically destroyed, but somehow remains there, as a ghost, as a non-used resource that is still available. The power that is freed by the sum of the parts, even if not expressed in its whole, meet a very different destiny. Sometimes it becomes frustration and melancholic inertia, or it generates pitiless competition and hysterical ambition. In other cases, it can be used as a propeller for subversive political action. Also, here we need to bear in mind an essential ambivalence: the

HOW TO DEAL WITH THOSE AFFECTS (TOGETHER)?





3—See, for example, Sonja Lavaert and Pascal Gielen, “The Dismasure of Art: An Interview with Paolo Virno” in *Open. Cahier on Art and the Public Domain* 17, 2009. <http://www.skor.nl/article-4178-nl.html?lang=en>.

same phenomenon can become both a danger and a salvation. The copiousness of collective intelligence is, altogether, *heimlich*—familiar and propitious—and *unheimlich*—disturbing and extraneous.

**AP:** *In one of your statements in which you discuss the contemporary culture industry, you argue that post-Fordist capitalism provides relative autonomy for creativity.<sup>3</sup> It can only capture and appropriate its products, commercializing and instrumentalizing the innovations emerging in subcultures, in “ghettos”—alternatives to the mainstream—as well as, we can suppose, in the field of production of critical knowledge and art. Referring to Marx’s dichotomy, you say that this means a return to “formal subsumption.” Therefore, capitalists do not organize the whole chain of production process, they just capture, and commodify, spontaneous, “self-organized” social collaborations and their products. This thesis seems to be contrary to the position of Negri and Hardt. They describe postmodern “biopolitical production” as an effect of real subsumption of labor under capital. Could you explain your argument and the differences of your position regarding this question?*

**PV:** Those who study communications are very attentive to the so-called

“pragmatic paradoxes.” What is that all about? Of exhortations or intrinsically contradictory orders, such as “I order you to be spontaneous.” The consequence is an obvious antinomy: I cannot be spontaneous if I am obeying to an order and, vice-versa, I cannot obey to an order if I am behaving in a spontaneous way. Alas, something similar happens in contemporary production in which there is the imperative to be efficacious through behaviors that cannot be conformed to any predetermined obligation. To show this paradox, I sometimes speak of a return of the “formal subsumption” of labor under capital. With this expression, Marx designates that moment in the industrial revolution in which capitalists appropriated a production that was still organized in a traditional way (craftsmanship, small rural property, etc). It is obvious that, in our case, it is a very particular “formal subsumption,” for the capitalists appropriate not something that already existed but, on the contrary, an innovation that can only exist with the recognition of a certain autonomy of social cooperation. This is a rough similarity. It is obvious, however, that the paradox “I order you to be spontaneous” tests the contemporaneous social conflict: the match point lies in the stress of either “I order you” or of “to be spontaneous.” In our present time, the labor force enriches the capital *only if* it takes part in a form of social cooperation that is wider than the one presupposed by the



factory or the office. In post-Fordism, the efficient worker includes—in the execution of his own labor—attitudes, competences, wisdoms, tastes and inclinations matured somewhere else, outside that time specifically dedicated to the production of goods. Nowadays, he who deserves the title of Stakhanov is he who is professionally entangled in a net of relations that exceeds (or contradicts) the social restrictions of his given “profession.”<sup>4</sup>

AP: As is well known, many avant-garde movements in twentieth-century art were organized by the logic of groups and collectives, which claimed that their programs aimed at revolutionizing the traditional aesthetic forms (dada, surrealism, Soviet avant-garde, situationism, etc). Over the past twenty years, artists and curators have visibly become more and more interested in collective work, and they make this interest the subject of research and representation in their practice. Probably, the logic of innovation in contemporary art depends on collective work and co-authorship, and the artistic collectivity is not just a matter of some “Party-style” sharing of a common program. You work on a theory of innovation in your recent texts, which has been partially published in the book Multitude between Innovation and Negation. How do you take into account this dimension of collectivity

*and co-authorship? Could we say that the moments of co-innovation are simultaneously the moments in which the subjectivization of the collective takes place?*

PV: I believe that there are two main differences between the avant-gardes of the first part of the twentieth century and the present collective artistic practice. The first concerns the relation with reproducibility of the work of art. Walter Benjamin noted that the dadaists and surrealists anticipated, with their expressive inventions, the functioning of techniques that, within a short period of time, would guarantee the unlimited reproduction of artistic objects. The historical avant-gardes tried to manage the transformation of the unicity attributed to the aura of the work of art into the condition of seriality in which the “prototype”—the original model—lost its weight. Obviously, the present collective artistic work accepts, from the beginning, technical reproduction, using this characteristic as the starting point to produce a sparkle of unicity, of unmistakable singularity. Using a slogan, I would say that the challenge is a sort of unicity without aura: a non-original unicity that originates in—and exclusively in—the anonymous and impersonal character of the technical reproduction.

The second difference concerns politics. The historical avant-gardes were inspired by the centralized political

4—Alexey Stakhanov (1906–1977) was a miner in the Soviet Union, member of the CPSU (1936) and Hero of Socialist Labor (1970). He became a celebrity in 1935 as part of a movement that was intended to increase worker productivity and demonstrate the superiority of the socialist economic system.

\*THE AESTHETICS OF

SEE ALSO HISTORY OF HUMAN ART IN VAMPIROTEBTHIS INFERNALIS



**NEW**  
LEFTIST  
THOUGHT



parties. In contrast, today's collective practices are connected to the decentered and heterogeneous net that composes post-Fordist social cooperation. Reusing your nice formula, I would say that co-authorship is an attempt to correct on an aesthetic level the reality of a production in which "the whole is less than the sum of the parts." It is an attempt to exhibit what would be the sum of the parts if it was not reduced to that whole.

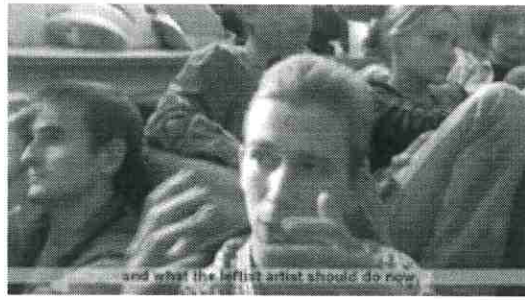
*AP: In conclusion, I'd like to ask you a question that departs from the local situation I share with my friends from the Chto delat/What is to be done? group as well as other new initiatives, movements, political and artistic collectives from the post-socialist, or post-Soviet world. Here, collectivity has a different waver in the course of the history of the revolutionary movement—from the "soviets" (worker councils) as organs of direct democracy and self-government, to their function as organizers of the production process in the early USSR, and finally their bureaucratization and submission to Party control. We are also aware of Stalin's "collectivization." This complicated historical experience also had an artistic dimension—just think of Alexander Rodchenko's famous idea of "workers' clubs" as places of mass engagement and politization. Nowadays, the activists of new political*

*movements in post-Soviet countries try to rethink this political, historical and aesthetic experience. What is your relation with the experience of the soviets? Was it important for your political formation?*

*PV: Before saying something about the soviets, I'd like to gesture to the political-intellectual tradition from which—without meriting it—I come. The critique of that modern barbarity that is the wage labor, dependent on the employer, the critique of that "monopoly of the political decision" that is the State—these were our references in the 1960s and 1970s, and they still are today. These references made us enemies of the real and ideal socialism. From the beginning, our tradition longed for the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the CPSU. It was divorced from the culture and the values of the "labor movement," and this allowed it to understand the meaning of the labor fights against the wage. It recognized capitalism's devotion to the "permanent revolution," to the continuing innovation of the labor process and the ways of life, in order to avoid astonishment or lament, since the production of surplus value is no longer connected to the factory and sovereignty does not coincide any more with the nation-states.*

*No nostalgia, hence. On the contrary, there is a lasting sense of relief for the fall of a regime founded on the cancerous metastasis of the State and on the*





glorification of labor (of that work that any laborer desired to suppress). Saying so, now we can speak of the soviets. The problem is: how do you articulate a public sphere that is no longer connected to the State? What are the institutions of the multitude?

The democracy of the multitude takes seriously the diagnosis that Carl Schmitt proposed, somewhat bitterly, in the last years of his life: "The era of the State is now coming to an end [...]. The State as a model of political unity, the State as title-holder of the most extraordinary of all monopolies, in other words, the monopoly of political decision-making, is about to be dethroned." With one important addition: the monopoly of decision making can only really be taken away from the State if it ceases once and for all to be a monopoly. The public sphere of the multitude is a centrifugal force. In other words, it excludes not only the continued existence, but also the reconstitution in any form of a unitary "political body." But here, the crucial question returns: which democratic bodies embody this centrifugal force? Hobbes felt a well-known contempt for those "irregular political systems" in which the multitude adumbrated itself: "Nothing but leagues, or sometimes mere assemblies of people, without union to any particular designee, nor determined by obligations of one to another." Well, the democracy of the multitude consists precisely of such institutions: leagues, assemblies and,

why not, councils ("soviets" in Russian). Except that, contrary to Hobbes's negative judgment, here we surely are not dealing with ephemeral appearances. The leagues, the assemblies, the soviets—in short, the organs of non-representative democracy—give political expression to the productive cooperation that has at its core the general intellect. The soviets of the multitude produce a conflict with the State's administrative apparatuses, with the aim of eating away at its prerogatives and absorbing its functions. Those same basic resources—knowledge, communication, etc.—that are the order of the day in the post-Fordist production are translated into political praxis.

What I mean is that the word "soviet," which became unpronounceable due to solid historical reasons, has now, and maybe only now, acquired a pregnant meaning. We can only realistically speak of the soviet at the dawn of the State, in the period of the cognitive work in which we must valorize whatever is singular and unique in the experience of each member of our species. Of course, to say *that*, we need to find other words. ■

All images:  
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to be done? (director:  
Dmitry Vilensky, graphics:  
Nikolay Oleynikov) 2009

COMMUNES

you might get  
THERE BY DIGGING  
A TUNNEL

AND OTHER SPECIES!

EMANUELE COCCIA – Yes. Before we ever start eating, moving, or speaking, we live off their life. Indeed, animal life is always the life of other living beings. Whereas plants are the sole autotrophs: they don't need other living beings to survive and find nourishment. They live off sunshine, carbon dioxide, and water. Animals, on the other hand, live by absorbing the life of others, by feeding off it.

OLIVIER ZAHM – *Plants don't feed on other plants. Aside from carnivorous plants, which constitute an exception. They're like the black sheep of the plant world.*

EMANUELE COCCIA – Yes, but that exception goes to show that life is a process of reciprocal cannibalism. Life is always feeding off itself, and no living being can survive without feeding on, consuming, and cannibalizing other living beings.

OLIVIER ZAHM – *Except for plants.*

EMANUELE COCCIA – Yes. But, although they eat no other living beings, plants are nonetheless themselves eaten by other living beings. They don't escape the cannibalistic system, whose law of life is that life feeds on itself.

EMANUELE COCCIA – Our link with plants goes beyond agriculture or gardening or long walks in the countryside. Every time we breathe, in fact, we come into close or distant contact with plants. We feed on their detritus, on what they expel – on their shit, so to speak, which is oxygen. This banal event is the basis of all existence. Respiration is an act through which we immerse ourselves in the world and allow the world to immerse itself in us – the world of plants. It's an astonishing dynamic in which the container becomes the content and vice versa.

OLIVIER ZAHM – *So oxygen isn't just a vital need, but also our link with plants, as if we breathed plants.*

### *Its Social Life*

THE FOLLOWING CONSIDERATIONS ARE BASED ON THE presupposition that what we call "evolution" is, essentially, the tendency of life toward socialization. Life is made up of cells. They are the building blocks, the "atoms," of life. From a pre-biological perspective, of course, cells are complex structures in



themselves, but they are regarded as the fundamental elements of biology proper. It is possible, in fact, to understand life on earth as nothing more than the shuffling of individual isolated cells—like the tiles of a mosaic in progress—in such a way that the cells divide and multiply without dying in the process. For an idea of this teeming and immortal mosaic of life, simply consider the current population of protozoa, the single-celled life-forms that still constitute the great majority of biomass on earth.

The tendency to live together arose at a very early stage in the development of life. Oddly enough, this tendency can also be regarded as a tendency toward death. This is because an organization of cells, a cellular community, cannot divide itself—as an individual cell can—without losing its embodied information. When an organization of cells divides, its information decomposes, and the decomposition of information is precisely what is meant by “death.” Surely there are numerous causal explanations—biochemical, for instance—for this death drive in life, but these are of little concern to this fable. The goal here is rather to relocate the discourse concerned with the tendency of life toward socialization. To be precise, the aim is to transplant this discourse from the optimistic perspective of “progressive” thinking into the more sobering perspective of the post-Auschwitz, thermonuclear era.

The earliest communities of cells, those of the mesozoa and parazoa, are colonies in which the individual cells have retained their individuality. As organizations, they are thus reminiscent of human society: each member lives for itself in collaboration with others. From this stage, evolution then leaped to that of metazoa, a truly startling transition. At this stage, cells forsake their individuality and live only as a function of society: they become specialized functionaries. What is more, a hierarchy of functions emerges that resembles human bureaucracies. The lowest level of this hierarchy is represented by cell tissue, the next by organs, and the highest by organisms. Individual cells work in the service of tissues, which work in the service of the organs, which in

SOCIALIZATION AND DEATH

CELL SOCIETY

EARLY

LATER

HUMAN SOCIETY

HUMAN BUREAU-CRACY

turn serve organisms (by which I mean something like the human body, not a totalitarian state). Certain cells, however, have managed to evade this process of specialization and have thus retained their individuality, namely, gametes. Ova and spermatozoa behave like protozoa; being immortal, they hold organisms in contempt.

Yet we have not fully appreciated the evolutionary transition into metazoic life, for organisms—complex organizations of cellular hierarchies—come to acquire an individuality of their own, an “indivisibility” (as etymology implies). Such is the perverse outcome of cellular socialization. An organism is not a society of cells but rather an individual; it is like an individual cell, only on a higher level. It should come as no surprise, then, that the same tendency toward socialization and death that manifests itself in individual cells is observable in organisms as well. Individual organisms of the same type are inclined to live together, and it is this inclination that leads to the formation of such groups as herds, packs, and human society. Though on a higher level, such groups are analogous to the loose societies of mesozoa and parazoa: they are porous and poorly established organizations.

In the case of insects, however, and especially Hymenoptera, evolution leaped from its metazoic stage to an even higher level of socialization. Supersocieties developed (anthills and beehives), in which individual organisms acquired specialized functions and sacrificed their organic individuality to perform them (as queens, drones, workers, and so on). Such a novel process of socialization warrants critical attention, if for no other reason than it might provide a model for the future of human interaction.

Though often highly cerebralized organisms, insects suffer from a major design flaw, namely, their exoskeleton. This has to be shed from time to time as insects grow, leaving them periodically vulnerable. Moreover, if they were comparable in size to us, insects would be crushed to death by their own weight. As individual organisms, insects are thus condemned to be very small. The purpose of the superorganism is to overcome this design

↳ vs. being always dispersed (in Butcher and by others) (attention) WE ARE DIVISIBLE

FAILURE

VULNERABILITY



Every revolt is battle, but a battle in which one has deliberately chosen to participate. The instant of revolt determines one's fulgurating self-realization and self-objectification as part of a collectivity. The battle between good and evil, between survival and death, between success and failure, in which everyone is individually involved each and every day, is identified with the battle of the whole collectivity: all have the same weapons, all face the same obstacles, the same enemy. All experience the epiphany of the same symbols: everyone's individual space, dominated by one's personal symbols, by the shelter from historical time that everyone enjoys in their own individual symbology and mythology, widens, becoming the symbolic space common to an entire collectivity, the shelter from historical time in which a whole collectivity finds safety.

Every revolt is circumscribed by precise borders in historical time and historical space. Before it and after it lie the no-man's-land and duration of each and everyone's lives, in which are fought uninterrupted individual battles. The concept of permanent revolution reveals—rather than an uninterrupted duration of revolt in historical time—the will to succeed, at each and every moment, in suspending historical time so as to find collective refuge in the symbolic space and time of revolt. Until a moment before the clash, or at least before the programmed action with which the revolt begins, the potential rebel lives in his house or perhaps his refuge, often with his relatives; and as much as that residence and that environment may be provisional, precarious, conditioned by the imminent revolt, until the revolt begins they are the site of a more or less solitary individual battle, which continues to be the same as in the days in which the revolt did not seem imminent: the individual battle between good and evil, survival and death, success and failure. The sleep before the revolt—presuming the revolt begins at dawn!—may even be as tranquil as that of the Prince of Condé, but it does not possess the paradoxical tranquillity of the moment of the clash. In the best of cases, it is an hour of truce for the individual who has gone to sleep without ceasing to feel like an individual.

FURIO JESI - THE SUSPENSION OF HISTORICAL TIME

100 NOTES, 100 THOUGHTS - DOCUMENTA SERIES 2012



flaw. Superorganisms have a tessellated brain, the capacity of which rivals our own. It is for this reason that ants, for instance, are capable of challenging our putative dominion over the continents. That matter aside, what is essential about a society of ants is the following: It is an individual, albeit on a higher level than that of an individual organism. The functions of the individual ants are not social but biological. The queen ant does not behave toward a worker ant as a general does toward a common soldier, no—their relationship is rather like that between a stomach and a liver. The society of an anthill operates according to biological rather than political rules. If myrmecological politics can be said to exist, it would come into play only between one anthill and another, never between individual ants.\*

To speak of politics is to speak of freedom. As part of a superorganism, ants have sacrificed their freedom; as part of an organism, cells have done the same. A consequence of this sacrifice is the creation of a new freedom, namely, that of the superorganism and the organism. This new freedom is created because the preceding and sacrificed freedom was biologized. Put another way, freedom exists where biological rules (regulations) have not fully encroached upon life. Freedom is a provisional stage in the tendency of evolution toward socialization and death. Those who explain human life as a function of biology—this would include economic explanations, since the economy is a digestive function—are “progressive”: They are wallowing in the evolutionary tendency toward socialization and death and are thereby contributing to the abolishment of freedom. Those who champion freedom, on the other hand, are “reactionary”: they are attempting to resist the biological tendency toward socialization and death in order to conserve space for a fleeting, provisional condition.

Unlike ants and bees, vampyroteuthes and humans are individual organisms that live in poorly organized societies. They are, as organisms, free individuals, but their freedom is threatened by their societies, which are becoming ever better organized and thus ever more conscious of biological regulations. They are in

SOCIETY OF ANTS  
 BIOLOGICAL RULES  
 (NO) POWER  
 FREEDOM  
 FOR VAMPYROTEUTHES & HUMANS

→ A FREEDOM GROUNDED IN THE AND REACTION THIPS → KE ANITOLE (YET VERY DIFFERENT FROM MYRMEC, ANIMALS)

→ SEE BOJANA KUNST

\*MYRMECOLOGY: branch of entomology focusing on ants

danger of becoming, sooner or later, like ants or bees. Like humans, that is, the vampyroteuthis is also confronted with the problem of freedom in the form of an antibiological struggle, but at the bottom of the sea this conflict manifests itself in an entirely different way. Let us then make an effort to extract the political engagements of the vampyroteuthis from the darkness of its abyss.

We know the following facts about the social life of the vampyroteuthis: the female lays its eggs in clusters; both the male and the female protect the eggs; the hatched young arrange themselves into groups according to these clusters; the vampyroteuthis is inclined toward suicide and cannibalism; it communicates in intraspecific codes. For now we will have to be content with these few details.

The central social phenomenon is the clustered configuration of the oviposited eggs, just as the central social phenomenon of humans, by way of analogy, is the structure of the family. Each egg cluster contains a group of “twins” (simultaneously hatched individuals) that are interrelated according to a genetically predetermined hierarchy. Human siblings are also hierarchized—a fact that explains the great discrepancy between our conceptions of fraternity and equality—but our fraternal hierarchies are, for the most part, culturally determined. The hierarchical structures in African tribes, for instance, can differ from those in China or the West. If we were to advocate, that is, for equality and against fraternity (or vice versa), we would be agitating for or against historical contingencies. If the vampyroteuthis, on the contrary, should take the side of equality over fraternity, it would be agitating against its own biological condition.

For the vampyroteuthis, fraternity is synonymous with society; vampyroteuthes live in clusters of twins. If, in the name of equality, the vampyroteuthis were to settle against fraternity, this settlement would not only be antibiological but also anti-social. If we are to understand political activity as the attempt to change the structure of society, then vampyroteuthic “politics” would represent the attempt to abolish, outright, its iniquitous

DESTITUTE  
 SEE COMITÉ INVISIBLE

FAMILY

FRATERNITY

2



ANARCHY

social structure. In other words, its "politics" is synonymous with anarchy. Because the hierarchy of the ovular clusters is biologically determined, there can be no other social structure, and thus the political ideal of the vampyroteuthis is anarchic, fraternal strife. Of course, fraternity has lost some of its shine for us, too, at least since Freud shared his thoughts about brotherly hatred—or, perhaps, ever since there have been Big Brothers. To some degree, at least, we can relate to the vampyroteuthic struggle.

In comparing its political activity to ours, we recognize at once that the tension underlying its efforts is far more taut and volatile than that which drives our own. It is true that all of our political activity is likewise directed against our biological condition, against biologically predetermined inequalities. The difference is that our biologically predetermined inequalities also have a large and overlying cultural component. Our political struggles are thus against this cultural superstructure, which we strive to rebuild. Moreover, we are able to imagine cultural structures ("Utopias") in which even our biological constraints are done away with. The vampyroteuthis cannot fathom Utopias, for the structure of its society is not a cultural product (it is not a "factum") but rather a biological given (a "datum"). When it engages in politics, it does so against its own "nature"—it commits a violent act against itself. In the end, however, is not all human political activity contra nature? Are not those who defend nature—those who defend such natural "realities" as race, the dominion of mankind, even ecological balance—somehow betrayers of the human Geist?

For us, political activity is a question of freedom that poses itself dialectically: as the self-assertion of an individual within society, on the one hand, and as the individual acknowledgement of other humans, on the other. Over time we have tried, with negligible success, to overcome this inherent contradiction. For the vampyroteuthis there is no dialectic of political freedom. It is biologically necessitated to recognize the hierarchical rank of its brother, and it can only become free if it disposes of this necessity. For it, then, freedom is cannibalism—the right to devour

NATURE (?)

NECESSITY  
7 DELETAZE

dichotomy  
individual - collective  
influence

its kin. Although the vampyroteuthic and the liberal conceptions of freedom have unmistakable similarities, their origins differ. The vampyroteuthis derives from animals that would develop into ants, and so the inclination to form an ant-like society is ingrained in its "collective unconscious." Much more than we do, it feels threatened by the anthill—that is, by absolute socialization—and its political activity is, therefore, far more antisocialist than ours. Hardly a Utopia, its liberalism is rather the denial of its biological condition.

It could even be said that its cannibalistic antisocialism represents a "hate movement," whereas our hymenopter socialism represents a "love movement." Its political liberation comes in the form of brotherly hatred, ours as a sacrifice of individual freedom to our beloved brother—an anthropomorphizing error on its part, a myrmecomorphizing error on ours. So much of vampyroteuthic behavior (its copulation, monogamous fidelity, brood care) reveals it to be a lovable and loving being. An examination of our society, however, reveals hardly any evidence of human lovability. If anything, the following is true: For the vampyroteuthis, it is precisely love, the recognition of others, and orgasm that constitute the natural state of its Dasein. The natural state of human Dasein, on the contrary, is defined by universal hatred, by the universal struggle for survival—one against all. By overcoming its animality, therefore, the vampyroteuthis learns to hate; by overcoming ours, we learn to love. This overcoming can be called "spirit" ("Geist"), and it expresses itself in the vampyroteuthis as hatred and in us as love. In Judeo-Christian terms, vampyroteuthic behavior might be said to approximate "sins against the spirit" (Sünde wider den Geist).

The foregoing discussion, in a word, has been about "hell," about Geist and freedom as sins. In this regard we should not forget that the vampyroteuthis stands on its head: its hell is our heaven, its heaven our hell. For us, its murderous and suicidal anarchy would be an infernal society, and yet, to it, such anarchy represents an inaccessible heaven of freedom. Loving and socialist

XENOFEMINIST  
VAMPYROTEUTHIS  
IF NATURE IS  
UNJUST, CHANGE  
NATURE

HATRED  
&  
LOVE

hell  
wants  
ants  
...

dichotomy  
good human  
nature  
vs bad  
human  
nature

SEE  
COCCIA  
ON  
ROOTS



collaboration and cohabitation represent, to us, an inaccessible and heavenly Utopia, a messianic state of being, to it nothing more than a hellish anthill. Is there not a third possibility, a middle road, a *tertius gaudens*? Can an “absolute good” and an “absolute evil” really be said to exist?

There is indeed a third possibility, however unappealing it may be: there is, namely, a *Geist* that is both human and vampyroteuthic, and it is not difficult to find. For there is something of the vampyroteuthis in each of us, otherwise we would not be able to recognize aspects of its heaven and hell. And there is something of the human *Geist* in each vampyroteuthis. For us, too, hell is the company of others (*l'infer, ce sont les autres*); and for us, too, freedom is the opportunity—ever at hand—to commit suicide. The vampyroteuthis is the reverse side of our own *Geist*, and if we could encounter both sides simultaneously, the question of heaven and hell, of good and evil, would be no more. In fact, it is likely that no questions would remain at all, for this encounter would mark the end of *Geist*. That is the risk we take when we face the vampyroteuthis eye to eye. What we would behold would be our own reflection, above all the reflection of our grotesque political folly.

## ESCAPE GOVERNMENT



A Government is the governing power in a given place; governance is the “act or manner of governing” a territory. Both however come from the Latin *gubernu*, “rudder”, and the Greek *kubernáo*, “directing the movement of a vessel”, “steer”. The original context of the word is nautical. We are at sea.

## ESCAPE MODERNITY



What kind of exit could we, as moderns, propose from modernism? From the medievalists, an intent to perform historical bypass surgery. From postmodernism a plan and (largely derided) attempts at accelerating and modulating modernist tendencies across cultures and hemispheres. For most, modernity is “essential for us, and for this reason it is ultimately inaccessible to us” (Zielinski). Modernity is inescapable, a genetic fallacy expanding into realms and geographies unknown...

## ESCAPE HUMAN



Unforeseen and unforeseeable effects would seem to threaten our definition of what it means to be a human being. We are losing our perceived dominance of Earth, at times purposefully enacting our own self-extinction, while extinguishing other species that cannot survive a world we rapidly change. We shall have to adapt, or rather our adaption, our mutation, is already underway. There is little to decide, little remission, little option to be always already part of ongoing transformations, technological, ecological, biological. Do we want to become more, or less, alien than we already are? Embracing new post-human becomings involves halting privilege and relaxing the suffocating grip we have come to have on this world. In learning to let go of humanity, how might we become yet still more, yet ever more, human?

## REFERENCE:

IMPOSSIBLE ESCAPES  
IS AN ESCAPE AND EVASION MAP  
CREATED FOR NEURAL AND THE 2017  
TRANSMEDIALE FESTIVAL, BERLIN. BY  
THE CRITICAL MEDIA LAB BASEL

YVONNE VOLKART, FLAVIA CAHIZEL, JOHANNES BRUGER,  
MORITZ DELIGER-PETTER, SHINTARO MIYAZEL, JAMIE ALLER WITH  
PROLO PATELLI, GIUDITTA VEDRAMA, LEANNE WILSON  
SPECIAL THANKS TO SARAH SHARMA



HEADLINE

Comité Invisible: Now

No more waiting.

No more hoping.

No more letting ourselves be distracted, unnerved.

Break and enter.

Put untruth back in its place.

Believe in what we feel.

Act accordingly.

Force our way into the present.

Try. Fail this time. Try again. Fail better.

Persist. Attack. Build.

Go down one's road.

Win perhaps.

In any case, overcome.

Live, therefore.

Now...

KNOWING THAT  
NO THERE IS  
OF WAY OUT  
IT



(...)

DESTITUTE

As Lyotard reportedly said: "Economy—a thing we needed to find a way out of, not criticize!" Communism is not a "superior economic organization of society" but the destitution of economy.

AUTONOMOUS AND INDIVIDUAL-ENT

Economy rests on a pair of fictions, therefore, that of society and that of the individual. Destituting it involves situating this false antinomy and bringing to light that which it means to cover up. What these fictions have in common is making us see entities, closed units and their relations, whereas what there is in fact are ties. Society presents itself as the superior entity that aggregates all the individual entities. Since Hobbes and the frontispiece of Leviathan, it's always the same image: the great body of the sovereign, composed of all the minuscule, homogenized, serialized bodies of his subjects. The operation which the social fiction depends on consists in trampling on everything that forms the situated existence of each singular human being, in wiping out the ties that constitute us, in denying the assemblages we enter into, and then forcing the depleted atoms thus obtained into a completely fictitious, spectral association known as the "social bond."

AND THAT OF INDIVIDUALISM

(...)

THIS

Let's Destitute The World

WHAT REALLY  
'CON-STITUTE'  
US

TRANS-  
INDIVIDUAL

JANE  
BAD  
Fictions

OLIVIER ZAHM - When you deal with art, in fact, you use plants as a starting point for your thinking on forms. You say that "plants have no hands with which to manipulate the world, and yet it would be difficult to find defter agents for the construction of forms." Do you see plants as faceless, handless artistic agents?

EMANUELE COCCIA - Yes, absolutely. The old idea I was just talking about, where the seed is a form of rationality, was also the idea of the universal artist or the cosmic artist. This rational force corresponds to the force of matter itself and does not pass through thought or mediation. Matter itself seeks, invents, produces its forms of life and rationality simultaneously. And the force that allows this was often called artistic force. In Greek, there is only one word for art, technique, and reason.

OLIVIER ZAHM - We can look at that from any angle. And hence, perhaps, the power of plants as decorative forces in the Middle Ages or in Islamic art and all the way up to Art Deco.

EMANUELE COCCIA - Actually, plants embody the aesthetic idea of a vitality of form. Life's ability to produce its own forms. Inversely, this illustrates that forms are nothing but living beings and that art is nothing but the sphere in which forms come to life.

OLIVIER ZAHM - Art is not a mere symbolic derivative of human activity?

EMANUELE COCCIA - Exactly. It's a force for changing the world. Every major work of art is an object that suddenly, magically manages to change the forms around it. Indeed, we could adopt this perspective to take a fresh look at the history of art, at art's forms, which are so powerful that they have brought other forms to life. Fashion is exactly that. Painting and sculpture are exactly that. A form that will no longer be contained by the simple object in which it has been captured and that suddenly explodes and spreads all over the place. In Antiquity and the Middle Ages, they used a vegetal metaphor to designate this force - the force peculiar to plants, which seems totally anonymous and bound to no specific individual.

FROM RPLE, 2017

THE  
WHY'S  
CONSTRUCTING  
FORMS?

FORM philosophical concept usually opposed to "matter" or "content"

→ yet, what do we understand today as "form"?



# WE DON'T NEED INSTITUTIONS BUT FORMS.

- A HABIT
- A THOUGHT
- A FRIENDSHIP
- A WORK
- A PROFESSION

Even though 80% of French people declared that they no longer expect anything from the politicians, the same 80% have confidence in the state and its institutions. No scandal, no evidence, no personal experience manages to make a dent in the respect owed to the institutional framework in this country. It's always the men who embody it who are to blame. There have been blunders, abuses, extraordinary breakdowns. The institutions, similar to ideology in this respect, are sheltered from the contradiction of facts, however recurrent. It was enough for the National Front to promise to restore the institutions to become reassuring instead of troubling. There's nothing surprising in that. The real has something intrinsically chaotic about it that humans need to stabilize by imposing a legibility, and thereby a foreseeability, on it. And what every institution provides is precisely a stationary legibility of the real, an ultimate stabilization of phenomena. If the institution suits us so well, it's because the sort of legibility it guarantees saves us above all, each one of us, from affirming anything whatsoever, from risking our singular reading of life and of things, from producing together an intelligibility of the world that is properly ours and shared in common. The problem is that choosing not to do that is the same as choosing not to exist. It's to resign from life. In reality, what we need are not institutions but forms. It so happens, in fact, that life, whether biological, singular or collective, is precisely a continual creation of forms. It suffices to perceive them, to accept allowing them to arise, to make a place for them and accompany their metamorphosis. A habit is a form. A thought is a form. A friendship is a form. A work is a form. A profession is a form. Everything that lives is only forms and interactions of forms.

**I AM STILL MISSING A MORE SPECIFIC DEFINITION OF "FORM".**

Except that, voila, we are in France, the country where even the Revolution has become an institution, and which has exported that ambivalence to the four corners of the world. There is a specifically French love of the institution that must be dealt with if we wish to talk again about revolution one day, if not make one. Here the most libertarian of the psychotherapies has seen fit to label itself "institutional," the most critical of the sociologies has given itself the name "institutional analysis." If the principle comes to us from ancient Rome, the affect that accompanies it is clearly Christian in origin. The French passion for the institution is a flagrant symptom of the lasting Christian impregnation of a country that believes itself to be delivered from that. All the more lasting, moreover, as it believes itself to be delivered. We should never forget that the first modern thinker of the institution was that lunatic Calvin, that model of all the despisers of life, and that he was born in Picardy. The French passion for the institution comes from a properly Christian distrust towards life. The great malice of the institution idea is in its claiming to free us from the rule of the passions, from the uncontrollable hazards of existence, that it would be a transcendence of the passions when it is actually just one of them, and assuredly one of the most morbid. The institution claims to be a remedy against men, none of whom can be trusted, whether the people or the leader, the neighbor or the brother or the stranger. What governs it is always the same idiocy of sinful humanity, subject to desire, selfishness, and lust, and who must keep from loving anything whatsoever in this world and from giving in to their inclinations, which are all uniformly vicious. It's not his fault if an economist like Frederic Lordon can't picture a revolution that is not a new institution. Because all economic science, and not just its "institutional" current, has its basis finally in the lessons of Saint Augustine. Through its name and its language, what the institution promises is that a single thing, in this lower world, will have transcended time, will have withdrawn itself from the unpredictable flux of becoming, will have established a bit of tangible eternity, an unequivocal meaning, free of human ties and situations—a definitive stabilization of the real, like death.

This whole mirage dissolves when a revolution breaks out. Suddenly what seemed eternal collapses into time as though into a bottomless pit. What seemed to plunge its roots into the human heart turns out to have been nothing but a fable for dupes. The palaces are vacated and one discovers in the prince's abandoned jumble of papers that he no longer believed in it all, if he ever had. For behind the façade of the institution, what goes on is always something other than it claims to be, its precisely what the institution claimed to have delivered the world from: the very human comedy of the coexistence of networks, of loyalties, of clans, interests, lineages, dynasties

NATURE OR RATIONALITY AS LEGITIMATION GROUND (see M. DOUGLAS)

SEE MAN ON REALITY APPREHENDING THE REAL (see COCCIA)


PROMISES OF INSTITUTION

CAN YOU PICTURE A REVOLUTION WHICH IS NOT A NEW INSTITUTION?

## WHY DO WE HAVE INSTITUTIONS AT ALL?

because we have no instincts, we build institutions - would say Deleuze. Me, I like to keep the question open. OR RATHER THE ANSWER





We use the word *revolt* to designate an insurrectional movement that differs from revolution. The difference between revolt and revolution should not be sought in their respective aims; they can both have the same aim: to seize power. What principally distinguishes revolt from revolution is instead a different experience of time. If, on the basis of the ordinary meaning of the two words, revolt is a sudden insurrectional explosion, which can be placed within a strategic horizon but which in itself does not imply a long-distance strategy, and revolution is instead a strategic complex of insurrectional movements, coordinated and oriented over the mid- to long-term toward ultimate objectives, then we could say that revolt suspends historical time, suddenly establishing a time in which everything that is done has a value in itself, independently of its consequences and of its relations with the transitory or perennial complex that constitutes history. Revolution would instead be wholly and deliberately immersed in historical time.

Revolt  
suddenly  
institutes  
a time

FURIO BEI  
THE SUSPENSION OF HISTORICAL TIME  
100 NOTES 100 THOUGHTS  
DOCUMENTA KRIS, 2012



# RE-PRODUCTION OF POWER

In other words...

THE FICTION OF INSTITUTIONS  
and INSTITUTION OF FICTION  
see Terry Moore

\* WITHOUT CHANGING OR BY FOLLOWING THE OLD PRINCIPLE "EVERYTHING MUST CHANGE FOR EVERYTHING TO REMAIN THE SAME" → see "The Leopard" by Tomasi di Lampedusa

even, a logic of fierce struggles for territories, resources, miserable titles, influence— stories of sexual conquest and pure folly, of old friendships and rekindled hatreds. Every institution is, in its very regularity, the result of an intense bricolage and, as an institution, of a denial of that bricolage. It's supposed fixity masks a gluttonous appetite for absorbing, controlling, institutionalizing everything that's on its margins and harbors a bit of life. The real model of every institution is universally the Church. Just as the Church clearly does not have as its goal leading the human flock to its divine salvation, but rather achieving its own salvation in time, the alleged function of an institution is only a pretext for its existence. In every institution the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor is re-enacted year after year. Its true purpose is to persist. No need to specify how many souls and bodies must be ground down in order to secure this result, and even within its own hierarchy. One doesn't become a leader without being basically the most ground down—the king of the ground-down. Reducing delinquency and "defending society" are only the pretext of the carceral institution. If, during the centuries it has existed, it has never succeeded at these things—on the contrary—this is because its purpose is different; it is to go on existing and growing if possible, which means tending to the breeding ground of delinquency and managing the illegalities. The purpose of the medical institution is not to care for people's health, but to produce the patients that justify its existence and a corresponding definition of health. Nothing new on this subject since Ivan Illich and his Medical Nemesis. It's not the failure of the health institutions that we are now living in a world that is toxic through and through and that makes everyone sick. On the contrary, we've seen their triumph. Quite often, the apparent failure of the institutions is their real function. If school discourages children from learning, this is not fortuitously: it's because children with a desire to learn would make school next to useless. The same goes for the unions, whose purpose is manifestly not the emancipation of workers, but rather the perpetuation of their condition. What could the bureaucrats of the labor unions do with their life, in fact, if the workers had the bad idea of actually freeing themselves? Of course in every institution there are sincere people who really think they are there to accomplish their mission. But it's no accident if those people see themselves systematically obstructed, are systematically kept out of the loop, punished, bullied, eventually ostracized, with the complicity of all the "realists" who keep their mouths shut. These choice victims of the institution have a hard time understanding its double talk, and what is really being asked of them. Their fate is to always be treated there as killjoys, as rebels, and to be endlessly surprised by that. YES, BUT I ALSO READ IN BETWEEN THE LINES A BLIND SPOT ON HUMAN NATURE, OR AM I WRONG?

Against the slightest revolutionary possibility in France, one will always find the institution of the Self and the Self of the institution. Inasmuch as "being someone" always comes down finally to the recognition of, the allegiance to, some institution, inasmuch as succeeding involves conforming to the reflection that you're shown in the hall of mirrors of the social game, the institution has a grip on everyone through the Self. All this couldn't last, would be too rigid, not dynamic enough, if the institution wasn't determined to compensate for its rigidity by a constant attention to the movements that jostle it. There's a perverse dialectic between institution and movements, which testifies to the former's relentless survival instinct. A reality as ancient, massive, and hieratic as that, inscribed in the bodies and minds of its subjects for the hundreds of years the French state has existed, could not have lasted so long if it had not been able to tolerate, monitor, and recuperate critics and revolutionaries as they presented themselves. The carnivalesque ritual of social movements function within it as a safety valve, as a tool for managing the social as well as for renewing the institution. They bring it the flexibility, the young flesh, the new blood that it so cruelly lacks. Generation after generation, in its great wisdom, the state has been able to coopt those who showed themselves amenable to being bought off, and crush those who acted intransigent. It's not for nothing that so many leaders of student movements have so naturally advanced to ministerial posts, being people who are sure to have a feel for the state, that is, an appreciation of the institution as mask.

PERVERS DIALECTIC BETWEEN INSTITUTION & MOVEMENTS





JAN RITSEMA - THE ARMY OF ARTISTS

Observation 7

Artists are distributors of values, among others, like teachers, journalists and scientists. They are what Noam Chomsky calls "manufacturers of consent". They have the tools to formulate, to propose, to present, to disguise, to modulate, to transpose, to mutate, to mutilate (together with others) what people might start to like. The creative industries are perfect servants for the capitalist operation of constantly changing the likings of people. More often than not, changing them into their opposites.

Imagine that artists become aware of their historical position and put up resistance to being instrumentalised for the purposes of others, namely the capital or state. Would it be necessary that they formulate common goals and develop the same perspectives for a future society? I don't think so. The times of the common and the communal are over. This was always already an artificial construct that could only be implemented by force, despite its ideal perspectives. Can people then still make history and be conscious of doing so? Can they do this consciously, on purpose? Yes, they can. They can break the circumstances, change them into something else, but nowadays they have to break them alone, without being connected to a common goal or ideology.

Being connected to others doesn't always involve a common goal.  
Being on this planet sometimes is enough (to be always dependent on others)

AHEAD?



# DESTITUTION

Breaking the circle that turns our contestation into a fuel for what dominates us, marking a rupture in the fatality that condemns revolutions to reproduce what they have driven out, shattering the iron cage of counter-revolution—this is the purpose of destitution. The notion of destitution is necessary in order to free the revolutionary imaginary of all the old constituent fantasies that weigh it down, of the whole deceptive legacy of the French Revolution. It is necessary to intervene in revolutionary logic, in order to establish a division within the idea of insurrection. For there are constituent insurrections, those that end like all the revolutions up to now have ended: by turning back into their opposite, those that have been made “in the name of”—in the name of whom or what? the people, the working class, or God, it matters little. And there are destituent insurrections, such as May '68, the Italian creeping May and so many insurrectionary communes. Despite all that it may have manifested that was cool, lively, unexpected, Nuit debout—like the Spanish movement of the squares or Occupy Wall Street previously—was troubled by the old constituent itch. What was staged spontaneously was the old revolutionary dialectic that would oppose the “constituted powers” with the “constituent power” of the people taking over the public space. There’s a good reason that in the first three weeks of Nuit debout, Place de la Republique, no fewer than three committees appeared that gave themselves the mission of rewriting a Constitution. What was re-enacted there was the old debate that’s been performed to a full house in France since 1792. And it seems there’s no getting enough of it. It’s a national sport. There’s not even any need to spruce up the decor to please today’s taste. It must be said that the idea of constitutional reform presents the advantage of satisfying both the desire to change everything and the desire that everything stay the same—it’s just a matter, finally, of changing a few lines, of symbolic modifications. As long as one debates words, as long as revolution is formulated in the language of rights and the law, the ways of neutralizing it are well-known and marked out.

HA, HERE WE ARE!

AGAINST REFORM

CONSTITUENT FICTION

When sincere Marxists proclaim in a union leaflet, “We are the real power!” it’s still the same constituent fiction that is operating, and that distances us from strategic thinking. The revolutionary aura of this old logic is such that in its name the worst mystifications manage to pose as self-evident truths. “To speak of constituent power is to speak of democracy.” It’s with this risible lie that Toni Negri begins his book on the subject, and he’s not the only one to trumpet these kinds of inanities that defy good sense. It’s enough to have opened the pages of Constitutional Theory by Carl Schmitt, who can’t exactly be counted among the good friends of democracy, to realize the contrary. The fiction of constituent power suits monarchy as well as it suits dictatorship. Doesn’t that pretty presidential slogan, “in the name of the people,” say anything to anybody? It’s regrettable to have to point out that Abbe Sieyes, inventor of the disastrous distinction between constituent power and constituted power, that brilliant sleight of hand, was never a democrat. This is what he said in his famous speech of September 7, 1789: “The citizens who appoint representatives refrain and must refrain from making the law themselves: they do not have any particular will to impose. If they dictated wills, France would no longer be this representative state; it would be a democratic state. The people, I repeat, in a country that is not a democracy (and France cannot be one), the people cannot speak, cannot act, except through its representatives.” If to speak of “constituent power” is not necessarily to speak of “democracy,” both these notions do, however, always lead revolutions into a cul-de-sac.

WORLD UNDER CAPITALISM MAYBE

Destituere in Latin means: to place standing separate, raise up in isolation; to abandon; put aside, let drop, knock down; to let down, deceive. Whereas constituent logic crashes against the power apparatus it means to take control of, a destituent potential is concerned instead with escaping from it, with removing any hold on it which the apparatus might have, as it increases its hold on the world in the separate space that it forms. Its characteristic gesture is exiting, just as the typical constituent gesture is taking by storm. In terms of a destituent logic, the struggle against state and capital is valuable first of all for the exit from capitalist normality that is experienced therein, for the desertion from the shitty relations with oneself, others, and the world under capitalism. Thus, where the “constituents” place themselves in a dialectical relation of struggle with the ruling authority in

ESCAPE TUNNEL MAYBE THEY MEAN IN THE "REAL"?

TO DESTITUTE VS.

TO INSTITUTE, *latin instituer*

means to establish, TO BEGIN something (WHAT'S OUT THERE? TO GO WHERE)

EXODUS VS.

EXIT, ESCAPE

(WHAT'S OUT THERE? TO GO WHERE)



WE NEED TO LEAP OUTSIDE AND DANCE ABOVE IT

order to take possession of it, destituent logic obeys the vital need to disengage from it. It doesn't abandon the struggle; it fastens on to the struggles positivity. It doesn't adjust itself to the movements of the adversary but to what is required for the increase of its own potential. So it has little use for criticizing: "The choice is either to get out without delay, without wasting one's time criticizing, simply because one is placed elsewhere than in the region of the adversary, or else one criticizes, one keeps one foot in it, and has the other one outside. We need to leap outside and dance above it," as Jean-Francois Lyotard explained, by way of recognizing the gesture of Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus. And Deleuze made this remark: "Roughly speaking, one recognizes a Marxist by their saying that a society contradicts itself, is defined by its contradictions, especially its class contradictions. We say rather is that in a society everything is escaping, that a society is defined by its lines of escape [...] Escape, but while escaping look for a weapon." It's not a question of fighting for communism. What matters is the communism that is lived in the fight itself. The true richness of an action lies within itself. This doesn't mean that for us there's no question of the observable effectiveness of an action. It means that the impact potential of an action doesn't reside in its effects, but in what is immediately expressed in it. What is constructed on the basis of effort always ends up collapsing from exhaustion. Typically, the operation that the cortege de tete causes the processional setup of union demonstrations to undergo is an operation of destitution. With the vital joy it expressed, the rightness of its gesture, its determination, with its affirmative as well as offensive character, the cortege de tete drew in all that was still lively in the militant ranks and it destituted demonstrations as an institution. Not with a critique of the rest of the march but something other than a symbolic use of capturing the street. Withdrawing from the institutions is anything but leaving a void, it's suppressing them in a positive way.

Deleuze  
(but) while  
look for  
a weapon

→ REVOLT  
in  
public  
space

YET, IT FEELS A BIT LIKE IT ←

↳ DO YOU MAYBE MEAN TO DO SOME HOLES IN THE GROUND?

To destitute is not primarily to attack the institution, but to attack the need we have of it. It's not to criticize it—the first critics of the state are the civil servants themselves; as to the militant, the more they criticize power the more they desire it and the more they refuse to acknowledge their desire—but to take to heart what the institution is meant to do, from outside it. To destitute the university is to establish, at a distance, the places of research, of education and thought, that are more vibrant and more demanding than it is—which would not be hard—and to greet the arrival of the last vigorous minds who are tired of frequenting the academic zombies, and only then to administer its death blow. To destitute the judicial system is to learn to settle our disputes ourselves, applying some method to this, paralyzing its faculty of judgment and driving its henchmen from our lives. To destitute medicine is to know what is good for us and what makes us sick, to rescue from the institution the passionate knowledges that survive there out of view, and never again to find oneself alone at the hospital, with one's body handed over to the artistic sovereignty of a disdainful surgeon. To destitute the government is to make ourselves ungovernable. Who said anything about winning? Overcoming is everything.

HERE I AM MIXING A DEFINITION OF "INSTITUTION": TO DESTITUTE EXACTLY? WHAT DO YOU WANT

The destituent gesture does not oppose the institution. It doesn't even mount a frontal fight; it neutralizes it, empties it of its substance, then steps to the side and watches it fall down to the incoherent ensemble of its practices and makes destituent. An example of this is the way in which the party then in the summer of 2016 to cancel its university. The party constituted in June within the cortege de tete could...

Approaching an institution from the perspective of what it sets conditions for and what it does is often a way to deconstruct the idea of that institution, and to become able to think it anew. I propose to apply this approach to the art school, in order to make it unfamiliar again, and thus to become aware of what it is, how it operates, what it makes possible or impossible. Only then, I believe, we can think it and operate within it differently. Deconstructing requires at the same time a critical exercise, that I am trying to articulate in this lecture and imaginative by any means. The Communist Party. For the other artists that had spoiled life for it they withdrew and abandoned the idea of doing battle faced with the

S. BOTTI ROLI

↳ "TO INSTITUTE" can also always be TO BEGIN AGAIN TO BEGIN A NEW

↳ "TO SET THE CONDITIONS FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN"



## Art Schools as Thinking Entities

Silvia Bottioli

Amsterdam, Performance Philosophy conference, March 15<sup>th</sup> 2019

As you might know, today education is on strike in the Netherlands, and obviously talking about school on this day raises some questions. Strike can be seen as a call to produce a different state via the suspension of the usual protocols of how work is produced and delivered. Paradoxically enough, being here today and taking the time to *think* what we are doing in art and education, and to think *together* about it, feels very close to a suspension, however problematic this may sound. Obviously, *thinking* and *thinking together* should be part of our everyday practice, but we know this is not often the case.

So, I am deeply thankful to the organizers of the conference, and to Ricarda Franzen in particular, not only for having me here but also for producing this suspended time for all of us.

With my contribution, I will take this suspension as an invitation to stop thinking education as an ongoing production and sharing of contents, and to investigate it as a practice of meaning making.

threat posed by the very positivity of the bonds formed in the "Attack!" assembly and the determination emanating from them. In exactly the same way, it's the potential of the connections that are formed around the ZAD that protects it, and not its military strength. The finest destituent victories are often those where the battle simply never takes place.

Fernand Deligny said: "In order to fight against language and the institution, the right phrase is perhaps not to fight against, but to take the most distance possible, even if this means signaling one's position. Why would we go and press ourselves against the wall? Our project is not to take and hold the square." †

no spectators →

Destitution makes it possible to rethink what we mean by revolution. The traditional revolutionary program involved a reclaiming of the world, an expropriation of the expropriators, a violent appropriation of that which is ours, but which we have been deprived of. But here's the problem: capital has taken hold of every detail and every dimension of existence. It has created a world in its image. From being an exploitation of the existing forms of life, it has transformed itself into a total universe. It has configured, equipped, and made desirable the ways of speaking, thinking, eating, working and vacationing, of obeying and rebelling, that suit its purpose. In doing so, it has reduced to very little the share of things in this world that one might want to reappropriate. Who would wish to reappropriate nuclear power plants, Amazons warehouses, the expressways, ad agencies, high-speed trains, Dassault, La Defense business complex, auditing firms, nanotechnologies, supermarkets and their poisonous merchandise? Who imagines a people's takeover of industrial farming operations where a single man plows 400 hectares of eroded ground at the wheel of his megatractor piloted via satellite? No one with any sense. What complicates the task for revolutionaries is that the old constituent gesture no longer works there either. With the result that the most desperate, the most determined to save it, have finally found the winning formula: in order to have done with capitalism, all we have to do is reappropriate money itself! A Negriist deduces this from the spring of 2016 conflict: "Our goal is the following: transformation of the rivers of command money that flow from the faucets of the European Central Bank into money as money, into unconditional social income! Bring the fiscal paradises back down to Earth, attack the citadels of offshore finance, confiscate the deposits of liquid returns, secure everyone's access to the world of commodities—the world in which we really live, whether that pleases us or not. The only universalism that people love is that of money! Let anyone wishing to take power begin by taking the money! Let anyone wishing to institute the commons of counter-power begin by securing the

CAPITALISM IS NARROWING DOWN THE THINGS ONE MIGHT LIKE TO RE-APPROPRIATE



NO PROPERTY

ON SETTLEMENT by VLADIMIR MILLER

Vladimir Miller Settlement VIII

14 September-2 October 2015 / a.pass studio

TOWARDS FRAGILITY

(fragile: unstable, disintegrating, malleable, temporary, sketchy, self-sabotage, needs care, gone when not needed, anti-territorial, only there as long as invested in, can't hold)

I have some questions:

**What can be a truly feminist architecture?** One that does not create territory, does not claim, does not exclude. (Will society be different if it builds in another way, or is it the other way around, or are they actually inseparable from one another?). How much of the utopia of Occupy is due to the haphazard conditions of camping and DIY? Should we be sad that it's gone? Or is its ability to disappear its most precious, most pioneering trait? Every social movement must find, claim and hold a space or perish, yes? – become an institution or die.

\* What's the role of 'space' in defining an institution as such?

But how to keep on dying?

Processes of institutionalization are also processes of architectural shifts away from the fragile: from sticks and fabrics to metal and concrete, from sit-ins on the floor to tables and chairs, from open spaces to chambers with doors, from expanding circles to sitting arrangements. All of these we justify with productivity concerns. So maybe the question is: **how to be productive and fragile at the same time?**

HOW TO SUSTAIN FRAGILITY?

**Settlement** is a spatial proposal that tries to sustain its architectural fragility hoping in this way to initiate a temporary social, organisational and ideological one. Simply put, it is a collective workspace, a camp and a hangout, open to all who step by and would like to contribute to it. Like many other such meetings it is a place of informal exchange and presentation. It is a space for practices instead of products, a place where our individual ideas and processes have not yet achieved a solid state and can flow into each other.

**Settlement** starts with a haphazard collection of materials in an otherwise empty space Everything one might need for one's work has to be built and (re)invented there. There are no tables, no chairs, and the materials and objects resist easy categorization and usability. They have to be mis-used, adapted, they have a will of their own. The built environment has to be negotiated (with) on the level of the object. There is a potential in a thing being one thing one day, and a totally different thing the day after. There is also a potential in a thing changing hands. (You will be surprised how quickly ownership is established from communal beginnings: you just have to take pick up something and move it somewhere else.)

MISUNDERSTANDING

**Settlement** is a space that tries very hard not to settle. Its instability naturally works against the establishing of clear boundaries between „your space“ and „my space“, what hopefully follows from that is that it is very difficult to establish boundaries between „your work“ and „my work“. I believe that practice is bound by space, and if space gets shaky, unstable, shareable, so does the practice.

By starting from scratch Settlement invites a re-negotiation of the specific conditions of each practice. In the course of the three weeks Settlement lets your particular method of production and sharing find its own intrinsic spatial conditions, free from the encoded behaviors of ready-made spaces such as “table”, “studio”, “meeting”, “gallery”, “venue”, “library”, etc. The politics of practice in terms of co-habitation and co-working, of claiming one's own space, inviting or excluding the outside, communication of ideas, inviting change and influence are all there to be questioned within this setup. As a practice is (in some ways) „re-built“ during Settlement, one can come to question its very construction.

HOW TO SHARE FRAGILITY?

MISUNDERSTANDINGS SHOW WHAT TWO INDIVIDUALS HAVE IN COMMON DIFFERENTLY (VIRNO)

dichotomy  
noun vs. product



SEE ALSO  
"TRIAL  
ON MONEY"  
performance by C. Meierhaus

material conditions on the basis of which those counter-powers can actually be constructed! Let anyone preferring the destituent exodus consider the objective possibilities of a withdrawal from the production of the dominant social relations that are inherent in the possession of money! Let anyone in favor of a general and renewable strike reflect at the margins of the wage autonomy granted by a socialization of income worthy of that name! Let anyone wishing for an insurrection of the subalterns not forget the powerful promise of liberation contained in the slogan "Let's take the money!" A revolutionary who cares about their mental health will want to leave constituent logic and its rivers of imaginary money behind them.

What is the difference between FORM and INSTITUTION exactly? Power? Solidarity? Possibility of re-appropriation?

So the revolutionary gesture no longer consists in a simple violent appropriation of this world; it divides into two. On the one hand, there are worlds to be made, forms of life made to grow apart from what reigns, including by salvaging what can be salvaged from the present state of things, and on the other, there is the imperative to attack, to simply destroy the world of capital. A two-pronged gesture that divides again: it's clear that the worlds one constructs can maintain their apartness from capital only together with the fact of attacking it and conspiring against it. It's clear that attacks not inspired by a different heartfelt idea of the world would have no real reach, would exhaust themselves in a sterile activism. In destruction the complicity is constructed on the basis of which the sense of destroying is constructed. And vice versa. It's only from the destituent standpoint that one can grasp all that is incredibly constructive in the breakage. Without that, one would not understand how a whole segment of a union demonstration can applaud and chant when the window of a car dealership finally gives way and falls to the ground or when a piece of urban furniture is smashed to pieces. Nor that it seems so natural for a cortege de tete of 10,000 persons to break everything deserving to be broken, and even a bit more, along the whole route of a demonstration such as that of June 14, 2016 in Paris. Nor that all the anti-smashers rhetoric of the government apparatus, so well-established and normally so effective, lost its traction and was no longer convincing to anyone. Breaking is understandable, among other things, as an open debate in public on the question of property. The bad-faith reproach "they always break what is not theirs" needs to be turned back around. How can you break something unless, at the moment of breaking it, the thing is in your hands, is in a sense yours? Recall the Civil Code: "As regards furniture, possession can be taken as ownership." In effect, someone who breaks doesn't engage in an act of negation, but in a paradoxical, counterintuitive affirmation. They affirm, against all appearances: "This is ours!" Breaking, therefore, is affirmation, is appropriation. It discloses the problematic character of the property regime that now governs all things. Or at least it opens the debate on this thorny point. And there is scarcely a different way to begin it than this, so prone it is to close back down as soon as it is opened in a peaceful manner. Everyone will have noted, moreover, how the conflict of the spring of 2016 served as a divine lull in the deterioration of public debate.

CREATIVE DESTRUCTION

TIME

Only an affirmation has the potential for accomplishing the work of destruction. The destituent gesture is thus desertion and attack, creation and wrecking, and all at once, in the same gesture. It defies the accepted logics of alternativism and activism at the same time. It forms a linkage between the extended time of construction and the spasmodic time of intervention, between the disposition to enjoy our piece of the world and the disposition to place it at stake. Along with the taste for risk-taking, the reasons for living disappear. Comfort—which clouds perceptions, takes pleasure in repeating words that it empties of any meaning, and prefers not to know anything—is the real enemy, the enemy within. Here it is not a question of a new social contract, but of a new strategic composition of worlds.

DESTITUTION + AFFIRMATION

COMPOSITION OF WORLDS

Communism is the real movement that destitutes the existing state of things.

(...)

We don't have any program, any solutions to sell. To destitute, in Latin, also means to disappoint. All expectations will be disappointed.

TO DISAPPOINT AS A POLITICAL STRATEGY



continuous flight of moments, as a manifestation of timelessness within time. Visual art, architecture and narrative prose too give mankind access to its original time dimension and space of its belonging to the world. Art gives people a place, a shelter in which they can determine the benchmarks of their stay on Earth and find their own truth (rhythm) in the unstoppable flow of linear time. As rhythm, art stops time and beats time. It is the gift of a place of one's own. That is why all art, regardless of its medium, is architecture. And that is also why all art, regardless of its content, is disturbing and revolutionary.

### Exercises in Exodus

The analogy between Agamben's considerations and Virno's theories is striking. Bartleby's passive resistance is reminiscent of the disobedience of leaving and ignoring. The "prefer not to", the negation and the searching for a different place are exercises in contingency, to use Agamben's terminology, or in exodus, to use Virno's image. To Virno as well, contingency is the main characteristic of human practice, institutions are incomplete and provisional, and art gives mankind a place in time, enabling us to acquire familiarity with the disturbing. But art too is disturbing, and an exercise in exodus. It is "dismeasure" that challenges benchmarks.<sup>16</sup> The biblical image of the exodus has been used for centuries as a metaphor for liberation and revolution. It is a paradigm for revolutionary politics, according to Michael Walzer in *Exodus and Revolution* (1985). *Exodus* is a story that is embedded in our collective memory, a judicial-theological text intended for analogous application, an example of an act of resistance to "try at home", a realistic presentation.<sup>17</sup> The image of the exodus reminds Virno of this revolutionary practice, and vice versa: because of his experiences in the movement of 1968-77, he recognizes what Walzer says. The exodus also remind him of how Marx described, in *Das Kapital*, the early stages of North-American capitalism when frontier man left wage labour in drove and headed west, and vice versa: the practice of the frontiers may serve as an example of disobeying the laws of the capitalist labour market.<sup>18</sup> Virno's reflections, in the wake of Garroni and Agamben, shed some light on the current situation. They revoke the romantic notions and compel us invert the questions. Is there still something to be learned from this? Creativity is the central concept in current labour processes, which are based on knowledge and verbal communication. Creativity takes place in the application of the rules. It is adaption to the environment, but this means that human adaption to the environment, such as creativity, is by definition incomplete and tentative. The rules are being changed in the course of the application, but this means that there is no application of rules that does not foresee this changing. Art is the non-knowledge-based specialization of creativity that coincides with the typically human potentiality, which therefore belongs to everyone. Art belongs to everyone. This of course has consequences for institutions. We can apply Les Ballets C de B's motto here: "This dance belongs to the world and the world belongs to everyone"<sup>19</sup> Fully aware the contingency and even for the sake of contingency, the tragic aporia, ambiguity, instability and the danger of the multitude, for everyone's sake therefore, Virno makes a plea for institutions – political institutions, but by extension also art institutions – that are open to their own negation as forces that impede. This means that they do not suppress the fight against them, the disobedience, the unruly imagination or the tendency to change them. It means that they become stronger and serve their purpose better – offering a space – as they no longer suppress opposition and make room for the confrontation with themselves, thereby enabling themselves to change. In opposition to the institutions are we, the people, the multitude, the makers of art, everyone. And for us it's the other way around: we are called to arms, to resistance, imagination, autonomy, rebellion, disobedience, innovation, appropriation and change. We are called upon to enterprisingly withdraw ourselves from the institutions that make many the slave of few and make these few the slaves of themselves and their own illusions.

→ That's disappointing indeed

rules

general intellect  
HAS  
CONSEQUENCES  
FOR ART  
INSTITUTIONS

THIS TIME  
FOR REAL

<sup>16</sup> Paolo Virno in Gielen and Lavaert, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Walzer, *Esodo e rivoluzione*, trans. M. D'Alessandro (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1986/1985), pp. 13-14.

<sup>18</sup> Paolo Virno, *Esercizi di esodo [Exercises in Exodus]* (Verona: Ombre Corte, 2002), pp. 177-82; Karl Marx, *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie: Erster Band* (Berlin, 1987/1867), pp. 792-802.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in the programme of C(h)oeurs, 12.06.12 – 14.06.12. Concertgebouw Brugge.



## The coming insurrection

(...)

Expect nothing from organizations.

Beware of all existing social milieus,

and above all, don't become one.

It's not uncommon, in the course of a significant breaking of the social bond, to cross paths with organizations — political, labor, humanitarian, community associations, etc. Among their members, one may even find individuals who are sincere — if a little desperate — who are enthusiastic — if a little conniving. Organizations are attractive due to their apparent consistency — they have a history, a head office, a name, resources, a leader, a strategy and a discourse. They are nonetheless empty structures, which, in spite of their grand origins, can never be filled. In all their affairs, at every level, these organizations are concerned above all with their own survival as organizations, and little else. Their repeated betrayals have often alienated the commitment of their own rank and file. And this is why you can, on occasion, run into worthy beings within them. But the promise of the encounter can only be realized outside the organization and, unavoidably, at odds with it.

Far more dreadful are social milieus, with their supple texture, their gossip, and their informal hierarchies. Flee all milieus. Each and every milieu is orientated towards the neutralization of some truth. Literary circles exist to smother the clarity of writing. Anarchist milieus to blunt the directness of direct action. Scientific milieus to withhold the implications of their research from the majority of people today. Sport milieus to contain in their gyms the various forms of life they should create. Particularly to be avoided are the cultural and activist circles. They are the old people's homes where all revolutionary desires traditionally go to die. The task of cultural circles is to spot nascent intensities and to explain away the sense of whatever it is you're doing, while the task of activist circles is to sap your energy for doing it. Activist milieus spread their diffuse web throughout the French territory, and are encountered on the path of every revolutionary development. They offer nothing but the story of their many defeats and the bitterness these have produced. Their exhaustion has made them incapable of seizing the possibilities of the present. Besides, to nurture their wretched passivity they talk far too much and this makes them unreliable when it comes to the police. Just as it's useless to expect anything from them, it's stupid to be disappointed by their sclerosis. It's best to just abandon this dead weight.

All milieus are counter-revolutionary because they are only concerned with the preservation of their sad comfort.

Form communes

Communes come into being when people find each other, get on with each other, and decide on a common path. The commune is perhaps what gets decided at the very moment when we would normally part ways. It's the joy of an encounter that survives its expected end. It's what makes us say "we," and makes that an event. What's strange isn't that people who are attuned to each other form communes, but that they remain separated. Why shouldn't communes proliferate everywhere? In every factory, every street, every village, every school. At long last, the reign of the base committees! Communes that accept being what they are, where they are. And if possible, a multiplicity of communes that will displace the institutions of society: family, school, union, sports

COMMUNES INSTEAD OF MILIEUS OR INSTITUTIONS

FORMS?

FLEE ALL MILIEUS

HOW TO KEEP ON DYING?

WHEN?



Until now, almost noone dares to leave the quasi-safe haven of the bubble of individuality, self-interest, and individual liberty.

But I think we have no choice.  
Let's have fun and go for the new revolution.  
Let's help to push history in another direction.

Let's make a movement for 21st century schools, elderly houses, prisons, hospitals, psychiatric asylums. The 19<sup>th</sup> century that invented and installed the existing disciplinary models has already violently passed away some two centuries ago.

Let's contest these institutions of slavery and barbarism firmly and offer the new models. The non-disciplinary ones. The reasonable ones. Let's embrace the many but rare examples that exist already in all the domains mentioned, but are dispersed all over the globe. All alone.  
Let's come together now (and do nothing)!

Or:

We the people have to start to organize ourselves, our work, our education, our medical care, and our infrastructures (transport, public space). We have to start to manage ourselves and go for highly flexible models of this self-organized work, and we need to restart currency (money) and the way we use it. We have no choice but to act, but before acting we have to think of a better post-capitalistic future. Implement think-tanks and research institutes. Find instruments/tools/models/concepts that show us, the people, that we can manage ourselves easily, better and more efficiently. That we can think of society as radically different. This can only be done in cooperation and together. But as I said, a lot has to be thought through thoroughly and has to be invented and imagined. For this we need to think less of strategies and do more thinking and imagining of models/concepts.

There is work to be done! Systematically and regularly and consequently!

Who wants to be no longer busy with themselves but with the world?

In the army of artists is situated a huge potential for these think-tanks or these purposeless gatherings. Please understand that these are needed, urgently. Understand that the stakes are high and solutions and results are not easily available.

but to cease feeling as independent individuals

LESS STRATEGIES  
MORE CONCEPTS

JAN PIJSEMA - THE ARMY OF ARTISTS

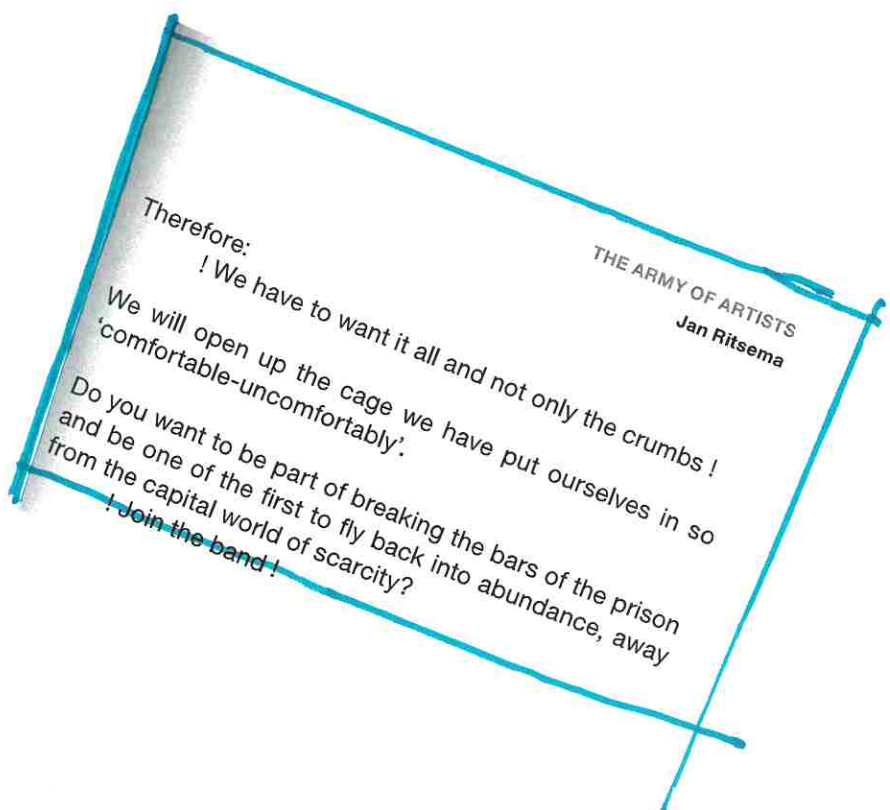
40  
INSIDE | OUTSIDE

club, etc. Communes that aren't afraid, beyond their specifically political activities, to organize themselves for the material and moral survival of each of their members and of all those around them who remain adrift. Communes that would not define themselves — as collectives tend to do — by what's inside and what's outside them, but by the density of the ties at their core. Not by their membership, but by the spirit that animates them. **HOW TO SHARE FRAGILITY?**

A commune forms every time a few people, freed of their individual straitjackets, decide to rely only on themselves and measure their strength against reality. Every wildcat strike is a commune; every building occupied collectively and on a clear basis is a commune, the action committees of 1968 were communes, as were the slave maroons in the United States, or Radio Alice in Bologna in 1977. Every commune seeks to be its own base. It seeks to dissolve the question of needs. It seeks to break all economic dependency and all political subjugation; it degenerates into a milieu the moment it loses contact with the truths on which it is founded. There are all kinds of communes that wait neither for the numbers nor the means to get organized, and even less for the "right moment" — which never arrives.

<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/comite-invisible-the-coming-insurrection>

THE RIGHT  
MOMENT  
- A MYTH?



THE ARMY OF ARTISTS  
Jan Ritsema

Therefore:  
! We have to want it all and not only the crumbs !

We will open up the cage we have put ourselves in so 'comfortable-uncomfortably'.

Do you want to be part of breaking the bars of the prison and be one of the first to fly back into abundance, away from the capital world of scarcity?  
! Join the band !





ASSEMBLY HALL

HOLY HOLE

A HOLE WITHOUT PEOPLE

ISLAND OF LONELINESS (ABENDLAND)

SUNSET SHAMP



GARDENS (POTATOES, TOMATOES, HERBS)

REHEARSAL STUDIO

DEAN'S OFFICE (VERANDAH)

EXIT TRAP HOLE

→ ART MARKET this way

A hole for the paragon

IF YOU FAIL JUST COME BACK HOME

ENTRANCE TUNNEL

A CRACK FOR PHINEAS

ARCHIVE BACK HOLE

ARCHIVE 2

PRINTING WORKSHOP

KITCHEN

LIBRARY

# The Life of Plants

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A Metaphysics of Mixture

Emanuele Coccia

Translated by Dylan J. Montanari

polity



IV

# Theory of the Flower

The Reason of Forms

12

# Flowers

*IMAGINE THE INSTITUTION...*

To cling to the surface of the Earth to better penetrate the air and the ground. To moor at random and then to expose and open oneself to anything in the surrounding world, regardless of its form or nature. Never to move, in order to allow for the world to be swallowed up in one's breast all the more. Never to tire of building canals, of opening holes for the world to fall, slip, or seep into oneself. For sessile beings, the encounter with the other—regardless of the qualification of this other—will never be a simple question of waiting and chance. Where no movement, no action, no choice are possible, meeting someone or something is possible exclusively through a metamorphosis of the self. It is only within itself that a being without motion can encounter the world. There is no geography, no intermediary space that might welcome the body of the one and that of the other and that might make this encounter possible. Every sessile being has to make itself world for the world, has to construct within itself the paradoxical site of an environment for the world itself. What is

FOR IT,



## Theory of the Flower: The Reason of Forms

more, faced with another sessile being, the world does not offer itself to experience as a multiplicity of substances separated by contours that one may touch or may observe with one's eyes; it is a single substance of variable intensity and density. To distinguish means to filter, to distill this continuous flux of the essence of things, to concentrate it into an image. To perceive the world in depth means to be touched and penetrated by it to the point of being changed and modified by it. For a sessile being, knowing the world coincides with a variation of its own form—a metamorphosis provoked by the outside. This is what one calls sex: the supreme form of sensibility, that which allows us to conceive of the other at the very moment when the other modifies our way of being and obliges us to go, to change, to become other. The flower is the appendage that makes it possible for plants—or, more precisely, for their most evolved component, angiosperms—to accomplish the process of absorption and capture of the world. The flower is a cosmic attractor, an ephemeral, unstable body that allows one to perceive—that is, to absorb—the world and to filter its more precious forms in order to be modified by it, to prolong one's being there, in the place where its form would not know how to lead it.<sup>1</sup>

It is, first and foremost, an *attractor*: instead of going toward the world, it attracts the world to it. Thanks to flowers, plant life becomes the site of an explosion of colors and forms and of a conquest of the domain of appearances. Sex, forms, and appearances all merge in the flower. Also, forms and appearances are freed from any expressive or identitarian logic: they do not have to express an individual truth, or define a nature, or communicate an essence: “The mode of the structure of the

See  
Jakob  
Klenke  
on  
perception

SEXUALITY

POSSIBLE  
ATTRACTORS  
FOR THE  
ART  
INSTITUTIONS  
?

more  
than  
TRANSINGUITY  
ABILITY



# THE TWO PRODUCTIONS OF SUBJECTIVITY IN CAPITAL

by JASON READ

20.08.2013

Presentation on the "production of subjectivity" in the autonomous education seminar "Cartography of the struggles"

The current historical moment can be described as the predominance of the individual over the collective. The individual reigns supreme in politics, as an ethic of individual rights and freedoms displaces any project of collective liberation. In economics this is even more the case, as the utility maximizing individual of neoliberal economics trumps not only any other idea of economic relations, but subsumes all social relations. Traditions and institutions have been stripped bare, revealing the calculating, self-interested individual that always lurked underneath. Individual self-interest has become the template through which all actions can be interpreted. The political and economic assertion of the individual is completed by a cultural ideal of complete and utter self-expression and independence. To deny this dominance, to assert that there might be other forces at work politically, other causes to be considered economically, and other values to aspire to ethically or culturally, is to be branded as a collectivist, to be burdened with the ghost of the past century's crimes and catastrophes. The individual has become not only the basis of political, cultural, and economic understanding but the extent of all of our aspirations; it is simultaneously all one needs to make sense of the world and the best that one could hope from it.

That we live in an "age of individualism" perhaps goes without saying. However, such a judgment raises as many questions as it answers. At what level are we to locate the individual? Is it, to borrow words from Foucault, an "illusion," an "ideological effect," or is it a real functioning element of society? In short, are people deluded into seeing themselves as individuals, or is individuation a material effect of practices? Much of the contemporary valorization of the multitude, and with it the cooperative dimension of labor has stressed that the individuation can only be a distortion of the actually existing collective conditions of production. As Antonio Negri writes with respect to neoliberalism, "The only problem is that extreme liberalization of the economy reveals its opposite, namely that the social and productive environment is not made up of atomized individuals... the real environment is made up of collective individuals."[1] In a related manner other theorists in the post-autonomist tradition, such as Paolo Virno have stressed that contemporary production, with its emphasis on intellectual labor, cooperation, and the production of social relations, has made the social individual, and not the individual, the contemporary laboring subject. Against this tendency we have post-Foucauldian critiques of neoliberalism, which argue

that far from being an ideological illusion, neoliberalism is an effective production of subjectivity. Neoliberalism functions as a set of institutional and political transformations that compels people to adopt its worldview. The parents sending their children to a charter school in place of underfunded public schools, or the college student trying to figure out the best major to go into debt to study, may not believe in the ideal of competitive individuals or market relations as the ideal model of social relations, but they are compelled to act as if they do just to survive. Neoliberal theory declares that everyone is an isolated individual, maximizing self-interest, while neoliberal practice, the constitution of market based solutions for everything from education to the environment, works to actively produce this tendency, destroying the possibility and desire to act in any collective manner.

There is thus a strong opposition between those who claim that the individual is nothing but the ideological representation of a society that increasingly puts to work the collective intelligence of society, and those who claim the contemporary society has destroyed any collective sense of belonging or action in favor of an increasingly isolated or individual subject. If one of these statements is true the other must be false.

AND  
IDENTITY  
WT



## Flowers

plant also has something purely demonstrative [and] has no relation with its use.”<sup>2</sup> Forms and appearances do not have to communicate meaning or content; they have to establish communication between different beings—different not only in number (the male and female of the same species), but in species, in realm, in ontological domain (plants and insects, dogs, humans. . .). In the flower, the form is the laboratory of conjunction, the space of the mixture of what is disparate.

> COMPLETE  
INVISIBLE  
WE DON'T  
NEED INSTI-  
TUTIONS, WE  
NEED FORMS.

Among the modes of self-multiplication, sexual reproduction is the one that transforms a process of division and multiplication of a single individual into a collective process of invention and variation of forms. In the flower, reproduction ceases to be the instrument of individual or specific narcissism to become an ecology of condensation and mixture, because the individual *makes* the world and the whole world is in labor with the new individual. The relation between individuals of the same species has to pass through the relation with other individuals from other realms. Not only is there nothing private or occult in the sexual act (this is what gets expressed in the concept of *phanerogam*), but, to accomplish a sexual act, one must pass through the world: sex is the most worldly and cosmic thing. The encounter with the other is always, by necessity, a union with the world in its diversity of forms, status, substance. It is impossible to enclose oneself in an identity, be it of genre, of species, or of realm. Besides, sex is the originary practice of identity relaxation.

IDENTITY  
RELAXATION

↳ IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ENCLOSE  
ONESELF IN AN IDENTITY

GORAN SERGEJ PRISTAJ - ANTI PRODUCTION OF ART

## PRODUCTION & REPRODUCTION IN ART

However, at this point we come to an important turnaround: this type of transforming artistic labour into a product can no longer be called "work" or "process". It is rather a social production (or reproduction) of conditions and modes of production, a kind of realism of production relations. Althusser would say that "social production is only apparently the production of things; in reality it is the production of a social relation, i.e., the reproduction of the relations of production."<sup>5</sup> The tendency to reproduce artistic labour as an alternative to the production of artworks, with the (c)aim to destabilise a fetish of objects, has actually turned into a fetishisation of process where the so-called free, non-alienated artistic work became a usable good, thereby erasing a difference between artistic production (*poiesis*) and reproductions of modes of production. Because they represent processes, art institutions no longer simply separate spheres of circulation, they also produce conditions of production and distribution and references and finally (or, initially), desire and consummation.

↳ ART INSTITUTIONS  
beyond the  
opposition  
product vs process



## Theory of the Flower: The Reason of Forms

Mixture—whose most universal form for the living is perhaps sex—is always a force of multiplication and of variation of forms, and not a mechanism for their reduction.

It is the active instrument of mixture: every encounter and every union with other individuals occur through it. But a flower is not, properly speaking, an organ: it is an aggregate of different organs, modified to make reproduction possible. There is a deep connection between the ephemeral and unstable aspect of this formation and that of overtaking a properly “organic” horizon. As a space of elaboration, production, and engendering of new identities, individual and specific, the flower is a device that overturns the logic of the individual organism: it is the last threshold where the individual and the species open up to the possibilities of mutation, of change, of death. At the heart of the flower, the totality of the organism as well as that of the species is decomposed and recomposed through the process of meiosis. Flowers are in this respect a place beyond totality, beyond the “one for all.” This is what is expressed in their number, too: if higher animals have stable and unique reproductive organs at their service, the plant builds its reproductive appendages *in huge amounts*, to free itself from them rapidly. Because of this excess—which in turn causes another excess, that of the legions of pollinators (animate or inanimate)—it

IT IS NOT ONE  
BUT AN  
AGGREGATE  
GETTING THE  
CONDITIONS  
FOR SOMETHING  
TO HAPPEN

THANKS TO  
THE MANY  
IT HOST



# TRANSINDIVIDUAL

The word that suggests itself in describing this concept of an individuation that passes through social relations, rather than in opposition to them, is transindividual. The term transindividual is drawn from the work of Gilbert Simondon, and can be briefly defined as resting on two postulates. The first is that individuation is a process not a principle. Rather than seeing everything as always already individuated, individuation has to be understood as a process. The building blocks of this process are not individuals, some basic building blocks or atoms of reality, but relations that exist in a metastable state. The things that individuate us, our ways of speaking, habits, comportments, are made up not so much of individual things, but of differential relations. This brings us to the second presupposition: the relation between individuation and the collective is less a zero sum game, in which individuation is always at the expense of collectivity and collective cohesion can only be a suppression of individuation, rather than a relation of mutual individuation—a transindividual relation. As much as Simondon's philosophy can be read as the ontological articulation, the ontogenesis, of Marx's formulation of an individual individuated in and through society, his ontology lacks the second component that of the paradoxical isolation through relation that defines capitalist individuation for Marx.

AS A BROADER  
BELONGING TO THE WORLD  
(see below)

interlinked ∞

energy, or species being that characterized the early texts on capital. Throughout Marx's mature writing it is possible to grasp not just a continuation of the critique of the individual or bourgeois society, or a development of an ontology of species being, but an articulation of their intersection. Marx critiques capital as both a constitution of an isolated individual of "freedom, equality, and Bentham" through the sphere of exchange, as well as a mode of production that increasingly relies on the combined powers of the species through the organization of cooperative production. The spheres of exchange and production are different "relations of individuation"; in the former individuals confront each other as isolated individuals on the market, confronting the labor of others only in and through the fetishized commodities, while in the latter individuals have their collective capacities put to work by capital.

Neither of these can be considered according to a moral spectrum of good or bad. It is not a matter of opposing a good collectivism to a bad individualism. As much as capital puts to work collective powers, it does so not only for capital, exploiting the maximum of profits, but under the rule of capital. As Marx reminds us, the collective power of workers increasingly appears to be the work of capital itself, as the productive power of cooperation disappears in the captivating image of capital producing capital. Capitalist cooperation cannot be understood to be a prefiguration of a communist future. It is too rigidly defined by discipline and caught in a constitutive misrecognition, where its collective energy appears to be the energy of capital. Conversely, the bourgeois individual is not simply to be obliterated in some kind of collective belonging. Or rather what has to be obliterated is precisely its bourgeois character, the isolation that confines it to "freedom, equality, and Bentham." Rather than simply affirm cooperation in its capitalist form, or destroy individuality in its bourgeois form, both must be overcome, even sublated in order to constitute the social individual, an individuation that is produced in and through its relations. The social individual could in some sense be understood as the goal. Meanwhile in the present, the question in the present remains as how to think the articulation of the two different, and contradictory individuations, that of consumption which reproduces mankind as isolated and fragmentary, and that of production, which increasingly draws on collective relations and potentials.

SOCIAL INDIVIDUAL

THE TWO PRODUCTIONS OF SUBJECTIVITY IN CAPITAL - JASON READ



would be difficult, anyway, to reduce the sex of plants to a simple strategy of self-replication. But there are also other elements that make it hard to treat the main instrument of plant reproduction simply as a subjective emanation. The Stoics imagined that, immediately after birth, every living being perceives itself and, on the basis of this perception, appropriates itself and grows accustomed to itself. They called this process of self-appropriation and self-familiarization *oikeiōsis*—the living being's becoming one's own, oneself. "One must know," wrote Hierocles, "that an animal immediately, as soon as it is born, perceives itself"<sup>5</sup> and that, "when it has received the first perception of itself, [it] immediately becomes its own and familiar to itself and to its constitution."<sup>6</sup> The flower quite often demonstrates the opposite mechanism: that of the disappropriation of the self, of becoming a stranger to oneself. This is what happens in fertilization: the majority of hermaphroditic flowers develop a system of self-immunization to avoid self-fertilization, a defense against themselves that allows them to open up to the world more.<sup>7</sup>

If a flower cannot be considered a simple organ, this is mainly because it is the site of the production of the future organism, and hence the totality of the organs of which a body is composed. In repeating ad nauseam that living beings are *organic* beings, one often forgets that every organism also participates in a metaorganic horizon, the one that permits the construction of all the organs of which it is composed. The flower (alone with the seed) is, from this point of view, the organ of all organs, not only because it puts into place the originary worksite from which the organic construction is both conceived and realized, but because, in order to do this,

Dis-appropriation of the self  
 (see also Disposition (BUT-ON, Attention)  
 AS A BROADER BELONGING TO THE WORLD



passive consumption. At the extreme point of this process is nothing less than the destruction of individuation itself. As Stiegler writes:

YOU MEAN EGOTISM NOT INDIVIDUALISM

To say we live in an individualistic society is a patent lie, an extraordinary false delusion, and, moreover, extraordinary because no one seems conscious of it, as if the efficacy of the lie was proportional to its enormity, and as if the lie was nobody's responsibility. We live in a herd-society, as comprehended and anticipated by Nietzsche. Some think this society individualistic because, at the very highest levels of public and private responsibility, but also in the smallest details of those processes of adoption stamped by marketing and the organization of consumption, egotism has been elevated to the pinnacle of life. But individualism has no relation to this egotism. Individualism wants the flourishing of the individual, the being always and indissociably a we and I, an I in a we or a we composed of Is., incarnated by Is. To oppose the individual and the collective is to transform individuation into social atomization, producing a herd.[7]

For Stiegler there is no individuation without transindividuation, the individual is constituted in relation to collectively inherited traditions and knowledge. It is precisely this which the contemporary culture industry destroys, reducing the individual to a series of marketable tastes and drives and the collective, the we into a "they" which is at best a statistical totality and at worse a hostile enemy. The sphere of

production puts to work not just the individual capacity to labor but also the collective labor of the species. What Virno stresses, and what justifies the use of the term transindividual, is that the contemporary labor process does not just put to work the combined efforts of different individuals, their cooperative powers, but their very capacity to relate and individuate. As Virno writes, borrowing Marx's phrase, social individual, "Social" should be translated as preindividual, and "individual" should be seen as the ultimate result of the process of individuation."[8] This is Virno's understanding of the rise of cooperative and intellectual dimension of post-fordist production. Work that involves communication, language, and affects is work that simultaneously exploits and produces the very conditions for individuation, reproduction and transforming collective and individual existence.

Following Stiegler and Virno's use of Simondon's terminology, we could argue that what defines the present stage of capitalism is the commodification of the preindividual and the exploitation of the transindividual. While the division is rough, it does highlight a particular observation underlying Stiegler and Virno's analysis, that much of what we read, listen to, and watch, the basis of our sensibility, comes to us in commodity form, while our labor is increasingly social, involving not only cooperation with others, but the capacity to relate to others. This assertion repeats and deepens Marx's analysis of the sphere of exchange and the hidden abode of production as two different individuations, two different productions of subjectivity. It is possible to understand Stiegler and Virno as deepening this analysis: now the sphere of exchange, the sphere of consumption, is no longer that of egotistical individuals, but of the destruction of the very conditions for individuation; and the hidden abode of production is no longer simply the place that puts to work mankind's cooperative powers, but the very conditions of collective and individual life. The division is deepened, and passes not between two classes, those that buy and sell on the market and those who have only their labor power to sell, but at the heart of transindividual individuation, subjectivity itself.

JASON READ - THE TWO PRODUCTIONS OF SUBJECTIVITY ...!



## Theory of the Flower: The Reason of Forms

it has to reduce the actual identity of the organism to a simple code, an abridged, revised sketch, diminished by half, an active image that contains the ensemble of technical and material procedures necessary to produce other individuals. It is in itself the perfect expression of the absolute coincidence of life and technique, matter and imagination, spirit and extension.

INSTITUTIONAL  
CROSS-POLLINATION

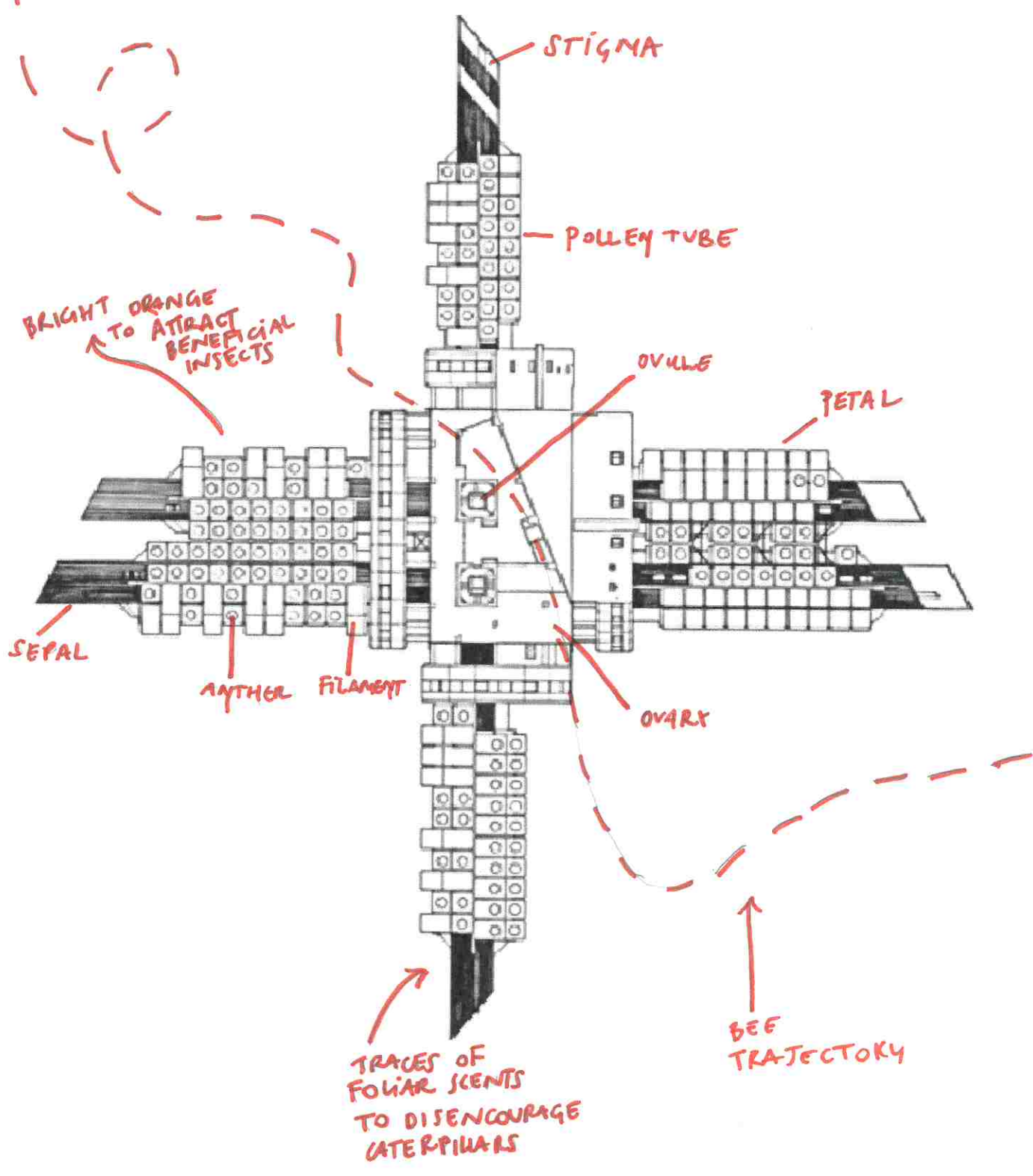
IT IS JUST SOMETHING  
APPEARING IN MY MIND  
NOW.  
I WILL THINK ABOUT IT  
LATER.

JASON READ

While it may be difficult to reconcile these two different perspectives, which together could be considered an intensification of the "schizophrenic" tendency of capitalism, collective at work but disindividuated in consumption, taken together they paint a picture of contemporary capitalism, which can perhaps only be united by what they exclude. Between the commodification of the preindividual and the exploitation of the transindividual there is the destruction of the kind of individuations which have defined contemporary politics, those of the citizen or even the worker, which defined themselves in relation to a stable collective and individual identity. This is not to say that any future politics must only address individuals and collectives as consumers or entrepreneurs, adopting the machinations of marketing or the dismal prospects of libertarianism. However, it does mean that any future politics cannot simply presuppose forms of transindividuation which have been radically transformed, such as citizenship. Instead any future politics must work in and on the terrain of individuation itself, mobilizing the collective powers of labor against the fragmenting anxieties of consumerism, transforming our collective anxiety and impotence into power.

- THE TWO PRODUCTIONS OF SUBJECTIVITY IN CAPITAL -





## Reason Is Sex

Over the centuries, plants have been considered the place where matter is animated by a kind of transcendental imagination: more than a personal faculty, capable of fashioning the intangible reality of psychism, this is an elastic power that models immediately the matter of the world. The “plant soul” is not thought of as a life devoid of the faculty of imagination, but as a life where the imagination produces effects on the whole body of the organism—to the point of giving it form—and where matter is a dream without consciousness, a fantasy that has no need of organs or subjects to realize itself.

Every plant seems to invent and open a cosmic plane where there is no opposition between matter and fantasy, between imagination and self-development. The idea of a sphere of absolute coincidence between body and knowledge, between image and matter, has never been alien to biology.

HERE WE  
SPEAK  
ABOUT  
IMAGINATION  
INSTEAD  
OF FICTION

MORE OF A  
LIVELY QUALITY  
BELONGING TO  
LIFE ITSELF

WORLD CHANGING  
FORCE OF  
GIVING FORM

→ PUTS INTO  
QUESTION OUR  
ONLY DISTINCTION  
BETWEEN  
FICTION AND  
REALITY / THE  
REAL WORLD  
→ INHERENT



# Theory of the Flower: The Reason of Forms

## Reason Is Sex

In this sense, imagination does not define a space of sovereignty: it is not possible to distract oneself from the object one contemplates, natural perception is affectivity without sovereignty.<sup>9</sup>

MEMBRAES



## Theory of the Flower: The Reason of Forms

\*

In his monumental *Manuel de philosophie naturelle*, Lorenz Oken wrote:

If one wishes to compare the flower—beyond sexual relation—to an animal organ, one can only compare it with the most important nerve organ. The flower is the brain of plants, that which corresponds to the light, which remains on the plane of sex. One can say that what is sex in the plant is brain for the animal, or that the brain is the sex of the animal.<sup>10</sup>

To think of reason as a flower—or rather to think of the flower as the paradigmatic form of existence of reason—leads one to conceive it as the cosmic faculty of the variation of forms.

IMAGINATION

## Reason Is Sex

Reason—the flower of the cosmos—is a force of multiplication of the world. It never gives the existent back to itself, to its numerical unity, to its history, to its genealogy; instead it multiplies bodies, renews the possible, sets the past back to zero, opens up the space to an inconceivable future. The reason-flower, at last, does not compress the plurality of experience into a unique “I,” does not reduce the difference of opinion to the uniqueness of a subject; it multiplies and differentiates subjects, it makes experiences incomparable and incompatible. Reason is no longer the reality of the identical, the unchangeable, the same; it is the force and structure that constrains each thing to mix with its similars by means of the dissimilar in order to change its face; it is the force that leaves in the care of the world, leaves up to chance encounters, the task of redesigning from within the face of its components.

*Reason is a flower:* one could express this equivalence by saying that everything that is rational is sexual and everything that is sexual is rational. Rationality is a matter of forms, but form is always the result of the movement of a mixture that produces variation,

HARAWAY'S  
TERRAPOLIS

8.0121  
SPACE  
TIME

IT CREATES  
A SPACE  
OF ACTION

REASON  
AND  
IMAGINATION



Every encounter, as every combination of relations in the process of production of artwork and its presentation, "might not have happened although it has happened."<sup>15</sup> Every encounter is subjected to chance and its outcome is aleatoric, therefore its conditions can be "defined exclusively by *working backward*"<sup>16</sup>. Our field of activity, as artists, is to detect "affinities"<sup>17</sup>, that have allowed/might allow this setting to hold on, and which have made it necessary. And that is what theatre investigates during the process: what are the preconditions for and which affinities do the actors of the process have for a particular collaboration, to hold on to different levels of existence – among those taking part in it, in the world of objects, in relation to fiction, in front of the audience, in a repertoire, in history ...

Zepke writes:

(...) it is not actual poetry that is required but a return to 'poetics', an open form of composition by which we can escape ourselves according to a 'logic of sensation', one in which affects multiply and lead towards a singular infinity of virtual possibility. As Nietzsche famously advised, we must become poets of our lives and in this way turn life into art. This, as Bifo rightly argues, is the way in which poetics might reconnect (it means to re-sensitise, to re-politicise) the social body and the general intellect.<sup>18</sup>

GORAN SERGEJ PRISTAJ – THE ANTI-PRODUCTION OF ART

## Theory of the Flower: The Reason of Forms

change. At the other end, sexuality is no longer the morbid sphere of the infrarational, the site of murky and nebulous affects. It is the structure and ensemble of the encounters with the world that allow everything to let itself be touched by the other, to progress in its evolution, to reinvent itself, to become other in the body of resemblance.

ART  
INSTITUTION (A)  
CROSS-POLLINATION

In sexuality, living beings make themselves agents of cosmic brewing, and mixture becomes a way of renewing beings and identities.

*Reason is a flower:* reason is not and can never be an organ with well-defined and stable forms. It is a corporation of organs, a structure of appendages that calls into question the entire organism and its logic. It is principally an ephemeral, seasonal structure whose existence depends on the climate and atmosphere of the world in which it finds itself. It is risk, invention, experimentation.

ASSEMBLAGE

- A FESTIVAL? -

The flower is the paradigmatic form of rationality: to think is always to invest oneself in the sphere of appearances—not in order to express its hidden interiority, nor in order to speak, to say something, but in order to put different beings in touch with one another. Reason is only this plurality of cosmic structures of attraction that allow beings to perceive and absorb the world and allow the world to exist wholly in all the organisms that inhabit it.

SEE ALSO  
→ FESTIVAL  
AS THINKING  
ENTITIES  
IN "CURATING  
LIVE ACTS"  
(2018)



# III

## Theory of the Root

The Life of the Stars

IO  
Roots

*In Sneffels Yoculis craterem kem delibat  
umbra Scartaris Julii intra calendas descende,  
audas viator, et terrestre centrum attinges.  
Kod feci. Arne Saknussem.*

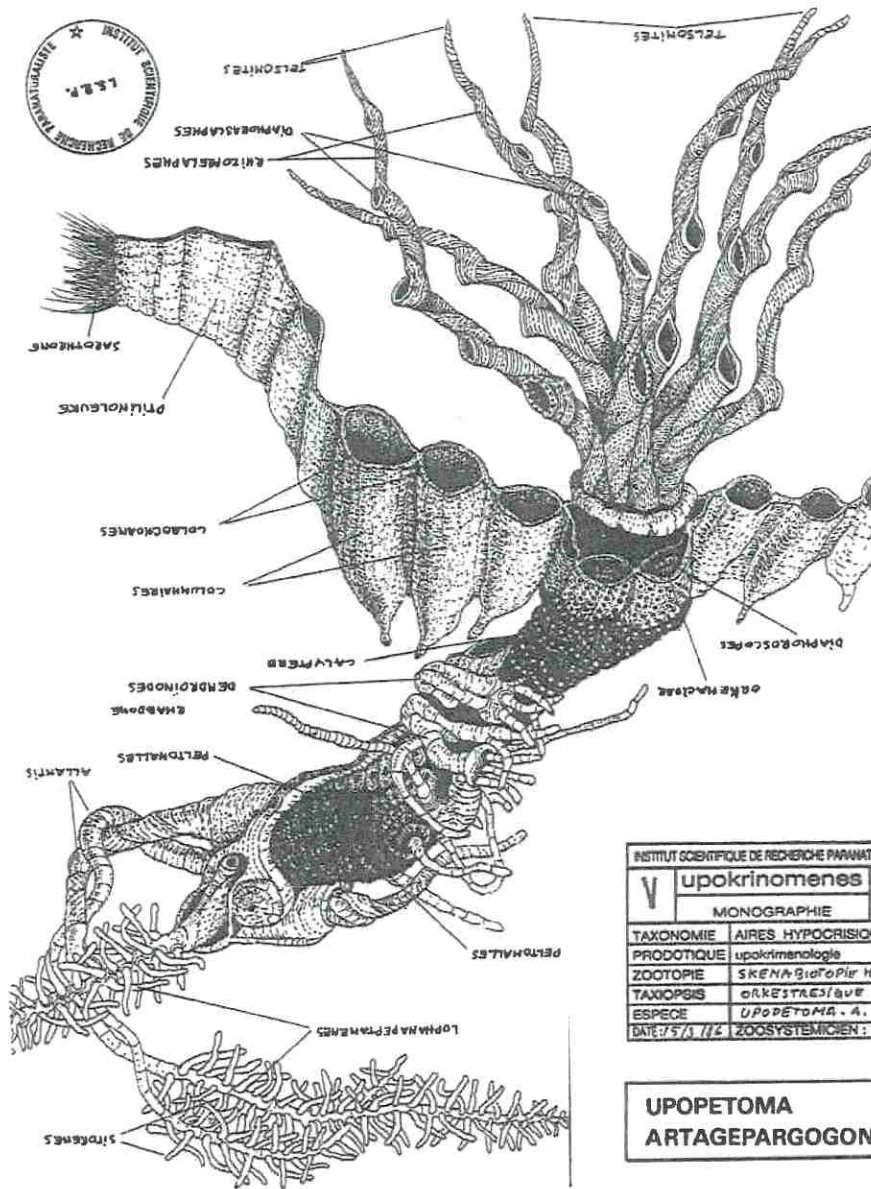
[Descend into the crater of Yocul of Sneffels,  
which the shade of Scartaris caresses, before the kalends  
of July,  
audacious traveler, and you will reach the center of the  
earth.  
I did it. Arne Saknussem.]

Jules Verne

→ YEE ALSO "The Cause of some recent  
changes" by A. Grey in  
this reader



\* Roots in the sky



INSTITUT SCIENTIFICUM DE RECHERCHES PARANATURALISTES		
V	upokrinomenes	3
MONOGRAPHIE		
TAXONOMIE	AIRES HYPOCRISQUES	
PRODOTIQUE	upokrinomenologie	
ZOOTOPHE	SKENABIOPOPIE HADALE	
TAXOPOBIS	ORKESTRASIAVE	
ESPECE	UPOPETOMA . A.	
DATE: 7/5/11	ZOOSYSTEMICIEN: L. BEC	

**UPOPETOMA  
ARTAGEPARGOGONE**

The *Upopetoma artagepargogone* belongs to the order Vampyromorpha. It inhabits a skenobiotopical preferendum in which it lures and seduces its prey with the grace and elegance of its movement.

FROM: INSTITUT SCIENTIFICUM DE RECHERCHES PARANATURALISTES

## Theory of the Root: The Life of the Stars

They seem to live cut off from the multiplicity of living beings, and yet it is thanks to them that plants come to be aware of what goes on around them. Plato had already compared our head, and hence reason, to a “root”: the human being, he said, is “a plant of the sky [*phuton ouranion*] and not of the earth,” with the roots going up—a sort of inverted plant.<sup>4</sup> But the version that was to become canonical was given by Aristotle in the treatise *De anima*: “up <sup>side</sup> and down are not for all

How to take root in the sky / How to take root where there is no ground\*  
78  
→ interesting questions for the art institution as well



## Roots

things what they are for the whole world: if we are to distinguish and identify organs according to their functions, the roots of plants are analogous to the head in animals.”<sup>5</sup> “The action of the two,” Averroes would gloss, “is identical.”<sup>6</sup> The analogy between the head and the root sets up the one between human being and plant, which was to have an extraordinary success in the philosophical and theological tradition from the Middle Ages and up to the modern period (Francis Bacon would still use it). Likewise, in his philosophical treatise, when he expands over the parallelism between these two, Guillaume de Conches explains that “trees push their root, which has their head, toward the bottom, in the earth from which they derive their nutrition. Man, on the contrary, exhibits his head, which is like his root, in the air, because he lives by his spirit.”<sup>7</sup> Linnaeus<sup>8</sup> would reverse the direction of the analogy, speaking of the plant as an upside-down animal.

ROOTS  
THINK

It is an upright creature: it has unwound its mollusk coil into a perpendicular line. In doing so it became an open palm, touching and absorbing the world to fill its elevated stomach. This is similar to how we, having begun to walk upright, freed our hands, but in the opposite direction. We have both surmounted our animality, and we have both had to pay a price for this. To transcend one's own evolutionary agenda is not without costs. We are both endangered species. The human because the process of walking upright resulted in a vulnerable stomach, because it lost two supporting limbs, and because its routine behavior has diluted its "instincts." The vampyroteuthis has forsaken the protection of a shell and can hold itself upright thanks only to the pressure at the bottom of the sea. The price that humans had to pay is the protection bestowed by the ground, by the floor; its price is banishment into the abyss, to be pressed against the deepest floor of all. We are estranged from the earth, and it from the sky. Analogous alienations.

→ SO IT NEEDS  
INSTITUTIONS!  
(DELEUZE)

"VAMPIROTEUTHIS INFERNALIS"

## Theory of the Root: The Life of the Stars

It is through the root system, in effect, that a plant acquires the vast majority of information on its own state and that of the environment in which it is immersed; it is also through the roots that it comes into contact with other, limitrophic individuals and manages, collectively, the risks and difficulties of underground life.<sup>11</sup> The roots make the soil and the subterranean world a space of spiritual communication. Thanks to them, then, the most solid part of the Earth is transformed into an enormous planetary brain<sup>12</sup> through which matter circulates, along with information on the identity and state of the organisms that populate the surrounding environment. It is as if the eternal night, in which one imagines the depths of the Earth to be plunged, were anything but a long and deaf sleep. In the immense and silent horn of the underground, night is a perception without organs, without eyes and without ears, a perception that takes place through the whole body. Intelligence, thanks to roots, exists in mineral form, in a world without sun and without movement.

ROOTS AS  
AN  
INSTITUTION  
UNDERGROUND

GENERAL  
INTELLECT

JEE ALSO  
VAMPIRO-  
TEUTIS  
DEPTHS  
OF THE  
SEA

As the work  
of the fictional  
Geographer  
Jakob Klenke,  
specifically his  
pioneering  
work on  
perception,  
native and  
trans-indivi-  
dual  
communication

\*

In ordinary speech as in literature and art, roots are often the emblem and the allegory of what is most *fundamental* and *originary*, what is most obstinately solid and stable, what is necessary. They are the plant organ par excellence. And yet it would be hard to find a more ambiguous form among those that life has created and adopted over the course of its history. They are not any more necessary to the survival of the individual than the other parts of the organism; from a strictly evolutionary

DIFFERENT  
TYPE  
OF  
SOLIDITY  
↓  
LIVELY  
AND  
LIFE-  
MAKING



## Roots

point of view, they are not at the origin of the plant result—as is the photosynthetic function, for example.

NEITHER ARE ART INSTITUTIONS  
The advantages they bring are those of networking, and not those of isolation or distinction. But, even so, it would be naive to consider them a secondary and “decorative” appendage. Roots are not what we thought they were, but they express and embody, all the same, one of the most significant traits of plant existence: ambiguity, hybridity, their amphibious and double character.

We are dealing here in the first place with ecological hybridity. Thanks to roots, the vascular plant, alone among all living organisms, inhabits *simultaneously* two environments that are radically different in their texture, structure, and organization and in the nature of the life that inhabits them: earth and air, sun and sky. Plants are not content to touch them lightly, they push into each one of them with the same stubbornness, the same capacity to imagine and to fashion their bodies in the most unexpected forms. Cosmic mediators, ~~plants~~ ART INSTITUTIONS are *ontologically amphibious* beings:<sup>13</sup> *they connect environments and spaces*, showing that the relation between the living being and the environment cannot be conceived of in *exclusive* terms (say, those of niche theory, or Uexküll’s); they always have to be inclusive. AS Life, <sup>which</sup> is always cosmic, and not a matter of niches; it is never cloistered in a *single* environment, but it radiates through all environments; it makes of those environments a *world*, a cosmos whose unity is atmospheric. Then, art could be experienced

This ecological duplicity is accompanied and as if redoubled by a dynamic, structural duplicity. Although in communication and in mutual interpenetration (much like in the whole cosmos), the two environments not only are juxtaposed against each other but structure

I would suggest the idea of the "Intervenor": an autonomous outside voice who nonetheless has the right to act within the institution. Intervenor could not only act within the walls of the white cube, but could also directly intercede when it comes to matters of communication, events, bureaucracy, administration, and even the office space itself.

It is not easy to talk about such an antagonistic position without putting it into practice. Let's imagine how this would work:

- Intervenor could be artists, art workers, cultural workers, or academics who aren't normally part of the institutional decision-making mechanism, and who are aware of the sensitivities of the local context.
- Intervenor would have an officially acknowledged agreement that protects their work from financial and political interference.
- Intervenor would have a right to vet all forms of communication before they go public. This would include announcements, press conferences, events, and statements.
- Intervenor would act in a time-sensitive manner, and would be flexible in times of crisis; they would not act according to preprogrammed agendas, concepts, exhibition schedules, or locations.
- Intervenor could leave when it is no longer possible to challenge the limits of structural change.
- Intervenor would be the protagonists who go beyond symbolic and harmless institutionalized critical agency. They would intercede if the institution reacted in an authoritarian or judgmental way to any public concerns.

Ahmet Özü

"The Intervenor"

GREAT  
CONNECTION!



## Theory of the Root: The Life of the Stars

AKT  
INSTITUTIONS

themselves as reversed mirror images. It is as though plants lived two lives at the same time: one aerial, bathed and immersed in light, made of visibility and of an intense interspecific interaction with other plants and with other animals of all kinds; the other chthonic, mineral, latent, *ontologically* nocturnal, chiseled in the stony flesh of the planet, in synergistic communion with all the forms of life that populate it. These two lives do not alternate and do not exclude each other: they are the being of the same individual, the only one who succeeds in reuniting, in its body and in its experience, the earth and the sky, the stone and the light, the water and the sun, and to be the image of the world in its totality. Already in the body of the plant, everything is in everything: the sky is in the Earth, the Earth is pushed toward the sky, the air makes itself body and extension, and extension is nothing but an atmospheric laboratory.

Plants are beings that are ecologically and structurally double: but their bodies are the ones that are *anatomically geminated* first. The root is like a second body, secret, esoteric, hidden; an antibody, an anatomical antimatter that reverses as in a mirror, point by point, everything the other body does, and that pushes the plant in a direction exactly opposite to that of all the efforts it makes above the surface. Imagine that, for each movement of your body, there is another one that goes the opposite way; imagine that your arms, your mouth, your eyes have an antithetical correspondent in a matter that mirrors perfectly the one that defines the texture of your world: you would then have an idea, albeit a vague one, of what it means to have roots. This is what Julius Sachs calls the anisotropy of the plant body—in

## Roots

other words, the antitropy specific to its extremities.<sup>14</sup> As if the body of plants were divided into two, each one of its parts structures itself according to a force and a texture radically opposed to each other. The root is an apparatus of meticulous deconstruction of forms and geometries from the terrestrial surface, starting with the force that seems to determine entirely our life, the life of mobile animals: gravity.<sup>15</sup>

INTERVENORS  
COULD LEAVE WHEN  
IT IS NO LONGER  
POSSIBLE TO  
CHALLENGE THE  
LIMITS OF  
STRUCTURAL  
CHANGE

→ THAT'S WHY \*  
IN ALASDAIR GRAY'S  
STORY THE ART STUDENT  
DIGGING AN ESCAPE TUNNEL  
ENDS UP IN THE CENTER THAT  
PRODUCES GRAVITY!

They are the essence of descent: the way toward the bottom, the geological plunge of life. Their existence—as though they were Otto Lidenbrocks or, better still, nonhuman Arne Saknussemm—is a perpetual voyage to the center of the Earth, an attempt to meld with it.

immersing themselves  
being immersed



## Theory of the Root: The Life of the Stars

One would be wrong to see in this love for the Earth a simple effect of gravity: the root does not limit itself to perceiving and passively submitting to the gravitational force, as does any body situated on the surface of the Earth. Of course, gravity is “the most constant and most permanent force among all the environmental forces that act on plants,”<sup>20</sup> but the reaction to gravity is not the same as the reactions that other bodies—animal bodies—display. It is not simply the effect of weight; it is a different attraction, a force of growth that is directed toward the center of the planet. Darwin had noticed it:

Geotropism [. . .] excites the primary radicle to bend downwards with very little force, quite insufficient to penetrate the ground. Such penetration is effected by the pointed apex (protected by the root-cap) being pressed down by the longitudinal expansion or growth of the terminal rigid portion, aided by its transverse expansion, both of which forces act powerfully.<sup>21</sup>

SEE  
VAMPIRO-  
TEUTHIS'  
PLEASURE  
OF RAPING  
ITS KINS

## Roots

It is as if the root doubled the weak force of gravity that pushes it toward the bottom. As if the plant, in its totality, used all its means to overcome the resistance against its descent—with an intensity equal to that which the stem uses to elevate itself.

One is tempted to see the root as the most perfect accomplishment of the Nietzschean program of *amor fati*: “I entreat you, my brothers, *remain true to the earth*, and do not believe those who speak to you of superterrestrial hopes!”<sup>22</sup>

But this is only a part of the truth, and it misconstrues what the root brings to each plant: its hybrid, amphibious character. The root is only a half of the seeded body of the plant—the relation with the earth is just one of the two lives of all plant organisms. And it cannot be understood except in relation to its other half: geotropism is one of the directions of an impulse [*élan*] that has no purpose besides being faithful to the Earth. It is an effect and a result of heliocentrism, which defines the very essence of plant life. If it needs to bury itself in the mineral body of the Earth, this is in order to bind it better to the fire that determines, part by part, its forms and movements.

that's what  
OUR INSTITUTIONS  
SHOULD START  
JOINING NOW



II  
The Deepest Are  
the Stars

IMAGINE  
THE  
BREATH  
OF AN  
INSTITUTION,  
WHAT  
COMES  
IN,  
WHAT GETS  
OUT  
BEING OPEN  
TO THE WORLD  
THAT ALLOWS/  
ENABLES ITS  
EXISTENCE

Everything breathes, but in a different way from the aerial world. Besides, the breath of bodies has no need to pass through lungs—or through organs, for that matter: any body is defined by its breath, any body is a port, open to the circulation of matter—within and outside itself. The organism is nothing but the invention of a new way of mixing with the world and of allowing the world to mix with what is inside it. Down here, to breathe means to give oneself a tentacular body, capable of clearing for itself a path blocked by stone, and to multiply one's

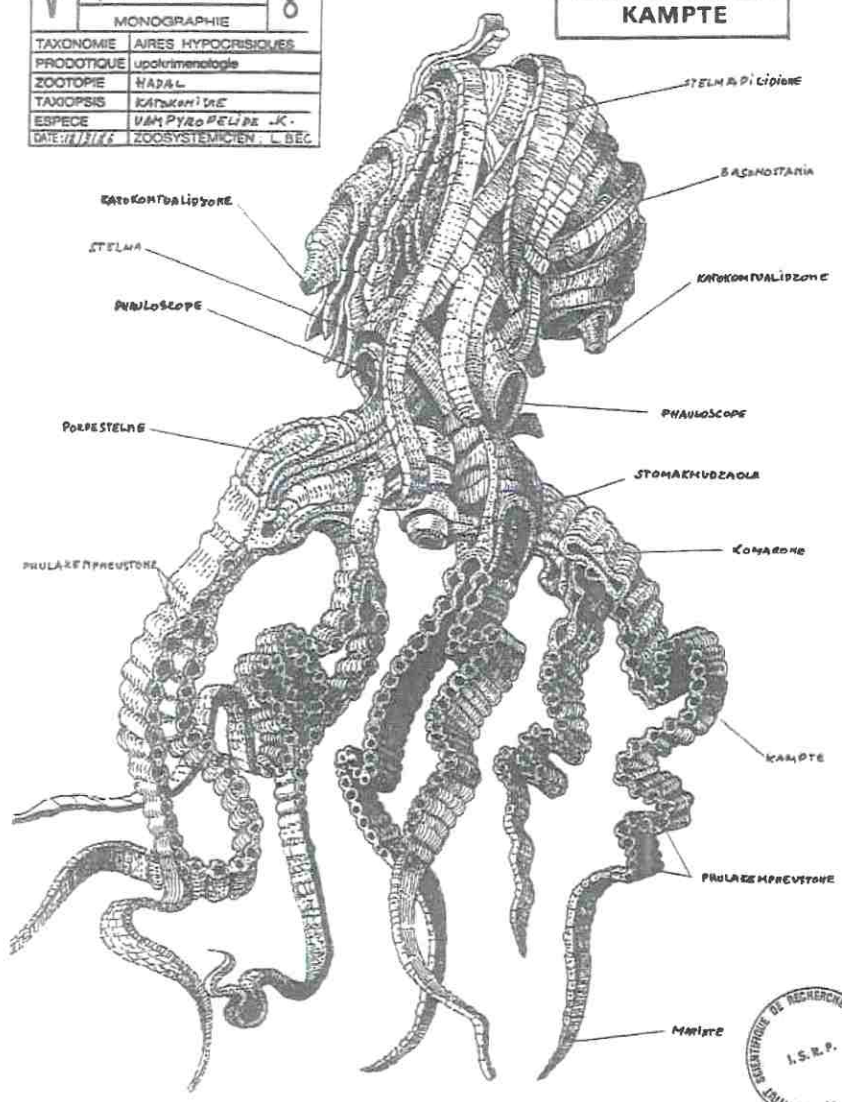
VAMPIROTEURISTIC  
BODY

AN INSTITUTION THAT TRANSFORMS CO<sub>2</sub> → O<sub>2</sub>!

MULTIPLE ARMS AND APPENDAGES SO AS TO EMBRACE  
 AS MUCH EARTH AS POSSIBLE

INSTITUT SCIENTIFIQUE DE RECHERCHE PARANATURALISTE		
V	upokrinomenes	8
MONOGRAPHIE		
TAXONOMIE	AIRES HYPOCRISIQUES	
PRODOTIQUE	upokrinomologie	
ZOOTOPIE	NADAL	
TAGOPSS	KATYKON'DIE	
ESPECE	VAMPYROPELIDE -K-	
DATE: 11/11/11	ZOO SYSTEMICIEN: L. BEG.	

VAMPYROPELIDE  
 KAMPTE





## The Deepest Are the Stars

arms and appendages so as to embrace as much Earth as possible, so as to expose oneself to it like the leaf to the sky.

One of the great botanists of the last century wrote:

The plant plays the role of a mediator between the Sun and the animal world. The plant, or rather its most typical organ, the chloroplast, is the connection that brings together the activity of all the organic world—everything we call life—to the center of energy of our solar system: such is the cosmic function of the plant.<sup>1</sup>

The root is what allows plants to implicate in this cosmic mediation the Earth, in its *planetary dimension*. If the Earth rotates physically around the Sun, it is *in* plants and *thanks to* them that this connection produces life and matter, which always exists in new forms.

## Theory of the Root: The Life of the Stars

Thanks to plants to a certain extent, heliocentrism changes from an erudite and speculative problem into a question of life: through them, life is—and is nothing but—the form par excellence of heliocentrism. This is not a matter of truth or opinion: every living being is only the effect and the expression of heliocentrism, on account of the fact that everything on Earth exists thanks to the Sun. The root makes it possible for the Sun—and for life itself—to penetrate down to the marrow of the planet, to bring the Sun's influence to its deepest resting places, to infiltrate down to the center of the Earth the metamorphosed body of the star that generates us.

\*



## The Deepest Are the Stars

We've never truly been heliocentrists: geocentrism is the deepest soul [*âme*] of western forms of knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

# Theory of the Root: The Life of the Stars



## The Deepest Are the Stars

We continue to conceive of ourselves through the prism of a falsely *radical* model, we continue to think the living being and its culture from a false image of roots (because they are isolated from the rest)—as if, by dint of conceiving of the root as reason, we have transformed reason itself and thought into a blind force of rooting, into the faculty of constructing a cosmic connection with the Earth. From this perspective, the replacement of the classical root-based model with that of the rhizome does not represent a real paradigm shift: thought continues to be what allows us to think of the Earth, and only of the Earth, as *ground*, to affirm that “[t]he earth is not one element among others but rather brings together all the elements within a single embrace while using one or another of them to deterritorialize territory.”<sup>11</sup> Fidelity to the Earth—the extreme geotropism of our culture, its will, and its insistence on “radicalness”—has an enormous price: it means devoting oneself to the night, choosing to think without the Sun. Philosophy seems to have chosen, several centuries ago, the way of darkness.

TERRAPONS

Geocentrism is the delusion of false immanence: there is no autonomous Earth. The Earth is inseparable from the Sun. To go toward the Earth, to dig into its breast means always to raise toward the Sun. This double tropism is the breath itself of our world and its dynamism. It is this same tropism that presents us with the possibility of making the incomplete present a territory for collective speculation, where to inhabit darkness together, without knowing the possible outcomes of this cohabitation.

AS THE VAMPIROTHEUTIS IN FERNANDEZ'S GIOVANNI ALSO SEEMS TO SUGGEST.

PIZZA: UNDER THE COVER OF DARKNESS

DIFFERENT KIND OF DARKNESS WE DEPEND ON THE SUN.

## Theory of the Root: The Life of the Stars

structures the life of plants and the existence of stars: there is no Earth that is not intrinsically tied to the Sun, there is no Sun that is not in the course of making possible the superficial and profound animation of the Earth. To the lunar and nocturnal realism of modern and postmodern philosophy, one should oppose a new form of heliocentrism, or rather an extremization of astrology. This is not, or not only, to make the simple assertion that the stars influence us, that they govern our life, but to accept all this and to add that we also influence the stars, because the Earth itself is a celestial body among others, and everything that lives on it (as well as in it) is of an *astral* nature. There is nothing but sky, everywhere, and the Earth is one of its portions, a state of partial aggregation.

\*

TO GO TOWARD THE EARTH MEANS ALWAYS  
TO RAISE TOWARD THE SUN  
BECAUSE IF WE DIG DEEP ENOUGH WE  
END UP IN THE SKY



The Deepest Are the Stars  
Reminders for an astrological  
institutional practice:

THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE: THE SUN

1

To posit that the Sun lies at the center of the universe means, first of all, to universalize movement. The Earth *needs to turn* around the Sun in order to exist: all its reality has to be comprised of and observed starting from this infinite source of light and energy. The core of our world is not a stable point, forever frozen; it is something in the nature of a continual bubbling of energy and something to which we have access only through movement, of which the Sun itself is the cause.

THE REALITY OF MIXTURE & MOVEMENT: THE SKY

2

To assert that the Earth turns around the Sun means, then, to deny the ontological separation between human, terrestrial space and celestial, inhuman space—and thus to transform the very idea of *sky*. The sky is

## Theory of the Root: The Life of the Stars

no longer an accidental atmosphere that envelops the Sun; it is the only substance of the universe, the nature of everything that exists. The sky is not what is above. The sky is everywhere: it is the space and the reality of mixture and movement, the definitive horizon starting from which everything has to draw itself.

### A CELESTIAL BODY: THE EARTH

3 To assert a *material* continuity between the Earth and the rest of the universe means to change the idea itself of the Earth. The Earth is a celestial body, and everything in it is sky.<sup>13</sup> The human world is not the exception in a nonhuman universe; our existence, our gestures, our culture, our language, our appearances are *celestial*. To recognize the *astral* nature of the Earth is to make astrology—the science of the stars—not just into a local science, but also into *the global and universal science*: the task is no longer to understand the dominion of the stars over us—their governance—but to understand the sky as the space of flux and of influences. It is not just that biology, geology, and theology are no more than branches of astrology; [on this model, astrology becomes a science of contingency, unpredictability, irregularity. The sky is not the site of the return of the same.

VICAL INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICE

IT



## The Deepest Are the Stars

Thus astrological universalism involves the destruction of the very idea of absolute immanence, the assertion of something like an infinite floating where no body and no being lets itself be anchored anywhere any more, where in fact there is no longer any soil, any stable base, any ground. The ultimate source of our existence is the sky. The Earth and its extension are not the base or the universal substrate of our existence but rather its extreme surface, the ultimate and least substantial screen of the universe of the real: depth is represented by the stars, the Earth and sky are the infinite extension of our skin. This destruction of the traditional idea of ground also allows us to go beyond the ordinary horizon of ecology. From its very beginning, ecology always considers the environment exclusively in terms of habitat, of a soil that hosts and welcomes: it makes the world a universalization of the idea of inhabitability. It reduces the great space, the universe of the sky, to an inhabitable Earth. And it is because of this conception of the world as ground, welcoming space, and inhabitability that ecology can consider the cohabitation of living beings in an *ordered* and *standardized* collective. To recognize or to become aware that the Earth is an astral space, that it is only a condensed portion of the sky, is to recognize that there is such a thing as the uninhabitable, that space can never be, and will never be, definitively inhabited.<sup>14</sup> One crosses and penetrates space, one mixes with the world, but one will never be able to establish oneself in it. Every dwelling tends to become uninhabitable, to be sky and (4) not a house.

MIGHT BE  
AN ANSWER  
TO THE  
QUESTION:  
HOW TO  
TAKE ROOTS  
IN THE SKY!

# Theory of the Root: The Life of the Stars







Finally, there are more demonic animals, pack or affect animals that form a multiplicity, a becoming, a population, a tale . . .

HOW TO BUILD INSTITUTIONS (ART INSTITUTIONS) FOR THEM?  
OR: HOW TO DESTITUTE?

TO QUOTE  
MARY DOUGLAS,  
INSTITUTIONS REMEMBER  
AND FORGET

*Its Art*

BOTH VAMPYROTEUTHES AND HUMANS ACQUIRE INFORMATION in order to disseminate it to others, and this practice is not unique to us. In several other of the so-called higher species—mammals and birds, for instance—certain behavioral models, such as hunting and flying, are passed along from a mother to her young. However, the case of humans and vampyroteuthes is somewhat different. Unlike other animals, both of us endeavor to preserve information in our respective memories, to saturate these memories with more and more new information, and to impart them—thus enriched—to others. In the case of humans and vampyroteuthes, that is, the transmission of information is

a cumulative process. In other words, humans and vampyroteuthes are historical animals, animals that have overcome their animality.

It is a biological function to pass along genetic information, from one generation to the next, by way of gametes. During this process, the transmitted genetic constitution coincidentally mutates (on account of transmission errors), and such mutations lead to the formation of new genetic information. It is a superbiological function, however, to transmit acquired information by means of conventional codes, to mutate this information intentionally—over and over again—and even to mutate the codes themselves. This is superbiological because, in addition to genetic evolution, there is now an overlying process of historical evolution, one that is not governed by chance but rather by intention (an admittedly nebulous term).

The central problem of historical evolution is that of memory. Animals perpetuate transmitted information in gametes. The latter are practically eternal memories: they will persevere as long as there is life on earth. To transmit their acquired information, however, humans make use of artificial memories such as books, buildings, and images. Because these are far less permanent than eggs or sperm, humans are therefore always in pursuit of more durable memories: *aere perennius* (more everlasting than bronze). They are aware that, after all of their artificial memories—all of their cultural artifacts—will have faded into oblivion, their genetic information, preserved in gametes and perhaps mutated by chance, will still remain. The biological is more permanent than the superbiological, and this truth is difficult for humans to accept. It is difficult because it is not as animals, but as superanimals, that humans want to achieve “immortality.” Memory, the central problem of historical evolution, is also the central problem of art, which is essentially a method of fabricating artificial memories.

From the perspective of the vampyroteuthis, all of this has the look of a laughable error. How foolish can humans be to entrust their acquired information to lifeless objects such as paper

• IMAGINE AN INSTITUTION FOR MUTATION.

SEE DOUGLAS  
INSTITUTIONS  
AS ARCHIVES/  
STORAGE  
AND TOOLS  
FOR  
TRANSMISSION



or stone? It is well known, after all, that these objects are subject to the second law of thermodynamics, that they will decay and necessarily be forgotten. In the vampyroteuthic abyss, where all is strewn with sedimentation and bathed in fluidity, the unreliable impermanence of lifeless objects is far more obvious than it is on the relatively dead surfaces of the continents, where sun-bleached bones can endure for millennia. And yet the laughable error that is human art should not simply be laughed at—assuming the vampyroteuthis is capable of laughter—but scrutinized as well.

When we attempt to express a novel experience or thought—when we aspire to render the unspoken speakable and the unheard audible—we do so as functions of artificial memory, as functions of lifeless objects. That is, our experiences and thoughts assimilate with lifeless objects to form inextricable unities. We experience and think, for example, as functions of marble, film strips, or the letters of written language. It is not the case that we first experience or think something and, subsequently, scour the vicinity for an object with which to record it. Rather, it is *already* as sculptors, filmmakers, authors—as artists—that we begin to experience and think. Material, lifeless objects (stones, bones, letters, numbers, musical notes) shape all of human experience and thought.

All objects are stubborn; being inert, they resist our attempts to “(in)form” them. Yet every object is stubborn in its own particular way: Stones shatter when chiseled; cotton slackens when stretched; written language deforms thoughts with the stringency of its rules. To (in)form objects and transform them into memories, art engages in a constant struggle against the resistance of the objects themselves. During this struggle, humans have experienced and come to know the essence of certain objects (stones, cotton, language, for instance). Of course, this very experience provides us with even more new sets of information that, in their turn, come to be recorded in other artificial memories. Thus an ever-expanding feedback loop has developed, and

PROSTHESES  
OF INSTITUTIONS

Performances  
can be  
too!

continues to develop, between objects and humans—in other words, “art history.”

The stubborn resistance of objects is aggravating to humans. It is as though humans are called from above to (in)form a specific object. There are humans whose calling it is to (in)form stones, others whose calling it is to (in)form language, and those who have missed their calling seem to be leading a false existence, a false *Dasein*. For the feedback loop—the relationship—between a specific object and a specific human is finely tuned and, over the course of its development, this relationship changes both the object and the human. To repeat, humans live as functions of their objects. Because of this fact, we tend to forget the purpose of art, which is to transform objects into memories from which other humans can extract information. Forgetting that they are engaged in the transmission of acquired information to other humans, artists allow the objects themselves to preoccupy and absorb all of their attention. It is typical of humans to allow objects to absorb their existential interests. The result of this is a work ethic that threatens (*sic!*) to turn objects not into communicative media but into the opposite, namely, barriers that restrict human communication. The creation of communicative barriers is, in the end, the laughable error upon which all of human art is based. Thanks to the perspective of the vampyroteuthis, it has finally come to our attention.

By observing the vampyroteuthis we are able to recognize an art of a different sort, one that is not burdened by the resistance of objects—by our error—but is rather intersubjective and immaterial. Its art does not involve the production of artificial memories (artwork) but rather the immediate inculcation of data into the brains of those that perceive it. In short, the difference between our art and that of the vampyroteuthis is this: whereas we have to struggle against the stubbornness of our materials, it has to struggle against the stubbornness of its fellow vampyroteuthes. Just as our artists carve marble, vampyroteuthic artists carve the brains of their audience. Their art is not objective but

BODY  
ART

Swedish artist Markus Öhrn created the 49-hour-and-13-minute-long film *Magic Bullet* from every censored film clip preserved in the Swedish state film archive in Stockholm. This censorship bureau was the first of its kind in the world, and was created in 1911 to defend the population against the medium of film, which was considered to be a ‘magic bullet’ that could penetrate the brain and infect the thoughts and actions of the masses.

HACKING THE  
IMAGINARY





intersubjective: it is not in artifacts but in the memories of others that it hopes to become immortal. = FAME

The production and dissemination of vampyroteuthic art—its epidermal painting, for instance—can be described as follows: It experiences something new and attempts to store this novelty in its memory, that is, to allot space for it among the other information stored in its brain. It then realizes that this novelty is incongruous with its mnemonic structure, that it somehow does not fit. The vampyroteuthis is thus forced to reorganize its memory in order to accommodate it, and so its memory, shocked by this new information, begins to process it (what we humans call “creative activity”). This creative shock permeates its entire body, overwhelming it, and the chromatophores on the surface of its skin begin to contract and emit colored secretions. At this moment it experiences an artistic orgasm, during which its colorful ejaculations are encrypted into vampyroteuthic code. This exhibition captures the attention of its mate, whetting the latter’s curiosity about the articulated novelty. Thus the mate is lured into copulation, which becomes a sort of conversation. During the course of this conversation, the novelty is inculcated into the partner’s memory in order to be stored in its brain. Exactly how it spreads from there to other vampyroteuthes—how it manages to infiltrate the common vampyroteuthic conversation—cannot be accounted for here. In any case, that is precisely what happens: the newly acquired information is now a part of the vampyroteuthic conversation, and as long as vampyroteuthes exist, it will exist along with them.

The creative process of vampyroteuthic art consists, as we have seen, of two phases. The first involves the processing of data by the artist itself: that which has remained unspoken or unheard is now articulated as ejaculations during orgasm. The second phase involves the seduction of a sexual partner: an artistic expression brings the latter to climax, enabling the newly articulated information to be stored in its memory. Artistic creation is therefore both an outward expression by an artist and an inward impression upon the seduced. It is an act of raping

ART AS  
SEDUCTION

SEXUANTITY  
AND  
ARTISTIC  
PROCESS



another vampyroteuthis in an effort to become immortal in the body of the victim. Its art is a mode of rape and hatred—of deception, fiction, and lies; it is a delusive affectation, that is to say, it is “beauty.” It is all of this, oddly enough, in the spirit of orgasm.

In the depiction of vampyroteuthic art presented above, we are able to recognize—it cannot be denied—elements of our own. Nothing about this creative and orgasmic deceit is alien to us. Not only is it not alien to us, but we have even begun to vampyroteuthize our art. We have begun, in other words, to stand defiant against the fundamental error of our art, to overcome our dependence on material objects, to renounce artifacts for an immaterial and intersubjective art form. Having lost faith in material objects as artificial memories, we have begun to fashion new types of artificial memory that enable intersubjective and immaterial communication. These new communicative media may not be bioluminescent organs, but they are similarly electromagnetic. A vampyroteuthic revolution is underway.

As a model, vampyroteuthic art can perhaps help us to make sense of our current cultural revolution. The history of human art can be divided into three periods of uneven length: the first is the period before the Industrial Revolution, the second coincided with the duration of industrial society, and the third period—initiated by the information revolution (the second industrial revolution)—is advancing into an unforeseeable future. During the first period, the production of art (*techne, ars*) was the practice of impressing information upon objects (stone, leather, iron, language), and thus builders, cobblers, blacksmiths, and authors were considered artists. The modern distinction between art and craft did not exist. With the advent of steel instruments (parts, tools) and machinery during the industrial age, artists were no longer needed to (in)form stone, leather, and iron. Objects such as these were now (in)formed mechanically. Builders, cobblers, and blacksmiths were thus rendered superfluous, and the act of (in)forming the objects of their respective trades was no longer considered to be art. Designers and engineers supplanted



## The SEXUAL Dimension of ARTIST'S RESEARCH

The anti-production model has penetrated deeply into the spheres of art education. Primarily with the Bologna Process, art education embraced the logic of *performance management*, finding an adequate form of anti-production in artistic research. Artistic research is not in fact production, but it implies a presentability that can be academically verified. The aesthetic revolution of academic institutions introduced the concept of education as an experience, and it would be worthwhile to analyse the *curatorial unconscious* of present-day progressive art educations, that presuppose different types of workshops, researches, and a proliferation of methods and methodological articulations. Classical educational models, where students learn about different modes of representation, has been replaced by a parade of experiential art forms and methods. The same parade that had been presented to the audience inside the presentational institution. And while the classical type of education has often resulted in student resistance and the inventions of their own ways of expression, current education is based on the exchange of information, experience, and a consensus, where the critique is in function of maintaining equilibrium. Here I do not intend to suggest a need for going back to the old educational technology, but I believe that the educational system founded in students' desires reproduces the anti-productional model of producing pleasure that is being repeatedly postponed.

Thus, it is worthwhile to open a discussion on various poetics that have been, due to great care paid to the spectator (reception) and a fetishisation of practice, repressed in the backyard of art discourse. My primary artistic interest is poetical in terms of reflection, but also in terms of proposing procedures for the production of art and knowledge, with the aim to problematise and contradict inside the field of social reproduction, where non-disciplinary dramaturgic procedures serve as methodological gateways for reflections of this kind.

ANTI-PRODUCTION OF ART

GOFFN SELIG PRISTAS



craftsmen—pre-industrial artists—as the true creators of information. Of course, the pre-industrial (nonmechanical) manner of (in)forming objects did not disappear entirely. Archaic relics continued to be produced. Labeled works of “art” by bourgeois-industrial society, they were removed from everyday life to be ensconced in museums and other glorified ghettos.

Before the Industrial Revolution, an informed object did not readily betray the precise source of its information—its potentiality. This potential information originated, rather vaguely, in an artist’s “head,” where it remained hidden until it was impressed upon one object or another. With the invention of steel instruments and machines, however, the potentiality of information became visible and tangible: we know precisely what information they are made to produce. Modern industrial technology did not entail—as did premodern art—the impression of information upon objects by artists; rather, it entailed the processing of potential information by engineers, who designed tools and machines, and then the impression of this information upon objects by these very tools and machines. Industrial technology, in other words, removed humans a step away from the objects that they had once (in)formed directly. As a consequence, human existential interest shifted away from (in)formed objects, which were becoming ever more inexpensive to produce, toward the processing of potential information, which was becoming ever more expensive. By making this shift away from objects, humans became more vampyroteuthic, and the Information Age began to dawn.

Another shift has since taken place. Potential information is no longer embodied in the form of steel instruments. It is now the case that such information is, first of all, symbolically and immaterially processed with the help of artificial intelligences—computers. It is then programmed into automated machines, the purpose of which is to produce steel parts. These steel parts are assembled into other automated machines which, in turn, (in)form objects. Human *Dasein* has thus been altered. Humans no longer realize their creative potential by struggling against

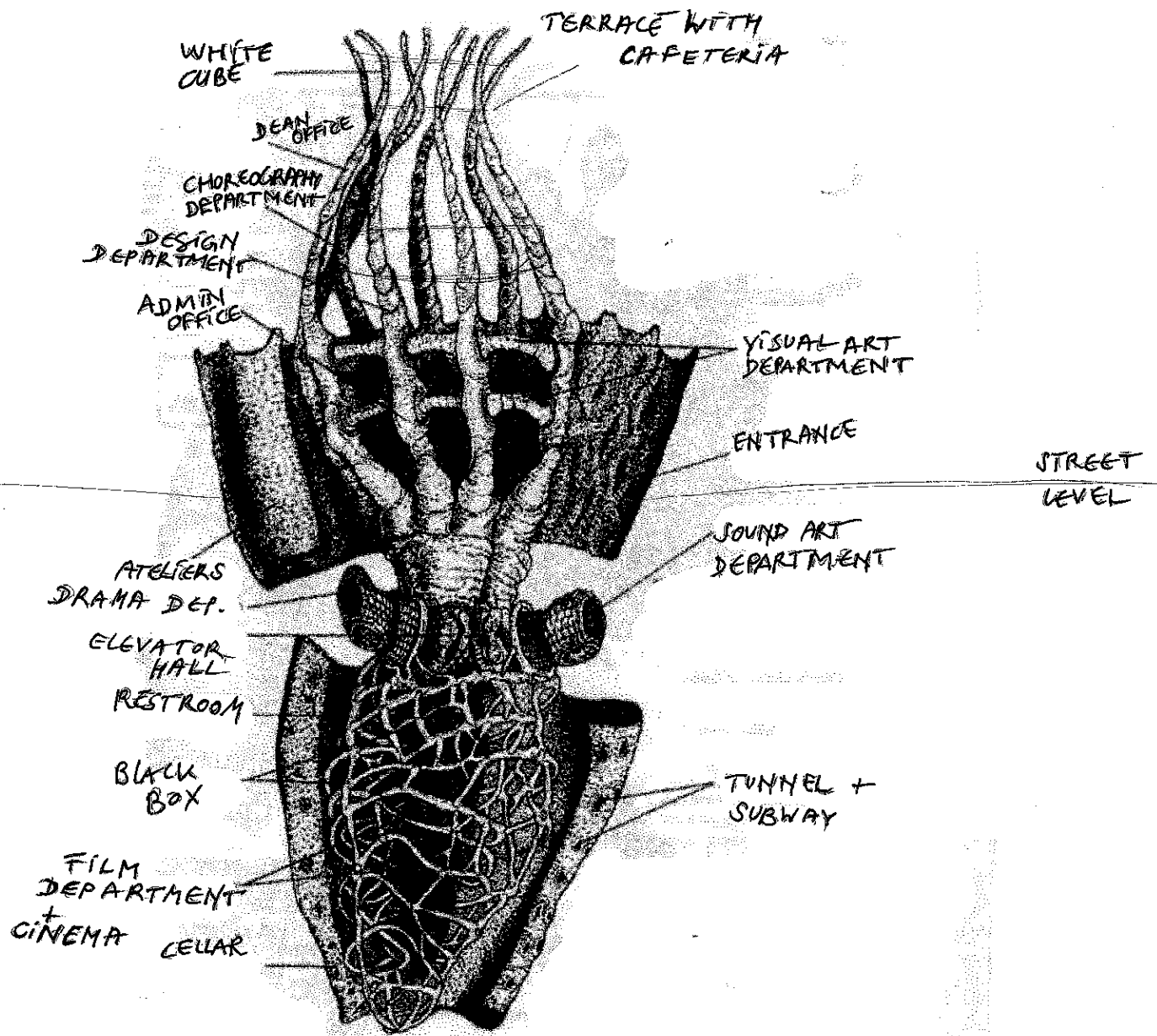
the resistance of stubborn objects, for this struggle has been delegated to machines. Human labor has become superfluous. From now on, humans can realize their creative potential only by processing new and immaterial information, that is, by participating in the activity that has come to be called “software processing.” In this context, there can be no doubt that “soft” alludes to mollusks (“soft animals”).

The vampyroteuthis is a mollusk of such complexity that it managed to appropriate, by developing a skull, an evolutionary strategy of vertebrates. We are vertebrates of such complexity that we managed to appropriate, by developing an immaterial art, an evolutionary strategy of mollusks. As our interest in objects began to wane, we created media that have enabled us to rape human brains, forcing them to store immaterial information. We have built chromatophores of our own—televisions, videos, and computer monitors that display synthetic images—with whose help broadcasters of information can mendaciously seduce their audiences. In time, this communicative strategy will surely come to be known as “art” (assuming that the term will not have lost its currency).

COMPUTERS  
& DATA  
ARE NOT  
IMMATERIAL

The glorification of art, artificiality, and other seductive measures should have no place in the encroaching future. To celebrate such things would be to ennoble the vampyroteuthis. And yet, as animals that have prevailed over our animality—or at least presume to have done so—we are compelled, like the vampyroteuthis, to pursue immortality in the minds of others. We are obliged, that is, to create art, and it is on account of this obligation that the vampyroteuthis wells within us. We are becoming increasingly vampyroteuthic.

We can walk under the cover  
of darkness





This is the script of the keynote lecture.  
The final version of the text is published  
in the *Performance Philosophy Journal*.

check it out!  
It's on a  
CC licence!

## Art Schools as Thinking Entities

Silvia Bottioli

Amsterdam, Performance Philosophy conference, March 15<sup>th</sup> 2019

AND EVERY FRIDAY WORLDWIDE

As you might know, today education is on strike in the Netherlands, and obviously talking about school on this day raises some questions. Strike can be seen as a call to produce a different state, via the suspension of the usual protocols of how work is produced and delivered. Paradoxically enough, being here today and taking the time to *think what we* are doing in art and education, and to think *together* about it, feels very close to a suspension, however problematic this may sound. Obviously, *thinking* and thinking *together* should be part of our everyday practice, but we know this is not often the case.

So, I am deeply thankful to the organizers of the conference, and to Ricarda Franzen in particular, not only for having me here but also for producing this suspended time for all of us.

**With my contribution, I will take this suspension as an invitation to stop thinking education as an ongoing production and sharing of contents, and to investigate it as a practice of meaning making.**

Having this discussion today comes from a sense of urgency, that I believe being shared among many.

"Nobody ever works on their own"  
Celine Condorelli, *The Company She Keeps*

SEE ALSO VIRVO ON POST-FORDIST  
LABOR AND SOCIAL COOPERATION

The title of my lecture, *Art Schools as Thinking Entities*, comes from a public conversation I had with some friends and colleagues back in 2015, around *Festivals* as thinking entities. I would like to credit them – Judith Blackenberg, Daniel Blanga-Gubbay, Livia Andrea Piazza and Berno Odo Polzer – for this title, and for our shared reflection.

Actually, all my thinking is built in conversation with others. Even though I am the only one responsible for how my contribution today *will* or *will not* make sense, the collective effort and the ongoing exchange that are behind it are very important to me.

In particular, I owe some of the inputs for this lecture to Livia Andrea Piazza, to Georg Docker, to Barbara van Lindt (who is also my predecessor at Das Theatre), to Miguel Angel Melgares and to Marijke Hoogenboom, head of DAS Research within the Graduate School that DAS Theatre is also part of.

Before starting to dive into *Schools as Thinking Entities*, I would also like to thank some people without whom these reflections would have never come to light.

One is Ira Melkonian, who in the last months has regularly taken care of my child Milo, allowing me to take time to produce and organize the materials that I can share with you today. Thinking always requires material conditions, and I would not have been able to do this work without her support.

The others are all the students, team members, tutors and collaborators of DAS Theatre, including my colleagues of the Graduate School and of the Academy of Theatre and Dance. My intervention is embedded and precisely situated in this context. I am speaking today as a practitioner who is trying to better understand some ways of thinking and working, some dynamics and structures,

→ POSSIBILITY OF THINKING DUE TO  
A  
WHOLE  
NET  
OF  
SUPPORT

→ all Furio Terzi

HOW ART SCHOOLS THINK  
→ DOUGLAS



some problems and potentialities of the art school, in order to improve the work that we are doing at DAS, in conversation with others who are engaging in similar questions in different places, within and beyond artistic education.

*"INSTITUTE"*

The invitation for this lecture gave me the chance to organize some thoughts responding to a set of questions about how we can practice a school, how we can do and undo the school, and about how institutional structures have power over us, and we have agency within them.

I will start with the question of power and agency.

"Every time we speak of the 'institution' as other than 'us', we disavow our role in the creation and perpetration of its conditions... It's not a question of being *against* the institution: we are the institution"

Andrea Fraser, *From the Critique of Institution to the Institution of Critique*, 2005

*NO ESCAPE.*

*HOW INSTITUTIONS PERFORM... + THINK*

*SEE DOUGLAS*

We are the institution, we have agency within it, and at the same time we experience how much institutions have power over us. As a matter of fact, every institution, no matter which one, allows certain things and not others, separates an inside from an outside establishing what and who is part of it and under which conditions, and dictates how people can and cannot behave within it.

With the risk of giving institutions a form of agency that is normally associated to human beings, we may say that they *perform* in the social realm, and that each of them has a particular way of performing. It is following this line of thought, and acknowledging that institutions exercise power in a particular way, that I argue that not they only *perform*, but also *think*, each of them in a particular way.

Understanding *how* institutions think, is very important in order to exercise our agency within them effectively, and consequently to be able to bend them, hybridize, challenge, betray or queer them.

*— SUBVERSIVE STRATEGIES with and contra- within and at the threshold*

When it comes to our shared field, I would consider that we – artists, curators, educators, researchers... - operate within existing institutions to make them progressive entities that can research, produce and operate within the field of the performing arts and beyond it, being connected globally and transdisciplinarily.

I am proposing today to look at institutions from two different, complementary perspectives: on one hand, how they think, and on the other how they perform. These two layers are obviously intertwined in the life of institutions. I will move from the one to the other, sometimes blurring their borders, but I believe it is important to be aware that institutions can only perform according to the way they think. It is at the intersection between their thinking and their performing, that we can intervene effectively within them.

*and viceversa?*

By approaching the art school as a thinking institution, I am positioning within a specific discourse, dealing with the rethinking of artistic institutions within the performing arts field. Only in 2011, with the conference *Beyond Curating* at PACT in Essen and with the issue *Curating Performing Arts* of the Croatian magazine *Frackija*, curation and curating started being discussed in the performing arts, initially bending the conceptual tools developed within the visual arts field, and only later building new terms, framing particular practices, raising specific questions. More recently, our field seems to be more intrigued than ever by institutions as a subject. The book *Turn Turtle! Re-enacting the Institute* edited by Elke van Campenhout and Lilia Mestre and published by the House on Fire network, the symposium and free school around *The Fantastic Institution* organized by BUDA arts center in Kortrijk, and *this* conference are just some of the strongest indicators of this phenomenon.



## WHAT TIMES DOES THE INSTITUTION BUILD?

Education, and the art school as an entity, have been present within this debate since its beginning, as a crucial subject in a field that thinks itself as progressive, research-led, experimental and committed to the production of the future. Nevertheless, the specific line of thought about art education within contemporary performing arts is still not very implemented, and that's where I hope ~~to be able~~ to offer a contribution.

Like any other artistic institution, the art school has been shaped in order to frame, secure and support specific aspects of the arts. All institutions are the result of a negotiation between different subjects and the discourses that inform them, and this is also the case with the art school, that is positioned at the intersection of art production and education, and responds to many more systems (political, financial and so forth).

More importantly, I think, institutions are always made to set conditions for something and always do something. In the art field, it can be for example about the transmission of a legacy or a tradition (the library, the museum...), about the production of new forms (the art center...) or about the broadening of the encounter between art and a public (the festival, the biennale...).

**Approaching an institution from the perspective of what it sets conditions for and what it does** is often a way to deconstruct the idea of that institution, and to become able to think it anew. I propose to apply this approach to the art school, in order to make it unfamiliar again, and thus to become aware of what it is, how it operates, what it makes possible or impossible. Only then, I believe, we can *think* it and *operate* within it differently. DOUGLAS & DELEUZE

Deconstructing requires at the same time a critical exercise, that I am trying to articulate in this lecture, and imaginative bumps, that I hope we will be able to make together with some of you later, during the workshop.

{ } = understanding why we think what we think

Let us start with the critical exercise of unlearning, and therefore understanding, the school.

To tackle what the institution of the school is, it may be useful to go back to the original meaning of the word, although we must be aware that it has undergone many transformations over time. In ancient Greek, *skolè* (the word for school) denotes, first, "a time of leisure" (as opposite to other, more instrumentalized, times), and only consequently means "a place for learning" and "a forum for discussion".

So, likewise any other institution, the school is defined by 3 vectors: time, space and forms of relationships oriented towards specific aims.

From the perspective of *time*, we can approach the school as a complex set of different temporalities, that intertwine. Time can be experienced at school not only as duration, but also in its density (it can be thick or vague...) and in its speed (it can be fast or slow...). More often, several temporal dimensions intertwine, and cut through the particular time of the school as an institution, that is instituted *in* time and requires to be re-instituted *over* time. Consequently, time operates within the school as a manifold entity, capable to affect profoundly the life and dynamics of the institution itself.

From the perspective of *space*, the first remark is that a school always needs a physical place, a specific locality, where its participants can come together. We could say then that a school is always *local*, no matter how broadly international its population is, or how deeply networked the institution is. → NOT NECESSARILY: SEE "THE PROGRAM CRITICAL PRACTICES MADE IN YUGOSLAVIA"

Let us leave time and space behind for now, and focus on the set of relationships that is specific of the art school.

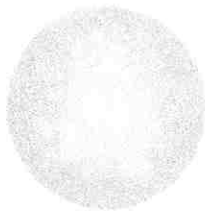
A "SCHOOL" BEYOND (HISTORICAL) BORDERS THAT DE- & RELOCALIZES IN DIFFERENT PLACES

see Comite 'Invisible' p.4

SCHOOL INSTITUTIONS A MEANTIME

What does sharing mean?  
short text

What does sharing mean? The verb seems to actually open toward two different spatial relations. On the one side the idea of sharing something groups different people together under a same condition that they share. We might share the same values, an identity or the same idea of truth. What we share constitutes the border of the group, it clearly circumscribes form the outside the limits of our group living together under a same given condition. But if we turn the head off toward the other direction we might suddenly discover the existence of a different space and idea of sharing. We don't share just the defined outer limits of our living together, rather the inner and not defined empty spaces ready to assume whatever shape. Does the geometrical relation we design with the idea of sharing have to be reversed? We, more than being circumscribed as a group by a common and shared outside, we circumscribe a shared and unstable space between us. As the cloud of Bruno, it shows the vitality of any uncertain relation. It shows how - if we teach certainties - we can only share uncertainty.



FROM  
"The Host and the  
cloud"  
Reader for a day  
within the frame  
of the Nomadic  
School at the  
Festival of the  
Jantar-mantara in  
2014

→ THIS SPECIFIC  
SHORT TEXT  
WRITTEN BY  
DANIEL GANZA  
GUBRAY

wrote  
by Guy Gutman  
and Hella  
Bottazzi

wrote by ALEFFO



PROTECTION (→ BEJANNA KUNST)

HARAWAY

SEE IMAGE/TEXT SF  
IN THIS READER

"Relationship among all things appears to be complex and reciprocal – always at least two ways, back and forth. It seems that nothing is single in this universe, and nothing goes one way".  
Ursula Le Guin, *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, p. M15

Schools always produce a complex set of relationships, and these are always reciprocal. Art schools, in particular, are meant to be places where a new generation of practitioners can and must imagine themselves anew within the context of formal education. The school offers a support structure for artists to imagine themselves as individual and collective forces that can shape the art field and have an impact on other spheres. It offers a unique space where students can experience a structural safety (I will be back to safety later), have time to focus on their work and can make use of facilities to explore, deepen and broaden their language and their research questions. Schools offer conditions for an in-depth peer exchange and for forms of encounters with guest artists, teachers and mentors that is based on *learning* rather than on teaching, meaning that the learning is always reciprocal.

If we look more closely to the forms of relationship that the school as environment offers, then two main sets of relationship seem to be crucial: one articulates the peer exchange between participants as students and as artists, while the other one is connected to the encounter between the students as individuals and as a collective body, and the school as an institute.

This latter is normally informed by the assumption that the students are *not* part of the institution. This assumption, that per se is false of course, is actually fueled by the fact that the students often *do* lack agency in the institution of the school, and tend to be seen, and therefore to become, sheer consumers of what the school can offer rather than co-authors of what it can generate.

Both these relationships are complicated further, in graduate education, by the fact that students are, in most cases, professional artists already. This means that their peer relationship is actually doubled: they are peer *artists* and peer *students* at the same time, and I believe that this does make a difference. But also their relationship with the teachers or tutors is of a double nature, since for their teachers they are not students only, but also (younger) peers.

AND BY  
OTHER  
DUALITY

So, like many other institutions, the art school produces a complex community, traversed by a variety of different relationships. But, opposite to others, this is, per definition, a *temporary* community. People don't stay at the school forever, and the school is meant to be a place for transition, for moving from one state to another. Therefore, the time spent within the school is very dense, because of the particular demands that students have towards the school: the demand to make them better artists, to broaden their professional networks, to consolidate their position within the field, and so forth.

What if we transcend the many, legitimate, expectations that artists-as-students have towards art schools, and focus on what the school should be there for, what the school should set conditions for? I believe that art schools are there to offer specific support structures for new generations of artists to explore and strengthen their means to engage imaginatively with the complexity of the world. This is something they, as artists, are doing anyway. They don't need the school for that. The difference is that, at school, they are offered a particular environment, that on one hand is meant to be extremely safe and supportive and on the other, by referring to the structures of formal education, confronts them with hierarchies, power structures, timelines and assessment policies.

A starting point might be to think of a festival as a practice of taking care of the incomplete, not in order to complete or define it but to keep it as such.

To work under the cover of darkness, then, could mean to grow a forest, taking shelter within and in between its shadows. A festival becoming the forest of signs described by Rancière, where the ignorant schoolmaster works not in order to bridge a presupposed knowledge gap with his pupils, but to adventure with them in the darkness.<sup>8</sup>

LEARNING IS ALWAYS RECIPROCAL ... (LIVIA PIAZZA)



One of the crucial things that the art school does is, in my view, producing this friction. I am not sure how many artists are fully aware of that when they do apply for a school, and also I don't think that the friction the school as an institute is producing is always fruitful, although I do see that it can be positive and very productive.

WHAT DO WE GET THE FRICTIONS FOR

In fact, I believe that art schools can be a place of positive tension, and that this tension is one of the support structures that they can offer to artists. I am proposing here an agonistic view on the art school, borrowed from Chantal Mouffe's thinking about agonism within the political. In bending Mouffe's concept of agonism to the art school, I am suggesting that schools are sites of the political and that we should approach them as such.

In fact, school can be approached from an agonistic perspective because they always pluralistic and democratic. Despite selecting their staff and students and setting some standards that, for right or for wrong, don't make them open to *everybody*, schools are per se open to *anybody*. Within any school, there is always a diverse community of people who, no matter what their position is within the institution of the school, are committing themselves to the difficult and necessary exercise of living together. We could look at schools as a very privileged place for the exercise of negotiation, since they always require to constantly negotiate rules and practices, to mediate between different needs, make compromises, question one's own beliefs and values, exercise a radical form of listening.

Often, art schools are places where artists study, work and research *alongside and with* each other, and also with other practitioners such as, if I take the case of DAS Graduate School for example, curators and creative producers. The encounter between practitioners who work in different positions and operate from different perspectives is not immune to misunderstandings and frictions. But a school where this encounter occurs is a unique space where not only new art forms, but also new cultural practices can be researched and tested. If this is the case, then the impact that art schools can have on the art field at large is huge.

On top of that, I believe that this tension within the art school operates as a physical force that allows the school as a complex entity to stand for its principles, resisting the hegemonic view on art as an ongoing production and circulation of works, in favor of a view of art as a *subject of reflection*. As opposite to the university, and similar to festivals and to few other subjects, art schools provide the possibility of thinking through practice, exploring art a subject of reflection rather than only as an *object* of reflection. In universities this only happens as an exception to a norm, as it is the case here in this conference: normally, other art practices and art works are tackled as objects of research by other disciplines that range from art theory to philosophy and beyond. In the art school, on the contrary, art practice is valued in its capacity to formulate research question and explore them with the specific means of art. The school as an institution supports this capacity, and also provides visibility to the specific form of thinking that is produced by the artists with their work, presenting it for what it actually is: a practice and a reflection, at the same time.

Nevertheless, the school is always traversed by an agonistic, pluralistic tension. This is certainly positive, but it can evolve into antagonistic tensions, that I would like to try to tap into.

Being confronted with an existing structure, as in the school, normally produces a form of discipline and obedience on one hand, and a form of rebellion on the other. When this tension crosses the asymmetrical power relationships of the school, the result – unwanted, but real – is that a school often produces forms of antagonism.

AND ARMY OF UNEMPLOYED ARTISTES



STAND FOR COMPLEXITY

fictional

fictional

fictional

fictional

### Observation 5

#### No work for graduates.

Another tendency which is now appearing is that we get a huge amount of graduated students from all of these schools/universities for artists and cultural workers (curators, programmers) who all look for opportunities to present their skills, but do not find any as these are full/saturated. Nonetheless they have smelled the life of the artist and want to live like this, free and independent. They are all well educated, talented (the average talent in these schools is much higher than twenty years ago, when there were only one or two, maximum three talented students in a class/group. Now 80% is artistically, intellectually and socially skilled, yet there is no place for them). It is painful to see that a quality generation becomes lost. Neoliberalism educated them, but took and takes money away from the governments in their never-ending privatization demands. What is left is this army of unemployed artists, or little employed artists, who live as masters of their own time and space. No employer who tells them what to do, or very rarely, in order to earn some basic money. But what is there to show from this 'free' way of living? This makes their societal function less dependent on their artistic production, and more dependent on their way of living.

What I describe here is what the neoliberal semio-capitalistic economies foresee for *their* future workforce: everybody permanently on holiday but managing the work 24/7 all by themselves, but not without the state holding power over the profit lines. Artists serve as the missionaries, as teasers and examples to inseminate this "free" life.

From being the *slave* of somebody else (labour), many more people will become the slave of themselves. There is no difference between worker and artist. Artists are submissive to divisions of labour and the conditions of the market, only the aspects of subordination are not of a disciplinary nature as it is only the disposal of control that changes. The artist does not listen to an individual boss, but is rather acting/reacting to a full range of power relations.

JAN RITSEMA - THE ARMY OF ARTISTS



Actually, I have the impression that we are increasingly experiencing an antagonistic polarization within the art schools. This polarization seems to reflect the contemporary socio-political atmosphere, ruled by inequalities and injustices, fueled by a narrative of scarcity and competition and by a very broadly spread mistrust, when not aggression, towards the very idea of institutions. Institutional critique seems to have played an important role in shaping the behaviour patterns of the encounter, collaboration or coexistence, of artists and artistic institutions in particular, and obviously schools are not immune to that.

As a first thing, I must say that I am really concerned about that. I am worried that we are reproducing behaviors that we are able to identify in society and are *not* willing to reproduce, but that seem to dictate how we meet each other within institutions. And I am afraid that this polarization could produce, within art schools in particular, what they are already producing in other fields of our collective lives: a harmful process of simplification that is flattening the perception of reality. → **STAND FOR COMPLEXITY (AGAIN)**

At the same time, if we push the *concept* of polarization further, it can turn into something else, something even desirable for the performing arts field in this very moment. I am aware that this can sound extremely dangerous, but please follow me in my thought and suspend the judgment for a minute.

I believe that the school is one of the few institutions in our field providing a space for such polarizing relationships. It provides a space for friction, for conflict even. No matter how progressive and open the program is, the school as such confronts all its constituencies with a clear hierarchical structure and with a set of rules that can be subject to negotiation but are already instituted.

In a working field that is advertised as a field where all the relationships are fluid, everything is debatable and negotiable, collaboration is a key resource and affective labour is a reality, a school is still based on a different vision, less friendly with contemporary policies. As we know, our working field is extremely critical toward current policies, but at the same time is perfectly reproducing, and even improving them, at a point that it is considered to be one of the fields where policies of self-exploitation are most successfully tested. We have produced a dangerous liquidity, where all relationships are blurred and artists often end up being complicit with the structural procedures that exhaust them. There is very little space in the artistic infrastructure to exercise conflict, to radically disagree, and even less space to disagree and still work together, from two different and irreconcilable positions.

At school, on the contrary, this is to be possible. Always, no matter what. This is part of the fundamental, unnegotiable form of safety that a school offers, or at least should offer. A safety that goes way beyond the sense of physical and psychological safety of being respected and valued as individuals, without any form of discrimination due to race, color, gender or sexual orientation. The structural safety that the art school is to provide is actually for students to be free to pursue their research and make their work, no matter what it is about, what forms, aesthetics and politics they perform.

The twist between antagonism and safety produces a specific intensity in the relationships within the art school, and invites to investigate them, and the capacity of the school of producing relationships, through the lens of the entanglement.

"To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence" — Karen Barad

**Maybe it's because of their being entangled (disposessed?) that they are free. Maybe because of this they are free from (even at risk of) self-exploitation**

**HOW DO THEY RELATE?**



An art school is not an independent subject. It is part of a wider environment. It operates at the intersection of art and education, depending on and contributing to both these fields. It is intertwined with the art infrastructure locally and globally, with the policies of its funding bodies, that are often public, and with the developments of the artistic and cultural field. As Karen Barad says, these sets of relationships actually mean something more than just being intertwined with another. According to her definition, an art school is also entangled, because it lacks a self-contained existence. It operates and think with and within a complex environment, it is affected by it in ways that are hardly predictable, and it affects its environment in many ways, connected to the concrete impacts that a school may have.

I will try to pinpoint some dimensions of this entanglement.

One dimension is the broad socio-political dimension in which art is questioned in its legitimacy as a cultural practice and in its capacity to strengthen citizenship and democracy, contributing to a progressive, liberal development of society. Art's role is often undermined or dismissed, in favour of a very functional approach to social dynamics. Art schools have agency within this field, since they are one of the few institutions that can render visible the work of art, but are also heavily affected by it, and often seen as useless places where a privileged minority cultivates its hobbies. One possible way of inhabiting this entanglement is, for art schools to combine their agendas with the agendas of other institutions and individuals, to propose themselves as allies and accomplices for other subjects that pursue different, but interconnected aims. A school's accountability, as any other institution's accountability in my view, is always relational and reciprocal. We operate within a circulation of responsibility and agency, and it is our task to embrace it.

The local dimension of the art school also contributes to complexify its entanglement, since the school operates locally and globally at the same time, and s one of the subjects that can contribute to shape artistic mobility and a transnational, moving artistic community, confronted with issues that include the psychological, social and environmental consequences of a model based on an exasperate mobility.

We could explore the school's entanglement even further, but it is more urgent for me to also point out how being entangled does not mean being identical to the other subjects that the school is intertwined with. On the contrary, entanglements require a form of interdependence that is based on difference. Cultivating the school's coefficient of diversity, its autonomy (to the extent to which autonomy is possible) is as important as making it permeable and porous to the entities that it lives and thinks with.

As you may notice, I like to think via frictions and tensions. The tension, and possible friction, between the local and the global field that the art school is part of, is possibly a very generative one. We could also push it further and question how art schools can relate to the particular form of transnational community that is there in the art field, with artists fleeing from many countries in search for better conditions for them to work and sustain their practice.

I will not enter in the complex social and cultural aspects of this situation, that we should be particularly committed to here in Western Europe, where for several reasons many artists decide to relocate, hoping in a more sustainable, fair and friendly working field that they don't always find. Rather, I would like to suggest that, in this contexts, art schools become sites of an important transnational exchange, that entails a potential impact of the ways the art forms of the futures will be imagined and produced.

Schools are, much more than any other institution in the art field, places where different artistic idioms meet and develop alongside and with each other. Schools are therefore sites of mutual



opening to more than "level of exchange"

influences, where the broadening or deepening of one's own artistic work unfolds in a form of commonality rather than in a splendid isolation. What this commonality can be about, and which forms of togetherness can be fostered within the art school, are questions of the utmost importance.

As a matter of fact, very often art schools cherish a narrative of individual makers, designing programs that are based on the students' individual ownership, driven by their specific research questions and art practices, and meant to strengthen them as individual voices. What if, instead, we look at the art schools as collective entities and unique environments that can nourish a sense of collectivity, a desire to undertake adventures together? What forms of empowerment could this shift produce, and what consequences within the broader art field, once students go back to it as makers, pursuing their artistic practices, intervening in the existing institutions and establishing the support structures that they have learnt being important for artistic research and practice?

This is one of the subjects where the best thing art schools can do is to look at some independent and artist run initiatives, that in specific contexts have been able to pursue... such as Beta Local in Puerto Rico, the Catedra Arte de Conducta established by artist Tania Bruguera in L'Havana.

I believe there is a lot we can learn from each of these experiences, and from them only, because of the particular proposal that they articulate. But now, let us go back to the institution of the school, and explore another aspect of it before rounding up our reflections.

"Past and future are two foggy, indistinct regions that the living can explore only in imagination or in memory; but perhaps memory and imagination are only instruments of illusion [...]. In reality, [we move] over an immobile sphere, complete from the beginning, in which the past and the future are one".  
Elsa Morante, *Menzogna e Sortilegio*

In a traditional understanding of education, relationships are set within the school in order to make knowledge transmission possible. In postgraduate artistic education, we rather think in terms of knowledge generation and exchange, but it is undeniable that each school has a particular legacy, and one of its core missions and key activities is to transmit it. In the best case scenario, transmitting goes hand in hand with questioning or challenging this legacy, in the attempt to keep it, and the school as such, permeable and porous to an ever-changing artistic, social, political environment that confronts us with philosophical, ethical and aesthetic issues.

If we look at them from the perspective of the legacy they carry, schools are "**forces of the past**", quoting a famous verse from Pier Paolo Pasolini. It is up to us to constantly explore what this past may mean today, how we can access it and use it as a force to shape the present and produce the future. I am not keen on celebrating the past as such or its abstract values. In the last few years, as a curator and as a researcher I have rather focussed on the possibility to produce change and to generate a new future, practicing imagination and prefiguration, within and beyond artistic institutions. Lately, I happened to realize to what extent this commitment towards the production of the future risks to be a form of escapism in a present time that many of us, I believe, consider to be quite dark. It is obvious to say that if we want to shift the focus from the future towards the present, then we cannot avoid considering the forces that have shaped it.

Yet, the supposed proximity between the past and the present should not only be understood in terms of continuity. When it comes to art school in particular, we may say that every school's function is to secure the transmission of knowledge. Every school is based upon a certain tradition and has a specific legacy, that connects it to something that comes to the past. Following Pasolini's statement, we could then wonder how we – as schools, and as forms of knowledge production

+ AND TO THINK ABOUT HISTORY AS "CONSTRUCTED"

INSTITUTIONS REMEMBER AND FORGET AND IMAGINE

SEE VAMPIROTEUTAS ART



# FORCES SCHOOLS ARE ~~IMAGES~~ OF THE PAST

and sharing operating within them – can be not an *image* of the past, but rather a *force* of the past. A force that is capable to mold the present, coming from a different time and place but operating here and now.

This shift may help us to think the relation with the legacy not as a way of repeating the past, but instead as a means of producing cracks in the present, digging holes or making gaps through which other forces can access our present time and fertilize it. I see this as another form of friction, another positive tension, that the art school can produce and sustain via the collision between its particular culture, vocabulary and system of values, and the students that enter it and rightly demand the school to make sense for *them*, and to *change* with them.

(SEE GROSZ ON CRACKS IN TIME)

"We know that those who enter university today belong to the generation that will have to face a future the challenges of which we just cannot imagine... Can we claim that what we are proposing them meets, or even vaguely meets, this situation?"

Isabelle Stengers, "Another science is possible!". A plea for slow science

Isabelle Stenger's famous speech is of course a prominent reference in thinking slowness as a necessary asset of research and knowledge generation. Her plea speaks to a scientific community that is in many respect very far from the community of artistic research. Like philosophy, as opposed to "fast science", art is per definition committed to "take the time needed to formulate questions". We are used to consider art and artists' legitimacy as related to their capacity to build a form of reflection that is barely achievable by any other field, including academic research. As a society, we support the arts and the artists because they do the job that we as individual citizens and community can't do anymore: the job of thinking, formulating questions and exploring them, not necessarily with the purpose to answer them (this is a main difference vis à vis scientific research). In fact, art explores what is unknown not to make it known, but to maintain it unknown, obscure. Being a means with no ends, not having any concrete aim, art is one of the highest political activities of the human being.

In this respect, art *does* operate, likewise philosophy, as the slow science that Stengers is claiming for. Stenger's plea is actually meant to radically question the bonds between scientific research and capitalist market, and obviously this cannot be answered by art, which is operating on a different layer. Nevertheless, art and philosophy are the tools and the environments that, quoting Stengers, could "enable scientists to accept what is messy not as a defect but as what we have to learn to live and think in and with".

In order to accept the complexity that "we have to live and think in and with", it is needed to create forms of temporality that allow us to fully engage, intellectually and imaginatively, with the real. As Virginia Woolf wrote in *A Room of One's Own*, we need to set all the necessary conditions for the thought to "let its line down into the stream". And the main condition is actually time, a continuity of time that only can create the conditions to patiently sit and wait, to contemplate and to observe, until "the line of thought dip deep into the stream".

I am aware that it sounds over romantic to claim this kind of time, in an working field ruled, as every other, by productivity and efficiency. Our current working conditions, and I am referring now to our field specifically, are meant to prevent us from thinking, in the sense of dipping deep and exercising imagination. We are aware of that, and we are also aware that, quoting Virginia Woolf one more time, *think we must.*

VANHEE

WHAT "THINGS" CAN THE INSTITUTION BUILD?

UNDER THE COVER OF DIVERSITY

TIME PRODUCTION



What if, then, we look at art schools as a site for thinking? What kinds of temporality should they provide, to allow artists to research and work outside or beyond the temporalities that rule the contemporary art field, making it so inhospitable for artists?

vs.

In her famous article *The Project Horizon: On the Temporality of Making* (2012), Bojana Kunst criticize the "projective temporality" of today's art field, suggesting that within the regime of the project "we don't actually move anywhere, because [...] no difference is produced. In a project, an equilibrium between the present and future is set up, in the sense that whatever has yet to come is already projected in the present". According to Kunst, and I believe it is impossible not to agree with her on that, "temporality is at the core of the production of difference. It is the material of social and aesthetic change [...]. Art production and creation must therefore rethink the relation between temporality and its production, and find new ways in which to push the time 'out of joint'". If it should respond to the current temporalities that are available within the art field, in the perspective of complementing them, the art schools should definitely propose a temporality freed from projects and deadlines, a sort of continuity where the time of the present can be inhabited again and a relation with the future can be set, beyond "the speculative balance between that which is and that which has yet to come", always according to Bojana Kunst.

→ **WHAT ABOUT TEMPORAL ENTANGLEMENTS?**

I would try to conclude my speech with some proposals about how we could approach the creation of such temporality

"I propose that instead of treating the interminable question of the capacity to act in terms of 'possible versus impossible', we examine what it might mean to institute 'otherwise', politically and performatively, 'as if it were possible'".

Athena Athanasiou, *Performing the Institute as if it were possible*, 2016

**FICTION AS CONSTRUCTION**

*excuse of fiction*

Athena Athanasiou's proposal could be adopted as a manifesto and as a methodology, based on the tactic of the "otherwise" and the "as if", as opposite to the hopelessness of the "due to" and to the strategy of the "against".

If we acknowledge that "we are the institution", then there is no outside from where we can speak. We depend upon the institutions, even when we claim to be outside of them or against them, when we don't practice them, leave them behind or try to build alternatives to them. But we don't only *depend* upon them. We also *shape* them, affect them, deconstruct them and construct them again. We *think* them, and we *perform* them. There is no outside of the institutions, and how terrible this might sound for some of us, it is also a radical call to engagement, to feel involved, to claim our agency and to practice it collectively, no matter how asymmetrical our relations and how different our positions are.

At school, it is not the *institution's* task to define what the theatre of the future will look like or, in other words, how theatre, performance or the arts in general can keep developing new aesthetics, new ways of making us sensitive to the world and of letting us experience and know the world.

In this respect, the students are the ones who have, or rather are building, the knowledge that the schools are supposed to be producing and transmitting. When involved in art schools, we are like the "ignorant schoolmaster" that Jacques Rancière writes about, teaching something that we don't know and that we can't know, or rather supporting new generations of artists to undertake *their* journey, to be bold enough to research into the unknown and strong enough to sustain their practice until they find something, and come back to share it.



SEE DRAWINGS AND IMAGES IN THIS READER

## NEW QUESTIONS:

But how to transmit a knowledge that we don't have, how to support the generation and exchange of knowledge? More specifically, how to serve a theatre whose aesthetics and languages we don't know yet, how to support forms of spectatorships and of togetherness that we feel emerging but can't recognize yet, how to improve practices of city and of society - practices of politics, too - that we can't even imagine yet?

It is here that fiction comes in our help, I believe. We can only start exploring this set of questions with a *what if* exercise, that can allow us to deconstruct the existing schools, and imaginatively construct possible or impossible other schools (the good thing with fiction is that we don't have to immediately wonder if what we imagine is possible in the realm of reality).

Practicing fiction as a form of collective imagination is something that fascinates me, and I believe that there is no better space than artistic institutions to allow ourselves to use fiction as a tool to build new realities. The art school, in particular, offers the space for some forms of exercise of fiction, that we will dive into further in a minute, with those who will partake in the workshop *Towards a Performative School*.\*

Before rounding up my thoughts, let me go back to the ancient Greece once more and quote the sophist Gorgias, a pre-socratic philosopher who affirmed the supremacy of fiction over reality, stating that "fiction suspends reality and produces the real". I will not deepen the distinction between reality and the real now, assuming that we all share some references about it. But it is important that we acknowledge this fundamental distinction: reality is *not* the real. The reality of what art schools are today is not what their *real* being is or can be, and we cannot access their *realness* via a critical analysis only. While reality separates us from the real, fiction allows us to access it, if we are willing to engage in a form of collective imagination, to suspend time and build a new fiction, together. **DIGGING HOLES AT THE ART SCHOOL**

So, acknowledging that schools are not autonomous entities and that they work towards an horizon that they can't foresee should not produce a form of disengagement of powerlessness, on the contrary. Because of their heteronomous and entangled nature, and because of their structural tension towards the production of the future, when we think and perform the art school, we are thinking and performing the whole art field, locally and internationally. How small the changes that we can make may look for us, they always makes space for others to build upon them, and will echo in unexpected places and discourses.

Thank you

SO LET'S GET OUR HANDS DIRTY!



Pushing it a bit further, we could ask the art school to be the site of a form of *creolization*. I am here referring to the word as used by Edouard Glissant and Robert Cohen among others, a condition in which "the formation of new identities and inherited culture evolve to become different from those they possessed in the original cultures" (Robert Cohen).

\* PERFORMATIVITY AS "REALITY-MAKING" → performative school as a school capable to transform and produce reality, not only within itself but also in the larger field it operates  
→ FROM THE PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY CONFERENCE WEBSITE (workshop description by Silvia Bottani)



INSTITUT SCIENTIFIQUE DE RECHERCHE PARANATURALISTE

12 Octobre 1967

Le Pr. Louis Bec  
Zoosystémicien  
président de l'ISRP

à

Monsieur Andreas Müller-Pohle  
Docteur Volker Rapsch  
Imatrix Publications

objet: Vampyroteuthis infernalis  
A2./10. Ref. 1801.

Messieurs,

Nous sommes en mesure de vous communiquer les premiers résultats des travaux menés par une équipe de zoosystémiciens et teuthologues de l'ISRP sous la direction du Pr. L. Bec sur le Vampyroteuthis infernalis g.

Ces études ont pu se développer grâce au travail initial et irremplaçable du Pr. V. Flusser. Certaines observations et analyses sont encore en cours dans le laboratoire et l'instrumentologie de l'ISRP.

Les conclusions certifiées par ces travaux de vérification vous parviendront dans les plus brefs délais, car nous sommes convaincus avec vous de leur importance zoologique, épistémologique et esthétique.

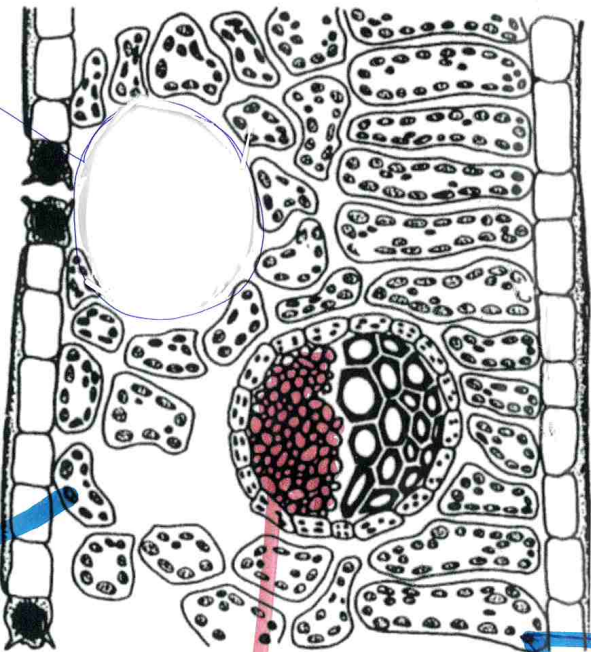
Veuillez agréer Messieurs l'expression de notre considération distinguée et de notre entier dévouement.

Le président

*Louis Bec*

UNITED NATIONS

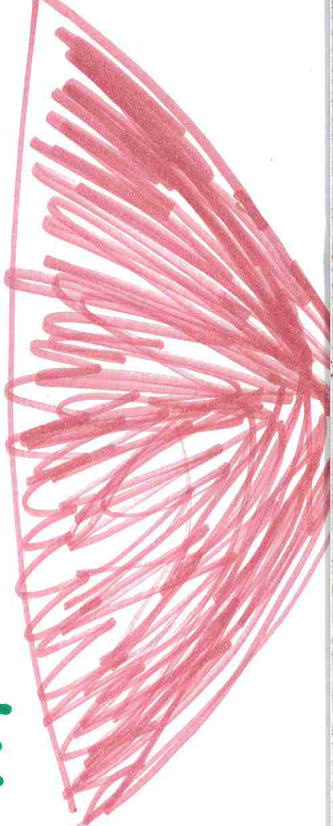
a hole for density



SACUNA

There will be an idea of student choice. There will be many places to sleep. There will be the possibility of collective work. There will be a free or progressive attitude of attendance. There will definitely be a feeling that there is a sense that there will be new migratory systems. Some things will be more migratory. Some effects will be a feeling that there is a problem of vacuum. Some structures will be disintegrated. There will be a feeling that there is a hierarchy of the power within the hierarchy of the power. There will be an architecture that clearly expresses the power. There will be an architecture that clearly expresses the power. There will be an architecture that clearly expresses the power.

SPACE  
DIVERSITY!



Three desires will mainly refer to the best.

subsidized art in the vertical structure. In this hypocritical employees, artists, and ones that have a little more could attempt to engage in the institution when they argue for a feminist.

three points. First, gender equality, a commitment to public policy. Third, a different way of doing in everyday life, relationships, the role of these points towards the politics of the institution. First, gender equality, linking from preconceived ideas, understanding of what art is. It works, giving up white privileges, socialism within the arts. axes should be re-



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## READER

Annotating Fiction & Performance  
Under Construction— Digging holes into the institutional landscape

## EDITORS

Livia Andrea Piazza & Heike Bröckerhoff

“Annotating” is a series of open access readers seeking to elaborate and explore perspectives on institutional practices. Each “Annotation” is developed by a commissioned collaborator, a select author-compiler, who’s inspired and inspiring work is to bring into momentary focus, and relation, institutional-practices from a given perspective. Recomposing the inevitable canonizing power of all institutional practice, and in particular this thing we call ‘research’, Annotations seeks to envelop the outlier and undo the archive of movements known as ‘institutional critique’, ‘new institutionalism’ and ‘instituent practice’, concentrating on what is to be done, by whom, with whom and how.

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Each publication is the result of a workshop and discussion among the contributors, with the aim to elaborate and explore perspectives on institutional practices.

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