DESCENT TO REVOLUTION

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BUREAU FOR OPEN CULTURE

DESCENT TO REVOLUTION

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Thank you



Making revolution is not easy.

For that matter, determining what

is revolution is not easy. In a neoliberal society that distorts meaning and context for the purpose of private capital gain over public welfare, the concept of revolution has slid somewhere into the abyss of obscurity. Revolution more readily conjures Levi Strauss, Sephora, Chevrolet, Gap, Nike and Apple than Lenin, Tocqueville, Jefferson, Mao, Hungary, 1968, East Berlin, Castro and Guatemala. The meaning of revolution has been reshaped by private agendas. They have changed its immediate connection with political contexts and political actions. The exhibition Descent to Revolution draws on a discourse of revolutionary action, revolutionary language and revolutionary theory.

DESCENT TO REVOLUTION

By doing so it seeks to thread together and situate revolution in the present moment. The economic, social, urban and pedagogical fabrics of Columbus, Ohio, are the specific conditions to which artistic production in the exhibition responded. However, while Columbus was the immediate physical and social playground in which activity took place, the exhibition and its contents are by no means localized. Equal attention is given to how the local conditions and the artistic responses to them are representative of a global sociopolitical predicament. So, making revolution is not easy. Descent to Revolution reveals the viability of artistic intent and the value in its production of knowledge, understanding and inquiry to invigorate historical and contemporary concepts and to instigate action. It proposes that this is how revolution is made: by taking action. Explored, then, are ways to determine what is revolution to us today and what are routes by which, over the course of time, human behavior can change to make it so.

A rather discursive collection of ambitious actions and projects make up Descent to Revolution. Claire Fontaine, Learning Site, Red76, REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT and Tercerunguinto participated in the exhibition. These five artist collectives and collaboratives utilize-to varying degrees and intents-urban spaces and social spheres as means of production and inspiration. The artists are based in Paris, Copenhagen, Malmö, Portland, Vancouver, Mexico City, Odessa and Dresden. The collective nature of their identities obscures and diminishes the traditional emphasis on the singular artist as sole author, opening up the possibilities for more collaborative creative production. The artists were invited by Bureau for Open Culture to visit Columbus in a series of residencies, ranging from one to five weeks, to create work during the course of the exhibition timeframe. Their participation and production were funded from an array of institutional and granting sources. Like most visitors to unfamiliar cities, they had that

unique perspective of place unlike those who live and work daily in it. Their objects and actions were not made for or inside the space of the gallery but in relationship with community and physical mediums outside. In fact, one of the intents of Descent to Revolution is to investigate the at times complicated role of the institution of art in realizing projects by practitioners whose interests lie primarily in contexts beyond the gallery site. So, while part of the gallery was an information outlet—a reading room of sorts—with texts, maps, calendars, online access and publications about the exhibition and the participants, the remainder of the gallery was empty. Visitors were encouraged to wander around as they contemplated the artists' practices and the rather conspicuous state of the large, dully lighted and vacant gallery. Most importantly, however, visitors were instructed to leave the art institution, to go out to experience and contribute to or participate in projects at nearby parking lots, an empty storefront space, city streets, the Ohio Statehouse, country roadways, area waterways and more.

Outside of the confines of the gallery, the Office of Collective Play operated temporarily. It was a space and program open during the course of Descent to Revolution. Leased by Bureau for Open Culture, it was located in a formerly empty, large downtown storefront. The artists were encouraged to utilize this space within the scope of the work they made in Columbus. Claire Fontaine, Red76 and REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT organized actions at the Office of Collective Play. Bureau for Open Culture also used the space in a quasi-participatory fashion. The institution stepped outside itself to insert its voice directly into the conceptual framework of the exhibition. Bureau for Open Culture invited local and regional artists to contribute to ideas explored in Descent to Revolution, complementing the overall cast of it. A certain sense of ambiguity and autonomy defined the Office of Collective Play due to the rawness of the space,

basic furnishings, simple lighting, no heat and lack of obvious institutional branding (although logos and donor credits were visible). Through a combination of intent and general pecuniary limitations, disorder, spontaneity, dynamism and unpredictability emerged from the activities at the Office of Collective Play. The immediate connection to an organized institution was clouded. The institution, with all its formalities, did not act the way an institution is supposed to act. In addition to the activity generated by the visiting artist collectives, particularly Red76, who utilized the space the most, an array of other actions took place, including reading groups, performances, film screenings and informal talks. All of it is documented in this publication. Embedded within the entire Office of Collective Play endeavor is an interest and investigation into how play, festival and basic behavioral disruptions undermine dominant capitalist, class and urban frameworks. Its mission was complementary to the overall theoretical underpinnings of Descent to Revolution.

The exhibition draws on ideas by cultural thinkers and producers Guy Debord, Henri Lefebvre, Thomas Jefferson, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Rancière, Hannah Arendt, Jean-Luc Nancy, Jürgen Habermas and others. A widespread collection of subjects and terms related obviously and sometimes more obliquely to subjects addressed by these writers is threaded throughout the exhibition and texts here. They include parking lots, play, love, collapse, renewal, community, education, revolution, urbanism, speech, public, private, consumerism, malls, surplus, technology, collaboration, learning, workshop, "being-in-common," institution, site-specificity, limits, economy, spectator, participant, transportation, automobiles, consumption and audience. Some of these are extracted and discussed specifically in the following essay. With the immense contributions by the exhibition participants and the in-depth consideration of revolutionary thought, a concept of revolution as a slow, everevolving process, always responsive to a changing contemporary society, is the basic foundation from which the exhibition departs. Thus Descent to Revolution comprehensively—through the actions, online documentation and this publication—investigates the way incremental shifts in human behaviors are generated by an ongoing production of knowledge, action and conversation and their underlying connections with institution. Indeed, as this decade comes to a close, the lack of confidence in and frustration with current political, financial, retirement, health, religion and education institutions, just to name a few, are paramount.

This is how Descent to Revolution took shape. Over the course of two months, more than eighteen artists from outside Columbus descended onto the social and physical spheres of the city to make work in public space and produce in coordination with the Office of Collective Play more than thirty events. The activities included intense and intimate collaborations with hundreds of participants in Columbus and the Midwest. This publication is organized around six sections, each representative of the invited participants and the Office of Collective Play. The essay considers revolution, public space, institution and economy from a distant to increasingly more focused connection to the exhibition. It seeks to pull together the driving concepts related to Descent to Revolution, while each section about the artists and the Office of Collective Play serves as documentation, descriptive essay, commissioned texts and interviews giving voice as much as possible to the participants.

REVOLUTION

Modernity's dictum was to always make it new, to always make it fresh. Its insistence on revolution to mean a new beginning made for a rather impossible political mandate to fulfill. In On Revolution political theorist Hannah Arendt

says that "the strange pathos of novelty, so characteristic of the modern age, needed almost two hundred years to leave the relative seclusion of scientific and philosophic thought and to reach the realm of politics."1 Revolution originally referred to celestial motion. It described the rising and setting of the sun, the many faces of the moon and the rotation of the stars in the night sky. Not until seventeenth-century England was revolution used in a political context to describe what happened on earth "among mortal men." But, even during the Glorious Revolution, as Arendt accounts, it was only a metaphor for that same astrological connotation of revolving. It described one English monarchy returning to a "former righteousness and glory" by unseating another English monarchy.3 It had nothing yet to do with a new beginning but with a restoration, a return of power. Citizens were not involved in any part of this revolution. Their cause, their plight of inequality and civil rights, had not yet been conceived as political. Revolution had nothing to do with the revolt of the people, a fight for autonomy, a struggle for freedom or an improvement of human rights.

It is an odd paradox: civil rights governed by the state apparatus. But it is so. And, the modernity in what we consider revolution is in the absolute striving to make a new beginning-novelty is Arendt's word-to make a break from old to new regimes of government in order to establish equality, freedom and rights to assemble. Freedom, that artificially made and governed condition. Today we know very well that government determines the degrees of equality and inequality with which humans relate to one another. The state affects human rights in regard to our movement through cities and across the globe, the quality of our food, the kinds of information we have access to in school, what we view on television and read on the Internet, the determination of how and where we build our homes and businesses and what is our physical and mediated contact with one another. The state is always present. Liberty

and civil rights are controlled by instruments of government. And, "If Revolution had aimed at only the guarantee of civil rights, then it would not have aimed at freedom but at liberation from governments which had over-stepped their powers and infringed upon old and well-established rights." ⁴

So, according to Arendt, "The modern concept of revolution, inextricably bound up with the notion that the course of history suddenly begins anew, that an entirely new story, a story never known or told before, is about to unfold, was unknown prior to the two great revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century." That is to say, the American and French revolutions. These political acts were originally intended as restorations of a different kind. They were not originally intended to be abrupt, absolute breaks. Each event sought a return to "an old order of things that had been disturbed and violated by the despotism of absolute monarchy or the abuses of colonial government" in which civil rights were administered through the state.6 Arendt looks toward the American Revolution as the most authentic, most modern revolution because it unfolded without the weight of history at its feet, affecting how it was supposed to act, how it was supposed to appear to the people. It was filled with the naïve break and thus the impossibility to return to the old order of things, as if a precipice had been reached and an abyss lay below. It gave revolution its modern significance. This rupture gave independence and set revolution on a semantic course that subsequent revolutionary action has sought to mimic. Revolution as we now know it was an accidental by-product, an almost misunderstanding of how to describe what happened. Revolution morphed from revolving to restoration to rupture, something modern world history reshaped and fit into the form we now associate with words like violence, opposition, oppression-and freedom. The novelty that informs the revolutionary spirit today was born from uncertainty of action and ignorance about the

consequence of violence against empirical powers to make it new. Modernity is hard to suppress.

Thomas Jefferson sees the new beginning, the rupture, as he calls it, as only a minor part of what is revolution. He is interested in a permanent "renovation of the revolution." At the heart of it is a constant state of transition. Human nature is always changing, and thus the continually transitional spirit of society and culture should be acknowledged. Jefferson thinks each generation should exercise "the power of appeal" that "leaves them as free as if the constitution or law had been expressly limited to 19 years only."8 Attention and action by citizens make change through constant consideration and reconsideration of civil rights within the machine of the state apparatus. That's how Jefferson views revolution. He says, "So, the real revolutionary event from this perspective is the progressive transformation of humanity, the constant democratic self-making of the multitude."9 As part of this process of self-making, education and learning are critical in his revolutionary philosophy.

Schools and libraries are essential components for the development of new habits, skills and knowledge. 10 An ongoing awareness about social and cultural transformation makes people see and experience the world continually anew. A revisit of revolutionary acts is a return to challenge what slowly becomes institution. "The only way to be faithful to revolution is to repeat it."11 Jefferson says to question staid behavior and make productive action, while gaining the knowledge of the history of prior action, in order to understand where the possibility of a new future resides. Renovate the revolution through learning and self-transformation, knowledge and rebellion. Education and training are similarly important to Vladimir Lenin. But he takes it even further than Jefferson to the goal of completely abandoning the state apparatus. So, is that freedom? He believes human nature can change

to a status of self-rule. Lenin's viewpoint of transition involves the withering away of the state to an autonomous body politic. He sees transition as a temporary facet of revolution during which time the state dissolves; the transition acts as training wheels of sorts until the multitude learns skills and knowledge for self-rule. Unfortunately, history has proven otherwise.

For French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre revolution is the disruption of everyday life in city streets through the repurposing of their original use. He is interested in economically and socially intertwined relationships with urban space and how outlying areas of the city act in service to it. According to Lefebvre, capital is not the production and consumption of goods but the production of space, because all territories beyond the urban, no matter how remote, are always producing and always transporting goods to it. With the rise of industrialization in the nineteenth century, cities experienced rapid urbanization and growth, drawing labor from the provinces. That labor in turn attracted more industry to cities to take advantage of the abundant workers and skilled trade there. The megalopolis was born, and the city as an economic force not only developed in concentration within its own limits but physically spread into and smothered rural space. The encroachment into rural space has economic consequences because the space for farming is diminished. But with the increase of population in the urban core the agricultural sector is forced to produce more and produce predominantly for the city. The rural is economically and sociologically dependent on the urban, making an absolute delineation between classes, between people of labor and people of leisure. This is definitely not freedom. Today with global economic conditions flattening the earth's surface in the easy transference of information and goods, Lefebvre's theory of the urban takes on unprecedented dimensions in the phenomenon of worldwide urbanization.

Lefebvre writes that "the eminent use of the city, that is, of its streets and squares, edifices and monuments, is la Fête (a celebration which consumes unproductively, without other advantage but pleasure and prestige and enormous riches in money and objects)."12 He believes play, or festival, as he also refers to it, is the most effective way to minimize the influence of the production of urban space and the social class differences it creates. He is interested in how festival unifies disparate classes within the same village or town. For example, he looks toward sixteenth-century practices in peasant communities when everyone from all classes stopped with the plowing and selling and herding and fishing and hunting and banking and cooking, building, sewing, milking, baking, mending, carving, repairing, writing-producing. They stopped with the toils of everyday life and came together. This coming together suspended the rules of community and created new ways of engagement, emphasizing the social over the economic. The festival provided a period in which "strict order was torn up and gave way to a different image of life."13 It overwrites differentiations in the social and physical order of the city. The right to the city via the practice of festival brings individuals into a collective coexistence, united socially instead of divided economically. The festival is a means toward the reappropriation of city space because of various unpredictable, uncommon and infrequent forms the city takes. For Lefebvre, this practice transforms-slowly-everyday life by breaking down class barriers through disruptions of routine behaviors. In Urban Revolution he says, "The street is a place to play and learn. The street is disorder. All the elements of urban life, which are fixed and redundant elsewhere, are free to fill the streets and through the streets flow to the centers, where they meet and interact, torn from their fixed abode. This disorder is alive. It informs. It surprises."14 Chaos prevails.

PUBLIC SPACE

"No, Majesty, it is a revolution," the Duke of La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt told King Louis XIV as the poor and oppressed confined to lives of servitude and work took to the streets. They flooded into the openness of city space in chaotic disturbances and spectacle. It was the beginning of the French Revolution and the beginning of revolution as the political construct we know today. It was the beginning of the motion of the people, when they strayed from the sidelines and the role of everyday spectator to the public space of city streets and the role of active participator.

Alas, the very notion of public space as free and open is construed and a misconception. Public is defined as accessible to or shared by all members of the community. Yet public space as a territory exempt from the confines of institution is misleading. Conceptually, linguistically and physically, it is an oblique term: public. While artists who work outside the art institution, for example, escape the physical walls of a gallery or museum and the limitations that accompany it, they only enter into another set of hegemonic conditions. In other words, there are no uncontested spaces. No escape. Public space is something imaginary. Curator and critic Simon Sheikh says, "It is not a fixed entity we can enter or exit at will, but rather something that has constitutive effects on the social, on how we socialize, and are indeed socialized."16 Sheikh explains that public space is a buffer zone, an imaginary space of economy between the private realm and the realm overseen by the state. That imaginary space called public is only a concept at which the limits and designations of power and sovereignty are always negotiated. It is the point at which a consensus between the state and the individual are sought. It is a space stretched and challenged in society to ultimately determine how much private contestation can be made before the state enforces its power or gives up. At what

point in the face-off does this thing called public space become "accessible to or shared by all members of the community"? 17

In Descent to Revolution the artists to varying degrees and intensities staked claim to areas outside the art institution. The occupation of four different kinds of spaces in what is generally considered the pubic realm occurred during the course of the exhibition. A problematic was generated around a fifth kind of urban space. Columbus College of Art & Design is located in downtown Columbus. Its location obscures easy determination of campus and city space. Red76 and Learning Site had the most sustained and prominent disturbance of public space with the construction of projects on two different asphalt parking lots on the periphery of the campus. Claire Fontaine made a new use of the exterior wall of a peripheral campus building with the installation of a work. REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT temporarily stopped the flow of traffic downtown by taking over streets with a mass procession from the campus to the steps of the Ohio Statehouse. Each action gave new articulations and experiences of these public spaces. Tercerunquinto, although unable to realize their plans, created a discourse about the problems of a vacant downtown shopping mall and its relationship with common space, economy and the city. And the Office of Collective Play energized an otherwise barren downtown storefront space with actions by some of these artists and many others that made it difficult to identify exactly what was the space and what was happening.

It was not the primary intention of all the artists to take a political position against the urban contexts of Columbus. The sites outside the gallery were used as a departure point to make work in line with the focus of the exhibition and the inherent, complementary nature of the artists' practices. The actions, however, reconfigured everyday uses of outdoor space for something new. That disturbance

of streets and open spaces interpreted as public is connected to the history of taking to the streets, the history of chaos and disruption that causes the art to take on more political dimensions than intended. These could be traced to the distant actions associated with the French Revolution when seeds were planted for challenging institution by way of disrupting city streets. The basic interruption of what we consider public space by unexpected actions and objects in the public realm is cast with activist and political motivation. Asphalt lots are made for parking cars. Downtown streets accommodate automobile traffic. A disruption challenges the assigned hegemony by articulating an alternative, even temporary, use of those kinds of spaces. 18 It is at that point when the art becomes political. So, it is not a question of determining the political in art. As political theorist Chantal Mouffe says, it is more a question of determining the critical in art. 19 In other words, all art created within some sort of public contemporary context is weighted with a political dimension. But not all art is critical of those contemporary contexts and spaces. It is the emphasis on the different striations of power within public space and social contexts that bring out the political. What are the possible forms of critical art, and how do the actions of artists in Descent to Revolution become, if they do at all, artistic activism? It is political if the intent is to destabilize the majority-the everyday ways a specific kind of space is used-in order to generate a new discussion, to produce knowledge or stimulate discourse beyond the extent of the temporal occupation of the space. Art becomes political by aggravating and infiltrating the social spheres, by stimulating a pulse, a new kind of energy that changes the consensus of particular positions, such as the way we practice education, disperse knowledge and insight, go about supporting hierarchal models of pedagogical industries, move through public space, rely on automobiles, forget the effect of arrested traffic, challenge established media rhetoric, understand

how often language controls our actions and utilize fully the power of public speech.

The artists participating in Descent to Revolution take flight from the actual space of the art institution into the public realm; as a result, they find themselves enmeshed in a whole new set of challenges. While the artistic activity unfolded within the political dimensions of public space, Bureau for Open Culture and the artists worked in collaboration to realize the productions. The institution, then, is by no means antagonistic to the work, contributing to its realization. As we know, public space is not an autonomous zone in which artists can work freely without the limits of power structures. Indeed, it is a place where contestation and negotiation are real. But the level and frequency of contestation are diminishing because of prevailing neoliberalism. It is not so much the state that controls the public domain anymore than the rise in private economy enveloping it. The in-between-ness of what we view as public space that Sheikh describes is rapidly deteriorating. Privately owned public spaces of consumption, such as "megamalls" with their own security forces, weaken the buffer zone of political contestation between the state and private corporations, developers and individuals. The public space administered by the state, although nebulous and obscure, is increasingly difficult to detect because it does not exist. The disappearing amount of contested space in contemporary life is not without relationship to the diminishing evidence of human rights in the world.

On one hand, the artists and Bureau for Open Culture's evacuation of the physical institution were strategies for escaping the contested site of the white cube, a space that has long been at odds with the production and exhibition of art. Indeed, institutional critique is de rigueur in curatorial theory today. This exhibition-making model, in coordination with the texture of the practices,

throws the action into the openness of Columbus city streets and the rather unlikely site of a decrepit downtown building. It neutralized the playing field and hierarchy between audience and artwork. Artist, institution and audience were at times obscured. Who is what here? In Descent to Revolution the flight from the interior of the art institution into the social contexts to which the work responded decreased the apparent visibility of hierarchy in the work and thus increased the potential for the passive spectator to become the active participant, sometimes by intention and sometimes by chance.

INSTITUTION

Bureau for Open Culture draws on the strong history of the curator as a caretaker or organizer in charge of various public works projects: a bureaucrat responsible for maintaining order.20 Coupled with this notion, "open culture" responds to new intersections of aesthetics, culture and art that challenge societal norms and ways of exhibition-making by inserting unpredictability and disorder in otherwise self-conscious and sometimes overly scripted, thus restricted, exhibition-making canons. Bureau for Open Culture privileges open exchange of information. All events are always free and publications that accompany exhibitions are downloadable online. Bureau for Open Culture is an agency for generating discourse about contemporary culture and new ways of thinking about and engaging with ideas on art and institution. It seeks to educate by opening up multiple points of entry. It operated in these capacities during Descent to Revolution. But this is not to say that Bureau for Open Culture does not present exhibitions inside the gallery. It does. The exhibitions include objects, new media and installation. They are thematic-based group exhibitions intended to stimulate discourse and prod questions on the effects of various kinds of social, historical, economical, cultural, market and political

institutions. They occur inside and outside the gallery not only to respond to the variegated and multidisciplinary condition of the contemporary art world but also to appeal to a wide range of audiences, funding sources and media visibility.

Artists whose practices do not rely exclusively on the interior space of the art institution to exhibit their work are, of course, exempt from the influence that the actual gallery or museum space wields. But the wide reach of the institution of art is more than just the physical site of exhibition. It also includes curators, donors, collectors, critics, installers, boards of trustees, media sponsors and more. Working outside the gallery does not mean the artists escape the effects of those institutional forces or that they operate in opposition to them. More often than not, the artists recognize the value of working with the institution and are not even interested in its position or a critique of it. But without the actual site of exhibition in the mix, what responsibility does the institution play within practices that utilize social and public contexts? What kind of artistic freedom, if any, accompanies this model? How do artistic and curatorial practices coalesce to produce work? And what are the relationships between the curator's two positions of curator-as-agent in service to the art institution and curator-as-agent in service to the artist's vision?

During the course of <u>Descent to Revolution</u>,
Bureau for Open Culture was the organizational
hub of the exhibition. Its responsibilities were
to understand the artists' intents, keep those
intents within the resources available and strive
to realistically bring them into fruition. It
advised on the social and economic conditions of
the city. It arranged travel, hosted research
visits, secured accommodations, connected artists
with Columbus-area resources, secured funding (from
college, local, national and international sources),
communicated to college faculty and students about

the practices, interpreted to audiences the value of the work, mediated with college officials, made introductions to faculty at area universities and colleges, provided practical support, communicated online and in print about the work, administered per diems, negotiated and located local skills, sourced materials, entertained, transported and much more. All of these duties are part of the organizing net of the institution.

Through these in-depth modes of facilitation, Bureau for Open Culture attempts to make unique, lasting and layered ties with the artists with which it works. It often puts significant attention into integrating the artist into the social contexts of Columbus. For example, an artist or collective may produce a work for an exhibition that becomes the first iteration on top of which subsequent forms of participation and artistic production build. Thus a string of collaborative experiences between the institution and artist forms. In this way a mutual understanding of working methods and personalities develops between curator and artist, and community and artist, that allows for increasingly stronger projects to be conceived and realized over years of exhibition-making. Instead of just a one-off participation or a loan, ongoing collaborations often make for rich productions. These artists are "frequent flyers" within the institutional framework of Bureau for Open Culture. Red76, Learning Site and REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT, for instance, participated in less intense capacities in previous exhibitions before making work for Descent to Revolution. Consequently, the Columbus community builds a familiarity with the artists and their practices through professional and personal relationships that are cemented with each exhibition and with each new visit. Not every collaboration is so intimate or ongoing. In fact, most are not. It occurs when relationships between the artist, curator, institution and city develop fruitfully and naturally.

The curator acts at times as a double agent through these continuing relationships and repeated collaborations with the artists. In fact, Bureau for Open Culture operates somewhat from within the institution as a challenge to it, even though the programming is tucked amicably within the college and works in cooperation with its administrative, academic and budgetary boundaries. Because the locations of activities and the exhibitions are not always consistent, a kind of cloudy screen makes it difficult to easily identify what, who or where is Bureau for Open Culture. One way it maintains this subversive condition is to generate relationships with new public, community and academic organizations not always interested in or acknowledged by the world of art. It finesses the program to accommodate the college's mission and to appeal to other Columbus-area constituents, including libraries, experimental music venues, non-art academic departments, city social agencies, alternative educational start-ups, garden projects and city improvement programs. It brings to Columbus artists and art from an array of international contexts to intermingle within this constantly changing fabric of local collaborators, generating new connections and original dialogues. All of it happens within the fragmented and expanded field of contemporary art. As such, Bureau for Open Culture embraces the less than predictable, welcomes the less than established and is drawn to the less than fully prepared. Some things simply do not turn out as planned. And that's all right. This attitude, of course, is a product and benefit of operating inside an academic institution that encourages experimentation and risk-and outside a rigid agenda of corporate sponsorship or controlling boards of trustees with heavily regulated missions, calendars and reports that larger, more commercial or established art institutions experience.

Cultural theorist and curator Nina Möntmann calls this phenomenon the "wild child." ²¹ She describes the wild child as a special art organization that

can operate within forms of institutional governance yet breach its limits, even temporarily, with the actions of artists it supports and the projects it produces. The wild child operates on a pseudoperipheral zone, subverting or suspending the reign of institution. This kind of subversion occurred during Descent to Revolution with the Office of Collective Play initiative. Located about five blocks from the college, the Office of Collective Play was a site for programming and action during the exhibition. It was within walking distance of the campus where visiting artists resided and, of course, the college community works. It occupied a covert but influential role in the exhibition, helping to shape the general premise, tenor and direction by creating the impression of a renegade, loose program. As a physical site, it facilitated experimentation and uninhibited behavior, marginalizing the institutional effect and operating literally and conceptually on the fringes of the college, its authority and oversight. While college and donor logos were included in window graphics and printed matter distributed freely citywide, the slight geographic distance from the college and the haphazard building conditions (including leaky ceiling and lack of indoor restrooms) alleviated the presence of institutional structure. These factors stimulated uninhibited kinds of social interaction within what was intimated as a neutral space. Obscuring identity and the power associated with the institution, this kind of enterprise is referred to by Möntmann as a "non-branded" space. 22 As a conceptual site, under the sweeping guise of play, an almost anything-goes attitude permeated the place and programming. The institution stepped outside itself to present diverse activities for Descent to Revolution alongside the commissioned artists' contributions. Bureau for Open Culture, therefore, became a participant via this avatar called the Office of Collective Play, making a tangible impact on the form the exhibition took. This approach to programming and creative intervention by the institution allows Bureau for Open Culture to occupy a new type of institutional model, one that draws on the "interests and participatory potential" of various local groups to create what Möntmann calls the "relational institution." ²³

Columbus is fertile ground for experimenting with this kind of curatorial model. The city has a high concentration of students, as it is home to a significant number of universities and colleges. The economy of Columbus is closely connected to the higher-education and creative industries. Descent to Revolution's public projects and the programming of the Office of Collective Play drew on these resources. It reached out beyond the art-world crowd (although they too were sought after) to the disciplines of philosophy, comparative studies, linguistics, foreign language, history and political science. Contrasting with the formal structure of educational institutions like Columbus College of Art & Design and Ohio State University, the two most engaged academic populations, the casual setting at the Office of Collective Play helped to neutralize the formality often associated with lectures, panel discussions and academic environments that can distance the audience. The casual intimacy of the space proved advantageous. In some cases, the established codes of institution and hierarchy were dismantled, particularly the guise of the artist or public speaker as an unapproachable, bottledwater-drinking deity. The spectator became an important, active, needed and very much invited participant in the Office of Collective Play programming. Whether it was eight or eighty people in attendance, all were engaged in the conversations and works. This was notably the case for Ben Kinsley's "lecture-tainment" and sing-along, Ola Stahl's readings from the journal entries of his great granduncle, Ryan Griffis's Parking Public discussion, Kevin VanScoder's TMF Co. skill share, REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT's banner workshop and Claire Fontaine's talk. It was also noted by faculty that students who do not regularly contribute to class discussions made thoughtful contributions to the

Pop-Up Book Academy, TMF Co. and YouTube School programs conducted by Red76.

As far as the works and actions produced for the public realm, such as Red76's Anywhere/ Anyplace Academy, Learning Site's Audible Dwelling, REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT's The Readymade Demonstration procession, VITALforms's Line of Flight: A Conversation on Love and Claire Fontaine's Warm War, these artists converted what would be considered the gallery "viewer" from a passive position into an active agent with shared responsibilities to bridge artistic intent and spectatorship.24 It is not easy to factor in spectators in public-sphere work because their role is not always detectable. Sometimes public spectators are discredited because they might do nothing physically to interact with the artistic contexts. But in contextual practices and projects the spectator or passerby becomes a significant factor in the production of the work. A kind of theater emerges in the public arena with a spectatorship radiating from the localized core of where the work is happening, from individuals in close proximity engaging intimately out to those distantly and quickly passing by. In all cases, however, the work is made in relation to that sense of audience, no matter how close, concentrated, distant or temporary. Thus, the number of "visitors" may rise to thousands more than if the work were confined to the interior space of the art institution.

ECONOMY

The economy of attendance is important for institutions. Foundations and granting sources want to know the gate, or the number of visitors to an exhibition. Success of an exhibition or event is often determined by this number. The challenge with projects like those produced for Descent to Revolution, where discursive aesthetic experiences take place in the public realm, on the Internet and in printed matter, is how to

communicate the unknown variables within traditional forms of evaluation that ask for the known. That information is important because it can influence fundraising for future projects. The quality of the experiences, however, is not easily translatable in the framework of this mode of documenting. Since the controlled space of the gallery is not the primary place of activity, there is a concern by the institution about adequately documenting public-sphere productions. That was the case for Descent to Revolution, where the impetus was to have people in the photographs in order to qualify the somewhat intangible and unquantifiable engagements between artist and spectator.

Revolutions do not come free. And revolutions are not cheap. Expenses are high for airfares, accommodations, per diems, materials, technology, honorariums, printed matter, entertainment, labor, administration, fuel, communication, signage, rent and the unexpected-lots of the unexpected. Funds to cover these costs are cobbled together in a patchwork approach that seems at times to mirror the multifarious state of contemporary art. This situation can put the curator in a position of financial hunter and gatherer, the gatekeeper of resources, distributing them in a diplomatic and sometimes tenuous mediation between artistic vision and financial reality. Also, not to forget, the artist today adopts managerial and administrative functions. As art historian Miwon Kwon points out, "Generally speaking, the artist used to be a maker of aesthetic objects; now he/she is a facilitator, educator, coordinator, and bureaucrat."25 Thus, artists can operate in ways that make them into fundraisers and grantseekers to such an extent that it taps into their creative potential, energy and time-time they do not have because they're already working another job in order to do their practice. In the end, for everyone involved, when the projects are completed justification for the funding must be reported.

The operating budget for Bureau for Open Culture is provided by Columbus College of Art & Design along with fluctuating annual grants from Greater Columbus Arts Council and Ohio Arts Council. If possible, these funds are supplemented with additional sources secured for each exhibition. Descent to Revolution was supported by the general exhibition budget and grants from Etant donnés: The French-American Fund for Contemporary Art, the Danish Arts Council and the Puffin Foundation. All the artists in Descent to Revolution were provided with an agreed-upon budget for their participation and the production of their work. In conversation with Bureau for Open Culture the artists decided how to use these funds, including the amount of honorarium they believed to be most appropriate for their time and work. Bureau for Open Culture is a form of economy for contextual practices through its interest and support of artists whose work does not regularly intersect with the commercial art market. So, it was left up to the artists to distribute their budget to produce their projects. Red76, REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT, Tercerunquinto and the Office of Collective Play programming were supported completely with the general exhibition budget. Claire Fontaine's participation was funded with the grant from Etant donnés as part of the promotion of cultural exchange between the United States and France. Learning Site's contribution was the most complex and ambitious in scale and resources. Their funding came from the exhibition budget, a grant from the Danish Arts Council to Bureau for Open Culture and a grant from the Danish Arts Council to Learning Site. Learning Site also transferred an unused grant awarded previously by the Danish Arts Council for an unrealized but conceptually comparable project proposed for an exhibition in Norway. These various financial contributions more than doubled their initial budget from Bureau for Open Culture.

The process of searching among disparate sources to fund Learning Site's <u>Audible Dwelling</u> generated significant cross-communication among grants

representatives, the artists and the institution. It was necessary to closely monitor and try to manage the status of pending funds alongside those obtained as they affected the development of the project. Since funds were awarded from a range of sources while the project was being conceived and even while it was being constructed, it posed a challenge to continually alter the design based on the amount of available or expected funding. This factor of flexibility, of course, is a condition of the contemporary art world in which funds do not come from a single source and the difficulty of receiving grants for projects often runs into the eleventh hour of actual exhibition-making. Therefore, the curator and artists are frequently forced not only to collaborate on the creative and practical aspects of producing the work in the public realm but also to "sell" the concept to funding sources to obtain the necessary support. They become financial managers of a temporary production enterprise with a kind of mini construction team. In the case of Descent to Revolution, Audible Dwelling and other countless public projects like it, the building unfolds right before the public's eyes. Because of the seemingly innate desire of cultural producers to make work of high quality and the natural progression of construction projects, Audible Dwelling took over six weeks to actually build, excluding the many months of design and planning prior to the residency in Columbus. Audible Dwelling was over budget and took three weeks longer than expected to open.26

The response to this situation required a diplomatic, temporary retreat from the public realm in order to regroup and reassess how to complete Audible Dwelling to the satisfaction of the artists while Bureau for Open Culture kept up a reasonable public message about the project. What is going on? Why are these structures taking so long to complete? Bureau for Open Culture had to provide communication about the project to bridge the obvious physical existence of unfinished work

in the midst of academic and urban spectators and other passersby. These spectators had paid a lot attention to the progress of the work taking shape in the highly visible corner parking lot on the edge of campus. And they seemed as eager for its completion, with daily questions posed to those working on it. The fear, of course, from the standpoint of Bureau for Open Culture, was the risk of generating a perception of mismanagement and incompetence from the larger academic institution to which it reports. Perceived incompetence reduces the autonomous space in which one operates, thus delimiting the wild child status one desires to cultivate. The ironical element in this situation is the attention originally put toward obscuring the presence of the institution with the cloak of the Office of Collective Play, and even the general premise of Bureau for Open Culture. Suddenly, it was paramount for the institution to step up and give a more authoritative and evident voice to influence the public's perceptions.

Cultural theorist and writer Brian Holmes speaks of the "tactical necessity of disappearance" as a strategy for sustained intervention. 27 Yes, the pure theater of making the two units, each 24 by 12 feet, of Audible Dwelling in the public space needed to be shut off temporarily to spatially and conceptually retreat, to determine next steps. But that could not happen, and it did not happen. In conventional exhibition-making, the decision-making processes between artist and curator, lender and institution, take place in private. The stumbling with lost loans or failed projects is undetectable in the final, clean, mopped-up space of the white cube. Backstage action is invisible. The house of Art cannot be swept and cleaned and scrubbed while guests are there. This action needs to be done before they arrive. But, Descent to Revolution sought transparency, reveling in process. And transparency is what it achieved. Audible Dwelling, of course, was completed successfully-beautifully on all accounts, in fact—and researchers, students

and artists have collaborated with it during its months in Columbus. The structures are to be shipped to Copenhagen with funds from a new (and renewed) annual exhibition budget and—here again—resources contributed by other institutions that have been approached to collaborate.

In the case of Claire Fontaine, their work and residency were funded with a grant from Etant donnés. The grant covered expenses for travel, per diems and the production of the solar panels and illuminated texts for Warm War. Claire Fontaine chose to forgo an honorarium with a plan to possibly recoup it through another economy. They wanted to put as much of the funds as possible into the production of Warm War as long as they ultimately retained ownership of it after exhibition in Columbus. The work will be shipped to one of their galleries in summer 2010. This situation reveals the intersections of the economies of the notfor-profit exhibition sector, grant organizations and the commercial art world. In theory, Claire Fontaine will ultimately be compensated for the conception of Warm War, production of the original text Human strike within the field of libidinal economy presented at the Office of Collective Play and the time for their residency in Columbus with funds from the intended sale of Warm War. This patchwork approach referred to earlier is, in fact, not so distant from what happened with Learning Site. There, too, was the need to creatively sweep together funding from disparate sources in order to produce work satisfactorily and pay the artists. However, in the case of Claire Fontaine, the only participant in Descent to Revolution with representation by commercial dealers, the bad-boy art market (read increasing privatization) swept in to affect the final form of participation in the not-for-profit sector (read decreasing public interests) with more funds if the artists had been left to use only the grant. Perhaps Claire Fontaine orchestrated this scenario in order to draw up a discourse about the increasingly blurry

boundaries between not-for-profit and commercial enterprises. Their practice engages with the extraordinary reaches of the commercial art institution, inhabiting it unabashedly instead of evading it. They test precisely the limits of its contours, mapping it from an interior, "parasitic perspective" in a mode of stock-taking intended to destabilize that institution from within.²⁸ Descent to revolution.

- $^{\scriptscriptstyle 1}$ Hannah Arendt, $\underline{\text{On Revolution}}$ (New York: Penguin,
- 1977), 36.
- ² Ibid, 32.
- ³ Ibid, 33.
- 4 Ibid, 22.
- ⁵ Ibid, 18-19.
- ⁶ Ibid, 34.
- 7 Thomas Jefferson, <u>The Declaration of Independence</u>,

intro. Michael Hardt (New York: Verso, 2007), xv.

- ⁸ Ibid, 56-57.
- 9 Ibid, xxi.
- 10 Ibid, xi.
- 11 Ibid, xxi.
- 12 Henri Lefebvre, "Right to the City," Writings
 on Cities: Henri Lefebvre, trans. and intro.

Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 66.

- ¹³ Quoted in Thomas McDonough, "The Beautiful Language of My Century" in <u>Reinventing the Language of Contestation in Postwar France, 1945-1968</u>
 (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2007), 141.
- ¹⁴ Henri Lefebvre, <u>The Urban Revolution</u>, intro. Neil Smith, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003), 18-19.
- 15 Arendt, 37.
- 16 Simon Sheikh, "Publics and Post-Publics. The
 Production of Social Space," Open. Cahier on Art and
 the Public Domain 14 (2008): 29.
- ¹⁷ Merriam-Webster online dictionary.
- 18 Chantal Mouffe calls this an "agonistic"
 intervention of public space. See Chantal Mouffe,
 "Art and Democracy. Art as an Agnostic Intervention
 in Public Space," Open. Cahier on Art and the Public
 Domain 14 (2008): 9.
- ¹⁹ Ibid, 11-12.
- 20 David Levi Strauss, "The Bias of the World:
 Curating After Szeemann and Hopps," in Cautionary
 Tales: Critical Curating, eds. Steven Rand and
 Heather Kouris (New York: apexart, 2007), 15.
 21 See Nina Möntmann, "Playing the Wild Child.
 Art Institutions in a Situation of Changed Public
 Interest," Open. Cahier on Art and the Public Domain
 14 (2008).

- ²² Ibid, 22.
- ²³ Ibid, 23.
- 24 Jacques Rancière, The Emancipated Spectator, trans. Gregory Elliott (New York: Verso, 2009), 12.
- 25 Miwon Kwon, One Place After Another. Sitespecific Art and Locational Identity (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2002), 51.
- ²⁶ The builder and project manager initially hired by Bureau for Open Culture to oversee this work considerably derailed plans as far as design and materials, making its completion challenging. This person was released from the project. Everyone else involved had to negotiate within what had been arranged, as far as design, materials and budget.
- ²⁷ Brian Holmes, "Transparency and Exodus. On Political Process in the Mediated Democracies,"

 Open. Cahier on Art and the Public Domain 8

 (2005): 60.
- ²⁸ Nina Möntmann does not refer specifically to Claire Fontaine but uses this phrase generally to describe the mapping of the institution as a step in a critical practice. I have used the phrase in relation to Claire Fontaine's work. See Möntmann, "Playing the Wild Child. Art Institutions in a Situation of Changed Public Interest," 18.

REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT ("Cleaning Service" or "Purification Society") is Martin Keil and Henrik Mayer. It is a collective based in Dresden that utilizes the creative potentials of uniting art and social reality to stimulate discourse about topics within specific contexts. Taking a kind of pseudo-form of an independent corporation, they use structured methodologies-like flow chartsto assess social, political and economic conditions. Their strategies uncover what exists to initiate dialoque about what is possible. REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT depends on collaborators from different backgrounds to make connections and to generate knowledge and actions, drawing on a fundamental aesthetics of the everyday.

REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT was in residence from October 10 to 19, 2009.

REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT



Politics of Space: Martin Keil and Henrik Mayer of REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT on The Readymade Demonstration

James Voorhies: Could you describe what is The
Readymade Demonstration?

REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT: It is a performative event to take place in the public space of an urban environment. It is the re-staging of a demonstration that took place originally in East Berlin during the peaceful revolution in fall 1989. The idea is to stage the demonstration in a shifted context. In this way we want to open the possibility to look at the demonstration as a cultural technique and perceive the urban space as a stage for a discussion on common social values. By using a demonstration that already happened in a different context we avoid a specific political message but shift the attention towards the inherent cultural, economic and social implications.

JV: In 2009 images of demonstrations proliferated on the Internet and television. I can immediately think of the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh and the protests of the Iranian presidential election. Could you speak about the connections you see between the cultural technique of The Readymade Demonstration and those forms of recent protest in action? In other words, what is the relevance of the demonstration model as a cultural technique without a social or political breach to generate that action?

RG: When protests like those against the G20 Summit or the Iranian election are reflected in the media, they occur in certain iconic forms. There is a certain vocabulary used by the media to picture protests. One can think of shaky cell phone movies, pictures of burning flags and running crowds. On the other hand there is a certain traditionalized protester culture: raised fists, a certain dress code, humming, etc. Demonstrators act to gain media attention and the media shapes the image of a protest in the public mind. The fact that a protest is reported shapes its appearance and the way it is perceived. In such a way protests can be seen as "instrumentalized events" absorbed by the media culture. A demonstration without a political breach represents this idea of a protest that has its only relevance from celebrating its stereotype behavioral forms.

It is interesting to take a closer look at the relation of opponents. Both sides depend on each other. There is no anti-globalization without globalization. So the culture of protests and the forms of dialogue are also determined by this dependency.

JV: From a personal perspective could you speak about the pivotal point in German and world history when the Berlin Wall fell? How has it affected the content of your practice?

RG: In the original demonstration nearly half a million people were protesting. The demonstration was organized by civil rights activists and the performing artists union. A result of the peaceful demonstrations were weekly round-table discussions between politicians and independent activists discussing democracy and reforms. We experienced this moment as a starting point of direct democracy. This process continued in many other East European countries: the discovery of individual liberty. After 20 years we can analyze that there were missed many chances of a radical renewal towards civil societies not only in the East. Another interesting fact is that even an artist union was co-organizing a demonstration. From our point of view: art can be a catalyst of social processes. We understand this demonstration as an utopian space to pose questions and raise critical awareness.

JV: Some of the participants in <u>The Readymade</u>

<u>Demonstration</u> were not yet born in 1989 and others
were too young to remember the Fall of the Berlin

Wall. So how are they supposed to relate to the
actions of the work?

RG: The work is not about history but about how we perceive our personal role in society. The Demonstration uses the original slogans from 1989 in German. It means that there is almost no possibility for the participants to identify with the actual messages. The attention is drawn to a different aspect: the politics of space.

JV: But one might say since the work is based on an important break in political hegemony, history has a place in the concept of The Readymade Demonstration. Could you expand on the part of your response about the perception of our role in society? Could you say more about your interest in the politics of space?



Martin Keil and Henrik Mayer host a discussion and workshop to recreate flags, banners and signs of the East German revolution of 1989.

RG: Jacques Rancière speaks about the creation of a common territory. For that reason it is important to analyze the political potential of space. By putting in question the established determination of space in terms of ownership, use and access there can be raised that critical potential. In our renaming projects we give temporary new names to streets. A new name changes the perspective and plays with different and ambivalent realities, and contradictions become apparent. We try to create a new utopian space beyond dispositions and definitions. With a change of perception through a public intervention or action there opens a social dialogue that can reach different audiences. Therein exists the responsibility in dealing with the politics of space.

JV: The workshop was a significant part of The Readymade Demonstration. Could you describe it? Why did you organize it? And why did you choose to recreate the banners and posters that you did?

RG: In preparation of the demonstration RG held a Banner Workshop. It was announced in public and mainly students took part. The workshop gave us the chance to introduce the idea of a readymade demonstration. It was important to us to involve possible protesters in the making of the materials. As banner models there were used original signs and posters from 1989. The aim was to recreate them completely, including

the German slogans. The message of the demonstration changes depending on the shifted place and time.

JV: Were the banners and slogans selected for a reason? What is the source for these particular images, and why did you decide to use them?

RG: The banners were collected in the 1990s by the German Historic Museum in Berlin to preserve the handmade artifacts of the demonstration. A selection from the preserved banners were models for *The Readymade Demonstration* banners. Criteria for certain choices were that the banners characterize the main ideas of the peaceful revolution, like the claim of a better socialism and the ban against violence. Some of the banners were chosen for their idealistic contents, like: "Philosophy Instead of Ideology" or some others, like a banner for free market economy that refers to the romantic imagination of a social capitalism which satisfies all consumerist needs.

JV: Beyond the obvious factor that you were invited to participate in the exhibition in Columbus, why did you decide to do this action in Columbus? What are some of the specific conditions in Columbus that you believe helped to shape the work?

RG: The project was developed especially for Columbus although it could have been realized also in other places. It was our interest to relate to the specific political, economical and urban conditions of the U.S. urban environment. The structure of almost all American cities stands for an economy of growth and consumerism. When we asked what is special about Columbus we were told that it is considered to be the most average American city.

JV: And how did you find Columbus in terms of reaction to the work and willingness (or not) to participate? Does a particular situation or conversation come to mind?

RG: Frankly speaking, we were not counting on a half million protesters. The participants of *The Readymade Demonstration* made a peaceful use of public space. When the demonstration crossed by a bus stop chanting *Wir Sind Das Volk* ("We Are The People") the people waiting for the bus spontaneously answered with a chorus: "We Don't Care!" This strange interplay









perfectly illustrates the growing disintegration tendencies in a society that shows a tendency to shift existential risks from the public sphere to the individual.

JV: Could you talk about the aspect of procession in your practice? With this in mind are there works or events by artists that have influenced that element of your practice?

RG: The word procession reminds us of a process. We believe that art interferes with other disciplines and can catalyze social processes. Also the original idea of the readymade as it was understood by Duchamp as an object changes toward a process that includes a procession. Processions in the first sense played a role in some of our previous projects. For instance there is the public intervention Labour Day. Together with social activists we created banners that refer to the topic of work in a way that they describe job nomadism and the rise of the individual. The idea was to change the understanding of labour from a traditional, union-based concept towards a concept of labour that is more and more connected to individual risks. Another project was the Cow Demonstration, realized just a few weeks before The Readymade Demonstration. It was realized in the context of a debate on urban developments in Zagreb, Croatia. Cows were forming a procession to claim their territory in an area that was endangered to become a spot for real estate speculation. For this project we co-operated with environmental activists. Our art practice is merely influenced by political and social movements, not by art works in the first place.















JV: How do you determine the success of a work?

RG: Success means that a work becomes part of the cultural and political consciousness of the society.

JV: Comparable to some of the other participants in Descent to Revolution, RG does not draw income from commercial art galleries. From a practical point of view, in terms of economy and livelihood, how do you support yourself with your practice? What do you see as some of the challenges and benefits of this model?

RG: We see a clear distinction between the commercial art world. which is determined by galleries, auctions and collectors, and a different sphere that is sometimes called the second art market. When we started out we clearly decided not to relate to the first art market but choose to be self-organized, meaning that the mercantile aspects of our practice are integrated in it and controlled by ourselves. So a lot our activities depend on a public interest, are based on public money, or relate to the educational sphere. Public funders sometimes try to control the artistic contents, so the challenge is to balance our own interests and the requirements of projects that are produced in the form of a social dialogue.





RED76

Red76 is a Portland, Oregon-based collaborative that facilitates discussions, texts and actions that draw on radical social and political histories, questioning their relevance to present-day life. They use fliers, posters, newsprints, YouTube, e-mail, blogs and more to rally participants into situations that generate insight about how knowledge is produced and in what form it exists.

Red76 members Sam Gould, Zefrey
Throwell and Gabriel Saloman along
with Mike Wolf, Ola Stahl and Dylar
Gauthier were in residence, each
for varying lengths of time, from
September 8 to October 5, 2009.

Surplus Seminar experiments with alternative forms of pedagogy. It is a series of projects that gather together participants to dream up and enact ideas about how to use the surplus in our world. Chief interest is the activitation of underutilized materials, skills and know-how into sites of learning.



A Conversation with Red76

James Voorhies: Can you describe <u>Surplus Seminar</u> and how it came to be conceived?

Sam Gould: The interests of *Surplus Seminar* are to create a site of convergence around the idea of how we create knowledge, or more appropriately, new ideas. Much of the thrust of this involves notions of how our experiences with the world around us create our knowledge base, and much of that comes from the repurposing of existing ideas to create new ideas. In a society that preaches the gospel of individualism and intellectual property rights this is a tricky subject, as people feel like their ideas are their own, to be bought and sold, even though the whole of human experience tells us otherwise. So with *Surplus Seminar* the goal is to converge from time to time around the world with the initiative—which manifests as a series of smaller projects with similar interests at heart—to create an atmosphere that both visualizes, actualizes and seeks to discuss how we can reuse existing knowledge, much like we would existing physical materials, to create new ideas and new platforms for the discussion and creation of those ideas.

In terms of the nuts and bolts of the process, it was conceived like most Red76 projects are often conceived. I'll have been working through some idea in my head for a little while. Probably I'll have written some form of supplementary, or arch-narrative, text that serves as a guide for a variety of ideas and concerns that I'm coming up against at the time. From there it depends on the weather, the environment. What usually starts to happen is that, from this arch-narrative, a variety of individualized projects begin to manifest. Often the individual projects will start to take shape in conversation with other Red76 collaborators, like Gabriel Saloman, or Zefrey Throwell, Mike Wolf or Dan S. Wang. I'll have the beginning of some thoughts on

means of engaging a set of concerns and, over the phone or through some form of correspondence or over a beer, I'll initiate a dialogue about it. In tandem I'll start seeing things—films, books, news stories, the actions of others—that begin to inform what I'm interested in engaging. Often I'll be hunting down books in thrift stores and used shops to find titles that inform what I'm after. Often these books might seem far afield, but as a cosmology—at least for me—they start to form a syllabus for future action. To a lesser extent I'd include other forms of media as well as other projects in this grouping, but it usually comes down to the printed form—books and scattered publications—that serve as an inspirational hub. For me they serve as containers for the projects' core interests. The content within is there to commingle with the ideas that begin to generate after I start talking with Gabriel, or whomever it might be at the time.

With *Surplus Seminar* in particular I'd been concerned for quite some time with notions of ad-hoc educational spaces. Those concerns had manifested in a lot of projects that we'd done over the last ten years, but they weren't often at the forefront, or explicated. They were subtexts to the larger apparatus. But starting with a tour that we did of former Eastern Block countries in early 2004.³ I started getting very

² GS: Sam called me up and said, "I have an idea for something that I want to do in Columbus with James —I want to create an underground bunker and grow potatoes above it." From there months of emails, visits to Portland and Skype calls ensued with Sam and I constructing, deconstructing and at times demolishing dozens of initiatives. As is often the case with our collaborations Sam initiated the project thematically and established various formal concerns, which all of our subsequent ideas worked within. Often I feel as though my role is to push Sam to be more clear in concept, or to address political and theoretical problems I perceive in his initiatives. Sometimes I lobby for more aesthetic labor, and sometimes I simply take Sam's ideas and attempt to build them into a tangible form. With my own initiatives Sam pushes them to develop a more rigorous narrative, a wider platform or else to add poetry if it seems that it's lacking. On the ground, as facilitators, our roles are much more similar, but this describes the ways in which more and more Red76 projects have developed. I imagine it is similar to some degree with other members of the collaborative.

¹ Gabriel Saloman: Good ideas are a commons. To lock them up and prevent them from making their way through the world is like letting food rot, boarding up an empty home or burning a library. If it wasn't for the precariousness of our lives under Capitalism we wouldn't care whether someone extrapolates from our work, collages it, refines it or even steals it out right. Our ego be damned (because credit is only worth something when it comes with material rewards). If every artist could feed themselves, house themselves and continue creating their work, would any but the most fearful or vain care if their work was repurposed, copied or appropriated?

³ GS: This was one of the worst projects we ever did. It's also one of my favorites. I highly recommend that anyone sharing a beer with Sam and me ask about this trip. I'm considering making a musical based on it.



interested in ideas of parallel education, things along those lines. This interest is due in large part to my learning about the Flying Universities that were created in many of the Soviet controlled countries and were facilitated by ousted professors to serve the students who were interested in continuing there classes, or just even scholarly proximity, to their old teachers.

The year after we took this trip, at the invitation of Ola Stahl, I went back to Zagreb, Croatia, to take part in a project that the group he was a part of at the time, C.CRED, was initiating. It was over there that I started toying with this thought of the deconstruction of the historical Flying University as a project for pedagogical, aesthetic and sociopolitical interests. But, as with a lot of projects that Red76 eventually gets to doing, the idea sat on the back burner for about three or four years before we got moving on it. After we finished *Revolutionary Spirit*—which lasted from January of 2007 to November of 2008—I took a little time off to think over the project and the ideas it brought up, as well as things that remained undone or unresolved. So, from there our conception of the Flying University began.





So, to follow this logic, *Flying University* is the arch-narrative, and *Surplus Seminar* carries many of that narrative's concerns within it, as a vehicle towards a convergence—or possibly more appropriately an accident—of those ideas.

JV: Would you talk more about the specific projects of <u>Surplus Seminar-YouTube for Social Politics</u>, <u>Pop-Up Book Academy</u>, <u>Anywhere/Anyplace Academy</u> and <u>TMF Co.</u>? How are they connected to one another?



narrative to the content at hand and the thematic narrative of each discrete project, such as the *YouTube School for Social Politics*, or *Pop-Up Book Academy*, for instance. Another important thing to point out, and what drives our interest in continuing *Surplus Seminar*, is that we see it as a model, and that as a model it will react to its environment differently in different sites. *Surplus Seminar* in Columbus is going to be different from *Surplus Seminar* in Chicago is going to be different from *Surplus Seminar* in Buffalo, etc. The available surplus — the people, their interests and skills, the actual physical surplus —acts









SG: The general plan that governs each iteration of *Surplus Seminar* is that there is one core element, which is *Anywhere/Anyplace Academy* (*A/AA*), and the other elements shift depending on interest and environment. What ties all these elements together is that they share a notion of knowledge and ideas, the space of consideration between us, as content to be reconfigured, recontextualized. The desire is to take these projects as vehicles to consider how we can create new spaces for learning and discussion, and the creation of knowledge, through what we have around us. This element exists as a parallel conceptual



as a player within the forming narrative of the project. You can't know how it will turn out in the end because you haven't done it yet. That experiment, or improvisational element, is vital.

So, before I describe some of the Columbus elements, let me describe *A/AA*, as this project really serves as the underpinning for them all. Everything emanates out from the daily considerations that take place on the site of *A/AA*.

For each manifestation of Surplus Seminar we choose an area to act as a construction site for A/AA. We'll meet there each morning a number of days each week and stay there for a normal workday. The idea is that the construction site serves as a classroom. Through the combined skill sets, interests and desires of the people who show up, and the application of those skill sets, interests and desires towards physical material that is donated or scavenged from the surrounding area, we collectively consider the question, "What is a school?" Equally as important is the expansion of that question to. "What is a school here; for us, for the people we know, as a response to the immediate area around us?" And from there it's pretty simple. You wake up each day, make yourself a thermos of coffee, put on a proper pair of shoes and head to work. You look around you to see what's available —discarded shipping pallets, old two-by-fours, doors, window panes, beer bottles, sheet metal - and you begin to discuss with one another how you could recontextualize this material together to create something new out of it, something that would be conducive to collaborative learning, to a site for questioning, to film screenings, lectures, reading, silent individual thought. The project, as a process, is wholly experiential in nature. It is horizontal as a format rather than topdown, or hierarchical. Each person looks around them to see what's available and confers with the others to consider its use. In this sense we're utilizing the act of A/AA as the beginning of the meme for all the

projects—how can I apply the ideas around me to the desires within me? How can I utilize this content into something new that represents the world around me, rather than just absorbing it indiscriminately? So, with that in mind, we're not talking about anything new, of course. We're trying to promote and make plain the very nature of learning, which tends to be happenstantial, collective, anarchic, occurring and manifesting continuously through association.

Fairly explicitly this conceptual narrative is the core of the *YouTube* School for Social Politics. The application of the project is very simple—as any really successful project of this nature needs to be. We commission artists, economists, writers, politicians, historians to compose clips that they've found on YouTube as the building blocks towards the creation of what we call an essay. As a narrative conceit the illusion to writing is important. By composing these clips into a conversation with one another, glued together with the assistance of a video forward spoken by the author (these videos being very similar to response videos you might find on YouTube), you're able to visually describe how we create texts.5 Ideas don't come out of thin air, no matter how much some might like to pretend that they do. We take from the world around us, we manipulate the ideas that interest us and provoke us, we piece this information together, and by our own personality, by our own point of view, these discrete bits of information, by association, create a new whole. This process continues over and over again, continuously morphing, exponentially. In a contemporary sense I think this is an extremely important idea to consider in regard to a networked society. While seemingly simple, maybe even juvenile,

⁴ GS: A/AA doesn't begin with an end, thus making the building a means. It has goals and potentials, but these are defined ultimately by the participants. Other than the frame of a "schoolhouse" and the suggestion of a methodology of "utilizing surplus," there is little else that is predetermined. The Diggers, anarchist hippies from San Francisco in the sixties, used to have a stock answer to the often asked, "Who's in charge here?" "YOU ARE!" A/AA borrows from that approach in that whoever shows up determines the next course of action, the qualities of the work, and within a collective and consensual framework must decide what it will become.

⁵ GS: A critical element not mentioned by Sam is the screening of these essays and the discussion that evolves from it. Most of our projects attempt to exist in multiple platforms that inform and support each other. So while these essays participate in the hyperlinked social space of the Web, through among other things blogs, URLs and YouTube itself, there is also a physical manifestation of the project. In Columbus we held screenings of these essays, often with the authors providing an introduction in person, substituting for their video version. Following the screening Red76, the authors and those attending the event engaged in a conversation. These conversations not only "complete" the project, they indicate a way of intervening in Web-based social spaces and creating physical world parallels. Without judging the merits of virtual social networking, I believe that people absolutely need to address the diminishing realm of physical social relationships and how that is affecting our Social Relations.

the process of the project—using YouTube as just one example—aims at discussing how we create new ideas, how knowledge manifests through anarchic associations of seemingly disparate data. It's through the association of content that new ideas form, and if these associations are further and further deemed as explicitly proprietary we are quite literally killing our ability to create for the sake of a few dollars for a mere few people.

Pop-Up Book Academy (PBA) utilizes these ideas in a somewhat less





explicit way. The project manifests as a traveling bookstore. Within that bookstore resides a school that uses the printed form as a vehicle to discuss sociopolitical histories and ideas. Each session is discrete: a new "professor" facilitating each class on a topic of interest to them, the divergent elements of each class topic all being tied back together through the narrative of the printed form and the social histories that they document. We sell books—sometimes food and drink as well—at each session, the purpose of this being the creation of a publication fund.

Red76 for a number of years now has been producing a publication called *The Journal of Radical Shimming (JRS)*. It began as the printarm for a two-year-long project called *Revolutionary Spirit*, which took place from 2007 to 2009. After that project came to a close we decided that the value of the *JRS* hadn't dissolved, so we decided to keep it running. It's publications such as the *JRS* that act as catalysts for many of the discussions that take place at *PBA* sessions. The *JRS* is never sold. It is distributed internationally through a hand-to-hand network. It is dropped off in coffee shops, bookstores, on doorsteps, in anonymous mailboxes, on subways seats. So, we sell books as a





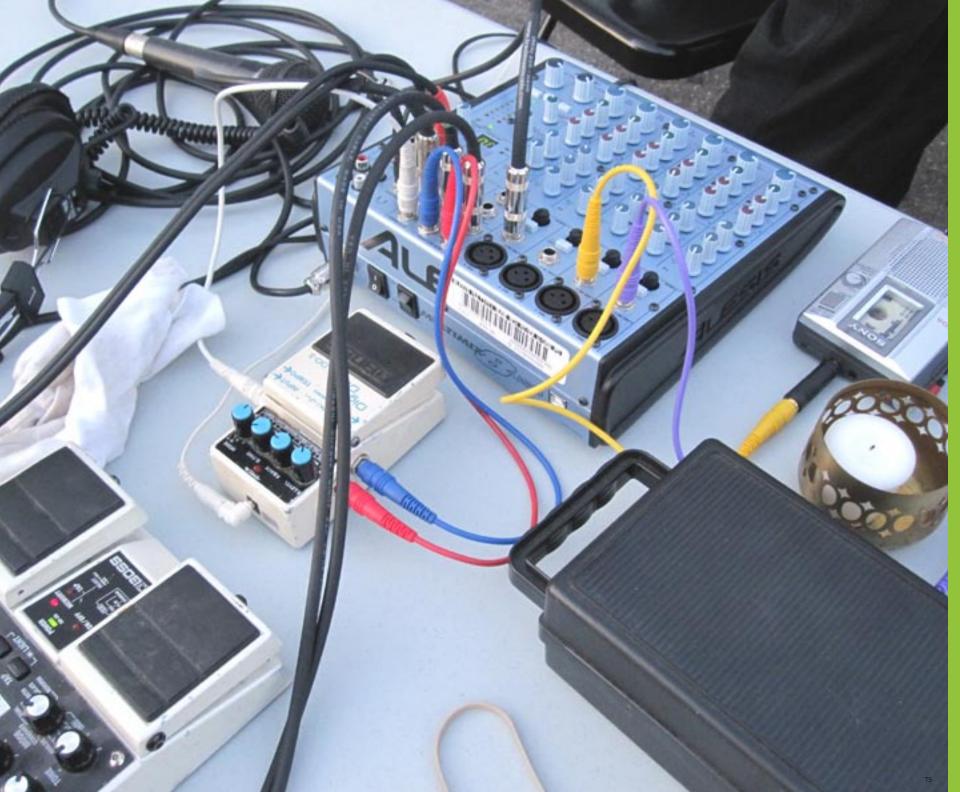
means to create a fund to help produce the *JRS*. As well, when we are able to sell enough titles to amass more than we need at the time of production, we distribute funds to other publishers and artists as a means to help produce other publications that share the interests of *PBA* and the Journal.⁶

JV: Red76 gathered quickly a significant circle of participants and interest in making Anywhere/Anywhere Academy (A/AA) and the other <a href=Surplus Seminar projects. It was as if you had filled a void. Why do think this was the case? What was the appeal and draw?

SG: I'll apologize in advance as I'm about to go off on a bit of a

⁶ GS: Conspicuously missing from this survey are *TMF Co.* and Levine's Market and Meeting Place. Briefly, TMF Co. or "Teacha-Man-to-Fish Company" was an experiment in creating a market that not only discourages future consumption but also turns the act of commercial exchange into a pedagogical tool. Essentially we attempted to create products for sale—journals, kim-chee, infused vodka, etc. —which contained in their packaging instructions for creating the same product on one's own. Ideally the package would contain some of the same tools one needed to create their own variation on the product. The goal was to never have a return customer. Most of the materials were comprised of secondhand, salvaged or gleaned materials, emphasizing the theme of surplus and suggesting the value of locality as opposed to the mass market. Within the context of a provisional *TMF Co.* shop we invited people to offer skill shares, revealing their own personal narratives and interests through the offering of their knowledge.

Levine's Market and Meeting Place was a school in the form of speakeasy wherein different forms of the marketplace were created simultaneously: barter, trade, black markets, grey markets, free boxes, gifts and traditional monetary exchange. Levine's asks us to ignore the typical definitions of value and propriety imposed by capital and the Law by allowing people to determine between individuals what a thing is worth and how it ought to be exchanged. Levine's was a sort of parallel project to Surplus Seminar that included thematic elements of Surplus, Pedagogy and Alternative Marketplaces, but situated itself intentionally as outside of the specific realm of the Descent to Revolution exhibit and CCAD.











tangent, but one that I think is really important to shine light on, as it often isn't discussed I feel. For us, from project to project, the number of people involved on the ground fluctuates wildly. Sometimes this is by design, and other times it's just a fluke. In this regard it's difficult not to view a project as unsuccessful when it doesn't gather a critical mass. But in my definition of this type of work those numbers are, relatively speaking, fairly meaningless. Interest and enthusiasm are far more important than size. And size (or more accurately, participation) is relative at that. As a counter notion to the critical-mass approach to socially engaged practices, I see the work existing in ideas, and those ideas are manifested in countless ways as a means of expanding and deconstructing each project's inherent ideas and interests. For us this

⁷ GS: As pertinent as this tangent is, I feel obligated to try and address elements of the question that Sam passes over in some ways. James refers to a "significant circle of participants" and I can't help but assume this implicates the unity, collectivity and social bond that seemed to develop from the project. Though primarily composed of less than a dozen students, and to some extent gallery staff and school faculty, it was clear that the project was of deep importance to these participants. There was little incentive to be involved other than the satisfaction of the experience, and yet the continuity of participation and the devotion expressed through it told me as a facilitator that a chord had been struck. The project had "failure" built into its narrative, whether that meant non-participation or deconstruction—both of which took place. The goal was to "do" and in that act see what would manifest. That a genuine circle formed, one for whom the project clearly was significant, makes other quantitative considerations seem moot.



notion tends to manifest in the forms of social gatherings, lectures, networked communication, publications and any form of media that makes sense to the interests of the ideas at hand. Oftentimes second-hand knowledge, myth or gossip play key roles in the furtherance of the project's interests as well.

The misnomer of socially engaged practices is that the work exists on the ground. I disagree, strongly. That numbers game turns the work into marketing and less about aesthetics and knowledge and cultural production. With quantitative values you'll find artists miming institutions, who mime the concerns of foundations, who mime the concerns of the market and further so down the line. They need to see a profit somewhere, and if the work doesn't have an object to sell, then mass appeal seems to take the place of salable goods. I think the promotion of this mentality, though obviously understandable if not acceptable, is really damaging to future cultural workers influenced by work occurring now, and in the past decade or so. While I feel groups like ourselves, or Temporary Services, Center For Tactical Magic, LTTR and so forth, play a non-quantitative game, there are plenty of artists and groups out there who adopt a more quantitative approach. I can't stress enough how damaging I feel that mentality is towards the values I see as most beneficial to the work. It presents a false measure of success based on quantifiable involvement rather than strength of participation or concepts. How many people engage in any project is meaningless in relation to the persistence of the ideas and concepts at hand and how they play out, not over a defined period of time like a month or so but over years, decades or more. How the ideas, because they were engaged in defuse, anarchic and unusual groupings, play

themselves out and become new and different through engagement and understanding over the long term is far more critical than if two hundred people showed up for group choir practice or a free yoga session together. Alright...so I'm going to stop being cranky for now.

JV: What you bring up about the emphasis on attendance numbers is a good point and I believe extremely prescient. I agree with what you say about the use of only numbers as an inconclusive means to evaluate the quality of a project. I believe this is where granting and donor sources and their ways of determining the success of socially engaged practices have not caught up to understand the nature of the work. In fact, at the Bureau for Open Culture it is an issue we face right now with reports due to the various sources that gave funding for Descent to Revolution. The recorded number of people who physically attended activity over the course of the two-plus month run of the exhibition is about one-third of total attendance for past exhibitions that have taken place inside the gallery in a less dispersed, less event-focused form. So, because these practices, for now, must fit within the evaluative structure of granting and funding sources, how does the institution and the artist qualify for reporting purposes the shift in participants' perspective, the newly gained awareness of ideas, the relationships established with artists and thus the intangible, long-term trajectories set by these projects? It is an economy of cultural and image production in which the number of hits on the website and the number of clicks at the entrance are the stalwarts of evaluation and the quick and easy messaging relayed to donors. This is a concrete and important subject because without funds projects do not materialize and artists do not make a sustaining livelihood. Additional thoughts?8

⁸ GS: I think this is an example where the Artworld's complicity in Capitalism is perfectly problematized. Capitalism is amoral, no matter what Milton Friedman may say. It has no obligation to consider the spiritual, emotional or even material effects of its impact on the world unless they can be quantified as some form of currency. This is the



SG: That notion of quantity over quality is so prevalent. You can't escape it. The more people involved the better, content be damned. I'm not sure what one can do about it. Keep pulling away, I suppose, and just do the work. But the question of making a living, in that regard inevitably rears itself to the surface. I do think that there is a chance to begin to change that, and it is through public conversation along these lines that urge a long and more direct process—by foundations, etc.—to engage with the actual work, rather than ,numbers on a page. That would be a big obligation for them, but it should be. Why else disperse all the money if you aren't interested in really looking into what it is you are promoting? Well...this could get ugly...maybe this is a conversation that needs to take place all on its own?

While I've tried to distance myself as much as possible from the notion of the importance of the number of participants on the ground in any given project, what happens in these social situations is obviously important as it's a large part of what we do. The social portions of the projects take up a large percentage of the action, and therefore are seen as the dominant theme of the practice. In this light we all prefer to nurture people into the process who feel inclined to do so. This involves actually listening to people rather than trying to tell every soul in the world about what you're up to like some second-rate used car salesman.

With Surplus Seminar I think we had the best of both worlds as it did seem like, as you mentioned, we filled a void of some sort. I'd argue against our having too much to do with that. The general nature of the city, the surrounding community, the urban infrastructure, etc., all play a huge role in any project. They have to be considered at length

crisis facing everything in too-late Capitalism, from the University, to climate, to food security. If art doesn't want to be resigned to a fate determined by numismatics it has to continue to push back. I think this is what makes *Descent to Revolution* a remarkable show. Its location in Columbus, its proximity to the G20 and its timing in the arc of the current financial crisis makes these unaccountable gestures a significant critique to the total absorption of culture into commerce.

GS: It was often expressed to me by participants that *Surplus Seminar*, and *Descent to Revolution* in general, represented a meaningful change or addition to the discourse and experience of artmaking in Columbus. Perhaps the project filled individual "voids," but I can't help but identify a different alignment of need and fulfillment. Red76 projects are always an attempt to respond to a perceived need,

in determining what you would like out of the project you're about to tackle. With that said though, I suppose we must have done something that existed outside of what was already there on the ground. I'll give us some credit. To break it down I think that our choice of placement for the construction site for A/AA was very important—as we'd discussed prior to the start of the project. And the proximity of the storefront, which you chose and where we held so many other aspects of the project, was also extremely important. It being so close by let the activities at A/AA easily continue, while not piling them on top of one another at one site. Along with all this the nature of introduction to the project, as always, was vital. As with so many of our projects it involved a variety of overt promotion, and willful subterfuge. In this regard, people knew about it and came to check it out. And those that were really intrigued became invested, or allowed themselves the time to consider it at more length, which allowed us to take more time to discuss our concerns with them.

So, though tons of people came in and out of the project(s) during our tenure within the exhibition—and they all seemed to gather something from it—there really was a core group that took to the ideas and ran with them. These folks became the core engine of the project for me, and they really only numbered about seven or eight people in the end. But even with only that many people I'm hard pressed to consider this project as anything but one of the best things we've ever accomplished in the last ten years as an outfit.

There's more to be said here that is very specific to the time, place, climate and individuals involved with this iteration of *Surplus Seminar*. In all honesty there was something extremely emotional about it that is hard to define. There was, for me, an emotional honesty that, maybe, hasn't existed for us before in other projects. This isn't downgrading past work as much as accepting an inevitable progression and consideration of what's important to you, a maturity of sorts in finally

or at least to offer a potential form of engagement and practice, which could play a meaningful role in the world. What they lack too often is meaningful engagement from outside of our inner collaborative. This void was filled wonderfully by the students, artists, teachers and others who participated in *Surplus Seminar*. Perhaps we (along with the Bureau for Open Culture's hard work) simply created a platform that earned that level of engagement. I can't help but feel that we were in part just lucky to have such wonderful collaborators available for this project and willing to fill our own voids.







accepting a somewhat secret willingness to do things poorly in defense of a good idea. A willingness to open things up, agree and promote that we—vehemently—do not possess answers but are converging to question. We, as artists, possess considerations, not dogmas.

JV: You use the word listening in your response. While, yes, Red76 had, as you say, seven or eight core participants (you call them builders) for Anywhere/Anyplace Academy, the number of people attending the YouTube School for Social Politics, Pop-Up Book Academy and TMF Co. sessions gained not only in numbers of participants but in the kinds of responses, the depth of conversations and the length of discussions as the month progressed. CCAD professors commented on the quality and intensity of engagement and interaction their students made at Surplus Seminar activities. I'm glad you used the word listening here because it reminds me how many people in Columbus commented on the way you, Gabriel, and Zefrey listened to them. It seems so easy, so basic. But in a culture of look at me, this is mine, I can do this, the other half of the act of conversation seems to take more often a secondary place. Could you say more about listening and the other ways Red76 "nurtured people into the process," especially with regard to specific moments or situations in Columbus?

SG: In regard to the topic of listening, I can't stress it enough. One thing that isn't discussed enough—at least critically, though it is somewhat minimally in academia—is the notion of socially engaged work as practice, as methodology. Possibly this is out of a belief that considering it this way would be to devalue the relationships that form? I think that's absurd. For me, and many people I admire within this line of practice, there has been a direct effort to critically consider how one engages public interaction for a variety of situations in relation to people, places and a myriad of environmental concerns. I'm hard-pressed not to have the topic come back to pedagogy and education though. For me so much of this work is creating collective learning spaces in public. As a facilitator of that space I need to really listen in the space I need to r

¹⁰ GS: Our work becomes more successful when we begin dissolving our roles as initiators, or facilitators, and become participants,



else it's just proselytizing. I'd argue, though, that preaching is a huge factor in a lot of projects that I see that couch themselves in this idea of social or dialogical practice. More often it seems it's people wanting to tell people things. I'm interested in telling people things, certainly. That's why we're all collaborating on these works. But I'm equally as invested in listening, and that is also why we're organizing these projects. I'm there as much to receive as I am to give. I'm seeking to create models that I find lacking, that I desire. If I'm not willing to act in the way that I'd like to be received, the work is not only disingenuous, it's also faulty. And this is possibly another area wherein the question of quantity over quality comes into play. From the outside you can say certain things, make visible certain signifiers, that direct people—often those not directly involved—into understanding what you'd like to do. But, with that said, it is not what you will do or can do. The real challenge of this work is seeing it outside of the history of text and image, and realizing that those aspects are only two sets of values in an arsenal of many. To really engage projects along these lines you have to openly, and without hesitation, encounter the intangibles.

JV: One of the many things I appreciate and value with the way Red76 approaches a project is the willingness and ability to respond to the conditions presented, to understand the environment and the moment. Red76 adapts to make those conditions work for the overall intention. From a curatorial perspective, it's really quite wonderful to experience this willingness, especially given the variables and unpredictable aspects that are naturally part of socially engaged practices.

SG: I'm glad you brought up the idea of improvisation. It's a key aspect to my practice, an aspect that I think is vitally important to this type

indistinguishable in the moment to all the others who are there. The degree to which I believe we have accomplished our goals is the degree to which we disappear. Of course, our investment in the project, our privilege to be there and be heard, our access to resources and the nature of some of the financial and cultural capital that is produced by the project means that we can almost never become truly equivalent to other participants. That said, in the course of enacting the project the space can be flattened and to listen and be receptive is a critical tool. I'm here to learn, to become more, because making art is not about becoming an authority but rather opening to what you don't know.

of work in general, and one that is somewhat outside of the culture of more traditional fine art and gallery models. I feel comfortable saying that this area of interest is also the case for Gabriel and Zefrey as much as for myself. But I'll let them chime in about that.¹¹ It's something we've discussed in the past but never publicly.

The idea of the artist as an infinite entity and all knowing, able in advance to recognize the outcome of their desired piece, is extremely alien to me. I also think that it is a ridiculous myth. A myth that many artists themselves adopt and labor over, at times promote. In regard to the more improvisational methods of Red76 work, I think some people —depending on where they are coming from —see them as a sort of amateurness, or naivety. But my take, and the cultural histories that I'm working off of, treat those ideas entirely differently and with a lot more respect. In this regard culturally my interests, and training in some fashion if you will, are coming far more from music, specifically the traditions, methods and histories of jazz, blues, punk and rock and roll music. Though I've played in bands, and continue marginally to make music, what I feel like I've inherited most concretely from these art forms and cultures—by way of reading, listening and varied forms of participation—is an understanding of a culture adept at call and response, active listening and improvised (though highly nuanced and methodological) modes of reaction to people, environments and situations. It's something that Red76 members all discuss when considering aspects of projects. We think about the situations we're getting ourselves into and how we might engage them, how we'd feel if things went one way or another. But when it comes down to it, on the ground, in the moment, anarchy reigns supreme. What you can do is plan, not for outcomes to take place but for means of reaction and response to types.

if GS: I'm not interested in being in control of a situation. My desire is to see capital letter, circle "A" anarchy in action. Not as a program but as a lived experience, which by its demonstration changes consciousness. When Red76 provokes a situation, no matter how gently or indirectly we do it, we're asking questions and admitting a vulnerability. In that space, others can step in and help form what is to occur. From this place I'm afforded an opportunity to respond and witness in a way I can't have anticipated. That is a Liberation. Improvisation, and its cousins Play and Mindfulness, are essential to being a liberated person. You can't impose that condition, but you can enact it and by doing so encourage others in the world, or the room, to respond.

JV: Does anything come immediately to mind that changed from its original conception during your month-plus time in Columbus? Also, thinking about the experiences in Columbus and the folks who engaged with <u>Surplus Seminar</u> activities, what, if anything, occurred that might affect future iterations of Surplus Seminar?

SG: I'm not sure that there was anything in particular that comes to mind as far as Surplus Seminar in Columbus is concerned. The way I look at it is that each day you are working, to some degree, on the fly. You plan as much as you can and then you go out there and see how your preconceived notions jibe with the lay of the land. There were some projects that we planned on doing before we arrived in Columbus, and then when we got there it just didn't seem to make sense to do them. In particular The School of the Unconscious (a project that was planned to debut in Columbus, and one that we hope to get off the ground in the near future) fell by the wayside, and Parcel *Platform*, which is an autonomous staging area for lectures, talks, performances, etc., that we planned to build as a counterpoint to A/ AA. That didn't get off the ground either, and I think for good reason. As the work began to reveal itself while we were there the idea of building Parcel Platform seemed superfluous, so we decided there's no reason for us to do it now, and that we can put it on the back burner for another time and another place where it would be far more appropriate. It's hard to be comfortable with that type of decision-making. Especially within a culture that prides itself on control and the aforementioned myth of the clairvoyant artist. It's easy to read that as not getting work done, being slack or lazy. It took me a long time to get to the stage wherein I could comfortably disagree with that assessment. But for me, now, it seems as if the completion of projects —when in your heart-ofhearts you know that they aren't needed to make the project whole seems like waste, something entirely unnatural to the notions of the project at hand. In the end the effort that it would take to do it would take away from the whole of the project. The only reason to complete it would be a belief in some sense of maximalism, a roundabout form of gluttony.

With this in mind, negation is only one form of this method of improvisation. There is also so much that gets added. This process of addition is in constant dialogue with the negation of certain elements of the projects in full. I feel like our projects have gotten so much more nuanced as time has gone on, and we've played around with the

environment and added elements on the fly in response to what we were feeling, thinking and doing at the time, rather then fascistically attempting to keep to a model of what we thought the project was supposed to be. This all gets back to some methodological ideas that I've formed over time, as I've mentioned, in regard to how these projects work most successfully. You create strong frames for what people are supposed to experience, legible forms for the public to enter that are easy to understand, they adopt cultural signifiers that are recognizable and easy to understand. Once they enter this space though, what's inside is—to some degree—up for grabs, though colored by the narrative the frame is cloaked under. The space then turns into a vehicle that they need to learn how to drive. We are there to help them along the way, to facilitate the idea behind the narrative of the project, to coach them in how to drive on their own.

JV: Red76 set down a platform that examined models of education within the framework of an institution of higher education? How do you feel that situation affected the outcome of Surplus Seminar?

SG: I think it was a really good foil to work within and alongside an existing educational platform. As you could argue, fairly easily, that the project is a base for experimentation having an educational institution as its host made perfect sense. While I didn't see it, and we didn't plan the project as a critique (though that did come up a fair amount with certain students), the institution was able to work as the control within the experiment with *Surplus Seminar* as the variable. In this sense we were able to compare and contrast certain ideas and means of engagement, along with how things might manifest when pedagogical frames are more transparent or nonhierarchical. I think this worked out really well since so many of the people who got involved were students at CCAD. They were able to traverse back and forth between their day-to-day educational experience at the school and this project, which offered a educational platform for them to consider what they might see as parallel outlets for ideas that they were already engaged in, or even ideas which were alien to their daily educational lives at the school. It all seemed like a really positive relationship to me: for us, for the students and for the school.12

¹² GS: I think this speaks to the fact there are (currently) limits to what can be done without the resources or even the methodologies of institutional education. Sam and I both have conflicted histories with our own personal engagements with Universities and public education.

What I find funny is the ability to see *Surplus Seminar* as oppositional, or a critique of higher- or organized education. We were asked to initiate elements of the project at a Pacific Northwest college, which will remain nameless. This was supposed to happen in the spring of 2010. After having just finished up with you and the Bureau for Open Culture and preparing to do another iteration of Surplus Seminar at the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis in the summer of 2010, we were interested in doing a smaller, more fluid version of the project with this college. It seemed natural to continue the momentum. So we offered this idea up and just received a horribly shocked response in return. Really horrible and seemingly pissed off in all honesty. I was really floored by the reaction. It was odd to experience this coming off of what had just occurred at CCAD through the Bureau for Open Culture, as the people associated with this college -students and their advisors alike - were, by all accounts, insulted by our proposal to them. As if we were attempting to blow up the college and all that they'd worked for. I have neither the desire, nor the technical know-how, to blow anything up. But I bring this up as I feel that for some people the idea of offering up alternatives to the norm, or even a friendly space to critically engage how we act and react within the norm, is inherently a threat. I'm fairly boggled by this approach. It seems to me to be blatantly anti-intellectual at heart not to constantly consider how you are working through problems and to be open to self-assessment. My understanding of this approach I'm interested in and used to is—while not always devoid of criticism—so far from what I would describe as oppositional.

JV: I can understand how on the surface <u>Surplus</u>

<u>Seminar</u> could be interpreted as a critique or opposition to the educational institution. However, it is difficult to explain such a negative reaction to the work and resistance to allowing a

It's not a coincidence that we would rather build a schoolhouse out of garbage than lecture in a class. That said, it was easy to see how well our notions and explorations of potential educational structures complemented the more traditional structures of CCAD. Certainly I sensed an attraction to *Surplus Seminar*, from students and faculty both, that alluded to a sense that this was a free space that inverted if not subverted many of the imposed conditions of a Bauhaus School arts education. Yet it truly existed parallel and could easily be understood as a complement as much as a critique of the Institution.

space for discourse about these structures. 13 By setting boundaries within which ideas, concepts and actions remain unchallenged or simply not discussed, creative and intellectual pursuits are, of course, stifled. When you and I initially talked about making Surplus Seminar part of Descent to Revolution, I was excited because I felt it was an ideal match with concepts explored in the exhibition as well as with the Bureau for Open Culture's situation within an academic institution. Surplus Seminar is also in concert with the practices I've been working through with programming. The exhibitions have an underlying interest in power structures: aesthetics, spatial, corporate, urban, art, etc. I am interested in the affect the institution of art makes on the experience of art, not only socially engaged practices but also on

I can't help but think of the occupations that have been occurring on University campuses, in particular in California. These students seem invested in the potential of an institutional education—why else would they fight for it. What they're demanding for in many ways is Agency. The ability to direct the course and outcome of their education. Divestment from forces that place economic or social judgment upon what they learn. I think it's a similar desire that drew people to *Surplus Seminar*.

¹³ GS: I think that everyone is implicated in any critique of Capitalism, Institutions and Social relationships because we directly and accidentally act as part of these forces. As a student or an administrator, when asked what would you be without this institution in its present form (a paraphrase of the premise that A/AA suggests), you are asked to face an existential crisis. What is a teacher or a student without a school? While some will find it liberating to investigate that premise, others see it as nihilistic. In Vancouver, where I'm based, Aboriginal people here are still fighting for sovereignty. They have very little support from most Canadians, to say nothing of the Government. Part of the challenge is that Native Sovereignty asks people living in the heart of a Western civilization to imagine their whole national identity disappearing, history being subjectively repositioned, and the redistribution of wealth, power and social status. All the while, everyone is implicated in the Colonial project. It takes courage to give up privilege, even if it is only in the form of a platform wherein this is imagined to take place.

more traditional presentations inside the gallery. And in some ways the programming challenges that influence. Descent to Revolution has that interest in it. I feel Red76's Surplus Seminar generates the kinds of conversations and experiments about the current practice and effectiveness of educational institutional frameworks—and those should be encouraged. It is about carving out an intellectual and physical space to create a discourse about what currently exists, the limits the institution possesses and the possibilities of transgressing the limits so a sense of permeability remains continually alive, continually porous.

You mention the people associated with the nameless Pacific Northwest college—students and advisors—were insulted by your proposal. This is interesting to me and helps to take the conversation back to your experience at CCAD. Red76 did make the project at an academic institution in the Midwest, a college that has a strong tradition of object-making and painting and not a significant experience with socially based practices or conceptual art. What were some unexpected positive and negative realizations you had in regard to the faculty, student and administration response to Surplus Seminar? How did those realizations affect the shape Surplus Seminar took?¹⁴

The nonhierarchical structure is a prevalent aspect of <u>Surplus Seminar</u>. It is a salient difference

between <u>Surplus Seminar</u> and organizational structures of educational institutions like CCAD and countless others. However, given that Red76 conceptualized, programmed and maintained a schedule of activity for the various components of <u>Surplus Seminar</u>, could you talk more about how a nonhierarchical theory was put into actualized practice?¹⁵

SG: It's never cut and dried setting up spaces like we did for Surplus Seminar. Our goal is absolutely to create a flattened space, a horizontal space available for questioning. Over time the ability to create those spaces has become fairly methodological, while maintaining, as I mentioned earlier, a purposeful degree of call and response to the work in the field. It requires a lot of consideration. My take on it is that to create these spaces, while not being the only way, the best method we've come upon is to create a frame for participants to enter that is familiar and easily accessible. A copy shop, a bar, a construction site, any of these things are gesturally and visibly familiar to people, to the point of non-questioning. The point is, though, you're never going to get it quite right. If it's a copy shop it is going to be a weird looking copy shop, if it's a construction site it's going to look like a somewhat unprofessional one. This familiarity and hint of messiness or deconstruction allows possible participants the comfortability and agency to enter the space on their own terms. What needs to be done from there is to promote this notion of the horizontal and the

¹⁵ GS: My friend Graham Sheard bought me a coffee when I returned to Vancouver. He'd been following the A/AA blog and he apparently admired it quite a bit. When I asked him why, he said, "There were groups of people... doing things.... together." I can't think of a better way of describing a nonhierarchical project. "Groups of people" implies that it is not about the lone individual but about a collectivity, and is thus permeable and can expand and contract. "Doing things" is very different than witnessing, or any other more passive role. There is activity and some form of labor. Positioned next to "groups of people" it suggests that there is not a separation between roles, an audience and performers, but a communal kind of activity rooted in participation. "Together" means that there is interaction and exchange. A classroom where everyone is at their own desk, or terminal, or lab describes students who, while in proximity, are not together. As the conclusion of the triad, it speaks explicitly of exchange, interchange and transmission as a further degree of group activity.

¹⁴ GS: I'm somewhat embarrassed to admit that I had next to no negative experiences in relation to CCAD. Its administration, teachers, students, security, the Bureau for Open Culture and its staff—everyone directly connected to the campus (with the pointless but notable exception of maintenance) was supportive, considerate and good to work with. Certainly there were many people who did not engage, but their absence didn't alter the project in a way I perceived. At times I was disappointed that more people from the general Columbus community didn't come to investigate. Perhaps being aligned so closely with a University gave less license to people who were not connected to that institution.

nonhierarchical as much as possible, and in this sense, give the participants the tools to begin deconstructing the false and missing interior narrative. As long as you have these strong frames, what goes on inside, no matter how anarchic, works for your purposes as long as the goal is to be looking, considering and proposing ideas within the space rather than to the space.

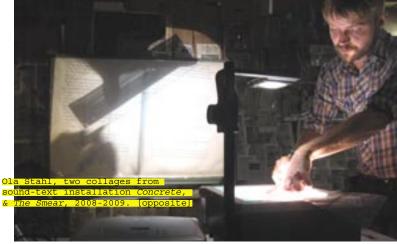
JV: And, to leave it here, what are the artistic, political and/or pedagogical histories that have influenced the development of ideas for <u>Surplus Seminar</u> and how do you see it within these legacies?¹⁶

SG: There have been a lot of past histories that have informed our methodology in this way, though none really that I can point to directly that I feel serves as a sole, linear parent to what we are interested in

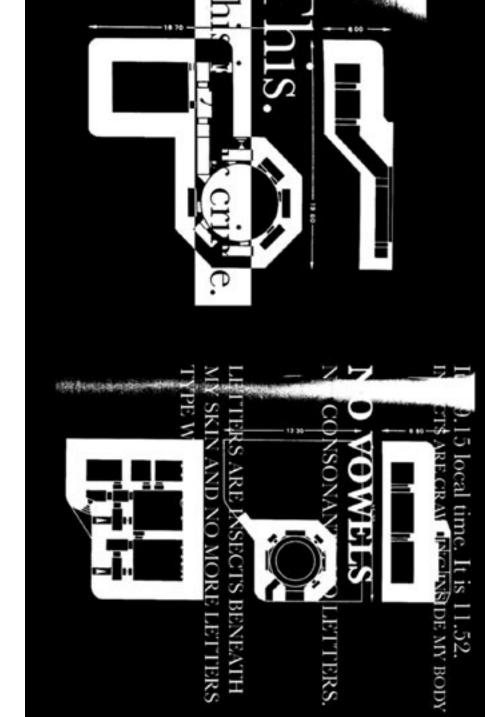
¹⁶ GS: This kind of question is almost too tempting. A list of a lifetime of influences and pre-figurations comes to mind, but it's too much. I will point out that we attempted to begin such a discussion in the form of our A/AA blog, with references to William James, The Book of Tea, etc. Perhaps I'll mention a few less obvious considerations. One would be Gone to Croatian: Origins of North American Drop Out Culture, edited by Ron Sakolsky and James Koehnline. Less the actual text itself than how it manages to overlap concerns of mine regarding enacted Utopias, communal life as a method of survival and resistance, and the ambiguity between facts, fictions and fantasy. Home, Washington, which has been a subject of research and activities for past Red76 projects still has a profound influence on our current work, I would say. An anarchist commune that survived for decades in the remoter parts of the Puget Sound, they had a remarkable attitude towards the importance of education, publication, autonomy and above all curiosity. In the middle of the woods, in a hand-built hall called Liberty, people from the community regularly gathered to hear lectures from preachers and cross-dressers, Wobblies and poets, vegetarians and theosophists. Perhaps the one text that really struck me in the moment right before I came to Columbus was Charlie Chaplin's Modern Times. His role as a participant in society as a worker, a criminal, an authority and a tramp was constantly undermined by his obliviousness to the structures of power he was supposed to be subservient to. Chaplin allows others to play in their roles only to the extent that he might eat and have shelter, and eventually fall in love. Something about that movie resonated for me throughout my time in Columbus.

pursuing. It's not a direct line. That said, researching sites like Home, Washington (Est. 1886), which is one of the Pacific Northwest's oldest anarchist/free-love planned communities, has been of great benefit. And, as always, the juxtaposition of various forms of media, to a large extent books, plays a huge role in our work. Finding bits and pieces of past histories, biographies, discrete projects and the communities that engaged them has always been an energizing tool for us. In this sense, getting back to CCAD and our work there in particular with Surplus Seminar, and to a large degree the VDC Copy Center, which we worked on with you in 2008, everything seemed to fit fairly naturally into place. Maybe this is because the history that we find influential and feel our work is informed by tends to be fairly disheveled. As we've been able to refine our practice over the years, this dispersed nature in regard to influence has been really helpful in that wherever we may be, whomever we may find ourselves working with, the conversation is varied and can fit in people's interests and opinions more often than not, as it's coming from so many different points of reference. And that's the point. That's why it's of benefit to set up these sites the way we do. It's not proselytizing in that way. It's not shouting out slogans or trying to indoctrinate people. Though we have our concerns—and we're going to discuss them, vigorously -our main desire is to set up a space where those concerns can be joined by the concerns of others. That space in between, wherein a third stream of insight can develop, new and different from our interests and the interests of those that join us, that's the space we want to create, and that's the space we feel is most vital.



















Sam Gould and Gabriel Saloman talk about Home, Washington, one of the earliest anarchist, free-love communities of the Pacific Northwest.











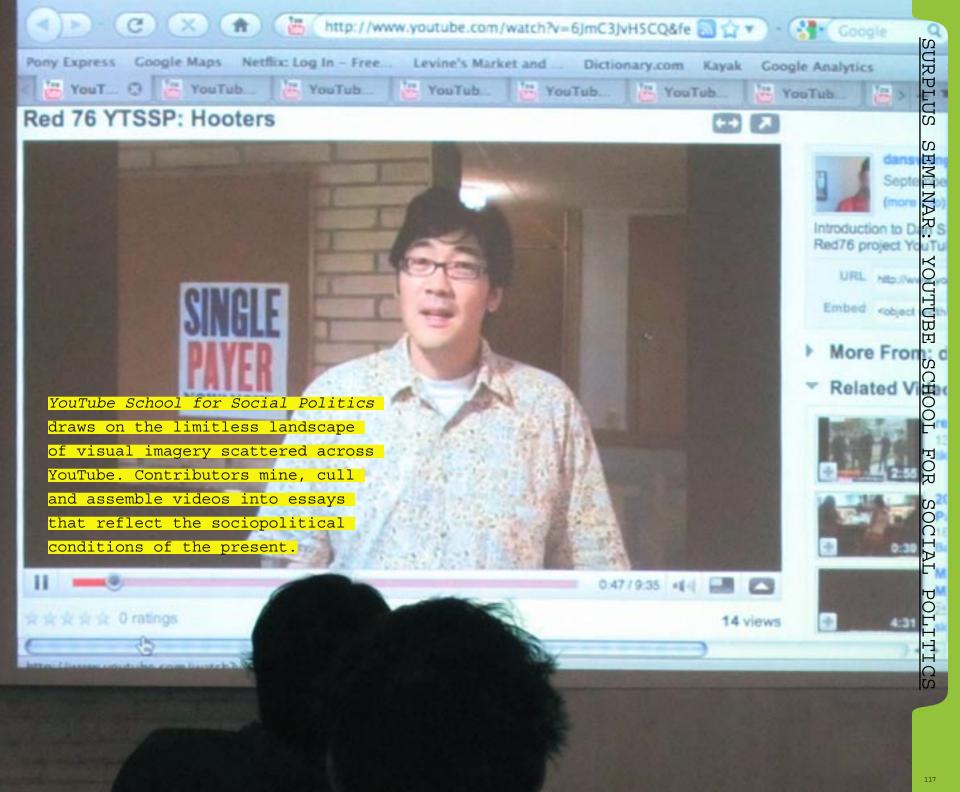
























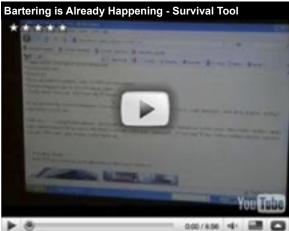














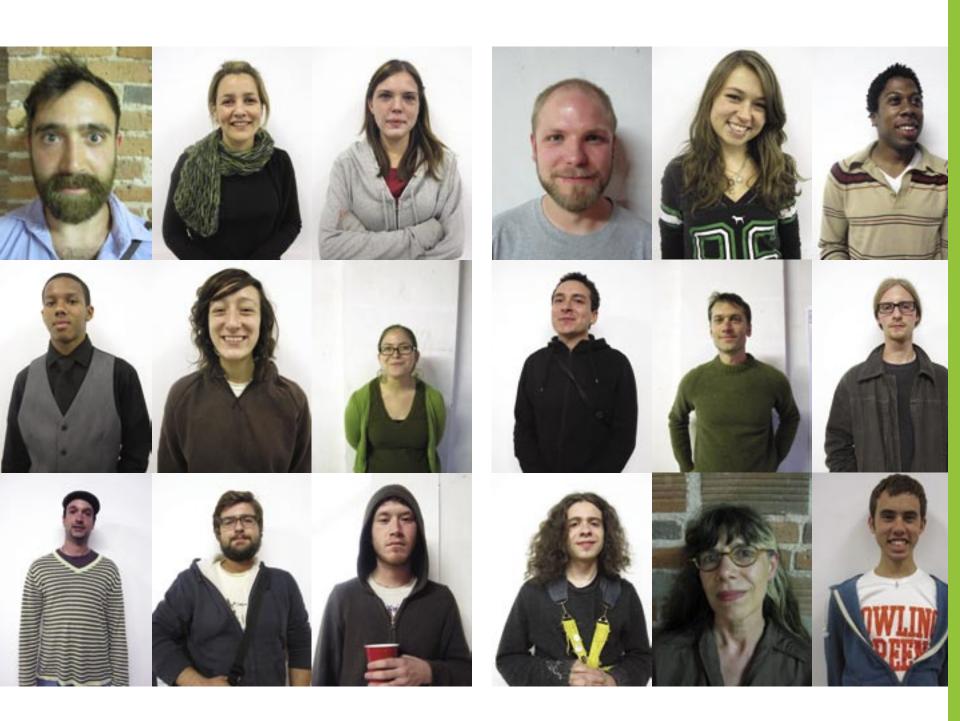














Claire Fontaine was in residence from October 26 to 31, 2009.

CLAIRE FONTAINE



Warm War, 2009

Double superimposed neon and argon sign, framework, sequencer, cables, four solar panels with dusk-to-dawn timer, dimensions variable
Detail: nighttime installation view

What is Warm War?

<u>Warm War</u> by Claire Fontaine consists of four solar modules and two superimposed clear illuminated signs "WARM" and "WAR," the former filled with argon gas emits a blue light, the latter neon has an intense red-orange glow. The solar panels generate just enough energy for the work to operate from dusk to dawn. <u>Warm War</u> is produced so both words are flashing on and off simultaneously but synchronized, one after the other. Facing south, <u>Warm War</u> is currently installed at the top of a two-story campus building with the solar panels situated on the roof. Immediately below the roofline the illuminated texts are mounted to the brick surface of the building.

James Voorhies: Warm War was produced for Descent to Revolution and installed in Columbus. Could you talk about the concept of the work and why Claire Fontaine chose to include it in this context?

Claire Fontaine: The work is conceived for an outdoor installation, ideally in the public space, so *Descent to Revolution* was the perfect context. It obviously quotes on a formal level a work from Bruce Nauman, *Raw War* from 1970, but it is a work in direct relationship with the ecological catastrophe. The warm war is the one we are all part of, the one that capitalism is leading against life, and Copenhagen has proved how impossible it will be to negotiate the peace with such partners.

JV: Why the particular attention to synchronize illumination of the words, opposed perhaps to an in-line text lighted continuously?

CF: A moving sign has a particular rhythm that catches the eye; this one is also lit exclusively during the night and in the darkness the clear blue and the orange red move together like a gas flame.

JV: This is Claire Fontaine's first illuminated work powered by solar energy. In terms of scale the modules at 3 x 16 feet are much larger than the glass scripts at 8 x 34 inches. It's rather surprising how many panels are needed to power Warm War. Why did you use solar panels in this work?

CF: We used solar panels because we were raising attention towards the

ecological catastrophe, but as you mention it, what appears here is the difficulty of autonomy. One needs a disproportionate surface of solar panels to light such a small sign. Of course this disproportion is now an important part of the sculpture, along with the expensive price of the solar panels.

JV: Briefly, why do you use the medium of illuminated and neon texts in your work?

CF: Illuminated text, mainly neon signs, were a transgression in the sixties; Nauman and Kosuth are famous for using them. Now it's a very common practice, it doesn't mark any singularity of the visual language of an artist, on the contrary. Claire Fontaine uses signs to make the sentences alive and to transform them into advertising messages that speak the same commercial language as the stores in the streets.

JV: Illuminated texts by Claire Fontaine are often installed in what is generally considered public space. Can you talk about the reasons for putting these works outside?

CF: Some of our signs can live in the white cube; others, such as *Capitalism Kills (Love)*, are conceived to be outside. Generally I would say that they attempt to function as a subtitle to the situation. The outside of a gallery is a more interesting spot than its inside because the work can be seen by anyone that walks in the street. Our work addresses everybody so we are happy when it can be as widely visible as possible.

JV: <u>Warm War</u> will be shipped to a commercial dealer and sold. The funds from its sale will provide the honorarium for Claire Fontaine's participation in <u>Descent to Revolution</u>. The economies of the not-for-profit and commercial art market intersect here to augment the scale of <u>Warm War</u> and to fairly compensate you for the residency. What are your thoughts about this scenario?

CF: We enjoyed our stay in Columbus, loved meeting some people that became friends and were very happy to give a talk that was very well received. If you don't live in a communist society you must pay for everything you do. What is there to think about the market economy? What is there to think about our impotency to change things individually and collectively? We think it's actually a good moment because things are cracking and they will soon have to change. And also, who knows if *Warm War* will ever be sold, at the moment it is a hypothesis.

Human strike within the field of libidinal economy

The possibility of keeping together autonomy and an affective life is a tale that hasn't been written yet.

Lea Melandri, Una visceralità indicibile, 2007

In 1974 François Lyotard published the surprising book entitled Libidinal Economy where he attacked Marxist and Freudian simplifications and he opened a new perspective on the connection between desires and struggle. What starts to crumble down at that time under the offensive of the two essential weapon-books by Deleuze and Guattari *The Anti-Œdipus* and *A thousand plateaux* is the fetishization of consciousness as the organ that will lead the revolution. As the myth of the avant-garde begins to decline, a psychosomatic reorganization arises and its consequences on the relationship between people are brutal and inevitable. Like in an inverted Menenius Agrippa's speech the head, with all its metaphorical connotations, lost its privilege and the low body could find a new voice full of desire and fear. A new materialism was coming to life *inside* people's bodies. At this point the failure of the responsible and pyramidal militant structures becomes blatant: thirst for power, need for leaders and the insufficiency of language to resolve conflicts inside the groups reveal the impossibility of living and fighting in such formations. In '73 the Gramsci Group wrote in the Proposition for a different way to make politics: "it's no longer possible to talk to each other from avant-garde to avant-garde with a sectary language of "experts" politicians...and then not being able to concretely talk about our experiences. The consciousness and the explanation of things must become clear through the experience of one's own condition, one's own problems and needs and not only through theories that describe mechanisms" (p.508, L'orda d'oro). The language that served the purposes of traditional politics seemed to have lost all its use value in the mouths of these young people; the members of the militant groups felt like they were "spoken," traversed by a speech that didn't transform them and couldn't translate their new uncertain situation. A protagonist of the events describes as it follows his position of leader: "the leader is somebody who is convinced that he has always been revolutionary and communist, and he doesn't ask himself what the concrete transformation of himself and the others is...The leader is the one that when the assemblies don't go the way they should either because a silence takes place either because some political positions are expressed which are different from the ones of his own group, he feels that he must intervene in order to fill the

verbal space or to affirm his political line against the others." In this simple and clinical diagnosis we see the groups as spaces where subjective transformation attempts to be funneled into revolutionary efficiency; as a result of this process the positions of the singularities that composed the groups became progressively more and more rigid and the revolutionary space, in order to remain such, imposed the most conservative patterns of behavior within itself.

The term "human strike" was forged to name a revolt against what is reactionary even – and above all – inside the revolt. It defines a type of strike that involves the whole life and not only its professional side, that acknowledges exploitation in all the domains and not only at work. Even the notion of work comes out modified if seen from the ethical prism of human strike: activities that seem to be innocent services and loving obligations to keep the family or the couple together reveal themselves as vulgar exploitation. The human strike is a movement that could potentially contaminate anyone and that attacks the foundations of life in common; its subject isn't the proletarian or the factory worker but the whatever singularity that everyone is. This movement isn't there to reveal the exceptionality or the superiority of a group on another but to unmask the whateverness of everybody as the open secret that social classes hide.

One definition of human strike can be found in Tiqqun 2: it's a strike "with no claims, that deterritorializes the agora and reveals the non-political as the place of the implicit redistribution of responsibilities and unremunerated work."

Italian feminisms offer a paradigm of this kind of action because they have claimed the abolition of the borders that made politics the territory of men. If the sexual borders of politics weren't clearly marked in the seventies in Europe, they still persisted in an obscure region of the life in common, like premonitory nightmares that never stop coming true. In 1938 Virginia Woolf wrote in *Three Guineas*, "Inevitably we look upon societies as conspiracies that sink the private brother, whom many of us have reason to respect, and inflate in his stead a monstrous male, loud of voice, hard of fist, childishly intent upon scoring the floor of the earth with chalk marks, within whose mystic boundaries human beings are penned, rigidly, separately, artificially; where, daubed red and gold, decorated like a savage with feathers he goes through mystic rites and enjoys the dubious pleasures of power and dominion while we, 'his' women,

are locked in the private house without share in the many societies of which his society is composed." Against the chalk marks, already obsolete in 1938 but that still keep appearing under our steps even in the twenty-first century, Lia Cigarini and Luisa Muraro specified in 1992 in a text called *Politics and political practice*: "We don't want to separate politics from culture, love and work and we can't find any criterion for doing so. A politics of this kind, a separated one, we wouldn't like it and we wouldn't know what to do with it."

At the core of this necessity of a politics that transforms life and that can be transformed by life, there wasn't a claim against injustice but the desire of finding the right voice for one's own body, in order to fight the deep feeling of being spoken by somebody else, that can be called the political ventriloguism.

A quotation by Serena, published in the brochure *Sottosopra* n°3 in 1976, describes a modest miracle that took place at the women convention in Pinarella, "Something strange happened to me after the first day and a half: underneath the heads that were talking, listening and laughing, there were bodies; if I was speaking (and how serenely, and with no will of self-affirmation I was speaking in front of 200 women!) in my speak, in a way or another there was my body that was finding a strange way to become words." What an example of miraculous transubstantiation of the human strike.

* 1890 date of birth of the human strike

In her extensive research around the strike in the nineteenth century, Michelle Perrot talks about the birth of a sort of "sentimental strike" in the year 1890. May 4th of that year, in the newspaper from Lille entitled Le Cri du Travailleur (the worker's scream) we can read that "the strikers didn't give any reason for their interruption of the work... just that they want to do the same thing than the others." In this type of movement, young people and women start to play a very important role, Perrot says. In a small village called Vienne militant women encouraged their female comrades, "Let's not bear this miserable condition any longer. Let's upraise, let's claim our rights, let's fight for a more honourable place. Let's dare to say to our masters: we are just like you, made out of flesh and bones, we should live happy and free through our work." In another small village, Besseges, in the same year a young woman of 32, wife of a miner and mother of five, Amandine Vernet, reveals her vocation of natural born leader, "she never made herself noticeable before May 14th when she started to read a written

speech in a meeting of 5,000 people in the Robiac woods. The day after she had started to speak, and the following days, made more self-confident by her success, she pronounced violent and moving speeches. She had the talent of making part of her audience cry."

In this type of strike, what Perrot calls the emotional strike, the movement is no longer limited to a specific target: what is at stake is a transformation of the subjectivity. This transformation – and that is the interesting point – is at the same time the cause and the consequence of the strike. The subjective, the social and the political changes are tightly entangled so that necessarily this type of uprising concerns subjects whose social identity is poorly codified, the people that Rancière calls the "placeless" or the "part-less." They are movements where people unite under the slogan "we need to change ourselves" (Foucault), which means that the change of the conditions isn't the ultimate aim but a means to change one's subjectivity and one's relationships.

According to some interpretations, there have been some components of this kind in the movement of '68. Young people and women rose up then and claimed new rights that weren't only political in an acquired sense, but that changed the very meaning of the word "political." The inclusion of sexuality as an officially political territory is actually symptomatic of this transformation. Sexuality isn't in fact the right term to be used, because it already designates an artificially separated field of reality. We should rather talk about the rehabilitation of the concept of desire, and analyze how new desires enter the political sphere in these specific moments, during the emotional strikes that we call "human strikes."

The feminisms that do not pursue the integration in a world conceived and shaped by male protagonists are part of these strikes. We can read on this crucial point in a collective book from 1987 entitled Non credere di avere dei diritti (Don't believe you have any right), "The difference of being a woman hasn't found its free existence by establishing itself on the given contradictions, present within the social body, but on searching the contradiction that each singular woman was experiencing in herself and that didn't have any social form before receiving it from the feminine politics. We have invented ourselves, so to speak, the social contradictions that made our freedom necessary."

¹ M. Perrot, *Les ouvriers en grève, France 1871-1890*, Mouton, Paris, La Haye, 1974, p.99-100.

Where invented doesn't mean made up but found and translated the facts that reveal their dormant political dimension.

*The plan of consistency of human strike

"They call it love. We call it unpaid labour. They call it frigidity. We call it absenteeism. Every time that we become pregnant against our own will, it's an accident at work. Homosexuality and heterosexuality are both work conditions. Homosexuality is just the control of the workers on the production, not the end of the exploitation. No more smiles? No more money. Nothing will be more efficient to destroy the virtue of a smile. Neurosis, suicide, desexualization: professional illnesses of housewives." Silvia Federici, *The right to hatred*, 1974

- "1) The house where we make the most part of our work (the domestic work), is atomized in thousands of places, but it's present everywhere, in town, in the countryside, on the mountains, etc.
- 2) We are controlled and we depend on thousands of little bosses and controllers: they are our husbands, fathers, brothers etc., but we only have one master: the State.
- 3) Our comrades of work and struggle, that are our neighbors, aren't physically in touch with us during the work as it happens in the factory: but we can meet in places that we know, where we all go when we can steal some free time during the day. And each one of us isn't separated from the other by qualifications and professional categories. We all make the same work.
- (...) If we went on a strike we would not leave unfinished products or raw materials untransformed etc.: by interrupting our work we wouldn't paralyze the production but the daily reproduction of the working class. This would hit the heart of the Capitalist system, because it would become an actual strike even for those that normally go on strike without us; but since the moment we stop to guarantee the survival of those which we are affectively tightened to, we will also have a difficulty in continuing the resistance." Coordination from Emilia Romagna for the salary to the domestic work, Bologna, 1976

"The worker has the possibility of joining a union, going

on strike, the mothers are isolated, locked in their houses, tightened to their children by charitable bonds. Our wildcat strikes manifest themselves as a physical and mental breakdown." Adrienne Rich, *Born of a Woman*, 1980

The situation of not being able to draw the line between life and work that beforehand only concerned housewives is now becoming generalized. A strike isn't possible to envisage for most of us, but the reasons we keep living the way we do and can't rebel against anyone but ourselves are to be searched in our libidinal metabolism and in the libidinal economy we participate to.

Each struggle has become a struggle against a part of ourselves because we are always partly complicit with the things that oppress us. The biopower, under which we live, is the power that owns our bodies but allows us the right to speak.

According to what Giorgio Agamben writes in *The coming community* the colonization of physiology by industry started in the '20s and it reached its peak when photography allowed a massive circulation of pornography. The anonymous bodies portrayed were absolutely whatever and because of this very reason *generically desirable*. Images of real human beings had become for the first time in history objects of desire on a massive scale, and therefore *objects*.

Stuart Ewen explains very well how advertising starts to target heavily women and young people in the fifties, right after the war; women and children were the absolute majority of the bodies portrayed in a promiscuous proximity with goods of consumption. The intimacy between things and human beings creates all sort of symbolic disorders since the very beginning. Since then the consumption shapes the actual *life form* of human beings – not only what is called life style. In the case of women the confusion and enforced cohabitation with objects within the sphere of desire – male and female desire – is clear for everybody. Advertisements talk to the affects, and tell tales of a human life reconciled with things, where the inexpressiveness and the hostility of object is constantly obliterated by the joy and the beauty that they are supposed to bring to their owners.

Work is never really present and life has no gravity in advertising: objects have no weight, the link between the cause and the effect of gestures is governed by pure fantasy.

The dreams engendered by capitalism are the most disquieting of its products, their specific visual language is also the source of the misunderstanding between the inhabitants of the poorly developed countries and the Westerners. These dreams are conceived as devices of subjectivization, scenes from the life of the toxic community of human beings and things. Where the commodity is absent, bodies are tragically different.

If brought to its last consequences this implicit philosophy leads to the complete redundancy of art – and in this sense the message that we all know so well and that we all receive every day in the streets of the cities or from the television screen must be taken seriously. The artwork is no longer the humanized object - this change started to take place in the nineteenth century with the industrialization of life in general. Duchamp himself explains the birth of the readymade in 1955 in an interview with James Johnson Sweeny by declaring that he came to conceive the readymade as a consequence of the dehumanization of the artwork. The task of making the objects expressive, responsive to human feelings, that for thousands of years has been taken in charge by artists, is now performed by capitalism essentially through television. Because what is at stake in the capitalistic vision of the world is a continuous production of a libidinal economy in which behaviors, expressions and gestures contribute to the creation of this new human body.

*The irreversible anthropological transformation in Italy (and elsewhere)

"I think that this generation (...) of the people that were 15 or 20 years old once they have made this [revolutionary] choice between 1971 and 1972, which in the following years becomes a generalized process in the factories and the schools, in the parishes, in the neighbourhoods, they have gone through an anthropological transformation, I can't find a better definition, an irreversible cultural modification of themselves that you can't come back from and that's why these subjects later, after '79, when everything is over, become crazy, commit suicide, become drug addicts because of the impossibility and the intolerability of being included and tamed by the system."

That's how Nanni Balestrini describes a form of tragic human strike

that took place during the eighties, when the movement of '77 fell under the weight of a disproportioned repression.

The bleed of revolutionary lives from the country makes Italy a nation of disappeared. Without needing a genocide nor a real dictatorship, the strategy of tension and a modest amount of State terrorism achieved this result within a few years.

One should consider that what doesn't happen isn't a disgrace or the legitimate source of resentment against the anonymous and submitted population, but as a consequence of what *has* happened before.

The space of politics where Berlusconi rose without encountering any resistance was a territory where any opposition had been deported since the repression started to function *directly* on the life forms, since people couldn't desire in the same way anymore because the libidinal economy they were part of went bankrupt.

One question that still isn't considered with the adequate attention in the militant context is the one of the struggle-force. The struggle-force, like the love-force, must be protected and regenerated. It's a resource that doesn't renovate itself automatically and needs collective conditions for its creation.

Human strike can be read as an extreme attempt to reappropriate the means of production of the struggle-force, the love-force, the life-force. These means are ends in themselves; they already bring with them a new potentiality that makes the subjects stronger. The political space where this operation is possible isn't of course the same one that was colonized by the televised biopower. It's the one that we can foresee in Lia's words from 1976:

"The return of the repressed threatens all my projects of work, research, politics. Does it threaten them or is it the truly political thing in myself, to which I should give relief and room? (...) The silence failed this part of myself that desired to make politics, but it affirmed something new. There has been a change, I have started to speak out, but during these days I have felt that the affirmative part of myself was occupying all the space again. I convinced myself of the fact that the mute woman is the most fertile objection to our politics. The non-political digs tunnels that we mustn't fill with earth."

² N. Balestrini, *L'Editore* in *La Grande Rivolta*, Bompiani, Milano, 1999, p.318-319.

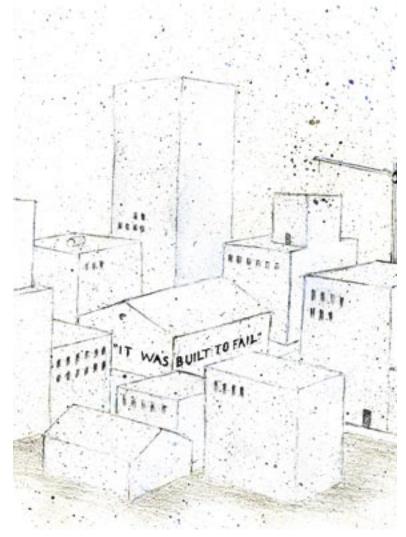


subtle alterations in basic

TERCERUNQUINTO



The proposal IT WAS BUILT TO FAIL by Tercerunquinto intended to make an inscription of a quote by Columbus Mayor Michael Coleman about the defunct downtown retail mall Columbus City Center on the exterior walls of that building. Constructed in 1989 and once the hub of a thriving downtown, the 1.2 million square-foot site met a premature demise as retai and residential construction on the periphery of the city proliferated over the course of the past decade. IT WAS BUILT TO FAIL sought to address the paradoxical condition of rising infrastructure in suburban Columbus and con decay at its core. City officials did not respond to repeated inguiries about the proposal surface of the building. It was not ossible to realize the project. Included here are proposal text and illustrations by Tecerunguinto and documentary photographs of the demolition of City Center.





IT WAS BUILT TO FAIL, Columbus, Ohio

For *Descent to Revolution*, the intervention project in Columbus, Ohio, Tercerunquinto proposes to realize the inscription of the phrase "It was built to fail" on one of the flanks of the Columbus City Center building which, at the time, was scheduled to be demolished. The phrase of the inscription was taken from a public declaration expressed by the city mayor where he states the motives why this building—in another time a commercial emblem of the city—should be torn down, while legitimizing a new project of developing downtown.

Tercerunquinto's interest was to reveal one of the mechanisms of legitimization by which the representative of political power of the city expressed this lapidary sentence. Beyond the commentary about the process of urban transformation this act generates, in social terms, there is a conflictive plan of economical investment and real estate speculation. At the same time it alters the human dynamics in relation to a vital space of coexistence. Therefore, the concept was to inscribe the phrase and allow it to disappear during the process of demolition of the building with the intention to establish a discursive axis that addresses the relationship between Power and Architecture.

Para Descent to Revolution, el proyecto de intervenciones en Columbus, Ohio, el colectivo Tercerunquinto propuso realizar la inscripción de una frase "It was built to fail" sobre uno de los flancos del edificio de Columbus City Center el cual, en ese momento, se encontraba en tramites para ser demolido. La frase de la inscripción sería retomada de una declaración pública expresada por el alcalde de la ciudad en donde exponía los motivos por el cual este edificio—en otro momento emblema comercial de la ciudad—debía ser demolido, al mismo tiempo que legitimaba el proyecto de renovación inmobiliaria en el cual se encuentra el centro de la ciudad.

Mas allá del mero comentario sobre los procesos de transformación urbana que generan, en términos sociales, un conflictivo plan de inversiones económicas y especulaciones inmobiliarias, que a su vez alteran las dinámicas humanas en relación a su espacio vital y de convivencia; lo que a Tercerunquinto le interesaba era evidenciar uno de los mecanismos de legitimación por medio del cuál el representante del poder político de la ciudad expresaba esta sentencia lapidaria. De esta manera, la idea de que esta frase estuviera inscrita y desapareciera paralemente en el proceso de demolición del edificio tenía también como intención establecer un eje de discusión que abordara la relación entre Poder y Arquitectura.





Learning Site is a collective comprised of Rikke Luther from Denmark and Cecilia Wendt from Sweden. They realize projects specific to the sites in which they decide to work, drawing on local skills, resources and knowledge. Their collaborations examine intersections of natural resources, the environment, economic markets, forms of habitation, land rights, labor and sustainability to reveal insight about conditions specific to a location. Embracing the unfamiliar and always open to experimentation, unpredictable processes. They allow the making-of to be as equally integral as the completed work. The situations and works they produce hover among the abstract, fantastic, the playful and the practical, pushing concepts into new, invigorating realms of speculation

Learning Site was in residence from October 12 to November 17, 2009.

that challenge conventional beliefs of what can be done.

LEARNING SITE





























Audible Dwelling speaks from its parking lot in Columbus, Ohio.

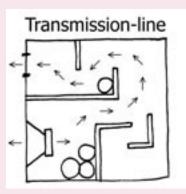
Audible Dwelling is a loudspeaker that is a dwelling. It is composed of two units, which make it into a stereo house. Each unit has two compartments. The first contains equipment for recording sound and drivers for sending electric signals to the second compartment. The second compartment is a sealed speaker enclosure containing a transmission line that converts the signals into sound.





Eileen Gray's De Stijl Table, 1922

In *Audible Dwelling*, the table, chair and bed, situated in the second compartment of each unit, also act as the transmission line. The design of the furniture takes its inspiration from Eileen Gray's De Stijl table. In *Audible Dwelling*, the furniture gives perfect sound to the air.



Transmission-line, seen from the side



The second compartment with the bed, table and bench for the transmission-line

A Space to Speak From

Audible Dwelling is now situated in one of the many downtown parking lots of Columbus, Ohio. It speaks about the economy of landscape—cars, asphalt, parking lots, malls, museums—the thinking that air-conditioned architecture engenders—positivism and abstraction—and Thomas Jefferson's notion of "renovating the revolution."

Audible Dwelling is constructed using certified red wood, pine, plywood, cellulose heat and sound insulation and felt carpet. Each unit contains four 18-inch subwoofers and six 8-inch cone speakers.

Audible Dwelling has been designed and constructed in order that it can be dismantled and shipped. In the future, it will travel to new locations to examine cultural, social and economic landscapes.

The speech for Columbus was constructed in exchange with Jaime Stapleton. The sound is performed by Cassandra Troyan and sound design is by Anthony Peluso and Joshua Penrose.



Three pipes lead up from the basement where the orchestra played into the castle.



Three pipes conduct sound through the floor into the King's winter room. Pipes are covered when not in use.

Sound Systems

As early as 1600, the King of Denmark had an early home music system installed in his castle. A 3-pipe system moved the sound of musicians playing in the basement around the building and into his "winter room." The system was a forerunner of the "piped music" we hear today in public spaces, like shopping malls, and the large sound systems in our private homes and cars.



A private house in Italy transformed into a giant loudspeaker system (basement)

House of Speech

The concept of Audible Dwelling is derived from Scandinavian democratic movements of the nineteenth century. In Sweden, the socialist agitator August Palm made the first public speech on socialism in 1881. So many attended a follow-up speech at the Almbacken Inn that Palm was forced to address the crowd in the open air. The speech from beneath a pear tree became a legend in Swedish politics.

The concept of a "People's House" developed in the nineteenth century. The purpose was to



August Palm had to leave the room and use the pear tree to address his audience.

provide ordinary workers with a place to meet and organize—a house of speech. In Denmark the first such house was built in the 1870s from money collected from workers. In 1872, a group of workers met on the "North Common" outside the city. Following confrontation with the police and military, a collection was raised from the workers, and the first People's House was built. In the following years, workers movements built more houses and bought parks for public meetings. Famously, in 1897 a People's House was built at Jagtvej 69 in Copenhagen. In 1910 the house hosted the second International Women's Conference.

The meeting was addressed by the socialist Clara Zetkin, in which she argued in favor of the establishment of an International Women's Day. In its early years, International Women's Day was one of the main forums agitating for women's right to vote in democracies. Today, March 8th is International Women's Day.



A drawing of Clara Zetkin from a Danish newspaper the day after August 26, 1910



The People's House, Jagtvej 69, from 1897

Thanks to The Workers Museum's library, Viggo Wichmann (ideas for construction, construction and things in general), Jaime Stapleton (writer and editor), Cassandra Troyan (speech performance), Justin Stapleton (sound system advisor), Joshua Penrose and Anthony Peluso (sound design), Frank Castenien, Stephen Cleveland, Matthew Donaldson, Nicholas Hoffman, Ian Horn, Ian Keller, Zak Kelley, Mary Vanwassenhove, Paul Simmons, Brian Sharrock (construction team), Tim Rietenbach and Junior Seminar and Advanced Sculpture (CCAD), the curatorial staff at Bureau for Open Culture at Columbus College of Art and Design: James Voorhies (director of exhibitions) and Diana Matuszak (exhibitions manager), and The Danish Art Council for support.

Is this Columbus, Ohio?

So, where am I now?

Is this Columbus, Ohio?

...how can you tell?

Only losers walk. Why walk when you can roll? Roll on wheels. That's the real American Revolution. Forget Jefferson. It's the car that makes revolutions. I *love* cars. They're democracy. They're the market. Look at them Gooooo

The car...it's the relationship between revolution and asphalt. Look at those wheels. Like Jefferson said, we need a "periodic renovation of the revolution." Soviet revolutionaries replaced the market with a state bureaucracy. But, look here. Columbus "renovates the revolution" with cars. It's the American revolutionary bureaucracy. It orders the city. Marks its spaces. Directs its behavior. That's the bureaucracy of the market...over there, sitting at the lights.

Argh... I love cars. Just think of it. We're burning dinosaurs! All that gas. That's what it is. Dead life. Long dead, plants. Long dead dinosaurs. Sticky black ooze. Right there at the junction....

The asphalt too. Dead life. All the parking lots downtown. The one beneath my feet. We get around on the bones and tree trunks of a million years ago. That's how you can sit at the lights, with your foot on the gas. Commuting to your next parking lot.

I hate the earth. It's dirt. I prefer asphalt. Give me asphalt: that's the landscape of freedom, the landscape of *culture*. Just like the Dust Bowl of the '30s, it may *be* a catastrophe, but... at least someone *tried* to farm the land, to turn a *profit*. Sure, they created a dust bowl... but how can you succeed if you're afraid to fail? So, roll on—
That's *Progress*.

Can you *imagine* what Columbus would look like with no highway heading west? If you had to hitch a ride on the next prairie wagon? *Progress*. I *love* cars.

Where would we be without climate-controlled boxes? Wet? Cold? Burning hot? We'd be in the weather! Don't you just hate the weather?

I do. Climate sucks.

Do you realize it's the fall? Hey. The fall is for losers who walk. That's what's great about *auto-cities*. Climate is something that just happens to other people. That's why I love cars. They're the real architecture.... Buildings suck, they never go *anywhere*.

At least they're climate controlled though.

You don't need to worry about the ice caps. We've already got climate control. It's 72° in your office, the mall and your car. Who needs carbon caps? Climate change is nothing to worry about....... Just don't open your windows.

You know... air conditioning revolutionized America.

How could you be *one* culture, *one* country, across an *entire continent*? But, with climate control, an apartment in New York and another in Dallas, Texas, could be the same temperature all year round. Air conditioning brought all the climates of a continent into one, *eternal springtime*. That's America. And workers could be like currency. You could swap one for another. They used to be *sticky*. Stuck together in lumps by cultural...*goo*. They didn't want to *move*. But climate control conquered all of that...culture...geography. We're *all* slippery now. Oiled up. That's revolution.

There's no need to adapt to geography when the office and the mall all look the same, and the temperature is *always* perfect. That's what's great about the auto-city. Buildings are sealed boxes. Metal and glass. With air *conditioning*. Makes it so much easier for markets to work. Move here, move there. It's pretty much the same.

That's why I love *malls*. Who needs climate, when you've got the mall?They should make Northland Center in Detroit into a national monument. That's where the future started. The first mall!.... Pity about Gruen though. He built Northland and then went to Europe and started yakking about alienation and cars destroying everything. He understood one thing though. Malls are *culture*. In the old days, culture was all geography and climate. It was all *cultivation*. But that's ugly. Who wants to be a farmer, grubbing in the *dirt*?

That's why we've got malls. That why we've got *museums*. Made out of metal and glass, with air *conditioning*. Who needs a climate when you

can have a white cube art gallery?

All those palaces in old Europe, with room, after room, after room to walk through. They put art inside. And that made art history: a room for this school of painters, or that country, or that era...Architecture makes thought. That's why I love cars.

We've got buildings like cars. That keeps all the thinking inside the box. It's beautiful. Look what it's given us. Everything from the New York School... all those paintings that exist because air conditioned boxes exist to exhibit them...to the Chicago School....economic science that talks to itself... ... You know, purity just disdains mess. And life *is* a mess. You don't want *that* in your "box." That's as stupid as designing a building that lets *rain* in! That's as stupid as walking! It's for losers.

I like architecture that's transparent. That's regular and predictable. The same wherever you go. It's got to be logical. Forget all that decoration. I like clear buildings, that create facts. Facts you can add together and subtract. That's reality. Stuff I can see. Things I can count. Things that have a purpose. That do the job. Things that aren't *pretending* to be something else.

Look over there. You see those skyscrapers downtown? That's the spirit of *empiricism*, *utilitarianism* and *positivism*!

Hey! You in the tower of logic!

(The sound of clapping. Not many hands, enthusiastically applauding the architecture downtown.)

You know what's really important? I've asked people. 74% of Americans think good parking is more important than healthcare. 61% of that 74% rate parking as an "essential element in the American way of life."

You can't *argue*. Those stats are statistically significant, seasonally adjusted and the sample has been weighted to discount bias based on:

- age
- gender
- occupation
- ethnic identity
- and sexual orientation

These are facts. And we've all gotta live with the facts...

Lets face the facts... There'd be a lot more *slums* downtown if it wasn't for the parking... There'd be a lot more people, sat in one place. Tenants have rights. And that makes it hard for business. You've gotta keep 'em moving. Move on. Don't get *stuck*... Don't renovate the houses for God's sake! *"Renovate the Revolution*!!" Like Jefferson said, *keep the wheels moving*.

You know... in Europe and India they use *plants* to clear people out of town. Yeah, they move people out and build *green zones*. Plant trees downtown. Make parks. They say they'll make CO₂ neutral cities! Ha! We don't need that. We've got climate control. What have trees got to do with it? We need parks for cars, not parks for trees.

You ask any proper economist. We don't need to worry about the climate. There's no crisis. Sure, all the parking lots make heat islands. So what? There's always a market-based solution. All that extra heat is a business opportunity... You could just put heat pumps in the asphalt, and make turbines for electricity... We'd just need a lot more parking lots! Don't believe all that stuff about parking lots polluting the water with metal, and oil, and rubber, and grease, and salt........ It's only socialists who wanna try and stop the market that believe that...a stable climate is just a way all those inefficient economies try to stop the free market... That's a fact.

You know what a parking lot is? It's a commons. Anyone can use it...

Providing they pay the quy who owns it.

I heard they were tearing down the City Center mall. You know what they're gonna do? They're gonna build a park: for trees!—"Columbus Commons." Stupid. The country is *full* of trees!

Parking lots. It's what we are. We should preserve them. They're cultural property. The government should protect them. You can't tear down a cathedral. It's not private property. Or, if it is, it's too important for its future to be decided by one person. The government should intervene to protect it. Like they do with historic buildings. Like they did with the TARP.

Heeey, if banks can't make a living, if General Motors can't make a living, why the hell should parking lots? We're heritage! We need protecting from the market. Parking lots are... are...are culture... We're so

important to you. We should be everyone's property. Culture is more important than private *property*. Without parking lots you'll all be *walking to work*! That's *socialism*!

Hey, did you hear China is celebrating 60 years of communism this year! Except they really aren't communists anymore...but, hey, that hasn't stopped them fearing the future. They're so scared. They save their wages... I think that's great! Their government uses their savings to buy U.S. government debt. That's great for you guys in the cars, standing at the lights. Yeah, you. It makes it really easy to buy stuff.

Why? Well, the dollar... outside of America, governments around the world use the dollar as the currency to trade with. That means you guys can borrow money really easily. It's cheap. Then you can buy lots of stuff. Stuff that's made *all over the world.*..in places like... *China*. Those Chinese workers save all that money they make from making stuff. Then China lends it to you, so you can buy the stuff they make. That's capitalism. That's the *free market*. They *make*. You *consume*.

What's great is that you can buy a car. You can get from home to work, from work to the mall, and from the mall to home. That's the *freedom* commuting gives you. *Freedom of Choice* makes the landscape of your life. Look at *your* city. It's beautiful. Look at the cars. They're beautiful.

Isn't it funny? All that *fear* of communism. We used to call it the Cold War. And, all the time, the Chinese were *more* afraid than you were!.... Wow, that makes you think. When they get money, they don't spend it. They lend it to *you*. And that allows *you* to sit for one minute and thirty seconds at this intersection, listening to *me*, in a car that you pay the finance company to own, with money *they borrow from the Chinese*.

Your economists are still fighting the Cold War. They're fighting communism. But it's *gone*. You know like when you're drunk on whiskey, and you're sick, and all the stuff that's gonna come up *has* come up, and you're there still retching, and your ribs hurt and your body is convulsing, but there's none of the poison left inside? Well, that's the <u>University of Chicago!</u> Economics to fight communism. When all the communism is gone. That's why all of *this* hurts so much. We're ruled by twentieth-century ideology instead of twenty-first-century economic science.

Hey, take me to Chicago.... Can anyone take me to Chicago?.....I just wanna meet Eugene Fama. Hey Eugene, maybe you can hear me from Columbus.

The efficient market hypothesis... I guess your assets are smaller than you were letting on. Or maybe you just didn't *price* them properly.

Hey Eugene? Do you still feel competitive...?

Tell you what, why don't we have a laughing competition?

No, no, no. I can assure you, I **am** beeeing per-fect-ly rational! So, let me start. How's this...

(>>>Laughter like rolling thunder; like God laughing at some pathetic creature he is casting into hell. Loud, mad, dangerous and stuttering between the speakers as it peters out

I can't *hear* you, Eugene...

(>>> Hysterical laughing, stuttering between the speakers

...Eugene...?

...Eugene...

(>>> Screaming, demented, insane

...Eugene...

??? Eugene......

...where is this?



Bureau for Open Culture is a philosophy and program that transgresses traditional models of exhibition-making. The core of its mission is to stimulate discourse about institution and its effect on culture and society. Conclusions are not its primary goals as much as trajectories. It uses the gallery as a site for these investigations, but also extends the exhibition model to involve off-site projects, researched-based practices, workshops, screenings, informal talks, publications, community and short-term residencies. Bureau for Open Culture embraces experimental artistic and curatorial approaches that respond to a multidimensional contemporary world. It challenges the exhibition system while acknowledging the historical sources for those interests.

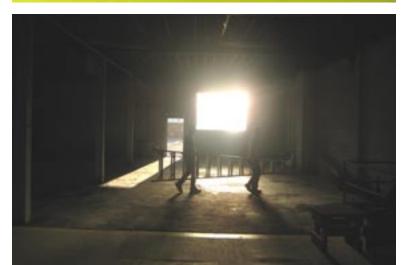
Bureau for Open Culture is James
Voorhies and Diana Matuszak, and
many others who periodically step
in. From September 10 to November
14, 2009, it operated the Office of
Collective Play.

BUREAU FOR OPEN CULTURE















...Baby One More Time

Britney Spears

Oh baby baby, how was I supposed to know
That something wasnt right here
Oh baby baby, I shouldnt have let you go
And now youre out of sight, yeah
Show me how you want it to be
Tell me baby cuz I need to know now, oh because

(CHORUS)

My loneliness is killin me (and I)
I must confess I still believe (still believe)
When Im not with you I lose my mind
Give me a sign, hit me baby one more time!

Oh baby baby, the reason I breathe is you Boy youve got me blinded Oh pretty baby, theres nothin that I wouldnt do Thats not the way I planned it Show me how you want it to be Tell me baby cuz I need to know now, oh because

(CHORUS)



Sing-Along Song Book

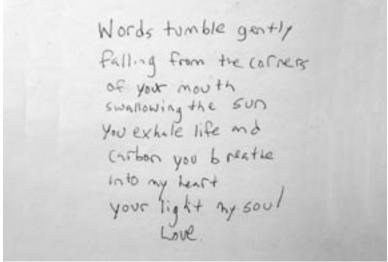
Ben Kinsley reads from A Year with Swollen Appendices: The Diary of Brian Eno, discusses past projects and hosts a sing-along with banjo recital.





Cassandra Troyan and Nicole
Langille of VITALforms drift
away in a hot air balloon from
a parking lot on the outskirts
of Columbus while reading
fragments of love poems and
texts through megaphones.
Participants below race to
communicate and close the
distance.













Bill Daniel presents a dual screening of Sunset Scavenger and hit-and-run exhibition of photographs.















Ryan Griffis of the Temporary
Travel Office screens Parking
Public: A Tour in the Storage
of Utopia and talks about
developments of surface
parking in the United States.











Reading group for Jean-François Lyotard's Libidinal Economy.













September 10, 2009

Red76: Sade Sade the musical alias for Red76 cohort Gabriel Saloman kicks off <u>Descent to Revolution</u>. In this performance Sade Sade creates gestural noise and abstract sound composed with found cassette tapes and mixer feedback.

September 11, 2009

Red76: YouTube School for Social Politics

Relationships to the Landscape: From Intimate Places
to Geological Timescales by Mike Wolf

Wolf examines our uneasy relationship with landscape

September 13, 2009

and the environment.

Red76: TMF Co. Skill Share

Gabriel Saloman demonstrates how he makes new sound from found cassette tapes and mixer feedback.

September 14, 2009

Red76: Pop-Up Book Academy

Mike Wolf discusses his research and travels related the Radical Midwest Culture Corridor.

September 14, 2009

Office of Collective Play: Libidinal economy
Session #1 of the reading group for Jean-François
Lyotard's <u>Libidinal Economy</u> in relation to the work
of Claire Fontaine.

September 16, 2009

Red76: Pop-Up Book Academy

Sam Gould and Gabriel Saloman talk about Home,
Washington, one of the earliest anarchist, free-love
communities of the Pacific Northwest.

September 18, 2009

Red76: YouTube School for Social Politics

A Hooters Universe by Dan S. Wang

Wang compiles a multifaceted sociological portrait
of the restaurant chain Hooters.

September 20, 2009

Red76: TMF Co. Skill Share

Kevin VanScoder demonstrates basic quilting techniques and discusses practical uses of sewing.

September 21, 2009

Red76: Pop-Up Book Academy

Gabriel Saloman talks about his essay "1999: A Year of Virtual Reality, Mind Control and the Rise of Male Paranoia."

September 21, 2009

Office of Collective Play: Libidinal economy
Session #2 of the reading group for Jean-François
Lyotard's <u>Libidinal Economy</u> in relation to the
work of Claire Fontaine.

September 22, 2009

Office of Collective Play: Andrew Culp and Gabriel Saloman host G20 and Resistance Teach-in.

September 23, 2009

Red76: Pop-Up Book Academy

Mary Jo Bole presents bookworks focusing on her ongoing relationship with the Dutch arts center and publisher Extrapool and Knust in Nijmegen.

September 25, 2009

Red76: YouTube School for Social Politics

Mediation, Self-Marginalization and Post-politics

in Protest Media by Robby Herbst

Herbst considers the move away from protest in the public sphere to more hermetic forms of resistance.

Mystery Ecology by Gabriel Saloman
Saloman ponders the global environmental movement
and its relation to "sacred value."

September 27, 2009

Red76: TMF Co. Skill Share

Dustin Click shares how he selects materials and constructs the products of Gnarly Toothed Bags.

September 28, 2009

Red76: Pop-Up Book Academy

Ola Stahl reads from his manuscript FILM, a reworking of the unpublished memoirs of his great granduncle who migrated from Sweden to the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century.

September 28, 2009

Office of Collective Play: Libidinal economy
Session #3 of the reading group for Jean-François
Lyotard's Libidinal Economy in relation to the work
of Claire Fontaine.

September 30, 2009

Red76: Pop-Up Book Academy

Ola Stahl discusses cut-up, recycling and collage-based writing styles making reference to RANT
(2006), a prose text reworking novels by Samuel
Beckett, and Concrete, & The Smear
(2008), a text-sound installation exploring discourses around fortification architecture in relation to the now derelict German bunkers scattered along the Atlantic coastline in Europe.

October 2, 2009

Red76: YouTube School for Social Politics
Ola Stahl counter-poses two sets of video interviews
engaging with the 1981 hunger strikes in The Maze
prison in Belfast, Northern Ireland: one, in
English, with loyalist prisoners, the other, in
Irish Gaelic, with republican prisoners.

October 4, 2009

Red76: TMF Co. Skill Share

Dylan Gauthier of the Free Seas/Mare Liberum collective leads a cooperative boatbuilding project out of surplus materials.

October 5, 2009

Office of Collective Play: Libidinal economy
Session #4 of the reading group for Jean-François
Lyotard's Libidinal Economy in relation to the work
of Claire Fontaine.

October 5, 2009

Red76: Pop-Up Book Academy

Dylan Gauthier of the Free Seas/Mare Liberum collective discusses boatbuilding as an enabling act of exploration, freedom and self-sustainability.

October 6, 2009

Red76: Anywhere/Anyplace Academy
Lunchtime dedication and recognition of Anywhere/
Anyplace Academy.

October 6, 2009

Red76: Open House

On this final evening of Red76's residency, music, drinks and performance by Mark VanFleet and friends using found cassette tapes and mixers.

October 12, 2009

Office of Collective Play: Libidinal economy
Session #5 of the reading group for Jean-François
Lyotard's <u>Libidinal Economy</u> in relation to the work
of Claire Fontaine.

October 13, 2009

 $\begin{array}{llll} \textbf{REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT:} & \underline{\textbf{The Readymade Demonstration}} \\ \textbf{workshop} \end{array}$

Martin Keil and Henrik Mayer host a discussion and workshop to recreate flags, banners and signs of the East German revolution of 1989.

October 16, 2009

Office of Collective Play: Ben Kinsley
Kinsley reads from <u>A Year with Swollen Appendices:</u>
The Diary of Brian Eno, discusses past projects and hosts a sing-along with banjo recital.

October 17, 2009

REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT: The Readymade Demonstration Martin Keil and Henrik Mayer lead a peaceful procession from CCAD campus to the Statehouse lawn.

October 19, 2009

Office of Collective Play: Libidinal economy
Session #6 of the reading group for Jean-François
Lyotard's <u>Libidinal Economy</u> in relation to the work
of Claire Fontaine.

October 21, 2009

Office of Collective Play: VITALforms: <u>Line of</u> Flight: A Conversation on Love

While in conversation Cassandra Troyan and Nicole Langille of VITALforms drift away in a hot air balloon from a parking lot on the outskirts of Columbus as participants race to follow and communicate.

October 23, 2009

Office of Collective Play: Ryan Griffis
Griffis of the Temporary Travel Office screens
Parking Public: A Tour in the Storage of Utopia and
talks about developments of surface parking in the
United States.

October 24, 2009

Office of Collective Play: Bill Daniel
Daniel presents a dual screening of <u>Sunset Scavenger</u>
and hit-and-run exhibition of photographs.

October 28, 2009

Claire Fontaine

Fulvia Carnevale and James Thornhill present <u>Human</u> strike within the field of libidinal economy in a public talk.

November 1, 2009

Office of Collective Play: playing practice
Via Skype Sönke Hallmann, Magda Tyzlik-Carver and
Paul Gangloff host playing practice, an ongoing
collaborative practice-led research project by
Virtual Networks Social Fabrics and Department of
Reading.

November 7, 2009

Office of Collective Play: Sarah Weinstock and Anthony Peluso

Weinstock and Peluso host part one of marathon screenings of 26 episodes of the Japanese anime $\underline{\text{Neon}}$ Genesis Evangelion.

November 14, 2009

Office of Collective Play: Sarah Weinstock and Anthony Peluso

Weinstock and Peluso host part two of marathon screenings of the remaining episodes of the Japanese anime Neon Genesis Evangelion and the film The End Evangelion.

November 24, 2009

Learning Site: Audible Dwelling

Opening dedication of Audible Dwelling.

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Claire Fontaine

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