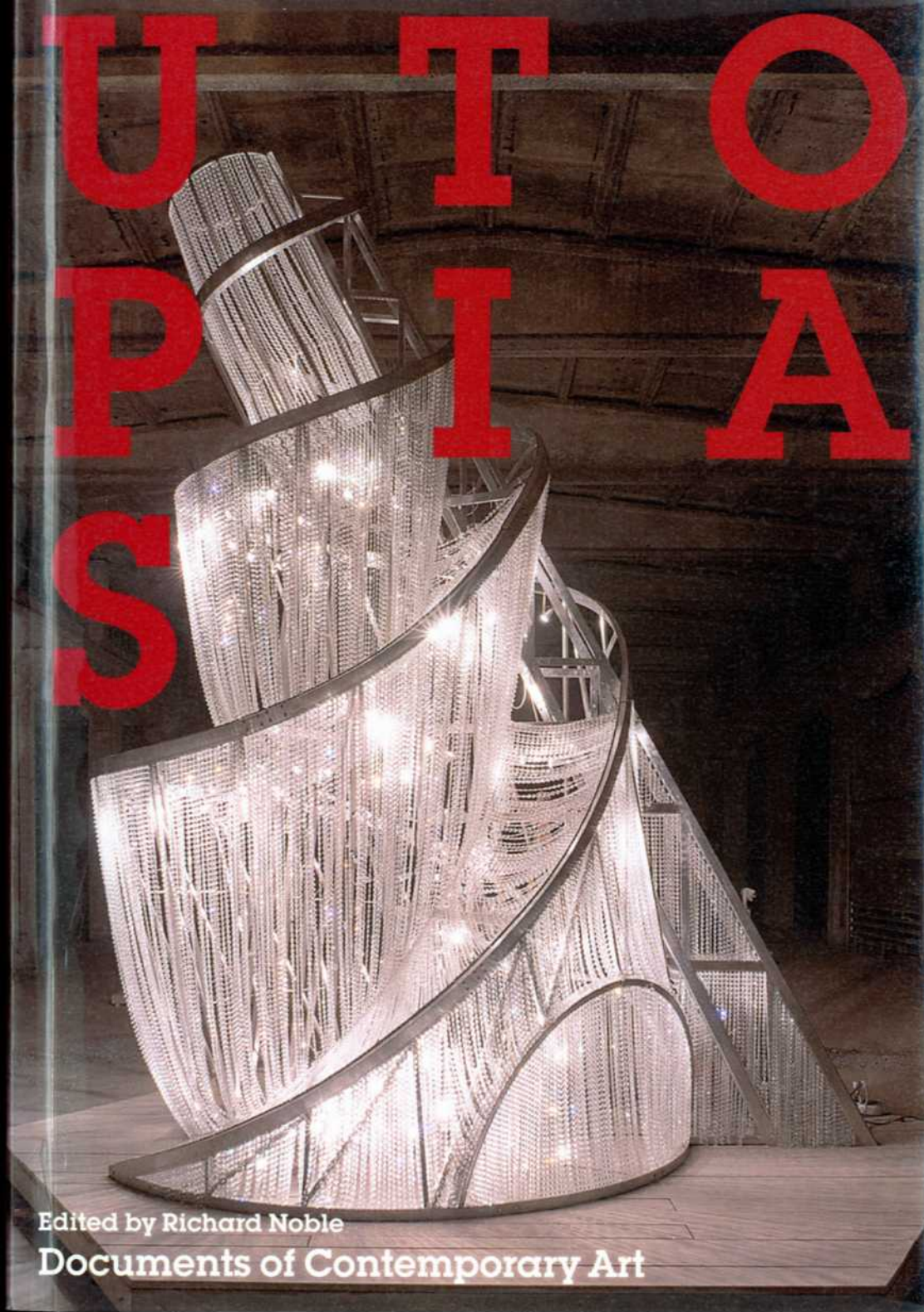
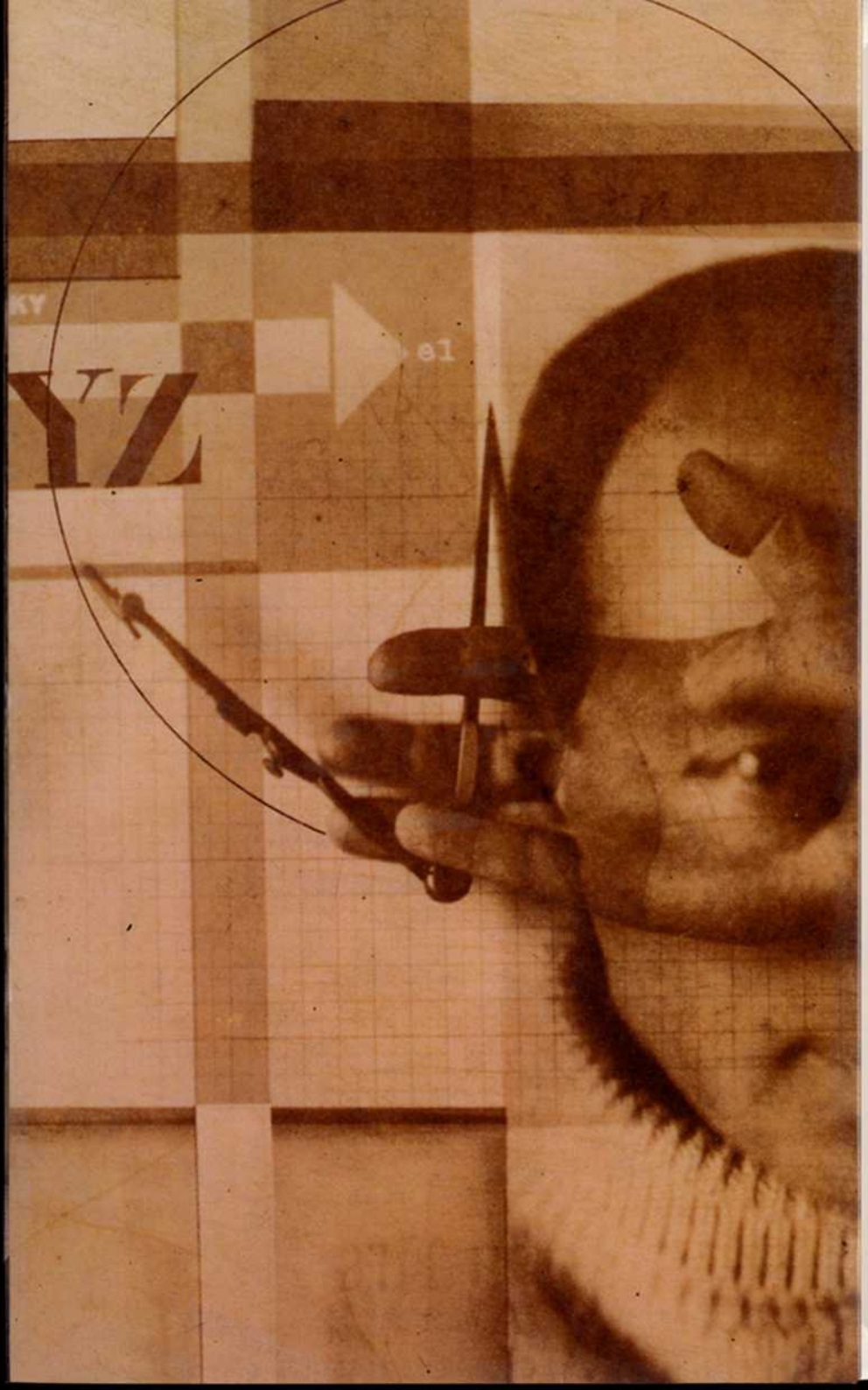
UTOPIAS



Edited by Richard Noble

Documents of Contemporary Art



Theodor Adorno//Catherine Bernard//Joseph Beuys//
Ernst Bloch//Yve-Alain Bois//Nicolas Bourriaud//
Benjamin H.D. Buchloh//Pierre Canjuers//Paul Chan//
Guy Debord//Jeremy Deller//Agnes Denes//Friedrich
Engels//Alex Farquharson//Hal Foster//Michel Foucault//
Liam Gillick//Antony Gormley//Dan Graham//Alison
Green//Thomas Hirschhorn//Pierre Huyghe//Fredric
Jameson//Ilya Kabakov//Stefan Kalmár//Alan Kane//
Bodys Isek Kingelez//Hari Kunzru//Donald Kuspit//
Dermis P. León//Paul McCarthy//Karl Marx//Jeremy
Millar//Thomas More//William Morris//Molly Nesbit//
Constant Nieuwenhuys//Nils Norman//Hans Ulrich
Obrist//George Orwell//Philippe Parreno//Pil and Galia
Kollectiv//Jacques Rancière//Stephanie Rosenthal//
Alun Rowlands//Beatrix Ruf//Karen Smith//Superflex//
Rirkrit Tiravanija//Jan Verwoert//WochenKlausur//
Carey Young

Utopias

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UTOPIAS

Edited by Richard Noble

Documents of Contemporary Art

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Cover, *front:* Ai Weiwei and Fake Studio, *Working Progress (Fountain of Light)* (2007). Steel and glass crystals on wooden base, 700 x 529 x 400 cm. Installation view at Ai Weiwei's studio. © Ai Weiwei Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Urs Meile, Beijing and Lucerne. *Inside flap:* El Lissitzky, *The Constructor* (1924). Photographic self portrait. Collection Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. © DACS 2009

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77-82 Whitechapel High Street
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Whitechapel Gallery

Documents of Contemporary Art

In recent decades artists have progressively expanded the boundaries of art as they have sought to engage with an increasingly pluralistic environment. Teaching, curating and understanding of art and visual culture are likewise no longer grounded in traditional aesthetics but centred on significant ideas, topics and themes ranging from the everyday to the uncanny, the psychoanalytical to the political.

The Documents of Contemporary Art series emerges from this context. Each volume focuses on a specific subject or body of writing that has been of key influence in contemporary art internationally. Edited and introduced by a scholar, artist, critic or curator, each of these source books provides access to a plurality of voices and perspectives defining a significant theme or tendency.

For over a century the Whitechapel Gallery has offered a public platform for art and ideas. In the same spirit, each guest editor represents a distinct yet diverse approach – rather than one institutional position or school of thought – and has conceived each volume to address not only a professional audience but all interested readers.

manhattan is the richest, most professional, most congested and without a doubt most fascinating island in the world: to attempt to plant, sustain and harvest two acres of wheat here, wasting valuable real estate, obstructing the machinery by going against the system, was an affrontery that made it the powerful paradox i had sought

Agnes Denes, *Wheatfield: A Confrontation*, 1982

COMMUNISM IS NOT FOR US A STATE OF AFFAIRS WHICH IS TO BE ESTABLISHED, AN IDEAL TO WHICH REALITY WILL HAVE TO ADJUST ITSELF. WE CALL COMMUNISM THE REAL MOVEMENT WHICH ABOLISHES THE PRESENT STATE OF THINGS

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, 1845–46

Richard Noble

Introduction//The Utopian Impulse in Contemporary Art

Utopian Consciousness wants to look far into the distance, but ultimately only in order to penetrate the darkness so near it, of the just lived moment, in which everything that is both drives and is hidden from itself. In other words, we need the most powerful telescope, that of polished utopian consciousness, in order to penetrate precisely the nearest nearness. (Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1954–59)

Utopia is a powerful trope in western culture. In its simplest form, it refers to a better place, a place in which the problems that beset our current condition are transcended or resolved. Yet it also means, or at any rate suggests through a pun on the ancient Greek words for 'no place', a place imagined but not realized, the 'shining city on the hill' that illuminates the limitations of the world in which we actually live, the telescope that allows us to grasp the 'nearest nearness'. The utopian impulse or tendency is present in many of our foundational works of art, literature and philosophy. It has been central to most of the dominant political ideologies of modernity, and if Bloch is to be believed, is present in virtually every future-oriented activity humans engage in, from the aura of hope surrounding the purchase of new clothes or planning a holiday, to the commitment to a better world implicit in medical research, constitution-writing and making art.

This anthology is a selection of writings that record some of the ways the utopian impulse informs and animates contemporary art. It includes artists and writers who are utopian, as well as artists and writers who are interested in utopia as a subject without themselves being utopian. As with any attempt to frame a range of current attitudes and practices in art, it reaches back into the past. It does so partly as a way of elucidating what I've termed the 'utopian imaginary', the basic architecture of the utopian impulse as it comes to us from the philosophical and literary traditions of the West; and partly as a way of outlining what remains one of the most important legacies of modernism, the utopian hope of radical social transformation as it was embodied within the modernist and neo-modernist avant-gardes. This legacy finds complex and often conflicted forms within contemporary art. It is a cliché that we are no longer moderns, yet the foundational ideas of modernism continue to haunt contemporary art, often in the guise of utopian strategies.

At some level, one might think that the utopian impulse is implicit in all art making, at least in so far as one thinks that art addresses itself to the basic project of making the world better. This may be partly what Adorno meant when he claimed that 'works of art, even literary ones, point to the practice from which they abstain: the creation of a just life.'[1] This is an idea to which many people involved in the visual arts – artists, critics and curators alike – are in one way or another committed. We think art makes the world a better place. But does this make us utopians? And perhaps more importantly, does it make all art utopian?

The answer to the first question is probably 'yes', but the answer to the second, if the category of the utopian is to be useful for understanding contemporary art, must certainly be 'no'. There are two reasons for this. One is the obvious point that if all art is utopian, the category itself has no critical utility: it won't allow us to distinguish one work of art, or one strategy of making art, from another. It is crucial then, that utopian art be distinguishable from non-utopian art, even if, at some deep psychological or ethical level, much art is animated by some kind of utopian aspiration. The second reason is that the meaning of the term 'utopian' is fundamentally contradictory. It can mean, as I have assumed thus far, the impulse or aspiration to make the world better either by imagining a better way to be or actually attempting to make it so. But equally, following from Marx's historically significant intervention, utopia and utopian can mean naïve, idealistic, pie-in-the-sky dreaming, an imaginary but otherwise futile attempt to escape from immanent reality, which ultimately has the effect of reinforcing the status quo. Marx sought to replace the utopian socialist dreams of Charles Fourier and Robert Owen with a scientific (and hence non-utopian) analysis of historical change. Yet this analysis spawned the most influential utopian (and ultimately dystopian) ideological doctrine in human history. Communism justified itself in terms of a rational, scientific account of historical change, but it relied on the most radical (and irrational) forms of utopian hope to sustain itself politically. In any event, this contradiction is both confusing and productively interesting. The utopian strategies discussed in the texts anthologized here range across it: from the various aspirations to build shining cities on the hill to dystopian imaginings intended to critique current social conditions; from small scale micro-utopian projects to full-on activist engagement with social problems; from detached and often amusing reconstructions of historical utopian moments to parodic manipulations of utopia as an aesthetic form.

What does it mean then, for a work of art to be utopian? The answer to this is perhaps less straightforward than we might think. It is hard to identify a single aesthetic strategy common to all utopian art, but there are nonetheless forms that tend to recur: the use of the architectural model (Constant Niewenhuys, Dan Graham, Bodys Isek Kingelez, Nils Norman); the use of the manifesto (Guy Debord, Joseph Beuys, Liam Gillick); references to design and technology (Mark Titchner, Pil and Galia Kollectiv, Goshka Macuga); small and large scale

collaborative actions (Beuys, Agnes Denes, Antony Gormley, Jeremy Deller, Rirkrit Tiravanjia). There are others, but perhaps what defines art as utopian is not so much a common aesthetic form as an attempt to model in some way the tension between an immanent critique of the present and a future, radically other condition implied by that critique. In this respect the utopian impulse in art is linked closely with the aesthetic strategy of modelling. In one way or another, most utopian art postulates models of other ways of being. This strategy of modelling possible worlds, 'what ifs' and the logical implications of current practices, seems particularly suited to art.

Section one of the anthology, *The Utopian Imaginary*, is a selection of canonical utopian texts, Thomas More's foundational *Utopia*, William Morris' nineteenth-century fictional account of a future socialist Britain, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' brief and uncharacteristic musings on life in communist society and George Orwell's brilliant account of the language of a utopian political project gone horribly wrong in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. These texts are all utopian in the sense that they embody both the positive, future-oriented aspiration to improve human society, but also in the sense that they are intended not so much as actual blueprints for new social organizations but rather models that allow us to see how far we are from what we have the potential to be. The exception to this is perhaps Orwell's text, but even this, for all its dystopic bile, is intended as a warning against tendencies, like the debasement of political language, that are inherent in the political systems in which we live.

We might, then, say provisionally that for artworks to be utopian they need to offer two things that seem to pull in rather different directions: on one hand a vision or intimation of a better place than the here and now we inhabit, and on the other some insight into what Bloch terms the 'darkness so near', the contradictions and limitations that drive our will to escape the here and now in the first place. This suggests an additional feature or tendency in utopian works of art, which is that they direct our attention to the realm of the political. Imagining a better world entails some sort of critique of the existing one, though of course Marx was right to claim that neither activity will necessarily have the effect of changing anything.[2] In this respect, all utopian art is political. It proceeds from an awareness of the imperfections of our social and political conditions towards some sort of understanding of, and possible solution to, what the artist perceives these to be. It is art oriented beyond existing conditions, sometimes to the future, sometimes to the past; it is art that asks us difficult questions about the conditions we live with and the potential we have to change them.

The second section, *Utopian Avant-Gardes*, includes writings from artists, critics and theorists whose conception of utopia is in some sense either grounded in or self-consciously returns to the avant-gardist utopian politics of the mid twentieth century. In the middle part of the last century, as Europe struggled to rebuild itself in the aftermath of the Second World War, Marxist revolutionary politics achieved huge significance within the art world. Debord and Pierre Canjuer's 'Culture and Revolutionary Politics' or Constant Nieuwenhuys' 'Our Own Desires Build the Revolution' illustrate the total integration of politics and art in the revolutionary project. For both, the practice of making art is given significance by the revolutionary project, and vice versa. As Constant writes: 'As a basic task we propose the liberation of social life, which will open the way to the new world – a world where all the cultural aspects and inner relationships of our ordinary lives will take on new meaning ... Therefore any real creative activity – that is, cultural activity – in the twentieth century, must have its roots in revolution.'[3]

Three highly contestable assumptions underlie Constant's utopianism: the belief that bourgeois capitalist society is producing the conditions necessary for a successful socialist revolution; the view that art has a significant role to play within this process; and its logical corollary that art must in some sense be in opposition to the status quo because of its revolutionary potential. Each of these is now 'utopian' in the Marxist sense. Yet despite the disappearance of revolutionary aspiration (at least in the West), the underlying structure of avant-gardist utopian thinking continues to influence us. In the selections from his recent influential book *Archaeologies of the Future*, Fredric Jameson argues that utopia remains politically significant precisely because it retains something of the holistic revolutionary approach to change. Utopian art, as Jameson conceives it, is politically effective because it focuses the mind on the necessity of a radical (revolutionary) break with what is. 'Utopia now better expresses our relationship to a genuinely political future than any current programme of action. It forces us precisely to concentrate on the break itself: a meditation on the impossible, on the unrealizable in its own right. This is very far from a liberal capitulation to the necessity of capitalism, however; it is quite the opposite, a rattling of the bars and an intense spiritual concentration and preparation for another stage which has not yet arrived.'[4]

This is a controversial claim. It rather narrows the utopian project to those who aspire to model imaginary but radically other worlds, and hangs on, one might argue nostalgically, to the prospect of revolutionary change. Nevertheless, Jameson identifies something all utopian artists share, which is the desire to model alternatives to the way things are, in order to force some sort of engagement with them. Equally, in his utopian commitment to revolution, even if, as he admits, a revolution as yet not fully imagined or understood, he identifies a powerful avant-gardist legacy to which many contemporary artists are drawn. How does one imagine or possibly effect radical change when all departures from

the liberal/capitalist norm are characterized as dream life? This is the problem to which Thomas Hirschhorn, Pil and Galia Kollectiv, Titchner and WochenKlausur are in their various ways drawn. Hirschhorn's uncompromising installations express his commitment to make art politically; to challenge his viewers to engage actively with his critique of contemporary life. WochenKlausur, more straightforwardly, adopt art as a practical means of effecting improvement in people's lives, whereas Pil and Galia Kollectiv and Titchner focus on specific revolutionary moments or strategies within the history of modernism – projects that might be characterized in terms of a desire to reconstitute what we seem to have lost into a new kind of utopian imaginary.

The third section, *Therapeutic Utopias*, considers a somewhat different legacy of the utopian avant-garde, what I've termed 'therapeutic utopianism'. As the promise of full-scale political revolution receded in the last century, the prospect of transformation was not so much abandoned as displaced. The confidence of modernist avant-gardes in the revolutionary potential of art gave way to postmodern pluralism, and if not to a greater scepticism about art's transformative political potential, at least a more localized, contingent and open-ended range of strategies for linking art to political change. A work like Agnes Denes' *Wheatfield: A Confrontation* is typical of such strategies. Denes grew two acres of wheat on a landfill site in lower Manhattan. Although it had no explicit political point, it offered a kind of utopian counterpoint to the ecological devastation wreaked by Wall Street. As Denes writes, '*Wheatfield* ... was an intrusion into the Citadel, a confrontation with High Civilization. Then again, it was also Shangri-La, a small paradise, one's childhood, a hot summer afternoon in the country, peace, forgotten values, simple pleasures.'[5]

Joseph Beuys was also significant in this development. Beuys' utopian ambitions for the total saturation of society by art have become hugely influential. For Beuys, art itself, rather than art allied to a political movement like communism, became the agent of revolutionary change. 'EVERY HUMAN BEING IS AN ARTIST who – from his state of freedom, the position of freedom he experiences at first-hand – learns to determine the other positions of the TOTAL ARTWORK OF THE FUTURE SOCIAL ORDER.'[6] The influence of Beuys' utopian aesthetic can hardly be overestimated, not least in contemporary art's current obsession with the importance of participation. Beuys wanted art to be democratic, open and accessible to the participation of all, because this respects the fundamental equality of persons as creative beings, and because art is good for people, it is therapeutic, it can rescue us from the traumatizing and dehumanizing effects of individualism, instrumentalism and competition.

The utopian aspirations of Beuys echo strongly amongst contemporary artists such as Antony Gormley and Ilya Kabakov. The latter's *Palace of Projects* exhaustively investigates the human propensity to construct and execute projects. Like Beuys, Kabakov believes art can find its way into the most mundane human activities, and also that it does so as an agent of liberation, a means of taking every individual beyond the quotidian towards something essentially human. Gormley has also developed a kind of therapeutic utopian strategy in his large-scale participatory works like *Field* and *Domain Field*. For Gormley, the activity of making *Field*, each person following a very simple set of instructions to create a mass of similar yet absolutely individuated forms, models a kind of social contract between artist and collaborators in which everyone is empowered as a creator of the work. More recently, the work of a number of artists associated with Nicolas Bourriaud's term 'relational aesthetics', has developed the therapeutic ideal of participation even further. Liam Gillick's constructions model the utopian possibilities of democratic life, while Rirkrit Tiravanija's shared meal installations attempt to create micro-utopian moments of intersubjective conviviality between participants in an artwork. In all these projects, such forms of participation are proffered as utopian moments in which a different kind of human relationship is modelled: equal, non-instrumental, better.

The therapeutic form of the utopian impulse in art is thus ascendant today, and arguably owes much to Beuys, but we need to note that neither Beuys nor his contemporary iterations are without their critics. Benjamin Buchloh's important 'Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol: Preliminary notes for a Critique', first published in *Artforum* in 1980, accused Beuys of a kind of subjectivized hubris, which while advocating an egalitarian/humanist social redemption effected through art, was in fact a reactionary symptom of late-capitalist social forms, not a solution to them. Beuys, it is true, inspired a cult-like following and perhaps too easily transferred the transformative potential of economic and political structures onto the utopian possibility of the creative act. In its contemporary forms the therapeutic impulse finds critics amongst those who find it lacking in critical focus.[7] The attempt to model a utopian or micro-utopian possibility within an artwork can, perhaps must, abstract from the oppressive conditions of contemporary life in ways that leave open the question of what precisely the moment of utopian possibility is meant to offer.

But whatever the merits of such criticism, it remains the case that utopian strategies in art can and do exercise a critical function. Section four, *Critical Utopias*, contains a number of texts by artists whose utopian modelling, or interest in utopian strategies, is intended primarily as a critical mirror to be held up to society. Dan Graham's *Homes For America* and the *Children's Pavilion* he designed with Jeff Wall explore the dystopic dimensions of social planning and architecture. Graham documents the utopian promise of suburban development in America, where seriality and repetition replace craftsmanship and

individuation; where homes are made to identical models quite independent of the needs, personalities or cultural specificities of the people who live in them. Stephanie Rosenthal explores Paul McCarthy's bizarre alternative world, a sort of dystopian take on Disney's utopian vision of American life. If Disney represents the utopian superego of American culture, McCarthy releases the dystopic potential of its cultural id: Dionysus unchained and spewing condiments everywhere! Nils Norman and Carey Young take a somewhat more detached and critical perspective on utopian strategies. For instance, Young explores the way the language of business management employs the rhetoric of revolution. Young's project *Revolution: It's a Lovely Word* examines the way the utopian language of revolution is debased within contemporary management culture. Her work is not itself utopian, but her performances enact a certain ironic critique of the utopian aspirations of business organizations. As Alex Farquharson writes, her recent 'corporate works relocate Beuys' notion of social sculpture within the modern business environment; its "soft" yet didactic techniques of training, brainstorming and skills workshops displacing Beuys' charismatic proselytising, and with it, by implication, his utopian vision for society.'[8]

The final section, *Utopia and Its (Im)possibilities*, contains a number of contemporary commentaries on the current uses, and abuses, of utopian modelling and utopian perspectives in contemporary art. Alison Green argues that the utopian legacy in contemporary art that matters most is more or less free of the grand narratives of modernism, more pragmatic and grounded in the materiality of sensuous experience. On her reading certain types of contemporary sculpture might be understood as utopian in so far as they activate an immediate sensual experience around which, or through which, people can find a direct, possibly non-verbal experience. Another model is Atelier van Lieshout, which builds utopian objects and installations based directly on existing social problems such as migration and over-dependence on non-renewable resources. Catherine Barnard explores the utopian political potential digital media offers, for example, to resistance movements in the developing world, and more generally how digital space itself becomes utopian when it opens up freedom of expression, equality of status and an environment of perpetual innovation. 'Second Life' where one can recreate a utopian version of one's life in cyberspace, is one example of this. Dermis León examines the utopian impulse behind the art biennial system, focusing on the Havana Biennial. While noting the success of the biennial system in shifting the balance of power in the art world away from the metropolitan centres, she also notices a kind of creeping homogeneity in this process, such that what distinguishes the Havana Biennial from many others is no longer so clear. Finally, the texts discussing the work of Paul Chan, Bodys Isek Kingelez and Paul Noble present different ways in which the idea of utopia, rather than any particular form of utopian solution, is adopted as a subject by these artists.

The utopian strategies anthologized here represent a range of iterations of the ways contemporary art engages with the realm of the political. Despite its diversity, utopian art carries on an important part of the legacy of the modernist commitment to social and political transformation. It offers provisional visions or models of transformation without the dystopic consequences attendant upon the actual attempt to bring them about. In this sense, the utopian impulse finds a largely negative or critical articulation in contemporary visual art, even in its therapeutic forms. It holds up a critical mirror to the world; a glass through which the darkness of the future illuminates the present.

1 Theodor Adorno, 'Commitment', first published in *Noten zur Literatur, III* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1965); trans. Francis McDonagh, 'Commitment', in Ronald Taylor, ed., *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso 1977); extracts reprinted in this volume, 46–8.

2 Karl Marx, Thesis IX, *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845), in Marx, *Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977).

3 Constant Niewenhuys, 'Our Own Desires Build the Revolution', *Cobra*, no. 4 (Amsterdam, 1949) 304; reprinted in this volume, 40–41.

4 Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future* (London and New York: Verso, 2005) 232–3; extracts reprinted in this volume, 69–75.

5 Agnes Denes, 'Wheatfield: A Confrontation. Battery Park Landfill, Downtown Manhattan, Two Acres of Wheat Planted and Harvested', artist's statement (New York, 1982); extracts reprinted in this volume, 122–3.

6 Joseph Beuys, 'I Am Searching for Field Character' in the group exhibition catalogue *Art into Society/Society into Art*, ed. Caroline Tisdall (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1974) 48; reprinted in this volume, 114–15.

7 See for example articles by Claire Bishop and Grant Kester in *Artforum* (February/May 2006).

8 Alex Farquharson, 'The Avant-Garde, Again', in *Carey Young Incorporated* (London: Film & Video Umbrella, 2002); extracts reprinted in this volume, 194–7.

THE TRUE SECRET OF HAPPINESS LIES IN TAKING A GENUINE INTEREST IN ALL THE DETAILS OF DAILY LIFE IN ELEVATING THEM BY ART

William Morris, 'The Aims of Art', 1877

Thomas More
Utopia//1516

[...] When I turn over in my mind the most prudent and holy institutions of the Utopians, who have very few laws and yet manage so well that virtue is rewarded and yet, since everything is equalized, everyone has plenty of everything, and then when I contrast their customs with those of other nations, always issuing ordinances but none of them all ever achieving order, where whatever a person can get he calls his own private property, where a mass of laws, enacted day after day, are never enough to ensure that anyone can protect what each calls his own private property or even adequately distinguish it from what belongs to someone else (as can easily be seen from the infinite lawsuits which are always being filed and are never finished), when I consider these things, I say, I have a higher opinion of Plato and I am not surprised that he would not deign to make any laws for people who would not accept laws requiring that all goods be shared equally by all. In his great wisdom he easily foresaw that the one and only path to the welfare of the public is the equal allocation of goods; and I doubt whether such equality can be maintained where every individual has his own property. For where everyone tries to get clear title to whatever he can scrape together, then however abundant things are, a few men divide up everything among themselves, leaving everyone else in poverty. And it usually happens that each sort deserves the lot of the other, since the one is rapacious, wicked and worthless, and the other is made up of simple, modest men who by their daily labour contribute more to the common good than to themselves.

Thus I am firmly persuaded that there is no way property can be equitably and justly distributed or the affairs of mortal men managed so as to make them happy unless private property is utterly abolished. But if it remains, there will also always remain a distressing and unavoidable burden of poverty and anxiety on the backs of the largest and best part of the human race. I grant their misery may be somewhat alleviated but I contend that it cannot be fully eliminated. I mean, if you decreed that no one could own more than a certain amount of land and that there be a legal limit to the money anyone can possess, if some laws were enacted that could keep the prince from being too powerful or the people too headstrong, that would keep offices from being solicited or put up for sale, or keep them from entailing many expenses (for otherwise they provide opportunities to rake in money by fraud and spoliation or it becomes necessary to put rich men in offices which ought to be held by wise men), such laws, I say, could mitigate and alleviate these ills, just as applying continual poultices can relieve the symptoms of sick bodies that are beyond healing. But as long as everyone has his own property, there is no hope whatever of curing them and putting society back into good condition. In fact, while you are trying to cure one part you aggravate the malady in other parts; curing one disease causes another to break out in its place, since you cannot give something to one person without taking it away from someone else.

'Quite the contrary', I said, 'it seems to me that no one can live comfortably where everything is held in common. For how can there be any abundance of goods when everyone stops working because he is no longer motivated by making a profit, and grows lazy because he relies on the labours of others. And then, when people are driven by want and there is no law which enables them to keep their acquisitions for their own use, wouldn't everyone necessarily suffer from continual bloodshed and turmoil? Especially when the magistrates no longer have any respect or authority, for I cannot conceive how they could have any among people who are all placed on one level.'

'I am not surprised that you think so', he said, 'since you have no conception of the matter, or only a false one. But if you had been with me in Utopia and had seen their customs and institutions in person as I did (for I lived there more than five years, and I would never have wanted to leave except to reveal that new world to others) you would quite agree that you had never seen a people well governed anywhere but there.' [...]

Thomas More, extract from *Utopia* (1516); trans. Clarence H. Miller (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001) 46–8.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels
The German Ideology//1845–46

Private Property and Communism

With the division of labour [...] which in its turn is based on the natural division of labour in the family and the separation of society into individual families opposed to one another, is given simultaneously the distribution, and indeed the unequal distribution, both quantitative and qualitative, of labour and its products, hence property: the nucleus, the first form, of which lies in the family, where wife and children are the slaves of the husband. This latent slavery in the family, though still very crude, is the first property, but even at this early stage it corresponds perfectly to the definition of modern economists who call it the power of disposing of the labour-power of others. Division of labour and private property are, moreover, identical expressions: in the one the same thing is affirmed with reference to activity as is affirmed in the other with reference to the product of the activity.

Further, the division of labour implies the contradiction between the interest of the separate individual or the individual family and the communal interest of all individuals who have intercourse with one another. And indeed, this communal interest does not exist merely in the imagination, as the 'general interest', but first of all in reality, as the mutual interdependence of the individuals among whom the labour is divided. And finally, the division of labour offers us the first example of how, as long as man remains in natural society, that is, as long as a cleavage exists between the particular and the common interest, as long, therefore, as activity is not voluntarily, but naturally, divided, man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him. For as soon as the distribution of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a herdsman, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic. This fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up till now.

And out of this very contradiction between the interest of the individual and that of the community the latter takes an independent form as the State, divorced from the real interests of individual and community, and at the same time as an illusory communal life, always based, however, on the real ties existing in every family and tribal conglomeration – such as flesh and blood, language, division of labour on a larger scale, and other interests – and especially, as we shall enlarge upon later, on the classes, already determined by the division of labour, which in every such mass of men separate out, and of which one dominates all the others. It follows from this that all struggles within the State, the struggle between democracy, aristocracy and monarchy, the struggle for the franchise, etc., etc., are merely the illusory forms in which the real struggles of the different classes are fought out among one another. [...] Further, it follows that every class which is struggling for mastery, even when its domination, as is the case with the proletariat, postulates the abolition of the old form of society in its entirety and of domination itself, must first conquer for itself political power in order to represent its interest in turn as the general interest, which immediately it is forced to do. Just because individuals seek only their particular interest, which for them does not coincide with their communal interest, the latter will be imposed on them as an interest 'alien' to them, and 'independent' of them, as in its turn a particular, peculiar 'general' interest; or they themselves must remain within this discord, as in democracy. On the other hand, too, the practical struggle of these particular interests, which constantly really run counter to the communal and illusory communal interests, makes practical intervention and control necessary through the illusory 'general' interest in the form of the State.

The social power, i.e. the multiplied productive force, which arises through the co-operation of different individuals as it is determined by the division of labour, appears to these individuals, since their co-operation is not voluntary but has come about naturally, not as their own united power, but as an alien force existing outside them, of the origin and goal of which they are ignorant, which they thus cannot control, which on the contrary passes through a peculiar series of phases and stages independent of the will and the action of man, nay even being the prime governor of these.

How otherwise could, for instance, property have had a history at all, have taken on different forms, and landed property, for example, according to the different premises given, have proceeded in France from parcellation to centralization in the hands of a few, in England from centralization in the hands of a few to parcellation, as is actually the case today? Or how does it happen that

trade, which after all is nothing more than the exchange of products of various individuals and countries, rules the whole world through the relation of supply and demand – a relation which, as an English economist says, hovers over the earth like the Fates of the ancients, and with invisible hand allots fortune and misfortune to men, sets up empires and overthrows empires, causes nations to rise and to disappear – while with the abolition of the basis of private property, with the communistic regulation of production (and, implicit in this, the destruction of the alien relation between men and what they themselves produce), the power of the relation of supply and demand is dissolved into nothing, and men get exchange, production, the mode of their mutual relation, under their own control again?

This 'alienation' (to use a term which will be comprehensible to the philosophers) can, of course, only be abolished given two practical premises. For it to become an 'intolerable' power, i.e. a power against which men make a revolution, it must necessarily have rendered the great mass of humanity 'propertyless', and produced, at the same time, the contradiction of an existing world of wealth and culture, both of which conditions presuppose a great increase in productive power, a high degree of its development. And, on the other hand, this development of productive forces (which itself implies the actual empirical existence of men in their world-historical, instead of local, being) is an absolutely necessary practical premise because without it want is merely made general, and with destitution the struggle for necessities and all the old filthy business would necessarily be reproduced; and furthermore, because only with this universal development of productive forces is a universal intercourse between men established, which produces in all nations simultaneously the phenomenon of the 'propertyless' mass (universal competition), makes each nation dependent on the revolutions of others, and finally has put world-historical, empirically universal individuals in place of local ones. Without this, (1) communism could only exist as a local event; (2) the forces of intercourse themselves could not have developed as universal, hence intolerable powers: they would have remained home-bred conditions surrounded by superstition; and (3) each extension of intercourse would abolish local communism. Empirically, communism is only possible as the act of the dominant peoples 'all at once' and simultaneously, which presupposes the universal development of productive forces and the world intercourse bound up with communism. Moreover, the mass of propertyless workers – the utterly precarious position of labour-power on a mass scale cut off from capital or from even a limited satisfaction and, therefore, no longer merely temporarily deprived of work itself as a secure source of life – presupposes the world market through competition. The proletariat can thus only exist world-historically, just as communism, its activity, can only have a 'world-historical' existence. World-historical existence of individuals means existence of individuals which is directly linked up with world history.

Communism is not for us a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence. [...]

Artistic Talent under Communism

The exclusive concentration of artistic talent in particular individuals, and its suppression in the broad mass which is bound up with this, is a consequence of division of labour. If, even in certain social conditions, everyone were an excellent painter, that would not at all exclude the possibility of each of them being also an original painter, so that here too the difference between 'human' and 'unique' labour amounts to sheer nonsense. In any case, with a communist organization of society, there disappears the subordination of the artist to local and national narrowness, which arises entirely from division of labour, and also the subordination of the artist to some definite art, thanks to which he is exclusively a painter, sculptor, etc., the very name of his activity adequately expressing the narrowness of his professional development and his dependence on division of labour. In a communist society there are no painters but at most people who engage in painting among other activities. [...]

The Free Development of Individuals in Communist Society

We have shown that the abolition of a state of things in which relationships become independent of individuals, in which individuality is subservient to chance and the personal relationships of individuals are subordinated to general class relationships, etc. – the abolition of this state of things is determined in the final analysis by the abolition of division of labour. We have also shown that the abolition of division of labour is determined by the development of intercourse and productive forces to such a degree of universality that private property and division of labour become fetters on them. We have further shown that private property can be abolished only on condition of an all-round development of individuals, because the existing character of intercourse and productive forces is an all-round one, and only individuals who are developing in an all-round fashion can appropriate them, i.e. can turn them into free manifestations of their lives. We have shown that at the present time individuals must abolish private property, because the productive forces and forms of intercourse have developed so far that, under the domination of private property, they have become destructive forces, and because the contradiction between the classes

has reached its extreme limit. Finally, we have shown that the abolition of private property and of the division of labour is itself the union of individuals on the basis created by modern productive forces and world intercourse.

Within communist society, the only society in which the original and free development of individuals ceases to be a mere phrase, this development is determined precisely by the connection of individuals, a connection which consists partly in the economic prerequisites and partly in the necessary solidarity of the free development of all, and, finally, in the universal character of the activity of individuals on the basis of the existing productive forces. Here, therefore, the matter concerns individuals at a definite historical stage of development and by no means merely individuals chosen at random, even disregarding the indispensable communist revolution which itself is a general condition of their free development. The individuals' consciousness of their mutual relations will, of course, likewise become something quite different, and, therefore, will no more be the 'principle of love' or *dévouement*, than it will be egoism. [...]

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, extracts from the sections 'Private Property and Communism', 'Artistic Talent under Communism', 'The Free Development of Individuals in Communist Society', *The German Ideology* (1845–46); trans. (Moscow, 1964) in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels
The Communist Manifesto//1848

[...] In the beginning [communist revolution] cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionizing the mode of production.

These measures will of course be different in different countries.

Nevertheless, in the most advanced countries, the following will be pretty generally applicable.

1 Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.

2 A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.

3 Abolition of all right of inheritance.

4 Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.

5 Centralization of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly.

6 Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State.

7 Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State; the bringing into cultivation of wastelands, and the improvemnent of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.

8 Equal liability of all to labour. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.

9 Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equable distribution of the population over the country.

10 Free education for all children in publicly owned schools. Abolition of children's factory labour in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production, etc., etc.

When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of associated individuals, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organize itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.

In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, extract from *The Communist Manifesto* (1848); in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

William Morris
News from Nowhere//1890

Chapter XII: Concerning the Arrangement of Life

'Well', I said, 'about those "arrangements" which you spoke of as taking the place of government, could you give me any account of them?'

'Neighbour', he said, 'although we have simplified our lives a great deal from what they were, and have got rid of many conventionalities and many sham wants, which used to give our forefathers much trouble, yet our life is too complex for me to tell you in detail by means of words how it is arranged; you must find that out by living amongst us. It is true that I can better tell you what we don't do, than what we do do.'

'Well?' said I.

'This is the way to put it', said he: 'We have been living for a hundred and fifty years, at least, more or less in our present manner, and a tradition or habit of life has been growing on us; and that habit has become a habit of acting on the whole for the best. It is easy for us to live without robbing each other. It would be possible for us to contend with and rob each other, but it would be harder for us than refraining from strife and robbery. That is in short the foundation of our life and our happiness.'

'Whereas in the old days', said I, 'it was very hard to live without strife and robbery. That's what you mean, isn't it, by giving me the negative side of your good conditions?'

'Yes', he said, 'it was so hard, that those who habitually acted fairly to their neighbours were celebrated as saints and heroes, and were looked up to with the greatest reverence.'

'While they were alive?' said I.

'No', said he, 'after they were dead.'

'But as to these days', I said; 'you don't mean to tell me that no one ever transgresses this habit of good fellowship?'

'Certainly not', said Hammond, 'but when the transgressions occur, everybody, transgressors and all, know them for what they are; the errors of friends, not the habitual actions of persons driven into enmity against society.'

'I see', said I: 'you mean that you have no "criminal" classes.'

'How could we have them', said he, 'since there is no rich class to breed enemies against the state by means of the injustice of the state?'

Said I: 'I thought that I understood from something that fell from you a little while ago that you had abolished civil law. Is that so, literally?'

'It abolished itself, my friend', said he. 'As I said before, the civil law-courts were upheld for the defence of private property, for nobody ever pretended that it was possible to make people act fairly to each other by means of brute force. Well, private property being abolished, all the laws and all the legal "crimes" which it had manufactured of course came to an end. *Thou shalt not steal* had to be translated into: *Thou shalt work in order to live happily.* Is there a need to enforce that commandment by violence?'

'Well', said I, 'that is understood, and I agree with it; but how about the crimes of violence? would not their occurrence (and you admit that they occur) make criminal law necessary?'

Said he: 'In your sense of the word, we have no criminal law either. Let us look at the matter closer, and see whence crimes of violence spring. By far the greater part of these in past days were the result of the laws of private property, which forbade the satisfaction of their natural desires to all but a privileged few, and of the general visible coercion which came of those laws. All *that* cause of violent crime is gone. Again, many violent acts came from the artificial perversion of the sexual passions, which caused overweening jealousy and the like miseries. Now, when you look carefully into these, you will find that what lay at the bottom of them was mostly the idea (a law-made idea) of the woman being the property of the man, whether he were husband, father, brother, or what not. That idea has of course vanished with private property, as well as certain follies about the "ruin" of women for following their natural desires in an illegal way, which of course was a convention caused by the laws of private property.' [...]

'Well, you have no civil law, and no criminal law. But have you no laws of the market, so to say – no regulation for the exchange of wares? For you must exchange, even if you have no property.'

Said he: 'We have no obvious individual exchange, as you saw this morning when you went a-shopping; but of course there are regulations of the markets, varying according to the circumstances and guided by general custom. But as these are matters of general assent, which nobody dreams of objecting to, so also we have made no provision for enforcing them: therefore I don't call them laws. In law, whether it be criminal or civil, execution always follows judgement, and someone must suffer. When you see the judge on his bench, you see through him, as clearly as if he were made of glass, the policeman to imprison, and the soldier to slay some actual living person. Such follies would make an agreeable market, wouldn't they?'

'Certainly', said I, 'that means turning the market into a mere battlefield, in which many people must suffer as much as in the battlefield of bullet and bayonet. And from what I have seen I should supose that your marketing, great and little, is carried on in a way that makes it a pleasant occupation.'

'You are right, neighbour', said he. 'Although there are so many, indeed by far the greater number amongst us, who would be unhappy if they were not engaged in actually making things, and things which turn out beautiful under their hands – there are many, like the housekeepers I was speaking of, whose delight is in administration and organization, to use long-tailed words; I mean people who like keeping things together, avoiding waste, seeing that nothing sticks fast uselessly. Such people are thoroughly happy in their business, all the more as they are dealing with actual facts, and not merely passing counters round to see what share they shall have in the privileged taxation of useful people, which was the business of the commercial folk in past days. Well, what are you going to ask me next?'

Chapter XIII: Concerning Politics

Said I: 'How do you manage with politics?'

Said Hammond, smiling: 'I am glad that it is of me that you ask the question: I do believe that anybody else would make you explain yourself, or try to do so, till you were sickened of asking questions. Indeed, I believe I am the only man in England who would know what you mean; and since I know, I will answer your question briefly by saying that we are very well off as to politics – because we have none. If ever you make a book out of this conversation, put this in a chapter by itself, after the model of old Horrebow's *Snakes in Iceland*.'

'I will', said I. [...]

William Morris, extracts from *News from Nowhere* (1890); reprinted in William Morris, *News from Nowhere and Selected Writings and Designs*, ed. Asa Briggs (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984) 251–3; 255–6.

George Orwell
Nineteen Eighty-Four//1949

Appendix: The Principles of Newspeak

Newspeak was the official language of Oceania and had been devised to meet the ideological needs of Ingsoc, or English Socialism. In the year 1984 there was not as yet anyone who used Newspeak as his sole means of communication, either in speech or writing. The leading articles in *The Times* were written in it, but this was a tour de force which could only be carried out by a specialist. It was expected that Newspeak would have finally superseded Oldspeak (or Standard English, as we should call it) by about the year 2050. Meanwhile it gained ground steadily, all Party members tending to use Newspeak words and grammatical constructions more and more in their everyday speech. The version in use in 1984, and embodied in the Ninth and Tenth Editions of the *Newspeak Dictionary*, was a provisional one, and contained many superfluous words and archaic formations which were due to be suppressed later. It is with the final, perfected version, as embodied in the Eleventh Edition of the *Dictionary*, that we are concerned here.

The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible. It was intended that when Newspeak had been adopted once and for all and Oldspeak forgotten, a heretical thought – that is, a thought diverging from the principles of Ingsoc – should be literally unthinkable, at least so far as thought is dependent on words. Its vocabulary was so constructed as to give exact and often very subtle expression to every meaning that a Party member could properly wish to express, while excluding all other meanings and also the possibility of arriving at them by indirect methods. This was done partly by the invention of new words, but chiefly by eliminating undesirable words and by stripping such words as remained of unorthodox meanings, and so far as possible of all secondary meanings whatever. To give a single example. The word *free* still existed in Newspeak, but it could only be used in such statements as 'This dog is free from lice' or 'This field is free from weeds'. It could not be used in its old sense of 'politically free' or 'intellectually free', since political and intellectual freedom no longer existed even as concepts, and were therefore of necessity nameless. Quite apart from the suppression of definitely heretical words, reduction of vocabulary was regarded as an end in itself and no word that could be dispensed with was allowed to survive. Newspeak was designed not to extend but to diminish the range of thought, and this purpose was indirectly assisted by cutting the choice of words down to a minimum.

Newspeak was founded on the English language as we now know it, though many Newspeak sentences, even when not containing newly-created words, would be barely intelligible to an English-speaker of our own day. Newspeak words were divided into three distinct classes, known as the A vocabulary, the B vocabulary (also called compound words), and the C vocabulary. It will be simpler to discuss each class separately, but the grammatical peculiarities of the language can be dealt with in the section devoted to the A vocabulary, since the same rules held good for all three categories.

The A vocabulary. The A vocabulary consisted of the words needed for the business of everyday life – for such things as eating, drinking, working, putting on one's clothes, going up and down stairs, riding in vehicles, gardening, cooking, and the like. It was composed almost entirely of words that we already possess – words like *hit, run, dog, tree, sugar, house, field* – but in comparison with the present-day English vocabulary their number was extremely small, while their meanings were far more rigidly defined. All ambiguities and shades of meaning had been purged out of them. So far as it could be achieved, a Newspeak word of this class was simply a staccato sound expressing *one* clearly understood concept. It would have been quite impossible to use the A vocabulary for literary purposes or for political or philosophical discussion. It was intended only to express simple, purposive thoughts, usually involving concrete objects or physical actions. [...]

The B vocabulary. The B vocabulary consisted of words which had been deliberately constructed for political purposes: words, that is to say, which not only had in every case a political implication, but were intended to impose a desirable mental attitude upon the person using them. Without a full understanding of the principles of Ingsoc it was difficult to use these words correctly. In some cases they could be translated into Oldspeak, or even into words taken from the A vocabulary, but this usually demanded a long paraphrase and always involved the loss of certain overtones. The B words were a sort of verbal short-hand, often packing whole ranges of ideas into a few syllables, and at the same time more accurate and forcible than ordinary language.

The B words were in all cases compound words. They consisted of two or more words, or portions of words, welded together in an easily pronounceable form. The resulting amalgam was always a noun-verb, and inflected according to the ordinary rules. To take a single example, the word *goodthink*, meaning, very roughly, 'orthodoxy', or, if one chose to regard it as a verb, 'to think in an orthodox manner'. This inflected as follows: noun-verb, *goodthink*; past tense and past partciple, *goodthinked*; present

participle, *goodthinking*; adjective, *goodthinkful*; adverb, *goodthinkwise*; verbal noun, *goodthinker*. [...]

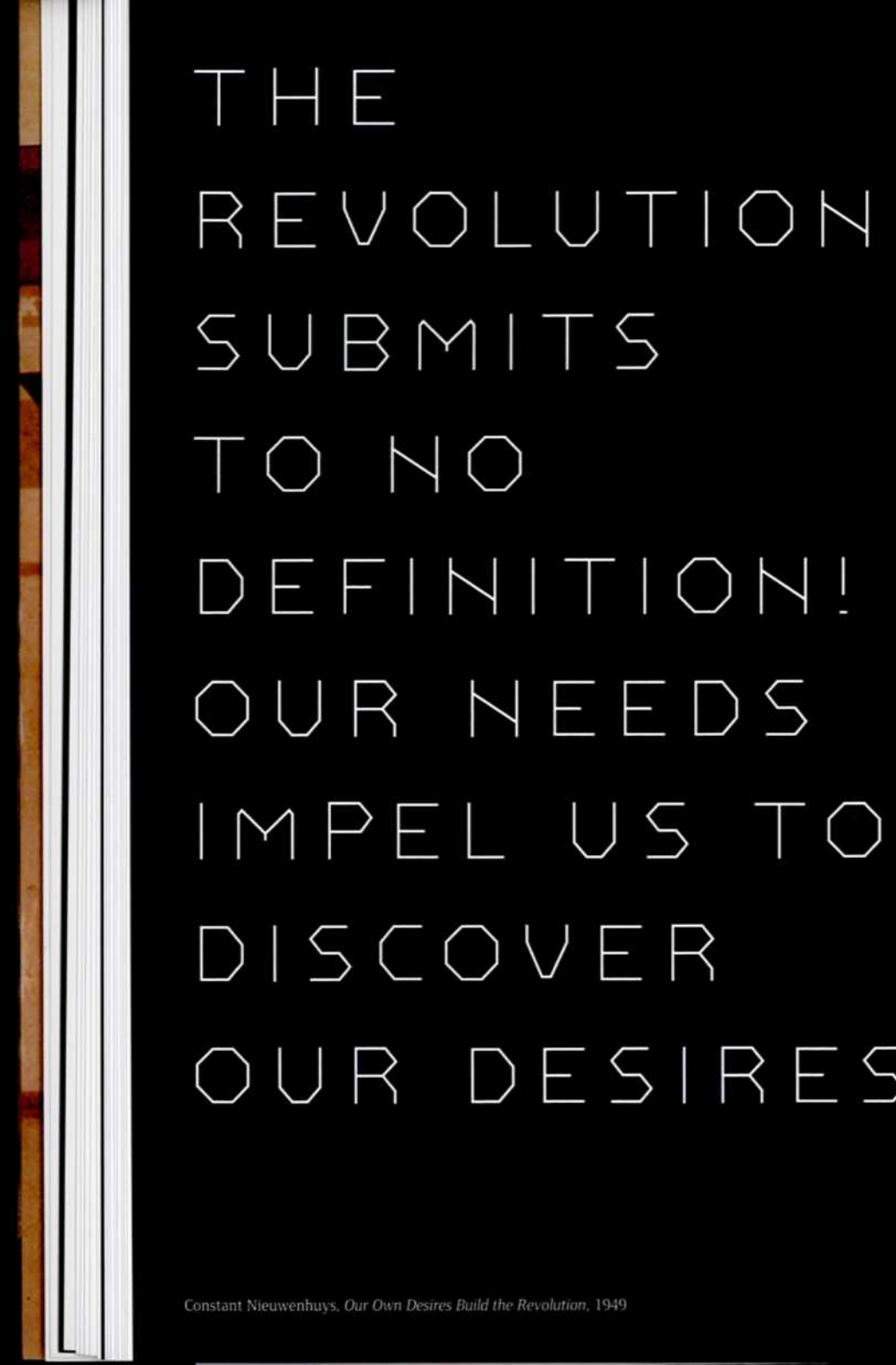
As we have already seen in the case of the word *free*, words which had once borne a heretical meaning were sometimes retained for the sake of convenience, but only with the undesirable meanings purged out of them. Countless other words such as *honour, justice, morality, internationalism, democracy, science* and *religion* had simply ceased to exist. A few blanket words covered them, and, in covering them, abolished them. All words grouping themselves round the concepts of liberty and equality, for instance, were contained in the single word *crimethink*, while all words grouping themselves round the concepts of objectivity and rationalism were contained in the single word *oldthink*. Greater precision would have been dangerous. [...]

The intention was to make speech, and especially speech on any subject not ideologically neutral, as nearly as possible independent of consciousness. For the purposes of everyday life it was no doubt necessary, or sometimes necessary, to reflect before speaking, but a Party member called upon to make a political or ethical judgement should be able to spray forth the correct opinions as automatically as a machine gun spraying forth bullets. His training fitted him to do this, the language gave him an almost foolproof instrument, and the texture of the words, with their harsh sound and a certain wilful ugliness which was in accord with the spirit of Ingsoc, assisted the process still further. [...]

The C vocabulary. The C vocabulary was supplementary to the others and consisted entirely of scientific and technical terms. These resembled the scientific terms in use today, and were constructed from the same roots, but the usual care was taken to define them rigidly and strip them of undesirable meanings. They followed the same grammatical rules as the words in the other two vocabularies. Very few of the C words had any currency either in everyday speech or in political speech. Any scientific worker or technician could find all the words he needed in the list devoted to his own speciality, but he seldom had more than a smattering of the words occurring in the other lists. Only a very few words were common to all lists, and there was no vocabulary expressing the function of Science as a habit of mind, or a method of thought, irrespective of its particular branches. There was, indeed, no word for 'Science', any meaning that it could possibly bear being already sufficiently covered by the word Ingsoc.

From the foregoing account it will be seen that in Newspeak the expression of unorthodox opinions, above a very low level, was well-nigh impossible. It was of course possible to utter heresies of a very crude kind, a species of blasphemy. It would have been possible, for example, to say *Big Brother is ungood*. But this statement, which to an orthodox ear merely conveyed a self-evident absurdity, could not have been sustained by reasoned argument, because the necessary words were not available. Ideas inimical to Ingsoc could only be entertained in a vague wordless form, and could only be named in very broad terms which lumped together and condemned whole groups of heresies without defining them in doing so. One could, in fact, only use Newspeak for unorthodox purposes by illegitimately translating some of the words back into Oldspeak. For example, *All mans are equal* was a possible Newspeak sentence, but only in the same sense in which *All men are red haired* was a possible Oldspeak sentence. It did not contain a grammatical error, but it expressed a palpable untruth – i.e. that all men are of equal size, weight or strength. The concept of political equality no longer existed, and this secondary meaning had accordingly been purged out of the word *equal*. In 1984, when Oldspeak was still the normal means of communication, the danger theoretically existed that in using Newspeak words one might remember their original meanings. In practice it was not difficult for any person well grounded in doublethink to avoid doing this, but within a couple of generations even the possibility of such a lapse would have vanished. A person growing up with Newspeak as his sole language would no more know that *equal* had once had the secondary meaning of 'politically equal', or that *free* had once meant 'intellectually free', than for instance, a person who had never heard of chess would be aware of the secondary meanings attaching to *queen* and *rook*. There would be many crimes and errors which it would be beyond his power to commit, simply because they were nameless and therefore unimaginable. And it was to be foreseen that with the passage of time the distinguishing characteristics of Newspeak would become more and more pronounced – its words growing fewer and fewer, their meanings more and more rigid, and the chance of putting them to improper uses always diminishing. [...]

George Orwell, extracts from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1949) 299–312. Reprinted by permission of Bill Hamilton as the Literary Executor of the Estate of the Late Sonia Brownell Orwell and Secker & Warburg Ltd.



Constant Nieuwenhuys, *Our Own Desires Build the Revolution*, 1949

Constant Nieuwenhuys
Our Own Desires Build the Revolution//1949

For those of us whose artistic, sexual, social and other desires are farsighted, experiment is a necessary tool for the knowledge of our ambitions – their sources, goals, possibilities and limitations.

But what can be the purpose of going from one extreme to the other, like man, and of surmounting even those barriers erected by morals, aesthetics and philosophy? What is the reason for this need to break the bonds which have kept us within the social system for hundreds of years, and thanks to which we have been able to think, live, create? Is our culture incapable of prolonging itself and of leading us one day to the satisfaction of our desires?

In fact, this culture has never been capable of satisfying anyone, neither a slave nor a master, who has every reason to believe himself happy in a luxury, a lust, where all the individual's creative potential is centred.

When we say desire in the twentieth century, we mean the unknown, for all we know of the realm of our desires is that it continuously reverts to one immeasurable desire for freedom. As a basic task we propose liberation of social life, which will open the way to the new world – a world where all the cultural aspects and inner relationships of our ordinary lives will take on new meaning.

It is impossible to know a desire other than by satisfying it, and the satisfaction of our basic desire is revolution. Therefore, any real creative activity – that is, cultural activity, in the twentieth century – must have its roots in revolution. Revolution alone will enable us to make known our desires, even those of 1949. The revolution submits to no definition! Dialectical materialism has taught us that conscience depends upon social circumstances, and when these prevent us from being satisfied, *our needs impel us to discover our desires.* This results in experiment, or the release of knowledge. Experiment is not only an instrument of knowledge, it is the very condition of knowledge in a period when our needs no longer correspond to the cultural conditions which should provide an outlet for them.

But what has been the basis of experiment until now? Since our desires are for the most part unknown to us, experiment must always take the present state of knowledge as its point of departure. All that we already know is the raw material from which we draw hitherto unacknowledged possibilities. And once the new uses of this experience are found, a still broader range will be opened to us, which will enable us to advance to still unimagined discoveries.

Thus artists have turned to the discovery of creation – extinct since the foundation of our present culture – since creation is above all the medium of knowledge, and therefore of freedom and revolution. Today's individualist culture has replaced creation with *artistic production*, which has produced nothing but signs of a tragic impotence and cries of despair from the individual, enslaved by aesthetic prohibitions: It must not ...

A creation has always been that which was still unknown, and the unknown frightens those who think they have something to defend. But we who have nothing to lose but our chains, we are perfectly able to tempt adventure. We risk only the sterile virginity of abstractions. Let us fill up Mondrian's virgin canvas even if only with our miseries. Isn't misery preferable to death for strong men who know how to struggle? It is the same enemy who obligated us to be partisans, to support the Maquis [the French Resistance], and if discipline is his advantage, courage is ours, and it is courage, not discipline, that wins wars.

Such is our response to abstractions, whether or not they exploit spontaneity. Their 'spontaneity' is that of a spoiled child who doesn't know what he wants; who wants to be free, but cannot do without his parent's protection.

But being free is like being strong; freedom appears only in creation or in strife – and these have the same goal at heart – fulfilment of life.

Life demands creation and beauty is life!

So if society turns against us and against our works, reproaching us for being practically 'incomprehensible', we reply:

1) That humanity in 1949 is incapable of understanding anything but the necessary struggle for freedom.

2) That we do not want to be 'understood' either, but to be freed, and that *we are condemned to experiment by the same causes that drive the world into war.*

3) That we could not be creators in a passive world, and that today's strife sustains our inventiveness.

4) Finally, that humanity, once it has become creative, will have no choice but to discard aesthetic and ethical conceptions whose only goal has been the restraint of creation – those conceptions responsible for man's present lack of understanding for experiment.

Therefore, understanding is nothing more than recreating something born of the same desire.

Humanity (us included) is on the verge of discovering its own desires, and by satisfying them we shall make them known.

Constant A. Nieuwenhuys, 'Our Own Desires Build the Revolution', *Cobra*, no.4 (Amsterdam, 1949) 304.

Ernst Bloch
The Principle of Hope//1954–59

[...] Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? What are we waiting for? What awaits us?

Many only feel confused. The ground shakes, they do not know why and with what. Theirs is a state of anxiety; if it becomes more definite, then it is fear.

Once a man travelled far and wide to learn fear. In the time that has just passed, it came easier and closer, the art was mastered in a terrible fashion. But now that the creators of fear have been dealt with, a feeling that suits us better is overdue.

It is a question of learning hope. Its work does not renounce, it is in love with success rather than failure. Hope, superior to fear, is neither passive like the latter, nor locked into nothingness. The emotion of hope goes out of itself, makes people broad instead of confining them, cannot know nearly enough of what it is that makes them inwardly aimed, of what may be allied to them outwardly. The work of this emotion requires people who throw themselves actively into what is becoming, to which they themselves belong. It will not tolerate a dog's life which feels itself only passively thrown into What Is, which is not seen through, even wretchedly recognized. The work against anxiety about life and the machinations of fear is that against its creators, who are for the most part easy to identify, and it looks in the world itself for what can help the world; this can be found. How richly people have always dreamed of this, dreamed of the better life that might be possible. Everybody's life is pervaded by daydreams: one part of this is just stale, even enervating escapism, even booty for swindlers, but another part is provocative, is not content just to accept the bad which exists, does not accept renunciation. This other part has hoping at its core, and is teachable. It can be extricated from the unregulated daydream and from its sly misuse, can be activated undimned. No one has ever lived without daydreams, but it is a question of knowing them deeper and deeper and in this way keeping them trained unerringly, usefully, on what is right. Let the daydreams grow even fuller, since this means they are enriching themselves around the sober glance; not in the sense of clogging, but of becoming clear. Not in the sense of merely contemplative reason which takes things as they are and as they stand, but of participating reason which takes them as they go, and therefore also as they could go better. Then let the daydreams grow really fuller, that is, clearer, less random, more familiar, more clearly understood, more mediated with the course of things. So that the wheat trying to ripen can be encouraged to grow and be harvested. [...]

Utopian consciousness wants to look far into the distance, but ultimately only in order to penetrate the darkness so near it of the just lived moment, in which everything that is both drives and is hidden from itself. In other words, we need the most powerful telescope, that of polished utopian consciousness, in order to penetrate precisely the nearest nearness. Namely, the most immediate immediacy, in which the core of self-location and being-here still lies, in which at the same time the whole knot of the world-secret is to be found. This is no secret which exists only for insufficient intellect, for example, while the matter' itself is content which is totally clear or reposing in itself, but it is that real secret which the world-matter is to itself and towards the solution of which it is in fact in process and on the way. Thus the Not-Yet-Conscious in man belongs completely to the Not-Yet-Become, Not-Yet-Brought-Out, Manifested-Out in the world. Not-Yet-Conscious interacts and reciprocates with Not-Yet-Become, more specifically with what is approaching in history and in the world. And the examination of anticipatory consciousness must fundamentally serve to make comprehensible the actual reflections which now follow, in fact depictions of the wished-for, the anticipated better life, in psychological and material terms. From the anticipatory, therefore, knowledge is to be gained on the basis of an ontology of the Not-Yet. So much for the second part here, and for the subject-based and object-based function analysis of hope begun within it. [...]

However, if this sketching out turns into a free and considered blueprint, then we find ourselves for the first time among the actual, that is, *planned or outlined utopias*. They comprise [...] *construction*, with historically rich content which does not merely remain historical. It develops in the medical and social, the technological, architectural and geographical utopias, in the wishful landscapes of painting and literature. Thus the wishful images of health emerge, the fundamental ones of *society without deprivation*, the marvels of *technology* and the castles in the air in so many of the existing wishful images of *architecture*. Eldorado-Eden appears in the *geographical voyages of discovery*, the landscapes of an environment formed more adequately for us in *painting* and *poetry*, the perspectives of an Absolute in *wisdom*. All this is full of overhauling, builds implicitly or explicitly on to the road and the goal-image of a more perfect world, on to more thoroughly formed and more essential appearances than have empirically already become. There is also a lot of random and abstract escapism here, but great works of art essentially show a realistically related pre-appearance of their completely developed subject-matter. The glance towards prefigured, aesthetically and religiously experimental being is variable within them, but every attempt of this kind is experimenting with something that overhauls, something perfect which the world has not yet seen. The glance towards this is concrete in various ways depending on the respective

class barrier, but the basic utopian goals of the respective so-called artistic aspiration in so-called styles, these 'excesses' over and above ideology, do not always perish with their society. Egyptian architecture is the aspiration to become like stone, with the crystal of death as intended perfection; Gothic architecture is the aspiration to become like the vine of Christ, with the tree of life as intended perfection. And in this way the whole of art shows itself to be full of appearances which are driven to become symbols of perfection, to a utopianly essential end. Of course, until now it has only been self-evident in the case of the social utopias that they are – utopian: firstly, because that is what they are called, and secondly, because the phrase 'cloud cuckoo land' has mostly been used in association with them, and not only with the abstract ones among them. Because of which, as noted, the concept utopia has been both unduly restricted, namely confined to novels of an ideal state, and also above all, through the predominant abstractness of these novels of an ideal state, it has preserved that abstract playful form which only the progress of socialism from these utopias towards science has moved out of the way and removed. Nevertheless, despite all these dubious aspects, the word utopia emerged here coined by Thomas More, though not the philosophically far more comprehensive *concept* of utopia. On the other hand, little utopian material worthy of consideration was noticed in other, for example, technological wishful images and plans. Despite Francis Bacon's 'New Atlantis', no frontier-land with its own pioneer status and its own hope-contents introduced into nature was distinguished in technology. This was seen even less in architecture, in buildings which form, re-form or pre-form a more beautiful space. And similarly, utopian material astonishingly remained undiscovered in the situations and landscapes of painting and poetry, in their extravagances and especially in their deeply inward- and outward-looking realisms of possibility. And yet, in all these spheres, utopian function is at work, with modified content, fanatical in the lesser creations, precise and realistic *sui generis* in the great ones. The very profusion of human imagination, together with its correlate in the world (once imagination becomes informed and concrete), cannot possibly be explored and inventoried other than through utopian function; any more than it can be tested without dialectical materialism. The specific pre-appearance which art shows is like a laboratory where events, figures and characters are driven to their typical, characteristic end, to an abysmal or a blissful end; this essential vision of characters and situations, inscribed in every work of art, which in its most striking form we may call Shakespearean, in its most terminalized form Dantean, presupposes possibility beyond already existing reality. At all points here prospective acts and imaginations aim, subjective, but possibly even objective dream-roads run out of the Become towards the Achieved, towards

symbolically encircled achievement. Thus the concept of the Not-Yet and of the intention towards it that is thoroughly forming itself out no longer has its only, indeed exhaustive example in the social utopias; important though the social utopias, leaving all others aside, have become for the critical awareness of elaborated anticipating. But to limit the utopian to the Thomas More variety, or simply to orientate it in that direction, would be like trying to reduce electricity to the amber from which it gets its Greek name and in which it was first noticed. Indeed, the utopian coincides so little with the novel of an ideal state that the whole totality of philosophy becomes necessary (a sometimes almost forgotten totality) to do justice to the content of that designated by utopia. Hence the breadth of the anticipations, wishful images, hope-contents collected in the part called: *construction*. Hence – in front of as well as behind the fairytales of an ideal state – the aforementioned notation and interpretation of medical, technological, architectural, geographical utopias, also of the actual wishful landscapes in painting, opera, literature. Hence, finally, this is the place for the portrayal of the multifarious hope-landscape and the specific perspectives on it in the collective thinking of philosophical wisdom. Despite the predominant pathos of What Has Been in previous philosophies – the almost continually intended direction: *appearance* – essence nevertheless clearly shows a utopian pole. The sequence of all these formations, socially, aesthetically, philosophically relevant to culture of 'true being', accordingly ends, coming down to always decisive earth, in questions of a life of fulfilling work free of exploitation, but also of a life beyond work, i.e. in the *wishful problem of leisure*. [...]

1 Bloch uses the term 'Sache' here and elsewhere to mean the true state of affairs which has not yet been revealed. We have translated this as 'the matter'. [trans.]

Ernst Bloch, extracts from *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1954–59); trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight, *The Principle of Hope* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) 3; 12; 13–16.

Theodor Adorno
Commitment//1962

Since Sartre's essay 'What is Literature?' there has been less theoretical debate about committed and autonmous literature. Nevertheless , the controversy over commitment remains urgent, so far as anything that merely concerns the life of the mind can be today, as opposed to sheer human survival. Sartre was moved to issue his manifesto because he saw – and he was certainly not the first to do so – works of art displayed side by side in a pantheon of optional edification, decaying into cultural commodities. In such coexistence, they desecrate each other. If a work, without its author necessarily intending it, aims at a supreme effect, it cannot really tolerate a neighbour beside it. This salutary intolerance holds not only for individual works, but also for aesthetic genres or attitudes such as those once symbolized in the now half-forgotten controversy over commitment.

There are two 'positions on objectivity' which are constantly at war with one another, even when intellectual life falsely presents them as at peace. A work of art that is committed strips the magic from a work of art that is content to be a fetish, an idle pastime for those who would like to sleep through the deluge that threatens them, in an apoliticism that is in fact deeply political. For the committed, such works are a distraction from the battle of real interests, in which no one is any longer exempt from the conflict between the two great blocs. The possibility of intellectual life itself depends on this conflict to such an extent that only blind illusion can insist on rights that may be shattered tomorrow. For autonomous works of art, however, such considerations, and the conception of art which underlies them, are themselves the spiritual catastrophe of which the committed keep warning. Once the life of the mind renounces the duty and liberty of its own pure objectification, it has abdicated. Thereafter, works of art merely assimilate themselves to the brute existence against which they protest, in forms so ephemeral (the very charge made against autonomous works by committed writers) that from their first day they belong to the seminars in which they inevitably end. The menacing thrust of the antithesis is a reminder of how precarious the position of art is today. Each of the two alternatives negates itself with the other. Committed art, necessarily detached as art from reality, cancels the distance between the two. 'Art for art's sake' denies by its absolute claims that ineradicable connection with reality which is the polemical a priori of the attempt to make art autonomous from the real. Between these two poles the tension in which art has lived in every age till now is dissolved. [...]

I have no wish to soften the saying that to write lyric poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric; it expresses in negative form the impulse which inspires committed literature. The question asked by a character in Sartre's play *Morts Sans Sépulture*, 'Is there any meaning in life when men exist who beat people until the bones break in their bodies?', is also the question whether any art now has a right to exist; whether intellectual regression is not inherent in the concept of committed literature because of the regression of society. But Enzensberger's retort also remains true, that literature must resist this verdict, in other words, be such that its mere existence after Auschwitz is not a surrender to cynicism. Its own situation is one of paradox, not merely the problem of how to react to it. The abundance of real suffering tolerates no forgetting; Pascal's theological saying, *On ne doit plus dormir* [one must sleep no longer], must be secularized. Yet this suffering, what Hegel called consciousness of adversity, also demands the continued existence of art while it prohibits it; it is now virtually in art alone that suffering can still find its own voice, consolation, without immediately being betrayed by it. The most important artists of the age have realized this. The uncompromising radicalism of their works, the very features defamed as formalism, give them a terrifying power, absent from helpless poems to the victims of our time. But even Schoenberg's *Survivor of Warsaw* remains trapped in the aporia to which, autonomous figuration of heteronomy raised to the intensity of hell, it totally surrenders. There is something embarrassing in Schoenberg's composition – not what arouses anger in Germany, the fact that it prevents people from repressing from memory what they at all costs want to repress – but the way in which, by turning suffering into images, harsh and uncompromising though they are, it wounds the shame we feel in the presence of the victims. For these victims are used to create something, works of art, that are thrown to the consumption of a world which destroyed them. The so-called artistic representation of the sheer physical pain of people beaten to the ground by rifle-butts contains, however remotely, the power to elicit enjoyments out of it. The moral of this art, not to forget for a single instant, slithers into the abyss of its opposite. The aesthetic principle of stylization, and even the solemn prayer of the chorus, make an unthinkable fate appear to have had some meaning; it is transfigured, something of its horror is removed. This alone does an injustice to the victims; yet no art which tried to evade them could confront the claims of justice. Even the sound of despair pays its tribute to a hideous affirmation. Works of less than the highest rank are also willingly absorbed as contributions to clearing up the past. When genocide becomes part of the cultural heritage in the themes of committed literature, it becomes easier to continue to play along with the culture which gave birth to murder. [...]

Art, which even in its opposition to society remains a part of it, must close its eyes and ears against it: it cannot escape the shadow of irrationality. But when it appeals to this unreason, making it a *raison d'être*, it converts its own malediction into a theodicy. Even in the most sublimated work of art there is a hidden 'it should be otherwise'. When a work is merely itself and no other thing, as in a pure pseudo-scientific construction, it becomes bad art – literally pre-artistic. The moment of true volition, however, is mediated through nothing other than the form of the work itself, whose crystallization becomes an analogy of that other condition which should be. As eminently constructed and produced objects, works of art, including literary ones, point to a practice from which they abstain: the creation of a just life. This mediation is not a compromise between commitment and autonomy, nor a sort of mixture of advanced formal elements with an intellectual content inspired by genuinely or supposedly progressive politics. The content of works of art is never the amount of intellect pumped into them; if anything, it is the opposite. [...]

Theodor Adorno, extract from essay first published in *Noten zur Literatur, III* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1965); trans. Francis McDonagh, 'Commitment', in Ronald Taylor, ed., *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso 1977) 177–8; 188–9; 193–4.

Theodor Adorno and Ernst Bloch
Something's Missing//1964

Horst Krüger (moderator) Mr Bloch, do you believe that the depreciation of the term 'utopia' is connected to ... the perfection of the technological world?'

Ernst Bloch Yes and no – it has something to do with it. The technological perfection is not so complete and stupendous as one thinks. It is limited only to a very select number of wish dreams. One could still add the very old wish to fly. If I recall correctly, Richard Dehmel wrote a poem concerning this in which he said: 'And to be as free as the birds' – the wish is in there, too. In other words, there is a residue. There is a great deal that is not fulfilled and made banal through the fulfilment – regardless of the deeper viewpoint that each realization brings a melancholy of fulfilment with it. So, the fulfilment is not yet real or imaginable or postulatable without residue. But it is not only this that brings about the depreciation of utopia. Incidentally, I believe that this depreciation is very old – the slogan 'That's merely utopian thinking' reduced as depreciation to 'castle in the clouds', to 'wishful thinking' without any possibility for completion, to imagining and dreaming things in a banal sense – this depreciation is very old and it is not our epoch that has brought it about. I do not know for sure, but it may be that our epoch has brought with it an 'upgrading' of the utopian – only it is not called this any more. It is called 'science fiction' in technology; it is called grist to one's mill in the theology, in which the 'principle of hope' that I have treated with great emphasis plays a role. It begins to play a role operatively with the 'If only it were so', which overtakes the role of reality – something is really so and nothing else. All this is no longer called utopian; or if it is called utopian, it is associated with the old social utopias. But I believe that we live not very far from the topos of utopia, as far as the contents are concerned, and less far from utopia. At the very beginning Thomas More designated utopia as a place, an island in the distant South Seas. This designation underwent changes later so that it left space and entered time. Indeed, the utopians, especially those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, transposed the wishland more into the future. In other words, there is a transformation of the topos from space into time. With Thomas More the wishland was still ready, on a distant island, but I am not there. On the other hand, when it is transposed into the future, not only am I not there, but utopia itself is also not with itself. This island does not even exist. But it is not something like nonsense or absolute fancy; rather it is not *yet* in the sense of a possibility; *that* it could be there if we could only do something for it. Not only if

we travel there but *in that* we travel there the island utopia arises out of the sea of the possible – utopia, but with new contents. I believe that in *this* sense utopia has not at all lost its validity in spite of the terrible banalization it has suffered and in spite of the task it has been assigned by a society – and here I would agree with my friend Adorno – that claims to be totally affluent and now already classless.

Theodor Adorno Yes, I support very much what you have said, and I want to use the objection that you have implicitly raised to correct myself a little.. It was not my intention to make technology and the sobriety that is allegedly connected to technology responsible for the strange shrinking of the utopian consciousness, but it appears that the matter concerns something much more: it refers to the opposition of specific technological accomplishments and innovations to the totality – in particular, to the social totality. Whatever utopia is, whatever can be imagined as utopia, this is the transformation of the totality. And the imagination of such a transformation of the totality is basically very different in all the so-called utopian accomplishments – which, incidentally, are all really like you say: very modest, very narrow. It seems to me that what people have lost subjectively in regard to consciousness is very simply the capability to imagine the totality as something that could be completely different. That people are sworn to this world as it is and have this blocked consciousness vis-à-vis possibility, all this has a very deep cause, indeed, a cause that I would think is very much connected *exactly* to the proximity of utopia, with which you are concerned. My thesis about this would be that all humans deep down, whether they admit this or not, know that it would be possible or it could be different. Not only could they live without hunger and probably without anxiety, but they could also live as free human beings. At the same time, the social apparatus has hardened itself against people, and thus, whatever appears before their eyes all over the world as attainable possibility, as the evident possibility of fulfilment, presents itself to them as radically impossible. And when people universally say today what was once reserved only for philistines in more harmless times, 'Oh, that's just utopian; oh, that's possible only in the land of Cockaigne. Basically that shouldn't be like that at all', then I would say that this is due to the situation compelling people to master the contradiction between the evident possibility of fulfilment and the just as evident impossibility of fulfilment only in *this* way, compelling them to identify themselves with this impossibility and to make this impossibility into their own affair. In other words, to use Freud, they 'identify themselves with the aggressor', and say that *this should* not be, whereby they feel that it is precisely *this* that *should be*, but they are prevented from attaining it by a wicked spell cast over the world.

Krüger Professor Bloch, I would like to ask the following question: What is actually the content of utopias? Is it happiness? Is it fulfilment? Is it – a word that has just come up in our discussion – simply freedom? What is actually hoped for?

Bloch For a long time utopias appeared exclusively as social utopias: dreams of a better life. The title of Thomas More's book is *De optima statu rei publicae deque nova insula Utopia*, or *On the Best Kind of State and the New Island Utopia*. The 'optima res publica' – the best state – is set by More as a goal. In other words, there is a transformation of the world to the greatest possible realization of happiness, of social happiness. Nor is it the case that the utopias were without an 'itinerary' or 'time schedule'. With regard to their content, utopias are dependent on social conditions. Thomas More, who lived during the period when British imperialism was beginning during the Elizabethan period, set liberal conditions for the feeling among his islanders. One hundred years later, during the time of Philip II and the Spanish domination of Italy, during the atmosphere of the Galileo Trial, Campanella conceived a countermodel to freedom in his Sun State. He said that all conditions could only be brought to order if the greatest possible order reigned, if everything is 'patched up', as the extremely sensible and well-known expression puts it. But the goal of More and Campanella was always the realm of conscious dreaming, one that is more or less objectively founded or at least founded in the dream and not the completely senseless realm of daydreaming of a better life. In addition, the technological utopias made their first imprint in Campanella's work and them most clearly in Bacon's *Nova Atlantis*. His 'Templum Salomonis' is the anticipation of a completed Technical University, in which there are monstrous inventions, a complete programme of inventions.

Yet there is a still much older level of utopias that we should not forget, that *we least of all* should not forget – the fairy tale. The fairy tale is not only filled with social utopia, in other words, with the utopia of the better life and justice, but it is also filled with technological utopia, most of all in the oriental fairy tales. In the fairy tale 'The Magic Horse', from the *Arabian Nights*, there is even a lever that controls the up and down of the magic horse – this is a 'helicopter'. One can read the *Arabian Nights* in many places as a manual for inventions. Bacon addressed this and then set himself off from the fairy tale by saying that what *he* means, the real magic, relates to the oldest wish-images of the fairy tale as the deeds of Alexander relate to the deeds of King Arthur's Round Table. Thus, the content of the utopian changes according to the social situation. In the nineteenth century the connection to the society at that time can be seen clearly, most clearly in the works of Saint-Simon and Fourier, who was a great, exact and sober analyst. He prophesied the coming of monopoly as early as 1808 in his

book *Théorie des quatre mouvements*. In other words, in this case it is a negative utopia that is there, too. The content changes, but an invariant of the direction is there, psychologically expressed so to speak as longing, completely without consideration at all for the content – a longing that is the pervading and above all only honest quality of all human beings. Now, however, the questions and qualifications begin. What do I long for as optimal? Here one must 'move out' of the 'home base' of the utopias, namely the social utopias, on account of the totality, as you say, in order to see the *other* regions of utopia that do not have the name 'technology'. There is architecture that was never built but that was designed, wish architecture of great style. There is theatre architecture, which was cheaply set up with cardboard and did not cost much when money was lacking and technology was not far advanced. In the Baroque Age, most of all in the Viennese Baroque Theatre, there were tremendous buildings that could never have been inhabited because they were built out of cardboard and illusion, but they nevertheless made an appearance. There are the medical utopias, which contain nothing less than the elimination of death – a completely foolish remote goal. But then there is something sober, like the elimination and relief of pain. Now that is in truth much easier and has been accomplished with the invention of anaesthesia. The goal is not only the healing of sickness but *this*, too, is to be achieved – that people are healthier after an operation than they were before. In other words, there is a reconstruction of the organism in exactly the same way as there is a reconstruction of the state. This is indeed the divine realm, that which appears at the end, or which announces, which the Messiah brings – distant wish-images, with tremendous content and great profundity, which appear here, so that, I believe, one must also look at the social utopias and at what resounds in them and is set in motion by these wish-images. However, these kinds of wish-images can be discussed individually according to the degree to which present conditions allow for their realization – in other words, in space, in the topos of an objective-real possibility. The possibility is not treated poorly as a 'stepchild' among the categories for nothing and also not clearly named – the possibility. [...]

Adorno I would like to return to the question of the content of the utopian. I believe, Ernst, that you have unrolled a whole series of very different types of utopian consciousness. That has a great deal to do with the topic because there is nothing like a single, fixable utopian content. When I talked about the 'totality', I did not limit my thinking to the system of human relations, but I thought more about the fact that *all* categories can change themselves according to their own constituency. Thus I'd say that what is essential about the concept of utopia is that it does not consist of a certain, single selected category that changes itself and from which everything constitutes itself, for example, in that one assumes that the category of happiness alone is the key to utopia.

Krüger Not even the category of freedom?

Adorno Not *even* the category of freedom can be isolated. If it all depended on viewing the category of freedom *alone* as the key to utopia, then the content of idealism would really mean the same as utopia, for idealism seeks nothing else but the realization of freedom without actually including the realization of happiness in the process. It is thus within a context that *all these* categories appear and are connected. The category of happiness always has something wretched about it as isolated category and appears deceptive to the other categories. It would change itself just like, on the other hand, the category of freedom, too, which would then no longer be an end in itself and an end in itself of subjectivity (*Innerlichkeit*) but would have to fulfil itself.

To be sure, I believe – and it moved me very much, Ernst, that *you* were the one who touched on this, for my own thinking has been circling around this point in recent times – that the question about the elimination of death is indeed the crucial point. This is the heart of the matter. It can be ascertained very easily; you only have to speak about the elimination of death some time with a so-called well-disposed person – I am borrowing this expression from Ulrich Sonnenmann, who coined and introduced it. Then you will get an *immediate* reaction, in the same way that a policeman would come right after you if you threw a stone at the police station. Yes, if death were eliminated, if people would no longer die, that would be the most terrible and most horrible thing. I would say that it is precisely this form of reaction that actually opposes the utopian consciousness most of the time. The identification with death is that which goes beyond the identification of people with existing social conditions and in which they are extended.

Utopian consciousness means a consciousness for which the *possibility* that people no longer have to die does not have anything horrible about it, but is, on the contrary, *that* which one actually wants. [...]

[...] I believe that without the notion of an unfettered life, freed from death, the idea of utopia, of *the* utopia, *cannot* even be thought at all. [...] There is something profoundly contradictory in every utopia, namely, that it cannot be conceived at all without the elimination of death; this is inherent in the very thought. What I mean is the heaviness of death and everything that is connected to it. Wherever this is not included, where the threshold of death is not at the same time considered, there can actually be no utopia. And it seems to me that this has very heavy consequences for the theory of knowledge about utopia – if

I may put it crassly: One may not cast a picture of utopia in a positive manner. Every attempt to describe or portray a utopia in a simple way, i.e. it will be like this, would be an attempt to avoid the antinomy of death and to speak about the elimination of death as if death did not exist. That is perhaps the most profound reason, the metaphysical reason, why one can actually talk about utopia only in a negative way, as is demonstrated in great philosophical works by Hegel and, even more emphatically, Marx.

Bloch 'Negative' does not mean 'in depreciation ...'

Adorno No, not 'in the depreciation of utopia', but only in the determined negation of that which is, because that is the only form in which death is also included, for death is nothing other than the power of that which merely *is*, just as, on the other hand, it is also the attempt to go beyond it. And this is why I believe – all this is now very tentative – the commandment not to 'depict' utopia or not to conceive certain utopias in detail as Hegel and Marx have ...

Bloch Hegel?

Adorno Hegel did this in so far as he depreciated the world-reformer in principle and set the idea of the objective tendency in opposition – this is what Marx adopted directly from him – and the realization of the absolute. In other words, that which one could call utopia in Hegel's works, or which one *must* call utopia in his youth, originated right at this moment. What is meant there is the prohibition on casting a picture of utopia, actually for the sake of utopia, and that has a deep connection to the commandment: 'Thou shalt not make a graven image.' This was also the defence that was actually intended against the cheap utopia, the false utopia, *the* utopia that can be bought. [...]

Bloch The turn against utopia that has been conditioned by the times has certainly had terrible effects. Many of the terrible effects that have arisen are due to the fact that Marx cast much too little of a picture, for example, in literature, in art, in all possible matters of this kind. Only the name Balzac appears; otherwise there is mainly empty space instead of Marxist initiatives to reach a higher culture that would have been possible. I consider this a condition that can be explained historically and scientifically, and that at the moment when this historical-scientific situation no longer lies before us, when we no longer suffer from a superabundance of utopianism, it will become devoid of meaning. The consequences that arise from this have been terrible, for people in a completely different situation have simply regurgitated Marx's statements in a literal sense.

It is, from the Marxist standpoint, definitely necessary to act like a detective and to trace and uncover what each case is about – without any kind of positivism. By doing this, one can set things aright, but one must not forget that other thing – the utopian. For the purpose of the exercise is not the technocratic ...

Krüger What would the purpose of the exercise be?

Bloch We talked before about the totality on which everything depends. Why does one get up in the morning? How did such an especially striking situation arise already right in the middle of the nineteenth century, enabling Wilhelm Raabe to write the following sentence?: 'When I get up in the morning, my daily prayer is, grant me today my illusion, my daily illusion.' Due to the fact that illusions are necessary, have become necessary for life in a world completely devoid of a utopian conscience and utopian presentiment. [...]

Theodor Adorno and Ernst Bloch, extracts from 'Something's Missing: A Discussion between Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno on the Contradictions of Utopian Longing' (1964); first published in *Gespräche mit Ernst Bloch*, ed. Rainer Traub and Harald Wieser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1975); trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg in Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1988).

Guy Debord
Theses on Cultural Revolution//1958

1
The traditional goal of aesthetics is to produce, by means of art, impressions of certain past elements of life in circumstances where those elements are lacking or absent, in such a way that those elements escape the disorder of appearances subject to the ravages of time. The degree of aesthetic success is thus measured by a beauty that is inseparable from duration, and that even goes so far as pretensions of eternity. The goal of the situationists is immediate participation in a passionate abundance of life by means of deliberately arranged variations of ephemeral moments. The success of these moments can reside in nothing other than their fleeting effect. The situationists consider cultural activity in its totality as an experimental method for constructing everyday life, a method that can and should be continually developed with the extension of leisure and the withering away of the division of labour (beginning with the division of artistic labour).

2
Art can cease being a report about sensations and become a direct organization of more advanced sensations. The point is to produce ourselves rather than things that enslave us.

3
Mascolo is right in saying (in *Le Communisme*) that the reduction of the work day by the dictatorship of the proletariat is 'the most certain sign of the latter's revolutionary authenticity'. Indeed, 'if man is a commodity, if he is created as a thing, if human relations are relations of thing to thing, this is because it is possible to buy his time'. But Mascolo is too quick to conclude that 'the time of a man freely employed' is always well spent, and that 'the purchase of time is the sole evil'. There can be no freely spent time until we possess the modern tools for the construction of everyday life. The use of such tools will mark the leap from a utopian revolutionary art to an experimental revolutionary art.

4
An international association of situationists can be seen as a coalition of workers in an advanced cultural sector, or more precisely as a coalition of all who demand the right to work on a project that is obstructed by present social conditions; hence as an attempt at organizing professional revolutionaries in culture.

5
We are excluded from real control over the vast material powers of our time. The communist revolution has not yet occurred and we are still living within the confines of decomposing old cultural superstructures. Henri Lefebvre rightly sees that this contradiction is at the heart of a specifically modern discordance between the progressive individual and the world, and he terms the cultural tendency based on this discordance 'revolutionary-romantic'. The inadequacy of Lefebvre's conception lies in the fact that he makes the mere expression of this discordance a sufficient criterion for revolutionary action within culture. Lefebvre abandons in advance any experimentation involving profound cultural change, contenting himself with mere awareness of possibilities that are as yet impossible (because they are still too remote), an awareness that can be expressed in any sort of form within the framework of cultural decomposition.

6
Those who want to supersede the old established order in all its aspects cannot cling to the disorder of the present, even in the sphere of culture. In culture as in other areas, it is necessary to struggle without waiting any longer for some concrete appearance of the moving order of the future. The possibility of this ever-changing new order, which is already present among us, devalues all expressions within existing cultural forms. If we are ever to arrive at authentic direct communication (in our working hypothesis of higher cultural means: the construction of situations), we must bring about the destruction of all the forms of pseudocommunication. The victory will go to those who are capable of creating disorder without loving it.

7
In the world of cultural decomposition we can test our strength but never use it. The practical task of overcoming our discordance with this world, that is, of surmounting its decomposition by some more advanced constructions, is not romantic. We will be 'revolutionary romantics', in Lefebvre's sense, precisely to the degree that we fail.

Guy Debord, 'Thèses sur la révolution culturelle', *Internationale Situationiste*, no. 1 (June 1958); trans. Ken Knabb, 'Theses on Cultural Revolution', in Knabb, ed., *The Situationist International Anthology*, revised and expanded edition (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006) 53–4; also published at http://www.bopsecrets.org

Guy Debord and Pierre Canjuers
Culture and Revolutionary Politics//1960

The revolutionary movement can be nothing less than the struggle of the proletariat for the actual domination and deliberate transformation of all aspects of social life – beginning with the management of production and work by the workers themselves, directly deciding everything. Such a change would immediately imply a radical transformation of the nature of work and the development of new technologies designed to ensure the workers' domination over the machines.

This radical transformation of the meaning of work will lead to a number of consequences, the main one of which is undoubtedly the shifting of the centre of interest of life from passive leisure to the new type of productive activity. This does not mean that overnight all productive activities will become in themselves passionately interesting. But to work toward making them so, by a general and ongoing reconversion of the ends as well as the means of industrial work, will in any case be the minimum passion of a free society.

In such a society, all activities will tend to blend the life previously separated between leisure and work into a single but infinitely diversified flow. Production and consumption will merge and be superseded in the creative use of the goods of the society.

Such a programme proposes to people no reason to live other than their own construction of their own lives. This presupposes not only that people be objectively freed from real needs (hunger, etc.), but above all that they begin to develop real desires in place of the present compensations; that they refuse all forms of behaviour dictated by others and continually reinvent their own unique fulfilments; and that they no longer consider life to be the mere maintaining of a certain stability but that they aspire to the unlimited enrichment of their acts.

Such demands today are not based on some sort of utopianism. They are based first of all on the struggle of the proletariat at all levels, and on all the forms of explicit refusal or profound indifference that the unstable ruling society constantly has to combat with every means. They are also based on the lesson of the fundamental defeat of all attempts at less radical changes. Finally, they are based on the extremist strivings and actions appearing today among certain sectors of youth (despite all the efforts at disciplining and repressing them) and in a few artistic milieux.

But this basis is indeed utopian in another sense of the word, in that it involves inventing and experimenting with solutions to current problems without being preoccupied with whether or not the conditions for their realization are immediately present. (Note that this utopian type of experimentation now also plays a key role in modern science.) This temporary, historical utopianism is legitimate; and it is necessary because it serves to incubate the projection of desires without which free life would be empty of content. It is inseparable from the necessity of dissolving the present ideology of everyday life, and therefore the bonds of everyday oppression, so that the revolutionary class can disabusedly discover present and future possibilities of freedom.

Utopian practice makes sense, however, only if it is closely linked to the practice of revolutionary struggle. The latter, in its turn, cannot do without such utopianism without being condemned to sterility. Those seeking an experimental culture cannot hope to realize it without the triumph of the revolutionary movement, while the latter cannot itself establish authentic revolutionary conditions without resuming the efforts of the cultural avant-garde toward the critique of everyday life and its free reconstruction.

Revolutionary politics thus has as its content the totality of the problems of the society. It has as its form the experimental practice of a free life through organized struggle against the capitalist order. The revolutionary movement must thus itself become an experimental movement. Henceforth, wherever it exists, it must develop and resolve as profoundly as possible the problems of a revolutionary microsociety. This comprehensive politics culminates in the moment of revolutionary action, when the masses abruptly intervene to make history and discover their action as direct experience and as festival. At such moments they undertake a conscious and collective construction of everyday life which, one day, will no longer be stopped by anything.

Guy Debord and Pierre Canjuers, 'II. Culture and Revolutionary Politics', from *A Unitary Revolutionary Programme* (1960); trans. Ken Knabb, in Knabb, ed., *The Situationist International Anthology*, revised and expanded edition (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006) 391–3.

Michel Foucault
Other Spaces//1967

The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world. The nineteenth century found its essential mythological resources in the second principle of thermaldynamics. The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. One could perhaps say that certain ideological conflicts animating present-day polemics oppose the pious descendents of time and the determined inhabitants of space. Structuralism, or at least that which is grouped under this slightly too general name, is the effort to establish, between elements that could have been connected on a temporal axis, an ensemble of relations that makes them appear as juxtaposed, set off against one another, implicated by each other – that makes them appear, in short, as a sort of configuration. Actually, structuralism does not entail denial of time; it does involve a certain manner of dealing with what we call time and what we call history.

Yet it is necessary to notice that the space which today appears to form the horizon of our concerns, our theory, our systems, is not an innovation; space itself has a history in Western experience, and it is not possible to disregard the fatal intersection of time with space. One could say, by way of retracing this history of space very roughly, that in the Middle Ages there was a hierarchic ensemble of places: sacred places and profane places: protected places and open, exposed places; urban places and rural places (all these concern the real life of men). In cosmological theory, there were the supercelestial places as opposed to the celestial, and the celestial place was in its turn opposed to the terrestrial place. There were places where things had been put because they had been violently displaced, and then on the contrary places where things found their natural ground and stability. It was this complete hierarchy, this opposition, this intersection of places that constituted what could very roughly be called mediaeval space: the space of emplacement.

This space of emplacement was opened up by Galileo. For the real scandal of Galileo's work lay not so much in his discovery, or rediscovery, that the earth revolved around the sun, but in his constitution of an infinite, and infinitely open, space. In such a space the place of the Middle Ages turned out to be dissolved, as it were; a thing's place was no longer anything but a point in its movement, just as the stability of a thing was only its movement indefinitely slowed down. In other words, starting with Galileo and the seventeenth century, extension was substituted for localization.

Today the site has been substituted for extension, which itself had replaced emplacement. The site is defined by relations of proximity between points or elements; formally, we can describe these relations as series or grids. Moreover, the importance of the site as a problem in contemporary technical work is well known: the storage of data or of the intermediate results of a calculation in the memory of a machine, the circulation of discrete elements with a random output (automobile traffic is a simple case, or indeed the sounds on a telephone line); the identification of marked or coded elements inside a set that may be randomly distributed, or may be arranged according to single or to multiple classifications.

In a still more concrete manner, the problem of siting or placement arises for mankind in terms of demography. This problem of the human site or living space is not simply that of knowing whether there will be enough space for men in the world – a problem that is certainly quite important – but also that of knowing what relations of propinquity, what type of storage, circulation, marking and classification of human elements should be adopted in a given situation in order to achieve a given end. Our epoch is one in which space takes for us the form of relations among sites.

In any case I believe that the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time. Time probably appears to us only as one of the various distributive operations that are possible for the elements that are spread out in space.

Now, despite all the techniques for appropriating space, despite the whole network of knowledge that enables us to delimit or to formalize it, contemporary space is perhaps still not entirely desanctified (apparently unlike time, it would seem, which was detached from the sacred in the nineteenth century). To be sure a certain theoretical desanctification of space (the one signalled by Galileo's work) has occurred, but we may still not have reached the point of a practical desanctification of space. And perhaps our life is still governed by a certain number of oppositions that remain inviolable, that our institutions and practices have not yet dared to break down. These are oppositions that we regard as simple givens: for example between private space and public space, between family space and social space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure and that of work. All these are still nurtured by the hidden presence of the sacred.

Gaston Bachelard's monumental work and the descriptions of phenomenologists have taught us that we do not live in a homogeneous and empty space, but on the contrary in a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well. The space of our primary perception, the space of our dreams and that of our passions hold within themselves qualities that seem intrinsic: there is a light, ethereal, transparent space, or again a dark, rough, encumbered space; a space from above, of summits, or on the contrary a space from below of mud; or again a space that can be flowing like sparkling water, or space that is fixed, congealed, like stone or crystal. Yet these analyses, while fundamental for reflection in our time, primarily concern internal space. I should like to speak now of external space.

The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be coloured with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another.

Of course one might attempt to describe these different sites by looking for the set of relations by which a given site can be defined. For example, describing the set of relations that define the sites of transportation, streets, trains (a train is an extraordinary bundle of relations because it is something through which one goes, it is also something by means of which one can go from one point to another, and then it is also something that goes by). One could describe, via the cluster of relations that allows them to be defined, the sites of temporary relaxation – cafés, cinemas, beaches. Likewise one could describe, via its network of relations, the closed or semi-closed sites of rest – the house, the bedroom, the bed, etc. But among all these sites, I am interested in certain ones that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize or invent the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror or reflect. These spaces, as it were, which are linked with all the others, which however contradict all the other sites, are of two main types.

Heterotopias

First there are the utopias. Utopias are sites with no real place. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society. They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces.

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, *heterotopias*. I believe that between utopias and these quite other sites, these heterotopias, there might be a sort of mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror. The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there. As for the heterotopias as such, how can they be described? What meaning do they have? We might imagine a sort of systematic description – I do not say a science because the term is too galvanized now – that would, in a given society, take as its object the study, analysis, description and 'reading' (as some like to say nowadays) of these different spaces, of these other places. As a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live, this description could be called heterotopology.

Its first principle is that there is probably not a single culture in the world that fails to constitute heterotopias. That is a constant of every human group. But the heterotopias obviously take quite varied forms, and perhaps no one absolutely universal form of heterotopia would be found. We can however class them in two main categories.

In the so-called primitive societies, there is a certain form of heterotopia that I would call crisis heterotopias, i.e. there are privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis: adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly, etc. In our society, these crisis

heterotopias are persistently disappearing, though a few remnants can still be found. For example, the boarding school, in its nineteenth-century form, or military service for young men, have certainly played such a role, as the first manifestations of sexual virility were in fact supposed to take place 'elsewhere' than at home. For girls, there was, until the middle of the twentieth century, a tradition called the 'honeymoon trip' which was an ancestral theme. The young woman's deflowering could take place 'nowhere' and, at the moment of its occurrence the train or honeymoon hotel was indeed the place of this nowhere, this heterotopia without geographical markers.

But these heterotopias of crisis are disappearing today and are being replaced, I believe, by what we might call heterotopias of deviation: those in which individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed. Cases of this are rest homes and psychiatric hospitals, and of course prisons, and one should perhaps add retirement homes that are, as it were, on the borderline between the heterotopia of crisis and the heterotopia of deviation since, after all, old age is a crisis, but is also a deviation since in our society where leisure is the rule, idleness is a sort of deviation.

The second principle of this description of heterotopias is that a society, as its history unfolds, can make an existing heterotopia function in a very different fashion; for each heterotopia has a precise and determined function within a society and the same heterotopia can, according to the synchrony of the culture in which it occurs, have one function or another.

As an example I shall take the strange heterotopia of the cemetery. The cemetery is certainly a place unlike ordinary cultural spaces. It is a space that is however connected with all the sites of the city, state or society or village, etc., since each individual, each family has relatives in the cemetery. In Western culture the cemetery has practically always existed. But it has undergone important changes. Until the end of the eighteenth century, the cemetery was placed at the heart of the city, next to the church. In it there was a hierarchy of possible tombs. There was the charnel house in which bodies lost the last traces of individuality, there were a few individual tombs and then there were the tombs inside the church. These latter tombs were themselves of two types, either simply tombstones with an inscription, or mausoleums with statues. This cemetery housed inside the sacred space of the church has taken on a quite different cast in modern civilizations, and curiously, it is in a time when civilization has become 'atheistic', as one says very crudely, that western culture has established what is termed the cult of the dead.

Basically it was quite natural that, in a time of real belief in the resurrection of bodies and the immortality of the soul, overriding importance was not accorded to the body's remains. On the contrary, from the moment when people

are no longer sure that they have a soul or that the body will regain life, it is perhaps necessary to give much more attention to the dead body, which is ultimately the only trace of our existence in the world and in language. In any case, it is from the beginning of the nineteenth century that everyone has a right to her or his own little box for her or his own little personal decay, but on the other hand, it is only from that start of the nineteenth century that cemeteries began to be located at the outside border of cities. In correlation with the individualization of death and the bourgeois appropriation of the cemetery, there arises an obsession with death as an 'illness'. The dead, it is supposed, bring illnesses to the living, and it is the presence and proximity of the dead right beside the houses, next to the church, almost in the middle of the street, it is this proximity that propagates death itself. This major theme of illness spread by the contagion in the cemeteries persisted until the end of the eighteenth century, until, during the nineteenth century, the shift of cemeteries toward the suburbs was initiated. The cemeteries then came to constitute no longer the sacred and immortal heart of the city but the other city, where each family possesses its dark resting place.

Third principle. The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus it is that the theatre brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another; thus it is that the cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space, but perhaps the oldest example of these heterotopias that take the form of contradictory sites is the garden. We must not forget that in the Orient the garden, an astonishing creation that is now a thousand years old, had very deep and seemingly superimposed meanings. The traditional garden of the Persians was a sacred space that was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world, with a space still more sacred than the others that were like an umbilicus, the navel of the world at its centre (the basin and water fountain were there); and all the vegetation of the garden was supposed to come together in this space, in this sort of microcosm. As for carpets, they were originally reproductions of gardens (the garden is a rug onto which the whole world comes to enact its symbolic perfection, and the rug is a sort of garden that can move across space). The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world. The garden has been a sort of happy, universalizing heterotopia since the beginnings of antiquity (our modern zoological gardens spring from that source).

Fourth principle. Heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time – which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry,

heterochronies. The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time. This situation shows us that the cemetery is indeed a highly heterotopic place since, for the individual, the cemetery begins with this strange heterochrony, the loss of life, and with this quasi-eternity in which her permanent lot is dissolution and disappearance.

From a general standpoint, in a society like ours heterotopias and heterochronies are structured and distributed in a relatively complex fashion. First of all, there are heterotopias of indefinitely accumulating time, for example museums and libraries. Museums and libraries have become heterotopias in which time never stops building up and topping its own summit, whereas in the seventeenth century, even at the end of the century, museums and libraries were the expression of an individual choice. By contrast, the idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organizing in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place, this whole idea belongs to our modernity. The museum and the library are heterotopias that are proper to western culture of the nineteenth century.

Opposite these heterotopias that are linked to the accumulation of time, there are those linked, on the contrary, to time in its most flowing, transitory, precarious aspect, to time in the mode of the festival. These heterotopias are not oriented toward the eternal, they are rather absolutely temporal [*chroniques*]. Such, for example, are the fairgrounds, these marvellous empty sites on the outskirts of cities that teem once or twice a year with stands, displays, heteroclite objects, wrestlers, snakewomen, fortune-tellers, and so forth. Quite recently, a new kind of temporal heterotopia has been invented: holiday villages, such as those Polynesian villages that offer a compact three weeks of primitive and eternal nudity to the inhabitants of the cities. You see, moreover, that through the two forms of heterotopias that come together here, the heterotopia of the festival and that of the eternity of accumulating time, the huts of Djerba are in a sense relatives of libraries and museums, for the rediscovery of Polynesian life abolishes time; yet the experience is just as much the rediscovery of time, it is as if the entire history of humanity reaching back to its origin were accessible in a sort of immediate knowledge.

Fifth principle. Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in one must have a

certain permission and make certain gestures. Moreover, there are even heterotopias that are entirely consecrated to these activities of purification – purification that is partly religious and partly hygienic, such as the hammam of the Muslims, or else purification that appears to be purely hygienic, as in Scandinavian saunas.

There are others, on the contrary, that seem to be pure and simple openings, but that generally hide curious exclusions. Everyone can enter into these heterotopic sites, but in fact that is only an illusion – we think we enter where we are, by the very fact that we enter, excluded. I am thinking for example, of the famous bedrooms that existed on the great farms of Brazil and elsewhere in South America. The entry door did not lead into the central room where the family lived, and every individual or traveller who came by had the right to open this door, to enter into the bedroom and to sleep there for a night. Now these bedrooms were such that the individual who went into them never had access to the family's quarter, the visitor was absolutely the guest in transit, was not really the invited guest. This type of heterotopia, which has practically disappeared from our civilizations, could perhaps be found in the famous American motel rooms where a man goes with his car and his mistress and where illicit sex is both absolutely sheltered and absolutely hidden, kept isolated without however being allowed out in the open.

Sixth principle. The last trait of heterotopias is that they have a function in relation to all the space that remains. This function unfolds between two extreme poles. Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory (perhaps that is the role that was played by those famous brothels of which we are now deprived). Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed and jumbled. This latter type would be the heterotopia, not of illusion, but of compensation, and I wonder if certain colonies have not functioned somewhat in this manner. In certain cases, they have played, on the level of the general organization of terrestrial space, the role of heterotopias. I am thinking, for example, of the first wave of colonization in the seventeenth century, of the Puritan societies that the English had founded in America and that were absolutely perfect other places. I am also thinking of those extraordinary Jesuit colonies that were founded in South America: marvellous, absolutely regulated colonies in which human perfection was effectively achieved. The Jesuits of Paraguay established colonies in which existence was regulated at every turn. The village was laid out according to a rigorous plan around a rectangular place at the foot of which was the church; on one side, there was the school; on the other, the cemetery – and then, in front of

the church, an avenue set out that another crossed at right angles; each family had its little cabin along these two axes and thus the sign of Christ was exactly reproduced. Christianity marked the space and geography of the American world with its fundamental sign.

The daily life of individuals was regulated, not by the whistle, but by the bell. Everyone was awakened at the same time, everyone began work at the same time; meals were at noon and five o'clock – then came bedtime, and at midnight came what was called the marital wake-up, that is, at the chime of the churchbell, each person carried out her/his duty.

Brothels and colonies are two extreme types of heterotopia, and if we think, after all, that the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel, it goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures they conceal in their gardens, you will understand why the boat has not only been for our civilization, from the sixteenth century until the present, the great instrument of economic development (I have not been speaking of that today), but has been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination. The ship is the heterotopia par excellence. In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates.

Michel Foucault, 'Des Espaces Autres', lecture for the Cercle d'études architecturale, 14 March 1967; first published in *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité*, no. 5 (October 1984); trans. Jay Miskowiec, at http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html

Fredric Jameson
The Utopian Enclave//2004

To see traces of the utopian impulse everywhere, as Bloch did, is to naturalize it and to imply that it is somehow rooted in human nature. Attempts to realize utopia, however, have been historically more intermittent, and we need to limit them even further by now insisting on everything peculiar and eccentric about the fantasy production that gives rise to them. Daydreams, in which whole cities are laid out in the mind, in which constitutions are enthusiastically composed and legal systems endlessly drafted and emended, in which the seating arrangements for festivals and banquets are meditated in detail, and even garbage disposal is as attentively organized as administrative hierarchy, and family and childcare problems are resolved with ingenious new proposals – such fantasies seem distinct enough from erotic daydreams and to warrant special attention in their own right.

The utopians, whether political, textual or hermeneutic, have always been maniacs and oddballs: a deformation readily enough explained by the fallen societies in which they had to fulfil their vocation. Indeed, I want us to understand utopianism, not as some unlocking of the political, returning to its rightful centrality as in the Greek city-states; but rather as a whole distinct process in its own right. [...]

[I]t is the social situation which must admit of such a solution, or at least of its possibility: this is one aspect of the objective preconditions for a utopia. The view that opens out onto history from a particular social situation must encourage such oversimplifications; the miseries and injustices thus visible must seem to shape and organize themselves around one specific ill or wrong. For the utopian remedy must at first be a fundamentally negative one, and stand as a clarion call to remove and to extirpate this specific root of all evil from which all the others spring.

This is why it is a mistake to approach utopias with positive expectations, as though they offered visions of happy worlds, spaces of fulfilment and cooperation, representations which correspond genetically to the idyll or the pastoral rather than the utopia. Indeed, the attempt to establish positive criteria of the desirable society characterizes liberal political theory from Locke to Rawls, rather than the diagnostic interventions of the utopians, which, like those of the great revolutionaries, always aim at the alleviation and elimination of the sources of exploitation and suffering, rather than at the composition of blueprints for bourgeois comfort. The confusion arises from the formal

properties of these texts, which also seem to offer blueprints: these are however maps and plans to be read negatively, as what is to be accomplished after the demolitions and the removals, and in the absence of all those lesser evils the liberals believed to be inherent in human nature. [...]

[N]othing guarantees that a given utopian preoccupation will strike the mark, that it will detect any really existing social elements, let alone fashion them into a model that will explain their situation to other people. There is therefore, alongside seemingly random biographical chapters, a history of the utopian raw material to be projected: one that is bound up with representation in so far as it is not only the real contradictions of capitalist modernity that evolve in convulsive moments (like the stages of growth of the eponymous monster of Ridley Scott's film *Alien* [1979]), but also the visibility of such contradictions from stage to historical stage, or in other words the capacity of each one to be named, to be thematized and to be represented, not only in epistemological ways, in terms of social or economic analyses, but also in dramatic or aesthetic forms which, along with the political platforms and slogans so closely related to them, are able to grip the imagination and speak to larger social groups. [...]

Yet in order for representability to be achieved, the social or historical moment must somehow offer itself as a situation, allow itself to be read in terms of effects and causes, or problems and solutions, questions and answers. It must have reached a level of shaped complexity that seems to foreground some fundamental ill, and that tempts the social theorist into producing an overview organized around a specific theme. The social totality is always unrepresentable, even for the most numerically limited groups of people; but it can sometimes be mapped and allow a small-scale model to be constructed on which the fundamental tendencies and the lines of flight can more clearly be read. At other times, this representational process is impossible, and people face history and the social totality as a bewildering chaos, whose forces are indiscernible.

For good or ill, this second type of utopian precondition – the material – would seem to distinguish itself from the first – the vocation – as object to subject, as social reality to individual perception. Yet the traditional opposition is little more than a convenience, and we are more interested in the mysterious interaction of both in utopian texts in which they in fact become inextricable. To separate them inevitably involves a figural process, even in objective disciplines like sociology. So if in a first moment I have characterized the utopian's relationship to her social situation as one of raw material, we may now ask what kinds of building blocks the historical moment provides. Laws, labour, marriage, industrial and institutional organization, trade and exchange, even subjective raw materials such as characterological formations, habits of practice, talents,

gender attitudes: all become, at one point or another in the story of utopias, grist for the utopian mill and substances out of which the utopian construction can be fashioned. [...]

But I hope some readers will want to take the position that postmodernism in economics is not at all the same as postmodernism in thinking or in philosophy; and that a principled rejection of the old 'centred subject' (whether in psychology or in ethics) ought not to be discredited by the replication of its form in globalization, in business and in finance. This is an awkward historical situation, and it is by no means always cheap invective and mud-slinging to argue, as some of us have from time to time, that such replication is exceedingly suspicious and testifies to the way in which postmodern or decentred thinking and art reinforce the new social and economic forms of late capitalism more than they undermine it. The new values thus often seem to offer training in a new logic, and thereby to strengthen and perpetuate trends in the infrastructure in such a way as to cast doubt on all the older programmes of critique and critical distance. [...]

But this leaves the political question intact: namely, whether resistance is still possible under such a regime of replication. It remains a theoretical question: whether homologies can generate oppositions or negations; as well as a historical one: what kind of system it is in which such structural standardization or contamination is possible in the first place. But perhaps it is in terms of our previous utopian oppositions that the whole problem needs to be restaged: as the return of that old opposition of difference and identity between which utopianism has oscillated throughout history – More's (and indeed Plato's) commitment to identity coming to seem rather dystopian to us today.

I believe, however, that it is best to consider this particular dilemma as part of a utopian debate in a new sector of thematics which we have not yet touched on, namely that of subjectivity. For even the premise of some fundamental utopian depersonalization takes a position on subjectivity and individualism, a position which is indeed more closely allied with postmodern thought and its decentring of consciousness than with more bourgeois and humanist notions, even though More's external social forms seem to reflect a logic of identity at odds with postmodern difference.

But the more fundamental categories for any discussion of utopia and subjectivity would rather seem to me to be those of pedagogy and of transition; or in other words, the question of the formation of subjectivities, and that of the problems posed by their death and succession, by the generations and the relationship of the later classes of subjects to the institutions of utopia laid in place by their predecessors. To put it this way is to realize that in socialism both of these poles are subsumed under the notion of cultural revolution: the

collective pedagogy of subjects to be formed or reformed for life and activity in the new mode of production – a process which is then supposed to secure the social reproduction of the new social world across a number of generations, if not indefinitely. [...]

This brings us to what is perhaps the fundamental utopian dispute about subjectivity, namely whether the utopia in question proposes the kind of radical transformation of subjectivity presupposed by most revolutions, a mutation in human nature and the emergence of whole new beings; or whether the impulse to utopia is not already grounded in human nature, its persistence readily explained by deeper needs and desires which the present has merely repressed and distorted. As we have implied in some of the preceding chapters, this is a tension which is not merely inescapable; its resolution in either direction would be fatal for the existence of utopia itself. If absolute difference is achieved, in other words, we find ourselves in a science-fictional world such as those of Olaf Stapledon [1886–1950], in which human beings can scarcely even recognize themselves any longer (and which would need to be allegorized [...] in order to bring such figuration back to any viable anthropomorphic and utopian function. On the other hand, if utopia is drawn too close to current everyday realities, and its subject begins too closely to approximate our neighbours and our politically misguided fellow citizens, then we slowly find ourselves back in a garden-variety reformist or social-democratic politics which may well be utopian in another sense but which has forfeited its claim to any radical transformation of the system itself. [...]

The utopian thought experiment, which abruptly removes money from the field, brings an aesthetic relief that unexpectedly foregrounds all kinds of new individual, social and ontological relationships. It is as if suddenly the utopian strategy had been transformed back into the utopian impulse as such, unmasking the utopian dimensions of a range of activities hitherto distorted and disguised by the abstractions of value. Non-alienated enclaves suddenly light up in our hitherto contaminated environment – such as [the science fiction writer] Kim Stanley Robinson's research laboratories – thereby converting utopian representation into a critical and analytical method, whereby the constraints of commodification are measured, along with the multiple developments released by its absence.

Meanwhile, thus renewed, the utopian impulse wanders the gamut from dual relationships of all kinds, relationships to things fully as much as to other people, all the way to an unsuspected variety of new collective combinations. And in so far as our own society has trained us to believe that true disalienation or authenticity only exists in the private or individual realm, it may well be this revelation of collective solidarity which is the freshest one and the most

startlingly and overtly utopian: in utopia, the ruse of representation whereby the utopian impulse colonizes purely private fantasy spaces is by definition undone and socialized by their very realization.

Now, however, utopian Fancy sets itself on the move, searching for implementations of the new principle. These are probably not yet formulas for getting rid of money as such, not yet practical political programmes. Its abolition is presupposed at this point, and what is sought is rather a series of substitutions for the operations (and even the satisfactions) that money once offered. Here substitutes for the wage relationship emerge, in the form of labour chits and work certificates; and also for market exchange and its modalities. Questions about consumption and its addictions, and also about labour satisfaction, loom down the road for any contemporary utopist; and the competition of this utopian principle of the abolition of money with rival schemes and alternate diagnoses begins in earnest, at the same time that blueprints of the social order emerge, along with tracings of the model factory, and indeed new efforts to replace archaic utopian pictures of cottage or industrial labour with cybernetic processes and problems.

But in this new situation, in which money, as an object or even a substitute for an object, has become as volatile as finance capital itself, the question begins to pose itself whether money has not in fact already abolished itself, by the very movement of capital as such; and therefore whether the original starting point was really a historically viable one after all, a doubt which leads on to other utopian themes and possibilities, and sets in motion a restless and speculative utopian search for other fundamental principles and other contents on which the utopian Imagination, as opposed to utopian Fancy, may set to work.

Thus the revival of the old utopian dream of abolishing money, and of imagining a life without it, is nothing short of precisely that dramatic rupture we have evoked. As a vision, it solicits a return to all those older, often religious, anti-capitalist ideologies which denounced money and interest and the like; but as none of those are alive and viable any longer in global late capitalism, and the search for an ideological justification for the abolition of money proves fruitless, this path leads to a decisionism in which we are forced to invent new utopian ideologies for this seemingly archaic programme, and in which we are thrown forward into the future in the attempt to invent new reasons. The lived misery of money, the desperation of poorer societies, the pitiful media spectacles of the rich ones, is palpable to everyone. It is the decision to abandon money, to place this demand at the forefront of a political programme, that marks the rupture and opens up a space into which utopia may enter, like Benjamin's Messiah, unannounced, unprepared by events, and laterally, as if into a present randomly chosen but utterly transfigured by the new element.

This is indeed how utopia recovers its vocation at the very moment where the undesirability of change is everywhere dogmatically affirmed, as with [the political scientist] Samuel Huntington's warning, on the political level, that genuine democracy is ungovernable and that therefore utopian demands for absolute political freedom and 'radical democracy' are also to be eschewed. So successful have such positions been in contemporary ideological 'discursive struggle' that most of us are probably unconsciously convinced of these principles, and of the eternity of the system, and incapacitated to imagine anything else in any way that carries conviction and satisfies that 'reality principle' of fantasy we have identified above.

Disruption is, then, the name for a new discursive strategy, and utopia is the form such disruption necessarily takes. And this is now the temporal situation in which the utopian form proper – the radical closure of a system of difference in time, the experience of the total formal break and discontinuity – has its political role to play, and in fact becomes a new kind of context in its own right. For it is the very principle of the radical break as such, its possibility, which is reinforced by the utopian form, which insists that its radical difference is possible and that a break is necessary. The utopian form itself is the answer to the universal ideological conviction that no alternative is possible, that there is no alternative to the system. But it asserts this by forcing us to think the break itself, and not by offering a more traditional picture of what things would be like after the break.

Paradoxically, therefore, this increasing inability to imagine a different future enhances rather than diminishes the appeal and also the function of utopia. The very political weakness of utopia in previous generations – namely that it furnished nothing like an account of agency, nor did it have a coherent historical and practical-political picture of transition – now becomes a strength in a situation in which neither of these problems seems currently to offer candidates for a solution. The radical break or secession of utopia from political possibilities as well as from reality itself now more accurately reflects our current ideological state of mind. Lukacs once said, in the 1960s, that we had been thrown back historically before the utopian socialists, that even those elements of a vision of the future still lay before us, yet to be reinvented, before we would ever reach an articulated stage of pre-revolutionary awareness and potentiality such as that expressed in 1848 (immediately before that revolution) by the *Manifesto*. How much the more true is this of the current period in which capitalism has, as in the industrializing period immediately following the revolution of 1848, expanded tremendously and generated a wealth calculated to smother the perception of its flaws and incapacities for a time?

Utopia thus now better expresses our relationship to a genuinely political future than any current programme of action, where we are for the moment only at the stage of massive protests and demonstrations, without any conception of how a globalized transformation might then proceed. But at this same time, utopia also serves a vital political function today which goes well beyond mere ideological expression or replication. The formal flaw – how to articulate the utopian break in such a way that it is transformed into a practical-political transition – now becomes a rhetorical and political strength – in that it forces us precisely to concentrate on the break itself: a meditation on the impossible, on the unrealizable in its own right. This is very far from a liberal capitulation to the necessity of capitalism, however; it is quite the opposite, a rattling of the bars and an intense spiritual concentration and preparation for another stage which has not yet arrived. [...]

Fredric Jameson, extracts from 'The Utopian Enclave', and 'Utopia and Its Antimonies', *Archaeologies of the Future* (London and New York: Verso, 2004) 10; 12; 13–14; 165; 166–7; 168.

Pil and Galia Kollectiv
The Future is Here//2004

Visit the future where love is the ultimate crime. In the not-too-distant future, wars will no longer exist ... The next war will not be fought – it will be played. In the future there will be no war. There will only be Rollerball. In The Year 2000 Hit and Run Driving is No Longer a Felony. It's The National Sport! It's the year 2022 ... People are still the same. They'll do anything to get what they need. And they need Soylent Greens. Westworld ... where robot men and women are programmed to serve you for ... Romance ... Violence ... Anything. The only thing you can't have in this perfect world of total pleasure is your 30th birthday. The Last Man on Earth is Not Alone. The Future is here.

Some decades before the future, in the 1970s, science fiction films, only recently liberated from B-movie invasion scenario stereotypes, promised utopia on a plate, as long as you were willing to eat your Soylent Greens and relish the horrors that inevitably underpinned the gleaming surfaces of the hedonistic societies and controlled spaces you were consuming. If every decade has given birth to a central visual image of the future (the eternal dark skies of *Blade Runner* and *The Terminator* in the eighties, for example), the seventies future is a weird hybrid of Fischer-Price white plastic toys, neon, über-computers the size of a house, Technicolor skies, Pucci prints and laser guns. Often understood as reactionary dark dystopias, Charlton Heston's films (*Soylent Green, The Omega Man, Planet of the Apes*) and various death-sport spectacles (*Death Race 2000, Rollerball, Westworld*) that filled cinema screens thirty years ago, removed the external enemy from doomsday narratives and portrayed post-catastrophic futures where destruction was wreaked by combinations of natural disaster and the misuse of technology. But these films, allowing cinema to showcase its finest special effects, also offered American audiences an opportunity to visualize magnificently rationalized societies under totalitarian rule divorced from the immediate cold war context. So if after depleting the world's natural resources we could subsist on multicoloured crackers or live inside domes, if we could enjoy organized violence and streamlined interiors, if our worst case scenario was living like a cult of beatnik zombies on the ruined streets of our decaying cities like the plague infected family in *The Omega Man*, why was the future such a cause for anxiety?

In a society that was beginning to question the validity of its own claims to freedom and equality, science fiction films boldly suggested, sometimes unwittingly, that dedication to pleasure in a free market democratic society could be at odds with the very notions of individualism and liberty that it seemed to emanate from. Rather than a different time, they seem to be showing places that exist somewhere between Soviet heavy-industry complexes and Eames-designed hotel lounges. What they present as a breathtaking gaze into the unknown is actually a rather cold consideration of a frighteningly familiar reality, the same one detailed by the post-war neo-Marxists. Though endless remakes conspire to empty most of these surplus meanings, there remains something subversive about these attempts to celebrate the beauty of utopia as inherently totalitarian while maintaining a critical distance from the implications of this attraction.

The seventies saw the idea of progress seriously questioned by filthy abandoned inner city districts, unsustainable energy resources highlighted by the oil crisis, race riots, a post-hippie youth culture falling into chaos, as exemplified by the Manson family, and a collapsing social order faced with the challenges of feminism and rising divorce levels. If a decade earlier science fiction was used as an extended metaphor for the Kennedy administration's expansionist ambitions, the future now felt closer to home, not because of a foreign threat but because 'the centre was not holding ... [in] a country of bankruptcy notices and public-auction announcements and commonplace reports of casual killings and misplaced children ... not a country under enemy siege [but] the United States of America in the cold late spring of 1967', as Joan Didion famously described the social vacuum that the hippie community tried desperately, and failed miserably, to replace with new institutions and values. The book that a vast public in the seventies experienced as the most adequate description of how the progressive discourse of postwar America turns into a nightmare was Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock*. Written in 1970, *Future Shock* is a link in the long chain of chroniclers of postmodernist malaise, and it portrays a society in a state of crisis whose technology, social morality and psychology have been consumed by the rock'n'roll paradox of 'too fast to live, too young to die': 'This is why the individual's sense of the future plays so critical a part in his ability to cope. The faster the pace of life, the more rapidly the present environment slips away from us, the more rapidly do future potentialities turn into present reality.' [...]

There is small wonder that the citizens of these future societies find it hard to conceive of progressive change and resort to even more extreme forms of violence to get back to the real in defiance of the spectacle. The time they live in is the eternal present of the suburbs, beyond the pseudo-cyclical time of the commodity described by Debord, 'lack[ing] any critical access to its own antecedents, which are nowhere recorded. It cannot be communicated. And it is misunderstood and forgotten to the benefit of the spectacle's false memory of the unmemorable.' Liberated from both work and history, they are trapped inside machine-like social constructs designed to eliminate conflict and its resolution, progress. From the

perspective of the viewer, though, they are immersed in history. Fetishized and embalmed in celluloid, our present crops up amidst the ruins – the Library of Congress overgrown with ivy in *Logan's Run*, the Statue of Liberty in *Planet of the Apes*, the streets of LA in *The Omega Man*. Yet we experience these futures not as our own but as futures past. Partly this is the result of watching these old films in a world of DVD widescreen surround digital dolby super sharp technology which makes their puny special effects seem like distant backwards Soviet cousins. But there is also another time loop mechanism at work. The perfect utopias of Progress City, with its instant technologies and abundance are in many cases themselves set in the fictional past of the films, as causes of catastrophe. The positivistic utopias that governed early twentieth-century ideologies no longer seemed plausible in the aftermath of World War II and the failure of the economic boom of the fifties, and where we do get to glimpse them they are immediately historicized by the meaning our own context provides them.

The warped chronology of retro-futuristism doesn't stop there, though. Already in the seventies, many of the science fiction films we now experience as originals were in fact remakes and reworkings of novels. The hip albino zombies of *The Omega Man* started out as vampires in the 1954 novella *I am Legend*, *Soylent Green* was an adaptation of the 1967 novel *Make Room! Make Room!* and *Death Race 2000*, also based on a short story, incredibly managed to outdo all the others by remaking *Rollerball* before the film ever came out (this was common practice with Roger Corman, the film's producer, who would find out about films in production and then copy them and beat them to the screens. He also followed *Death Race 2000* with *Death Sport*). This commodification of time encases and replicates the aesthetics that we celebrate when we enjoy these films as camp (like most cult films, they are often hardly enjoyable in any other context – and we are not even going into talking dogs in *A Boy and His Dog*, and other even more ludicrous manifestations of the retro-futuristic dreams of seventies sci-fi cinema). Eerily, these ahistorical societies become increasingly recognizable in our own as retro-nostalgia culture takes over and the only futures we can think of are the ones in all those old cult films. Utopia, even in its darkest negative form, is now conceivable only through the mediation of an image-projecting apparatus, the living room entertainment-centre matrix. The machines put in charge of these worlds would surely approve, Keanu Reeves notwithstanding. [...]

Pil and Galia Kollectiv, extracts from 'The Future is Here', *Miser & Now*, no. 2 (London: Keith Talent Gallery, 2004) n.p.

WochenKlausur
Art and Sociopolitical Intervention//2003

The artist group WochenKlausur has been conducting social interventions since 1993. The concept of intervention, whose usage in art has undergone an inflationary trend in recent years, is often used for any form of change. In contrast, WochenKlausur, at the invitation of art institutions, develops and realizes proposals – small-scale but very concrete – for improving sociopolitical deficits. In the context of many twentieth-century artists who understood how to take part actively in the shaping of society, WochenKlausur sees art as an opportunity for achieving long-term improvements in human coexistence. Artists' competence in finding creative solutions, traditionally utilized in shaping materials, can just as well be applied in all areas of society: in ecology, education and city planning. There are problems everywhere that cannot be solved using conventional approaches and are thus suitable subjects for artistic projects. Theoretically, there is no difference between artists who do their best to paint pictures and those who do their best to solve social problems with clearly fixed boundaries. The individually selected task, like the painter's self-defined objective, must only be precisely articulated. Interventionist art can only be effective when the problem to be solved is clearly stated.

The demand has been coming up again and again for a long time now: Art should no longer be venerated in specially designated spaces. Art should not form a parallel quasi-world. Art should not act as if it could exist of itself and for itself. Art should deal with reality, grapple with political circumstances, and work out proposals for improving human coexistence. Unconventional ideas, innovative spirit and energy, which for centuries were wrapped up in formal glass bead games, could thus contribute to the solution of real problems.

Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the demands are slowly starting to take effect. The formal-aesthetic discussion has run its course. Its myriad self-referential somersaults have become inflationary, and the worship of virtuosi has given way to other qualities. In the process, a fundamental discussion of the functions of art has arisen: Who does what in art, and why?

Art can perform many functions. For pages and pages, the various functions could be listed like a catalogue of stylistic 'isms': Art can represent its commissioners and producers; it can be a definer and caretaker of identity; it can affect snobby allures and satiate the bourgeois hunger for knowledge and possession. Art can fatten up the leisure time of the bored masses; it can serve as an object of financial speculation; it can transmit feelings and cause one's

heart to vibrate. Furthermore, the many functions are also enmeshed in one another. Abstract Expressionism served Cold War Americans as a political instrument of culturalization just as much as it served the spiritual need for expression of the young painters that created it.

One of the functions of art has always been the transformation of living conditions. Since the advent of Modernism, with its rejection of religiously founded authority, art has been an especially fertile domain for querying irrational taboos and inherited value standards and for correcting social imbalances. This function was first put into practice by the Russian Constructivists. Simultaneously with the 1917 change of regime in Russia, an art was introduced which for the first time sought to directly influence the people's consciousness and living conditions through agitation and activism. Thus a new chapter was opened in the history of art.

In Germany the Bauhaus cultivated these developments. Science, architecture, technology and the visual arts were all working toward one another so as to shape as many aspects of life as possible. Books and posters, vehicles, landscapes and clothing took on new forms corresponding to function and ideology in order to establish the new philosophies of life with a certitude nearing self-evidence. Every formal renewal of the world – so thought the artists of that time – would also have to bring about a corresponding change of attitude.

For many decades it seemed that society actually could be manipulated through alteration of the visual surroundings and of habits of seeing and hearing. This view still had its supporters as recently as the sixties, and the question of whether that era's youth revolt was influenced or even triggered by rock and pop music, or if conversely the music was merely a part of the release of long-accumulated dissatisfaction, is a source of material for sociology seminars up to the present day. Looking back, the idea of 'altering social relationships by altering form' appears a little naïve. Of course attitudes and habits, thinking patterns and value standards can be marginally influenced through forms. The whole advertising field is sustained by this thesis. But people's ideological principles, their world views and values can not really be changed through colours, sounds and forms. Clothes, one could say, only make the man in romantic novels. [...]

In contrast to seventies thinking, today's activists are no longer concerned with changing the world in its entirety. It is no longer a matter of mercilessly implementing an ideological line, as it was in Beuys' idea of transforming a whole society into Social Sculpture, or as it was in the thinking of the Russian Constructivists, the Futurists and many other manifesto writers of the modern. At the end of the century, activist art no longer overestimates its capabilities but it does not underestimate them either. It makes modest contributions. It would be wrong, in a society in which every discussion of basic principles has been lost, to expect that something like art can make decisive changes. [...]

Social renewal is a function of art after the art of treating surfaces. It makes more sense to improve the carrying structure before improving the surface. This art's big chance lies in its ability to offer the community something that also achieves an effect. The motives for concrete intervention based in art should not be confused with an excess of moralistic fervour. As a potential basis for action, art has political capital at its disposal that should not be underestimated. The use of this potential to manipulate social circumstances is a practice of art just as valid as the manipulation of traditional materials. The group WochenKlausur takes this function of art and its historic precursors as its point of departure. WochenKlausur sets precise tasks for itself and, in intensive actions that are limited in time, attempts to work out solutions to the problems it has recognized. [...]

WochenKlausur, extract from 'Art and Sociopolitical Intervention', in *Surface Tension: Problematics of Site*, ed. Ken Ehrlich and Brandon Labelle (Los Angeles and Copenhagen: Errant Bodies Press, 2003).

Thomas Hirschhorn
Interview with Okwui Enwezor//2000

Okwui Enwezor What would you say to the idea that one creates a kind of democratic space in which the work exists; an alternative, public sphere around which the notion of your sculpture, and its utter fragility, can be constituted in a democratic sense?

Thomas Hirschhorn I want to make non-hierarchical work in non-hierarchical spaces. The work is not something more in the museum and something less in the street; this is essential for me. I am concerned by equality and inequality in all forms. Thus, I do not want to impose hierarchies; in exhibiting my work, I try to efface the values associated with the location of the exhibition. I am not interested in prestige. I am interested in community. Democracy is a beautiful concept, but I think democracy and direct democracy are becoming increasingly passive; they are terms that dissimulate. Democracy can conceal private interests. I want to replace the word democracy with equality.

Enwezor It seems to me that the spectator is really at risk inside of your installations. There is a massive amount of information he or she must process in order to arrive at that crucial nexus of meaning you may want to connect him or her to. So what sense of power do you give to spectators when the sheer amount of information you throw at them becomes overwhelming? Is there a position you take in terms of how the spectator confronts your work?

Hirschhorn I do not wish my work to exclude anyone; I try to create for people the possibility of entering into my work in different ways, introducing elements that provide access (the Chicago Bulls and Rosa Luxemburg spoons are examples). I want to be precise but open. I do not want to invite or oblige viewers to become interactive with what I do; I do not want to activate the public. I want to give of myself, to engage myself to such a degree that viewers confronted with the work can take part and become involved, but not as actors. When I present an abundance of images, documents and informational materials, I try to demonstrate that, on their own, these things are important not because I have selected them and made them evident by enlarging them, but because their importance can be judged differently from one person to the next.

Enwezor In the past, you vehemently refused to classify or constitute your work as installation, choosing instead the notion of sculpture to describe the spatial practice of your work, its presence in a given space. But there is an evident paradox in the idea of sculpture being part of the condition of your work, in that sculpture's formal terms can be seen today as the very antithesis of radical, progressive thinking. How do you reconcile this paradox between the utterly conservative nature of sculptural practice, with its formal, canonical essence, and the work you make today? Why this distinction between sculpture and installation in your work?

Hirschhorn As an artist, I don't think that I have to resolve paradoxes and contradictions or to fight confusion; I myself feel confused and full of contradictions. I make affirmations without being certain of their validity. But I must work according to what interests me profoundly. What I reject in the word 'installation' is that it is a term that reduces work to a form of expression. It is an insider, contemporary art term. I do not make work that achieves within a form, within a discipline; I think those who use the term 'installation' to differentiate this genre from painting, video, photography, etc., are lazy, because they believe the decision to work in one or another medium is a formal choice. I've never said 'I want to make an installation.' An artist who uses photography as a medium is not a photographer. Artists make their work in the most appropriate way to convey what they wish to say. I call my work 'sculpture' because it is an open term. I achieve in three dimensions what I have thought out in two dimensions: I think in plans, points and lines. This kind of thinking is stacked up. I have to work my ideas out in space. That transformation is a sculpture without volume, without thinking of making volume. I don't think that the term 'sculpture' is anti-progressive or anti- radical. I think of the work of Joseph Beuys.

Enwezor It seems to me that we can go from this paradox – the distinction you make between sculpture and installation – into the very nature of another contradiction, which is sculpture's relationship to the monument. The monument has been very much a part of the way that you not only describe the public presence of the personalities you admire, but also serves to critique the very constitution of the monument as a forever-present, temporal question in the public imagination. How do you reconcile your critique of the monument, which you insist upon relative to the specificity of a given work, as conditioned by the language of sculpture, and the fact that you do not wish to produce monuments?

Hirschhorn My critique of the 'monument' comes from the fact that the idea of the monument is determined, produced and situated by decisions imposed from above, by those in power. And its forms correspond to the will to lead people to

admire the monument and, along with it, the dominant ideology – whether it is the monument in Berlin to Ernst Thalmann, co-founder of the German Communist Party, or the commemoration in Washington, D.C., of those who lost their lives in Vietnam. A monument always retains something of the demagogic. I want to fight hierarchy, demagogy, this source of power.

Enwezor Of course the nature of the materials you use has been central to the discussion of your work in recent years, especially your proclivity for and insistence on materials that are readily available, cheap, mass-produced; materials that both mimic 'kitsch' and deride the excesses of our throw-away, consumer-driven culture. For me there is, in this choice of cheap, quotidian materials such as plastic, aluminum foil and cardboard, a strategy to contaminate the very nature of art's relationship to high culture, and to critique the preciousness of sculptural practice. What led you to these types of materials for your work?

Hirschhorn The choice of materials is important. I want to make simple and economical work with materials that everyone knows and uses. I don't choose them for the value of their appearance. I hate art made of noble materials. I don't understand why one attaches value to a material, whether it is clean metal, marble, glass, fine wood, big screens, empty space, and enormous, heavily framed objects, etc. I don't believe these are contemporary expressions. I am against using materials or forms that attempt to intimidate, seduce or dominate rather than encourage reflection. For the activity of reflection, material does not matter. The materials I work with are precarious. This means that their temporal existence is clearly determined by human beings, not by nature.

Enwezor Don't you risk, in terms of the materials you use, the charge of being patronizing to so-called everyday people in terms of this idea of working very close to how 'people' identify, through their sense of recognition, what these materials are and what they mean? In a sense, don't we have here what one would call a kind of naïve utopianism and a nostalgia, a kind of social-realist attitude, about the humility of such materials versus the pretensions of high art – the highly finished, regulated and precious sculptural object in a museum context and the banal, unprecious material of the everyday.

Hirschhorn My choice of materials, as well as my work itself, is constituted as critical, obviously. The energy that fuels my work comes from my being a critic of the state of the world, of the human condition. However, for me these choices are based on a determination that originates beyond classification of the order

of making critical art. I don't want to play the critic against the public or vice versa; but, rather, art and the art world cannot be removed from the larger world. I try to present my ideas and reflections in a clearer, more powerful manner at each exhibition. Naïvety doesn't interest me; utopianism does; nostalgia doesn't interest me; stupidity does. I want my work to be judged.

Enwezor Yet there is still the risk of the work being seen as 'radical chic', because it so clearly references attitudes sympathetic to a quasi-democratic context of art for the populace rather than for the elite.

Hirschhorn To make art is very risky. But terms such as 'radical chic' make me really angry. I believe that this term comes from the fashion element of the art world. It is a critical term that protects its own interests, the real chic. 'Radical chic', like 'politically correct', is an art-world term that, as such, is an ineffectual and uninteresting phenomenon of our time. These terms reflect fleeting values and are used to avoid rather than initiate discussion.

Enwezor I understand your refusal to have your work contained in this particular register, even though writers critiquing it find that certain aspects are consumed by an overly stylized fashion, which is neither the work's fault nor intention. But I want to depart from that and go on to what has been one of your central preoccupations, the political nature of your artistic enterprise – that you do not make political art but that you make art politically. What does this mean?

Hirschhorn Political questions are life questions. They are not art-specific or ideological. I want to affirm, as strongly as possible, that my art must appropriate the world. To make art politically means to choose materials that do not intimidate, a format that doesn't dominate, a device that does not seduce. To make art politically is not to submit to an ideology or to denounce the system, in opposition to so-called 'political art'. It is to work with the fullest energy against the principle of quality. [...]

Enwezor You have made what you call classical monuments for four philosophers: Spinoza, Deleuze, Gramsci and Bataille. Why them, and why monuments for them and altars for artists and writers?

Hirschhorn These philosophers have something to say to us today. I think that the capacity of human beings for reflection, the ability we have to make our brains work, is beautiful. Spinoza, Deleuze, Gramsci and Bataille are examples of people who instil confidence in our reflective capacities. They force us to think.

Monuments to their memory continue to question, reflect, and keep this internal beauty vital. The altars for artists and writers are conceived as personal commitments; the monuments for philosophers are conceived as communal commitments. [...]

Enwezor You have stated that artists have a responsibility in the ways their work communicates with the world. What do you see today as the ethical relationship between contemporary art and artists working today?

Hirschhorn Spaces that contemporary art occupies are spaces for reclaiming the world, which I believe contemporary art must do. As an artist, I want to work in relationship to and in the world that I inhabit. Contemporary art is a strong force, because it can repossess the world according to the biases of individual commitments. It poses the question of ethics. It can express sadness; it can express what we reject. [...]

Enwezor Your work possesses the attributes of a work in progress, a studio, a laboratory, a storage space; all are evoked in the experience of walking through them. Can you discuss how the movement in your work between these associations becomes a kind of evasion, as if no one sphere, or context, determines the way one sees what you do?

Hirschhorn Art is always movement, art is work. I hate forms and formalisms that wish to impose themselves on us as something fixed, stable, immutable. I want my work not to make one think first about art, but rather about something related to other work or life experiences. Laboratory, storage, studio space, yes, I want to use these forms in my work to make spaces for the movement and endlessness of thinking and to provide time for the movement of reflection.

Enwezor I am intrigued by your notion of yourself – seemingly anachronistic in this age of global capitalism – as a worker. You refuse to see your work as a piece, because of the market appropriation of a piece as a product. You emphasize the notion of the work as conceived of not only through the ideas of the artist but in the very activity involved in the production of it.

Hirschhorn I love the word 'work'. It indicates both something realized and an action. I also love that the word relates the activity of an artist to that of a secretary or a baker, and so forth, in the sense of something that must be accomplished, done. Production does not come from productivity; rather, it comes from having given form to an idea; it is in this sense that I try to work.

There is a sense of resistance in the word 'work' and also in the activity of work. Both noun and verb fight against 'producing a piece', which is the opposite of what I want to do.

Enwezor Let's discuss the interdisciplinary nature of your practice. You were trained as a graphic designer, a training that manifests itself in the orientation and arrangement of your work. Moreover, you work with writers who contribute commentaries about your ideas. You are a worker, an artist, a philosopher, a writer and a researcher. How do these disparate identities converge in your work and become legible as an idea or a fully constituted process of sculptural elaboration?

Hirschhorn I am an artist, worker, soldier. I am neither a theoretician nor a philosopher. At first I wanted to be a graphic designer with a political commitment because of what I could achieve with social issues and in everyday life. Such political thinking, I understood after some time, is limited because such work only serves an ideology. I was not interested in making graphic design for an ideology. I wanted to give form to things that revolted me, that I could understand, that I did not agree with. But I wanted to give them my forms. That is how I decided to be an artist. My work with several writers, Manuel Joseph, Jean Charles Massera, Marcus Steinweg, comes from the fact that I share their concerns about the use of words to appropriate the world. Also because I want to include people who are not interested in the formal aspects of contemporary art, but are open to ideas expressed through writing or to writing in general. I want to integrate their work into mine just as they integrate mine into theirs.

Enwezor You often say that art has an ethical purpose. How do you reconcile this with the current critique of political correctness and multiculturalism?

Hirschhorn The motor that drives my work is the human condition and my concerns about it. I do not believe that the process of making art can exist without taking a critical position. An artist does not make a work of art so that it works or succeeds. To not agree with the system requires courage. Artists are disobedient – this is the first step toward utopia. An artist can create a utopia. The utopia is based on disagreement with predominant and pre-existing consensus. I want to work freely with what is my own.

Enwezor I want to end this interview with your current work at The Art Institute of Chicago. There seem to be some scatological elements connected with *Big Cake*, especially in the etymological meaning you allude to between 'cake' and 'kaka'. Part of your proposal is to cut the cake into twelve equal parts. In this

gesture, you seem to be speaking about the distribution of resources in global economic terms. The spoons, meanwhile, represent failed utopias. I am fascinated by the ease with which you have conflated individual movements and structures as part and parcel of what a failed utopia is. How are the Chicago Bulls and the moon failed utopias?

Hirschhorn I had to make twelve spoons, and I wanted the spoons to refer to things that don't engage me, like the Chicago Bulls spoon, Rosa Luxemburg spoon, and Friedrich Nietzsche. In selecting them, I opened possible doorways between them. Perhaps Ms Luxemburg goes to see the Chicago Bulls. She does not have only one focus, preoccupation, or love; she is perhaps aware of her contradictions, or she is confused. That is why I put the twelve spoons together. I am interested in the interaction and links between them. The links are the failures, the failures of utopias. A utopia is something to aim for, a project, a projection. It is an idea, an ideal. It is right; it is wrong. Art and making artwork are utopian. But a utopia never works. It is not supposed to. When it works, it is a utopia no longer. [...]

Thomas Hirschhorn and Okwui Enwezor, extracts from interview in James Rondeau and Suzan Ghez, eds, *Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2000), 27–9; 31–2; 34–5.

Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Hal Foster
The Predicament of Contemporary Art//2005

Benjamin Buchloh [T]he dialectic of sublimation and desublimation plays an enormously important role in the history of postwar art. Perhaps it is even one of the central dynamics of the period, certainly more so than in the history of the prewar avant-gardes. It is defined differently by different theoreticians, both as an avant-garde strategy of subversion and as a strategy of the cultural industry to achieve incorporation and subjection. One axis on which this dialectic is played out more programmatically in the postwar period than ever before is the relationship of the neo-avant-garde to the ever-expanding apparatus of cultural industrial domination: as of the fifties, in the context of the Independent Group in England, for example, or in early Pop art activities in the United States, appropriating imagery and structures of industrial production became one of the methods with which artists tried to reposition themselves between a bankrupt humanist model of avant-garde aspirations and an emerging apparatus whose totalitarian potential might not have been visible at first. Desublimation in England served as a radical strategy simultaneously to popularize cultural practice and to recognize the conditions of collective mass-cultural experience as governing. Desublimation in Andy Warhol, by contrast, operated more within the project of a final annihilation of whatever political and cultural aspirations the artists of the immediate postwar period might still have harboured.

As schematic as this might sound, my own work is situated, methodologically, between two texts: one from 1947, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, the chapter on 'the culture industry' in particular, and the other one from 1967, *The Society of the Spectacle* by Guy Debord. The more I think about those two texts the more they seem to historicize the last fifty years of artistic production, for they demonstrate how the autonomous spaces of cultural representation – spaces of subversion, resistance, critique, utopian aspiration – are gradually eroded, assimilated, or simply annihilated. This is what occurred in the postwar period with the transformation of liberal democracies, in the United States and in Europe: from my perspective not only has the prognosis of Adorno and Horkheimer in 1947 been bitterly fulfilled, but so too has the even more nihilistic prognosis of Debord in 1967 – exceeded even. The postwar situation can be described as a negative teleology: a steady dismantling of the autonomous practices, spaces and spheres of culture, and a perpetual intensification of assimilation and homogenization, to the point today where we

witness what Debord called 'the integrated spectacle'. Where does that leave artistic practices in the present, and how can we, as art historians and critics, address them? Are there still spaces situated outside that homogenizing apparatus? Or do we have to recognize that many artists themselves don't want to be situated outside it?

Hal Foster Are you content with the finality of that narrative?

Yve-Alain Bois It's a dire diagnostic (after all, Debord committed suicide), but one I think we all share to some extent.

Foster Yes, but if you agree entirely with Adorno and/or Debord, little more can be said.

Buchloh I take the last statement I made seriously: I'm not concluding that every artist in the present defines her or his work as inextricably integrated and affirmative; the artistic capacity still might exist not only to reflect on the position that the artwork assumes within the wider system of infinitely differentiated representations (fashion, advertisement, entertainment, etc.), but also to recognize its susceptibility to becoming integrated into those subsets of ideological control. And yet, if there are artistic practices that still stand apart from this process of homogenization, I'm less convinced than ever that they can survive, and that we as critics and historians are able to support and sustain them in a substantial and efficient manner, to prevent their total marginalization.

Foster Let's look back over the last few decades to instances where critical alternatives were proposed. Indicating some 'incomplete projects' might help us look ahead as well.

Buchloh Yes: what place does neo-avant-garde practice have in the present compared to the one it held in the moment of 1968, for example? Or even in the seventies, when the relative autonomy of such practice had a role in the liberal bourgeois public sphere as a site of differentiating experience and subjectivity? It was supported then, or at least taken seriously, by the state, the museums and the universities. As of the eighties, artistic production was subsumed into the larger practice of the culture industry, where it now functions as commodity production, investment portfolio and entertainment. Consider Matthew Barney in this regard: even more than Jeff Koons, he has articulated, that is to say exploited, those tendencies. In that sense he is a proto-totalitarian artist for me,

a small-time American Richard Wagner who mythifies the catastrophic conditions of existence under late capitalism. [...]

Bois Perhaps conditions have changed again now, and, instead of a polar opposition à la Adorno between resistant high art and mass-cultural trash, both have become, in the context of global media, so many bits in the planetary web. The paradigm isn't resistance versus dissolution any more: resistance is immediately dissolved in the new situation. Young artists are not necessarily suicidal about it (there I agree); they want to do something with it.

Buchloh Certainly, artists as diverse as Allan Sekula, Mark Lombardi and Thomas Hirschhorn address the condition of artistic production under the rule of an intensely expansionist form of late-capitalist and corporate imperialism, now generally identified with the anodyne and meaningless term 'globalization'. All of them have succeeded to articulate the fact that nation-state ideology and traditional models of conventional identity-construction are no longer available to relevant cultural production, since the internationalization of corporate culture would desire nothing more than a cultural retreat into mythical models of compensatory identity-formations. At the same time such artists have made it one of their priorities to work through the intensely complicated networks of political, ideological and economic intersections that make up the supposedly liberating forms of globalization. Thereby they achieve a critical analysis of phenomena that are generally presented by the media, but also by cultural organizers and functionaries, as an emancipatory and almost utopian achievement. But globalization is only one of the driving factors. There are at least two others. One is technological development, which confronts artists, historians, and critics today with problems that none of us really foresaw in the sixties or seventies. The second factor is more complicated, and it's difficult not to sound conspiratorial about it: the very construct of an oppositional sphere of artists and intellectuals appears to have been eliminated: certainly this is true in the realm of cultural production. That production is now homogenized as an economic field of investment and speculation in its own right. The antinomy between artists and intellectuals on the one hand and capitalist production on the other has been annihilated or has disappeared by attrition. Today we are in a political and ideological situation that, while it is not quite yet totalitarian, points toward the elimination of contradiction and conflict, and this necessitates a rethinking of what cultural practice can be under the totalizing conditions of fully advanced capitalist organization. [...]

For the most part participants in the contemporary art world (and that includes ourselves) have not yet developed a systematic understanding of how

that once integral element of the bourgeois public sphere (represented by the institution of the avant-garde as much as by the institution of the museum) has irretrievably disappeared. It has been replaced by social and institutional formations for which we not only do not have any concepts and terms yet, but whose *modus operandi* remains profoundly opaque and incomprehensible to most of us. For example, we have more artists, galleries and exhibition organizers than ever before in the postwar period, yet none of these operate in any way comparable to the way they functioned from the 1940s to the 1990s. We have ever larger and ever more imposing museum buildings and institutions emerging all around us, but their social function, once comparable to the sphere of public education or the university, for example, has become completely diffuse. These new functions range from those of a bank – which holds, if not the gold standard, at least the quality and value warranties for investors and speculators in the art market – to those of a congregational space, semi-public at that, in which rites are enacted that promise to compensate for, if not to obliterate, the actual loss of our sense of a once given desire and demand for political and social self-determination. [...]

Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Hal Foster, extracts from round table discussion with Rosalind Krauss, in Bois, Buchloh, Foster, Krauss, *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005).

Jacques Rancière
Art of the Possible: Interview with Fulvia Carnevale and John Kelsey//2007

Jacques Rancière Contemporary art was taken hostage in the operation of the 'end of utopias', caught between so-called postmodern discourse, which proclaimed the 'end of grand narratives', and the reversal of modernism itself, as modernist thinkers ended up polemicizing against modernism, ultimately condemning emancipatory art's utopias and their contribution to totalitarianism. It's always the same process: using defined periods and great historical ruptures to impose interdictions. Against this, my work has been the same, whether dealing with labour's past or art's present: to break down the great divisions – science and ideology, high culture and popular culture, representation and the unrepresentable, the modern and the postmodern, etc. – to contrast so-called historical necessity with a topography of the configuration of possibilities, a perception of the multiple alterations and displacements that make up forms of political subjectivization and artistic invention. So I re-examined the dividing lines between the modern and postmodern, demonstrating, for example, that 'abstract painting' was invented not as a manifestation of art's autonomy but in the context of a way of thinking of art as a fabricator of forms of life, that the intermingling of high art and popular culture was not a discovery of the 1960s but at the heart of nineteenth-century Romanticism. Nevertheless, what interests me more than politics or art is the way the boundaries defining certain practices as artistic or political are drawn and redrawn. This frees artistic and political creativity from the yoke of the great historical schemata that announce the great revolutions to come or that mourn the great revolutions past only to impose their proscriptions and their declarations of powerlessness on the present. [...]

Fulvia Carnevale We have a diagnosis you might not agree with: as soon as there are political subjects that disappear from the field of actual politics, that become obsolete through a number of historical processes, they are recuperated in iconic form in contemporary art. Many contemporary artists and curators seem to share, for example, a certain nostalgia for the countercultures of earlier generations. We are thinking of all the things centred on the labour movement, for instance, not only in the work of Jeremy Deller but also in that of plenty of other artists who use this sort of iconic code – Rirkrit Tiravanija, Sam Durant, Paul Chan. How do you explain this process? Is it a delayed reaction of contemporary art in relation to the present or is it a form of absorption?

Rancière We have to go beyond too simple a relationship between past and present, reality and icon. Your question presupposes a certain idea of the present: It accredits the idea that the working class has disappeared, that we can therefore speak of it nostalgically or in terms of kitsch imagery. Artists might reply that this is a vision borrowed from the dominant imagery of the moment and that, furthermore, the re-examination of the past is part of the construction of the present. The question then is whether by reconstructing a strike from the Thatcher era, Jeremy Deller is proposing a break in relation to the dominant imagery of a world where there would otherwise be nothing but high-tech virtuosi or the occasional amused glance at the past, which is complicit with this vision. The retrospective glance at the counterculture of the past in fact covers two problems: first, the relationship to the militant culture of the years of revolt, which is not necessarily nostalgic. It is, rather, acidic in the work of Sam Durant, for example, to say nothing of the work of Josephine Meckseper, who tries to show protest culture as a form of youth fashion. Second, the relationship to popular culture, which seems to me to be the object of a new mutation. In the era of Pop art and the Nouveaux Réalistes, we gladly used popular 'bad taste' to destabilize 'high culture'. Martin Parr's photographs of kitsch follow in this tradition. But there is a more positive attempt today to give form to a continuity between artistic creativity and the forms of creativity manifested in objects and behaviours that testify to everyone's capacities and to our inherent powers of resistance. Works like Jean-Luc Moulène's photographic series *Objets de grève* [*Strike Objects*, 1999–2000] or the installation *Menschen Dinge* [*The Human Aspect of Objects*, 2005] created at the Buchenwald Memorial by Esther Shalev-Gerz around objects repurposed and refashioned by detainees of the camp, are just two examples – examples that suit my argument perhaps too well. In any case, this way of relating to popular culture or to countercultures from the point of view of the capacities they set in motion and not the images they convey seems to me to be the real political issue of the present.

Carnevale Does anyone still believe in the search for exteriority in relation to the commodity today? Antonio Negri, for example, argues precisely that there is no possibility of standing outside the market, and through this Marxist reading he concludes that transformation therefore must arise from within capitalism itself. But in any case, there is no true outside. Do you believe that an aesthetic practice that critiques and subverts the becoming-merchandise of art is still possible?

Rancière To ask: 'How can one escape the market?' is one of those questions whose principal virtue is one's pleasure in declaring it insoluble. Money is necessary to make art; to make a living you have to sell the fruits of your labour.

So art is a market, and there's no getting around it. For artists as for everyone else, there's the problem of knowing where to plant one's feet, of knowing what one is doing in a particular place, in a particular system of exchange. One must find ways to create other places, or other uses for places. But one must extricate this project from the dramatic alternatives expressed in questions like, How do we escape the market, subvert it, etc.? If anyone knows how to overthrow capitalism, why don't they just start doing it? But critics of the market are content to rest their own authority on the endless demonstration that everyone else is naïve or a profiteer; in short, they capitalize on the declaration of our powerlessness. The critique of the market today has become a morose reassessment that, contrary to its stated aims, serves to forestall the emancipation of minds and practices. And it ends up sounding not dissimilar to reactionary discourse. These critics of the market call for subversion only to declare it impossible and to abandon all hope for emancipation. For me, the fundamental question is to explore the possibility of maintaining spaces of play. To discover how to produce forms for the presentation of objects, forms for the organization of spaces, that thwart expectations. The main enemy of artistic creativity as well as of political creativity is consensus – that is, inscription within given roles, possibilities and competences. [...]

Jacques Rancière, John Kelsey, Fulvia Carnevale, extracts from 'Art of the Possible: Jacques Rancière in Conversation with John Kelsey and Fulvia Carnevale', trans. Jeanine Herman, *Artforum* (March 2007).

Karen Smith

To Contradict Reality: A 'Utopian Strategy' by Ai Weiwei//2009

Art might not be able to transport an audience physically to another realm – although this was literally the challenge Ai Weiwei realized with his mass action work *Fairytale* (2007), described below – but it can be a liberating activity for those who can open themselves up to it. Art can illustrate or invoke a utopian vision. It can also turn Man's vision of utopia back upon itself, which is the primary function of Ai's art and activities. He is a mirror to society, which reflects its absurdity and conceit back at the viewer. Ai's 'strategy' serves largely to highlight the fallacy of utopian idealism by demonstrating possibilities for tangible change that are within reach, not beyond it. The first step towards arriving at this 'strategy' was for Ai to return to China after a decade of living in the United States, which he did in 1994 to be close to his ailing father. Once primed of the changed situation in China since he had last lived there, his first act was to begin to carve out alternative space for the new and experimental artistic communities that were emerging. The initial platform was a publishing project, begun in 1994, that united a fragmented community of disenfranchised artists – conceptual, performance, experimental – in a common goal: that of communicating their ideas beyond immediate private and isolated circles. The *Black | White | Grey* cover books thus set a precedent for the core concerns of all works that have followed since – which include Ai's curatorial activities.

Architecture offered a particularly effective mechanism through which to disseminate ideas. This began in 1999. Conceptualizing or conceiving physical spaces forced Ai to explore 'how to cross over from one environment to achieve a new one. How to give dignity to the lives of a group of individuals, to single people, as spaces they can be willing to share'.[1] Within the space of a decade, FAKE Design – the studio Ai established to focus on architectural design – completed work on several hundred projects: in its way his own experiment with constructing an ideal social environment. It produced a social network of architects. The culmination of this experience was the project *Ordos 100*, begun in 2008, which brings together designs from one hundred architects for a 200,000 square metre site in Inner Mongolia. For Ai, this represents an unprecedented example of using a physical public environment to contradict the rationale of China's historic urban development, and the 'reality' its ideas continue to shape, whilst providing a platform for communication and the exchange of individual aesthetics and goals.

Central to Ai's strategy is the notion of the individual. At certain moments, he believes individuals need some form of shock to jolt them out of complacency. His explanation is thus: 'Communism's idea of utopia was less about raising people up than bringing everything down to the lowest common denominator in the name of equality: to make each and every individual, community, work unit, identical to the next. We must always challenge this'.[2]

Fairytale functioned in just this manner. It was conceived entirely to service the individual: 1001 of them in total, all Chinese citizens of the most ordinary rank and file. Within the context of China, even today where few restrictions are placed on individual travel, surely *Fairytale* represents the ultimate utopian dream. It was aimed specifically at those citizens who had no idea *they* could travel: poor people, from remote communities, people without prior documentation, papers, who had never travelled further than the boundaries of the provincial town, or even out of their villages. Yet Ai transported them to a new world, to see for themselves the actualities of life in Europe and allow them to judge for themselves if life was better, the grass greener. It was a life-changing experience for most, which led to the travellers meeting, sharing something and creating a nationwide network to stay in touch.

For a fine example of acknowledging truths that rhetoric and grand ambition, often in bombastic fashion, trample and conceal, and of the goals and ideals enshrined in Ai's work, one only has to look to *Fountain of Light* (2007). *Fountain* began from Ai's theory that 'People are drawn to moments in history that send blood racing through the veins; that prompt a surge of humanist feeling. Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International* was just such a moment.'[3] Put simply: an emblem arising out of rhetoric used to blindside humanist concerns. As Tatlin's form referenced the march of European industrialization, which continued through the twentieth century, becoming responsible for shaping the present world – in Ai's words, responsible, 'for creating the junk [physical and spiritual (political)] that we're still living with today'[4] – so Ai's works speak of a similar revolution sweeping the new centres of industrial expansion almost a century on.

In referencing Tatlin's work, Ai recalls the utopian ambitions of the Constructivists, whose aesthetic would not find favour among the new industrial hegemonies: whose voices and visions would be rejected. *Monument* embodied the conflict in a physical structure designed to represent architectural innovation for the industrialized age – for which the design is still recognized as iconic – but which was also emblematic of its physical impossibility: presaging the future fate of Constructivism.[5] *Monument* demonstrates the zeal of the new Soviet regime in the honeymoon years immediately following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Steel and iron were symbols of the new power and hope: a political ideal further reflected in the dazzling volume of glass that was intended

to clad the external façades of the *Monument's* three main sections. As interpreted by Ai: 'Glass served to emphasize the degree of clear, enlightened thinking behind Lenin's theories of an ideal social system'.[6] The original vision of the *Monument* remains far ahead of its era: the spiral form, which dominates its external shape, injects a dynamic force of motion, but in 1920 was almost impossible to engineer. Ai might not have been moved to address its structural complexities had he not been involved in discussions with the engineering firm Ove Arup to resolve the challenges raised by the design for Beijing's Olympic Stadium, the 'Bird's Nest', in which he was involved.[8] Rarely seen in architectural forms, for Ai the symbolism of the spiral is perfect; exerting a dynamic upward motion that ultimately moves in ever smaller concentric circles. He has stated: 'Whenever Man experiences a bout of revolutionary thinking he always ends up boxing – caging in this case – himself in'.[9] For Ai, then, 'the form of *Monument* defeats the very intellectual ideal it was meant to symbolize: it ironically becomes a metaphor for the way in which power ultimately collapses in upon itself; for the romantic sentiments with which the rational mind is eternally in conflict always prove to be its undoing'.[10]

1 Interview with Karen Smith, Ai Weiwei's studio, March 2009.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Karen Smith, 'Ai Weiwei', *The Real Thing*, catalogue of group exhibition of Chinese artists at Tate Liverpool (London: Tate Publishing, 2007) 36.
5 The movement ended somewhat abruptly in 1934 with the enforcement of socialist realism as the only form of expression permitted. A number of leading Constructivist artists had already departed the Soviet Union by this time.
6 Karen Smith, 'Ai Weiwei', *The Real Thing*, op.cit., 38.
7 One might suggest that some of the issues associated with the structure of the form, specifically the angle of its upward thrust, have been tackled in the design for the China Central Television Tower in Beijing created by Rem Koolhaas and Ole Scheeren of OMA Architects.
8 Together with Swiss team of architects Herzon & De Meuron.
9 Karen Smith, 'Ai Weiwei', *The Real Thing*, op.cit., 38.
10 Ibid., 40.

Karen Smith, extract from a longer essay on the utopian dimension of Ai Weiwei's work (2009). With thanks to the author for agreeing to its first publication in this volume.

Alun Rowlands
Exegesis: *When we build let us think that we build forever*//2006

Maybe Plato got it wrong. Or perhaps, from a distance, he could not have known how grand illusions, when shaped by deft hands, can become true raptures of the mind, diamond-bright images of undying delight. Plato imagined an audience. Imprisoned in darkness. Chained by their own deceiving fascinations, they watch a parade of dancing shadows on a cave wall. The puppet-masters choreograph various forms lit by a fire that is the source of the audience's knowledge – that is the totality of their world. This world is not reality, but is merely a spectral representation. A benign hallucination. Plato's concern was that society, through the prolixity of images, would entirely dissociate itself from 'the real' and from Truth, or at least that this dissociation from the real would encourage the reign of anarchy. The importance of the allegory of the cave, in Book VII of *The Republic*, lies in Plato's belief that there are invisible truths beneath the apparent surface of things, truths that only the most enlightened can grasp.

Mark Titchner's installation *When we build let us think that we build forever* (2005), first made manifest at Vilma Gold Project Space, Berlin, and reconfigured at Arnolfini, Bristol, is a multifaceted *mise en scène*. Here, the allegory of the cave is deconstructed through image, object and text. Projections replace the fire, sculptures replace the forms casting shadows, screens replace the cave wall and the echoes become a distorted, hypnotic soundtrack. This illusory space is staged. It vibrates and resonates in semi-darkness. Our senses are assaulted with a totalizing affect. To block in the scenario – a freeze frame, a snapshot – there is a central totemic black pyramid. It shimmers in projected light that illuminates inscribed text. Dense fabric screens, punctuated by lamps that act as strange attractors, encircle the periphery of the space. A rebus of disconnected images adorns the screens, impressing upon us the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli. The drone of peripheral sound and the flicker of images amplify the antagonistic undertow of the structures. Events are not what they seem. A confounding multiplicity of voices vies for our attention through the very fabric and materiality of the installation.

The helter-skelter of references and discourses that Titchner employs in *When we build* ... extends beyond the formality of art history. He interweaves private visions and marginal histories that signify a determined agency to probe knowledge. This revisionist cut-and-paste filter allows a reconsideration of multitudinous systems of belief that saturate our porous contemporary culture.

Here, the jump-cut and montage of histories fold into the legacies of modernism and its allusion to permanence. Visual impressions succeed one another. Time becomes solvent. Everyone and everything is implicitly bound to grand narratives and specific ideologies. Exhausted political systems, tired revolutionary ideals and empty zealous doctrines mingle in a decisive provocation. Citations of traditions of western art are persistent and detailed – Suprematism colludes with iniquitous Symbolism while being distorted into something polytheistic. The geometric keystones of this universe are quite distinct from early twentieth-century endeavours to discover the essence of pure shapes in the natural world. [...]

Titchner restages in fragments the cannibalization of revolutionary and liberating artistic languages. He draws on these covert reference points in a renegotiation with the progressive spirit of modernism. Art can be an instrument for transforming the larger culture – in the right hands. There is an overt recognition within Titchner's work that knowledge and power are inextricably bound. They are situated amongst a cacophony of social practices and situations. Through the excavation of referential discourses an estranged epistemology is forged. Rewinding to Plato's allegory of the cave, we recall that those who cast the shadows have the power to project certain intentionality, through the formation of the icons paraded in front of the fire. One interpretation of the allegory is that Plato's puppeteers are institutions and authorities that manipulate how we apprehend the world. The museum still dominates the horizon of our material culture, legitimizing cultural form and expression. Its practices of selection, presentation and historiography deploy values that control and decipher our past. These governing practices – the ruling forces of political and economic factors – reveal the institution as subject to the shifting associations of authority. In Titchner's manifestation we confront institutions head on. Is this an infernal critique? The museum's position as the most authoritative art institution appears inflamed. Is this fire a metaphor for knowledge, or internal combustion, brought about by the weight of governing the construction of our present, as well as our hallucinatory future? [...]

Titchner's use of language, as Michael Wilson writes in his *Artforum* review of *Why and Why Not!* (2004), is 'a kind of alienated, undermined, institutional poetic ... [he] summons declarative force only to cast profound doubt on the authority of any given creed'. In *When we build...* Titchner literally hammers alternating texts into the supporting columns of the central sculpture. WHAT IS THIS SHADE, THIS DARKNESS THAT MOCKS US WITH THE SIGHT OF WHAT WE MIGHT HAVE KNOWN and HERE I AM, A LIGHT FLASHING ABOUT YOU OF ALL PEOPLE, IT IS YOU I LOVE THE MOST are just two contrapuntal examples that articulate a physical penumbra. There is no simple exegesis of Titchner's use of

quotation and language. At times it is scholastic and measured. At other times his composite citations read like zealous rants. This is reflected in their textual references and allusions: from Spinoza and Blake to the narcotic philosophy of Philip K. Dick and the lyrics of The Fall. No single source is privileged above the other. Everything and everyone is eclipsed towards enlightenment.

Both *The Bible* and Plato's *Republic* are concerned with man's search for the infinite and metaphysical truth that will provide a moral structure for society and its institutions. It is not possible to turn the eye from darkness to light without turning the whole body. To prolong our Platonic analogy, we must escape the bonds of the cave, transcend the shadows and emerge into the sunlight and knowledge of true forms. At no point in his work does Titchner propose such a route, or cast judgement on the material proffered. Instead the scenario is confounded. Throughout the exhibition, a visionary agency is at work without divulging any clear or explicit knowledge. Philip K. Dick's gnostic vision is documented in his amphetamine-fuelled *Valis* (1981), in which a coterie of religious seekers forms to explore revelatory visions. The group's hermeneutical research leads to a rock musician's estate where they confront the Messiah. Titchner paraphrases Dick's heavily autobiographical epiphany, in which the prophet Elijah possesses him in the form of a rose-coloured light. Dick believed his enlightenment was an act of love. He was unable to rationalize his experience, questioning his perception of reality. He transcribed what thoughts he could into an eight-thousand-page, million-word journal, written in the first and third person, laced with paranoia and arboreal fantasies. Maybe the moral here is this: if we returned to the cave knowing the truth, our eyes would be slow to adjust to the dim light. Visionaries, by their nature, are not appreciated and often misunderstood. Rarely do they drag the rest of the dark cave's inhabitants to light and knowledge. Like rock stars, they either burn bright or burn out. [...]

Archaeologically excavating the references and intertextuality of Titchner's exhibition reveals a continuously discursive formation. In a moment of clarity, and due to the contiguous nature of the totalizing installation perhaps, we apprehend a moment of acuity. A fleeting episteme. Titchner charts a historic migration where the aestheticization of politics is countered by the politicization of aesthetics. His arrangements of signs inhere to both reality and representation. Ideologies, belief and knowledge coagulate, less as rigid convictions than as vehicles for speculative thinking. In *The Nights of Labour* (1981), philosopher Jacques Rancière chronicles accounts of the self- education of the artisan classes during the nineteenth century. He implicitly states that we can forge a 'society of emancipated individuals that would be a society of artists', who would 'repudiate the divide between those who know and those who don't know'. It would recognize only 'active minds that speak of their actions and

transform all their works'. Mark Titchner's 'works' within such an aesthetic regime clearly envision how art can be historically affective and directly political. He achieves this by means of fictions: fictions in which history, culture and politics flicker into an unfinished film, a documentary fiction, of which we are both cameramen and actors.

Alun Rowlands, extracts from 'Exegesis: *When we build let us think that we build forever*', in *Mark Titchner* (Bristol, England: Arnolfini, 2006) 50–51; 54; 55; 56–7.

Jan Verwoert
Gestures Towards a New Life: The Avant-Garde as Historical Provocation//2007

I. What to do with the Avant-Garde?

What does an avant-garde want – from art, from people, from society? What is it getting at? How can we find that out? What if we begin by not asking about an avant-garde's motivations, goals and influences, and instead consider the gestures with which avant-gardists stage themselves? Avant-gardists are never without a gesture, for their appearance on the stage of art history must have the necessary power to unhinge this history (as it previously conceived itself) with a long-lasting effect. The appearance of an avant-garde indeed only goes down in history if it successfully performs gestures that make conceivable another course of history. These gestures correspond in their form and status to a *coup d'etat* in art history and its politics. The successful performance of an avant-garde gesture entails a coup, a historical feat. Paradoxically, it lies in the nature of the avant-garde gesture that it is on the one hand *transhistorical*, to the extent that as a singular event it radically interrupts the course of history, exploding its framework and falling out of all previously valid categories of historiography, while at the same time it is deeply *historical*, founding the new history in which it will exist and be conceived from now on – as the revolutionary act of founding a new art. The power of the avant-garde gesture could not even be measured if we didn't somehow feel the impact of the break it causes, and thus did not perceive the break as an event with a still undiminished – that is, transhistorical – effectivity. But adequately describing the significance of this power means nonetheless presenting its long-term impact from an overarching historical perspective. To grasp the coup of an avant-garde thus entails understanding the force of the gesture at its core in its simultaneously historical and transhistorical dimensions.

Indeed, it seems quite a general characteristic of gestures that the context in which they take on meaning is historical and transhistorical at the same time. On the one hand, historical reality manifests itself so clearly in gestures because they belong to the inventory of means of expression available at a certain point in time. In their function as cultural-historical specific forms of interaction, gestures are signs of their time. On the other hand, the significance of a gesture is always also absolutely *contemporary* in the transhistorical sense, for we only understand the gesture if we allow it to have an impact upon us in the moment we perceive it, if it engages us in an exchange in that moment. Gestures demand a direct response. When someone greets, he or she expects to be greeted back. Someone who makes a scene is courting attention. Whoever cries saddens, and

so on. Gestures create presence to the extent that they always commit us to participating in an exchange in that moment. Because it seems to lie in the nature of the gesture that the person who performs it intends to provoke a reaction, it can be said that the gesture is 'provocative' in a literal sense. The practical meaning of the gesture thus lies not least in the provocation that it causes. Provocation is inherent to gestures.

That provocation is the intention of an avant-garde can surely be counted as a commonplace of art history. The slogan 'Épater le bourgeois' is almost proverbially associated with the concept of the avant-garde.The expanded perspective that this understanding of the intrinsically provocative character of the gesture allows is that provocation no longer presents itself as a mere attitude of the avant-garde, but an immanent force of artistic practice. The power of the avant-garde gesture that strives for the historical coup in its performance is its provocative power. But whom does this gesture provoke? Here as well, the answer must remain ambivalent: on the one hand, the avant-garde gesture provokes the witnesses of its performance, that is, both the historical witnesses as well as those interested in its history, who try to re-experience the power of the provocation in order to attest to it. On the other hand, the avant-garde gesture provokes not just its witnesses, but history itself – here also in a double sense. Avant-gardists *pro-voke*, or indeed *e-voke* history to the extent that they summon history as the system of references for their artistic practice. It is precisely here that avant-gardists differ from ordinary art producers, for they understand their artistic acts always directly as historical acts, as entries in – and rewritings of – the book of history. Through the radical transformation of our habits of perception, they seek to cause an event in art that in its radicalness and explosiveness exceeds art history and constitutes a historically new form of experience – that is, a new form of experiencing history. At the same time, they *pro-voke* history in a still more direct sense, by summoning it, as if calling a ghost finally to show itself: 'Reveal yourself, history, let us see how you will be!' is the true motto of avant-garde provocation. The hope here is that the ghost of history, if it would allow itself to be lured into making an appearance, might take on the shape of a revolution. Through the provocation of their gestures, avant-gardists are interested in nothing less than causing a revolution as the eventful appearance of a new history.

II. Signs Like Slaps

Let us take a look at three gestures:

A film shows letters in close-up before a bright background. Each shot displays one letter. The shots are sometimes just a few seconds long, sometimes a bit longer. We see the sequence: 'a b c k s p f h n p a c o a c o t w o j u a b c i f y d i m o z k w e h z w n w o d r i j g a b c d k t k i n s o a u c d u a n t w f z t f z t d r j y r j d r t a c o z s k ...' For the length of each shot, a sound is played on an organ or synthesizer. Each sound has a definite pitch, but neither does the sequence of pitches result in a melody in the conventional sense, nor does the chain of letters form a recognizable term. Nonetheless, the series of letters and sounds does not seem arbitrary, but clear and definite. The film lasts 4 hours 20 minutes, is entitled *Cwiczenie* (An Exercise) and was made in 1972/73 by Józef Robakowski.

A film shows a man in close-up. He is sitting in a kitchen, screaming, with his eyes closed and his mouth wide open, producing two alternating sounds: a high pitch, that sounds like an E (or a Polish Y), and a deeper sound like an A. He holds this sound for the duration of every shot, so that for each shot only one of the two sounds is made. In each shot, the protagonist is differently lit: sometimes from the front, sometimes from the back, sometimes from the side. The irregular alternation of high and deep pitches thus corresponds to a constant change of the light in the image. In the final shot, the protagonist signals with a wave that the shooting has come to an end. The film lasts three minutes, is entitled *YYAA* and was made in 1973 by Wojciech Bruszewski.

A film alternately shows a black screen and a white sheet. When the sheet is seen for the first time, the word 'nie' (no) appears in typing on it. The second time, the word 'nie' appears twice. This continues, until a number of lines have been filled with the word 'nie'. Then the process is reversed, and with each subsequent shot a word less can be seen, until finally the sheet is again blank. Accompanying each shot, in which the sheet can be seen, a voice sounds, monotonously intoning the word 'nie'. Since the black screen and white sheet with the narrator's voice alternate in rapid sequence, this results in a rhythm of silence and sound and an alternation between black and white that over time produces a nervous flicker. The film lasts four minutes, and is entitled *Zaprzeczenie* (Negation) and was made in 1973 by Ryszard Wasko. Robakowski, Bruszewski and Wasko were members of The Workshop of the Film Form, an artist group that was founded in 1970 in Lodz and existed until 1977.

Why speak here of gestures? Indeed, the films hardly show what can generally be understood as a gesture. Admittedly, there's a man screaming, but he does not make this screaming any more emphatic by using other forms of body language: he does not gesticulate, but just sits there restfully. In the two other films, there are no people, but just letters and words to be seen and sounds to be heard. All the same, the films have the *impact* of gestures. They have the same intensity. They transfer the power of body language to a language of images, letters,

sounds and cuts. The screaming, the illumination of letters, and the appearance and disappearance of the word 'nie', marked by hard cuts, have the force of a strike. Each cut, each image, each letter and each sound has the sharpness of a slap with the flat palm on a smooth surface. One feels the rhythm of the strikes with each cut. Slap slap slap slap. Nie nie nie nie. A A Y Y. Through the simultaneous reduction of the image's informative content in image and sound to clear, powerful signals and acceleration (if not even brutalization) of the cuts, the images and cuts are brought closer to one another to the point where the series of cuts is just as present as the series of images and sounds.The series of sounds, pitches, the chain of letters and the lighting are thus inseparably tied to the rhythm of the series of cuts, fusing them into one. The image, sound and light are the cuts, and the cuts are the image, sound and light. But when we say that the power of a gesture lies in its power to realize a *coup* – 'couper' means in French literally 'making a cut' – and by way of this cut creating a situation that involves the beholder addressed by the gesture, then it becomes all the more clear that the three films are in fact radical gestures.

Using concepts from Gilles Deleuze's cinema theory, Giorgio Agamben in this sense describes the aesthetic of modern film montage as an aesthetic that is marked by '*coups mobiles*', images that are themselves in movement, and which Deleuze calls 'movement-images'. He continues, 'It is necessary co extend Deleuze's argument and show how it relates to the status of the image in general in modernity. This implies, however, that the mythical rigidity of the image has been broken, and that here, properly speaking, there are no images but only gestures.'[1] Picking up from this definition, we could speak of the gesture as 'coupes mobiles', moving cuts, that is to say, the films of Robakowski,Wasko and Bruszewski are avant-garde gestures because they perform this radicalization of visual form. They are resolutely modern films, because all the filmic means they mobilize are used in such a way that they not only follow the logic of *coupes mobiles* but also forcefully expose this logic with the entire gestural power of a slap. In other words, the films make us experience what it means when an image as a cut becomes a moving gesture.

But if the power of the gesture, as we established above, cannot be divorced from its provocative impact, this raises the question of whom or what do the films provoke in the gesture inherent to their form? What avant-garde cut do the filmmakers achieve with their 'coupes mobiles'? First of all, we are the addressees of this gesture. The provocation of its avant-garde film language – that is, a language that is condensed into the form of a gesture – is directed at us beholders by subjecting us to sequences of images, sounds and cuts that cannot be understood in a conventional way, do not correspond to our habits of vision, and thus throw us off balance. Bruszewski yells at us, while Wasko and

Robakowski work over our senses with audiovisual information transmitted with the speed, brevity and density of a technical signal. Their films are like telegrams in Morse code. As recipients, we become tickers that directly process the signals received and spit them out on tape: a b c k s p f h n p a c o a c o t w o j u a b c i f y d i m o z k w e h z w n w o d r i j g a b c d k t k i n s o a u c d u a n t w f z t f z t d r j y r j d r t a c o z s k ... A A Y Y ... But the medium that processes this information is neither transparent nor functional. It is the body that screams or is yelled at, bombarded with a cannonade of audiovisual signals. As gestures, the films are not just a strike, but a shot or a fusillade. In this way, the military character of the metaphorical concept of avant-garde – the French word originally referred to 'front riders' – is fulfilled.

But wherein lies the impact of this provocation? What reaction do they seek to provoke or tease out? First of all, the provocative effect of all three films lies in bringing the beholders to encounter them with an attitude other than contemplation. Through the high frequency of the moving cuts and processed information (as well as the almost physical proximity created by the audiovisual bombardment), they rob the beholders of the time to allow themselves to engage contemplatively – that is, slowly and deliberately – with the film. As every engagement is immediately a reaction, the processing of information becomes the production of communication. We are immediately tied and plugged into the feedback loop of signal transmission. To the extent that they rob us of the possibility of contemplation, the films provoke the distanced beholder to become an involved participant. The provocative gestural power of the filmic language changes our attitude in relationship to the object of our perception, from an unbinding distance to a binding implication. (Hence Adorno's short and sweet pronouncement on avant-garde provocation: 'Progressive art [...] hardly tolerates a contemplative attitude.')[2]

Apart from this, there isn't really anything to contemplate in these films. Due to the extreme reduction of the filmic language to the simplest means of expression the filmmakers avoid any form of filmic composition that would offer itself to contemplation. It is impossible to immerse oneself, for the films have no depth. They are flat like the palm of a hand ready to strike. They are pure audiovisual information: cut, signal, stimulus. This abolition of depth should be understood as a provocation not just directed at viewers but at the filmmakers as well. They refuse themselves expressive depth and thus the use of all conventional creative techniques that could generate the impression of semantic depth. In that they consciously limit their own possibilities of expression by making the conceptual decision to choose a reduced filmic form, they provoke themselves into taking a different position in relation to their own filmic/artistic ability to act. They thus lure themselves from their reserve, as they do with us as participants in

the communicative act. The laws of their new filmic language force them to take a new position or attitude regarding artistic production. They provoke themselves into changing from authors to signal transmitters and participants in communication. As Lukasz Ronduda sums up, 'In numbing these qualities [the subjective qualities of their works] the artists (or rather "scientists" in the field of art and aesthetics) sought to "objectify" their own actions [...] in order to adapt them to the "intersubjective" sphere of communication.'[3]

The avant-gardist sharpening of filmic language to the form of a powerful, flat gesture thus entails a provocation against both the filmmaker and the viewers, which seeks to change their relationship: they move away from a distanced form of communication that relies on the contemplation of semantically complex artworks. And they instead allow themselves to engage in a far more direct form of communication that relies entirely on the maximal amplification of the moment of intersubjective communication, because it concentrates on the transmission of the simplest signals, where everything takes place blow after blow. By way of provoking new forms of intersubjectivity, the avant-garde gesture wants to create new forms of social interaction, and thus connect our social ties in a different way.

III. Gestures for Another Society

The provocation of the avant-garde gesture by these Workshop of the Film Form filmmakers is thus meant to summon a different social situation that at the same time would be a new historical situation, because it would represent an alternative to extant political relations in this historical moment. By developing gestures that are to provoke direct intersubjective communication, the filmmakers formulate their protest against the party dictatorship and the bureaucratic government that determined social life in Poland in the historical moment of their emergence. The transformation of gestures of interpersonal communication is intended to break the authoritarian order of the existing relations. Decisive here is that the authoritarian character of a social order manifests itself most vividly in the most everyday gestures as the ideology maintaining the regime penetrates and determines all areas of social life. In this sense, Ronduda writes, 'In Communist Poland there was no situation outside ideology, just as today there is no situation free from the laws of the market.'[4]

But if the gestures of people in the society in which they live are entirely charged with ideology and alienated by this, then the first step towards liberating gestures must be emptying them of all ideological content. What is at stake in this conscious emptying of significance is in fact the utopian project of inventing gestures that are removed from the grip of ideology because nothing in or about them could be used for any ideological purposes. These motivations explain the

provocative flatness of the films discussed. By breaking down filmic language to its simplest, most basic elements, Robakowski, Bruszewski and Wasko strive towards a form of expression that is simultaneously too direct and too open to allow ideology to infiltrate. On the films of Pawel Kwiek, a further member of the Workshop, Ronduda thus states, 'Kwiek's film [...] was structurally incapable of promoting the dominant ideology of the time: its basic principle was interpretative openness and a deliberate indeterminacy of meaning.'[5]

The avant-garde provocation of the Workshop of the Film Form artists therefore effectively lies in the sharpening of the artistic form to a gesture that refuses the historical reality of an ideologically over-formed social life and strives for a form of intersubjective exchange which is both direct and radically open. In the same historical moment, the artist Jan Swidzinski formulated in 1974 in his 'Theses on Contextual Art' a programme that pointedly expresses this ethics and politics of another form of gesture. Swidzinski understands his programme of 'contextual art' as a counter-model to Joseph Kosuth's propositions on 'conceptual art'. He emphasizes that an artistic activity freed from the conventional forms of media expression should not primarily be, as Kosuth maintained, about defining unambiguous conceptual positions. Instead, it should be about inventing signs and gestures that due to their radical openness only (and always anew) obtain significance in the concrete moment and specific context of an intersubjective social exchange between people. The commitment to the openness of the context-sensitive artistic gesture here means both a reflexive recognition of the fact that the significance of artistic activity is dependent on the social context in which it comes to performance, and, as well, an insistence that such an open and direct context-sensitive artistic gesture might proactively contribute to the opening of existing social relations. Thesis 15 from Swidzinski's programme reads as follows: 'Contextual Art is a form of acting in reality through the following transformation of meanings: REALITY > INFORMATION > ART > NEW OPEN MEANINGS > REALITY.'[6]

Swidzinski's avant-garde programme of changing social relations by inventing a language of forms that is open and yet simultaneously intervenes directly in the social reality of interpersonal communication, and can thus be read directly as an expression of the goals pursued by the Workshop of the Film Form artists. In this context Ronduda's summary of Swidzinski's theses reads like a precise description of the film language developed by Robakowski, Bruszewski and Wasko: 'Instead of obscuring reality, the contextual pure/empty signs were to be stimuli initiating a series of processual, interactive relations, creating an open process of semiosis, blurring the line between the artist and the viewer. [...] For contextualism, the ideal of social and cultural communication was radical democracy, i.e. a system completely different from the one in which

it was itself born. This aspect reveals the current critical attitude towards communist Poland's non-democratic reality. Its anti-authoritarian dimension is contained in the postulate of the impossibility of monopolizing meaning in a single context and the necessity of over-contextual negotiations.'[7] The intersubjective, social and historical provocation of this avant-garde programme thus lies in inventing gestures that, in contrast to then extant relations, establish openness and directness in communication.

The radicalness of this gesture lies not least in the fact that the political protest appeals directly to the essence of language. The films of Robakowski, Bruszewski and Wasko want to show language's potential in the state of its liberation from ideology. They want to make clear what language can do when used with the directness and openness inherent in it. It is precisely this performative exhibition of language's basic character that Giorgio Agamben in turn understands as the point of the gesture. The following passages read like a commentary on the films here discussed, in particular Wasko's *Zaprzeczenie* (Negation): 'In the same way, if we understand the "word" as the means of communication, then to show a word does not mean to have at one's disposal a higher level (a metalanguage, itself incommunicable without the first level), starting from which we could make that word an object of communication; it means, rather, to expose the word in its own mediality, in its own being a means, without any transcendence. The gesture is, in this sense, communication of a communicability. It has precisely nothing to say because what it shows is the being-in-language of human beings as pure mediality.'[8] Agamben continues that precisely humanity's 'being in a medium' [*l'essere-in-un-medio*] opens up the 'ethical dimension' of human action.[9]

The provocation and explosiveness of the avant-garde gesture developed by the artists from the Workshop of the Film Form and theorized by Swidzinski lies in the act of reclaiming the sphere of communication, communicability, intersubjectivity, and thus the realm of ethics itself, from dominant relations, the regime and ideology. By opening up this sphere as a field for artistic endeavours, the artists turn language, intersubjectivity, and thus ethics, into an artistic medium. They reclaim the right to determine their own form of social communication. If, with Agamben, we understand this realm of communication and being in language as the genuine milieu of intersubjective relations and the ethics of human existence, it becomes clear that reclaiming language means winning back an existential ability to act, and thus reclaiming life from the regime. And that is truly radical. For herein lies the provocation of this avant-garde gesture: by performing a different kind of communication, it seeks to achieve a different and better way of shared living, where direct and open forms of exchange finally liberate social life from the power of ideology.

1 Giorgio Agamben, 'Notes on Gesture', in *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vicenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) 54.

2 Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970) 495.

3 Lukasz Ronduda, 'Soc Art – An attempt in Revitalizing Avant-Garde Strategies in Polish Art of the 1970s', *Piktogram*, no. 1 (Summer 2005) 121–31; 125.

4 Ibid., 130.

5 Ibid., 129.

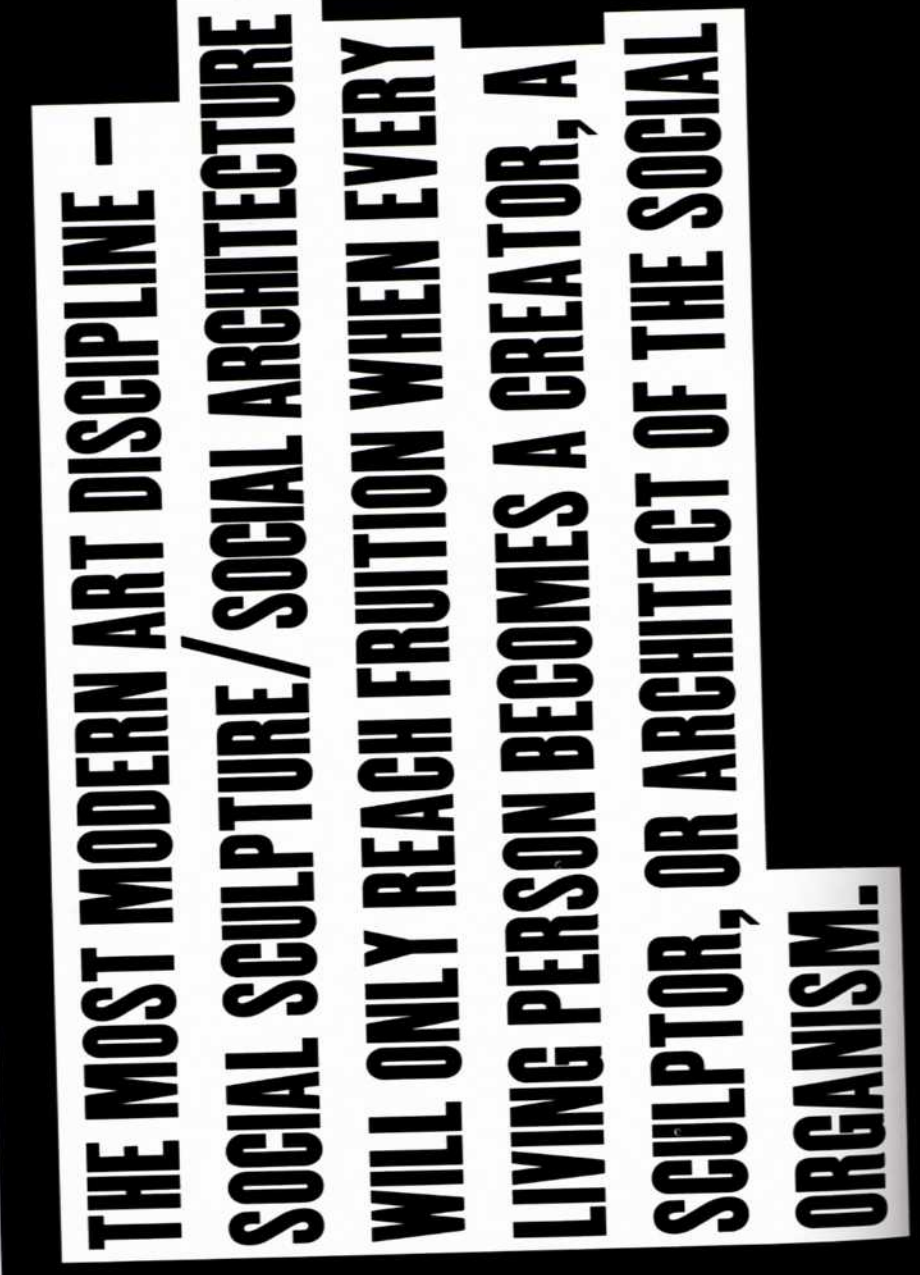
6 Jan Swidzinski, *The 12 Theses of Contextual Art* (1974). (As a gesture of the conscious disturbance of the conventional format of listing theses, the numbering follows no recognizable logic. The numbers of the theses are in random order, and sometimes exceed the number of actual theses. See *Piktogram*, no. 3 (2006) 31.

7 Lukasz Ronduda, 'Flexibility Makes Our Existence Possible: The Contextual Art of Jan Swidzinski', *Piktogram*, no. 3 (2006) 32–9; 39.

8 Giorgio Agamben, op. cit., 55.

9 Ibid., 54.

Jan Verwoert, 'Gestures Towards a New Life: The Avant-Garde as a Historical Provocation', trans. Brian Currid, in *1,2,3 ... Avant-Gardes: Film/Art between Experiment and Archive*, ed. Lukasz Ronduda and Florian Zeyfang (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2007) 28–39.



Joseph Beuys, 'I am Searching for Field Character', 1973

THERAPEUTIC UTOPIAS

Joseph Beuys
I Am Searching for Field Character//1973

Only on condition of a radical widening of definition will it be possible for art and activities related to art to provide evidence that art is now the only evolutionary-revolutionary power. Only art is capable of dismantling the repressive effects of a senile social system that continues to totter along the deathline: to dismantle in order to build A SOCIAL ORGANISM AS A WORK OF ART.

This most modern art discipline – Social Sculpture/Social Architecture – will only reach fruition when every living person becomes a creator, a sculptor or architect of the social organism. Only then would the insistence on participation of the action art of Fluxus and Happenings be fulfilled; only then would democracy be fully realized. Only a conception of art revolutionized to this degree can turn into a politically productive force, coursing through each person and shaping history,

But all this, and much that is as yet unexplored, has first to form part of our consciousness: insight is needed into objective connections. We must probe (theory of knowledge) the moment of origin of free individual productive potency (creativity). We then reach the threshold where the human being experiences himself primarily as a spiritual being, where his supreme achievements (work of art), his active thinking, his active feeling, his active will, and their higher forms, can be apprehended as sculptural generative means, corresponding to the exploded concepts of sculpture divided into its elements – indefinite – movement – definite (see theory of sculpture), and are then recognized as flowing in the direction that is shaping the content of the world right through into the future.

This is the concept of art that carries within itself not only the revolutionizing of the historic bourgeois concept of knowledge (materialism, positivism), but also of religious activity.

EVERY HUMAN BEING IS AN ARTIST who – from his state of freedom – the position of freedom that he experiences at first hand – learns to determine the other positions in the TOTAL ARTWORK OF THE FUTURE SOCIAL ORDER. Self-determination and participation in the cultural sphere (freedom); in the structuring of laws (democracy); and in the sphere of economics (socialism). Self-administration and decentralization (threefold structure) occurs: FREE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM.

THE FIFTH INTERNATIONAL is born

Communication occurs in reciprocity: it must never be a one-way flow from the teacher to the taught. The teacher takes equally from the taught. So oscillates – at all times and everywhere, in any conceivable internal and external circumstance, between all degrees of ability, in the work place, institutions, the street, work circles, research groups, schools – the master/pupil, transmitter/receiver, relationship. The ways of achieving this are manifold, corresponding to the varying gifts of individuals and groups. THE ORGANIZATION FOR DIRECT DEMOCRACY THROUGH REFERENDUM is one such group. It seeks to launch many similar work groups or information centres, and strives towards worldwide cooperation.

Joseph Beuys, 'I am Searching for Field Character' (1973), in Carin Kuoni, ed., *Energy Plan for the Western Man: Joseph Beuys in America* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1990) 21–3.

Joseph Beuys
An Appeal for an Alternative//1982

This appeal is directed to all people belonging to the European cultural sphere and civilization. The breakthrough to a new social future will be successful if, in the European zones, a movement emerges which tears down the walls between East and West and closes the rift between North and South by its power for renewal. We maintain that a start would be made if the Middle Europeans decide to act in accordance with this appeal. If we in Middle Europe begin today to follow a path responding to the demands of the time for co-existence and co-operation in our states and societies, this would have a strong influence on every other place in the world.

Before we ask WHAT CAN WE DO? we have first to consider the question HOW MUST WE THINK? so that the usual approach to the highest ideals of humanity, limited to phrases proclaimed by all party programmes today, does not continue to spread as an expression of its flagrant contradiction of what we actually do in practice in our economic, political and cultural dealings in real life.

We warn, however, against a thoughtless turnabout. Let us begin with SELF-REFLECTION. Let us first look for the grounds which call for our turning away from the prevailing state of things. Let us seek the ideas which point in the direction of a change.

Let us examine our concepts according to which we have shaped conditions in East and West. Let us reflect whether these concepts have benefited our social organism and its interactions with the natural order, whether they have led to the appearances of a healthy existence or made humanity sick, inflicted wounds on it, brought disaster over it and put its present survival in jeopardy.

Let us examine, through careful scrutiny of our needs, whether the concepts of Western capitalism and Eastern communism are open enough to perceive what emerges ever more distinctly from the stream of development of our modern age as the central impulse in the soul of humanity, and which expresses itself as the will to a concrete personal responsibility. And that means, not to be harnessed any more to relations involving command and subjection, power and privileges.

I have occupied myself for many years with this question. Without the help of many other people whom I encountered in my research and experiences, I certainly would not have arrived at the answers that I would like to communicate in this appeal. And this is why these answers are not 'my opinion', but that which numerous others have also recognized to be true.

These are still too few to accomplish instant change. The number of those having the proper insights has to grow. If we should succeed in giving a compact political and organizational form to what we call into being herewith and in applying it finally in a CONCENTRATED NON-PARLIAMENTARY-PARLIAMENTARY ACTION, then this appeal has reached its goal. What is at stake is a NON-VIOLENT REVOLUTION, an alternative which is designed to remain open towards the future.

The Symptoms of the Crisis

The problems that give us every reason to turn away from the prevailing conditions we assume to be well-known. It suffices here to call to mind the most decisive factors of the total predicament, in a summary ordered by key phrases.

The Military Threat

Even without the actual aggressive intentions of the superpowers, there is the danger of the world's atomic destruction. The military technology and the type of weapon stockpiling which has been preposterously increased no longer admits any control over the total apparatus, already impossible to survey. In spite of the stockpiled potential for the destruction of the Earth a hundred times over, behind the backdrops of so-called disarmament negotiations the arms race intensifies with every year.

The result of this collective madness is an enormous wastage of energy and raw materials and a gigantic waste of the creative faculties of millions of people.

The Ecological Crisis

Our relation to nature is characterized by its having become thoroughly disturbed. There is the threat of total destruction of our fundamental natural basis. We are doing exactly what it takes to destroy this natural basis by putting into action an economic system which consists in its unscrupulous exploitation. It has to be clearly spelled out that in this regard the capitalist economic system of the West is basically no different to that of the state capitalism of the East. The destruction is implemented on a worldwide scale.

Between the mine and the garbage dump extends the one-way street of modern industrial civilization, to whose expansive growth more and more lifelines and life cycles of the ecological systems are sacrificed.

The Economic Crisis

This manifests itself in a great number of symptoms that fill the newspapers and media broadcasts daily. Strikes and lock-outs. Billions of people, if counted on a world scale, are unemployed and cannot put their faculties into use for the common good. In order not to slaughter that holy cow 'the laws of marketing', giant amounts of the most valuable food products which accumulate in

subsidized overproduction are destroyed, without the batting of an eyelid, while at the same time in other areas of the world thousands are dying of hunger daily.

What we see here is not the concern to produce in response to the demands of consumers but the skilfully disguised wastage of goods.

This kind of business method surrenders humanity ever more into the power of a clique of multinational corporations that decide the fate of us all at their conference tables, with the top functionaries of communist state monopolism.

Let us leave out any more characterization of what is constantly delivered free of charge into our homes – in the names of 'the monetary crisis', 'the crisis of democracy', 'the crisis of education', 'the legitimation crisis of the state', etc. – and in conclusion discuss briefly:

The Crisis of Consciousness and Meaning

Most people feel helplessly at the mercy of surrounding conditions. In the destructive processes they are subjected to, in the impenetrable tangle of political and economic power, in the distractions and diversionary strategies of a cheap entertainment industry, they cannot find any existential meaning.

Especially the young fall in growing numbers victim to alcoholism, become addicted to drugs, commit suicide. Hundreds of thousands of them are victimized by fanatics under the guise of religion. There is a boom of escapism. As a pendant to this loss of personal identity and depersonalization we see the slogan 'after me the deluge!', the reckless pursuit of the pleasure principle, the complete accommodation of the attempt to get from the total meaninglessness of life, as long as it lasts, all there is to get, without any consideration for those whose account is being overdrawn for the difference.

This difference is one which our environment, our fellow men and posterity will have to pay. It is time to supersede the systems of 'organized irresponsibility' (Rudolf Bahro), by an alternative of equalization and solidarity. [...]

In the outline of the alternative, that is, of the THIRD WAY, of which the communist party first and now the PCI [Partito Comunista Italiano] also speaks positively, we think of man first. He is the builder of the SOCIAL SCULPTURE and according to his dimensions and intentions the social organism must be formed.

In accordance with the feeling for and the recognition of human dignity, three basic needs are held by man today as pre-eminent:

1. He wants to DEVELOP FREELY his faculties and his personality and to put to use his capacities, jointly with the capacities of his fellow men, FREELY for a purpose which he has recognized to be MEANINGFUL.

2. He views every kind of privilege as an unbearable violation of the legitimate democratic right for equality. He has the need, as a person of age in respect to all rights and duties – be they in an economic, social or cultural

context – to be recognized as AN EQUAL AMONG EQUALS and to have a say in the democratic process on all levels and in all areas of society.

3. He wants to GIVE SOLIDARITY AND TO CLAIM SOLIDARITY. Perhaps it will be doubted that this expresses a pre-eminent basic need of man today, because egoism is by far the predominant motive today in individuals' behaviour. But conscientious scrutiny reveals a different situation. Egoism certainly may be in the foreground and determine one's behaviour. However, it is not a need, nor a sought-for ideal. It is a drive which rules and dominates. Yet what is wished for is MUTUAL HELP GIVEN BY FREE CHOICE.

When the impulse of solidarity is felt as a human ideal and the ideal of humanity, then the task is posed, to change those mechanisms which activate the egotistical drive through the social structures, in such a way that they do not oppose inner human intentions. [...]

What can we do now for the realization of the Alternative?

Anyone who envisages this evolutionary alternative has a clear understanding of the SOCIAL SCULPTURE which MAN AS AN ARTIST is helping to build.

Anyone who says there has to be change but skips over the 'Revolution of concepts' and charges up against only the external embodiments of ideologies, is going to fail. He will either give up, be satisfied with reforms, or enter the blind alley of terrorism. All three are forms of victory for the strategies of the systems.

If we finally ask the question: WHAT CAN WE DO? so as to reach the goal of the new reorganization, starting at the fundamentals, then we have to realize: there is only one way of transforming the established order, but it requires a wide range of different measures.

This only way is NON-VIOLENT TRANSFORMATION. Non-violent, not because violence does not seem to promise success in the moment, or for other specific reasons. No. Non-violence must be based on human, spiritual and moral, social and political grounds.

On one hand, the dignity of man is inextricably bound up with the inviolability of the person, and whoever disregards this, leaves the plane of being human. On the other hand, the systems which need to be changed are built on violence of every imaginable kind. Therefore, every way of using violence is an expression of conformity, which thus consolidates that which it wants to dissolve.

This appeal aims to encourage the adoption of the way of non-violent transformation. To those who have been passive until now, though filled with discomfort and dissatisfaction, goes our call: BECOME ACTIVE! Your activity is perhaps the only thing which could lead those who are active but flirt with the use of violence or already are using violence, back to the way of non-violent action.

Although the indicated 'Revolution of concepts' is the core of the method for change presented here, it does not absolutely have to come at the beginning of

all stages. Absolute claims are foreign to it as well. Anyone who is robust enough to examine thoroughly the theories of Marxism, liberalism, the Christian social ethic, down to their final conclusions, will find that they arrive at the same results as we do.

This examining of historic trends down to their final conclusions is necessary today. Where it has courageously been achieved, one notices how the fronts are shifting. There [eco-socialist philosopher] Bahro stands nearer to [Free Democratic Party members] Karl-Hermann Flach and William Bonn than these stand to their party friend [minister for economic affairs] Otto Graf Lambsdorff, and to those of their comrades who took him prisoner and found him guilty [in the Flick corporation bribery scandal].

The process of recasting hardened concepts and theoretical attempts is under way. It has to lead to a BIG DIALOGUE, to a communication between factions, disciplines and nations on the alternative models for a solution. The FREE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY (Free University for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research) is the permanent bid to organize and develop this communication.

'Against the combined interests of the powerful, only an electrifying idea has a chance at least as strong as that of Humanism in the last and that of Christianity of the first centuries of our era' (Herbert Gruhl [a founder of the German Green Party]). In order to penetrate to this 'electrifying idea' across the different beginnings alive in the new social movement, we need a constant and all-embracing dialogue. The FREE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY as a place for organization also includes all the groups and live cells in our society in which people have banded together to think through the questions of the future of our society together. The greater the numbers who collect together for this work, the stronger and more effective the alternative ideas will be. Here then, is our appeal: Let us create jobs at the FREE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, the university of the people.

But this alone is not enough. Wherever possible, we should commit ourselves to the PRACTICE of an alternative mode of living and working. Many have made a beginning already in small areas and special fields. An ALLIANCE of alternative economic and cultural enterprises is the CONSTRUCTIVE INITIATIVE ACTION THIRD WAY (union of enterprises, foundation, members organization). Individual groups or enterprises that want to add actions to their alternative ideas are called upon to support this project.

A final relevant aspect. Perhaps the most important and decisive one for the way of the non-violent transformation. How can the NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT achieve a POLITICAL DIMENSION?

This poses the question, at least for the context of the Western democracies, concerning the possibility of parliamentary action. If we choose this way, then we are right in following it only if we develop a NEW STYLE of political work and

political organization. Only if we get practice in this new style, will we be able to overcome the obstacles which are put in the way of alternative development in the form of restrictive clauses and the like.

It really is necessary that from the side of the parliaments as well, alternative models for solutions are advanced, noticeable to the general public. For this to happen, those people who have developed such models have to get into the parliaments. How do they get in? By concentrating their whole energy in a JOINT ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

For the success of such an attempt it is crucial how the whole alternative movement is viewed. This consists of a true abundance of different currents, initiatives, organizations, institutions, etc. They have only one chance for success, that of moving jointly.

However, joint election campaign does not mean party organization, party programme, party debates in the old style. The needed unity can only be UNITY IN PLURALITY.

The movement of citizens' initiatives, the ecological movement, the peace movement, the women's movement, the movement of models for practice, the movement for a democratic socialism, a humanistic liberalism, the Third Way, the anthroposophical movement and the different Christian denominationally oriented movements, the movement for civil rights and the Third World movement have to realize that they are indispensable ingredients of a general alternative movement, parts which do not exclude or contradict, but which supplement each other.

The reality is that there are Marxist, Catholic, Lutheran, liberal, anthroposophical, ecological, etc. alternative concepts and initiatives. In many essential points there already is a high degree of agreement amongst them. This is the basis of collectivity in unity. In other points there is a lack of agreement. This is the basis of freedom in unity.

A joint election campaign of the general alternative movement is viable only as an ALLIANCE of many autonomous groups, which shape their reciprocal relations and those to the general public in the spirit of ACTIVE TOLERANCE. Our parliaments need the liberating spirit and life of such an union, the UNION FOR THE NEW DEMOCRACY.

The vehicles embarking on this new course are thus ready. They offer room and work for everyone. [...]

Joseph Beuys, extracts from 'An Appeal for an Alternative', in *Art into Society/Society into Art: Seven German Artists* [Albrecht D., Joseph Beuys, K.P. Brehmewr, Hans Haacke, Dieter Hacker, Gustav Metzger, Klaus Staeck] (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1974) 370–71.

Agnes Denes
Wheatfield: A Confrontation//1982

[...] My decision to plant a wheatfield in Manhattan instead of designing just another public sculpture grew out of a longstanding concern and need to call attention to our misplaced priorities and deteriorating human values.

Manhattan is the richest, most professional, most congested and without a doubt most fascinating island in the world. To attempt to plant, sustain and harvest two acres of wheat here, wasting valuable real estate, obstructing the machinery by going against the system, was an affrontery that made it the powerful paradox I had sought for a calling to account. [...]

Wheatfield was a symbol, a universal concept. It represented food, energy, commerce, world trade, economics. It referred to mismanagement, waste, world hunger and ecological concerns. It was an intrusion into the Citadel, a confrontation of High Civilization. Then again, it was also Shangri-La, a small paradise, one's childhood, a hot summer afternoon in the country, peace, forgotten values, simple pleasures.

The idea of a wheatfield is quite simple. One penetrates the soil, places one's seed of concept and allows it to grow, expand and bear fruit. That is what creation and life is all about. It's all so simple, yet we tend to forget basic processes. What was different about this wheatfield was that the soil was not rich loam but dirty landfill filled with rusty metals, boulders, old tyres and overcoats. It was not farmland but an extension of the congested downtown of a metropolis where dangerous crosswinds blew, traffic snarled and every inch was precious realty. The absurdity of it all, the risks we took and the hardships we endured were all part of the basic concept. Digging deep is what art is all about. [...]

Wheatfield affected many lives, and the ripples are extending. Some suggested that I put my wheat up on the wheat exchange and sell it to the highest bidder, others that I apply to the government for farmers' subsidy. Reactions ranged from disbelief to astonishment to being moved to tears. A lot of people wrote to thank me for creating *Wheatfield* and asked that I keep it going. After my harvest, the four-acre area facing New York harbour was returned to construction to make room for a billion-dollar luxury complex. Manhattan closed itself once again to become a fortress, corrupt yet vulnerable. But I think this magnificent metropolis will remember a majestic, amber field. Vulnerability and staying power, the power of the paradox. [...]

Early in the morning on the first of May 1982 we began to plant the two-acre wheatfield in lower Manhattan, two blocks from Wall Street and the World Trade Center, facing the Statue of Liberty.

The planting consisted of digging 285 furrows by hand, clearing off rocks and garbage, then placing the seed by hand and covering the furrows with soil. Each furrow took two to three hours.

Since March over two hundred truckloads of dirty landfill had been dumped on the site, consisting of rubble, dirt, rusty pipes, automobile tyres, old clothing and other garbage. Tractors flattened the area and eighty more truckloads of dirt were dumped and spread to constitute one inch of topsoil needed for planting.

We maintained the field for four months, set up an irrigation system, weeded, cleared out wheat smut (a disease that had affected the entire field and wheat everywhere in the country). We put down fertilizers, cleared off rocks, boulders and wires by hand, and sprayed against mildew fungus. [...]

We harvested the crop on 6 August on a hot, muggy Sunday. The air was stifling and the city stood still. All those Manhattanites who had been watching the field grow from green to golden amber, and gotten attached to it, the stockbrokers and the economists, office workers, tourists and others attracted by the media coverage, stood around in sad silence. Some cried, TV crews were everywhere, but they too spoke little and then in a hushed voice.

We harvested almost 1,000 pounds of healthy, golden wheat.

Agnes Denes, extracts from 'Wheatfield: A Confrontation. Two Acres of Wheat Planted and Harvested. Battery Park Landfill, Downtown Manhattan, in New York's financial centre, a block from Wall Street', artist's statement (New York, 1982).

Benjamin H.D. Buchloh
Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol//1980

The fact that people in Germany deceive themselves concerning Wagner does not surprise me. The reverse would surprise me. The Germans have modelled a Wagner for themselves, whom they can honour: never yet have they been psychologists; they are thankful that they misunderstand. But that people should also deceive themselves concerning Wagner in Paris? Where people are scarcely anything else than psychologists. ... How intimately related must Wagner be to the entire decadence of Europe for her not to have felt that he was a decadent. He belongs to it: he is its protagonist, its greatest name. ... All that the world most needs today is combined in the most seductive manner in his art – the three great stimulants of exhausted people: brutality, artificiality and innocence (idiocy) ... *Wagner est une névrose* [Wagner is a neurotic].
– Friedrich Nietzsche, 'The Case of Wagner'[1]

During these days of the Guggenheim Museum's Joseph Beuys exhibition, one wonders why that most beautiful building, normally beaming with clarity, warmth and light, is dimly lit in a grey and moody twilight. What is this theatrical trick, creating a setting of 'Northern Romantic' light, meant to obscure? What mental semi-trance are we supposed to enter before we are allowed to wander down the spiral of twenty-four stations (whose martyrium, whose mysterium)? In this manner we are perhaps prevented from seeing belated automatist drawings on the walls, pompously framed in chthonic iron, and weathered, withering relics and vestiges of the artist's past activities, which might be 'souvenirs of a life of spectacle, poor dead things. Bereft of the confectioner, the life of his art has vanished.'[2]

The presentation of the souvenirs, however, is most elaborate. Enshrined in specifically designed glass and wood cases that look like a crossover between vitrines in Victorian museums of ethnography and display cases in turn-of-the-century boarding schools, the objects, or rather their containers, signal to the viewer: 'you are entering interior spaces, the realm, of archetypal memories, a historic communion.' Ahistoricity, that unconscious or deliberate obliviousness toward the specific conditions that determine the reality of an individual's being and work in historical time, is the functional basis on which public and private mythologies can be erected, presuming that a public exists that craves myths in proportion to its lack of comprehension of historic actuality. The ahistoric mythology of fascism, to give an example from political history, could only develop and gain credibility as a response to the chiliastic and debauched hopes of the starving and uneducated masses of the German Weimar Republic and post-monarchic Italy. Veneration for leaders grows out of the experiences of severe deficiency.

The private and public mythology of Beuys, to give an example from art history, could only be developed and maintained on the ahistoricity of aesthetic production and consumption in postwar Europe. The substantially retarded comprehension of European Dada and Russian and Soviet Constructivism, and their political as well as their epistemological implications, determined both European and American art up until the late 1950s and served for both producers and recipients as a basis for mythifying subsequent aesthetic work. Once put into their proper historic context, these works would lose their mystery and seemingly metaphysical origin and could be judged more appropriately for their actual formal and material, i.e. historical, achievements within the situation and the specific point of development of the discourse into which they insert themselves. The public myth of Beuys' life and work, by now having achieved proportions that make any attempt to question it or to put it into historic perspective an almost impossible critical task, is a result of these conditions, just as it tries to perpetuate them by obscuring historical facticity. This very attitude of making the artist a cult figure, however, historicizes Beuys and aligns him with representatives of his own generation in Europe during the 1950s who were equally grand masters of fusing the avant-garde with the culture of spectacle (figures like Yves Klein and Georges Mathieu). No other artist (with the possible exception of Andy Warhol, who certainly generated a totally different kind of myth) managed – or probably ever intended – to puzzle and scandalize his primarily bourgeois art audience to the extent that he would become a figure of social worship. No other artist succeeded so systematically in aligning himself at a given time with artistic and political currents, absorbing them into his myth and work and thereby neutralizing and aestheticizing them. Everybody who was seriously involved in radical student politics during the 1960s in Germany, for example, and who worked on the development of an adequate political analysis and practice, laughed at or derided Beuys' public relations move of founding his International Student Party, which was supposed to return an air of radicality to the master who was becoming aesthetically dated. Nobody who understands any contemporary science, politics or aesthetics, for that matter, could want to see in Beuys' proposal for an integration of art, sciences and politics – as his programme for the Free International University demands – anything more than simple-minded utopian drivel lacking elementary political and educational practicality. Beuys' existential and ideological followers and admirers, as opposed to his bourgeois

collectors and speculators, are blindfolded like cultists by their leader's 'charisma'. As usual with charisma, Beuys' magnetism seems to result from a psychic transfer between his own hypertrophic unconscious processes at the edge of sanity and the zombie-like existence of his followers. Their supposed 'normality', in which individuation has been totally extinguished, predisposes them to become 'followers' of whomever seems to be alive. Ernst Bloch, the German philosopher, discussing Beuys' philosophical master Rudolf Steiner, identifies those processes that constitute the mythical figure and the cult, and his portrayal seems to describe Joseph Beuys in precise detail:

> It is not surprising that special dreamers are to be met here too. They are perforated enough to allow unstandardized states to enter into them. That which is deranged has so deranged the limits of the ordinary everyday that it can easily coat the unusual with the everyday and vice-versa. Into the ego thus split there enters not only a sense of sin of a strength long presumed dead. Here, as incorporated superego, a pride, a certainty copied from the saviour takes root, such as the sane, even with the extremist arrogance, could never bring off. No false Demetrius can hold out for long, but a false Jesus among lunatics certainly can. ... At the peak of 'Knowledge of Higher Worlds' the occult journalist Rudolf Steiner established himself, a mediocrity in his own right. A mediocre, indeed unbearable curiosity, yet effective, as if mistletoe were still being broken off here, as if something shoddily druidical were fermenting, soaking, murmuring and chatting on newspaper.[3]

In Beuys, the cult and myth seem to have become inseparable from the work; as his confusion of art and life is a deliberate programmatic position, an 'integration' to be achieved by everybody, it seems appropriate to take a critical look at some aspects of his private 'myth of origin' before looking at the actual work.

Beuys' most spectacular biographic *fable convenue*, the plane crash in the Crimea that supposedly brought him into contact with Tartars, has never been questioned, even though it seems as contrived as it is dramatic. The photographic evidence, produced by Beuys to give credibility to his 'myth of origin', turns against itself: in Gotz Adriani's monograph (until the Guggenheim catalogue, the most comprehensive documentation of his life and work, and established in co-operation with the artist) we see Beuys standing beside a JU 87 that is in fairly good shape and flat on the ground. The caption reads: 'Joseph Beuys after a forced landing in the Crimea in 1943.' The accompanying text reads as follows:

> During the capture of the plane over an enemy anti-aircraft site, Beuys was hit by Russian gunfire. He succeeded in bringing his plane behind German lines, only to have the altimeter fail during a sudden snowstorm; consequently the plane could no longer function properly. Tartars discovered Beuys 'in total wilderness in the bottleneck area of the Crimea', in the wreckage of the JU 87, and they cared for Beuys, who was unconscious, most of the time, for about eight days, until a German search commando effected his transport to a military hospital.[4]

Caroline Tisdall's Guggenheim catalogue reproduces three totally different photographs showing a severely damaged and tipped-over plane that under no circumstances can be identical with the one shown in Adriani's book.[5] Beuys' own recollection (an updated version of the *fable convenue*) reads as follows:

> Had it not been for the Tartars I would not be alive today. ... Yet it was they who discovered me in the snow after the crash, when the German search parties had given up. I was still unconscious then and only came round completely after twelve days or so, and by then I was back in a German field hospital. The last thing I remember was that it was too late to jump, too late for the parachute to open. That must have been a couple of seconds before hitting the ground. ... My friend was strapped in and he was atomized by the impact – there was almost nothing to be found of him afterwards. But I must have shot through the windscreen as it flew back at the same speed as the plane hit the ground and that saved me, though I had bad skull and jaw injuries. Then the tail nipped over and I was completely buried in the snow. That's how the Tartars found me days later. I remember voices saying 'Voda' ('water'), then the felt of their tents and the dense pungent smell of cheese, fat and milk. They covered my body in fat to help it regenerate warmth, and wrapped it in felt as an insulator to keep the warmth in.[6]

Who would, or could, pose for photographs after a plane crash, when severely injured? And who took the photographs? The Tartars with their fat-and-felt camera? Beuys' 'myth of origin', like every other individual or collective myth, is an intricate mixture of facts and memory material rearranged according to the dynamics of the neurotic lie: that myth-creating impulse that cannot accept, for various reasons, the facticity of the individual's autobiographic history as such (a typical example would be the fantasy, more common in the beginning of this century, of being the illegitimate child of an alien nobleman, not the simple progeny of a factory worker). As in every such retro-projective fantasy – such narcissistic and slightly pathetic distortion (either dramatization or ennoblement) of the factually normal conditions (made either more traumatic or more heroic) of the individual's coming into the world – the story told by the myth's author reveals truths, but not truths their author would want to acknowledge. Beuys' story of the messianic bomber pilot turned plastic artist,

rising out of the ashes and shambles of his plane crash in Siberia, reborn, nurtured and healed by the Tartars with fat and felt, does not necessarily tell us about and convince us of the transcendental impact of his artistic work (which is the manifest intention of the *fable*). What the myth does tell us, however, is how an artist whose work developed in the middle and late 1950s, and whose intellectual and aesthetic formation must have occurred somehow in the preceding decade, tries to come to terms with the period of history marked by German fascism and the war resulting from it, destroying and annihilating cultural memory and continuity for almost two decades and causing a rupture in history that left mental blocks and blanks and severe psychic scars on everybody living in this period and the generations following it. Beuys' individual myth is an attempt to come to terms with those blocks and scars. When he quotes the Tartars as saying, "'Du nix njemcky" [you are not German], they would say, "du Tatar", and try to persuade me to join their clan',[7] it is fairly evident that the myth is designed to deny his citizenship and his participation in the German war. But, of course, the repressed returns with ever-increasing strength, and the very negation of Beuys' origin in a historic period of German fascism affirms every aspect of his work as being totally dependent on, and deriving from, that period. Here lies, one has also to admit, certainly one of the strongest features of the work, its historic *authenticity* (formally, materially, morphologically). Hardly ever have the characteristic and peculiar traits of the anal-retentive character, which forms the characterological basis of authoritarian fascism (in as much as these features, once specific to the German petit-bourgeois, have by now become dangerously universal), been more acutely and accurately concretized and incorporated into the art of the postwar period.

In the work and public myth of Joseph Beuys, the German spirit of the postwar period finds its new identity by pardoning and reconciling itself prematurely with its own reminiscences of a responsibility for one of the most cruel and devastating forms of collective political madness that history has known. As much as Richard Wagner's work anticipated and celebrated these collective regressions into Germanic mythology and Teutonic stupor in the realm of music, before they became the actual reality and the nightmare that set out to destroy Europe (what Karl Kraus had anticipated more accurately as the *Last Days of Mankind*), it would be possible to see in Beuys' work the absurd aftermath of that nightmare, a grotesque coda acted out by a perfidious trickster.

Speculators in Beuys' work did well: he was bound to become a national hero of the first order, having reinstalled and restored that sense of a – however deranged – national self and historic identity.

Beuys' obsession with fat, wax, felt, and a particularly obvious kind of brown paint that at times covers objects totally and at others is used as a liquid for

painting and drawing on paper and other materials, and his compulsive interest in accumulating and combining quantities of rejected, dusty old objects of the kind that one finds in rural cellars and stables, are imbued with metaphysical meaning by the artist and his eager exegetes: they could just as easily be read in psychoanalytic terms, and perhaps more convincingly so (which, again, would by no means disqualify the work). Obviously, Beuys himself consciously implements materials and forms that suggest a prominent sense of the infantile anal stage of instinct development:

> I placed it [the fat] on a chair to emphasize this, since here the chair represents a kind of human anatomy, the area of digestive and excretive warmth processes, sexual organs and interesting chemical change, relating psychologically to will power. In German, the joke is compounded as a pun since *'Stuhl'* (chair) is also the polite way of saying 'shit' (stool), and that too is a used and mineralized material with chaotic character, reflected in the cross section of fat.[8]

But an outspoken affirmation of one's compulsive inclinations does not necessarily transform or dissolve them, neither in one's behaviour nor in one's work and object production. Let us quote from a popularized comprehensive study of psychoanalytic theory, published in 1945, when Beuys, aged twenty-four, could easily have started to familiarize himself with recent psychoanalytical theories:

> If an adult person still has sexual excitability connected with the excretory functions (either with those of his object or autoerotically with his own) he clearly shows that his sexuality is on an infantile level. But in these uses too, the regression serves as a defence against genital wishes, not only in a general way as in any compulsion neurotic but also in a more specific way, the coprophilic fantasies regularly representing attempts to deny the danger of castration. ... The stressed anality expresses the wish to have sexual pleasure without being reminded of the difference of the sexes, which would mobilize castration fear.[9]

But Beuys, in his general contempt for the specific knowledge of contemporary sciences and in his ridiculous presuniptuousness about the idea of a universal synthesis of the sciences and of art, as late as 1966 phrased his disdain for psychoanalysis in a polemic against the German psychoanalyst Alexander Mitscherlich by calling the discipline 'bad shit' (*schlechter Mist*).[10] Apparently, he follows the archaic and infantile principle that as long as you do not acknowledge the existence of real things that seem to threaten your ideas, they will not concern or affect you.

Functional structures of meaning in art, as in other sign systems, are intricately bound into their historical context. Only in as much as they are dynamic and permanently changing their field and form of meaning do they remain functional, initiating cognitive processes. Otherwise, they simply become conventions of meaning or clichés. As such, they do, of course, follow different purposes, becoming the object of historically and socially latent interests contradictory to the author's original aim of trying to develop a meaningful sign. Obviously, it is possible to ignore or reject the basic scientific steps that have been taken in twentieth-century science, such as Freudian psychoanalysis or de Saussure's linguistic and semiotic concepts (to give only the two most prominent examples that Beuys does reject). It is also possible to ignore or reject the crucial epistemological changes that have occurred in one's own field of discourse, for example the consequences of Duchamp's work for art in the second half of the twentieth century. But again, such infantile behaviour, closing one's eyes and disavowing phenomena apparently threatening one's existence in order to make them disappear, is of very limited success. When Beuys made his notorious (and obscure) 1964 statement that 'the silence of Marcel Duchamp has been overrated',[11] he publicly confessed not to have the slightest clue of the scope of Duchamp's theoretical positions and the lasting significance of his work. This becomes even more evident when Beuys comments on his own statement:

> This statement on Duchamp is highly ambivalent. It contains a criticism of Duchamp's anti-art concept and equally of the cult of his later behaviour. ... Apart from that Duchamp had expressed a very negative opinion of the Fluxus artists claiming that they had no new ideas since he had anticipated it all. ... Most prominent, though, is the disapproval of Duchamp's anti-art concept.[12]

Just as the functions of artistic meaning are permanently altered, so its forms, objects and materials change within that dynamic process. The designation of a given, industrially produced, readymade object and its integration into artistic context were viable and relevant primarily as epistemological reflections and decisions within the formal discourse of post-Cubist painting and sculpture. Within this context the 'meaning' of these objects is established, and here they fulfil their 'function': they change the state of a formal language according to given historical conditions. Only later, when the original steps become conventionalized, imitated, interpreted, received, misunderstood, do they enter that field of psychological projection. Only then do they acquire a certain type of transcendental meaning, until they are finally reimbued with myth.

Unlike his European peers from the late 1950s – Piero Manzoni, Arman or

even Yves Klein – Beuys does not change the *state of the object within the discourse itself.* Quite to the contrary, he dilutes and dissolves the conceptual precision of Duchamp's readymade by reintegrating the object into the most traditional context of literary and referential representation: *this* object stands for *that* idea, and *that* idea is represented in *this* object. Beuys has often affirmed this himself, obviously intrigued by Duchamp but never coming to historical terms with him – as, for example, when talking about his own work, *Bathtub* (1960):

> But it would be wrong to interpret the *Bathtub* as a kind of self- reflection. Nor does it have anything to do with the concept of the readymade: quite the opposite, *since here the stress is on the meaning of the object* [my italics]. It relates to the reality of being born in such an area and in such circumstances.[13]

Or, when he comments on *Fat Chair* (1964):

> The presence of the chair has nothing to do with Duchamp's Readymades, or his combination of a stool with a bicycle wheel, although they share an initial impact as humorous objects.[14]

The more an aesthetic decision, a formal or material procedure, is removed from its functional historical context – which, in the system of art, is first of all the aesthetic discourse itself – the more the work will attract other meanings that may be assigned to it. The very suggestiveness, the highly associative potential and quasi-magical attraction that Beuys' work seems to exert on many followers and his public, results paradoxically enough precisely from that state of obsolescence that his works maintain within the discourse of art itself. It seems that the more the aesthetic discourse is removed from the formal analysis of the aesthetic object and its correspondences to cognitive processes – or, for that matter, the more it is removed from historical specificity – the more urgent will the claim for a metaphysical meaning become. Visual ideology (commercial movies and television, advertising and product propaganda) immerses its viewers in that type of signification as much as the discourses of religion and neurosis do: to the extent that literally everything within these belief systems is 'meaningful', reaffirming the individual's ties to such systems, the actual capacities of individual development are repressed. Beuys keeps insisting on the fact that his objects and dramatic performance activities have precisely that type of 'metaphysical' meaning, transcending their actual visual concretion and material appearance within their proper discourse. He quite outspokenly refers to an antihistoric, religious experience as a major source and model of his art production: 'This is the concept of art that carries within itself the

revolutionizing not only of the historic bourgeois concept of knowledge (materialism, positivism) but also of religious activity'.[15]

Notably, Beuys does not even attempt to qualify his understanding of 'religious activity' in historical terms, which would seem obvious, since Feuerbach, Marx and Freud have analysed religion in a manner that hardly allows for a simplistic concept of 'religious activity'. Again, it seems inevitable to quote from Nietzsche's poignant analysis of Wagner's aesthetic position, discovering once again an amazing congruence with that of Beuys:

> As a matter of fact, his whole life long he [Wagner] did nothing but repeat one proposition: that his music did not mean music alone. But something more! Something immeasurably more! ... Music can never be anything else than a means. This was his theory; but above all it was the only practice that lay open to him. No musician however thinks in this way! Wagner was in need of literature, in order to persuade the whole world to take his music seriously, profoundly, because it *meant* an infinity of things.[16]

Precisely because of Beuys' attitudes toward the functions and constructions of meaning in linguistic and visual signs, and his seemingly radical ahistoricity (which is a manoeuvre to disguise his eclecticism), his work is different from that of some of his European colleagues as well as his American contemporaries. This becomes particularly evident in a comparison of works that seem to be connected by striking morphological similarities: Beuys' *Fat Corner* (1960–63?) and *Felt Corner* (1963–64?) with Robert Morris' *Corner Piece* (1964) and Richard Serra's *Lead Antimony* (1969); Beuys' *Fat Up to This Level* (1971) with Bruce Nauman's *Concrete Tape Recorder* (1968); Beuys' *Site* (1967) with Carl Andre's *12 Pieces of Steel* (exhibited in Düsseldorf in 1967). In many instances it seems appropriate to speculate about priorities of formal 'invention' in these works that appear to be structurally comparable,[17] as Beuys certainly commands an amazing integration and absorbtion of principles of formal organization that have been developed in totally different contexts, charging them with his private projections so that, in fact, they no longer seem in any way comparable. In other cases, such as with Beuys' *Rubberized Box* (1957) and *Fat Chair* there simply can be no doubt about his original vision in introducing into a sculptural discourse issues that became crucial years later in Minimal and post-Minimal art. If we compare Beuys' *Fat Corner* with Richard Serra's *Splashing* (1968), we discover a comparable concern for the dissolution of a traditional object/construct-oriented conception of sculpture in favour of a more process-bound and architectural understanding of sculptural production and perception. On the other hand, one tends to overestimate Beuys' originality and inventiveness if one

forgets about his eclectic selection of historical information and influences absorbed from Futurism, Russian Constructivism, Dada and Surrealism, as well as their American and European successors in Happenings and Fluxus activities, plus the Nouveaux Réalistes.

Beuys' sense of the specific nature of sculptural materials, and the wide variety of materials that could be introduced into sculpture, was most obviously informed by the Italian Futurists, who in turn pointed to Medardo Rosso as one of their precursors.[18] One should recall Umberto Boccioni's 'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture' (1912): 'We claim that even twenty different materials can be used in a single work to achieve sculptural emotion. Let us mention only a few: glass, wood, cardboard, horse hair, leather, cloth, mirrors, electric light, etc., etc'.[19] Moreover, the sculptural discovery of that crucial point in space where two planes meet at an angle of ninety degrees, thus constituting the most elementary evidence of spatial volume and, one could argue, a point of transition between sculptural space and architectural space, finds its first clear demarcation in twentieth-century art in Tatlin's Cubo-Futurist *Corner Counter-Reliefs* of 1915, and the explicit use of an inserted triangle shape in Tatlin's and Yakulov's decoration of the *Café Pittoresque* in Moscow in 1917. Beuys, whenever he might have placed his first triangle into a corner – whether fat or felt – has to be seen as much in that perspective as with respect to Morris' *Corner Piece* and Serra's *Splashing*.

That other great German artist who was an eclectic of the first order, and knew equally well how to conceal and transform his sources to the point of almost total unrecognizability, Kurt Schwitters – certainly the focal point of Beuys' references, within German art history of the twentieth century[20] – was equally aware of Italian Futurist notions in sculpture, as well as of Russian Cubo-Futurist works. By joining the former's innovative sense of sculptural materiality with the latter's idea of sculptural expansion into architectural dimensions, and by merging them with his peculiar brand of German Dada, Schwitters conceived the *Merzbau* environment. This *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which included live guinea pigs and bottles of urine collected from his friends, obviously attempted to define sculpture as an all-encompassing activity, incorporating everyday life into aesthetic creation. Beuys' definition of 'sculpture as an evolutionary process, everyone an artist'[21] has its visual/plastic roots here as much as it paraphrases Lautréamont's famous proto-surrealist dictum, 'Poetry must be made by all.'

Beuys' problematic attempt to revitalize Dada and Surrealist positions becomes apparent within the concrete materiality and formal organization of his sculptural work itself. Precisely because of its claims for universal solutions and global validity, this work does not achieve the acuity and impact of some of the seemingly comparable sculptures mentioned above. The historic precision

and function within (as it seems) the limits of a formalist tradition and of work growing out of it (such as Serra's, Nauman's or Andre's) is altogether lacking in Beuys' works. Their opulent nebulousness and their adherence to a conventional definition of artistic signification make the visual experience of them profoundly dissatisfying. His work does not initiate cognitive changes, but reaffirms a conservative position of *metaphoricity*. The same becomes evident in a comparison between Beuys' work and sculptural works done in the late 1950s and early 1960s in Europe. Arman's *Le plein* (1960), in which the artist filled a gallery space with two truckloads of garbage (expanding his sculptural procedure of 'poubelles' – garbage accumulations), still strikes us today as a crucial and consequential work (and more complex in its ramifications), precisely because of its self-imposed restriction to function first of all, and critically within the discourse of art.

The same is true for Stanley Brouwn's proposal in 1960 to declare all shoe stores of Amsterdam as his exhibition, or for every single work of Piero Manzoni's since 1958. It seems that, after all, Gustave Flaubert was correct in predicting, 'The more art develops, the more scientific it must be, just as science will become aesthetic.'

Aesthetic as well as political truths are concrete phenomena. They manifest themselves in specific reflections and acts, hardly in grandiose gesticulations and global speculations. Beuys' supposedly radical position, as in so many aspects of his activities, is primarily marked by his compulsive self-exposure as the messianic artist (think, for example, of his preposterous offer at a women's liberation gathering in New York: 'What can I do for you?'). When called upon for particular commitments within the art world, which is, after all, the prime and final sphere of his operations, he shows an astonishing reluctance to commit himself to anything that might harm his good standing with the existing power structure of cultural institutions. When, for instance, in 1971 the Guggenheim Museum censored and closed down its Hans Haacke exhibition, firing its curator Edward Fry, an impressive list of signatures by artists and critics – proof of international solidarity – was circulated to support Haacke and condemn publicly the oppressive politics of the Guggenheim's director, Thomas Messer. Joseph Beuys never signed. Shortly afterwards, an international group show, 'Amsterdam-Paris-Düsseldorf', was installed at the Guggenheim. Marcel Broodthaers, then living and working in Düsseldorf, withdrew his contribution from the show (his work had been originally dedicated to Daniel Buren, whose work had been equally censored at the Guggenheim's international exhibition the preceding year) to protest against the treatment of Haacke's and Fry's work, and it was on this occasion that Broodthaers published his famous 'Open Letter to Joseph Beuys' in a Düsseldorf newspaper. The letter, disguised as a letter by

the German-French composer Offenbach addressing Wagner, reads as follows:

> Your essay 'Art and Revolution' discusses magic ... politics the politics of magic? Of beauty or of ugliness? Messiah, I can hardly go along with that contention of yours, and at any rate I wish to register my disagreement if you allow a definition of art to include one of politics ... and magic. ... But is not the enthusiasm that His Majesty displays for you motivated by a political choice as well? What ends do you serve, Wagner? Why? How? Miserable artists that we are.[22]

The aesthetic conservatism of Beuys is logically complemented by his politically retrograde, not to say reactionary, attitudes. Both are inscribed into a seemingly progressive and radical humanitarian programme of aesthetic and social evolution. The abstract universality of his vision has its equivalent in the privatistic and deeply subjectivist nature of his actual work. Any attempt on his side to join the two aspects results in curious sectarianism. The roots of Beuys' dilemma lie in the misconception that politics could become a matter of aesthetics, as he repeats frequently: 'real future political intentions must be artistic.' Or, even more outrageously:

> How I actually bring it as theory to the totalized concept of art, which means everything. The totalized concept of art, that is the principle that I wanted to express with this material, which in the end refers to everything, to all forms in the world. And not only to artistic forms, but also to social forms or legal forms or economic forms. ... All questions of man can be only a question of form, and that is the totalized concept of art.[23]

Or, finally speaking in the explicit terms of crypto-fascist Futurism:

> I would say ... that the concept of politics must be eliminated as quickly as possible and must be replaced by the capability of form of human art. *I do not want to carry art into politics, but make politics into art.*[24]

The Futurist heritage has not only shaped Beuys' thoughts on sculpture; even more so, it seems, his political ideas fulfil the criteria of the totalitarian in art just as they were propounded by Italian Futurism on the eve of European fascism. It seems that Walter Benjamin's most overquoted essay has still not been understood by all. It ends as follows:

> '*Fiat ars – pereat mundus*', says Fascism, and, as Marinetti admits, expects war to supply the artistic gratification of a sense perception that has been changed by

technology. ... [Mankind's] self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order. This is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds by politicizing art.[25]

1 Friedrich Nietzsche, 'The Case of Wagner', in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Oscar Levy (Edinburgh and London: T.N. Foulis, 1909) 12–14. The idea of seeing Joseph Beuys in the tradition of Richard Wagner was first proposed by the late Marcel Broodthaers in his 'Public letter to Joseph Beuys', *Rheinische Post* (Düsseldorf, 3 October 1972). The letter was subsequently published as a book by Marcel Broodchaers under the title *Magie: art et politique* (Paris: Éditions Multiplicata, 1973).

2 This is the way Dore Ashton described her impressions of Yves Klein's work in 1967 on the occasion of his first retrospective show in New York, in her essay 'Art as Spectacle', *Arts Magazine* (March 1967) 44.

3 Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1986) vol. 3, 1184–6.

4 Gotz Adriani, et al., *Joseph Beuys: Life and Works* (New York: Barron Books, 1979) 16.

5 Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum/London: Thames & Hudson, 1979) 19.

6 Ibid., 17.

7 Ibid., 16.

8 Ibid., 72.

9 Otto Fenichel, *The Psychoanalytical Theory of Neurosis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1945) 349.

10 Joseph Beuys, *Sigmar Polke*, exh. cat. (Berlin: René Block Gallery, 1966) n.p.

11 Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, op. cit., 92.

12 Ibid., 92.

13 Ibid., 10.

14 Ibid., 72.

15 Ibid., 269.

16 Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, op. cit, 30.

17 As was already evident in his *fable convenue*, Beuys at times takes a certain licence with the concept of truth. This seems to apply to the dating of his own work as well, since the dates given by him are on occasion either completely contradictory or highly dubious. For example, Adriani (*Joseph Beuys*, 96) quotes Beuys as asserting: 'The titles are not original, many of them were given later, because exhibitors and buyers felt the need to name these works. On the evening at the Zwirner Gallery [on the occasion of a lecture by Allan Kaprow, Cologne, 1963] fat actually made its first appearance in the form of a carton of lard.' Caroline Tisdall maintains in the Guggenheim catalogue text that '*Fat Chair* appeared at the same time as the first *Fat Corners*.' On following pages, however, *Fat Corner* and *Filter Fat Corner* are dated 1960 and 1962, respectively (see Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, 72–5). *Filter Fat Corner* is dated 1963 in Adriani's monograph (*Joseph Beuys*, 102). *Felt Corner* is dated 1953 on page 75 of the Guggenheim catalogue but 1964 on page 125, in a slightly different photograph of the same installation. Tisdall's information on Beuys' work seems unreliable in other regards as well. For example, on page 271 of the catalogue we are made to believe that Beuys swept up Karl Marx Platz in *East* Berlin on May Day in 1972. Obviously, it would have been quite spectacular and courageous (or rather foolishly provocative) to perform such an activity under the conditions of the rigid police control of the regime in East Berlin, particularly during the official May Day celebrations of the Communist Party. Unfortunately (or fortunately), however, Beuys did perform his little act in West Berlin, where nobody cares about harmless artistic jokes and where you can express 'solidarity with the revolutionary principles through the bright red broom' (Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, 271) at any given time.

18 The beginning of modernist sculpture is marked by a mixture of heterogeneous materials within the sculptural unit: Degas' *Little Dancer of Fourteen* (1876) assembles wax, cloth and wood. And Medardo Rosso's wax-over-plaster sculptures, which were supposed to 'blend with the unity of the world that surrounded them', should be remembered when Beuys talks about the universally process-oriented nature of sculpture. Rosso's use of beeswax as a sculptural material that can maintain two aggregate states, liquid and solid, has a particularly strong process quality, thanks also to the precision with which it records modelling processes.

19 Umberto Boccioni, 'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture' (1912), in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (New York: Viking Press, 1973) 51–65.

20 In Germany the drawings of Kurt Schwitters would be the key reference for Beuys' drawing. In drawings from around 1919 Schwitters combined the expressionistic tradition with the mechanomorphic 'drawing' elements that he had undoubtedly recognized in Picabia's work from the mid teens. The mechanical rubber stamp impression as a counterbalance to the lyrical and scriptural expressionist line later figures prominently in Beuys' drawings. Unlike Beuys, the French artist Arman acknowledged the debt to Schwitters when he produced his own rubber stamp drawings and paintings in the late 1950s, again a few years before Beuys discovered the device.

21 Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, op. cit., 7.

22 Broodthaers, *Magie*, op. cit., 11.

23 Adriani, *Joseph Beuys*, op. cit., 283.

24 Ibid., 277 (emphasis mine).

25 Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968) 242.

Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol: Preliminary Notes for a Critique', *Artforum*, no. 5 (1980); reprinted in Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2000) 41–64.

Donald Kuspit
Beuys or Warhol?//1987

I see contemporary art caught in a tug-of-war between what can be called the media and therapeutic conceptions of art. It is a cold war that has been going on since the 1960s, and that has recently become hot. Warhol is on one side, Beuys on the other; each is a paradigmatic figure, as important for what he represents as for his actual art. Much is at stake in this war; one cannot remain neutral in it: I am for Beuys, and against Warhol. The clearest way to understand their difference is in terms of narcissism. As Erich Fromm wrote, in narcissism 'only the person himself ... [is] experienced as fully real, while everybody and everything [else] ... is not fully real, is perceived only by intellectual recognition, while affectively without weight and colour.' Warhol is the perfect narcissist, summarizing in his art the modern narcissistic idea of art for art's sake, and in his person the narcissism which supposedly guarantees – but is in fact the dregs – of the artist's 'genius'. In contrast, Beuys represents postwar art's major effort to transcend aesthetic and personal narcissism, and seriously relate to the socio-historical objects of the lifeworld. Beuys spreads and spends, as it were, the substance of his self in life-world material, such as the fat and felt on which his being once depended. Beuys responds to what Habermas calls the lifeworld's pathologies, while Warhol is pathology incarnate.

This distinction between an art that actively engages the lifeworld and one that is passive toward it correlates with Fromm's distinction between 'the (biologically normal) love of life (biophilia) and the love of (and affinity to) death (necrophilia) ... its pathological perversion'. The choice between them is 'the most fundamental problem' of our age. So long as art has a subliminal reparative function, it remains in the service of life. Beuys shows art's biophiliac tendency at its strongest. Warhol is the consummate necrophiliac; to completely submit to media reproduction – Warhol uses it to negate affect and as naive intellectual recognition – is to embrace living death. In Warhol's use, reproduction is the instrument of death, a way of killing what has already been fast-frozen by society into an insidious banality, betraying life's spirit and process. [...]

Baudelaire's attack on photography (Salon of 1859) is in effect the first major critique of the media. It is worth emphasizing that for Baudelaire photography's major negative psychic effect was its encouragement of narcissism, the most regressive and involuted of psychic tendencies. With photography's invention, 'our squalid society rushed, Narcissus to a man, to gaze at its trivial image'. It may be that Baudelaire's remark – half in passing jest, half in ironic seriousness – is one of the earliest recognitions of the prevalence of the problem of narcissism in modern society. (Photography – on which Warhol is totally dependent – may be both its symptom and a way of gaining narcissistic satisfaction that exacerbates the sickness it pretends to cure.) In any case, media-language art is profoundly narcissistic in that it unquestioningly accepts the banal sense of self manifest in the media. It implies that there is no deep, critical work of imagination – analysis and synthesis – that needs to be done on the self. The primary appeal of works of art is that they symbolically do the imaginative work of analysis and reintegration of the self for us, or catalyze it in us through our identification with them. They give our decomposition and recomposition of the psyche socio-aesthetic form, and acknowledge its inner necessity. Thus works of art acquire general human significance because of their therapeutic 'suggestiveness', 'contagion'.

More than Baudelaire ever thought possible, Warhol uses photography and the media to invite us to gaze at our trivial image on its screens – indeed, trivializes the image so that it becomes unmistakably us. It offers us a fixed and superficially complete idea of our self, as though to be fixed in place and totalized by an image was to be healthy. Media articulation does not encourage us to alter our sense of reality, or in general lead to an alternate grasp of it, as imagination does. Nor does the media satisfy unconscious wishes deeply, which is why it relies on relentless reproduction to make its shallow point. In contrast, imagination subtly changes our sense of reality by subtly changing us. Such 'change of heart' is part of art's subliminal therapeutic effect.

When Beuys spoke of his work with material as 'a sort of psychological process' of self-healing, or of his performances as 'a psychoanalytical action in which people could participate', he was explicitly acknowledging art's therapeutic task and his biophilia. Beuys had a 'ritualistic respect for the healing potential of material', and tried to make his art of materials a mode of healing: '*Similia similibus curantur*: heal like with like, that is the homoeopathic healing process'. For Beuys, 'the principle of form' is only one pole of art; the other is 'a process of life'. Their integration in 'social sculpture' was a move 'towards the possibility of creating a new planet'. But, as he said, a social revolution can never occur 'unless the transformation of soul, mind and will-power has taken place' – for him, through healing art.

In the last analysis, Warhol's media-oriented art is a cold art, while therapeutically oriented art is a warm art. It is worth noting that Beuys was concerned with keeping warm. He was always recapitulating the situation when, shot down in the Crimea in 1943, he was found unconscious in the snow by nomad Tartars: 'Had it not been for the Tartars I would not be alive today ... They covered my body in fat to help it regenerate warmth, and wrapped it in felt

as an insulator to keep warmth in.' In contrast to this, Warhol was determined t remain cold; his passivity was a successful form of coldness – a great necrophiliac achievement, for it rendered him deathlike. Perhaps both Beuys and Warhol suffered from narcissism, but in Warhol it became ingrained. [...]

The moral choice between them is clear. To vote for Warhol is to give the victory to death. To give Beuys a vote of confidence is to give the victory to life. It is the major critical choice facing art, and the critic.

Donald Kuspit, extract from 'Beuys or Warhol?', *C Magazine* (Fall 1987); reprinted in Kuspit, *The New Subjectivism: Art in the 1980s* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993) 403–6.

ntony Gormley
nterview with Marjetica Potrc//1995

Marjetica Potrc When I first saw *American Field* (1991) in Salvatore Ala's gallery in New York, I was amazed by seeing thousands of small clay figures staring at me. I felt uneasy, as if the subject of *Field* was myself and not the work. The 'to be' of the work has become the 'to be' of the viewer. Thinking about it afterwards I started to question myself as to why. It was not possible to approach the work with formal language and with categories defining objecthood or figure. The basic condition of the work seemed to be different.

Antony Gormley I think it's an attempt to escape from the object nature of art into an idea of art as a creative place: as an open space. An open space that in this work can't be physically inhabited but nevertheless is an architecturally defined space in the gallery. Up to now the appreciation of art has been based on a kind of shared notion of space; that the viewer and the object share the same space and they have this dialogue where the audience perceives it – walks around it. With *Field* [1991–2003] the work entirely occupies the gallery. In an ideal installation, the space of the viewer and the space of the work are in some kind of balance, and the the occupation of space is something I have been interested in for a long time.

The works cast in lead try to negotiate a relationship between the body as a thing and the body as a place, so there has been an attempt to make an image of something and also to contain space: a space that can't be occupied physically but can be occupied imaginatively. Sometimes that space is perceivable because there's a hole either in the mouth or the eyes or the genitals, but with *Field*, for the first time, the 'placeness' has overcome the 'objectness': the object is dissolved not by being hollow, as in the lead works, but by being multiple and the place is open. It looks on one hand like an empty landscape, but then that landscape itself has been personalized, touched, made, constructed out of these beings that look at you. There is a sense in which this space is on one hand empty and on the other hand is full. On one hand it is unconscious and on the other hand it is highly conscious. It looks back at us across the threshold: you stop at it and you look across this touched landscape and it is a transposition from an external landscape into an internal space. That's the physical side of it; the spiritual or imaginative side of it is that because it possesses the attributes of consciousness – these gazes that look back at us - we become, curiously, the place of the work. There is a trick that the work plays - life becomes its subject.

We previously would have entered a gallery expecting to share the space with works and in some way aesthetically be possessed or possess those works. With *Field*, the space is entirely occupied by the work and the work then seems to make us its subject. [...]

We've become terribly blind in a way. There is so much of contemporary art made in the West that in a sense has as its validation only the last twenty years of Western practice, in which the references to conceptual or minimal concerns become its right to be given the name of art at all.

I've just made two works called *Lost Subject* (1994). I think we've been obsessed with the idea of the object because we've been obsessed since Minimalism – since the Fried/Greenberg debate – with the idea of referentiality or non-referentiality. The postmodern take on referentiality is almost as absurd to my mind as the minimalist idea that somehow you could make something that was solely self-referential. I think it's quite impossible. We have to move on from American-led art and objecthood towards subjectivity and a non-dominant world view. Western art history is one art history; there are many histories, there are many arts, there are many reasons why things get made. While I acknowledge the fact that I am a Western artist working in a Western tradition, I think that the most important condition of today is this sense that we have of the globalization of culture. What that means is that all those old dialectics between self and other, between the developed and the undeveloped, between the first and the third world, have been rejected as modes of thought. So if there's one thing that *Field* suggests it's the globalization of culture, the necessary primitivization of culture - not meaning 'the primitive' as understood formally in shows like the one [curated by William Rubin in 1984] at The Museum of Modern Art, New York – but primitive as in fundamental. I hope that what *Field* does is radically re-present the question of where culture belongs or what the place of culture is and what its parameters are: does culture come out of language or does culture come out of being? In a sense this is 'the flood' the second time round. This is the second moment of creation, in which we have to start with the idea of the existence of man, not with the old story of Adam and Eve and a gradual dispersion – but with the idea that there are no longer different streams of dispersion and division within the evolution of humankind. There are no streams any more, that is why 'mainstream' in talking about art is useless. There are no streams, there's just an ocean, one ocean, one humanity. We have to look for the notion of future in us, and that's why we are the subject; we are the 'to be' of the work. In the terms that I'm thinking of, category and formal language are really not much use. I'm trying to return people to life, with the sense not of having learned about things that lie outside of themselves and the history of those things, but in some way to recover their own memories, their own aspirations, and be returned to life with a greater intensity as creators. [...]

I am trying to find where creativity fits in the world; people are part of the material and the subject. You might say that this is a totalitarian kind of project but I don't want to manipulate people; I don't want to force them to do things, but I do want to engage their inner selves. I get people involved in these projects because I think there's value in it, in the working for its own sake. I also get people involved because for me part of the work has to do with realizing the potential for art to be everywhere: positive creativity. The work is about questions. It's about somehow managing to make the reality of today, which is a reality of self in the world in a way that it's never been before, because the world is present to us, mediated maybe, but present to us all the time. The globalization of culture has happened. [...]

Field suggests that there has to be a new negotiation with the earth. The idea of civilization as being an opposition between those that are civilized and those that are savage can no longer continue because we can no longer continue to exploit in a global world; because we discover that we are exploiting ourselves.

Antony Gormley and Marjetica Potrc, extracts from 'An Interview Between Antony Gormley and Marjetica Potrc' in *Antony Gormley: Field for the British Isles* (Llandudno: Oriel Mostyn, 1994) 59; 60–61; 62–6; 68; 72.

Richard Noble
An Anthropoetics of Space: Antony Gormley's *Field*//2003

[...] *Field* has its own history within Antony Gormley's work. It began in 1990, when Gormley commissioned a family of brick makers in San Mafias, Mexico, to construct the first *Field*. About sixty men, women and children from or close to this family made 42,000 clay figures by hand. Their instructions were simple: 'to make the pieces hand-sized and easy to hold, to make sure the eyes were deep and close, and to try to get the proportions of the head to the body as they should be (there was a tendency to make the heads larger). The resulting collaboration was a sharp departure from Gormley's previous working practice. It introduced an element of unpredictability and irregularity into the construction of the work: the trace of many hands and many discrete decisions, and so of a certain frontier of uncertainty between the artist's conception and its final embodiment in form. *American Field* was first installed at the Salvatore Ala Gallery in New York, and subsequently in Fort Worth, Mexico City, San Diego, Washington, D.C., and Montreal. The collaborative process of its construction has been repeated a number of times since. *European Field* was made in Sweden in 1993, *Field for the British Isles* was made later the same year, and now *Asian Field* has been made in Guangzhou. In each case the instructions and process are the same.

In *Field*, the object has become a place. One views a room filled with terracotta figures through a framed threshold, an experience which subtly reverses the normal experience of sculpture. We are used to encountering sculpture in a shared space, walking around it, viewing it from different angles, feeling the phenomenology of its mass and form. With *Field* something different occurs: the work occupies its own space totally, such that the viewer's experience necessarily occurs in a different space. The only possible means of entering the space of the work is via the imagination. Yet despite its distinctiveness *Field* has its own genealogy within Gormley's oeuvre. An important precursor is *Man Asleep* (1985), in which a column of tiny hominoid figures appear to be walking away from a sleeping lead figure. The use of clay here is significant, because it invokes the possibility of creation. In Jewish mythology, for instance, the Gollum is a creature fashioned of clay to protect the Jews from their oppressors. The figures are humanoid, but as in *Field* they are in the process of being formed, of becoming. They walk away from the sleeping figure as if into the future, as though it were dreaming a new world into existence. This immanence of the future inherent in the materiality of clay, the possibilities it holds for moulding, shaping, creating, becoming, remains important for *Field*.

Field appeared in two previous incarnations, *Field I* and *Field II* (1989). Both consisted of small clay figures fashioned by Gormley himself and arranged in a pattern on a gallery floor. Neither work fills the gallery space, in each the figures are arranged densely at the centre and increasingly less densely towards the periphery. We share their space, but there is a sense, particularly in *Field II*, of a physical force like magnetism holding their formation in place, and they are in this sense a collectivity distinct from the viewer. They thus construct a relationship which anticipates one of the central questions posed by *Field*: How does one imagine a collective being?

Antony Gormley has suggested [in the preceding interview with Marjetica Potrc] that *Field* responds to the most important feature of the contemporary world: the globalization of culture. But he does not mean by this the homogenization of culture attendant upon the inexorable march of capitalism. He means rather the increasing irrelevance of the old binaries defining western conceptions of the self and its relation to culture: between self and other, developed and undeveloped, so-called First and Third World ways of thinking. [...] We might think of *Field* then, as a starting point for thinking again about the future; about how diversity emerges from and ultimately recedes back into our common humanity.

Field can be seen as a poetic interpretation of the 'social contract', a device used by political philosophers to imagine and think through the possibility of reconstructing existing societies according to principles of justice. In political theory, the social contract models the idea that human beings are free and equal, and as such would only agree to live under the authority of political institutions and in social relations which respect their freedom and equality. It is a device of argument, a thought experiment intended to persuade others to give their free and conscious assent to a particular vision of a just society. *Field* is not an argument, nor is it an attempt to persuade anyone to adopt a particular view of individual rights or social justice. Nevertheless, it poses the fundamental question of justice by asking us to think again about the ways we might live together.

This way of thinking of *Field* is reinforced by the process of its creation, which as with all of Gormley's work is intimately related to its meaning. The participants freely agree to create something together, by a common set of rules. None asks more for her or himself than she or he would grant to the others in the process of making the piece, each participates on equal terms: woman, man or child. The agreement or 'contract' binds the individual participants into a collective task limited by a time frame, to produce something that is larger and more complex than any one of them could have imagined from the perspective

of their own contribution. Once it is made, they are implicated in it; it becomes their own in the sense that it has been produced by their own freely given creative labour.

As viewers of *Field* we only encounter the end result of the original agreement and the co-operative process it initiates. Nevertheless, what we find is an indexical record of their common purpose, their respect for each other in this purpose, and their individual diversity. The sheer number of the figures testifies to their makers' dedication to their purpose and their willingness to tolerate and co-operate with each other in order to bring it to a conclusion. Yet at the same time the near infinite diversity of the figures, the tiny differences of detail, of shape, colour and size, remind us that each was moulded by an individual hand, each is the record of a conscious intention translated into material form.

Field gives form to the possibility of a future in which equality of contribution is respected, in which space is given for collective self awareness which neither subsumes nor destroys individual identity. It is utopian in the classic tradition of More and Rousseau.What it posits is not a blueprint for the future, but a series of questions about the present which in turn orient us towards what comes next. *Field* turns us back on ourselves, to ask not, 'What are you doing here?' But rather, 'Who do you understand yourself to be? And what will you do from now on?'

Richard Noble, extract from 'An Anthropoetics of Space: Antony Gormley's *Field*' in Antony Gormley, *Asian Field* (London: The British Council, 2003) 199–201.

Ilya Kabakov
The Palace of Projects//1995–98

Studying a boundless area of utopias and projects, at first you begin to drown in the gigantic sea not only of all kinds of proposals and beginnings, but also in the abundance of the goals and ideas which guided their inventors and authors. Gradually, it is possible to discern a few groups of such intentions.

An enormous quantity of projects fall under the heading which could be designated as 'Power and Control': all possible forms of management, regulation, observations, etc. The main idea that dominates in all these projects is the complete mastery of the situation, the gravitation of everything to one centre, to the author of the project himself and to the place where the author or the one using it is located.

Another group of projects is guided by the ideas of blackmail and the threats of total annihilation. The authors invent possibilities for subjecting as many people as possible, all of humanity in their extreme forms, to fear and desperation with the aid of special mechanisms or directed cosmic rays. The authors are inspired by the idea of the destruction of this world, moreover, destruction that is total and instantaneous.

A large group of projects is connected with the idea of movement guided by the principle: 'farther, higher, faster'. Here belong not only all types of new methods for terrestrial transportation, but also an enormous quantity of fantasies about space flights, the reaching of extra-terrestrial civilizations, travels around the universe, etc. To the 'transportation' projects we can also add a gigantic group of projects involving all possible kinds of connections and contacts, an area that is truly developing today at phenomenal speed. Furthermore, today we can already say that many of these 'communications projects' cannot really be called projects, since virtually all of them are already in a stage of technical development or have already been realized or will be in the very nearest future. [...]

It is particularly important to note the construction of the walls of the 'palace' which not only shield and separate the palace from the space surrounding it, but they (the walls) also have an 'illuminating' function. They are made from semi-transparent plastic fabric and are stretched between wooden structures. The ceiling is also made of the same fabric. The lighting inside the palace passes 'through' these walls; from the outside, on the walls of the dwelling surrounding this 'palace', projectors are mounted which aim light through these 'walls'. As a result of these shining walls, a special atmosphere

emerges, similar to the insides of a Chinese lantern, which creates the required fantastic atmosphere.

What does the viewer see upon winding up in such a palace?

Inside there are 65 objects of various configurations and sizes representing models of each project. Near each such project is a small table and a chair; on the table is a description and commentaries on this model. Having sat down at this table the viewer can unhurriedly become acquainted with the essence of the project rather than rushing through with the 'tourist' method, as usually happens in museums where explanations are hung on the walls and therefore, as a rule, cannot be read. In this way, moving from project to project, from table to table, the viewer can have a greater co-experience with the idea, guided by the author, sitting in the specially lit, slightly yellow atmosphere that reigns inside the 'palace'. [...]

The installation displays and examines a seemingly commonly known and even trivial truth: the world consists of a multitude of projects, realized ones, half-realized ones, and not realized at all. Everything that we see around us, in the world surrounding us, everything that we discover in the past, that which possibly could comprise the future – all of this is a limitless world of projects.

But turning to oneself, thinking about one's own life, we as a rule are not sure about this, we do not discover in ourselves, so it seems to us, any special project, especially not a major one which captivates us entirely. We think that to have a 'project' is most likely the business of some other, special people and therefore they are standardly referred to as 'creative', or it is in general some sort of special, extreme state which requires a special resolve and special personality traits.

But we are convinced, and we will try to demonstrate this in our installation, that the only way and means to lead a worthy human life is to have one's own project, to conceive it and bring it to its realization. To have one's own project, to realize it, perhaps, should be inherent in every person. The project is the concentration, the embodiment of the meaning of life. Only thanks to it can one establish 'who one is', what one is capable of; can one receive 'a name'. It is only from the moment of the determination of one's project that one's true 'existence' and not just 'survival' begins.

Ilya Kabakov, extracts from 'Foreword to the Installation', trans. Cynthia Martin, in Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, *The Palace of Projects* (1995–98) (London: Artangel, 1999) n.p.

Nicolas Bourriaud
Conviviality and Encounters//1998

A work can function as a relational device in which there is a degree of randomness. It can be a machine for provoking and managing individual or collective encounters. To cite a few examples from the last two decades, this is true of Braco Dimitrijevic's *Casual Passer-by* series, which disproportionally celebrates the names and faces of anonymous passers-by on posters the size of those used for advertisements, or on busts like those of celebrities. In the early 1970s, Stephen Willats painstakingly charted the relationships that existed between the inhabitants of a block of flats. And much of Sophie Calle's work consists of accounts of her encounters with strangers: she follows a passer-by, searches hotel rooms after getting a job as a chamber maid, asks blind people how they define beauty, and then, after the event, formalizes the biographical experiments that led her to 'collaborate' with the people she met. We could also cite, almost at random, On Kawara's *I met* series, the café *Food* opened by Gordon Matta-Clark in 1971, the dinners organized by Daniel Spoerri or the playful shop opened by George Brecht and Robert Filliou in Villefranche (*La Cédille qui sourit*). The formalization of convivial relations has been a historical constant since the 1960s. The generation of the 1980s picked up the same problematic, but the definition of art, which was central to the 1960s and 1970s, was no longer an issue. The problem was no longer the expansion of the limits of art,[3] but testing art's capacity for resistance within the social field as a whole. A single family of practices therefore gives rise to two radically different problematics: in the 1960s, the emphasis was on relationships internal to the world of art within a modernist culture that privileged 'the new' and called for linguistic subversion; it is now placed on external relationships in the context of an eclectic culture where the work of art resists the mincer of the 'Society of the Spectacle'. Social utopias and revolutionary hopes have given way to day-to-day micro-utopias and mimetic strategies: any 'direct' critique of society is pointless if it is based upon the illusion of a marginality that is now impossible, if not regressive. Almost thirty years ago, Félix Guattari was already recommending the neighbourhood strategies on which contemporary artistic practices are based: 'Just as I think it is illusory to count on the gradual transformation of society so I believe that microscopic attempts – communities, neighbourhood committees, organizing crèches in universities – play an absolutely fundamental role'.

Traditional critical philosophy (and especially the Frankfurt school) can no longer sustain art unless it takes the form of an archaic folklore, or of a splendid

rattle that achieves nothing. The subversive and critical function of contemporary art is now fulfilled through the invention of individual or collective vanishing lines, and through the provisional and nomadic constructions artists use to model and distribute disturbing situations. Hence the current enthusiasm for revisited spaces of conviviality and crucibles where heterogeneous modes of sociability can be worked out. For her exhibition at the Centre pour la Création Contemporaine, Tours (1993), Angela Bulloch installed a café: when sufficient visitors sat down on the chairs, they activated a recording of a piece by Kraftwerk. For her 'Restaurant' show (Paris, October 1993), Georgina Starr described her anxiety about 'dining alone' and produced a text to be handed to diners who came alone to the restaurant. For his part, Ben Kinmont approached randomly-selected people, offered to do their washing up for them and maintained an information network about his work. On a number of occasions Lincoln Tobier set up radio stations in art galleries and invited the public to take part in broadcast discussions.

Philippe Parreno has drawn particular inspiration from the form of the party, and his exhibition project for the Consortium, Dijon, consisted in 'taking up two hours of time rather than ten square metres of space' by organizing a party. All its component elements eventually produced relational forms as clusters of individuals gathered around the installed artistic objects. Rirkrit Tiravanija, for his part, explores the socio-professional aspect of conviviality: his contribution to *Surfaces de réparation* (Dijon, 1994) was a relaxation area for the exhibiting artists, complete with a table-football game and a well-stocked fridge. To end this evocation of how such conviviality can develop in the context of a culture of 'friendship', mention should be made of the bar created by Heimo Zobernig for the *Unité* exhibition, and Franz West's *Passtücke* ['adaptives']. Other artists suddenly burst into the relational fabric in more aggressive ways. The work of Douglas Gordon, for example, explores the 'wild' dimension of this interaction by intervening in social space in parasitic or paradoxical ways: he phoned customers in a café and sent multiple 'instructions' to selected individuals. The best example of how untimely communications can disrupt communications networks is probably a piece by Angus Fairhurst: with the kind of equipment used by pirate radio stations, he established a phone link between two art galleries. Each interlocutor believed that the other had called, and the discussions degenerated into an indescribable confusion. By creating or exploring relational schemata, these works established relational micro-territories that could be driven into the density of the contemporary *socius*. [...]

Nicolas Bourriaud, extract from 'Conviviality and Encounters' (1998); reprinted in *Esthétique relationelle* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 1998); revised translation by David Macey, 2006.

Superflex
Interview with Åsa Nacking//1998

Åsa Nacking You are working with social interaction in your creative practice. I would like to ask why have you chosen to locate this work within the realm of art?

Superflex To be specific, we've chosen to refer to our artistic activity as socio-economic integration. We work within art because of the possibilities it offers – a space in which to experiment, free from the bonds of convention.

Nacking It seems to me that you are not only posing questions or using art metaphorically, rather you really believe that art can make a difference.

Superflex Basically, it's a question of what art is capable of doing. Art is able to focus on various topics and discourses, and our way of doing it is to go beyond mere problematizing. We want our art to have clear social relevance, and we are assuming full responsibility for the consequences. We are engaged in an operation which we hope will be concretely relevant to an individual or a group of people. The Biogas project is an example of precisely this.

Nacking Last year, you successfully installed a Biogas system into a one-family home in Tanzania. Do you think that the project should be integrated more broadly into African society in order for it to be considered successful, or is a single intervention sufficient?

Superflex The biogas project has several aspects that may be more or less successful. Discussion is an important part – the fact that we have an opportunity to enter into a dialogue with people from a variety of divergent positions. In this situation negative feedback can become an important part of the way the project develops. In that sense, the project may already be termed a success, since it is now part of the public debate.

Nacking As you mentioned, the project operates at different levels at the same time and many of its characteristics are rooted in this multiplicity of readings. I imagine that the vast complexity of the project and the different ways in which people may encounter it could give rise to misinterpretations. It must place great pedagogical demands on how it is transmitted.

Superflex The complexity of the project is designed to avoid the claim that something is simple. The viewer takes in the specific aspects that speak directly to him. An engineer is likely to fasten on to a technical detail, thereby missing a large part of the information. Somebody else may focus on political questions, which is again something very specific.

Nacking I'm still interested in the fact that you have chosen to work within the institution of art. What do you think that brings to a piece like *Biogas*, or do you find that the art world has its limitations?

Superflex The biogas project as presented in an art institution offers a practical example of what we are doing in Africa. We can use the presentation to create a debate on our attitude toward Africa and the Third World. Art exhibited at an institution becomes a type of of advertisement or exhibition booth - perhaps more for our specific way of thinking than anything else. We not only present a product, we also offer ideas on social and aesthetic function. As yet, however, we have not launched the product strategically, though we would obviously be stupid not to avail ourselves of any opportunities for advertising.

Nacking Who do you see as your audience and how do you gather and follow up possible reactions? Do you participate in a public discussion or do you go in for some other form of public interaction?

Superflex Our audience is whoever shows interest. What we get from the exhibition in concrete terms are the contacts we make, those who make the effort to get in touch with us once their interested is aroused. We do not establish a direct dialogue with the audience of the art institutions, however, as it usually does not work. In our experience, it has to take place outside the institution. In a few cases we have tested alternative strategies, such as a meeting organized in conjunction with an exhibition in Chicago that was intended to create a dialogue about the biogas system within that specific art environment. Our idea was that the audience would feel that they would want to take the project further and try out new paths. [...]

Nacking You are talking about future economic change.

Superflex Economics is growing ever more abstract, and that means that ideas are gaining in importance. In the future there will be a need to redefine some of our fundamental economic laws.

Nacking Our own time is characterized by failed utopias. Even so, we want to retain faith in the future and find new ways to develop. Your project is positive proof of this. Is it possible to describe your project as a do-it-yourself utopia on a small scale, a utopia which is available to the individual, rather than an ambition to save everybody?

Superflex Yes, the project may be seen as a utopia for a specific group of users, namely the African family. We do not wish to impose a prevailing ideology on people – the families are perfectly free to choose. Nor is the biogas project a gift. We might compare it to a western family buying a car, they will usually only do so if they need one and if their finances allow. We are interested in the opportunity that the *Biogas* system presents for the individual families. They now have more time to do something else but gather firewood. Inherent in it is an opportunity for productivity, even if we have no definite proof that this will follow.

Nacking In an imaginative article the Spanish critic Octavio Zaya says that he has a vision that your orange balloons will be seen all over the African landscape within the not too distant future. How optimistic are you about the large-scale realization of the project?

Superflex If we manage to start up production, we will have the potential for reaching a large number of sites. We are totally convinced about its strong market potential. [...]

Superflex and Åsa Nacking, extracts from 'An Exchange Between Åsa Nacking and Superflex', *Afterall*, issue 0 (London, 1998).

Liam Gillick
Utopia Station: For α ... Functional Utopia//2003

Over the last few years I have avoided a number of exhibition structures that have used the word 'utopia' as part of their base. The reason for this is connected with my resistance to the misreading of some work now as part of some ineffectual quasi-utopian project or at least a commentary upon a particularly Anglo-Saxon misreading of postmodernism predicated upon an ironic focus on the failure of modernism, which renders all progressive thinking as utopian by default. My interest is far more grounded and potentially disappointing than this, and could be described as an ongoing investigation of how the middle ground of social and economic activity leaves traces in our current environment. If we agree that we live in a post-consensus sequence of moments, you might certainly also agree that we live in a post-utopian environment. Throughout, of course, I am glossing over the notion of the rogue individual, the visionary and the baroque dream-scapers. Their apparent 'visions' are retrogressive and not utopian in quality as they are not part of an effective critique of new models. So, if we are working in a post-utopian situation, how are things still agreed, planned and developed and who controls these processes? And if the situation is effectively post-utopian in terms of the absence of functional alternative visions, does the word 'utopian' only exist as an accusatory for cultural workers now. If it is true that there are no functional utopias describable today, what kind of alternative vision can be proposed to the dominant ideologies that control and alienate our relationships and circumstances? The reason for avoiding these prior utopian structures has been connected to my rejection of the assumption that any progressive movement is somehow utopian. My frequent use of the term 'post-utopian' in writing and in relation to my work is an attempt to break free from the designation of 'utopia' to any old alternative structure that happens to have existed. The left has always been multiple and essentially fractured, the nature of its developed arguments never consolidated or singular. So one question might be: is it necessary to resurrect the notion of a functional utopia in order to provide a set of rhetorical tools that might help us out of the currently reactive situation we find on the progressive Left, or should we keep with a relativist form of multiple interest development that remains mutable, fluctuating, responsive and inclusive?

My last short book was titled *Literally No Place: Communes, Bars and Greenrooms* (2003). It attempted to outline certain narrative structures that might expose the conditions under which we might find ethical and moral traces that resist commodification within our current situation. It is a text that is more focused on the relationship between the urban and the rural as they develop under the same cultural conditions, the connection between personal relationship structures within broad battles to control the images that they create and an attempt to look at the particular American development of forms of functional communality in place of the suppression of the legacy and potential of communism and truly alternative structures at an organized and general level. Of course these undercurrents remain deeply embedded within a sequence of narrative texts that present some environments where such play and negotiation might take place. The commune, the bar and the greenroom. [...]

So why would someone change their mind? Why suddenly shift into an association with the word 'utopia' in an art context? If I understand this potential structure – as a participant rather than an organizer – *Utopia Station* appears to be working towards a temporary, if rather visible, marker of a sequence of 'becoming utopias' or 'in relation to the application of the accusation of utopias', rather than a reflection of work that appears to reference a set of aesthetic tools that have been deemed dysfunctional and rendered as ironic failures by the dominant culture's desire to corrupt and prevent through the accusation of hypocrisy and lack of economic realism, yet are still used and passed around as a sad reminder of how good things could have been. A 'Utopia Station', on the other hand, might be an ongoing arrival and departure framed by waiting at an in-between space that has been designated by the organizers. All this combined with something to look at and to pass the time with before moving back into the islands of art that are always presented by the Venice Biennale. Rather than a reflection of flawed social models, it could be a refutation of the accusation of utopia, which is merely one stage, or station, in the development of any progressive idea. In order to bypass a simplistic application and ongoing corruption of the applied meanings of the word 'utopia', *Utopia Station* might be a call to question whether we are happy with a situation where certain art remains characterized by the phrase: 'it's all very interesting but ...'

This 'becomingness' rather than 'aboutness' is combined with a way of reconfiguring and reassessing the activities of certain artists, critics and curators whose position is hopefully shifting and shimmering under the umbrella of the project. Ironically this *Utopia Station* emerges at a time when the worst predictions from the recent past are playing out. The warnings from those who chose to continue the analysis of social and political conditions in the face of emergent globalization and the rise of relativism have come true. The apparent utopists were working in the realm of documentary rather than fiction after all. The quasi-rationalizations of neo-liberal thinking are, right now, in full flow. Once again confronting us with a non-choice wrapped in a perversion of moral positioning that renders things binary, unsophisticated and potentially deadly.

Anyone opposing both the leaden thinking that emanates from the governments of the US and UK and the too-late manoeuvring and poorly articulated positions of the French, German and Russian governments might be called a fool or worse, a utopian thinker. The use of a baseball bat to destroy a hornets' nest is not a perfect technique at any point, but the fundamental opposition to the entire matrix of value systems that has generated the current international situation, whether in favour or against a war scenario [in Iraq], is generally viewed as an operational system that should be analysed with utopian tools at best, and suppression at worst.

The problem here is linked to the wide-ranging use of the term utopia – the literally no place – in our current language. It is a common enough word so we don't think twice about using it. We tend also to associate it with art and architecture or withdrawal and communality. The developed sense of a word that was originally used to title a book that was intended as a localized critique of a particular historical circumstance has no relation to its original meaning. The question is, how does any consideration of such a term avoid the micro-fascistic traps that lie in wait for anyone who is not convinced that things are the way they could be? In the hands of neo-liberal pragmatists, utopia has come to describe any art movement, architectural moment, political system or communal proposition that doesn't operate within the terms of modern capitalism. 'Utopian' is the term that refers to the desire for something that is impractical, because it levels and implies harmony, while sidestepping the generalized, lurching linearity of the dominant system. The thinking goes that the attempted application of utopian systems has had to be forced onto people whenever it has been attempted. There has always been a suppression of 'human nature' in order to experience temporarily something more enlightening and less guilt or repression ridden. The strange thing is that the current international tension is between two sets of people who veil their true interests with a faked set of socio-economic anxieties. The religious underpinnings, and therefore essentially utopian, value systems of both parties are dragging us into the mire. The question for us is: do we leave this utopian question to these people to fight over, or do we reclaim it through the use of analytical tools that are more rigorous at identifying the way things work? The question is, can there be a Marxist analysis of utopia that has any functional role within our range of interests? But it is not as simple as this. Moments in the recent past when people have found their own functional utopias have been suppressed and broken down. Other powers are most vigilant when mini-utopian structures emerge and make every effort to point out the apparent hypocrisy in their set-ups so as to hasten their demise.

So why use such a flawed, dysfunctional, accusational tool for an exhibition title? The question is linked to how to proceed when you are not convinced by

current conditions. Working in a relativist, parallel fashion appears to be sufficient at various moments, yet with a continuing proliferation and appropriation of models of radicality by others, it becomes more and more difficult to divine the differences between one named structure and another. It is possible that there is some kind of irony at the heart of its use here. An acknowledgment that the activities of the artists concerned has reached a point of perfect irrelevance. It is arguable that the notion of utopia within the cultural sphere is most attractive to those who have no ongoing interest in making productive change. Instead they create a sequence of mirage visions of how things could be if they were everything other than the way they are now. I would argue that the greatest strength of *Utopia Station* would be derived from its becoming a functional utopia. A model of a more discursive and contingent exhibition structure that could cut free from the generalized experience of the Biennale as a whole and retain a utopian becomingness throughout the time of the exhibition. Scooping up and re-spreading a layer of ethical traces from a sequence of suppressed attempts to actually create a better place and actually have a better time, rather than just providing soothing images of experimental architecture and a mish-mash of interactive structures, however interesting they might be.

How could an exhibition like the one in Venice perform tasks of refusal in relation to the utopian legacy while retaining some reconstituted sense of how things could be. In other words, how could it become a free-floating, non-defined sequence of propositions that wander in and out of focus and avoid being lodged within the consumable world of the concept.

> The utopian impulse in thinking is all the stronger, the less it objectifies itself as utopia – a further form of regression – whereby it sabotages its own realization. Open thinking points beyond itself. For its part, such thinking takes a position as a figuration of praxis, which is more closely related to a praxis truly involved in change than in a position of mere obedience for the sake of praxis. Beyond all specialized and particular content, thinking is actually and above all the force of resistance, alienated from resistance only with great effort.
> (Theodor Adorno, 'Resignation', in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Fickford [New York: Columbia University Press, 1998]).

Liam Gillick, 'Utopia Station: For a ... Functional Utopia', first presented during a symposium that took place just before the project *Utopia Station* at the Venice Biennale in 2003; reprinted in Liam Gillick, *Proxemics: Selected Writings 1986–2006*, ed. Lionel Bovier (Dijon: Les Presses du réel/Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2006) 277–82.

Molly Nesbit, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Rirkrit Tiravanija
What is a Station?//2003

During a debate with Theodor Adorno in 1964, Ernst Bloch, pushed to the wall to defend his position on utopia, stood firm. Adorno had begun things by reminding everyone present that certain utopian dreams had actually been fulfilled, that there was now television, the possibility of travelling to other planets and moving faster than sound. And yet these dreams had come shrouded, minds set in traction by a relentless positivism and then their own boredom. 'One could perhaps say in general', he noted, 'that the fulfilment of utopia consists largely only in a repetition of the continually same "today"'.

Bloch countered. The word utopia had indeed been discredited, he noted, but utopian thinking had not. He pointed to other levels of mind, to removes that were less structured by Western capital. Utopia was passing less auspiciously under other names now, he remarked, for example, 'science fiction' and the beginnings of sentences starting with 'If only it were so ...'

Adorno agreed with him there and went on. 'Whatever utopia is', he said, 'whatever can be imagined as utopia, this is the transformation of the totality. And the imagination of such a transformation of the totality is basically very different in all the so-called utopian accomplishments – which, incidentally, are all really like you say: very modest, very narrow. It seems to me that what people have lost subjectively in regard to consciousness is very simply the capability to imagine the totality as something that could be completely different'. How to think utopia then? Adorno saw the only possibility to reside in the notion of an unfettered life *freed from death*. All at once the discussion of utopia expanded; it became not merely old, but ancient. It seemed to shed ideologies as if they were skins. Adorno declared that there could be no picture of utopia cast in a positive manner, there could be no positive picture of it at all, nor could any picture be complete. He went very far. Bloch only followed him part way. He summoned up a sentence from Brecht. He let it stand as the nutshell that held the incentive for utopia. Brecht had written 'Something's missing'.

'What is this "something"?' Bloch asked. 'If it is not allowed to be cast in a picture, then I shall portray it as in the process of being. But one should not be allowed to eliminate it as if it really did not exist so that one could say the following about it: "It's about the sausage". I believe utopia cannot be removed from the world in spite of everything, and even the technological, which must definitely emerge and will be in the great realm of the utopian, will form only small sectors. That is a geometrical picture, which does not have any place here,

but another picture can be found in the old peasant saying, there is no dance before the meal. People must first fill their stomachs, and then they can dance'.

'Something is Missing', the statement from Brecht. Typically when searching for utopia, one relies on the steps taken by others, for ever since its first formulation in 1516 by Thomas More, ever since its invention as the island of good social order, utopia has been a proposition to be debated, several speakers often pitching in at once. They bring thoughts, experience, the fruits of the past. For utopia is in many ways an ancient search for happiness, for freedom, for paradise. Sir Thomas More had had Plato's *Republic* in mind as he wrote. By now however utopia itself has lost its much of its fire. The work done in the name of utopia has soured the concept, left it strangled by internal, seemingly fixed perspectives, the skeletons of old efforts which leave their bones on the surface of the body as if they belonged there. Has utopia been strung up? Or obscured by bad eyesight? Certainly *it* has gone missing. Utopia itself has become a conceptual no-place, empty rhetoric at best, more often than not an exotic vacation, the desert pleasure island of cliché. Abbas Kiarostami, when asked recently if he had any unrealized or utopian projects, refused the long perspectives of utopia altogether. He preferred to fix matters in the present, taking each day one hill at a time. We in turn have set our sights on the middle ground between the island and the hill. We will build a Station there and name it *Utopia Station*.

The *Utopia Station* is a way-station. As a conceptual structure it is flexible; the particular Station planned for the Venice Biennale is physical too. It will rise as a set of contributions by more than sixty artists and architects, writers and performers, the ensemble being coordinated into a flexible plan by Rirkrit Tiravanija and Liam Gillick. It has been important to all concerned that the plan not present itself as a finished picture. Let us therefore conjure up the Station by means of a few figures. It begins with a long low platform, part dance-floor, part stage, part quay. Along one side of this platform is a row of large circular benches so that you can watch the movement on the platform or silently turn your back or treat the circle as a generous conversation pit. Each seats ten people. The circular benches are portable; as an option one could line them up like a row of big wheels. Along the other side of the platform a long wall with many doors rises up. Some of the doors take you to the other side of the wall. Some open into small rooms in which you will see installations and projections. The wall wraps around the rooms and binds the ensemble into a long irregular structure. Over it floats a roof suspended on cables from the ceiling of the cavernous room in the old warehouse at the far end of the Arsenale where the Station sits. Outside the warehouse lies a rough garden. Work from the Station will spill into it.

The Station itself will be filled with objects, part-objects, paintings, images, screens. Around them a variety of benches, tables and small structures take their

place. It will be possible to bathe in the Station and powder one's nose. The Station in other words becomes a place to stop, to contemplate, to listen and see, to rest and refresh, to talk and exchange. For it will be completed by the presence of people and a programme of events. Performances, concerts, lectures, readings, film programmes, parties, the events will multiply. They define the Station as much as its solid objects do. But all kinds of things will continue to be added to the Station over the course of the summer and fall. People will leave things behind, take some things with them, come back or never return again. There will always be people who want to leave too much and others who don't know what to leave behind or what to say. These are the challenges for a *Utopia Station* being set up in the heart of an art exhibition. But in addition, there are the unpredictable effects, which Carsten Höller has been anticipating, the points where something missing turns to something that becomes too much. The doubt produced between these two somethings is just as meaningful as any idea of utopia, he believes. These tensions will be welcomed like a guest.

What does a Station produce? What might a Station produce *in real time*? In this *produce* lies an activity more complex than pure exhibition, for it contains many cycles of use, a mixing of use. It incorporates aesthetic material, aesthetic matters too, into another economy which does not regard art as fatally separate.

But what is its place? The discussion of this question has been opened again by Jacques Rancière, in his book *Le partage du sensible*, which in French has the advantage of having a partition and a sharing occupy the same word. What is sectioned off and exchanged? It is more than an idea. Rancière takes his departure from Plato, pointedly, in order to remind us of the inevitable relation between the arts and the rest of social activity, the inevitable relations, it should be said, that together distribute value and give hierarchy, that govern, that both materially and conceptually establish their politics. This theatre of relations wraps itself around visions of worlds, each of them islands, each of them forms, but all of them concrete realities replete with matter and force. This is a philosophical understanding of aesthetic activity; it extends materialist aesthetics into the conditions of our present; it is a book to bring to a Station. As we have. But, once released, a book too leaves its island.

The *Utopia Station* in Venice, the city of islands, is part of a larger project. Utopia Stations do not require architecture for their existence, only a meeting, a gathering. We have already had several in Paris, in Venice, in Frankfurt, in Poughkeepsie, in Berlin. As such the Stations can be large or small. There is no hierarchy of importance between the gatherings, meetings, seminars, exhibitions and books; all of them become equally good ways of working. There is no desire to formalize the Stations into an institution of any kind. For now we meet. Many ideas about utopia circulate. Once when we met with Jacques Rancière, it was in Paris last June, he spoke to the difficulties involved in putting the idea of utopia forward. He pointed to the line that says 'There must be utopia', meaning that there must not only be calculations but an elevation, a supplement rising in the soul, and said that this line of thought has never interested him. Indeed he has always found it unnerving, even irritating. That which does interest him, he explained, is the *dissensus*, the manner in which ruptures are concretely created – ruptures in speech, in perception, in sensibility. He turned to contemplate the means by which utopias can be used to produce these ruptures. Will it begin and end in talk? [...]

It is simple. We use utopia as a catalyst, a concept most useful as fuel. We leave the complete definition of utopia to others. We meet to pool our efforts, motivated by a need to change the landscape outside and inside, a need to think, a need to integrate the work of the artist, the intellectual and manual labourers that we are into a larger kind of community, another kind of economy, a bigger conversation, another state of being. You could call this need a hunger. [...]

Molly Nesbit, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Rirkrit Tiravanija, extract from 'What is a Station', in Francesco Bonami, et al., *Dreams and Conflicts: The Dictatorship of the Viewer* (Venice: 50th Venice Biennale/Marsilio, 2003).

Pierre Huyghe, Stefan Kalmár, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Philippe Parreno, Beatrix Ruf
No Ghost Just a Shell: Dialogue//2003

Hans Ulrich Obrist We might as well begin at the beginning.

Pierre Huyghe It all started when we heard certain agencies in Japan sell fictional characters.

Beatrix Ruf What kind of companies are they? Animated film production companies?

Philippe Parreno No, in fact they're agencies that develop fictional characters for the manga market. They sell the characters to production companies that produce games, mangas or advertising films. We bought the rights to one of these characters from one of these agencies.

Ruf With what intention?

Huyghe We wanted to free a character from the fiction market.

Parreno We looked for a character and we found this one. A character without a name, a two-dimensional image, with no turn-around. A character without a biography and without qualities, very cheap, which had that melancholic look, as if it were conscious of the fact that its capacity to survive stories was very limited. [...] We wanted to tell this story through two animated films. As real-time animation is the most economic way of producing animated films today, the character was modelled in 3-D.

Hans Ulrich Obrist That was an important step, since when you later passed the sign to other artists, it was not exactly a readymade anymore, but a transmuted readymade.

Huyghe The project gradually took shape as we were making the films.

Obrist So there wasn't any predetermined plan?

Parreno No. *Anywhere out of the World* (2000) is about a product – an image – that tells its story. In *Two Minutes out of Time* (2000) this image or sign tells of its emancipation and becomes a character that lends its voice to other authors. It's the beginning of a story ...

Kalmár Something has just arisen in what you've just said, which is the question of the character's sex. How far do you think about 'it' as a gendered sign? Would you agree that Annlee is interchangeable, a kind of transsexual – or a shell, for projection?

Huyghe It isn't a 'she', it's an 'it'. It was that feeling, that melancholy in the character that made us choose this image rather than another.

Parreno As for the projection and identification processes, no, I don't think they are so simple today. I don't think Annlee is the projection of anything.

Huyghe After these two episodes, we began to talk about the 'film d'imaginaire' which is still a pretty obscure idea, but you can vaguely grasp the meaning of it when you compare it to a film of fiction.

Parreno These two *films d'imaginaire*, these non-fiction films, constitute the preface to a real story. By freeing the character from the fiction market, it became an empty shell: 'No Ghost Just a Shell'.

Ruf Annlee is everywhere, there are lots of signs that mean a lot and here is a sign that changes meaning all the time, the logo denying content. Is it a logo allowing 'authentic' subjectivity of all artists involved?

Parreno Its singularity is that it has a plural meaning today.

Huyghe It's a sign around which a community has established itself and which this community also established. Unlike a logo, it's a fragile sign without autonomy; it has that ability to become plural and complex. A hologram requires several beams of light to exist. Each author is the amplifier of an echo that he or she has not emitted and does not own.

Parreno That's the condition of cultural consumption as a part of any liberal system. In that respect, 'No Ghost Just a Shell' is a pagan enterprise.

Huyghe The narrator, the narrated and the narration become interchangeable.

Parreno Yes, they are interchangeable and self-consuming.

Kalmár How did you proceed with the artists who worked on this sign; did you think about a possible group of people whom you would invite to work on this project or did you use a given communal network?

Parreno There was never any list.

Huyghe When the two films were finished, we began to think in terms of an exhibition. We decided to show our films at the same time, Philippe at Air de Paris and me at Galérie Marian Goodman. So the same invitation was sent out for both shows.

Parreno Only the names were changed. [...]

Huyghe The contract that will bind the Annlee association, run jointly by the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, and a legal firm, is there to ensure that the image of Annlee will never again appear beyond the existing representations.

Ruf Is the project really coming to an end, or does the contract open new kinds of fiction for Annlee and the project? Is there a narrative for the 'ghost' coming from the future? What happens after the end?

Parreno It's a stalemate, Annlee withdraws from the realm of representation. Does history stop in the absence of an image?

Kalmár Annlee is travelling, adapting herself to four different venues (Zurich, Cambridge, Massachusetts, San Francisco and Eindhoven). How do you see the project addressing the different contexts in which it appears?

Parreno The modes of the group exhibition are at stake, not the ways these exhibitions are received in different contexts.

Huyghe In Zurich we brought together all these participations in one space for the first time. It wasn't something we had already done (I'm thinking of an exhibition at the Kunstverein in Hamburg). In Zurich we made choices, we invented a display, laying the accent on the project and its structure, rather than on its constituent parts. At the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art it worked out differently, at the Van Abbemuseum it will be different again. The project should never be reduced to its representation.

Parreno The finest solution remains the very first one, when we showed the two

films simultaneously in Paris, but in two different galleries. Today you'd have to have 17 places in the world, where 17 versions of Annlee would appear. That would be the finest of all exhibitions. In the sci-fi novel *Hyperion* [Dan Simmons, 1989], humans move from one galaxy to the next by using 'distrans' gates, which allow them to warp instantly through space-time without moving. The novel describes houses with rooms in different galaxies. When they go from one room to another, crossing through these 'distrans' gates, the occupants are actually changing galaxies. That's a bit like the Annlee project: architecture without a facade, a space without an outside, which is made only of interiors. One of the visual solutions in Zurich was to fabricate huge doors that you had to push to move from one gallery to the other. At the Van Abbemuseum, a robot following a programmed pattern will travel through the space, projecting the films.

Huyghe One solution isn't any more interesting than another. They are different stops along the way, and each of them shares in the project's composition.

Obrist The book is an anthology of a single sign. What is its role in the structure of the project?

Parreno We wanted to make a somewhat technical book, a book exploring the different facets of the project. We wanted to take up certain ideas that had been thrown out in the course of different discussions, or observed in the course of the project's constitution. So we asked a series of authors to help us deal with these problems. It's a little like asking a Formula One mechanic how your car works.

Huyghe The authors of the book add on to the list of artists who have already taken the character into their hands. They share equally in the project.

Obrist They add to the polyphony constituted by the authors of the film.

Huyghe They're all actors...

Parreno To get back to the question that Beatrix was just asking, the project doesn't stop in the absence of Annlee, it can always produce more authors, and these texts are quite a good example of that.

Huyghe We're just lifting the mask. What's behind it no longer needs a face to exist. It's not because the mask has been taken away that the obscure identity hiding behind it must cease to exist.

The book prolongs the story, more than writing it.

Parreno It will have as many bookmarks as it does authors.

Huyghe As you said, Hans, it's more of an anthology ... Among the authors is Kathryn Davis, a novelist interested in biography, a subject she teaches at a university in New York. We asked her to reflect on what the biography of a sign might be like. Her text takes the form of a letter ... In fact, none of the authors have approached the project in an objective, scientific way. They all integrated this type of writing into their own work, just like she did. They instrumentalized this relation to the sign.

Parreno There's a text by Maurizio Lazzarato. What interested us in *Puissance de l'invention* (*Powers of Invention*, 2002) was his philosophical portrait of Gabriel Tarde, a sociologist of the late nineteenth century who proposed to measure the world by dividing it into different categories, to link up the active forces according to the difference and repetition of the time of creation. It's an essay that deals with the problems of copyright and moral rights. For 'No Ghost Just a Shell', Maurizio offered to do a portrait of Mikhail Bakhtin, and through him, of polyphony. It's a text that answers our invitation in a highly articulate but also very indirect way. It deals with exactly what's at stake here: the conversational process, the relation between self and other ...

Huyghe The multiplicity of the other, how individualization is constituted, the role of the object-event.

Parreno There's also the text by Molly Nesbit, which is really more of a poem than a text, even if she talks about Mallarmé's 'Afternoon of a Faun'. As an art historian she also took to the game and got into remixing her discourse. What she's done are haikus, little speech-bubbles, clues thrown out to keep us off the track, or find our way again.

Huyghe There's a text by Jan Verwoert, on copyright, the idea of the ghost and the demon, fetishes and agents of capital. The idea that an object has to begin resembling a ghost to make itself desirable. Then there's Maurice Pianzola, an art historian; we're publishing one of his short stories about the peasant uprising in Switzerland and Germany in the sixteenth century, and via this insurrection, the story of their quest for a unifying, federating sign, one of which was chosen for the cover of the book.

Parreno The quest for a flag that could have made this movement into the first Marxist revolution. Among the rallying signs that Pianzola found there is the

shell, the shell of Compostella, which just happens to be the shell on the poster that M/M did for our project. Then there's also a satirical text by Israel Rosenfield, who presents us with a recent biological discovery: the discovery of HOX or homeobox genes. A sequence of genes that is found in all animals, from ants to men. Genes dealing with anatomy and producing morphologies. In the cobra you find the same genes that make human arms in humans, and the same ones that make chicken wings in chickens. Annlee is like a 2-D living being developed from this genetic sequence.

Obrist Finally there is the presence of Jean Claude Ameisen and the famous legal contract drawn up by Luc Saucier.

Huyghe Yes, the contract that provides a legal framework for this whole story. The acquisition of Annlee took place within a poetic project, which consisted in freeing a fictional character from the realm of representation. Logically, Philippe and I had to give up our rights. Now that Annlee's rights finally belong to her specifically, and won't just fall into public domain, we have worked with the legal firm to create an association under the name Annlee. Ceding our rights to the Annlee Association is what seals her definitive liberation. Which was intended to become jurisprudence.

Parreno The association is supposed to ensure that the image of Annlee does not reappear, with the exception of the images existing before the date that the association is rendered public in the Journal Officiel. Immediately after the publication in the Journal Officiel, the association will acquire all the rights to Annlee from Pierre and myself, for one symbolic Euro. The text by Luc Saucier is the legal apparatus, the contracts ceding our rights and creating an association under the French law of 1901. This is the aspect of the project that most interested Jean-Claude Ameisen in the course of a very interesting interview he did with us, concerning the interdependence of living organisms, the fragility of residual complexity, cellular death, and the definition he gives by quoting the scene in Lewis Carrol's *Alice in Wonderland* when the Cheshire cat disappears: 'A smile without a cat'.

Obrist Is it a utopian project?

Parreno Maybe, in the way that the communities in the marsh region of Poitevin are utopian. They live by the economy of salt, a trading economy legalized by Napoleon. The feeling that emerges from these communities might be utopian, but in fact it's strongly melancholic ...

Huyghe Finally, there's the magazine by Lili Fleury, through which we share the imaginary experience of a character afflicted with personality troubles.

Parreno Lili did the graphic art for Anna Sanders and now she's proposing a new magazine for this new character.

Huyghe Then there's Miami: Annlee will make her last appearance before she evaporates from the realm of representation. It will be fireworks display, a final wink ... A set of subjective viewpoints around the same event, which Pasolini talks about in *Heretical Empiricism* [*Empirismo Eretico*, 1972].

Ruf So what comes after the book is still unpredictable?

Huyghe We can speculate.

Parreno Let's speculate, let's speculate ... There could be a trial if anyone uses Annlee's image again. She could also become the heroine of many novels. The fable begins now, it's being woven with this book.

Huyghe It's now that the shooting of the imaginary film really begins.

Pierre Huyghe, Stefan Kalmár, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Philippe Parreno, Beatrix Ruf, extracts from round table discussion, trans. Brian Holmes and Alexandra Keens, in *No Ghost Just a Shell* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2003) 15–17; 25–30.

Hans Ulrich Obrist
the land//2003

More and more artists today refuse to display their creativity exclusively within and upon the pristine walls of the gallery space. Their curricula vitae increasingly mention such diverse projects as designs for restaurants, private residences, or public buildings. This inclination of art towards architecture and design emerges from the revived interest of artists throughout the 1990s to question more actively the role they play in society. In turning towards collaborative and transdisciplinary practices, artists have been defining new modes of bypassing formalist credos and interacting with the social realities of daily life.

Rirkrit Tiravanija has been a key figure of these evolutions. Recently he revealed his ideas concerning *the land*, a large-scale collaborative and transdisciplinary project taking place on a plot of land that Tiravanija purchased in the village of Sanpatong, near Chiang Mai, Thailand. *The land* is a laboratory for self-sustainable development but it is also a site where a new model for art and a new model for living are being tested out.

Begun in 1998, *the land*, as Tiravanija explained, 'was the merging of ideas by different artists to cultivate a place of and for social engagement. It's been acquired in the name of artists who live in Chiang Mai. We've been trying to find a way to turn it into a collective, and to have the property owned by no one in particular, but that's one of the hardest things to do in Thailand. We cannot be a Foundation.' The undoing of ownership strikes at the heart of what Tiravanija is trying to do with the project since, as he emphasized, '*The land* is not a property'. And to the question, then, 'Is *the land* an art project?' the artist replied: 'We don't want to have to deal with it as a presentation to the art structures, because I think it should be neutral; and, it's also one of the reasons why it's not about property'. Indeed seeming to underscore this are the two working rice fields positioned in the middle of *the land* and monitored by a group of students from the University of Chiang Mai and a local village. The harvest, cultivated using traditional Thai farming techniques, is shared by all participants involved.

Extending Tiravanija's previous artistic efforts that engage the objects and actions of everyday life, *the land* demonstrates how far contemporary artistic production today exceeds the boundaries of the autonomous object and the art systems that uphold it. Although *the land* was not initiated uniquely as a space for structures to be designed, built and used by artists, many of the projects to date are being developed along those lines. Thus in its own way, *the land* is something of a 'massive-scale artist-run space' in which Tiravanija's incitement

to collaborate is offering artists of all kinds the chance to exceed the boundaries of their discipline, to construct works they may not have otherwise imagined, and to allow these works to be developed and experienced in an atypical way.

A slew of contemporary artists have thus designed or carried out projects for houses or self-sustaining device systems for *the land*: Kamin Lertchaiprasert built a gardener's house, Atelier van Lieshout developed a toilet system, Tobias Rehberger, Alicia Framis and Karl Holmqvist worked on housing structures, and Peter Fischli and David Weiss are building a utopic bus stop inspired by Oscar Niemeyer's Brasilia.

Some contributions are structural in other ways: Arthur Meyer constructed a system for harnessing solar power, Prachya Phintong put in place a programme for fish farming and a water library, Mit Chai-Inn develops tree plants to be later turned into baskets and the Danish collective Superflex developed a system for the production of biogas. Tiravanija described some of the inherent complexities to which the participants were responding: 'There is no electricity or water, as it would be problematic in terms of land development in the area. Superflex has made experiments to use natural renewable resources as alternative sources for electricity and gas. *Supergas* is using the land as a lab for the development of a biogas system. The gas produced will be used for the stoves in the kitchen, as well as lamps for light.' Tiravanija himself contributed to the occupation of *the land* with the construction of a house based on what he calls 'the three spheres of needs', described as the following: 'The lower floor is a communal space with a fireplace; it's the place of accommodation, gathering and exchanges; the second floor is for reading and meditation and reflection on the exchanges; the top floor for sleep.'

Finally, Philippe Parreno and the architect François Roche have begun their plans for a central activity hall that will be built this spring and will function as a biotechnology driven hyper-plug. The Plug in Station uses nature to produce the interface: it will make use of a satellite downlink and a live elephant will generate the necessary power.

The land is already in use. The curious have begun to visit. And although there are currently elements in construction and others still yet unrealized, it is developing in density and layers like the sedimentation of the plot it sits on. Constructed of the complex exchanges that have, in some cases, begun between individuals in locations all over the world and long before Tiravanija staked out its territory, *the land* demonstrates perfectly the 'collaborational promiscuity' that interests so many of the artists involved. To that end, it is important as well that *the land*'s collaborative development is somewhat unpredictable, organic, and ultimately oscillates between process, object, structure and exchange.

'*The land* itself', Tiravanija emphasized, 'is not connected to anything and that's what's interesting about it.' And this can be understood in many ways. Above all, Tiravanija's initiation of *the land* project resists the normative and prescriptive aspects which accompanied many earlier utopias. *The land* is a concrete utopia, but it is also first and foremost a self-imposed utopia, one that is not rooted in intransigent beliefs on how others should live. Thus, *the land* stands as a pertinent illustration of what a utopian project can be once grand theories have been moved aside: a feasible, practical, but even more importantly, subjective utopia.

Hans Ulrich Obrist, 'The Land', first published in a shorter form in *Wired*, no. 11.06 (June 2003); revised version at http://architettura.supereva.com/esposizioni/20030608/

Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane
Folk Archive: Contemporary Popular Art from the UK//2005

[...] This book suggests how popular art may have developed in light of recent social, technological and cultural changes. If art practice has changed in recent decades, then what might be considered folk art has similarly changed and we must take into account performance and action, video and installation. We have made a partial account of popular art in this country: for everything we have included there are a hundred objects or events that we have left out through ignorance or our own preferences. We are not trying to define popular art, as this book is a very personal selection of things that have excited us over the past few years. We have tried to convey our enjoyment of the range and depth of creativity we have come across everywhere we have managed to reach.

We decided to avoid what is often called 'outsider art'. Our artists are mostly quite clear on how their work will be read, and we have simply transposed the works from one form of public display to the more traditional presentation of art in a gallery. We mostly applied the same wide-ranging criteria for deciding as we would normally bring to viewing any art. We looked for works which have attributes including: humour, modernity, insight, a unique voice or perspective, motifs we recognize and ones we don't, attempts to tackle ambitious subjects, refreshing directness or effectiveness, endeavours beyond normal expectation, pathos or just something extra. The one aspect common to all contributions is that they have been authored by individuals who would perhaps not primarily consider themselves artists.

With *Folk Archive* we are treading a path between being artists and being anthropologists. As artists we engage in an optimistic journey of personal discovery (albeit often very close to home). As anthropologists, we hope we are describing something overlooked and worthy of attention as thoroughly as possible. For those interested in an anthropological approach, we must apologize for the rather too knowing misuse of the phrase 'archive' and an artistic casualness with details. For all involved in the folk or vernacular cultural scenes we must similarly apologize for the cheap 'folk' shot and a fly-by-night plundering of whole worlds. It's kind of obvious, but this book would not have been possible without all those who have made the work. [...]

Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane, extract from 'Preface' in Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane, *Folk Archive: Contemporary Popular Art from the UK* (London: Book Works, 2005) 150–52.

Jeremy Millar
Poets of Their Own Affairs: A Brief Introduction to *Folk Archive*//2005

[...] To take but a single institution, the Whitechapel Gallery, its identity firmly rooted in its traditionally working-class location, has on numerous occasions displayed folk or popular art, such as the 'Design and Workmanship in Printing' exhibition of 1915, one of a number of 'trade' shows that emerged from an 'Arts and Crafts' tradition and that were targetted at future apprentices. 'Black Eyes and Lemonade – A Festival of Britain Exhibition of British Popular and Traditional Art', an early Arts Council exhibition of 1951; 'Banner Bright – An Exhibition of Trade Union Banners from 1821 to 1973'; and 'The Fairground' in 1977, which was 'respectfully dedicated to the showmen and showwomen who maintain and transport the travelling fairs, and to the craftsmen who support them'. In her introduction to the catalogue for 'Black Eyes and Lemonade', Barbara Jones admits: 'We have not been able to find a satisfactory brief and epigrammatic definition of Popular Art. It was finally decided to set up a series of arbitrary categories which reflect most forms of human activity without creating bogus sociological implications.' The primary sociological implications of this exhibition in its entirety, however, like that of the other elements of the Festival of Britain (such as the Lion and Unicorn Pavilion), in Jones' *The Unsophisticated Arts*, or in Enid Marx and Margaret Lambert's notable book *English Popular Art*, which all appeared in the same year, is a desire to consolidate a sense of Englishness following the ravages of war. Yet it is a sense of Englishness that is curiously backward-looking. In the catalogue introduction to the exhibition of popular art they organized for the Museum of English Rural Life at Reading in Berkshire, in 1958, Marx and Lambert write:

> The term 'popular art', though we may none of us find it entirely satisfactory ... has the merit of being sufficiently elastic to include not only handicrafts and things made, either by professionals or amateurs in the countryside itself but also such things made to country needs and tastes, in towns and by machinery, or even imported from abroad.

It is striking to recall that, contemporaneous with these books and exhibitions, a new form of 'popular art' as being developed in England by members of what became known as the 'Independent Group', a form which was far more modern and internationalist in spirit. Appropriately, perhaps the most memorable display of these elements was made within the Whitechapel Gallery in the 1956

exhibition 'This is Tomorrow', the catalogue of which included Richard Hamilton's now iconic 'pop' collage *Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?* Indeed, just a few months later, in a famous letter to [the architects and fellow members of the group] Alison and Peter Smithson, Hamilton was able to find 'the brief and epigrammatic definition of Popular Art' that had eluded Jones a few years previously:

Pop Art is
Popular (designed for a mass audience)
Transient (short term solution)
Expendable (easily forgotten)
Low Cost
Mass produced
Young (aimed at youth)
Witty
Sexy
Gimmicky
Glamorous
Big business

If, as Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane state, a primary aim of the *Folk Archive* is 'to question what might constitute present-day folk art', then this is but the latest expression of an ongoing process of re-evaluation of which the Independent Group were also a part. It is telling that such a process remains necessary. Even in recent publications such as the catalogue of the British Folk Art Collection, published in 1993, or James Ayres' *British Folk Art* of 1977, the area of enquiry seems to be curiously moribund, contrary to the stated intentions of the authors (indeed the reader may be reminded of Raymond Williams' wry observation that 'sepulture' is one of only two words that rhyme with 'culture'). While Ayres acknowledges, for example, that 'Industrialization did not arrest the growth of folk art', citing the painted roses of the canal boat, or the wooden steam-driven roundabouts which were often carved by ex-ship carvers made redundant by the development of new iron-hulled and steam-driven ships, his survey scarcely goes beyond 1900, 'when folk art was finally succumbing to industrialization and to the destruction of the subcultures on which its traditions rest'. More than this, Ayres ends his foreword to the book with a curiously moralistic statement: Today we view this work as the product of a Garden of Eden before The Fall.'

What we are able to discern in such publications, I believe, is a thinly disguised contempt for that which they are ostensibly celebrating. It is certainly easy to find many items of traditional folk art 'quaint' or 'charming', their simple

elegance enhanced when displayed in restored schoolhouses or the Regency townhouses of Bath, for example. By contrast, folk art, from the post-lapsarian world of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is deemed irredeemable. What was popular is now just common, the 'people's baroque' become merely vulgar. The passing of time allows those who wish to demonstrate their enthusiasm for 'the art of the people', without the blasted inconvenience of having to associate with them. 'The operational models of popular culture cannot be confined to the past, the countryside or primitive peoples', wrote the French theorist Michel de Certeau in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 'they exist in the heart of the strongholds of the contemporary economy.' Indeed, what has come to be known as folk art shares much with what has come to be known as everyday life, and they are often similarly defined as that which escapes or lies outside specialized activities. Yet despite the enormous interest in exploring what might be understood as, and meant by, everyday life over recent decades, there seem not to have been concomitant developments in our understanding of folk art. Indeed, while the investigations of sociologists such as de Certeau, Pierre Bourdieu and, importantly, Henri Lefebvre, amongst many others, have demonstrated with immense power the complex relationships which make up something as seemingly simple as 'everyday life', many writers on folk art (and certainly those referred to here) require of it a straightforward truthfulness, a transparent expression, unaffected by self-conscious artistry, which delivers to the viewer a shared understanding of the world outside and the life that can be lived within it One hardly need be aware of the many developments within twentieth-century anthropology, ethnography, philosophy, even art history, to recognize the gaping conceptual hole that lies at the heart of such a desire, and the myth of authenticity that has been constructed around it like a piteous disguise: one need only ask, whose everyday life?

Of course, one might ask of this question in turn; well, who's asking, and why? Such are the difficulties of any enquiry into the nature of everyday life and its cultural practices, although they do hint at why ethnography has been so concerned at examining its own status and methodologies over the past century. The critic Hal Foster has referred to an 'artist envy' within critical anthropology in recent decades, in which the artist has become 'a paragon of formal reflexivity, a self-aware reader of culture understood as text'. Foster notes also a complementary 'ethnographer envy' within some contemporary artistic practices. Often this can be found, with varying degrees of seriousness, within conceptual art, which often played with bureaucratic or statistical modes of expression, such as Dan Graham's *Homes for America* article from 1966 or the ad absurdam attempt by Douglas Huebler to photograph every human being. Of course, both Deller and Kane are well aware of the uncertain nature of the

position in which they find themselves, or rather, have positioned themselves, as both artists and anthropologists, and also between the two. As the anthropologist Edgar Morin noted of the sociological observer (and one might say of the artist, or curator, similarly); 'he [sic] must be like everyone else and also the possessor of special knowledge like the priest and the doctor. The art of sociological inquiry is to experience this dual personality internally and express it externally, dialectically to enrich participation and objectification. We do not claim to have succeeded; we do claim that it is necessary to attempt to do so.' These are claims, no doubt that Deller and Kane would also make.

Indeed, as Foster has made clear in his essay, 'The Artist as Ethnographer', questioning the authority of the ethnographically-minded artist is as important as the questioning of the artistic ethnographer. At its worst, such an artistic practice, like that of the folk art historians discussed earlier, is dependent upon a form of neo-primitivism, in which the object of enquiry (or 'other', in contemporary terms) is remade as somehow 'authentic' or 'real', and yet in its very naïvety dependent upon the more sophisticated practice in order ro draw out its immanent self-identity. As de Certeau might have it, such a practice is merely an 'offering up of hagiographic everydayness for its edifying value'. Of course, what we then become increasingly aware of is the act of speaking for others, in which, according to critic Grant Kester, the community artist is in a position analogous to that of the delegate (as defined by Pierre Bourdieu), as someone who speaks on behalf of a certain community or group. This relationship is not a simple one, however, as not only does the delegate derive legitimacy from the community for which he or she speaks, but this community is in some sense created – at least symbolically – through the expression of the delegate. It is upon this understanding that Kester questions 'the rhetoric of community artists who position themselves as the vehicle for an unmediated expressivity on the part of a given community'; indeed, certain collaborative community artists, he claims, operate as little more than self-serving delegates that claim 'the authority to speak for the community in order to empower [themselves] politically, professionally and morally'.

It should be clear that this is not a charge that I think could be made, at least not fairly, at either Deller and Kane or *Folk Archive*. In many discussions of the artist-ethnographer, or community artist, the communities being spoken for are said to possess both a curious ability and a curious lack of ability; that is, they possess an authentic voice and yet somehow lack the means of articulation. The artist not only helps the community to find its voice but also trains it, before projecting it into the world. What is important to bear in mind with *Folk Archive* is that the works included were made quite specifically for forms of public display, no matter how diverse or different from the context in which we now

come across them, and are not simply objects or activities that have been taken from a hidden corner of everyday life and that now stand rather awkwardly, for our attention. Everything included within *Folk Archive* is quite clearly the result of a self-consciously creative activity, and not a raw self-expression, to be appreciated for its guileless charm.

Furthermore, and perhaps even more importantly, *Folk Archive* does not perpetuate – or even allow for – any coherent sense of what might be meant by community, although many different communities are represented. For some, the community identity is strong and almost necessarily univocal, and the works on display reflect that, such as the unionist and nationalist murals, or the trade union banners; for others, the communities consist of people who would no doubt rather not be a part of them, such as prison inmates. Community is here understood as something provisional, and subject to competing claims, social forces and misunderstandings, a community that is 'inoperative', to use Jean-Luc Nancy's term. And if a coherent – and unchanging – understanding of community is impossible, then so too must any representation of it, which is why, importantly, *there is no such thing as the Folk Archive*. Rather, it is as a concept instead of a material fact, an actively organizing (and disorganizing) idea instead of a passive accumulation of objects, that it is able to represent more accurately the cultural productions of contemporary communities, rather than being hampered by any perceived lack of methodological rigour. Indeed, *Folk Archive* might even answer anthropologist Michael Taussig's call for 'an understanding of the representation as contiguous with that being represented and not as something suspended above and distant from the represented'. In so doing, *Folk Archive* not only provides us with an invaluable picture of life in Britain today, it shows us also what life might be.

Jeremy Millar, extract from 'Poets of Their Own Affairs: A Brief Introduction to Folk Archive', in Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane, *Folk Archive: Contemporary Popular Art from the UK* (London: Book Works, 2005) 150–52.

I AM INTERESTED IN UTOPIAN THINKING AS A CRITICAL TOOL, A FORM OF SATIRE AND IRONY . . . TRYING TO DEVELOP INTERESTING METHODS OF DISTRIBUTING PROPAGANDA AND INFORMATION WITHIN THE HIDEOUS BOREDOM OF COMMERCIAL SPACE

Nils Norman, 'Utopia Now: Interview with Jennifer Allen', 2002

CRITICAL UTOPIAS

Dan Graham
Homes for America//1966–67

Belleplain	Garden City
Brooklawn	Garden City Park
Colonia	Greenlawn
Colonia Manor	Island Park
Fair Haven	Levitown
Fair Lawn	Middleville
Greenfields Village	New City Park
Green Village	Pine Lawn
Plainsboro	Plainview
Pleasant Grove	Plandome Manor
Pleasant Plains	Pleasantside
Sunset Hill Garden	Pleasantville

Large-scale 'tract' housing 'developments' constitute the new city. They are located everywhere. They are not particularly bound to existing communities; they fail to develop either regional characteristics or separate identity. These 'projects' date from the end of World War II when in southern California speculators or 'operative' builders adapted mass production techniques to quickly build many houses for the defence workers over-concentrated there. This 'California Method' consisted simply of determining in advance the exact amount and lengths of pieces of lumber and multiplying them by the number of standardized houses to be built. A cutting yard was set up near the site of the project to saw rough lumber into those sizes. By mass buying, greater use of machines and factory produced parts, assembly line standardization, multiple units were easily fabricated.

Each house in a development is a lightly constructed 'shell', although this fact is often concealed by fake (half-stone) brick walls. Shells can be added or subtracted easily. The standard unit is a box or a series of boxes, sometimes contemptuously called 'pill-boxes'. When the box has a sharply oblique roof it is called a Cape Cod. When it is longer than wide it is a 'ranch'. A two-story house is usually called 'colonial'. If it consists of contiguous boxes with one slightly higher elevation it is a 'split level'. Such stylistic differentiation is advantageous to the basic structure (with the possible exception of the split level whose plan simplifies construction on discontinuous

ground levels). There is a recent trend toward 'two home homes' which are two boxes split by adjoining walls and having separate entrances. The left and right hand units are mirror reproductions of each other. Often sold as private units are strings of apartment-like, quasi-discrete cells formed by subdividing laterally an extended rectangular parallelepiped into as many as ten or twelve separate dwellings.

Developers usually build large groups of individual homes sharing similar floor plans and whose overall grouping possesses a discrete flow plan. Regional shopping centres and industrial parks are sometimes integrated as well into the general scheme. Each development is sectioned into blocked-out areas containing a series of identical or sequentially related types of houses all of which have uniform or staggered set-backs and land plots.

The logic relating each sectioned part to the entire plan follows a systematic plan. A development contains a limited, set number of house models. For instance, Cape Coral, a Florida project, advertises eight different models:

A The Sonata
B The Concerto
C The Overture
D The Ballet
E The Prelude
F The Serenade
G The Nocturne
H The Rhapsody

In addition, there is a choice of eight exterior colours:

1 White
2 Moonstone Grey
3 Nickel
4 Seafoam Green
5 Lawn Green
6 Bamboo
7 Coral Pink
8 Colonial Red

Each block of houses is a self-contained sequence – there is no development – selected from the possible acceptable arrangements. As an example, if a section was to contain eight houses of which four model types were to be used, any of these permutational possibilities could be used:

AABBCCDD	ABCDABCD
AABBDDCC	ABDCABDC
AACCBBDD	ACBDACBD
AACCDDBB	ACDBACDB
AADDCCBB	ADBCADBC
AADDBBCC	ADCBADCB
BBAACCDD	BADCBADC
BBAADDCC	BACDBACD
BBCCAADD	BCADBCAD
BBCCDDAA	BCDABCDA
BBDDAACC	BDACBDAC
BBDDCCAA	BDCABDCA
CCAABBDD	CABDCABD
CCAADDBB	CADBCADB
CCBBDDAA	CBADCBAD
CCBBAADD	CBDACBDA
CCDDAABB	CDABCDAB
CCDDBBAA	CDBACDBA
DDAABBCC	DACBDACB
DDAACCBB	DABCDABC
DDBBAACC	DBACDBAC
DDBBCCAA	DBCADBCA
DDCCAABB	DCABDCAB
DDCCBBAA	DCBADCBA

As the colour series usually varies independently of the model series, a block of eight houses utilizing four models and four colours might have forty-eight times forty-eight or 2,304 possible arrangements.

A given development might use, perhaps, four of these possibilities as an arbitrary scheme for different sectors; then select four from another scheme which utilizes the remaining four unused models and colours; then select four from another scheme which utilizes all eight models and eight colours; then four from another scheme which utilizes a single model and all eight colours (or four or two colours); and finally utilize that single scheme for one model and one colour. This serial logic might follow consistently until, at the edges, it is abruptly terminated by pre-existent highways, bowling alleys, shopping plazas, car hops, discount houses, lumber yards or factories.

Although there is perhaps some aesthetic precedence in the row houses which are indigenous to many older cities along the east coast, and built with uniform façades and set-backs early this century, housing developments as an architectural phenomenon seem peculiarly gratuitous. They exist apart from prior standards of 'good' architecture. They were not built to satisfy individual needs or tastes. The owner is completely tangential to the product's completion. His home isn't really possessable in the old sense; it wasn't designed to 'last for generations'; and outside of its immediate 'here and now' context it is useless, designed to be thrown away. Both architecture and craftsmanship as values are subverted by the dependence on simplified and easily duplicated techniques of fabrication and standardized modular plans. Contingencies such as mass production technology and land use economics make the final decisions, denying the architect his former 'unique' role. Developments stand in an altered relationship to their environment. Designed to fill in 'dead' land areas, the houses needn't adapt to or attempt to withstand Nature. There is no organic unity connecting the land site and the home. Both are without roots – separate parts in a larger, pre-determined, synthetic order.

Dan Graham, 'Homes for America: Early Twentieth-Century Possessable House to the Quasi-Discrete Cell of '66', text of the photograph-and-text work *Homes for America*, first published [with the editor's choice of a photograph by Walker Evans replacing Graham's photographs of 1960s tract housing] in *Arts Magazine*, December 1966 – January 1967.

Dan Graham
Children's Pavilion:
A Collaboration with Jeff Wall//1988

The *Children's Pavilion* is located at the periphery of a playground. The structure can be entered through a portal in the form of a circle. The *Children's Pavilion* is built into and enclosed by a landscaped grass hill similar to, but larger than such an artificial 'mountain' in children's playgrounds,

The children's playground customarily features one or more symbolic mountain or hill forms. These are archetypes of complex experiences because they permit penetration underground through various openings, a primal exploration of the earth, and, at the same time, an occasion for ascent and conquest, for the attainment of a privileged overview as 'king of the mountain'. In this process, one child becomes 'king of the mountain' by towering on the summit.

At the top of *Children's Pavilion* is an oculus, which children can look down into. The oculus is a two-way mirror concave glass lens through which children can see an enlarged image of themselves as giants against the smaller image of adults and other children looking up from the inside, superimposed on the changing skyscape and also superimposed on Jeff Wall's nine illuminated cibachromes of children of different nationalities set against different skies. Inside, visitors can look up through the two-way mirror concave lens and see their own gazes against the real sky shifting superimposed on the gazes of the children outside.

The central water basin reflects the cibachromes, the overhead, convex two-way mirror oculus, parents, and children inside the pavilion. As they look up at the oculus they see themselves, the overhead real sky, the interior of the pavilion, and the eyes of the children looking down at them at the top of the mountain. All these images are superimposed on each other.

The inside of the hill is like a prehistoric cave or a grotto. The *Children's Pavilion* also relates to the Roman Pantheon and to [the eighteenth-century architect] Boullée's neoclassical dome projects. Another aspect of this typology is provided by the observatory and the planetarium. The observatory is a structure devoted to optical study of the sky. The planetarium is, on the other hand, a kind of cinema. It reproduces, stages and projects cosmological narratives as entertainment and education. The modern planetarium is, however, attached to telescopic power and cinematographic projection itself. [...]

Dan Graham, extract from 'Children's Pavilion. A Collaboration with Jeff Wall' (1988), in *Dan Graham and Jeff Wall: Children's Pavilion* (Rhône-Alpes: Villa Grillet, FRAC, 1989).

Paul McCarthy
Heidi//1992

1985 I became interested in Heidi, child of the future, future utopia, purity icon. I begin doing drawings. Images are collected. 1992 I begin working on Heidi again. A decision is made to collaborate with Mike Kelley. He is interested in Adolf Loos. We design a television stage set, a schizophrenic collusion of Alpine decoration and reductive Modernism. In Los Angeles we work in a pseudo-Alpine studio, working daily – day-to-day labour. The apparent and hidden agendas form. We protect and slip stream from turf to turf. The idea is to make a video tape in the schizophrenic structure which is assembled in Vienna, Galerie Krinzinger. Video taping is done over a three-day period. Scripts or predetermined ideas float in and out during taping. Improvization is necessary. We each perform as different characters, switching identities, becoming Heidi, becoming Peter, becoming Grandfather. We use, where necessary, stand-ins, rubber body parts: arms, torsos. The sick girl remains an alien, an untouchable. The goat is forever visible from the window, an object to be gazed on. Editing is done in three days. The tape is shown in a separate room from the television stage set, a separate piece of sculpture.

Grandfather as I am
Mike protects the sick girl
I work on the Heidi chalet
Neither admits to the goat
Heidi as European model as Madonna
Heidi as European fashion
Heidi as fashion model as Madonna
Heidi as purity – as fashion
Horror movie as model as docudrama
Docudrama as horror movie
Surrogate parts as stand-ins
Stand-ins as stunt props
Disney himself
Modern decorative purity
A lesson in aesthetics
Ultimately a question of taste
Acceptance of the role of beauty as correctness
Insistence on the role of beauty as correctness

Paul McCarthy, 'Heidi', artist's statement (Los Angeles, 1992).

Stephanie Rosenthal
How to Use a Failure: On Paul McCarthy//2005

The impetus for *Caribbean Pirates* (2001–5) came from Paul McCarthy's son Damon McCarthy, who came up with using Disney's 'Pirates of the Caribbean', one of the most popular rides at Disneyland in Anaheim, California, as inspiration. [...] The video *Pirate Party* (2005) for *Caribbean Pirates*, which was filmed during the performance, is clearly staged and sexually charged, showing taboo processes and actions like masturbation and onanism. McCarthy carried out the performance in his studio in Los Angeles over the course of one month, recording it with eight cameras. The video is edited into a four-screen projection, each of which is one hour and 32 minutes long. Apart from a rough plot and the constant but spontaneous directions provided by Paul and Damon McCarthy, the actions are often improvised; the actors were given free rein to fill their roles and develop their own sequences of movements. The essence is not a targeted action but seemingly senseless, absurd activities that take up most of the space.

Paul McCarthy himself plays the First Mate, who is in command of the five pirates. These absurd, all but preposterous figures, with outsized noses and ears, plan an attack on a village. Captain Morgan, in the form of an enormous mechanical head on a lifeless puppet, appears on the screen for the first time and takes part in the plot. The plot's only specific connection to the Disneyland ride is the invasion. At Disneyland one passes through stations that are also to be found in the video: a gun battle, the taking of the village by force, joyous carousing, and preparations to sell women at auction. In the McCarthys' version, however, it is the small white dinghy that – calling to mind the Disneyland visitor's journey into the world of pirates – runs on rails past the frigate and into the village (here wooden grandstands), letting everything around it turn to water.

The frigate, like the one in the film set, is only the illusion of a boat; the fibreglass exterior wall exists only on the starboard side. The rust-red ship construction makes up the hull. In the interior, where the 'guts' would be, the *Cakebox* is implanted – a wooden construction with two windows and irregularly cut holes in the lower regions. The individual parts of the outer skin are held together with bolts, and the joints have the appearance of poorly healed scars. On the port side is the wooden façade of the *Cakebox* rather than the fibreglass wall. This is one of the main sites in the performance. The sailors' leftovers, including funnels, hoses, empty tubs of butter, chocolate syrup, fake blood and similar substances bring to mind body parts and excretions. The chocolate flowed through the architecture, a symbolic filling with excrement. There is a kitchen on the ground floor. The central table is used both for the preparation of food and as an operating table for amputating artificial limbs – as shown in the video. In the course of the performance, the *Cakebox* transforms into a village bar. The McCarthys raise the construction up a storey, place a stage in front of it, and give the site a new meaning through a small bar in the form of a ship. The rest of the village is represented by a wooden grandstand connected to the ship.

In this way the installation has two altogether different sides: one closed and classically sculptural (*Frigate*), and one ripped open and smeared with ketchup, fake blood and butter (*Cakebox*). One side seems like scarred flesh tanned by wind and weather, the other side like this body's inner life, as though the artists had made precise incisions to pull back the skin and metaphorically uncover the interior. Likewise one may read the construction of the village as an organ of the ship's body, as bowels connected to the bladder or the kidneys. Outgrowths of the ship take over the village and penetrate the residents' living spaces. [...]

Pop and Pop culture have been present in McCarthy's work since the mid 1970s, and his confrontation with the worlds of Walt Disney and Hollywood may also be included under this heading. He wishes to create a counterweight to these worlds and, by mimicking them, to answer the question of how art can address the increasing dominance of the entertainment industry. Yet he does not condemn these worlds of illusion, but instead uses them for his own parodies. McCarthy seems to feel both fascination and disgust for Disneyland and Hollywood; his work has just the same effect on the audience.

The Abstract Expressionists claimed to confront the observer with an image that could not be grasped at first sight, thereby creating a sense of 'being inside'. McCarthy constructs an entire setting, creates a world of his own that can be walked into. Here, inside and outside can no longer be clearly defined – a theme to be found throughout McCarthy's work. One may also see the walls riddled with holes as the perforation of the boundary between inside and outside. For McCarthy, there is no backstage: make-up, glueing on fake body parts, adjusting the light, and the preparatory team discussions are just as important as the actual performance. The cameramen, together with the gigantic camera dollies, are just as much protagonists as the actors. Here McCarthy suggests the question as to what is *not* played in our society. He seeks to dissolve boundaries – to such an extent that one can no longer say, as an outsider, in which world the artist now lives: in the one of his own making, or in the other one, the world of the real. The so-called real world is itself constructed and functions according to man-made rules. McCarthy creates his own system – just like Walt Disney. If we are to speak of a world of one's own, as so often in art, then in McCarthy's case we must speak not of a single installation, but rather of his entire studio system, which can be interpreted as an enormous sculpture. 'I am interested in my art

simultaneously appropriating and depicting the technical quality of Hollywood and so achieving a certain level of production. At the same time I want my work to look almost ridiculous, to not fit in, to not be commercial, to subvert the very genre of Hollywood itself.' [...]

There are two threads to McCarthy's continued artistic work: sculpture and performance installation. Drawings have often been the point of departure for both. In the early 1980s, he created mechanical sculptures, and in the early 1990s he realized sculptures like *Spaghetti Man* (1993), and *MoCA Man* (1992). Even today, McCarthy's examination of his own body remains clear in this aspect of his work. Since the 1990s, he also uses his own body, in order to have casts made of it (as in *Heads and Hands*, 1995). McCarthy defines these cast forms simply as sculptures in themselves, thus clarifying their closeness to such architectural works as *Dead H* and *A Skull with a Tail*. The 2001–2 sculpture group *Peter Paul*, the casting mould for the artist's body, shows another variation on how to approach interior and exterior in the context of one's own body. The head of the casting mould used here also served McCarthy as a basis for his pirate masks. McCarthy developed this examination further in his latest works, the *Body Related Sculptures*: they are casts in various materials of his own body and those of two actors from his *Pirate Party* video. On a work table he arranges models in various sizes with different noses and ears, made by his employees as studies, and incorporates them into the *Body Related Sculptures* series as readymades. The discovered and the invented, the constructed and the deconstructed, find a meaningful connection in McCarthy's work. With *Bossy Burger* in 1991, McCarthy created his first large-scale installation, choosing a new path by using a TV set for the first time. He distanced himself from his own body, and at the same time created a new one. From now on, the social body is in the foreground, and one can also read the Western fort and the frigate as such. At the centre now is not personal transformation but the transformation of society. [...]

Stephanie Rosenthal, extracts from 'How to Use a Failure', in *Paul McCarthy: LaLa Land Parody Paradise* (Munich: Haus der Kunst/Hatje Cantz, 2005) 132–3; 135; 144–5.

Molly Nesbit, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Rirkrit Tiravanija Meeting Immanuel Wallerstein//2003

It was March. Immanuel Wallerstein, the author of *Utopistics*, had come to Paris and we arranged to meet. We began with the problem that had motivated our work. After the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, utopian thought has been neglected, given a ceiling or simply declared obsolete. But what if one refused to see utopia as a terminal condition but rather as a way-station? Wallerstein had circumvented the dilemma of obsolescence by coining a new term, utopistics, to contain the historical choices facing us in the twenty-first century. We asked him to describe the advantages that came when one abandoned utopia, the word.

These were questions to which he had given much thought and he spoke about them at length. 'The term "utopia" was, of course, invented by Sir Thomas More in the sixteenth century', he began, building his argument up from the base, 'and it literally means "nowhere" in Greek. I don't know if many people have actually read the book ... It is an interesting book and More *imagines* a society that exists on an island somewhere which is perfectly safe because no one can touch it, and he imagines how that society *could be* constructed. So it is an act of his imagination as to what the good society could be like. And, in a sense, that's what utopias have been: acts of *imagination* about what a good society ought to look like, and then some people have acted on these acts of imagination and they say: "Okay, we have to do A, B and C in order to arrive politically at this perfect society." I start with the premise that, first of all, perfect societies not only do not exist but in fact *cannot* exist. Secondly, I start with the old Marxian premise that maybe men make history, but they do not make it as they wish – there are constraints of social realities. So I actually took the world "utopistics" from the usage of "-istik" in German, because you speak in German of Germanistiks and other "-istiks". The Germans add the "-istik" to the root to speak of the study, the careful, serious study of X.'

So I thought', he continued, 'that we had seriously to study what are possible better – not perfect but better – societies within the constraints of reality, which is why I had the subtitle "historical choices for the twenty-first century". So I am trying to say: here is what I think the world is like at the present moment, here is what I think is happening, and here is where I think it might go, as opposed to other places where it might go in terms of realistic alternatives. And I am trying to emphasize with "utopistics" that before we sit down as philosophers, in our imagination dreaming what would be a beautiful, perfect society, we have to analyse the real historical world. That is a very important task if you want to

change the world. That book actually has three chapters, as you know, and the first is modelled a bit on Milton's *Paradise Lost*. I tried to think in that first chapter of the dreams that were betrayed, the whole attempt of the Old Left to enact their various utopias and why they failed. And then the second chapter says, well, if I believe, as I do, that the world-system is in structural crisis, then what is going on now? I talk about the chaotic situation and I call it "Hell on Earth". I say that it isn't going to be pleasant, and this was written before September 11 and before an Iraq war. It is not going to be pleasant; it is in fact going to be very unpleasant to live in this world and all sorts of terrible things are going to happen. It's going to be very chaotic, with wild oscillations, economically, politically and culturally, that we don't seem to control and don't quite understand. But that is what a chaotic period is like, and that means that the system is disintegrating. And when it disintegrates, the curve bifurcates; it can move in two possible directions, and I don't define the directions other than in very general terms: another system which isn't capitalist but which is hierarchical and undemocratic and maybe terrible; and a system which is relatively democratic and relatively egalitarian. And the next years (and that's where we end), meaning the next twenty, thirty or forty years, are a big struggle – a real struggle – about which direction the world will move in, and no one is sure how it will come out, history is on no one's side.'

We noted the unpredictability of history. Wallerstein would not see this to be the supreme obstacle. He continued, still speaking at length. 'It is unpredictable', he acknowledged, 'but you can affect it. And indeed you can affect it much more in times of structural crisis than in so-called normal times. Every little act works into the equation. So, 1) you have seriously to study what the alternatives are; 2) you have to live with uncertainty; and 3) you have to work really hard – politically, intellectually, morally – to move the world in the direction you want it to go. And maybe, in twenty to thirty years we will come out with a system that is better because it is substantively more rational.'

In *Utopistics* he had spoken of fifty-year patterns. Should we imagine ourselves running long-distance in history? It was a question that made everyone present slow down. 'No', Wallerstein replied to the idea of the long-distance runner, 'but the crisis and the transition are long ... Fifty years is a normal amount of time, but it is a guess. At some point the situation will stabilize. Once it stabilizes, we are into a new world-system, or maybe even a world of many world-systems, one doesn't know that. But I assume it will be a single world-system. It may then stay stable for several hundred years. So we are living in a time that is a quite decisive era but, unless you are very, very young, you might not see the end of this time. Hence, you have to act the way you think you ought to act without the certainty that you will be successful. And that is very tricky. Lots of people want to be mobilized by certainty, but I think that is just not possible.'

Utopistics can be read as a manual or *mode d'emploi*. This is perhaps why so many artists find it so useful, for it becomes a toolbox in a Foucauldian sense. Had he meant to write his book for this purpose? As Wallerstein answered, it became clear that he was thinking of a toolbox useful to everybody. He began with the questions that pressed him to write the book in the first place.

'I respond to people saying to me: "alright, here is your description of the world but what should be done about it?" I did, in fact, write that book very much with the idea of ending up saying what we might be able to do about it. And indeed there are some essays in the new book which are along the lines of what we might do about it. I say that but I also say that I don't have a formula in my jacket pocket which I can bring out so as to tell you "this is it". I have some ideas, which I am ready to share with other people and discuss. I think a conversation has started, it already started ten or fifteen years ago, but it has accelerated in the last few years among people across the world about what kind of world they would really want to construct. That conversation is not completed – it is ongoing. So, maybe ten or fifteen years from now the toolbox will be transformed into a model. If you want to use an analogy from architecture, the first thing you do is you have various tools – meaning knowledge of engineering and aesthetics and so forth – and you apply these to thinking about the certain kind of building you want to build. That's step one: you have to assemble all those tools. Then, step two, you create a model of the building that you want to build. And you submit it to review and, then, you build it. So, I think we are at stage one: we are only playing with the tools at this point, trying to think about what the model of such a building would look like. And I think it may take us ten to fifteen years of constant discussion. That's why I am writing this book, because I'm anxious to contribute to and stimulate this kind of discussion. I am not coming to people to say that I am the architect or that I have the definitive plans for the building. I am saying that these are the structural elements that have to go into the building and the aesthetic elements that have to go into the building, but how to put it all together, I have not figured that out myself and I am ready to discuss that with anyone who wants to build that kind of building.' [...]

Molly Nesbit, Hans-Ulrich Obrist and Rirkrit Tiravanija, extract from 'Meeting Immanuel Wallerstein', in Francesco Bonami et al., *Dreams and Conflicts: The Dictatorship of the Viewer* (Venice: 50th Venice Biennale/Marsilio, 2003) 369–73.

Nils Norman
Utopia Now: Interview with Jennifer Allen//2002

Jennifer Allen Would you consider your work to be public art?

Nils Norman Projects like the *Geocruiser* or *The Gerrard Winstanley Radical Gardening Space Reclamation Mobile Field Center and Weatherstation (European Chapter)* are specific to the idea of public sculpture, which is a more abstract and complicated discursive space than those of the museum or the gallery. I'm also very interested in 'autonomous' spaces – what the Danish artist Jakob Jakobsen calls 'parallel institutions' – that can be used to develop more complicated, multiple practices around context and site-specificity.

I'm also interested in mobility. Together with Wowhaus (artists Scott Constable and Ene Osteraas-Constable) and the curator Marina McDougall, I'm developing a mobile form of public sculpture for the Sonoma County Museum in California in March 2002. Called *Ecology/Art Expedition Survey: A Sustainable/experimental garden and agricultural projects tour of the Bay Area. Phase:1*, the work is a tour of self-sustaining and experimental gardens and various ecological and agricultural institutions.

Allen Your work has been called utopian, but it appears more suggestive than prescriptive, more humorous than normative. Do you agree with the label?

Norman I am definitely interested in utopian thinking, but as a critical tool, a form of satire and irony, Utopia is only one facet of my practice. Trying actually to realize projects like the *Proposed Occupation, Redesign, Renaming and Reuse of Nelson A. Rockefeller Park, Battery Park City, NYC*, or the *Tompkins Square Park Monument to Civil Disobedience*, was not my intention at all. They were meant to be more about trying to develop interesting methods of distributing propaganda and information within the hideous boredom of commercial space. I was trying to rethink the way certain spaces and models are locked into business-as-usual capitalism. The 'white cube' school of corporate art dealing and its global manifestation in a Chelsea warehouse 'style', for example, is a model that I think should be radically reconsidered.

Allen How did the *Geocruiser* come about? What do you hope to accomplish with it?

Norman The *Geocruiser* is primarily a mobile public sculpture. It has a greenhouse built into the back and a reading room in the front. It contains a small library and information centre devoted to city gentrification, experimental city design, radical gardening, sustainable design, alternative energy and utopias. Some people read it as an 'eco-bus', but that's just one element of its function as a mobile propaganda machine. Onboard is a solar-powered photocopier and laptop. It also has its own wormery, which is used to compost and recycle organic waste.

Allen Aren't there several versions of the *Geocruiser*?

Norman Yes. I came up with the idea when Stefan Kalmár at the Institute of Visual Culture in Cambridge invited me to do an exhibition. I produced four scale models of four *Geocruiser* combinations. The first was a mobile water filtration reed bed with library and reading room. A second design enabled *The Gerrard Winstanley Radical Gardening Space Reclamation Mobile Field Center and Weather Station, (European Chapter)* to drive out of the rear of the vehicle when the *Geocruiser* approached more difficult terrain. The final, realized version is halfway through a successful European tour. [...]

Allen Can you tell me about the series of large-scale drawing/diagram proposals for redesigning Battery Park and Nelson A. Rockefeller Park in New York? In view of how the redevelopment of the World Trade Center is being dominated by big-money interests, your project seems unusually relevant.

Norman I was trying to present alternatives to the official plans of the Hudson River Park Trust. At that time they were very dodgy proposals benefiting corporate and private interests rather than public and community needs. Economic function superseded the broader social function of what could be an amazing public space. I took existing sculptures like Richard Artschwager's public seating sculpture *Sitting Stance* and redesigned them. In the case of the Artschwager piece, I made it so that park visitors could lock their bodies into the sculpture to avoid being removed from the park. A 'locked-on' person can only be extracted by destroying the sculpture. [...]

Nils Norman and Jennifer Allen, extract from 'Utopia Now: The Art of Nils Norman', *Artforum* online (www.artforum.com) (22 January 2002).

Alex Farquharson
The Avant-Garde Again: On Carey Young//2002

So what will be required in the future? Answer: 'sole creators ... defined by ideas', 'disruptive innovation' and 'a shift from ... tangibles to intangibles'. These phrases aren't lifted from an award ceremony speech by the curator of an international Biennale, but from an article in *Fast Company*, a leading business magazine.[1] 'Where is the Next Frontier of Innovation?' we're told is the question we should continually be asking ourselves. 'The only way ... today', the unnamed author concludes, 'is to be fully, constantly and instantly alive – alive to new ideas, alive to new practices, alive to new opportunities'. Never before have the lexicons of contemporary art and leading-edge business, with their mutual emphases on discovery, creativity, and innovation, sounded so alike. [...]

Carey Young, dressed in a smart business suit, paces back and forth in a slick office space. The wall behind her is made entirely of glass. It looks out onto the vast central atrium of a sparkling postmodern office complex. Beyond the atrium are similar offices to the one she's in, where executives in shirt sleeves sit before computer monitors. Young is alone in the room with a tall middle-aged man, also smartly dressed, who is in the process of offering her instruction – coaxing her, giving praise and supporting her efforts with constructive advice. 'I am a revolutionary', Young exclaims for the n'th time, weary but determined to better her delivery. Again, but with different emphasis: 'I ... am a revolutionary.' She doesn't sound quite certain, and knows she needs to believe what she's saying herself if she is to convince the prospective audience. Alisdair Chisholm of Marcus Bohn Associates, a company that specializes in business skills training, sketches out a scenario and, improvising, alludes to passages of the speech we haven't heard that are supposed to have preceded this declaration. He encourages her to step a couple of paces towards her audience on reaching the tricky phrase; towards us, in fact, since, when the work is projected, the room appears life size, and we seem to occupy the other half of the office space that the screen seems to bisect.

Carey Young's *I am a Revolutionary* is, on one level, a delirious postmodern reading of Keith Arnatt's Wittgensteinian *Trouser Word Piece* (1972) – a photo of the artist holding a sign that reads 'I AM A REAL ARTIST'. Young's video performance includes Arnatt's original tautologies while overlaying them with contemporary corporate versions of each term: artist/businesswoman rehearses artistic statement/corporate speech about herself in an art video/corporate training video for a small art audience/imaginary business audience. As well as

Arnatt's work, the substitution of 'revolutionary' for 'artist' evokes Joseph Beuys, implying that today's corporate guru is the progeny of Beuys' now antiquated radical shaman routine, his legendary persuasive powers and inexhaustible ego now redirected from participatory democracy to profit. But why are these four words causing her so much trouble? Is it, as artist, because she can't quite bring herself to believe in either the avant-garde or political utopia, if that is her message? Or, as executive, does she doubt that she is indeed a radical leader, a visionary? Or, can't she bring herself to accept the co-option of the rhetoric of radical politics by modern day business, and the redundancy of opposition that this seems to imply?

Joseph Beuys' own take on the art/life dichotomy was that the active reshaping of society by the people themselves was itself a form of art – an art he termed 'social sculpture'. His primary medium for propagating this idea was a didactic form of performance in which the use of language and speech was instrumental – 'to be a teacher is my greatest work of art', he said. For the entire duration of Documenta 5 (1972), he put himself in the position of the art work in what he called an 'office', rather than 'gallery', where people could meet with him at all times for social and political debate ('One Hundred Days of the Information Office of the Organization for Direct Democracy through Referendum'). Carey Young's recent 'corporate works' relocate Beuys' notion of social sculpture within the modern business environment; its 'soft' yet didactic techniques of training, brainstorming and skills workshops displacing Beuys' charismatic proselytising and, with it, by implication, his utopian vision for society. In an act of double irony, Beuys' parodic 'Office' becomes, quite simply, an office. Another work, 'Social Sculpture' (2001), performs a similar manoeuvre, whereby Beuys' famous rolls of felt – that in his symbolic world signified the preservation of human life – are substituted by a roll of its visual equivalent in the modern workplace: beige contract carpeting.

In *Everything You've Heard is Wrong* (1999), Young herself assumes the role of the instructor, this time at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park (a piece that 'I am a Revolutionary', in many ways, mirrors and reverses). Speakers' Corner is itself a kind of cacophonic mini-Beuysian participatory democracy, where anyone, no matter what his or her status, can get up on a 'soapbox' – actually, a step ladder – and promote a world view to whoever happens to be assembled. Providing a forum for the amateur orator, the fanatic, the oddball or the disenfranchised, it is inevitably a site for more left-field or idiosyncratic opinion. In the video of the performance Young is shown giving a sober 'skills workshop' on corporate presentation, again dressed impeccably in a businesswoman's suit. On an obvious level the humour derives from the disparity between the methodologies Young advocates and the calmness of her delivery, compared to the style and

content (religious, political, other) of her neighbours' more feverish oratory. Though the corporate persona Young adopts believes her act to be a helpful one, and that her audience shares her aspirations, the dark lining of the humour resides in the unwelcome proposition that even this carnival of free thought might be absorbed by the corporate world some time in the not so distant future. The title *Everything You've Heard is Wrong*, which is borrowed from the title of a business book, suggests further paradoxes and ambivalences: does it mean to say that it's the 'presentation skills' of her fellow speakers that are at fault (i.e. on the level of the signifier), or that their messages are 'wrong' too (the signified)? More generally, is it suggesting that all the knowledge we've each acquired throughout our lives is now corrupted? Or self-reflexively, is it saying that it's what the piece itself appears to represent – i.e. the corporate absorption of free debate – that's 'wrong'? Characteristically, Young presents us with continuum rather than closure. [...]

In a new video, *Getting to Yes*, Young, dressed for business, stands at a lectern in an empty corporate auditorium, its rather sublime blue interior reminiscent of works by James Turrell or Yves Klein. As in *I am a Revolutionary*, she is rehearsing a speech for an implied audience, but this time it is an acceptance speech. The three short paragraphs narrate a kind of corporate take-over of the artist, though given that the persona Young adopts mentions her paintings, and Young does not paint, we can conclude she may not be referring to herself. From the time the artist's works are bought for the corporate collection, this artist gradually finds herself relinquishing her autonomy to the flattering and apparently benign advances of a 'mighty' corporation. First she agrees to a sponsored party at her opening, then allows her images to be used in a company report, then runs a 'creative thinking workshop' for some of their 'top people', until eventually her sense of self as an artist dissolves altogether and she gratefully accepts a position in this 'mighty' corporation: 'And of course, I said yes! To all of those things'; 'I shall devote myself entirely to achieving your objectives.'

The narrative trajectory of the video is a kind of travesty of Carey Young's own increased involvement in business, both in art and life. Her first job, at a major IT and management consultancy, was to give occasional presentations on uses of new technology to corporate clients – the company had a policy of deliberately selecting 'creatives' for this task. Young still distinctly recalls, with a sense of self-estrangement, the time she first identified her employer's interests as her own by saying the word 'we' instead of 'me/them'. *Getting to Yes* includes the gallery audience in the equation, by appearing to position us amongst the auditorium's rows of empty chairs, since they form the foreground of the projected image. By implication we may also be on the 'slippery-slope' to a corporate take-over. It's an impression that's unmistakably uncanny: her

contamination of 'business' with the virus 'art', and, at the same time, 'art' with the virus 'business', is, indeed, a little dislocating, perhaps alienating, but whatever shuddering this cross-contamination may induce is rapidly replaced by laughter when we begin to unravel the layered ironies that go into their conception. The döppelgangers she makes of avant-garde art and leading edge business may appear indistinguishable, but for the time being, at least, they remain, for the most part, separate, if parallel worlds.

1 'What is the State of the New Economy?', *Fast Company* magazine (September 2001).

Alex Farquharson, extracts from 'The Avant-garde, Again', in *Carey Young, Incorporated* (London: Film & Video Umbrella, 2002).

Carey Young
Revolution: It's a Lovely Word: Interview with Raimundas Malasauskas//2006

Raimundas Malasauskas In your video *I am a revolutionary* you try to learn how to sell the revolution. Do you know your potential clients?

Carey Young The work was inspired by the popularity of the rhetoric of 'revolution' within business in the years around 2000, and its consequent effect on society at large through the resulting business decisions and deals which of course today have an unprecedented influence on everyday life.

As a consumer of art theory, historical and political texts one comes to this word with a special sensitivity. And so the work, which features a rehearsal of the line 'I am a revolutionary' uses this word as something cherished in different ways by different audiences, and yet also emptied of meaning, since the line appears to be yet another message which can be rehearsed by anyone until they sound convincing.

I disagree with your assessment that the work shows an attempt to 'sell the revolution'. With this piece I am more interested in exploring questions of appearance and interpretation, such as 'how would one recognize a real revolutionary today?', or 'what kind of marketing techniques might future revolutionaries use' or even 'who, today, can convincingly claim to be a revolutionary?' It is an exploration of our desire for, and belief in, political and social change, but my aim was also to give a sense of vulnerability and pathos through the performance of the characters you see on screen, who are both deadly serious in their effort and intent, but also impossible to take seriously.

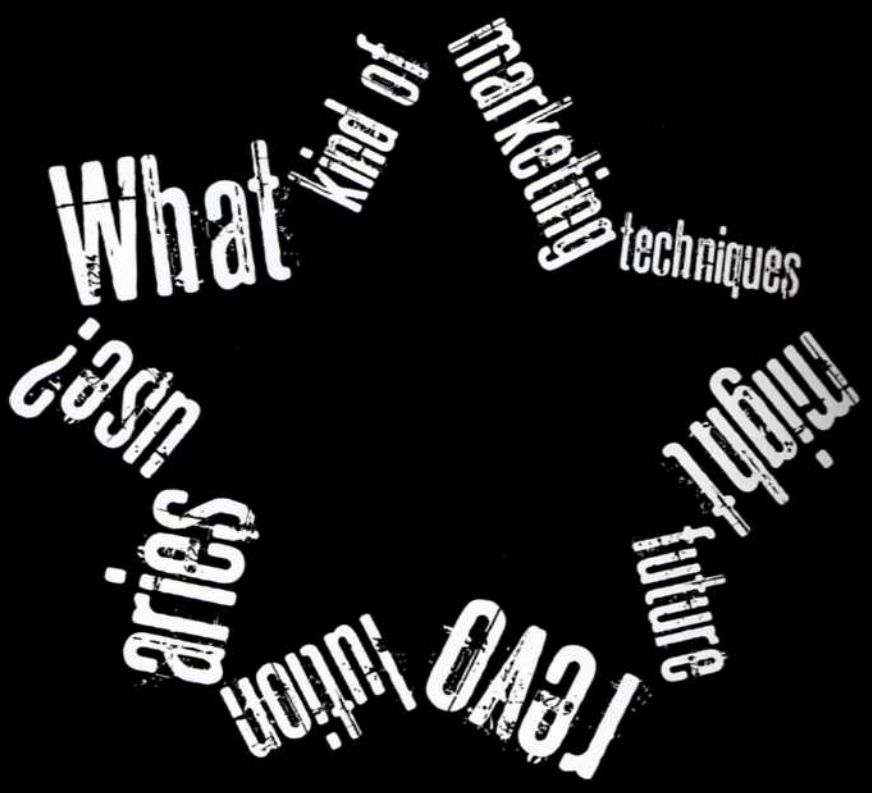
Malasauskas The corporate setting in which you are unmaking the rhetoric of revolution leads one to think that actually the most radical innovations nowadays take place not in the domain of the working class, but in the corporate headquarters of creative business.

Young At some point in the future, with the benefit of hindsight we may perhaps be able to call recent 'revolutions' such as the public overthrow of the corporate-owned water system in Bolivia in 2000, or the 2004 'orange revolution' in the Ukraine elections 'radical innovations' for their impact on emergent forms of corporate or state power, although their model – street protest – is of course an ancient one. But through their relentless focus on the new for the sake of market dominance, corporations can be seen as offering today's avant-garde – with all the military and cultural interpretations of that term. As an artist I'm interested in the hugely problematic implications of that for society, and also for artists and cultural production. My work is not a question of accepting the status quo, or of creating a polemical or didactic work, or even offering some kind of a solution, but of creating pieces which immerse the audience in the problem – albeit presented in a roundabout way – for the sake of engendering a discussion.

Malasauskas What do you think of Adrian Piper's statement: 'Implicitly political art reinforces unregulated free-market capitalism. Explicitly political art subverts the power relations that undergird it' (*frieze*, no. 87)?

Young To me the question is also how we measure the subversion of power relations and over what period of time. Also, the status of any artwork, whatever claims are made for its political activity, is necessarily altered by whether it is or could be sold, and to whom. These elements are part of the context of a work of art and should affect its reading.

Carey Young and Raimundas Malasauskas, extract from 'Revolution: It's a Lovely Word', email interview produced for the gallery programme of Trafo Gallery, Budapest, on the occasion of Young's solo show, March–April 2006.



Carey Young, Interview with Raimundas Malasauskas, 2005

Bodys Isek Kingelez
The Essential Framework of the Structures Making up the Town of Kimbembele-Ihunga (Kimbéville)//1995

Historical Background to Kimbéville

The monument of Kimbéville belongs to a genre of art which has attained its zenith presenting what already has the potential to become or is on the way to becoming a reality. Gradually the town of Kimbembele-Ihunga, abbreviated to Kimbéville by its creator-maker, the enlightened artist of new horizons, Bodys Isek Kingelez, should glorify the times rather than exist merely to further my own success and prosperity, in view of my fame and international reputation as a highly talented artist. This town, a natural product of my thought processes, represents the shape of my imagination; it is the very image of my ability to create a new world as well as being a gauntlet thrown down to professional artists in the arena of inventive references for beauty and grace. Kimbéville with its dazzling array of forms and colours is a 21st-century environment which has fired my artistic imagination. It is a town where Kingelez, the enlightened artist, was born on 27 August 1948. Every artist on earth achieves self-expression through the most deep-rooted origins of their nature. Kingelez of Kimbéville is no longer merely an artist from his native town, he is the favoured poet of his traditional sources. The town's glittering vista radiates along countless boulevards which lead in all directions, thereby preserving the originality of Kimbéville's diamond-like divisions; parallelism is a thing of the past

The overall concept of the town, the very problem of quality architecture, ranks it among the high-calibre, super-multisystem phenomena of futurist architecture. The landscape design and the concrete styles used in shaping the buildings systematically combine to represent and reflect the different cosmopolitan cultures which surround the town's unquestionable unity. Kimbéville will be responsible for the rapid creation of a tourist trade, as people will flock to see the town's many sights, the lifestyfe of its inhabitants, and the ways in which it differs from what has gone before: its avenues, its emphasis on form, its overall appearance, its artistic landscape displaying the magnificent intermingling outlines of the differently-shaped buildings, which give the TOP place of honour to the leading cultures of the world.

So the town of Kimbéville is similar to an extremely realistic prototype gem which should in fact exist in all its glory in accordance with the issues and requirements of housing standards. A town which symbolizes my sources, found geographically in what could be called:

– the traditional village of KIMBEMBELE-IHUNGA
– in the Belo sector
– in the IDIOFA territory/the Kwilu region
– province of Bandundu
– in the Republic of Zaire
– in the heart of the African continent

Conclusion

Still talking about accelerated civilizations, the town of Kimbéville acts as a mechanism for development with a myriad of distinctive features applying as much to the buildings as to the varied elements of its clearly defined landscape which blatantly demonstrates why this town was created. Its creator, the artist Kingelez, a man of high moral fibre, will keep his future promises with this work of art which will accompany him into the 21st century. Kimbéville is a real town which, given time, will exist; it is not an effigy made up of well-known brandnames which is doomed to remain a maquette.

Inextricably linked to its historical past, put down on paper within the context of its delirious, uncommon structures, its ideas have gained a lot of ground which will guarantee its future reputation – there is no going back.

Kingelez's art, through the medium of this image-maquette which invokes an ancient traditional village, i.e. Kimbembele-Ihunga, situated within the south-west borders of the Province of Bandundu, is a concrete imaginative leap built with the careful equanimity that comes from knowledge. It has created a real bridge between world civilizations of the past, the present and the future.

Kingelez's art, which provides the blueprint for a real town, is a large-scale architectural act which champions what is most important to the artist the time-honoured traditions of his village.

The vista of Kimbéville, the sight of which sometimes beggars description, is larger than life, making it an image which contains all the major universal values, providing countless resonant references.

These highly diverse model buildings have a certain imperative quality since this highly stylized landscape demands admiration as much for its eye-catching appearance as for the far-reaching compass of the genre. Its visual extravagance acts as a universal focus of attention.

And, all the while, conspicuous, well-known landmarks form part of a logical system of architecture which is not opposed to revealing the ambitions of the artist, who would not want the real existence of the town of Ihunga to be undermined by its true nature.

In line with this large-scale investiture, certain curious names can be seen on the buildings which form the town of Kimbéville; names which have taken on a clannish quality.

In the same way as the traditional village of Ihunga is comprised of five groups, there are also five clans, namely:

the LODI clan (my mother's clan)
the BAYETE clan (my father's clan)
the BOLOUMBOU clan (neighbouring clan)
the MISSAMOU clan
the KIMBEMBELE clan

These clans form the entity of Kimbéville, which has been modernized in view of its recreated nature.

Planned in this way, Kimbéville is still basically traditional despite the fact that its former appearance has altered with the passing years. This concern has caused the artist Kingelez to devote a great deal of attention to ensuring that the existence of these various civilizations is charted.

If you examine this town's specificity closely, you get the feeling that, due to its eye catching and extremely demanding effects, you could go on admiring it endlessly. Frankly, it would take me a lifetime to relate even half its history.

Nevertheless, in terms of its architectural autonomy, its distinctive features so full of promise, this town should appear on a definitive list of the greatest towns on earth.

Kimbéville is not far from being fêted as a potential tourist town, with regard to which its critics have not played a significant part in its history because Kingelez himself has given a meaning to the town's existence.

The gigantic, carefully erected, statue which represents the wisdom of my father, Maluba Kingelez, who died on 27 March 1968, is dedicated to him and should be situated right in the administrative centre of the town of Ihunga.

In other words, this statue carrying his body of knowledge in his hand, simply represents the intellectual heritage of common sense and good manners which belongs to multi-cultural people. This is the way my father has proudly risen above the meaning of a ceremonial life to practise an art in praise of beauty and grace which will bring about a better world.

Opposite this Kingelez monument, a superb communal building mirrors itself, doubly interesting in the fascinating and obscure way that both foundation and form are constructed.

The partial view of the Monde-Vision building, with its superlative details, effortlessly substantiates the incomparable, highly elaborate modern achievement of the town. This collection of realist buildings, unaffected by the dictates of fashion, represents an unparalleled devotional vision. The aim of these buildings is to promote this new image throughout the world. These boulevards, these lanes with their spotless pavements, hardly ever become congested, blocking freedom of movement. On the contrary, they provide people with pleasant, easy access to all parts of the town.

The town of Kimbéville flourishes. People flock here because the wind blows in off the sea and the mountains, refreshing its complex beauty in which all the heightened colours join forces constantly to create an environment where everyone can feel at home.

This maquette is a promise of something real. The attractions of this town include a plethora of services, hotels and restaurants. Sometimes with an American flavour, sometimes Japanese, Chinese or European, not to mention African fare.

The town has it all, from sun-up to sun-down, and for forever and a day. The artist, Kingelez, prophet of African art, is striding towards a new world which is more modern, more prosperous and a better place to live.

This lengthy resumé about the town was written by someone who devotes his daily life to excellence.

Bodys Isek Kingelez, 'The Essential Framework of the Structures Making up the Town of Kimbembele-Ihunga (Kimbéville)' (Kinshasa, Republic of Zaire [now Democratic Republic of the Congo], 1995), text to accompany the work *Kimbembele-Ihunga (Kimbéville)* (1993–94); reprinted from *Big City: Artists from Africa* (London: Serpentine Gallery, 1995).

Dermis P. León
Havana, Biennial, Tourism: The Spectacle of Utopia//2001

The blockade mentality, the result of a political and economic reality, has fostered a lack of communication between the United States and Cuba since 1959, which in turn has contributed to the mythologization of each in the eyes of the other. Myths about Cuba have been created by both the left and the right in the United States, as well as by some of the Cuban community in exile. The US imagination in particular has constructed an image of Cuba as a land of the mulatta, of mambo, of the sea, where, according to the critic Gerardo Mosquera, artists grow as plentifully as wild grass. In fact, since the 1980s, Cuban artists have become an increasingly visible presence in the international art world. One of the major factors in this increased visibility is the Havana Biennial, which was established in 1984 – the next most important international art biennial, after the Sao Paulo Biennial, in the Western hemisphere. [...]

Without a doubt, the success of the Biennial has changed the balance of power in the international art world by focusing critical attention away from the dominant cultural centres toward the periphery. It has stimulated the opening of other biennials in Africa, Asia and Latin America, thus reaffirming Cuba's position as a cultural leader within the Third World. Indeed, from the beginning, the Biennial has had its own political agenda; specifically, it has operated as a forum for the discourse of otherness, centre and periphery. Cuban art criticism of the 1980s and early 1990s functioned as a sort of peripheral discourse within the international celebration of the Biennial.

When I returned to Cuba to see the 1997 Biennial, I became aware of the dramatic changes that were transforming Cuban society. A new Habana Vieja (Old Havana), the historical centre of the city, had re-emerged through restoration, and displaced the experience of marginality and abandonment that I had known as a child growing up in the city. Another energy, different from the typical neighbourhood excitement, livened up the area. Restaurants, hotels and stores sold traditional Cuban products; this was a city artificially created within a city. The dollar-driven economy of tourism had reappeared; and each restored building was a new place for the tourist to locate his complacency.

These changes were reflected in the Biennial itself. Along with contemporary Cuban art, whose profile was continuing to rise internationally, the Biennial itself had become a tourist attraction. Its exhibitions and parallel independent events now encompassed more districts of the city, such as El Vedado. And for the first time, entrance to these exhibitions had to be purchased. Without a doubt, the Biennial had discovered that it could be more than 'an alternative space for the familiarization of that artistic production so rarely seen by and spread among the main international scenes'.[1] It had discovered that it could be a force for cultural tourism. In the 2000 Biennial, for instance, foreign visitors had the opportunity to select, and pay for in dollars, a variety of ticket packages that granted them access to exhibitions, activities and publications.

I am not against cultural tourism; Cuba has sought many means of economic survival, since it is no longer the Soviet Union's 'protected pearl', and has been compelled to enter the global economy in an impoverished state. But what seemed new and disconcerting to me was how readily this biennial could become a spectacle of ideology. This was shocking in an institution that had begun as an alternative to the Venice Biennale, Documenta and other First World biennials – an event intended to showcase the artistic production of the Third World countries marginalized from these mainstream exhibitions. The anti-imperialist and Third World ideology maintained by the socialist system has politicized Cuban life in all its spheres, including the world of art. Yet Cuban art has now become both symbolic and literal monetary capital, an attractive investment for curators, gallery owners, collectors and seekers of alternative art and politically critical art outside of Cuba. Cuban art – and the artist with it – has become the fetish of a utopian desire: an advertisement for a society that has changed dramatically since the early days of the Revolution. So I ask: How can art that was originally made as an alternative critical discourse be assimilated and promoted by the institution of the Biennial in its transformed state?

The administrators of the Biennial understand that in order to survive in the precarious Cuban economy, which is now subject to the rhythm of the international markets, it is necessary for its art to address global themes, spiced with a hint of local exoticism. Cuba no longer has the same leadership role in Third World culture, nor the economic resources, that it had in the 1980s. In the era of Istanbul, Johannesburg, Kwangju and the countless other biennials that keep critics, curators and artists hopping from plane to plane always seeking novelty. The Havana Biennial must offer something more than Third World art. The novelty it has offered thus far is a 'critical' Cuban art that calls the concept of socialist utopia into question. And of course Havana itself is an attraction, softly radiating the exoticism of an old city emerging from ruins. The myths of the mulatta, of mambo, of the sea are present to alleviate the hardships of lodging and food and transportation. The myths of the Cuban Revolution and the artist who represents it linger – the last gesture of creativity from a nation that continues to insist on representing Third World art. But the most recent Biennials have begun to show the same artists who make the rounds at the other international art events. This makes me wonder what audience the Biennial now has in mind. Is it Havana's

local citizens? Is it the international public, who comes to the city for the first fifteen days before and after the opening, when the main events take place, and then leaves? Is it Cuban artists and art schools, hungry for attention and success? And so I ask: How can the Biennial present an art marginalized from the hegemonic centres in such way that it does not reaffirm touristic totemism? From this perspective, the theme of the 2000 Biennial, 'communication', is ironic. What sort of communication did the curators seek in a divided and fragmented culture in which there are few signs of reconciliation?

1 Liliane Llanes, 'Hacia un arte universal sin exclusiones', in *Quinta Bienal de Habana: arte, sociedad, reflexión* (Havana: Havana Biennial/Gran Canaria, Spain: Centro Atlantico de Arte Moderno, 1994) 23.

Dermis P. León, 'Havana, Biennial, Tourism: The Spectacle of Utopia', *Art Journal*, vol. 60, no. 4 (Winter 2001) 69–73.

Catherine Bernard
Bodies and Digital Utopia//2000

Our current relation to physical and social bodies betrays a deep uneasiness in our society, engendered by altered definitions of physical identity and increasing mediacentric behaviour. Obsessive violence, the notion of invincibility, and recurring themes of the survival of the fittest in film and television combine with sensationalistic news reports of genetic progress and manipulation of human longevity, health, appearance and reproduction to foster the concept of disposable bodies and physical reality. Cloning is an established fact; genetic engineering has become the stuff of newspaper headlines.

The now famous predictions of Guy Debord in the late 1960s about a reality that would be transformed into myriad spectacles have proven true.[1] The continuous and tremendous impact of broadcasting technology has contributed to re-engineering our perception of physical reality as a soap opera, complete with logo, specific design and commercial breaks. So, too, have communication networks turned into appendices to our lives, as faxes, modems and email increase the dissociation from experienced physical reality.

Digital communications also promote an ideology of transcendence in regard to the plurality and diversity of cultures, politics and histories that overcome space and time, offering the promise of an open space of equal exchange based upon a non-hierarchical structure. On the one hand, the creation of a global network and space without physical boundaries subverts unilateral systems of information by de facto opening transnational and transcultural connections, while on the other hand, it allows the restructuring of geo-political boundaries into an ever-expanding market of limitless access. The latter aspect demonstrates the shift away from the dominance of national economic and cultural interests that characterized modern capitalism into a next phase, that of postmodern, transnational pancapitalism. Pancapitalism better operates under the guise of a 'global' identity, for which otherness is good as long as it offers new marketing concepts, distributed through the virtual corporate mall, aka the World Wide Web. Consider the staggering numbers that characterize the digital divide: in spite of the fact that electronic commerce is exploding and that more than 1.5 billion websites now crowd cyberspace, less than 5 per cent of the world's population is now online.[2]

I would like to examine here the work of two artists' collectives that create a critical apparatus that assesses emerging definitions of body and space in the age of new media. Through performances and actions involving digital technology,

Floating Point Unit, Fakeshop and the Electronic Disturbance Theater address our shifting perceptions of physical and social bodies.

Digital Space/Physical Bodies

In the age of a new eugenic consciousness, physical bodies are cumbersome; their opacity is opposed to the transparence of the digital utopia that promotes a distance from experienced reality and a uniform space and time. The body and physical experiences are disruptive, because physical functions are both unpredictable and difficult to quantify. Within the digital economy, desire is given a privileged place, because it can be rerouted into consumerism. Body politics, then, need to be orchestrated within this frame of organized consumption and fabrication: fit bodies, perfect health, eugenic ideology and neo-natal procedures organize the comprehension and use of the body within specific parameters.

Floating Point Unit is a New York-based group of artists working within the realm of new media technologies, with a special emphasis on distance performances and Internet broadcasting. The collective is composed of Jeff Gompertz, Bruno Ricard and Vulcano, with special guest artist Prema Murthy and various collaborators. Floating Point Unit, along with its offspring Fakeshop, have addressed, in several Internet broadcast performances, the dematerialization and slow disappearance of the physical dimensions of our beings. Floating Point Unit also injects a poetic quality into the definition of space, in performances where multiple dimensions – live, broadcast, actual and virtual – coalesce without necessarily destroying one another and reflect on the blurring of our perception of different levels of reality.

The group specifically raises the issue of the body as a place of physical and economic reconstruction. Such events as *Observation Platform* (1996), a live performance simultaneously broadcast on the Internet, emphasized the concept of voyeurism and desire. During the performance, ethereal composite bodies were constructed on-screen through the manipulation of digital images of actual bodies immersed in a tank of water, referencing both primal substance and the fluidity of digital space. It also addressed the notions of virtual versus physical presence and the blurring between spectacle and reality.

A recent performance by Fakeshop titled *Multiple Dwelling* (www.inch.com/~floating; www.fakeshop.com/multiple_dwelling), presented at the Ars Electronica Festival in September 1999 in Linz and at the New York Fakeshop performance space in Brooklyn, combined an installation in a warehouse, complete with suspended platforms, wires and suspended bodies, real audio/video, and Internet broadcast through CU-SeeMe, a Web-based video conference system, used mainly for corporate meetings. The performers' bodies were scanned and the signals transmitted to network participants who sold and bought the performers' organs, redesigning their bodies on screen. *Multiple_Dwelling* presents the idea of reality as co-constructed between different subjectivities/categories. It also addresses the idea of the bio-economy of body parts, both legal and illegal, in the First and Third Worlds, which often translates into organ trafficking, and the concept of designer bodies as part of the new eugenic consciousness, at a time when the code structures of any living being can be adapted and transformed.

Floating Point Unit and Fakeshop performances also reveal the existence of a 'vision machine', to quote Bruno Ricard – an ubiquitous machine that edits edits reality and creates a hypervisual language that is easily quantifiable and manageable.[3] Directly related to the increased mediation of reality and specifically the unceasing transmissions of images, such a vision machine rhythmically organizes and fragments our daily lives.

Digital Space/Social and Political Bodies

The idea of digital space as a space of great equality is supported by the entrepreneurs of the New Economy, who present cyber-economy as a place of equal opportunity and cyberspace as non-hierarchical. This representation also fosters the idea of global equality, a seamless place where we can all coexist and be treated equally, one that nevertheless respects and even protects cultural and historical differences. This idyllic image takes into account neither the digital divide, nor the fact that cyberspace, as any economic space, is regulated more by laws of profit than by cultural enlightenment. In that context, the work of the Electronic Disturbance Theater offers an axis of reflection and restores opacity to the purity and transcendence of cyber-utopia.

Electronic Disturbance Theater is a small group of cyber-activists and artists, composed of Ricardo Dominguez, Stefan Wray, Carmin Karasic and Brett Stalbaum. It has created Electronic Civil Disobedience, a form of virtual mass protest on the Web. In 1998 the group developed a URL-based software, FloodNet, which was first used to organize online protests and virtual sit-ins to flood and disrupt Mexican government websites, as well as other Mexican and US computer systems, in order to support the Zapatista Liberation Army and increase visibility of the movement. Participants, media, and the site on which the virtual sit-in will take place are announced via email postings on multiple listserves.

The Zapatistas' goal is to resist what they see as the genocidal practices of the Mexican government, which in turn sees the Zapatistas as disruptive of the country's economic development, as dictated by the International Monetary Fund, for example. Ideologically, Zapatistas' history echoes that of peoples such as Native North Americans, Peruvian Indians, or – closer to home – homeless people, who must assimilate or disappear. Dominguez points out that through

such actions, the Zapatista movement, without the benefit of any infrastructure, has been able to manifest itself as a transnational network of email-based activism that has so far succeeded in preventing the Mexican government from quashing it: 'While at present a catalyst for moving forward with ECD tactics, the Electronic Disturbance Theater hopes eventually to blend into the background to become one of many small autonomous groups heightening and enhancing the ways and means of computerized resistance'.[4] Through this digital activism, the Electronic Disturbance Theater deftly demonstrates that cyberspace contains, within its structure, resistance tools to such politics of repression.

Electronic Civil Disobedience demonstrates the political nature of digital technology and indeed of cyberspace. It opposes the representation of cyberspace as a gliding transparency that is not disrupted by historical or political narratives; its actions transform the passive use of an electronic tool – obedient clicking – into an active disruption of the quiescence of the screen that imposes itself into the heart of power structures. Such digital activism introduces a glitch in the electronic oligarchy machine and its model of smooth perfection and efficiency.

Rhyzomes

The digital flux that frames our experience of physical and socio-political realities functions through continuous additions, subtractions and disappearances. In this process, memory can be constructed from information drawn from several contiguous places and times, a process that tends to replace actual experience.

Such systems rest upon the existence of rhyzomatic forms of communication and interaction – organisms without roots, hierarchy or linear histories – an image recalling the configurations of digital servers. This image is closely related to the rhyzomatic nomadism introduced by Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze in *A Thousand Plateaux*. For Guattari and Deleuze, this concept was defined as resistance against authoritarian structures, a war machine forcing the constant remodelling of any fixed and absolute models.

It is possible that the digital erasure of physical, social and political narratives through such 'global' and self-referential systems will neither open a new era of utopian freedom of expression, nor promote the safekeeping of and democratic access to multiple histories and cultures. On the contrary, it might serve the dynamics of oblivion and erasure on a global scale. The Deleuzian war machine, a possible agent of liberation, can turn into an agent of oppression, just as it might quantify our existence and reduce it to parts easily transformed into commodities. Expanding the debate, Floating Point Unit reveals the existence of a vision machine that fragments visual language and perception, relaying

surface signals onto a confine-less space of unspecified representations, while Digital Civil Disobedience disrupts the information machine.

In the end, a critique addressing the digital utopia of equality and perfection might very well be construed as a heterotopia, a necessary appendix to a cyber-economy of transparent desire. However, it also remains the place of a perpetual invention, refusing systemic approaches and playing instead on the prismatic quality of the digital world.

1 Guy Debord, La Société du spectacle et autres films (Paris: Éditions Champ Libre, 1978). The opening paragraph of The Society of the Spectacle, originally published in 1967, reads: 'The entire life of societies in which modern conditions of production prevail, heralds itself as an immense accumulation of SPECTACLES. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation.'

2 These figures were published by the United Nations General Assembly in June 2000. In regard to the growing importance of electronic transactions and communication in the world financial markets, they illustrate the process of exclusion faced by Third World countries, as well as poorer communities in First World nations.

3 Quoted by Bruno Ricard, in a conversation with the author, July 2000.

4 Stefan Krempl, 'Computerized Resistance after the Big Flood', interview with Ricardo Dominguez (www.heise.de/+p/english/inhalt/te/5801/1.html)

Catherine Bernard, 'Bodies and Digital Utopia', *Art Journal*, vol. 59, no. 4 (Winter 2000) 26–31.

Alison Green
Utopias and Universals//2003

For what seems like a long time, Modernism has been an untouchable subject for contemporary artists and critics or, better stated, it was the thing to resist – a phantom ideological system whose filtration into contemporary art discourse had to be militated against. Credibility rested on the distance measured from it; most art and critical practices of the last 30 years that we consider to be cutting edge embody, whether implicitly or explicitly, attacks on or rebuttals of Modernism's great claims – its utopianism, its model of historical progress and notion of the new, and its idealism.

These ideas have never gone away, of course, but recently some of them are being excitedly raised, notably with an attitude less ironic and jaundiced, more curious and compelled, than might have been expected. Examples were included in the exhibition 'Early One Morning' [Whitechapel Gallery, London, 2002] which proclaimed a return to formalist sculpture. They are also there, though less obviously, in neo-utopian projects like that of the Dutch art collective Atelier van Lieshout, shown last spring in London at Camden Arts Centre, and in the work of artists brought together for the 2000 show 'Future Perfect' at the now-defunct Centre for Visual Arts in Cardiff.

The strong anti-modernist credo, set in motion in the 1960s art world against a generally insipid type of formalist painting and sculpture, is still invoked in critical circles in terms of an opposition between formalist art and art that is politically or socially engaged. A hack phrase like 'neo-Greenbergian formalism' still has the power to dismiss art that plays with colour or form or that fails to be topical, as if these things preclude a conscious figuring of difference. And the return in the 1990s of an interest in conceptual art only reinforced the injunction against everything Modernism stood for. A good mnemonic for this present crux of influence is John Baldessari's painting *This is Not to Be Looked At* [1966–68]. Working with the idea that text and an image put up unartfully on a canvas could be a legitimate replacement for painting, Baldessari reproduced the cover of a 1966 issue of *Artforum* that featured Frank Stella's painting, *Union III*. Baldessari was challenging a big sixties assumption, that art's preoccupations had to be visual. By commanding the viewer not to look, Baldessari 'proves' that looking is prescribed – not a pure activity but one supported by implicit ideological systems. And, by reproducing Stella's painting as it appeared on the cover of *Artforum*, Baldessari bundled this kind of art with its main critical organ, seen by many then as dominated by formalist writing by Greenberg

acolytes such as Rosalind Krauss and Michael Fried. But the reason this work remains an icon is that it articulates an institutional bias. *This is Not to Be Looked At* signals the sea-change that conceptualism brought to art. While we might still be impressed by or thankful for this, the critique seems to be the work's most trivial aspect, since what was then a weighty discourse bearing down on artists trying to get recognized is now no more or no less inherently problematic than conceptual art's historical biases. In other words, the work is better as a historical place-marker than a deep critique of Modernism.

In some ways we have progressed. Artists today – especially artists making abstract work – tend to reject both the conceptualist idea, that the rigours of the text are an antidote to mindless abstraction, and the formalist need for purity. Someone like Peter Davies makes formalist paintings that are recycled through conceptualism so that a text-based diagram painting can sit side by side with an abstract one. Seen in isolation, his abstract works are similar enough to sixties decorative abstraction that his approach seems importantly different from postmodern appropriation. This is not the knowing, intellectualized work of the eighties artist Sherrie Levine, who copied iconic works of Modernism and thereby confronted the apotheosis of the canon's highest saints. It seems marginally more possible to make formalist painting or sculpture now without staking an explicit critical position vis-a-vis Modernism, more possible to approach it innocently, and engage on its own terms.

To a large degree, this interest is a reaction to late conceptualism's limitations, in particular the way its strategies insist on social and cultural meanings to the detriment of any objective internal coherence or material pleasure. Formalism – strictly speaking a means of interpretation rather than a style – seems to act as a kind of tonic to the apparent levelling of art into cultural objects (which Baldessari suggested by making a painting with a reproduction of a reproduction of a painting). Neo-formalist art reasserts that art is something quite out of the ordinary, that it can construct an experience in the viewer that is not predetermined. This is the main argument made by Iwona Blazwick in her catalogue essay for 'Early One Morning'. She writes that the sensual effects of material (sight as well as sound and smell) as used in the sculpture in the exhibition trigger experiences that 'go beyond language'. As in classic sixties arguments about late Modernism, the 'sensory' is a code word for experiences of art which can't be pinned down. But here the work's materiality is a beginning point (but not the delimitation) of an experience, one that might change from person to person. The jury is still out, it seems, on whether we can do without aesthetic experience. You can find subtle arguments in its favour in a wide range of theoretical writing, from Peggy Phelan's work on performance art, to Krauss' and Yve-Alain Bois' recent invocation of the abject, to Roland Barthes' 'third

meaning'. All of these intimate that art has an excess of meaning that spills over the process of signification. After three decades of critical discourse about language's construction of experience – making a travesty of our all-too-human desire to connect – Blazwick's interest in something fundamental and primary seems quite radical. But the terms of the debate still seem entrenched in an opposition between materially-engaged and critically-engaged art where formal issues ultimately lose out. Jim Lambie, for example, in an interview published in the exhibition catalogue, insists that in his work the 'idea' is more important than the 'material'.

Is it possible to move past this opposition? In his review of 'Early One Morning', (*Art Monthly*, no. 259) J.J. Charlesworth sees the resurgence of attention to materials in terms of a long-needed resolution of formalism's tendency to essentialize and idealize. What he calls a 'gallery aesthetics' is just a set of strategies for making that artists can use now because they are more pragmatic and pluralistic, and have a handle on formalism's pitfalls. But he delineates too narrow a historical context – in a sense inventing a history to justify present claims – that makes the work in the exhibition succesful in terms of the failures of 'Young British Art' and neo-conceptualist work. Despite his argument to the contrary, whether or not this work becomes reified as dessicated aesthetic objects is not under the control of the artists. The trend seems less to do with the historical idea contained in the word 'formalism', and whether or not it is authentically realized, than with an attitude that wishes to define art positively – an urge to move, as T.J. Clark describes, from 'representation to agency'' that in this moment finds value in primary experience. These urges should be set in a wider context than abstraction v. representation or formalism v. postmodern irony, as they have always coexisted in this situation we call modernity.

Idealisms are implicit in art. What seems more interesting than arguing them away is seeing how they function. Something apparently lost in our appreciation of abstract art is the way it can represent a non-real space. Non-reality is a good alternative to over-prescription. As a 'picture' with inner organization, art can present a whole of sorts, although maybe only one that works then and there, for the viewer who knowingly suspends his or her doubt and entertains what may not be possible. This is a form of idealism (it projects a more positive future), and clearly is less stultifying than the idealism that measures our lacks. Perhaps it is useful to recall here that the Bauhaus used abstraction as a critique of subjectivity. Their idea was that an unadulterated visual language could be understood by everyone, even over time. (To clarify: they thought life would be better if aestheticized, which was at odds with the Dadaist idea that art should dissolve into life and ultimately cease to exist.) We can cite the historical failures of the Bauhaus, but it did succeed in producing objects with a sensuality that still

registers, which suggests that the pleasure of looking, of finding something out for oneself in the process of interpreting a work, could be described as a universal.

This spectre of values such as pleasure, excess and contingency, as well as social progress, suggests that Modernism the first time round was more complex than we often make it – that it knew its own contradictions. Utopianism, for example, always had to do with a sensory transformation as well as a structural one. In our present context, what seems striking are attempts to address these issues instead of rejecting them as a lip-service to critical discourse. Atelier van Lieshout attempts to solve some of society's real problems – such as economic and political migration, over-dependence on non-renewable resources, and our disconnection from human drives – via inhabitable sculptures. Using standardized, modular construction methods (a cornerstone of modernist design) the group can respond to an immediate need, and adapt it later on. They have established a 'free state' outside of Rotterdam called AVL-Ville, which is a self-sustaining community with its own rules, currency and restaurant. But this utopia also has space for sex and violence, and for privacy, which makes it seem like it might actually work, since it includes both concrete, social change as well as space for alternatives to be conjured up, and perhaps only temporarily realized. The problem, of course, is the unavoidable issue of how this idealized situation interfaces with the art world. When it appears in the gallery, is it a representation of something real and elsewhere, or has it closed the perennial gap between aesthetics and politics? As a project, it will probably devolve and disband like the Bauhaus did, and suffer years of recriminations if it ends up being influential, but it is good to have it here now, measuring one outer limit of art's potential.

In a similar way, Liam Gillick's work is a kind of mitigated consideration of idealism and society-wide issues, which also takes place in the context of Modernism's successes and failures. Gillick wants to take on the big issues, but avoid their follies ('when people sincerely try to improve things and then go wrong on a grand scale'[2]). His discussion island works, which he describes as places of 'parallel activity' and are intended to be sites of open historical processing, speak to ideas of free thought and cross-cultural dialogue, but he does not presume any effect or consequence of them as sculptural objects, rather he pushes their use-factor back to their audiences. Unlike Atelier van Lieshout, Gillick never claims to want to fix the problems. He leaves them irresolvable, but returns to them over and over again as if to acknowledge that they are a force that can't ever be gotten over (which was postmodernism's folly). Modernism is, of course, our history. At the same time, Gillick confuses the fates of thought and cultural product. The former will usually be rejected or built upon, but the latter will often survive its initial context, as it is already open to different

interpretations. Even at its inception art is addressing transitory issues; Gillick doesn't need to reinforce this in the thinness of his sculptural installations.

Perhaps the idea of utopia would seem more palatable if one considered it as a drive rather than a place. (The word itself, of course, means non-place.) The fact that utopianism locates its quest for perfection in the material world puts a nice brake on tendencies to idealize or systematize it – material eventually breaks down, literally and figuratively. Art's utopian function could be similar to its critical function: to be different enough from the master narratives of culture and its bureaucracies that alternate possibilities become apparent. Art objects could be seen as representations that evoke future experiences, even as substitutions for the impossibility of utopia itself.

The utopia that interests me is borrowed not so much from modernist theory as from pragmatic philosophy: simple as it may seem, culture can be seen as part of an endeavour to make life better, and art as an imaginative creation driven by a desire to improve things.[3] We still talk about art's power, whether it be its ability to synthesize ideas, to mediate between cultures, or to stimulate criticality. People still want a singular, powerful experience from art, one that draws together separate parts of their intellectual, political and social lives. We look for this in art that seeks to understand itself as it produces itself. This is a perennial, and the rest doesn't matter.

1 T.J. Clark, 'Introduction', in *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999) 7.

2 'Liam Gillick in conversation with Catsou Roberts and Lucy Steeds', in *Liam Gillick / Renovation Filter: Recent Past and Near Future* (Bristol, England: Arnolfini, 2000) 24.

3 See the philosopher and social critic Richard Rorty's 'Relativism: Finding and Making', *Philosophy and Social Hope* (New York: Penguin, 1999) xxxiv.

Alison Green, 'Utopias and Universals', *Art Monthly*, no. 265 (April 2003) 7–10.

Hari Kunzru
I See the Sea: On Paul Noble//2008

[...] It's clear that Paul Noble's aesthetic inversion of values, his many dealings with high and low, black and white, up and down, are both ethically and politically driven. Likewise his persistent focus on memory, what one might punningly call his 'monumentality'. Noble's involvement with a campaign against the M11 motorway link road in Leytonstone, East London, focused on the community that was being destroyed to build the bypass. Like the artist Gavin Turk, he détourned the blue heritage plaques that mark the homes of London's famous dead. Unlike Turk, who used his own name as part of his ongoing joust with art-world celebrity, Noble commemorated the buildings themselves, and the uncelebrated families who had lived in them.

Likewise, Noble's carnivalesque seems to be aimed, in a Bakhtinian fashion, at the builders of self-aggrandizing monuments, the emperors who preside over our swarming networked world. Acumulus Noblitatus, an area of *Nobson Newtown* [the utopia-allusive imaginary space explored in a series of Noble's works], spells out the words of the English civil war Digger leader Gerrard Winstanley: 'And the nations of the world will never learn to beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and leave off warring, until this cheating device of buying and selling be cast out among the rubbish of kingly power.' In his 2004 Whitechapel Gallery show, alongside several *Nobson Newtown* drawings, Noble exhibited *Egg*, a large sculpture whose white surface is inscribed with a kind of Sadean vegan hell, in which cartoon turds torture and vivisect animals. It's a sort of scatological horror show projected onto a big clamped-open eyeball, a riff, so Noble has said, on Peter Singer's 1975 book *Animal Liberation*. The egg, an ancient symbol both of new life and of the soul, appeared elsewhere in the show, filmed and projected in inverted negative, emerging from a female anus. Birth or defaecation?

It is clear how the ocean, a threatening remnant of the Flood, came to inspire horror, as did the mountains, that other chaotic vestige of the disaster, which were 'pudenda of Nature', ugly, aggressive warts that grew on the surface of the new continents. This repulsive interpretation was in keeping with the certainty that the world was in Decline. No matter how zealously they worked, men would never be able to recreate the antediluvian Earth, on whose surface the traces of earthly paradise could still be seen.
– Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea*

The French historian Alain Corbin traces what he terms the 'invention of the seaside', excavating the layer of mediaeval terror that lies beneath our present-day enjoyment of the various sensations of the beach. Health, aesthetic pleasure, social spectacle, sexual excitement – all this, he argues, is a gradual cultural accretion, sediment laid down over a primal scene of disgust. Whitley Bay, with its arcade and its art deco houses, is a product of a historical process that has been underway for about three hundred years. 'A full size golf course has been built over the site of an opencast working'.

We Moderns, garden city planners, rational makers and collectors, inhabitants of Villa Joe [drawings, 2005–6], with its plate-glass *wunderkammer*, and Paul's Palace, with its various amenities for civilized Noblife, find ourselves forever staring out to sea, always examining the ground beneath our feet, trying to join the dots. Around Villa Joe, the rocks seem to form the shapes of constellations, a protolinguistic tracery, geological jargon. The schizophrenic asks: 'Are these things random, or have they been arranged?' This is a suspect landscape, constantly threatening or promising meaning without finally revealing it.

The villa's precinct and the little driveway decorated with a proud faecal menhir are surrounded by debris, by the 'pudenda of nature'. These cleared spaces are the only blanks in a palimpsest-landscape, an archaeological rubble of intentionality. The large rocks surrounding the villa are ground down toward the edges, becoming progressively smaller, until they are mere specks, pinpricks. Nature or culture? Impossible to say. As we look out from Paul's Palace, behind us on the cliffs is a pile of humanoid fragments, artistic wreckage blocking the way to a Renaissance fantasy summit. On the other sides, the cliffs themselves, like most natural phenomena in man-made Nobson, are bursting with forms, the recognizable biomorphic forms of the arch-modernist Henry Moore.

> In all his work Moore is not only a humanist, in the sense that his work is intricately related to the human figure; but also in the wider sense of a man who has an acute awareness of the vital process itself, a feeling for organic form whether manifested in man, or animals, trees, plants, shells, fossils – whatever has been formed by the life-force in its endless procreative process.[1]

That's Moore's great champion, Herbert Read, articulating his hero's vitalism, his ability to channel nature's fecundity and excrete it as sculpture. Moore, who famously refused to read a Jungian analysis of his work in case a rational apprehension of his motives blocked his ability to sculpt, had a sense of himself as a conduit for archetypes. 'There are unusual shapes to which everybody is subconsciously conditioned and to which they can respond if the conscious control does not shut them off.'[2] In Moore's conception, sculpture is a serious

business, involving a sort of total cosmic identification between artist and form, a heroic struggle to dredge the correct shape out of both the material and the subconscious.

Look again at the rocks in Nobson. Are they heroic sculpture? Or are they just rocks? Random or arranged? If they're sculpture, can we forget and look at them like rocks? If they're rocks, can we look at them like sculpture? And what does it mean to be an artist, if what you're doing is this heroic work of ingesting the flow of nature, digesting it with your archetypes, and excreting your humanized version in front of Lincoln Center? Are you a hero? Or just a guy pooping on a plinth?

Moore's fame increased during his life to the point where another of his many admirers, the aristocratic British critic Kenneth Clark, could announce: 'If I had to send one man to another planet to represent the human race, it would be Henry Moore.'[3] Noble's enormous *Monument Monument* (2007), a drawn agglomeration of all the pieces illustrated in the six volumes of Moore's catalogue raisonné, is less homage than an insult to this strongest of 'strong fathers'. This enormous faecal pile, with its various folds and protuberances, acknowledges the ubiquity of Moore's work, all those organic forms standing in all those plazas and campuses, outside all those bank buildings and embassies and arts centres. And yet it reverses the public spectacle of their various unveilings, the moments of civic pride and corporate self-congratulation.

Like Nobson, 'an exercise in self-portraiture via town planning',[4] Noble's Moore seems to be both a person and a place – in this case, a battlefield on which a conflict is being fought between form and formlessness, carnivalesque freedom and ascetic rigour, social conscience and global capital, art as liberating free play and art as the excrescence of monstrous monuments.

> ... a term serving to demean, implying the general demand that everything should have its form. That which it designates has no rights in any sense, and is everywhere crushed like a spider or an earthworm. For the satisfaction of academics, it is imperative that the universe take on a form. The whole of philosophy has no other goal: it's about putting a frock coat on that which is, a mathematical frock coat. To affirm on the contrary that the universe doesn't resemble anything and is nothing but formless amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or a gob of spittle.[5]

Georges Bataille's dictionary definition of the *informe* captures precisely the nature of Noble's insult, his relegation (*déclassement*) of Moore. These monuments are above all individual, erected on their plinths, lauded in humanist terms as triumphs of the artistic spirit. To shove them back together is a perverse

revaluation, a comic denial of the academic demand for form. To do so with such skill, such intense, concentrated labour, is to exalt the *informe*, the flow of the undifferentiated real, to bring the high low and raise the low on high. *Monument Monument*, and the six individual *Volume* drawings are writhing biomorphic orgies, cluster-fucks. They are quite gloriously obscene.

There's a naughtiness to all this, the humour of a saucy seaside postcard. Noble shows a photograph of a solemn Moore looking up at one of his heroic creations, an outsize humanoid form, in which he has excised the work and replaced it with a soft-porn image of a naked arse and a pair of legs in stockings. So much for the grand, ineffable 'mystery of the hole'. Noble is not the first artist to engage in an Oedipal battle with Moore. From Bruce Nauman's lumpy, string-tied package, called *Henry Moore Bound to Fail* (1967–70), to Bruce McLean's *Pose Work for Plinths 3* (1971), an action satire on Moore's *Falling Warrior* (1956–57).[6] Younger artists have taken on the old modernist master in various ways. His former assistant Anthony Caro once said in an interview that 'my generation abhors the idea of a father-figure and his [Moore's] work is bitterly attacked by artists and critics under forty when it fails to measure up to the outsize scale it has been given.'[7] But of course, Caro is himself a father figure now, and so Noble has taken him to the seaside too, using a distinctly Caroesque girder to support a version of a classic seafront entertainment, the board with a hole through which you can poke your head to see your face on the body of a fat lady or a skinny man. In this case, sure enough, you find yourself emerging from a porn star's bum.

An agonistic relationship to tradition, a penchant for dirty jokes, a relentless interrogation of the boundary between the natural and the cultural – Noble's weird brew of ideas and emotions reaches its peak of sophistication in a series of ceramic works that take the elements of Moore sculptures and use them as modules, arranged in various combinations, glazed and presented on beautifully carved wooden stands, like Chinese scholars' stones. Scholars' stones are found objects that have been appreciated by collectors for well over a thousand years. An aesthetics of the scholars' stone was codified as early as the Song Dynasty (960–1279), by collectors such as the statesman, calligrapher, drunkard and obsessive hand-washer Mi Fu (1051–1107). Mi Fu (known as 'madman' for his various passions) is said to have disrupted a ceremony at the Imperial court by turning his back on the dignitaries assembled to greet him and bowing instead to a particularly beautiful rock, which he addressed as his teacher.

Mi Fu and his fellow rock fans based their aesthetic judgements on such qualities as *shou* (slenderness), *zhou* (wrinkles), *lou* (channels), and *tou* (holes and openness), the last particularly significant when thinking about them in relation to Moore. Scholars' stones became art because they were appreciated as art. They were mounted and displayed. They were, above all, individuated, separated out from the formless flow of nature by the connoisseur's academic eye. Noble is performing a complicated riff on this tradition. By presenting elements of Moore's art in this way, he is once again crossing and recrossing the boundaries between the natural and the cultural, the formal and the formless. By appropriating Moore's terms as modules, relegating them to the status of prefabricated elements in a construction kit, he is pitting one kind of modernism (architectural and utilitarian) against another (psychological, asocial) in a game that both are bound to lose when faced with the infinite fecundity of nature. *O rock, my true teacher!*

The ceramics are, it should be said, very beautiful, glazed in ways that suggest the Japanese ceramic tradition brought to Europe by such students as Christopher Dresser and Bernard Leach. Their hardwood bases bubble and ripple. These objects are not only the physical instantiation of the precious collection housed in Villa Joe, but also of the boulders surrounding it. They are Moore's monuments reduced to the status and scale of ornaments, relegated to the devalued aesthetic territory of the decorative arts. They are forms that insult the pretensions of form-giving, the ultimate efflorescence of a body of work that seems to be concerned above all with reminding us of our place in the world, telling us that for all our grand projects, our desire for aggrandisement or liberation or domination, we are human-scale creatures. We live in the world, and it lives in us.

1 [footnote 10 in source] Herbert Read, *Henry Moore: A Study of His Life and Work* (New York: Praeger, 1966).

2 [11] Henry Moore, 'The Sculptor Speaks', *The Listener*, 18 August 1937.

3 [12] Kenneth Clarke, quoted in Harriet F. Senie, 'Implicit Intimacy: The Persistent Appeal of Henry Moore's Public Art', in Dorothy Kosinski, ed., *Henry Moore: Sculpting the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

4 [13] Publicity material for Noble's 2004 Whitechapel Gallery show.

5 [14] '... un terme servant à déclasser, exigeant généralement que chaque chose ait sa forme. Ce qu'il désigne n'a ses droits dans acucun sens et se fait écraser partout comme une araignée ou un ver de terre. Il faudrait en effet, pour que les hommes académiques soient contents, que l'univers prenne forme. La philosophie entière n'a pas d'autre but: il s'agit de donner un redingote à ce qui est, une redingote mathématique. Par contre affirmer que l'univers ne ressemble à rien et n'est qu'informe revient à dire que l'univers est quelque chose comme une araignée ou un crachat.' Georges Bataille, 'L'informe', *Documents*, no. 7 (Paris, December 1929).

6 [15] See Dorothy Kosinski, 'Some Reasons for a Reputation', in *Henry Moore*, op. cit.

7 [16] Quoted in Harriet F. Senie, 'Implicit Intimacy', in *Henry Moore*, op. cit.

Hari Kunzru, extract from 'I See the Sea', in *Paul Noble* (New York: Gagosian Gallery, 2008) 7–12.

Paul Chan
Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist and Adam Phillips//2008

Adam Phillips [...] I was wondering, as I read earlier interviews, about the relationship between you quoting so often when you speak and the sense in which your work quotes or alludes. It seems to me your work is both extremely elusive and not elusive at all, both allusive and elusive. It appears to be full of other art and yet very much itself. And while quotation isn't exactly somebody else talking on one's own behalf, it is an opportunity to have a commonwealth of things, rather than an inside. They're in circulation, these quotes, and we can use them and they may be our best way of speaking. If we drop the pressure to be original and new, we're free to use the cultural repertoire in a completely different way. I like the thing Cocteau said – that originality is trying to be like everyone else and failing. I think it's a much better model.

Paul Chan [Laughs] I like that! The idea of freedom is important and having a common currency sounds right to me. For one reason or another, when I read something, I can remember it, and so I use it. But I also know that I don't have that burden of accuracy; maybe I'm not in a field where that's valued anyway, but mistranslation is very important to me. And I only had the courage to mistranslate because I felt I was comfortable enough with the initial translating to mistranslate. Mistakes are a form of freedom. So the question is: how can you get yourself to a point where you're willing to make those kinds of mistakes, to sort of go with them? It's like making work as a form of hallucination. Maybe this is why people simply describe the works, hoping to make them cohere in some fashion. I'm constantly hallucinating things that I read anyway, so whatever primary source there was, has gone through me into a secondary, tertiary and quaternary transformation. If you let go of that, then things become light. They can move in a way in which they were not originally intended to move.

Phillips As in your ~~*Light*~~ pieces. The work really does pun on the word 'light', doesn't it?

Chan Yes, and it bugs me when journals print the title of *1st* ~~*Light*~~ [video installation, 2005] without the strikethrough. They've made a mistake by not making a mistake.

What is the piece if not light and the lack of light – light struck through.

Phillips When I saw that piece at the Serpentine Gallery, London, I was intrigued by the way people looked into it as though it had tremendous depths. Which of course it does. I find the work very hypnotic, and I'm sometimes wary of that. But it's a new kind of haunting. If I read a poem, I can be haunted by a phrase; if I listen to a piece of music, I can be haunted by an atmosphere. I don't know why I'm haunted by them, but I don't feel suspicious of the spell. It's the same with your pieces: it's like being entranced, but I don't feel as if they've got a design on me and that they know what they're doing and I don't. I feel they don't know what they're doing and I don't either. It feels more collaborative. [...]

Chan As I make the works and they become more foreign to me, the question becomes not only the idea of light and shadow, but gearing towards imagining the time, the loop essentially, the process of making a ligule[1] of 14 minutes. This loop gathers around it a constellation of different ideas that I'm just beginning to explore, but that others have explored a lot: Nietzche's eternal return, Freud's idea of trauma, and music, actually.

Phillips Yes, music is based on return, as is poetry.

Hans Ulrich Obrist Toni Negri told me return is a 'motif polyphonique'.

Phillips I suppose the alternative would be to imagine the idea of a return or repetition in which one is not preoccupied with whether things are getting better or worse. To me, it's neither. So it's not teleological, it's not purposive. Nor is it compulsively repetitive. Yours seems to be a very unaggressive, anti-redemptive vision. Most anti-redemptive art is militantly anti-redemptive. It hates redemption; it wants to destroy the idea of it forever. Your pieces are anti-redemptive, but they're gentle.

Chan It's ironic that I had to read a lot of religious texts and look at a fair amount of religious works to get to that point – not just to read, but to inhabit a particular space and tradition of Western art and Western philosophical discourse. The work certainly wouldn't be anywhere without the idea of Western religion. But I think we live in a time where so much militancy, so much of the aggression, is tinted with theological colours. [...]

Chan That's strange to me, given that in the twenty-first century I didn't think I'd have to think about God ever again.

Phillips You know what I think is weird about this? The ten of us who believed

that secularism is obviously right have really had to wake up to the fact that there are only ten of us. We thought this was obvious: God was dead and we were now entering an era where for the first time people were genuinely beginning to think about what it would be like to live without God, without a centre, without an origin, without a source. But actually, we're the eccentrics.

Chan True, it makes me think that the parties, the camps, the movements that we once believed in, perhaps left a lot of people behind. And if one of the ideas of modernism is that we can take care of ourselves, then we must take care of ourselves without a transcendent order. The responsibility and the burden and the challenge is within us.

Phillips It seems that a lot of people feel that religious language is the only language available to say the things that matter most to them. I think there was a hope that psychology might take the place of this, or poetry might, or literature might. But actually, people need a religious language. It's almost as though we underestimated just how traumatic it would be to live in a secular world. People like Darwin, Freud and Marx, who introduced all this, were voices on behalf of culture. There was this great shock and then a great embracing and then great ignorance again. Your work is very preoccupied with these areas. There's a real attempt to produce a non-transcendent secular art that still has hope in it. The real problem with secularism is hope.

Chan I don't want to speak for the generation I grew up with, but those of us schooled with some of those secular horizons of knowledge thought things were going to change, and they haven't, and now we need a language that really works: the tried and true, the things that have worked over time. And nothing has worked longer over time than religion. I think we should invest in those secular forms of knowledge, not with the urgency of finding out the truth, but to imagine what other things we can get out of these old dogs. I remember reading in your work [on the Freudian legacy, poetry and literature] that to imagine is a form of survival. How else can we survive becomes the interesting question.

Phillips The risk is that we secularists become bitter and cynical if we don't have a strong language that has some hope in it and that can compete with the other languages. I think a lot of people wanted art to do this for them, as though there could be a kind of commonwealth of art lovers, which has now become a degenerate tribe.

Chan [Laughs]

Phillips But art could be one of the things we do as part of the process of secularization without having to be excessively privileged or, indeed, excessively disparaged. So people wouldn't be saying to you, 'What is the relationship between your political activism and your art?' because that question would no longer be of any interest; it just wouldn't be like that.

Chan Right.

Obrist And it's probably the question that you're asked most frequently.

Chan Yes, in a strange way I think they don't know that they're uncomfortable talking about art. And I think they're uncomfortable because there's no quick and easy and right solution to it. Perhaps, once upon a time, we thought art was the divine, high culture. We don't know what it is now.

Phillips There's no obvious shared language.

Chan Right. And the language becomes more and more weaponized. For instance, the cynic might say that art is just toys for the rich; art students might say it's a path to stardom or careers; art historians might say it's of the past. But I think it's a shared conflict in which I want to invest as much time as possible, because I don't know what other form provides the opportunity, the challenge, to reimagine the contradictions in such a way. [...]

1 ['Ligule' (a thin outgrowth at the junction of a stem and a leaf) in this context would suggest a point of convergence.]

Paul Chan, Hans Ulrich Obrist and Adam Phillips, extracts from 'Interview with Paul Chan', in *Paul Chan: 7 ~~Lights~~* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2008) 100–101; 103–5.

Theodor Adorno (1903–69) was a philosopher, musicologist and cultural critic of the Frankfurt School. His major works include *Negative Dialectics* (1966) and the posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory* (1970).

Catherine Bernard is Assistant Professor of Art History and Gallery Director at State University of New York at Old Westbury. Journals she has contributed to include *The Art Journal*, *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* and *Parkett*.

Joseph Beuys (1921–86), the influential German artist, founded organizations such as the Free International School of Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research in the early 1970s. Archives of his work are at the Joseph Beuys Archiv (http://www.moyland.de/pages/josephbeuysarchiv/), the Hessisches Landesmusum in Darmstadt, the Busch-Reisinger Museum at Harvard University, and the Kunstmuseum Bonn.

Ernst Bloch (1885–1977) was a German Marxist philosopher, in exile from 1933–49. His works include *The Principle of Hope*, in three volumes (1954; 1955; 1959), *Man on his Own: An Essay on the Philosophy of Religion* (1970), *On Karl Marx* (1971) and *A Philosophy of the Future* (1970).

Yve-Alain Bois is the Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., Professor of Modern Art at Harvard University, a critic and curator. His books include *Painting as Model* (1990) and, with Rosalind Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide* (1997). He is an editor of *October* and a contributing editor of *Artforum*.

Nicolas Bourriaud is a French art theorist and curator. From 1999 to 2005 he was co-director, with Jérome Sans, of the Palais de Tokyo, Paris. Projects he has curated include *Aperto*, the Venice Biennale (1993), the Moscow Biennale (co-curator, 2005) and the Tate Triennial (2009). His books include *Relational Aesthetics* (1998), *Postproduction* (2002) and *Radicant* (2009).

Benjamin H.D. Buchloh is the Franklin D. and Florence Rosenblatt Professor of Modern Art, Harvard University, an editor of *October* and a contributor to *Artforum*. His books include a first volume of collected writings, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (2001).

Pierre Canjuers (pseudonym of Daniel Blanchard) was a member of the group *Socialisme ou Barbarie* during the same period that Guy Debord participated in the group.

Paul Chan is a Hong-Kong born American artist and activist based in New York, who was co-founder of the New York section of the independent media network Indymedia. His website is www.nationalphilistine.com. Solo exhibitions include the New Museum, New York (2008).

Guy Debord (1931–94), the French writer, theorist and filmmaker, formed the Situationist International with the artist Asger Jorn and others in 1957. His books include *Society of the Spectacle* (1967), *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (1988), and the edited collection *Guy Debord and the Situationist International* (ed. Tom McDonough, 2002).

Jeremy Deller is a British artist based in London whose participatory projects include *Unconvention* (with Bruce Haines, 1999), *Folk Archive* (with Alan Kane, 1999 to the present), *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001), *Social Parade* (2004) and *Procession* (2009).

Agnes Denes is a Hungarian-born artist based in the United States who has worked internationally on environmentally, ecologically and socially based projects since the late 1960s. Her projects include *Wheatfield: A Confrontation*, Battery Park, Manhattan (1982), *A Forest for Australia*, Melbourne (1998) and *Masterplan-Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie*, The Netherlands (2000).

Friedrich Engels (1820–95) was a German theorist of society and politics, and co-founder with Karl Marx of the critique and theoretical system of Marxism. His works excluding those co-written with Marx include *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1844), *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880) and *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884).

Alex Farquharson is a British art critic and curator who has published numerous catalogue and monograph essays and is a regular contributor to *frieze*, *Art Monthly* and *Artforum*. Exhibitions he has curated include the British Art Show (with Andrea Schlieker, 2005) and 'If Everybody Had an Ocean', Tate St Ives (2007).

Hal Foster is an American art critic whose books include *Compulsive Beauty* (1993), *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (1996), *Prosthetic Gods* (2004) and, with Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and Rosalind Krauss, *Art since 1900* (2005). He is Townsend Martin Professor of Art, Princeton University, and a regular contributor to journals such as *October* (co-editor), *London Review of Books* and *New Left Review*.

Michel Foucault (1926–84) was a French philosopher and historian of systems of thought. His books include *Madness and Civilization* (1961), *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) and the three-volume *History of Sexuality* (1976–84).

Liam Gillick is a British artist whose projects include the ongoing series *What If Scenarios* and *Discussion Islands*. He was included in *Utopia Station*, Venice Biennale (2003). Solo exhibitions include Whitechapel Gallery, London (2002) and The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2003).

Antony Gormley is a British sculptor whose major sited projects include *Field* (made in different world locations, 1991–98), *Another Place* (1997), *The Angel of the North* (1998), *Inside Australia* (2002–3) and *One & Other* (2009).

Dan Graham is a New York-based American artist and writer on art and culture who began working in the early 1960s. His writings are collected in *Rock My Religion* (1993) and *Two-Way Mirror Power* (1999). Retrospectives include The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2009).

Alison Green is an art historian, critic and curator who teaches art history and theory at Central St Martins School of Art and Design, London, and writes regularly for *Art Monthly*. Her published work includes 'When Attitudes Become Form and the Contest over Conceptual Art's History', in the collection *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth and Practice* (2004).

Thomas Hirschhorn is a Swiss-born artist based in Paris. Major projects include *Bataille Monument*, Documenta 11, Kassel (2002), *Musée Précaire Albinet*, Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers (2004), and *Utopia, Utopia*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2005).

Pierre Huyghe is a French artist based in Paris, whose projects have included *The Third Memory* (1999) and, with Philippe Parreno and other collaborating artists, *No Ghost Just a Shell* (1999). Solo exhibitions include Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2003), Tate Modern, London, and ARC, Musée d'art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2006).

Fredric Jameson is Professor of Comparative Literature and Romance Studies at Duke University,

Durham, North Carolina. His books include *Signatures of the Visible* (1990), *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) and *The Cultural Turn* (1998).

Ilya Kabakov is a Ukrainian-born artist based in New York. An 'unofficial' Moscow artist in the 1960s and 1970s, he first exhibited outside the USSR in the 1980s. Retrospectives include the Kunstmuseum, Bern (1999).

Stefan Kalmár is a curator and critic, and Director of Artists Space, New York. He was formerly Director of the Institute of Visual Culture, Cambridge (2001–4) and Curator at the Kunstverein München (2004–9). In 2009 he curated a retrospective of Liam Gillick in collaboration with Witte de With, Rotterdam, Kunsthalle Zurich and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago..

Alan Kane is a British artist based in London whose recent projects include 'The Home Office Collection of Art from Prisons, Secure Hospitals and Young Offenders Institutions', Home Office Headquarters, London (2006), 'Alan Kane and Humphrey Spender', Ancient and Modern, London (2007) and, with Jeremy Deller, *Folk Archive* (2005).

Bodys Isek Kingelez (Jean Baptiste) is a Congolese artist based in Kinshasa since 1970. He has participated in international exhibitions since 'Magiciens de la Terre', Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (1989). Solo exhibitions include Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris (1995), Villa Stuck, Munich (2002) and Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston (2005).

Hari Kunzru is a British novelist and writer on art, music and culture based in London. As a journalist he has written for many major newspapers and magazines and is a contributing editor of *mute*. His books include *The Impressionist* (2002), *Transmission* (2005) and *My Revolutions* (2008).

Donald Kuspit is an American art critic and poet, and Distinguished Professor of Art History and Philosophy at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. His books include *Health and Happiness in Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde Art* (1996) and *The End of Art* (2004).

Dermis P. León is an independent critic and curator based in New York and a graduate of the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York.

Paul McCarthy is an American artist based in Los Angeles who has been making performance-based work since the late 1960s. Major solo exhibitions include The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2000), Haus der Kunst, Munich, and Whitechapel Gallery, London (2005).

Karl Marx (1818–83), the German philosopher, historian and theorist of economics and society, was the co-author, with Friedrich Engels, of *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848. His other key works include *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845) *The German Ideology* (1845–46), *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847), *Grundrisse* (1857) and *Capital* (vol. 1, 1867, vols 2 and 3 published in 1885; 1894).

Jeremy Millar is a British artist, writer and curator based in Whitstable, England, and a Research Fellow at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, University of Oxford. He has curated numerous exhibitions for British and European institutions and has contributed to journals including *Afterall*, *Art Monthly*, *frieze*, *Modern Painters* and *Parkett*.

Thomas More (1478–1535) was one of the leading Renaissance humanist scholars and an English statesman who occupied high office under Henry VIII until his execution for refusing to sign the Act of Supremacy. In 1516 he completed and published his Latin text on the imaginary island *Utopia*, a Greek pun on *ou-topos* (no place) and *eu-topos* (good place).

William Morris (1834–96) was an artist and designer, writer and socialist. In 1884 he founded the Socialist League in England. His utopian novel *News from Nowhere: An Epoch of Rest* was first published in serial form in *The Commonweal* in 1990.

Molly Nesbit is Professor of Art at Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, and has also taught at the University of California, Berkeley, and Barnard College, Columbia University. A contributing editor of *Artforum*, she is the author of *Atget's Seven Albums* (1992) and *Their Common Sense* (2000). She was a co-curator of *Utopia Station*, Venice Biennale (2003).

Constant Nieuwenhuys (1920–2005), known as Constant, was an artist and co-founder of the experimental Cobra group in the late 1940s. In 1956 he joined Asger Jorn in the International Movement for a Bauhaus of the Imagination, and a year later allied himself with the Situationist International, leaving in 1960. He worked on his utopian city model *New Babylon* from 1959–74.

Nils Norman is a British artist, designer and teacher who since the early 1990s has initiated a series of experimental spaces and collaborations with other artists, such as Parasite, with Andrea Fraser. His projects include an 80 metre pedestrian bridge and two islands for Roskilde Commune in Denmark (2005).

Hans Ulrich Obrist is a Swiss curator who is Co-Director of Exhibitions and Programmes at the Serpentine Gallery, London. From 1993 to 2005 he ran the 'Migrateurs' programme at the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris. Among the exhibitions he has co-curated are Manifesta I, Rotterdam (1996), the Berlin Biennale (1998), *Utopia Station*, Venice Biennale (2003), and the Moscow Biennale (2005). Volume 1 of his collected interviews was published in 2003.

George Orwell (pseudonym of Eric Arthur Blair, 1903–50) was a British socialist essayist, journalist and novelist. His works exploring social injustice and the dangers of totalitarianism include *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949).

Philippe Parreno is French artist and filmmaker based in Paris. He frequently collaborates with other artists and is also a writer on art, film, design and sound works. Solo shows include Kunstverein Munich (2004), Kunsthalle Zurich (2006) and Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2009).

Pil and Galia Kollectiv are a collaborative group of London based artists, writers and curators. Their art, texts and curatorial projects are documented at http://www.kollectiv.co.uk/

Jacques Rancière is a French philosopher who first came to prominence as a co-author, with Louis Althusser and others, of *Reading* Capital (1965). His books include *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1982), *Disagreement* (1998) and *The Politics of Aesthetics* (2004).

Stephanie Rosenthal is Chief Curator at the Hayward Gallery, London and was previously Curator of Contemporary Art at the Haus der Kunst, Munich. Exhibitions she has curated include 'Lala Land Parody Paradise: Paul McCarthy' (Munich, 2005) and 'Walking in My Mind' (Hayward, 2009).

Alun Rowlands is a Welsh-born artist and writer based in London, and Senior Lecturer in Art Theory and Practice at the University of Reading, England. His publications include *3 Communiqués* (2007) *Communiqué 4* (2008) and *Novel* (2008).

Beatrix Ruf has since 2001 been Director and Curator at the Kunsthalle Zurich, where artists she has exhibited and published on have included Monica Bonvicini, Elmgreen & Dragset, Liam Gillick, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno, among many others.

Karen Smith is a British curator and writer based in Beijing with a specialist knowledge of contemporary Chinese art. In 2007 she co-curated 'The Real Thing: Contemporary Chinese Art' at Tate Liverpool. Her publications include a monograph on the artist Ai Weiwei (2009).

Superflex is a Danish artists' group set up by Rasmus Nielsen, Jakob Fenger and Bjornstjerne Christiansen in 1993. Projects include *Supergas*, a collaboration with engineers to produce portable biogas units for African families. Their projects are documented at www.superflex.net

Rirkrit Tiravanija is an Argentinian-born Thai artist based in Chiang Mai, Berlin and New York. Solo exhibitions and projects include Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne (1996), The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1997), Wiener Secession, Vienna (2002), Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (2005) and *The Land*, Chiang Mai, Thailand (ongoing from 1998).

Jan Verwoert is an art critic based in Berlin. He is a contributing editor of *frieze* and has contributed essays for numerous catalogues and monographs and to the journals *Afterall* and *Metropolis M*. He is the author of *Bas Jan Ader: In Search of the Miraculous* (2006).

WochenKlausuris is an Austrian artist group which since 1993 has developed concrete proposals 'aimed at small, but nevertheless effective improvements to socio-political deficiencies'. Their website is http://www.wochenklausur.at/

Carey Young is a British artist based in London. Her projects and performances date from 1996. Solo exhibitions include John Hansard Gallery, Southampton (2002) with the accompanying monograph, *Carey Young, Incorporated*. The artist's website is http://www.careyyoung.com

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Richard Noble is by training a political philosopher who has migrated into the field of art. Much of his writing and teaching focuses on the relation between art and politics. Head of the Department of Art at Goldsmith's College, London, he is currently writing an introduction to art theory and has published catalogue essays on contemporary artists including Antony Gormley, Mona Hatoum and Rachel Whiteread.

'What truly distinguishes this volume is the manner in which it reveals that the imagination of a perfect society is the other half of a critique of society, and that the two halves rarely add up. Some of the authors project brilliant visions of the future, others seek to examine the contemporary blockages on the utopian impulse, while most investigate the confusion of what makes (or does not make) something utopian within the context of art. This excellent selection of pieces that in one way or another contemplate utopia will help renew interest in this most important of subjects.'
– Alexander Alberro Virginia Bloedel Wright Associate Professor of Art History, Barnard College and Columbia University

'Richard Noble has brilliantly brought together a selection of writings by artists, political theorists, critics and philosophers in order to investigate the utopian in contemporary art and culture – how art explores the impulse towards a better world, as well as how it plays out the intimation of a dystopian and dark universe so near to us. ... This collection of essays and interviews provides insight and challenges us to imagine the twenty-first century with absolute freedom.'
– Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev Chief Curator, Castello di Rivoli, Turin; Artistic Director, Documenta 13

'This is an exceptionally stimulating book, helping explain why Utopia continues to mean "Nowhere".'
– Arthur C. Danto Johnsonian Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Columbia University; art critic, *The Nation*

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UTOPIAS Utopian projects aspire to a better world but their forms may only ever live in our imaginations. Furthermore, we are as haunted by their failures as we are inspired by the aspiration to repair the failed and build the new. This anthology contextualizes art's current engagement with the utopian in relation to political thought, viewing the utopian as a key term in the artistic lineage of modernity. It illuminates how the exploration of utopian themes in art today contributes to our understanding of contemporary cultures and the possibilities for shaping their futures.

Utopias is one of a series documenting major themes and ideas in contemporary art

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