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Counter-Production

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“ It is this specificity—or perhaps a better word would be *specification*—that most defines success in the new world of outsourced making. The artists who derive the most benefit are those who can fold the story of the making into the very substance of their work, even when they are not the makers.”

Run of the Mill: A Brief History of Contemporary Art Production

Glenn Adamson and Julia Bryan-Wilson

In 2010, Chinese artist Ai Weiwei spread 100 million porcelain sunflower seeds on the floor of the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern. This low-lying carpet of massed tiny objects was accompanied by a video that explained that these seeds, far from being identical units, had been handcrafted by skilled workers in a city, Jingdezhen, historically known for its ceramics industry.[1] Many commenters on the *Sunflower Seed* video, which was posted on YouTube, portrayed Ai as a tyrannical manager, an overseer whose art "factory" was no better than the worst corporation. As one such poster acidly wrote: "Mining and pulverising marbles produced a lot of fine dust particles which were inhaled by these poor Chinese peasants who will suffer long term health effects. Heartless Ai Wei Wei *[sic]* exploited these poor peasants like Union Carbide exploited the poor Indians of Bhopal." This comment, with its condescending tone that forces equivalences between the compensated artisanal workshops of Jingdezhen and the sickened residents of Bhopal, encapsulates how outsourced art often triggers cries of exploitation or of a despoliation of the artistic process, which "should" be a more intimate, personal, and individual act.

Among the many concerns raised by this piece were the ethics of production. *Production*: this word has the potential to signify across a range of recent practices, from factory-line manufacturing that plops out widgets to a theatrical performance that has been carefully staged. It can mean both process (that is, the gestures or motions or systems that move toward a product) and concrete output. Within the realm of contemporary art, redefining *making* as *production* serves to unhinge it from the grip of authorial intent, as well as to situate it within wider materialist questions. For instance, Walter Benjamin's pivotal article "The Author as Producer" asked not how a cultural work is positioned "in relation *to* the relationships of production of a period," but rather, "how does it stand *in* them?"[2]

For theorist Pierre Bourdieu, the term *cultural production* redefined how the realms of literature and the arts are concrete economic practices, subject to questions of valuation, circulation, marketing, and consumption.[3] *Production* is also defined as that which is exaggerated, as when someone makes an unnecessarily heightened "production" out of something with relatively small importance. In what follows, we consider how material production in recent art is often cast in this more rhetorical sense of overblown proportion. *Production* has become an inflated term, we argue, in part because of contemporary

anxieties about fabrication and outsourcing (not least to factories in China), anxieties that Ai's installation brought to the fore.

Yet today's "outsourced" art has a wide range of historical precedents, many of which focus less on industrial procedures than on tapping in to already-existent microeconomies of exchange. Some even reverse the presumed power dynamic in which an all-powerful artist makes lowly "peasants" do his dirty work (per the *Sunflower Seeds* comment), and recruit those with political power to participate. Take Jeffery Vallance's punningly titled *Cultural Ties*: "Greetings from America. Enclosed is a necktie that belongs to me." So began the form letter that the artist sent to every world leader in 1979. The letter continued in a disarmingly earnest tone: "You may keep the necktie as a token of friendship. Could you please send me one of your personal neckties in exchange for the necktie that I sent you? The exchanging of these ties will help to strengthen the link between our cultures."

Though it might not have been immediately evident to his correspondents, Vallance was in fact initiating an artwork. His investment was modest: twenty dollars of used neckties, sourced from a local Goodwill Industries charity shop, plus postage.[4] But he hoped for a big return, and to his surprise, it worked. The artist received no fewer than fifty ties in the mail, among them the personal accouterments of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, King Hussein of Jordan, and the soon-to-be-toppled Shah of Iran. *Cultural Ties* also drew mass-media attention, outside the usual precincts of the art world—including a spot on *David Letterman* in 1983, on which occasion Vallance proudly wore King Hussein's tie and noted that the FBI had begun tracking his activities, "wanting to find out if I am a security risk factor."[5]

Outsourcing in art is often thought of as a simple matter—and one fraught with inherent imbalances. The artist comes up with an idea, and another person (usually someone with less political, material, and cultural capital) executes it. But as Vallance's work demonstrates, distributed production can be much more complicated than that. *Cultural Ties* began as an act of gift-giving, but it came into being through haphazard reciprocity. A large number of people participated in the making of the work, each operating half-blind. Vallance did not know what sort of responses he might get, and his collaborators (the assistants of world leaders who replied to his messages, the presumably low-level state officials who processed the thank-you letters, even the post-office employees who transmitted the correspondence) were unaware even of taking part in an art project.

Art today still negotiates global networks of power, and it does so through systems of production even more widely distributed than the one Vallance put into motion. The current context, of course, is different. As in so many other areas of art-making, artists today have much greater self-awareness when it comes to involving others in their work. *Cultural Ties* seems frankly naive in comparison with a recent work by the artist Martin John Callanan, entitled *Letters 2004–2006*. The premise was similar. Callanan sent a typed note to various political and religious leaders, reading only, "I respect your authority" or "When will it end?"[6] The responses he got are comparable to those Vallance elicited—mainly form letters, as well as a few personalized notes (usually either baffled, intrigued, or both). Yet if Vallance

extended an offer of universal friendship, Callanan instead addressed shadowy realms of power, expecting and getting no adequate reply. This shift from optimism to resignation captures a general change in tone when it comes to artistic production. In today's hypernetworked society, "cultural ties" are all too evident; connection itself has become a primary mechanism of late capital.

Some post-Marxist thinkers insist that one must look beyond material production to fully understand the realm of self-creation within capitalism (as in Jean Baudrillard's *Mirror of Production*).[7] From this perspective, it is perhaps more revealing to consider *Cultural Ties* as a forerunner not to so-called relational works, but rather to more physically robust kinds of outsourced fabrication. Obviously, the postal system is not the only extended system in which an artwork can be produced. Nor was Vallance even an early entrant in the exploration of distributed making. Already in the 1920s, the Hungarian-born artist Lázsló Moholy-Nagy created a series of "Telephone Paintings," enamel paintings on steel that featured abstract forms so simple that they could be ordered from a commercial sign painter over the phone. These conformed to the Constructivist aesthetic explored elsewhere in Moholy-Nagy's work, an aesthetic that became powerfully influential through his teaching at the Bauhaus and in Chicago. He dreamed of a completely populist art, an art that could be industrially manufactured, like cars or airplanes.[8]

There is no proof that fabricators actually made the "Telephone Paintings." Moholy-Nagy most likely produced them in his own studio. One might be inclined to dismiss this detail as irrelevant. The concept was clear enough; does it really matter if it was only hypothetical? It certainly does, for when it comes to outsourcing we are in the terrain of actual rather than notional "art work." Moholy-Nagy had hoped to equate his artistic labor with that of the proletariat. But the productive base is not so cooperative. When art fabrication did eventually move out of the studio and into the factory, something very nearly opposite occurred. The Constructivist dream had been a level playing field, in which everyone was involved in the making of art.[9] Instead, outsourced production has become a high-end specialist industry capable of ever more astounding feats of making, and hence ever higher levels of stratification.

The first company to focus exclusively on making art to order was founded by Donald Lippincott in Connecticut in 1966. Sculptors had long relied on casting specialists both inside and outside their own studios, just as photographers and printmakers had used commercial print shops. But Lippincott was not selling a defined service. His firm was more like a bespoke craft shop; customization was the norm. The business also had a commercial sideline, selling large-scale sculptures directly on an artist's behalf and lending works to exhibitions. Already in its early days, then, the fabrication business was more than a contracting service; it was a node within a network.

Barnett Newman's *Broken Obelisk* (designed in 1963 and first fabricated in 1967) is perhaps the best-known production of Lippincott's early years, featured heavily in the firm's own published history and on the cover of a 2007 special edition of *Artforum* about art and production.[10] Obelisks have been symbols of power since the first ones were erected in

ancient Egypt, and for American audiences, Newman's snapped-off version inevitably recalls the Washington Monument. Against the backdrop of political foment in the late 1960s, it would have read clearly as a symbol of fractured and inverted authority. But the work is also an apt symbol of the contradictions and possibilities of the fabrication business. Newman, of course, is mainly known as a painter. Most of his canvases consist of one or more vertical stripes ("zips," he called them) against a monochrome background. Conceptually, each zip functions as a "You are here" sign, a marker of the encounter between artist and viewer. The same is true of *Broken Obelisk*, which converges at a daringly small fulcrum where obelisk meets pyramid. The sheer scale and weight of the sculpture emphasize the effect—three tons of Cor-Ten steel meeting at one point along perfectly straight vectors, thanks to the technical skill of Lippincott's casting team. No wonder the Museum of Modern Art in New York chose it as the *axis mundi* of its new building.

Yet in the photo of *Broken Obelisk* out in Lippincott's yard, there are not one but *two* points of convergence. The effect is disorienting. Is this a twice-exposed photo? No, these are the original casts of the sculpture, identical except for the snow clinging to their slopes. The image at once contradicts the singularity of the sculpture and suggests the power of the fabricator. If a form can be made twice, it can be made as an indefinite series. Indeed, two further *Broken Obelisks* would eventually be made at Lippincott for institutional clients, one in 1969 and one in 2005 (the latter long after Newman's death but with the permission of his estate). In theory, there could be more. Even for this most existential of artists, then, fabrication loosens the relation between the original authorial concept and the finished work, bringing these two into alignment with the dictates of the exhibitionary complex.

It is no coincidence that serial art fabrication flourished at the same time that the depersonalized aesthetics of Minimalism and Conceptualism held sway in the 1960s and 1970s.[11] The expressionist tendencies of the preceding generation had placed a great emphasis on individual action and gesture—aspects of the artistic process that can't be left to others. But for the generation of the 1960s, personal touch was often expunged through careful planning. Donald Judd, for example, prioritized exact rendering of shapes and surfaces as a means to achieve an effect of forceful unity, or what his colleague Robert Morris referred to as "gestalt." Judd, too, spoke of ordering his sculptures over the telephone, but he and the other Minimalists were certainly not picking up where Moholy-Nagy left off. As the honed surfaces of Judd's metal and plastic sculptures make clear, outsourcing was not a way to democratize his work, but rather the contrary: a way to elevate production values.

To achieve the precise results he wanted, Judd worked with trusted fabricators, including the metal shops Milgo Bufkin and Bernstein Brothers and the carpenter Peter Ballantine. Often, seemingly crucial details were left unspoken. "Judd never stopped by," according to Ballantine. "It wasn't because the shop wasn't close. My shop was a block and a half away from his studio. It was so close that you could walk over and discuss the new pieces that you were thinking about in the rain without an umbrella. But you weren't running to ask, 'Should I use a darker grain of plywood?' That kind of stuff—the type of plywood, where to

cut the sheet, to a large extent the details of the joints—those were fabricator decisions. They were not Judd decisions."[12]

Newman's and Judd's recourse to outside workshops was unusual in the 1960s, but it become quite literally run-of-the-mill by the mid-1970s. Only a few years after Lippincott opened his doors as a specialist art fabricator, he already had plenty of competition. In 1971, Peter Carlson began making sculptures for other artists near Los Angeles, in the San Fernando Valley (where Jeffrey Vallance grew up; as he notes, the critic Dave Hickey has called the Valley "the place where authenticity comes to die").[13] Until its recession-induced closure in 2010, Carlson & Company was the most heavily capitalized art-fabrication company in the world. The workshop has memorably been described as "an art studio inside a paint shop inside a machine factory inside an airplane hanger inside a world-class museum" and "a sci-fi incubator for some kind of cyborg life form, only the aliens turn out to be artworks."[14] In its early years, Carlson executed projects for artists as various as Isamu Noguchi, Ellsworth Kelly, and Robert Rauschenberg. Latterly, the firm's best-known client was Jeff Koons, whose series of immaculate, immense, toylike objects entitled "Celebration" is perhaps the most challenging art-making project ever taken on by an outside contractor. Fittingly, the firm hired engineers from the Disney Corporation to get the job done. On the brink of closure, Carlson was in the thick of developing an even more prodigious (and, at the time of writing, still unrealized) project for Koons, a full-scale locomotive engine dangling from a crane, the fabrication costs of which have been estimated at 25 million dollars.

Though specialist giants like Lippincott and Carlson have tended to dominate the fabrication scene, there are generalists in the business as well. Treitel-Gratz (now Gratz Industries) and the aforementioned Milgo Bufkin make sculpture alongside architectural elements, designer furniture, and the like. Both firms existed as metal shops in New York City prior to World War II and got into the art business relatively late in their histories. Yet they produced some of the most iconic of postwar sculptures—such as Walter De Maria's seminal land artwork *Lightning Field*, for which Treitel-Gratz made the metal poles, and Robert Indiana's sculpture *LOVE*, several copies of which have been fabricated by Milgo. Similarly, the Germany-based glass manufacturer Schott works within a bewildering range of industries, from defense and pharmaceuticals to solar power and scientific research. Were it not for its high-tech capabilities, Roni Horn could never have made a sculpture like *Pink Tons* (2008), whose title aptly conveys the impression the work makes in person: an update on Minimalism in which obdurate steel is exchanged for the magical but massive effects of solid optical glass.

The mixed economy of such companies points to an important fact: the jurisdiction of fabricators begins and ends with manufacture. Generally speaking, these shops have no "house style," no artistic predilections. Fabricators may well make major aesthetic contributions, helping to determine material selection, color, construction, scale, and finish. They are no doubt status conscious and not shy about making their associations with celebrity artists known. But fabricators do not typically have the opportunity to pick and choose their clients, and they certainly do not profess to be arbiters of what makes good or

bad art. How could they, when they always work on commission? As production values have become increasingly central to the art scene, this professional neutrality has come to be a default mode of operation, shared to some extent by curators, dealers, galleries, museums, fairs, and even private collectors. As the challenges of making and installing work mount ever higher—in keeping with the rising tide of financial investment that has buoyed contemporary art since the 1980s—nearly everyone in the art business has taken on something of the fabricator's ambitious and exacting, but fundamentally indiscriminate, approach.

These effects are enhanced by geographic proliferation. This is one business where proximity still matters: no amount of digital renderings will replace a face-to-face consultation on the shop floor. So wherever you find artists in large numbers today, there are also bound to be art fabricators. London alone is home to three major providers: AB Foundry, MDM Props, and Mike Smith Studios. Each has come to the business through a different trajectory. AB Foundry began as a restoration-oriented metal-casting workshop. They can draw on their extensive experience in restoring Neoclassical sculpture when making one of Marc Quinn's depictions of the supermodel Kate Moss, twisted into the Buddha-like pose of a contortionist. The work speaks to contemporary celebrity culture, but both stylistically and productively it mimics nineteenth-century academic sculpture, which was typically made in large workshops, with the "master" artist providing only the original maquette.

MDM Props—which also makes work for Quinn—was founded by the sculptor Nigel Schofield and carries out projects for commercial, theatrical, and museum clients, as well as art stars. To visit its studio in South London is to feel an odd equivalence between projects that will eventually be categorized very differently. In one corner of the shop, you might see a monumental bronze casting for a blue-chip artist; in another, props for a play or even display furniture for a shopping mall. An uninformed viewer may not know which is which. The range of work is enormous, and one of the company's primary concerns is simply sourcing and retaining sufficiently skilled artisans. The team can expand to meet the needs of a specific project, be it simple carpentry, carving and painting photorealistic figures, or modeling miniature landscapes.

Megafabricators like MDM can pool resources and talent from anywhere they like, without being overly concerned about their own identity or its implications for their clients. This raises a sensitive point: many of the artisans who work for MDM are sculptors in their own right, who carry on an independent professional career when not "on the clock." Though the phenomenon is largely undocumented, the boundary between fabricator and artist is a permeable one. The hyperrealist sculptor Ron Mueck, for example, began his career as a puppeteer and prop and model maker, contributing to Jim Henson's 1986 film *Labyrinth* as both a performer and a craftsman. Conversely, London's best-known fabricator, Mike Smith, got his start as one of the emergent stars of the Young British Artist generation. Though he had some success as an artist, he was also a consummate craftsman and frequently took on jobs for others, including Damien Hirst—for whom he made vitrines designed to hold hundreds of gallons of formaldehyde and sliced-up animals.

In 1995, Smith decided to concentrate his career solely on fabrication. He has gone on to make some of the most technically ambitious recent British artworks, including Rachel Whiteread's project for the Fourth Plinth on Trafalgar Square, entitled *Untitled Monument*—a direct copy of the existing plinth in transparent polyurethane resin, which was set atop the original upside down, creating a watery mirror image. This ghostly echo of imperial grandeur is possessed of a powerful poetic content, but in press coverage of the work this was often downplayed in favor of sheer physical magnitude: the sculpture weighed nearly twelve tons; the mold took four months to make; it cost a quarter of a million pounds; it was the largest resin object ever made. Ironically, given the work's subtle critique of monumentality, these impressive statistics, as well as the herculean efforts made by Smith and his team to overcome the difficulty of the making, became the principle discourse around the work.

Of the various issues that surround outsourced fabrication, this is undoubtedly one of the most sensitive: that other people's making will take precedence over the artist's ideas and intent. Though he has always been crystal clear that he is the fabricator, not the author, of works made in his studio, Smith inadvertently touched that nerve in 2003 when he took the unprecedented step of publishing a monograph about his work.[15] (Even now, the only other fabrication firm to have published a book about its activities is Lippincott, and that is mainly about the early years, safely distant by a few decades.) Though fabrication has become a less closely guarded secret in the decade since, it is still difficult to get access to details of the process, much less the finances involved. In addition, it raises questions about who exactly is doing the work, how such laborers are compensated, how their safety conditions are monitored, and who gets the privilege to call the finished product theirs.

These questions of privilege are often explicitly asked of artists who grapple with global economic injustice within the current manufacturing landscape. In her piece *Pulso y Martillo* (*Pulse and Hammer*), 2011, Margarita Cabrera, a Mexican-born, US-based artist who has continually engaged with questions of fabrication and the ethics of outsourcing, made a "production" out of production—that is, she theatricalized and made public one method of making. For this piece, a group of performers (mostly immigrant students in Southern California) were enlisted to pound sledgehammers onto large copper sheets. The resultant sound was resonant and percussive—reminiscent of noise music or the traditional procedures of handcrafted copper work, and also of the assembly line. Here Cabrera is commenting on the often invisible labors of workers along the US-Mexico border, whose bodily efforts in maquiladoras are obscured by the processes of commodity exchange. Instead of resulting in a materialized, tangible product, however, Cabrera utilizes what Claire Bishop has referred to as "delegated performance," a form of performance in which others are asked to legibly embody their identities.[16]

Why does outsourced production—and performance—remain such a sensitive topic? Is it one part of a wider economic crisis within the Global North, in which the closing of local manufacturing plants has led to a widespread fear that all making will soon be outsourced—art included? Is it that the public still expects work to be made by the artist

him- or herself? A century after Duchamp, that seems unlikely. Is the concern that authorship might be ascribed to fabricators, instead of artists? Again, probably not. Or is it the concern that the potency of fabrication has become so great that it trumps conception? This is a problem because, as Greg Hilty (curator at the Lisson Gallery in London) says, "it's still about the artist, for good or ill. The market needs a single figure, an artist's signature." We are a long way off from a situation in which the authorship of art is apportioned out to all parties involved in the making of a work, with each credited in the manner of a Hollywood film. (Some artists do credit their fabricators, but this remains a personal choice, not an expectation.) And perhaps that day will never come. As Hilty puts it, despite the growth of the fabrication sector, "art isn't an industry like film is. It's very bespoke, very specific."[17]

It is this specificity—or perhaps a better word would be *specification*—that most defines success in the new world of outsourced making. The artists who derive the most benefit are those who can fold the story of the making into the very substance of their work, even when they are not the makers. Figures like Hirst, Koons, and Quinn have, with some justice, been criticized for overindulging in production values. Each of them operates at the scale and budget of a Hollywood spectacular. But so far, this has not resulted in an erosion of their artistic authorship. On the contrary: when Matthew Barney (who has actually produced several full-length films) had a retrospective at the Guggenheim in 2003, his artistic persona was hardly diluted. Rather, he seemed to absorb the museum itself as one more prop in his bizarre and byzantine narrative of sex, technology, art history, and Masonic symbolism. He is another example of an artist who has mastered outside fabrication as a medium in its own right, which can be manipulated as surely as paint or clay can.

For artists, fabrication is fraught with difficulties, as Ai's *Sunflower Seeds* demonstrated. The logic of the readymade rests on the assumption that authorship can take any form, flowing unimpeded through new structures. But like the resistance in an electrical system, the realities of production impose friction on the process of making. The artists who navigate the new sea of possibilities most successfully are those who know exactly what they want, and are also generous in getting it, trusting their collaborators and affording them scope to deliver a significant quotient of the finished work. As the art system comes to rely on ever more sophisticated systems of outsourcing, we can expect the complexities of collaboration to come increasingly to the fore. For now, fabrication is still a backstage activity. In retrospect, however, it may well become clear that it was where the main action has been all along.

Notes

1 Ai's piece was quickly cordoned off to viewers (who originally walked among and over the seeds) due to the potentially hazardous dust they kicked up.

2 Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," *New Left Review* 1, no. 62 (July–August 1970): p. 85.

3 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. and intro. Randall Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

4 Bob Greene, “Necktie Diplomacy,” *Pittsburgh Press*, September 5, 1981, p. B3.

5 Jeffrey Vallance, interview by David Letterman, *Late Night with David Letterman*, 1983, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15mGxWJpkDY (accessed August 2, 2012).

6 See http://greyisgood.eu/letters/book (accessed August 2, 2012).

7 Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, trans. Mark Poster (New York: Telos Press, 1975 [orig. 1973]).

8 Louis Kaplan, “The Telephone Paintings: Hanging Up Moholy,” *Leonardo* 26, no. 2 (April, 1993): pp. 165–68.

9 For a detailed look at the Constructivist (and, later, Productionist) moment, see Christina Kiaer, *Imagine No Possessions: The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).

10 Jonathan Lipincott, *Large Scale: Fabricating Sculpture in the 1960s and 1970s* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010).

11 For more on 1960s and 1970s visions of artistic labor in relation to fabrication, see Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

12 Madeleine Schwartz, “Art in Hand: A Conversation with Lawrence Voytek and Peter Ballantine,” *Harvard Advocate*, Fall 2009, http://www.theharvardadvocate.com/content/notes-21-south-street-art-hand-conversation-lawrence-voytek-and-peter-ballantine (accessed August 4, 2012).

13 Vallance, interview.

14 Jori Finkel, “At the Ready When Artists Think Big,” *New York Times*, April 27, 2008, AR11; Guy Raz, “An Art Factory Goes Out of Business,” National Public Radio, May 30, 2010, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=127239760 (accessed August 4, 2012). On Carlson & Co., among other fabricators, see also Michelle Kuo, “Industrial Revolution,” *Artforum* 46, no. 2 (October 2007): pp. 306–15.

15 Patsy Craig, *Making Art Work: The Mike Smith Studio* (London: Trolley Books, 2003).

16 Claire Bishop, “Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity,” in *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London and New York: Verso, 2012), pp. 219–39.

17 Glenn Adamson, interview with Greg Hilty, Lisson Gallery, August 21, 2012.

“ along the way, we would progress from an object to its image, which seems to us a useful allegory for the way in which things become their own shadows, peel off, and circulate by themselves.”

A Note on the Time

Dexter Sinister

The time right now is 2011 Feb 18 3:34 PM. Have a look at the computer on which you are reading this text. What time does it say? Certainly it's different. These two times could never be precisely alike—each is a specific POINT, and no two are ever exactly the same.

Both originate from the same source. Mine, the time according to the computer on which I'm writing this, comes courtesy a networked time server maintained by Apple Computer and named, simply, time.apple.com. This external beacon not only commands the official time here on my MacBook but also synchronizes its local clock with those of Apple users worldwide (laptops, desktops, phones, pods, pads, who-knows-what's-nexts). It's easy enough to think of time.apple.com as a master clock, but actually it is itself only a network of time machines, a collection of counters comprising a circuit of servers—computers named time1.apple.com, time2.apple.com, time3, time4, time5, time6, and time7. (The server my laptop is using right now, time4, is located at 20400 Stevens Creek Boulevard in Cupertino, California, just a few blocks away from Apple's appropriate corporate address, 1 Infinite Loop.)

All of these servers communicate and agree what time it is at time.apple.com. But this covers only North and South America, and also must synchronize itself with time.asia.apple.com and time.europe.apple.com to provide a unified answer. All this close coordination, communicated over distance and time, is governed by Network Time Protocol (NTP), a set of time-sharing conventions developed in advance of the World Wide Web in 1985, by University of Delaware professor David Mills. It is one of the oldest, and most essential, Internet protocols.

NTP runs as a Ponzi scheme. Each layer in the scheme organizes a set of time servers, which both receive the correct time from the layer above (each layer is properly called a "stratum" in the protocol) and are responsible for dispersing the correct time to computers in the next layer down. At each level, more and more computers are connected.

The protocol works by sending a message between two points on a network containing two bits of information: 1. what time it is now at the source, and 2. how long it took to transmit this message to its receiver. Simple addition tells you what time it is on the receiving computer (according to the sender). So what time is it, precisely? Multiply this transaction through the layer cake of millions of computers redundantly organized around the Network

Time Protocol, and you'll begin to see a collective consensus emerge that passes for accuracy.

Turns out that in order to send a MESSAGE between two POINTS, it's essential that the two points AGREE on what time it is; otherwise, the communication is jumbled. A quick thought gymnastic confirms. You live in Los Angeles and I live in New York. We settle on Eastern Standard Time; your clock tells you it is 2:34 PM, and mine tells me it is 2:32 PM, and you tell me, "Hey! In one minute the eclipse is going to start, you'd better run outside right now to see it (don't forget your sunglasses)!" and I drop what I'm doing to rush right outside. I see nothing. I'm bummed. I write back—"Nothing doing out there, I must've missed it." You reply, "But the eclipse is scheduled for 2:33 pm! You probably came in too early!" And I respond, "I'd already missed it then. It's 2:34 now." "No you haven't, it's in one minute still!" In the midst of this tedious exchange, surely the moon has passed in front of the sun and everyone in question has missed the party. What a misunderstanding!

These kinds of missteps multiply exponentially over a network, and it should be blindingly clear how critical agreement on the correct time is now, in our intimately connected present. For communication, then, perhaps time is more of a medium than a measure. If we are going to be able to say anything to one another, we'd better start by agreeing on what time it is.

A few months ago now, we were invited to suggest a design format for both the immediate publicity materials and the eventual catalogue of *Counter-Production*, an exhibition at the Generali Foundation from September 7 to December 16, 2012. And the text you are reading right now is part of the Portable Document Format catalogue that came out of that invitation. Let's scroll back a bit and revisit the original proposal we sent to the curators:

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Wed, 11 Jul 2012 11:31:46 -0400

hello Diana and Ilse,

so we have an idea -- it has morphed a bit from where we were, which i suppose is not surprising. it now is no longer a text that we insert but rather more of an operation. it should be easy enough to realize. we propose for the run of this exhibition from 7 September through 12 December 2012 that you flip the city of Vienna, all of its residents, every building, chair, train, tree, and so on except for one particular item.

the one thing that should not be flipped vertically is the banner that announces this exhibition and spans the Wiedner Hauptstrasse. this should be left in its original form. we think leaving this the right way around will serve as a clue to the city's residents and any visitors as

to why the whole place has been rotated to produce a mirror-image of itself.

once you have hung the banner and flipped Vienna, we would like to have a photographer make a picture of it hanging in situ. then we would take this image and flip it vertically, so that the words "Counter-Production" are easily read once more. this photograph would serve as our contribution to the exhibition, hung at the entrance, printed and mounted at whatever size makes sense in order to clearly title rest of the show. of course we are happy to talk about how this might work more exactly.

as you can tell, what we are suggesting is a fairly elaborate setup in the real world (producing the banner, then flipping Vienna) in order to produce this one image. along the way, we would progress from an object to its image, which seems to us a useful allegory for the way in which things become their own shadows, peel off, and circulate by themselves.

at the close of "Counter-Production" you should feel free to return the city to its original orientation.

let us know what you think,

DS

--

The proposal was accepted. But before we return to it, let’s back out for a minute and look again at the time reported in the first sentence of this text. This time was handed down through the cascade of networked time servers described previously, but where did the original “time” come from, and how was it set?

In the top tier of the Network Time Protocol, one computer is hooked directly to one extraordinarily accurate clock. Currently, this is the cesium fountain atomic clock running at the National Institutes of Standards and Technology laboratory in Boulder, Colorado, named NIST-F1. Atomic clocks rely on the fuzzy logics of quantum mechanics. As electrons orbit the nucleus of an atom, rather than winding down gradually in energy like a pendulum, they lose energy in discrete chunks, at which point the circling electron jumps down to the next closest orbit, producing something like a very, very, very faint click. These steps are consistent for any one atom, and this quantity is its resonant frequency. The resonant frequency of the cesium atom, for example, is 9,192,631,770 hertz (or cycles per second). And in a twist of recursive identity, the NIST has set the official standard for one second to be equal to 9,192,631,770 vibrations of the cesium atom. The United States’ primary time and frequency standard is set then by NIST-F1 and is accurate to within one second every sixty million years.

So you can now more or less assume that the time stamped in the first line of this text does rather accurately reflect when the first sentence was written.

We'd all agree that 2011 Feb 18 3:34 PM identifies one specific POINT in time, a forever unrepeatable instant that disappears as quickly as we can stamp it. Eighteenth-century empirical philosopher David Hume would certainly concur. Working from the center of the Scottish Enlightenment, Hume described his particular, uncompromised version of empiricism. He asserted that everything we know or can know about the world arrives to us only through direct sensory experience. Nothing exists outside our own practical encounter with it as we move through the world. Further, he suggests that any sensible experience is composed of a single indivisible sensory building block that is marked by the limits of our perception. If you can't experience it, it does not exist. Hume most certainly was an essentialist.

While American empirical philosopher William James built many of his ideas on Hume's scaffolds, he also rejected Hume's reductive essentialism. In James's second-wave or "radical" empiricism, although knowledge about the world still arrived through direct experience, James dismissed what he called Hume's "atomism," or the idea that this experience was ever assembled from smaller elementary blocks. James was, instead, a "Gestaltist"—a totalist who, although insisting on the incrementalism of building the world piece by piece, also understood that any one experience was whole and complete in and of itself, neither equivalent to nor reducible into any constituent bits.

So if we could query Hume on our time marked in the first line of this text, he would identify it as one irreducible moment. However, ask James and he would say that this POINT is really more of a DURATION. Time is like that—both point and duration. This is how it can bend and warp. A week, a second, a season: all are specific and discrete, but none are the same. The present can be cut to any number of lengths, from a single vibration of a cesium atom to the three-month run of a contemporary art exhibition.

You will have already noticed that the PDF you are reading has (like any text) a specific format. Why does it look like it does? How did come to be that way? Let's take a look at another e-mail sent to explain the design of this *Counter-Production* catalogue:

--

Thur, 2 Aug 2012 12:43:44 -0700

dear Katharina etc.,

first we should say how pleased we are with how everything's going so far, that the publicity ideas are being implemented as we write. very excited to see the upended material on the street. what we want to do here is write some more about our thinking on the catalog. this is based on your response to our first email about it, as well as our thinking

and discussing since.

to try and make things clearer, we'll elaborate on our thinking behind our proposal that you use your existing template for the entire catalog. so: we propose that that we/you simply take the format you typically use for the press releases -- the single column of text, positioned slightly to the right side of the page, with a useful left-hand margin. we further suggest to keep all the header and footer information intact -- to use the "title" area for the running heads of individual essays, and to leave all the general Generali information at the bottom as is. as for images, we propose larger images as filling single pages, working to the same margins as the text, and smaller thumbnail images (as described in your previous outline of the probable contents) positioned alongside the text in that left-hand margin.

this is not a big deal: your PR page template is simply a completely workable format for the material at hand, and no doubt we'd end up proposing something similar if we were designing a "regular book" "from scratch". we admit, though, that given the nature of the show, it seems especially interesting and apt to repurpose what you already have, something you're all already familiar with. it's also hopefully an expedient proposition given that you asked us quite late, so we're already running out of time. finally, you could consider it a kind of rebooting of your own stationery, reinstituting the original standards set up in those templates that have doubtless become degraded over time as they get passed on through generations of staff and software.

any elements we haven't mentioned -- footnotes, endnotes, etc. -- ought to follow logically from the base formatting, i.e. probably the same type, just smaller, and in an obvious position, at an obvious width, dictated by what is already in place.

we also described the idea of laser-printing these template-set pages as and when they are produced in batches during the run of the show -- which you then suggested would occur ideally 3 (?) times up until the end of the year; and further, that at the close of the show, these parts could be assembled and bound as a book.

it might seem that we could essentially work in the way we're suggesting (producing along the way, releasing PDFs), then simply turn the accumulated pages into a so-called "normal" book in the end, meaning offset-litho printed in a large batch on fancier paper, etc. now for sure that would be possible, but again it's not something that particularly interests us, nor does it seem particularly in tune with the show. what DOES interest us is when the process and the result

combine into a single tangible object -- which is why we're emphasizing that this idea IS the book, not an excuse for one that might exist by some other means.

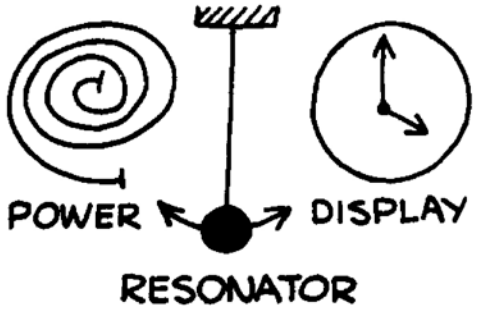
best,

DS

--

Again, the proposal was accepted, and things moved on. But let's double back once more to the time stamped in the first sentence: 2011 Feb 18 3:34 PM. And also, to the time as it stands right *now*: 2012 Nov 14 9:28 AM. We'll agree that the difference between these two points describes a length, but how can we measure it? Our meter stick won't do. Time is nothing until it is counted, and for that we need a clock.

In *From Sundials to Atomic Clocks: Understanding Time and Frequency*, James Jespersen and Jane Fitz-Randolph describe keeping time as only a matter of counting the ticks of any regular, cyclical action. They also describe the constituent parts of a "clock" (or more properly a "clock system"). Schematically, it looks like this:



First, you need a device that can produce a periodic phenomenon (for example, a pendulum). This is the RESONATOR. Next, you'll have to sustain the periodic motion by feeding it POWER (for example, the wound coil of a mechanical wristwatch). Finally, you need a means for counting, accumulating, and rendering the ticks of the resonator. This is the DISPLAY (for example, a watch face and arms). Together, these three pieces define a clock. But of course to be useful—to measure a length—our clock must be RUNNING. With all of these conditions met, we can now simply determine the duration between writing the first sentence of this text and editing this one: 475 days, 22 hours, 54 minutes. And this delivers one final paradox: Time can only be measured by MOVING.

Once the publicity was installed in the city, and the first PDF installment of the *Counter-Production* catalogue ready to be released, one final question remained: what to put on its cover, and on the covers of the two subsequent PDF collections?

--

Tues, 4 Sept 2012 20:52:00 -0800

first, please tell whoever's making the documents that they're typesetting very well. then, some responses:

what we'd like to propose for the cover is a sort of reconfiguration of the idea sent in the previous mail, which seems to make more sense (to us at least) now. first, the front cover image will be the upside-down shot of the banner, the same one being framed for the show. simple enough. but then we'd also like to re-photograph the same location from the same position with the same photographer/camera/lens etc. each time you publish a new batch. these cover images would then obviously be the-same-but-different, and so reflect the fact that this thing is being produced and assembled piecemeal *over time*. we're assuming you're still roughly imagining adding to the stack of essays something like once a month for the run of the show -- so perhaps another 2 or maybe 3 times.

if you agree to this in principle, it keeps things very simple in the immediate future, as we just use the same b/w street picture already photographed as the first front page (with those standard margins used for a "full page picture"), and we can worry about the rest later. it’s crucial to us, though, that -- assuming you think this is a good/workable idea in principle -- you commit at this point to doing this for the future installments.

--

and you replied, the following day:

--

Wed, 5 Sep 2012 11:08:41 +0200

dear S and D,

thank you for the tiff. yes, it makes sense to use this image as a cover. concerning the other two covers: sure, it would be possible to use same-but-different images for the other covers, but maybe we

can talk about the covers for PDFs 2 and 3 later and see whether we still find a different, more interesting solution. in any case, let's go with the upside-down image as a cover for PDF 1. Shall we just save the tiff as a PDF?

i'll get back to you later today with Luke's and Diana's texts.

Best, Katharina

--

to which we elaborated and expanded:

--

Wed, 5 Sep 2012 14:25:52 -0700

dear all,

okay, good on the cover then. we hope you don't mind this seemingly endless back-and-forth, but:

our interest in "forcing" you to work to this template is in order to push both ourselves and yourselves to think *in advance* what's going to happen later, and to try to tailor conditions NOW that will play out in an interesting way THEN. in a sense, this means formulating some rules and sticking with them as part of the "game", if you like. only it's not a game in the sense of being funny or facile, rather that the upfront commitment to this idea guarantees the generation of *a particular kind of form* -- a form that might be considered "off" or "weird" or actually something more like *so straight that it actually turns weird again*. and ultimately all THAT isn't merely "off" or "weird" for its own sake, but strictly in the service of engagement, i.e. engaging a reader to be interested in the first place, as well as to chime with the theme of the show.

as regards those future cover images, then, we say all that only to emphasize that FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW we don't intend to conceive of this notion of the same/different picture as a "placeholder" idea in advance of a "better" one. we just think it's a good idea! now again, that doesn't necessarily mean YOU have to think it is, but what IS important to us is that, for the reasons outlined above, we either agree on it now or not at all. this might seem churlish, or even childish, but it's important that you at least

understand WHY we think it's a good idea.

two significant aspects of this book/catalog are (1) that it's serialized, that's to say, *produced over time*, and (2) that it's specific to the institution (using its templates, producing it in-house) and the show (experimenting with a *way* of producing, however modest). as such, having you take these same-but-different photos of the street outside the institution as winter encroaches emphasizes this particularity: you're seeing a local scene develop over time, that scene self-reflexively *contains* the title and venue, and we're pushing the responsibility of making of the thing (in this case the image) back on you. all this yields a form. THIS is the "graphic design," if you like -- precisely the conditions that create it. as such, it's kind of anathema to then consider things in terms of more regular "images for covers" and so on. the "image" is the idea. it’s a loop, intrinsically.

please don't take this as arrogance, only as wanting to make sure you understand the point before disagreeing with it, or otherwise declining it. simply put, there's no way of knowing whether these things have been understood when working at such a distance, halfway round the world; and this precarious situation is only multiplied by working with four people with different levels of authority, involvement, and attention -- not to mention different time zones. so these emails are an exercise in damage limitation as much as anything else.

and really: it's going great. shame we can't make the opening.

best,

DS

“ At stake is how to exhaust an idea. How will this idea adapt to its circulation? Will it survive its repetition, its stuttering? Will it devalue? Is the rupture desirable? How long can you dance before collapsing out of exhaustion?”

How long can I dance?

Lili Reynaud-Dewar

Disgust

I went to a café to read the newspaper this morning. I felt I had to stop staring at the computer screen, I wanted to distance myself from this stuttering attitude of checking e-mails and being repeatedly distracted from what I should do: write this text for the *Counter-Production* digital publication. Simultaneously, I felt disgusted by the fact that I had hardly received any e-mails or phone calls. I was experiencing tiredness and frustration, a somehow usual contemporary combination of symptoms that anyone addicted (to whatever) knows all too well. Usually, I would read the news from my mobile and e-mail a selection of two or three articles to four or five of my friends. But today, I felt tired by the whole idea of selection and interconnectivity, and wanted to keep my relation with the news vague and private (even if this privatization would occur in a café and wouldn't last for long—as you will read very shortly).

In the newspaper, there was a short article on Robert Walser's correspondence: the French translation has just come out. In a letter to Frida Mermet (a friend of his sister's and laundress in a psychiatric hospital), Walser compared some of his writings to "little dancers dancing until complete attrition, and collapsing out of exhaustion."

Pertinence

At the beginning of my conversations with Diana Baldon and Ilse Lafer, I evoked the idea of using existing work from the Generali Foundation's collection, as a way to maybe not produce something, but instead put something already there (in the collection) into circulation (through the exhibition). Something that would be emblematic of counterproductive "manners" but could also function as an ambiguous conveyor/mirror of my work, both revealing and contradicting it, or at least undermining some of its intentions. I also sought to overlap with and mess up the curators' propensity to select, compose, combine. At this point, the substitution of my work with Adrian Piper's seemed like a good way to be counterproductive, but it was in fact a disciplined and applied way of responding to a context. Too aptly pertinent to be counterproductive? The work I wanted to put into circulation through counter-production was Piper's *Untitled Performance at Max's Kansas City, NYC*, 1970.

Self-privatization

The photographic documentation available on Generali's website shows Piper walking through Max's Kansas City wearing a white T-shirt with long sleeves, a black eye mask, and black gloves covering her forearms. Young people seating at a table drinking coffee take a semi-amused glance at her. She looks like an apparition or ghost. Her T-shirt is too white, slightly fluorescent; it glows, like that glass of milk in *Suspicion* (1941): Hitchcock famously installed a lightbulb behind it so it would look surreal. In the text accompanying the photographs, Piper describes the work as a refusal to be "absorbed" or "co-opted" by "an Art Environment, replete with Art Consciousness and Self-Consciousness about Art Consciousness," namely: Max's Kansas City. In order to do so, she seeks to "privatize [her] own consciousness as much as possible, by depriving it of sensory input from that environment; to isolate it from all tactile, aural, and visual feedback"; and to present herself "as a silent, secret, passive object."

Wikipedia describes Max's Kansas City as "a hangout of choice for artists and sculptors of the New York School, like John Chamberlain, Robert Rauschenberg and Larry Rivers whose presence attracted hip celebrities and the jet set." A long list of famous Conceptual artists who were at Max's Kansas City (from Carolee Schneemann to Joseph Kosuth, Dan Graham, Lee Lozano, and so on) completes the description… but Piper is nowhere mentioned. I conclude that she has successfully avoided her co-optation by Max's Kansas City's "collective Art Self-Conscious Consciousness."

I like Piper's gesture of "privatizing" herself in a public space. Her hermetic physical presence conveying a determination to disrupt, divert, and resist the informal flow of production and information generated by the "hangout." Her "privatized consciousness" has been circulating through the bar, between its tables and its customers. I like that she objectifies herself as a means for combining her desire to be critically present with her reluctance to be part of the New York art scene embodied by Max's Kansas City (which is an institution of some sort). Piper offers her own body as an inverted and sterile participant, proudly wearing its contradictions as a glowing piece of cloth, overexposing her reluctance to "belong," "share," "accept," "join"…

Piper's piece resonates in a moment when everyone feels that the ideas of connection, network, information, fluidity, the apparition and circulation of artists, of their bodies within this seemingly ever more stretchable, responsive art world, are reaching some critical threshold. The symptom is a palpable mood of intellectual exhaustion.

Adaptation

Lending oneself to the conditions I just evoked, alternatively atmospheric and physical, is what artists currently do or have to do with. Whatever we invent in order to adapt to them, those conditions are around, somewhere, when we make work, exhibit it, discuss it, sell it

(or not). It is not as if the strategies and tactics we monopolize to counter these conditions are producing immediate effects on a general basis, effects that can be instantly shared and enjoyed by everyone. Those strategies and tactics produce, as we know, effects that can be enjoyed on a localized, fragmented, and sometimes delayed basis. Those effects may apply to just our work, or to a particular group show, or to a particular group of artist friends/peers, or maybe to a particular period of time, or even to a moment, or even to an instant, which does not yet exist or will soon be obsolete and ask again (and again) for a whole new set of adaptation, counteraction, and modulation strategies and tactics. And this can prove to be tiring.

Degradation

Over the summer preceding the opening of *Counter-Production*, I finally realized (or was subtly brought to realize) that it was problematic to propose a piece by Adrian Piper in the context of a show where my work was called on, mostly because it was a way to co-opt a work of hers precisely motivated by a resistance to co-optation. The work presented in *Counter-Production* would have to be mine: my own work I can co-opt. I would co-opt something that was not an existing piece or a new one produced for the show, but a repeat, a stutter, and—*yes!*—a form (or tactic, or strategy) of adaptation of my work to the context of *Counter-Production*.

By repeating and adapting a previous work I wanted to attain a degradation of the original content of the work. A transformation should occur, not necessarily under productive or generative terms, but rather toward a trajectory of blurring, loss, distortion, and finally exhaustion of both quality and message. When you compress or change the encoding of a video in order to make it travel or conform to a new reading device, you often end up with a deteriorated format. In its efforts to adapt and to circulate, the video has lost something (at least this was still true recently), or maybe it has just been tired, worn.

Fatigue

If in most instances, as in Piper's piece, counter-production can be identified with a pause in production, a strike, a refusal or retreat from work, a way of containing the energy required to put the whole production machine in motion, what about deliberately misspent energy and the fatigue that ensues?

In mechanics and material science, fatigue is the progressive and localized structural damage that occurs when a material is subjected to cyclic loading. Fatigue occurs when a material is subjected to repeated loading and unloading. If the loads are above a certain threshold, small cracks will begin to form. Eventually, a crack will reach a critical size, and the structure will suddenly fracture. My boyfriend is an electrochemist. He specializes in metal corrosion, so I had no need to search Wikipedia for this definition. "It is the repetition of a similar movement that engenders the fatigue which results into fracture," he explains in

an e-mail sent from his shared office in the company he works for. I regularly interrupt his working time with my e-mails, sent from the improvised and precarious desk I have installed for myself in his apartment. I moved into his flat over summer and feel I am still camping rather that really settling. But maybe this feeling of instability is also due to the fact that I work irregularly, that I don't have a fixed schedule. Sometimes during the day, at any time of the day, I send my boyfriend newspaper articles from my mobile. I have to copy the entire text into the e-mail's body, because if I just send him the links he cannot open them. At least, not until five o'clock. During working hours, the company blocks access to most websites for its employees.

Getting back to fatigue considered as a counterproductive tactic, it must be addressed in the most literal and physical way possible, that is to say with a body.

Repetition

The work for *Counter-Production* gradually came to be a "repeat" of a series of videos I had made in a studio I was renting in the summer of 2011.

At that time, every night (so that I wouldn't risk meeting the other artists working in the building), I was in the studio mimicking some choreographies of Josephine Baker, the best I could, my body covered with dark makeup. In order to perform these imitations, I would watch again and again the few films that were made of Baker performing. I would then fragment her choreographies into short bits, dancing without any music, repeating and repeating just one symptomatic movement in silence until I got tired with it. The videos were edited as successions of short sequences of those short bits. In the end I had three videos, composed of different takes and choreographic imitations, like an abstract collection of Baker's repertoire.

The following winter, I danced this dance again in Magasin in Grenoble, on a Sunday, when nobody from the art center would be there working. This was during the installation of my solo exhibition, that specific "production" time between two exhibitions, a kind of private time when the public dimension of the institution is on hold. I did not film the dance, I photographed it. Because it was so cold and I was only taking photographs, I just danced for a few hours. The show's opening was five days later. I chose and exhibited ten pictures out of the many I had made in the freezing art center.

At the end of the summer in 2012, I went to the Generali Foundation and danced again. This time, I was filming, and the plan was to make a series of four videos. I danced for many hours over the course of a weekend during the installation period. While I was dancing, Ilse was working in her office above the exhibition space, Diana was writing her text for *Counter-Production* in her Viennese flat, Tom was in a studio somewhere in the foundation's building: my performance actually chased him away from the exhibition spaces where he had to build things for *Counter-Production*. Of course, yes, indeed, why not, we work during weekends. In order to be ready on time for the show, the videos were edited

shortly after the weekend, as successions of short sequences of those short bits. They were also drastically compressed in order to travel and be transferred and adapted to those monitors so emblematic of the Generali Foundation. In the end, I had four videos, edited according to where the dancing was performed, looking like a melancholic, erratic tour of the foundation empty of any exhibition, and thus deprived of its function.

One month later, I had a show in a Swiss gallery, Karma International. The weekend preceding the show, I went to Zurich and danced in the gallery for two days, including nighttime. I covered the windows of the gallery, located in some small shopping mall, with curtains. In order to be ready on time for the show, the videos were quickly edited, as successions of short sequences of those short bits, organized according to the speed, precision, or approximation of the various steps, the energy or the exhaustion perceptible in the moves. In the end, I had three videos composed of different takes and choreographic imitations, yet another abstract collection of Baker's repertoire.

Devaluation

Now I find myself with ten videos and ten photographs, each being an edition of three. So that's thirty videos and thirty photographs of the same "series." The videos and photographs all being available for sale and for transfer to private or public collections, their number brings into question the problem of their value. It is true in the context of the art economy that artists might sometimes sell more of what they repeat again and again (the signature-work scenario). It is also true that most collectors are keen to collect the same art or even the same work as other collectors. True again is the fact that value can in some instances be independent of the rarity of the art object. But it is also true that rarity matters. And it is true that the value of an artwork is independent of the labor, the time, the energy, that was put into it by the artist.

Now here is an hypothesis: could it be that the organized repetition (which may or may not come to an end soon) of that dance in various areas of art production, and the subsequent multiplication of the resulting formats, would engender their own devaluation? Am I, while I develop this project (and not knowing when it should end), degrading the commercial value of my work, thus combining two diverging trajectories: the one of the projects' development and the one of the works' commercial value? Would I have put in place a system of countervalue applicable specifically to this project? Would it be that the more I repeat this dance, the more devalued the products of my labor, my energy, my physical and intellectual investment, will be? It is an interesting possibility when one wants to address counter-production, although maybe a painful one, too.

Rupture

Dancing from one area of art production to the other (from the studio to the public institution to the private foundation to the commercial gallery and so on, this cycle not

being organized hierarchically but opportunistically), I seek to perform an unusual kind of institutional critique: fidgeting, unstable, ridiculous even. With this role of the naked dancer who infiltrates and occupies “the institution,” like a Trojan horse, I present otherness, the same kind of otherness Piper overexposes when she wants to be a “silent, secret, passive object… deprived of sensory input” in a very public place. Dancing from one area of art production to the other, I enact a melancholic homelessness, reminiscent of Baker’s unsettlement but also of art’s homelessness itself. This critique, this melancholy, and this otherness come together with unavoidable restlessness.

At stake is how to exhaust an idea. How will this idea adapt to its circulation? Will it survive its repetition, its stuttering? Will it devalue? Is the rupture desirable? How long can you dance before collapsing out of exhaustion?

“ if we return back to this playground, *wenn wir zu dem spielplatz zurückkehren*, it will probably be now again, *wird es womöglich wieder jetzt sein*, then called then, *dann heißt es damals*.”

collective-conversations

Ricardo Basbaum

As its title implies, the *collective-conversations* are organized as group workshops where all the participants are invited to join in—the dynamics involves a constant shift between talking, writing, and reading; the voices are taken as they may sound, with differences in language, pronunciation, tone, etc., but also in terms of what anyone have to say to one another and to the group about the topics we propose to discuss.

I've been organizing the *collective-conversations* around three outcomes, which function together and occupy spaces that directly touch one another, but have particular and complementary requirements: (1) a document is produced, in the form of a script, comprising the text of the conversations and instructions for its reading; this document may be published anytime; (2) a public reading is enacted, where the script is performed in front of an audience; the reading unfolds according to a dynamic that includes refrains, choruses, dialogues, parallel and simultaneous readings, translations, improvisations, etc., following the script's instructions; (3) the reading is recorded, resulting in a sound piece; this recorded audio might return to the installation as a discursive sonic layer that mediates future access to the work.

As a group-dynamics process, the collective action produces a strong move to the outside, making it possible to encounter a space proper to the group, where the actual actions can take place—this particular spaciality lasts as long as the group spends time and acts together, writing, reading, performing. It is a property of such singular common spaces to vanish right after the actions end—it might be said that it is as volatile as it is intense. However, a transformation has occurred, one may feel, as there is no return to the departure point, only the possibility to go somewhere else, ahead.

In the particular context of the *Counter-Production* project, the collective-conversation workshop is intended to establish a direct connection with my two works in the exhibition: a diagram around *local/global* relations and a compilation (1999–2009) of nine videos of the *me–you: choreographies, games and exercises* series. Topics like geography, body, scale, skin, globalization, and memory—among others—were discussed, addressing the problem of how to vocalize in a group a large variety of aspects, subjects, and interests. To perform the reading in front of the diagram, standing and walking—shoes off—was a last-minute decision; it looks like the perfect choreography for our performance: to have the bodies mixed with the lines and letters of the wall drawing and with the sound floating in the space as a layer that involves the viewer as s/he now actively reads-sees-listens.

collective-conversation

Counter-Production, Generali Foundation
23 November 2012

Elvira Bachl, Petra Klara, Christian Helbock, Elsa König, Ilse Lafer, Diana Baldon, Angela Strohberger, Lukas Tagwerker, Ricardo Basbaum, Beba Fink, Verena Spiesz, Theresa Stieböck

All
[Four groups reading the letter-names and sounds, accessing different languages if possible]

1 Ilse, Ricardo, Verena

L
O
C
A
G

2 Diana, Angela, Elsa

B
R
W
N
S

3 Petra, Lukas, Christian

P
U
Q
I

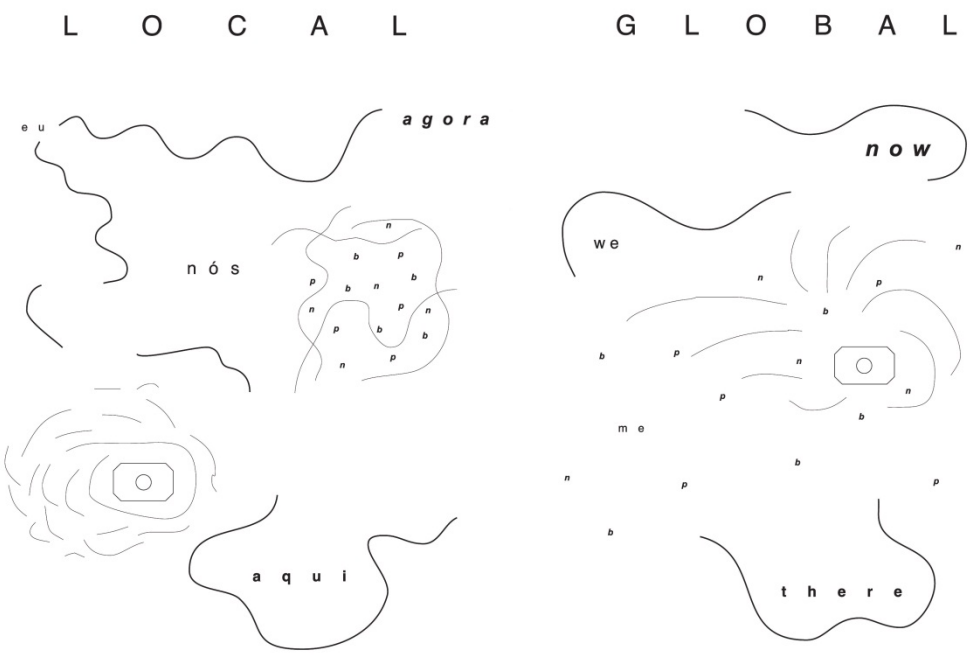
4 Beba, Elvira, Theresa

E
H
T
M

Ilse, Diana, Elsa, Petra, Christian, Beba, Theresa, Verena
Pronouns as sounds [life line <–> organic line]

me-you-we
eu-você-nós
ich-du-wir
io-tu-noi
je-tu-nous

Ricardo, Angela, Lukas, Elvira
[descriptive fictional reading of the diagram – improvisation]



Diana

La “contraproduzione” è un termine che implica il termine “produzione” la cui funzione ed effetto sono diretti a ridefinire l’atto produttivo attraverso una nozione che in apparenza sembra contrastarlo. Quarant’anni dopo, l’uso di un termine inventato durante gli anni sessanta in un periodo caratterizzato dai movimenti sociali contro-culturali sembra un paradosso. In realtà è un concetto che occupa metodi di produzione estetica adottati da alcuni artisti contemporanei che in altri casi si trasforma in una strategia discorsiva o puo’ diventare il soggetto di pratiche artistiche. La ri-articolazione di un concetto ambivalente come quello di “contraproduzione” (la cui parola nel contesto di questa mostra è separata

da un simbolico trattino che permette a “contra” e “produzione” di separarsi o combinarsi arbitrariamente attraverso l’equo valore del loro significato) mette in luce con precisione la situazione contradditoria nella quale la produzione artistica attuale si trova oggi: tra richieste di lavorare molto, al quale sia il soggetto che il corpo si sottopongono, e qualsiasi sforzo di scalzare tali richieste.

Ricardo
[starts reading when Diana is in the middle of the paragraph]

De modo a evitar um fácil mal-entendido, não é correto considerar o global como um “espaço” ou “território”, uma vez que não possui concreção física: considerar que Londres ou Nova York são mais “globais” do que o Rio de Janeiro ou Mombay é tomar erradamente o conceito de global, colaborando ao mesmo tempo para torná-lo um elemento mais próximo dos grandes centros financeiros (isto é, fazer dele um item facilmente manipulável). Parece muito mais interessante tomar o global como um “campo”, uma região habitada por padrões de relacionamento em que as representações simbólicas podem ser redesenhadas e rearranjadas. Não estamos distantes de um campo de batalha, para onde os grupos devem dirigir suas estratégias e em relação ao qual devem ficar atentos (não creio que existam aqui espaços para indivíduos isolados, no sentido tradicional: também a subjetividade precisa ser reenquadrada).

Lukas
[starts reading when Ricardo is in the middle of the paragraph]

Schaust du mich an aus dem Kristall
Mit deiner Augen Nebelball.
Es fällt auf, dass sich dieser Satz reimt.
Phantom, du bist nicht meinesgleichen!
Hier wird ein Unterschied behauptet.
Trätest du vor, ich weiß es nicht,
Würd’ ich dich lieben oder hassen?
Handelt es sich hier um eine Gedichtinterpretation?
Gespenstig, würd’, ein scheuer Gast,
Weit, weit ich meinen Schemel rücken.
Hier erscheint das Motiv der Entfernung, Distanz, die natürlich auch Nähe bedeutet.
Und dennoch fühl’ ich, wie verwandt,
Zu deinen Schauern mich gebannt.
Gut, wir haben das Konstruktionsprinzip dieses Textes erkannt: Gedichtzeilen wechseln sich ab mit Einschüben, die in ihrer Redundanz zwischen den Reimen verschwinden.
Nur leise zittern würd’ ich, und
Mich dünkt - ich würde um dich weinen!

Petra and others
[eventually, over the previous readings]

Klick!

Christian starts, followed by Angela, Elvira, Verena, Theresa
[connect the words in the right and left columns with lines]

DI	A	GRAM
CON		NECT
GLO		BAL
LO		CAL
LOW		HIGH
RIGHT		LEFT
WRITE		READ
SPEAK		HEAR
WE		NOW
HERE		THERE
WHO		
YOU		ME
VI	DE	O
AU	DI	O

Ilse and Lukas
[dialogues 1-4]

1

A	WHAT	
B	can	people
A	who	
B	ARE	
A + B	WE	

2

B	IN	certain
A	DISTRICTS	

B in or

A OUT

A IN certain

B fields

A let’s say

B POLITICS

B + A YOU-ME

3

A local

B VOCAL

A call it

B global

A is there

B a

A BIG DIFFERENCE

A + B SAY NO

4

B this means

A local

B CULTURE

A is for

B THE POOR

B + A NO question

Angela and Ricardo
[reading simultaneously]

if i return back to this playground, *wenn ich zu dem spielplatz zurück̈kehre*, it will probably be now again, *wird es womöglich wieder jetzt sein*, then called then, *dann heißt es damals*. if you return back to this playground, *wenn du zu dem spielplatz zurück̈kehrst*, it will probably be now again, *wird es womöglich wieder jetzt sein*, then called then, *dann heißt es damals*. if we return back to this playground, *wenn wir zu dem spielplatz zurück̈kehren*, it will probably be now again, *wird es womöglich wieder jetzt sein*, then called then, *dann heißt es damals*. agora. *jetzt*.

Ilse, Diana, Elsa, Petra, Christian, Beba, Theresa, Verena
Pronouns as sounds [life line <–> organic line]

me-you-we
eu-você-nós
ich-du-wir
io-tu-noi
je-tu-nous

Christian and Elvira
[dialogues 5-8]

5

A form

B IN OR

A form

B OUT and

A with IN

B with

A INTEREST

A + B WHAT DOES IT MEAN

6

A to exhibit

B is it a

A term

B does it

A have substance

B are there

A just things

B standing

A around

B or

A hanging

B is it

A normal

B that it

A looks like

B this

A what is

B art

A AN UNDER

B STANDING

A + B NOT

7

A dear

B all

A what we

B have

A so far

B from our

A work shop

B meet ing

8

B The

A do cu ment

B con tains

A the

B script

A as we have

B the

A general

B guide lines

Ricardo
[reads with pauses]

writing in group talking in group developing documents producing sounds thinking collectively individual lines voice combinations indicating differences pronouncing words alone and at the same time.

reading over the previous sentence

Angela
what you feel if you write about water

Lukas
ICH GEHE MIT DER SPUR

Petra
what you feel if you read about love

Verena
WIR FLIEGEN AUS DER SPUR

Petra
what you feel if you read about love

Theresa
ERWEITERTE SPUREN

Angela
what you feel if you write about water

Elvira
er musste die seine seele auffressenden TRAUMAS des GLOBALEN und LOKALEN alleine ertragen ohne die wärmende und dämpfende anwesenheit von gleichwissenden und gleich-erlebt-habenden, die seine seelischen qualen aufgesaugt hätten wie abwaschschwämme das abwasser.

Petra
[repeating the series continuously]

T R A U M	A
T R A U M	B
T R A U M	C
T R A U M	D
T R A U M	E

Ilse
[the others improvise the replies for each of the sentences]

Say 1, 2, 3, 4, paint
Say 1, 2, 3, 4, follow

Say 1, 2, 3, 4, hide
Say 1, 2, 3, 4, don't
Say 1, 2, 3, 4, make
Say 1, 2, 3, 4, paint
Say 1, 2, 3, 4, behave
Say 1, 2, 3, 4, occupy
Say 1, 2, 3, 4, move
Say 1, 2, 3, 4, leave
Say 1, 2, 3, 4, start

Elvira
absolutely no number

Ilse, Diana, Elsa, Petra, Christian, Beba, Theresa, Verena
Pronouns as sounds [life line <–> organic line]

me-you-we
eu-você-nós
ich-du-wir
io-tu-noi
je-tu-nous

at the same time:

Verena
(fast) take a ship to the other side

Ilse
Joy is the proof of nines.

Ricardo
Alegria é a prova dos nove.

Counter-Production

09/07/2012 – 12/16/2012

Ricardo Basbaum, Mary Ellen Carroll, Dexter Sinister, Goldin+Senneby, Marine Hugonnier, Henrik Olesen, Marion von Osten, Johannes Porsch, Seth Price, Josephine Pryde, Lili Reynaud-Dewar, Josef Strau

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Wiedner Hauptstraße 15, 1040 Vienna
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Courtesy Dexter Sinister

~~Counter-Production~~

Ilse Lafer

> I think every writer probably has looked at an old printed text and seen things they'd like to change, but there are protocols of publishing, rules that limit the ways in which you can change older texts. The Net, however, is understood to be a fully manipulable medium; authors may simply update an article or posting. Information there seems to represent not a fixed object, but some kind of state, like the weather.[1]
>
> Seth Price, "Redistribution (Video Transcript)"

Prologue

By proposing to repeatedly reflect on "Counter-Production", we have chosen a process-oriented form of publication that opens up space for thinking "over". The modifier "over" implies a temporality of thinking about an exhibition as a continuous but editable process. The point in time at which a text about an exhibition is written is always only the interruption of a movement between thinking "ahead" and thinking "over" about the strengths and weaknesses of curatorial thinking articulated by means of and with art. How does artistic work relate to the theoretical superstructure, or to what extent does its experience change when, as Helmut Draxler argues, the work asserts a presence in the exhibition that is only semiautonomous, and its reception is a category determined by display and spatial configuration?[2] What if the text describes not the exhibition but instead possible refigurations of it? Such a text would not be about a correspondence between the work and its imposed context that is as coherent as possible. It could, starting out from the encounter with works, devote itself to the smaller particles of meaning that the works contain, yet with the fundamental agreement that it (the text) describes a state ("like the weather") or the simple consolidation of experiences in time. The present text makes use of this privilege of revision; it takes up work in the exhibition again by picking up contexts not yet executed and offering them for discussion. The material is provided by the contributions to this publication, on the one hand, and by direct confrontation with the works, on the other. In the process, it follows a concept of production that is addressed by the artists themselves in the exhibition: Each in its own way, the individual works describe "states" that imply a possible "after-"life. Consider Paul Valéry's conception of time, in which the aesthetic process by which a work of art is created is conceived as potentially infinite. For Valéry, as Karin Krauthausen writes, "art does not simply exist in time; it creates a time."[3] The inability to conclude—or, to put it another way, the mode of movement inscribed in a

concept of the work conceived in this way—leaves open for artists an option for action or a reserve that can always be set in motion again. Josef Strau writes: "*Counter-production* is not an answer, it has no definition, or does it and I don't know about it? Counter-production is a label given to some works and withdrawn from others in what's often a quite subjective way, as if by empathy instead of common, objective rules of evaluation."[4] The present exhibition is distinguished by a lack of terminological definition, and it is, as Strau says, "not an answer." However, that could be its strength. In a conversation during the conception phase of this exhibition, Tom Holert encouraged the idea of understanding "counter-production" as a concept emptied of its historical attributions of meaning so that it could be refilled with new, different meanings. The heterogeneity of this exhibition suggests such an approach, since each new consideration of the exhibition reinforces the experience that Maurice Blanchot summed up when he wrote, "The work [the concept] lays a path, speaks, and leads slowly away from itself. Beyond that, it whispers." I would like to consider *Counter-Production* in this way: as a concept that diverges from itself with and through movement.

A Textual Path

A box is no innocent object.[5] Marine Hugonnier uses one to exhibit a manuscript that cannot be seen; Josef Strau packs a commissioned text on Henrik Olesen's works into an old, remote cardboard box. With respect to both works, it is worth recalling Marcel Duchamp's conception of the *Boîte verte* (Green Box) or the *Boîte 1914* (Box 1914). Whereas the latter consists of notes that were precisely *not* collected with an eye to a project to be realized, the majority of the notes in the *Boîte verte* should be read as preliminary reflections on *The Large Glass*:

> These notes are with the intention of doing something else, which I did not know at the time what it was going to be, naturally. And they were jottings, you see, on pieces of paper, whenever an idea came to me, I would put it on a piece of paper, any piece of paper, so those papers have all kinds of shapes, torn shapes, pieces of paper and then I kept them, because I used them in my next thing, which was the *Large Glass*, which is now in Philadelphia.[6]

What makes Duchamp's box interesting for our context is that combines a moment of the possible (*possible*) with delay (*retard*). In the *Boîte verte*, for example, there is the note "Delay in Glass"—as a possible subtitle for *Le grand verre* (The Large Glass)—which implies a pause in order to give fixed content or form to an idea and at the same leaves open the *possibility* it could mean something else. As Sandro Zanetti has written: "a possible paper for future realizations. Open not only for the projected *Large Glass*. But also open for other projects."[7] Let's return to Hugonnier's black box *TRAVAIL CONTRE PRODUCTIF*: a loose-leaf manuscript that reproduces in fragments future projects, quotations, and thoughts. Nine pages are displayed, all of which follow a consistent, unremarkable layout: the sentences and fragments of text are placed in the middle and set with uniform typography. They are sheets that are fundamentally reproducible, whose selection and arrangement

remain just as unclear as the questions of whether the considerably large part that cannot be seen contains notes at all, and of whether they follow a specific principle of ordering or are merely a collection of loose pages. This makes inevitable the ambiguity of the work's reception, which allows only vague allusions and cross-references to arrange a conceptual void (the pages in the box). The moment of delay—or, as Hugonnier expresses it, a gesture of restraint—is inherent in the work, with the difference that it does not betray whether and how a possible project could take shape. If we wish to specify the mode of movement here we would have to say it is a force turned backward that restrains the work it keeps under lock and key. Or as Hans Belting summed it up for Duchamp's *Boîte verte*: "The idea was not the idea *for a work*, but an idea that transcended any work, with the result that the *Glass* and the commentary became equally important."[8]

Josef Strau's imaginary box is created as a text around a work that is not his and that, as a takeaway poster, follows a principle of distribution that is also inherent, each in its own way, in the works of Seth Price and Johannes Porsch. I quote here at length a passage from Strau's text "What Is Counterproductiveness? What Is Ossipism? And a Few More Counterproductive Questions":

> This and a few more sentences I had written down quite coincidentally while in fact trying an object dedicated to the powers of the familial inheritance and the strange influences of the father and the mother. But when I repeated and edited certain parts of this text here again, I did not focus on this very complex object by Henrik; instead I interrupted the text whenever it came to determine the object's qualities; I left out these parts about the object, emphasizing and keeping the secondary story. While I worked on his object this other story came up in an almost automatic way, inventing and creating a second object, which is the so-called debt box. Is this counterproductive to the primary intention of the writing, the intention of art criticism, I wondered. Anyway, later when I edited it for this new (half-)reprint, I wondered as well as in many cases before, not only wondered where the second object, the debt box, came from suddenly but as well wondered who then actually is the writer of this invention and of this second object, the box, as it cannot exactly be me. Once I thought that this person, the second writer, must have a name, or actually should be given a name as well and quite quickly, and so suddenly, without much thinking, his name became OSSIP.[9]

Strau's "secondary story" revolves around his own production as an artist—the written, the circulated, or the exhibited—whose visible evidence (as a text in a publication, an invitation card to an exhibition, etc.) disappears in a cardboard box ("debt box"). It does not follow the logic of the "still possible," like Duchamp's *Boîte 1914* or Hugonnier's *TRAVAIL CONTRE PRODUCTIF*; rather, it expresses a peculiar negation of the "already done." As an object that tends to be left open, the debt box produces a contradictory moment, between the hiding and showing of one's own work, between a "guilty feeling about what has been produced" and a "taking-care-what-to-do-about-it attitude." It relates to Olesen's series *Mummy, Daddy and I* and to the L-shaped children's tunnel in the exhibition as *parergonal* in a specific way—that is to say, it is a secondary work or supplement outside the given

work: as a poster for the children's tunnel and a (para)text connected to *Mummy, Daddy and I*. In the exhibition, Strau's text (the poster) functioned like a staged coincidence, seemingly randomly and externally indebted to the children's tunnel and its insides (a kind of retrospective of Strau's textual works). "A parergon," wrote Derrida, "comes against, beside, and in addition to *ergon*, the work done [*fait*], the fact [*le fait*], the work, but it does not fall to one side, it touches and cooperates within the operation, from a certain outside. Neither simply outside nor simply inside. Like an accessory that one is obliged to welcome on the border, on board [*au bord*, *à bord*] it is first of all the on (the) bo(a)rd(er) [*Il est d'abord l'à-bord*]."[10] If we juxtapose Derrida's view of the parergon (secondary work) and Strau's remark, it was not "he" who imagined or created the box but rather a different figure working from an outside; "Ossip" (an Eastern European variant of Josef) is credited with a parergonal function that invents the secondary work (the box) on which the work proper (in our case, the children's tunnel) feeds or by which it is determined.

A reading of Maurice Blanchot, whom I do not wish to leave out here, offers a different direction. The reason was provided by a conversation with Strau after the exhibition opening, which in a sense followed a parergonal logic: we successfully avoided talking about the exhibition, in particular the concept of counter-production. Instead, I mentioned Blanchot, because I was searching for a possible connection between Strau's externalized voice (in our case that of Ossip) and the way Blanchot withdrew from his own writing by writing. In *Le tres-haut* (translated as *The Most High*), he wrote: "When I speak, when I reflect, I'm working—that's obvious. Everybody can grasp that. Even if I look… at anything at all, at this office, these busts, sure, I'm still working, in my own way. Because there's a man there who sees things as they should be seen—he exists, and all the notions for which we've been struggling for so many centuries exist with him. I'm perfectly aware that if I changed, or if I went off my head, history would collapse."[11] With this "man with whom all notions exist," Blanchot introduced an anonymous figure who turns against the simple identity of the subject. As a doubling or splitting of the "I," this figure stands for that which is permanently produced in thinking or observing, whether a challenge that is never fulfilled or a burden one would like to be free of. A comparable doubling occurs in Strau's work when he identifies the debt box as a "second object" created by another "I" (Ossip = Josef):

> Once I thought that this person, the second writer, must have a name, or actually should be given a name as well and quite quickly, and so suddenly, without much thinking, his name became OSSIP.[12]

I return to the motif of the box in order to suggest another approach to reading. According to David Joselit, Duchamp's *Boîte verte* follows a diagrammatic logic in that it contains a "proliferation of independent scraps or sheets of paper" that corresponds to a tactile destruction of the book. Joselit speaks of "pages in liberty" that form a "multidirectional field of vectors."[13] This field in turn has a symbiotic relationship to *Le grand verre*. To put it another way, in *Le grand verre*, "The machine runs only on words."[14] Now we could speculate whether and, if so, to what extent there was a comparable relationship between Strau's debt box and the L-shaped children's tunnel, or to what extent the "pages in liberty" in Hugonnier's *TRAVAIL CONTRE-PRODUCTIF* and Porsch's *Project Proposal (The Work Is How to Become an Artist)* follow such a diagrammatic understanding. The latter

corresponds to the actual liberation of single pages from a book, which could turn up anywhere in the exhibition space or in other books. The numbered pages follow an autonomously created semantics that produces a relation between conventional characters, comic-book-like forms, numbers, colors codes, and images. Moreover, this relational framework—the resulting consolidations, superimpositions, the isolation or collision of signs on the individual pages, and their spatialized relationships to one another—exists in connection with a text written by Porsch that describes the artist-subject as the prototype for an entrepreneurial self that contributes to the production of knowledge and symbolic values by and by means of art.[15] In this way, a diagrammatic concept of the subject comes into play—a suspicion that the very title of the work, *… The Work Is How to Become an Artist*, confirms—of the sort put into position by Deleuze and Guattari. I am referring here to Susanne Leeb's remarks in her introduction to *Materialität der Diagramme*, in which she states that Guattari and Deleuze were concerned about a semiotics that would be able to liberate a level of subjectivity, "above all enjoying and desiring, which would be blocked by the linguistic composition of the world, of subjects, and so on. […] Guattari's initial question was therefore: 'under what conditions certain semiotic areas—in sciences, arts, revolution, sexuality, etc.—could be removed from the control of the dominant representations, could get beyond the system of representation as such.'"[16] The resulting diagrammatic concept of the subject does not reduce subjectivity to an intrasubjective relationship but is instead understood as produced by "individual, collective, and institutional authorities."[17] In other words, the diagrammatic becomes a question of semantic contexts, which, as Brian Holmes shows, are subdivided by Guattari in *Cartographies schizoanalytiques* into four dimensions that circulate among themselves: "the self-referential dimension of aesthetic qualities (form, color, rhythm, tone, intensity); the body with its sensible experience (grasping, becoming, anxiety, ecstasy); the social world of things, energies and signs (institutions, projects, constructions, conflicts); and the conceptual realm of ideas (logic, diagrammatism, invention, reflexivity)."[18]

Applied to Olesen's series *A. T.*, this framework of dimensions circulating among themselves can provide an interpretive level based on diagrammatic logic. By coupling different forms of representation—image, word, number, grid, machine drawing, and diagram—on the same visual and semiotic plane, which revolves around the biography of the English mathematician and forefather of modern computer technology Alan Turing, the diagrammatic course seems evident in that it enables the reception of pure relationality that evolves between the forms of representation chosen by Olesen and their semiotics. Joselit has said of the Dada diagrams that they promise a politics "that might circumvent the object altogether—by running circles around it."[19] Olesen makes a comparable move, not in order to handle an object but rather to reproduce it (Alan Turing's body). He does this by weaving a complex fabric of modernist blueprints for the subject—from Guillaume Apollinaire, Antonin Artaud, and Sigmund Freud to Picabia's machines, Philippe Soupault's *Portrait d'un imbécile*, and Man Ray's *The Enigma of Isidore Ducasse*—around the "ghostly body" of Turing. The lines, traces, codes, and narratives follow the same impulse to produce the presence of the body as a standardized and codified entity qua historically wide-ranging contexts of meaning.

With an eye to semiotic mobility or the potential for action inherent in diagrammatic logic, we can speak of the diagram as an apparatus of production employed by artists such as Olesen, and subsequently Ricardo Basbaum and Seth Price, in order to keep processes of semantic production ambiguous with respect to a nascent statement or concreteness. Last but not least, this text is indebted to the effort to develop a kind of diagrammatic topography of the exhibition. I owe the primary impetus for this to conversations with Basbaum during his workshop *collective-conversation*, held as part of this exhibition. When he is asked to describe the beginning of his work on diagrams (1993), which Basbaum understands as mappings that are not media- or site-specific, as "levels of intense contact," he mentions the psychologist Kurt Lewin and a drawing by Deleuze: *Foucault's Diagram* (1986). What interests him about Levin is the "spatialization of a subject that goes beyond the limits of the physical body," that is, the possibility of visualizing a field of affective experiences in order to depict active forces such as attraction, encounter, separation, and so on, between the "I" and the "you." Deleuze's wonderful drawing, which resembles an insect or a mechanical apparatus, reveals, according to Basbaum, that things exist in a state of potentiality and are in the process of "triggering diverse other processes or events; the diagram is the appropriate means to produce this present moment of an action that just now taking place, a momentary problematization that knocks things out of their familiar, usual balance and generates a space of problems."[20] The fact that the activation of such a machinelike apparatus presumes a dialogue with the viewers, without generating any meaning, leads us to Basbaum's participatory projects, which subdivide the participants into diagrammatic formations in different ways—in the case of our workshop, for example, twelve participants from different sociocultural milieus. As the point of departure for our joint writing and speaking, Basbaum chose the diagram *Local / Global*, which had been shown in the exhibition. The first step was to activate the "contact zone"—that is, to confront one's own body with the diagram, to sense its lines, words, letters, consolidations, and dynamics. If the script begins with all the letters that occur in the diagram,[21] it does so because the phase of linking or harmonizing finds expression in the diagrammatic. Then the fragments that we produced individually resulted in a text produced collectively, that is, revised by the group. A certain recurring "score" in the text—the "lifeline"—characterizes precisely the dynamic that emerged through the joint editing and speaking: in the constant repetition of *me-you-we, ich-du-wir, je-tu-nous*, and so on, an act of transformation took place in which "I" embodied "I," "you," and "we." Thanks to Basbaum's gentle and yet concrete stage direction, the voices, rhythms, beats, and refrains during the speech act formed a kind of vibrating membrane, not in "harmless synchronicity but rather with a degree of confrontation, shifting, overlapping, and dissonance."[22] As an audio file right next to the diagram, it does not provide a level of meaning intended or controlled by the artist but is rather an expression of a potentiality immanent in the diagrammatic and released in the speech act.

Describing an experience based on process-oriented projects soon reaches its limits, whereby the diagrammatic, thanks to its topography, makes precisely visible what would not be conceivable or describable outside of its graphic arrangement. Here we can make a connection to Marion von Osten's *The Glory of the Garden*, which had four employees from different lines of work at the Arnolfini sketch key moments in the reorganization of that

British cultural institution. Von Osten employed pedagogical toys that had originally been developed for children by Friedrich Fröbel but are now used for team-building exercises at large companies. She concentrated her camera on the dynamic of the game, without including the players. We follow the hands of the participants, who are not writing a joint text but rather sketching the structural transformation of the institution by rearranging wooden blocks. The topology of the wooden blocks correlates and changes with the active speaker, and hence the relational structure of the institution formed. The interesting thing here is the relationship between the variously formed objects, their changing symbolic attribution, and the voices, which cannot be clearly identified with a subject or an object. Working together, they generate a fundamentally unstable diagrammatic structure in the flux of constant change, which in contrast to Basbaum's rather open concept of the diagram seems solution- and goal-oriented.

Yet another diagrammatic understanding, resulting from the act of eliminating the difference between textual and iconic elements in relation to digital data, is provided by Seth Price's approach. With Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt, the diagram, with its ability to combine texts and images, generates a "medial third"[23], a semantics based on its own rules, which argues for Price's concept of de- and recontextualizing "data" in general. Right at the beginning of *Redistribution*—an essayistic film located somewhere between documentary, art film, and lecture—Price establishes the "medial third" as the starting point for his approach:

> These images are from a video [*"Painting" Sites*] I made in 2000. I typed the term painting into a search engine and took just about whatever came back. Taking imagery solely from the Internet seemed like a way to move the focus away from these other video traditions, to start to think about digital video as simply material in a chain. It translates directly from a circulated image, which itself is an offcut of a stored file, to video data. It never enters the realm, whether it comes from film or a computer lab or some waste on the Web, is reduced to the level of graphics; it becomes *diagrammatic*. It highlighted procedures and tools, translations, plasticity.[24]

Let's begin by noting that no (traditional) apparatus is necessary to produce this video. In other words, it is an artifact based on a search function, specifically on "search: 'Painting.'" The video, which is structured like a slide show and combined with an off-camera voice, follows, as Price explains, the undifferentiated, normalizing logic of databases, which is expressed in just such a sequence of images: from high to low, from Dutch genre painting to calendar images, and so on. It is certainly tempting to assume the logic is the opposite of that of Olesen's work, in which the relating of selected images and information corresponds to a complex process of reconstruction, whereas Price seems to exhibit the selection procedure produced by the search engine. Yet Price goes beyond the mimetic function when he assigns a narrative level to the visual one: a singsong voice (his own) that tells stories about the life of the writer Ludwig Tieck, entangling this author of German Romanticism in an increasingly labyrinthine narrative. Michael Newman has pointed out that the incoherence between the visuals and the sound—that is, the connection between Tieck (who, by the way, was famous for his narrative reworking of old folk legends and fairy tales) and digital images—is intended to reformulate the relationship between work and artist. In

other words, the logic of databases produces conditions under which the concept of the work, the concept of the author, and the idea and concept of "intellectual property" are subject to a process of infinite transformation owing to constant reproduction and modification. This is made explicitly precisely by using the character of Tieck, since his biographical trace dissolves in the labyrinth of the narrative.
I would like to cite here at length Lars Bang Larsen's rereading of Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author," because it seems to identify the point that eloquently sums up the narrative approach not only of Price but also of Lili Reynaud-Dewar and Goldin & Senneby:

> Barthes claims that there is one place where the multiplicity of a text is focused—the active reader—who is simply "someone [...] holding together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted." He concludes that the birth of the reader takes place at the cost of the death of the author, and the reader is the someone who reproduces, and is reproduced by the multiplicity of the text. The space that Barthes releases is opaque and mediated, consisting of "multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation"; and in the distance, the reader is born as someone "without history, biography, psychology"—all of these the author takes with him to the grave, along with identity, meaning and message.
> But the opacity of Barthes' text space leaves the terrain open to a figure of authority other than that of the author. This is an ethnographic figure that Barthes declares to be historically and culturally obsolete, namely the "mediator, shaman or relator whose 'performance' [is] the mastery of the narrative code". However, is not the proclaimed emancipation of the text in effect a situation that opens to a new struggle over the mastery of narrative codes? With a view to understanding art's location in culture, we must challenge Barthes' literary paradigm of pure text by introducing a dimension of embodied cultural agency. With this, his statement that the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile once the author is removed and shifted into the register of performativity in social space, in which the (artistic) subject becomes a "someone" by force of her mediation of narrative (cultural, social, artistic) codes.[25]

With the disappearance of the author that Price demonstrates using the example of Tieck, this "someone" appears: the artist as evaluator and user of the data streams and information. In an economy based on the flow and reproduction of information, he or she is now the "operator of copies (rather than originals), quotes (rather than statements), simulations (rather than depictions), and pluralities (rather than individualities)."[26] Setting out from the aforementioned reflections, Larsen subsequently brings into play a type of artist of "self-mediation," whom he describes with "hypothetical subjectivity." He argues that the point of this is to reinhabit one's own self by getting involved and observing how desire and biography are parts of the signs and materials of social reality.[27]

Lili Reynaud-Dewar's literal and metaphoric "darkening" of her own body/subject in "I Don't Know What a Conceptual Artist Looks Like" seems to propose just such a hypothetical blueprint of the subject. In her installation, which like Price's piece works with the labyrinthine intertwining of diverse thematic strands, four monitors display fragments from a

performance that took place during the installation phase of the exhibition. For it she slipped into the role of Josephine Baker, painting her body black, and took over the exhibition space by mimetically reproducing (observed) dance movements from the repertoire of Baker's *Dance sauvage*. In contrast to Price, Reynaud-Dewar no longer seems to be a mere communicator of narrative codes; rather, an intricate subject-object relationship comes into play that aims at the above-mentioned "reinhabitation of the self." In her text "How Long Can I Dance," Reynaud-Dewar relates Adrian Piper's *Untitled Performance at Max's Kansas City, NYC, 1970* to her own work, in which she is concerned with the "hermetic physical presence" that Piper tries out, with her eyes blindfolded, surrounded by in a bar. Just this simple gesture of closing off turns the body in a public space into an unwelcome disturbance, on the one hand, and a place of withdrawal, on the other, from which one can be silent, speak, or act (dance). "With this role of the naked dancer who infiltrates and occupies 'the institution,' like a Trojan horse, I present otherness, the same kind of otherness Piper overexposes when she wants to be a 'silent, secret, passive object … deprived of sensory input' in a very public place."[28] This conceptual approach also seems to offer an interpretive level for the sculptural objects (the numbers 4, 5, 6) that appear individually or in groups in the otherwise logical environment that Reynaud-Dewar organizes around the figure of Josephine Baker. They look like constant companions that, regardless of where in the room the different sequences of the performance are recorded, are always part of the media image, but without contributing the groundwork for the themes otherwise addressed (feminist questions, voyeurism, cultural and political inclusions and exclusions, etc.). As "silent, secret, passive objects," they not only build a bridge between the media and the real space but also occupy the void left behind by the artist's "private," performative act in the institutional space.

Similarly, the affective images of a small child by Josephine Pryde seem to have been removed from their original context in order to reappear as a moment of perplexity in an alienated context (that of the exhibition). A comparable puzzlement is also evident from the props employed with wit and conceptual acuity in the staged photographs: a Levi's T-shirt, a white cotton Moschino shirt, colorful packing material, and a measuring stick. Together with the close-ups, which at times show only an emotional detail of a face, Pryde walks a tightrope between the individual image and the series that stretches from the "pliable body and interior world of gesture and impulse." The exaggerated exposure of the young boy seems to produce, in an inverse process, a space that simultaneously penetrates and evades the institutional framework. This also evokes the divergent aspects implied by the title *Adoption* and by Pryde's laconic remark that the work is about reproduction and artistic practice. These things suggest a complex subject-object relationship if, for example, "adoption" means non-biological reproduction expressed photographically in the consciously artificial approach to the modes of representation of studio photography. It may seem astonishing how close Reynaud-Dewar's model of performative, hypothetical subjectivity comes to Pryde's depiction of an infantile subjectivity in order to create, as Rhea Anastas has remarked, "an allegory of the neo-avant-garde artist [...], whether as jester in farce, sex object or victim, or knowing idiot savant."[29]
The deliberate inscription into institutional space, which for both artists is a testing ground to explore complex subject-object relationships, becomes for Goldin & Senneby a stage for

a complicated interplay between life performance and model-like staging. Consider the stage directions and introductory words for the lecture-performance:

> The curator introduces the piece… Welcome to the Generali Foundation… the show… this is *The Discreet Charm of Meta-Finance* by Goldin & Senneby. She sits. She has made no mention of Ismail.
> We watch the projection of the box of the gallery space… just chairs set for the lecture.
>
> Ismail, who has been sitting in the front row stands and takes his place to the side of the projected image.
>
> Hello / Hi… thank you Ilse/Diana…
> And yes, welcome to the *The Discreet Charm of Meta-Finance*… which is actually the title of my lecture… an idea I approached Simon and Jakob… or Goldin & Senneby… an idea I approached them with some weeks ago… a proposal to talk about finance within the context of their artwork.[30]

The first lines of *The Discreet Charm*, a lecture-performance conceived in relation to Luis Buñuel's film *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgoisie*, already reveal that the mediator of "narrative codes" is a "someone" (Ismail) engaged by the artists. Moreover, later we learn that the playwright Pamela Carter wrote the script, which suggests that the entire conception of the play is based on shared authorship. The authors' passing remark contributes to the interweaving of reality and fiction that is the basis for this text on meta-finance and its complex production. The live performance on opening night was illustrated synchronously by using a puppet theater reconstructed as a model of the exhibition space of the Generali Foundation and ultimately presented as a video recording along with the model in the exhibition. What the documentation withholds from us, however, is the actual live act. Although we can follow it from the soundtrack, the repeated video track shows only its doubling illustrated in the model. We can speculate about whether the perception of the projected image permits us to conclude that the act of performance we presume is real, or what is visible (video and model), represents nothing but a fiction of spatiality and performance. Does knowledge of the performative act suffice to fill this void of the real? Goldin & Senneby's complex mise en abyme and its narrative suggest the humorously presented critical insight that the exhibition space, along with the art and the viewers, represents an abstract (fictitious) world just like that of meta-finance: "So really I think we have here a world of meta-finance. And just like the characters in another film of Buñuel's, *The Exterminating Angel*… bankers like those characters are entrapped in a room, which they cannot leave, and they have no connection with the outside of reality."[31]

Let's return to the work of Seth Price: it comes as no surprise that *Redistribution* articulates, in one way or another, all of the themes addressed in the exhibition; after all, Price is trying to suggest an overview or a potential reading for his own artistic work. Correspondingly, the film image is divided; we see a framed excerpt from Price's lecture, which repeatedly fades in and out in order to combine the figure of the artist with the works

in the background. The lecture itself spans an arc from the video works (*"Painting" Sites* was already mentioned above) by way of his work on plastic to the calendar images and silhouette compositions and fan out the space of Price's multilayered system of references, his constantly recurring figures of thoughts and formal solutions. Price lays down a continuous line of argument when he calls digital information a fragment "that thanks to its indeterminacy can continue to be used as material or be rearranged, changed, downloaded, and placed in the Internet again."[32] By doing so he makes explicit a "state of art" in that one and the same work can adopt different states, such as plastic that can be shaped at will, melted again, and then manifest itself in a new form. One example of this is *Dispersion*: a work that is distributed in different media in the exhibition: as sculptural form, in the video *Redistribution*, as essay in our online publication (available as a free download or in printed form). Knowing that both *Dispersion* and *Redistribution* represent the artist's meta-reflection on the way he works—except that in *Dispersion* he does not use his own works but those of other artists who are important to him, such as Duchamp and Robert Smithson—one might conclude that Price's artistic practice is finding ever new forms of materialization and then dissemination between the concepts *redistribution* and *dispersion*. This process of de- and recontextualization is aimed less at producing, displacing, or redistribution than at "exhibiting" the immanent potential meanings of digital information: their mode of movement, distribution, and complete modifiability.

By contrast, in *Prototype 180* Mary Ellen Carroll makes a literal shift, with the intention of uncovering or making visible existing structures. Like Price, Carroll uses "existing" material (in this case, a single-family home in Houston, Texas), only to, in an elaborate act, turn it 180 degrees and then put it down again on the opposite side of the lot. What we see is the floating house, loaded on a tractor trailer, filmed from opposite positions. Apart from the political, economic, and ecological implications that such a rotation sets in motion (Houston's building codes are determined entirely by the flow of capital), this act remains a purely conceptual and performative one and does not represent an artifact in the productive sense. The fact that Carroll's video documentation withholds the moment of raising and placing the house—that is, shows only the time window during which its architecture is moving and is, therefore, performative—underscores this aspect. At the same time, the double projection makes it possible to make an analogous turning motion while we are watching it in the exhibition. In the process, we are confronted with a comprehensive time line (2012–1953) that strategically links political and economic processes, architecture, and Land art projects such as Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970) and Walter De Maria's *The Lightning Field* (1977). Carroll responds to the (rigid) monumentality of these historical works—which also relates Seth Price to *Spiral Jetty* in order, among other things, to derive his concept for *Dispersion*—with a simple rotating movement. I conclude with a remark by Christian Höller concerning Carroll's *Prototype 180*: "With an ease that, disguised as difficulty, exemplarily reveals the counter-sense in the term 'counter-production.'"[33]

Epilogue

"The work [the concept] lays a path, speaks, and leads slowly away from itself. Beyond that, it whispers." These lines from Maurice Blanchot not only were the occasion for the title of this essay, ~~*Counter-Production*~~, but also represent its leitmotif. This text has followed the movement that Blanchot proposed—as delay or withdrawal in the semiotic mobility immanent in diagrams, the narrative in the context of blueprints for the subject, concepts of the author, and performative strategies, the flowing of information, and finally the literal and metaphoric rotation—in order to capture "counter-production" as a paradoxical concept that moves away from itself with and by means of movement.
So it should come as no surprise that I only come to speak of the work of and collaboration with Dexter Sinister in the afterword, as the designer duo wanted to be present in the exhibition only through the title *Counter-Production*. Nor is it a coincidence that this text ends with the rotation of *Prototype 180*, since turning *Counter-Production* 180 degrees seems at first to promise as much legerity as a counterproductive gesture. Although the proposal was initially found perplexing, the conceptual idea seemed persuasive: the posters, invitation cards, folders, and so on, were to become shadows of themselves. The intervention into the Generali Foundation's existing design was thus limited to removing the representative subject, standing the text on its head, and ultimately showing "Courtesy Dexter Sinister." A related idea also shaped the conception of this publication, whose design is based on the so-called concept paper of the Generali Foundation and the associated guidelines for the layout. Everything suggests that this is an approach based on institutional critique, which is not limited to questioning the corporate identity of an institution but also makes us aware of its resources and capacities. In other words, hiring Dexter Sinister reversed the roles of client (institution) and service provider (designer). So something that on the surface seemed to promise simplicity was/is in fact associated with an excess of administrative work on both sides and actual work on the side of the institution. Benjamin Buchloh's by now canonical assertion—"erosion works, then, not just against the hegemony of the visual, but against the possibility of any other aspect of the aesthetic experience as being autonomous and self-sufficient. That the introduction of legalistic language and an administrative style of the material presentation of the artistic object could effect such an erosion"[34]—proved true once again in our collaboration with Dexter Sinister. For the otherwise visual presentation of processes of graphic design gave way to meticulously formulated instructions, some of which can be read in the text contributed by Dexter Sinister, which we implemented at the cost of a considerable investment of time (owing to our lack of technical skills). The contrary sense implied in the term "counter-production" must therefore be: a direct gesture produced by roundabout ways.

Notes

1 Seth Price, "Redistribution (Video Transcript)," in *Price, Seth*, ed. Anja Nathan-Dorn and Beatrix Ruf, exh. cat. (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein; Zurich: Kunsthalle Zürich, 2010), p. 91.

2 Helmut Draxler, "Editorial," in *Shandyismus: Autorschaft als Genre*, ed. Helmut Draxler, exh. cat. (Vienna: Secession; Dresden: Kunsthaus Dresden, 2007), p. 11.

3 Karin Krauthausen, "Kunst als unendlicher Schaffensprozess und Ornament der Dauer: Aspekte der Zeitthematik bei Paul Valéry," in *Momente im Prozess: Zeitlichkeit künstlerischer Produktion*, ed. Karin Gludovatz and Martin Peschken (Berlin: Reimer, 2004), p. 77.

4 Josef Strau, "What Is Counterproductiveness? What Is Ossipism? And a Few More Counterproductive Questions," in *Counter-Production* (pdf2), ed. Diana Baldon and Ilse Lafer, exh. cat. (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 2012), p. 28.

5 Marcel Duchamp's *Boîte en valise* (1935–41), *Boîte verte* (1912–34), and *Boîte 1914*; Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box* (1964); and Robert Morris's *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961) are just a few examples that have achieved iconic status.

6 Marcel Duchamp in an interview with Jeanne Siegel, April 12, 1967, broadcast on May 18, 1967, as part of WBAI's *Great Artists in America Today* series.

7 Marcel Duchamp, *From the Green Box*, trans. George Heard Hamilton (New Haven, CT: Readymade, 1957), unpaginated. Sandro Zanetti, "Handschrift, Typographie, Faksimile: Marcel Duchamps frühe Notizen, 'Possible' (1913)," in *Bilder der Handschrift: Die graphische Dimension der Literatur*, 2006, http://www.schreibszenen.net/zanetti-open/sz-duchamp-possible.pdf (accessed November 20, 2012).

8 Hans Belting, *The Invisible Masterpiece* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 323.

9 Strau, "What Is Counterproductiveness?" (see note 4), pp. 34–35.

10 Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 54.

11 Maurice Blanchot, *The Most High / Le très-haut*, trans. Allan Stoekl (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996; orig. pub. in French in 1948), p. 24.

12 Strau, "What Is Counterproductiveness?" (see note 4), p. 35.

13 David Joselit, "Dada's Diagrams," in Leah Dickerman, ed., *The Dada Seminars* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art; New York: D.A.P., 2005): pp. 221–239, esp. pp. 225–226.

14 Jean Suquet, "Possible," quoted in ibid., p. 226.

15 Johannes Porsch, "Project Proposal (The Work Is How to Become an Artist)," in *Counter-Production* (pdf2), pp. 11–14.

16 Susanne Leeb, "Einleitung," in Leeb, ed., *Materialität der Diagramme* (Berlin: b_books, 2012), p. 20 [Leeb cites Félix Guattari, *La révolution moléculaire*, quoted here from *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1984), p. 100—*Trans.*]

17 Ibid., p. 21.

18 Brian Holmes, "Guattari's Schizoanalytic Cartographies; or, the Pathic Core at the Heart of Cybernetics," http://brianholmes.wordpress.com/2009/02/27/guattaris-schizoanalytic-cartographies.

19 Joselit, "Dada's Diagrams" (see note 14), p. 238.

20 Ricardo Basbaum, "Von 'Love Songs' zu anderen Rhythmen," in *Materialität der Diagramme* (see note 17), p. 202.

21 See Ricardo Basbaum, "collective-conversations," in the present publication, pp. 30–42.

22 Basbaum, "Von 'Love Song' zu anderen Rhythmen" (see note 21), p. 212.

23 Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt, "Einleitung," in *Die Kunst der Diagrammatik: Perspektiven eines neuen bildwissenschaftlichen Paradigmas* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012), p. 24.

24 Seth Price, "Redistribution" (see note 1), p. 78.

25 Lars Bang Larsen, "Hypothetical Subjectivity," in *Umkehrungen*, ed. Janneke de Vries, exh. cat. (Heidelberg: Kehrer, 2007), p. 116.

26 Giaco Schiesser, "Autorschaft nach dem Tod des Autor: Barthes und Foucault Revisited," http://blog.zhdk.ch/giacoschiesser/files/2010/12/Autorschaft.pdf (accessed November 20, 2012).

27 Larsen, "Hypothetical Subjectivity" (see note 26), pp. 117–118.

28 Lili Reynaud-Dewar, "How Long Can I Dance?," in the present publication, pp. 24–29.

29 Rhea Anastas, "Material Holes: On Josephine Pryde at Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles," in *Texte zu Kunst*, no. 77 (March 2010), unpaginated.

30 Unpublished script of the lecture-performance.

31 Ibid.

32 Maria Muhle, “Eine Blüte ist ein Knoten ist eine Bomberjacke,” *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 71 (September 2008): p. 244.

33 Christian Höller in an e-mail to the author, December 7, 2012.

34 Benjamin Buchloh, “Conceptual Art, 1962–1969: From the Aesthetics of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,” *October* 55 (Winter 1990): pp. 105–143, esp. p. 118.

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Glenn Adamson is head of research at the Victoria and Albert Museum. He is coeditor of the triannual *Journal of Modern Craft* and author of *Thinking through Craft* (Berg Publishers/V&A Publications), an anthology entitled *The Craft Reader* (Berg, 2010), and *The Invention of Craft* (Berg, 2013). His other publications include the coedited volumes *Global Design History* (Routledge, 2011) and *Surface Tensions* (Manchester, 2013). He was cocurator of the exhibition *Postmodernism: Style and Subversion, 1970 to 1990*, which was on view at the Victoria and Albert Museum from September 2011 to January 2012.

Ricardo Basbaum

Ricardo Basbaum lives and works in Rio de Janeiro. As an artist and writer, he has investigated art as an intermediating device and platform for the articulation of sensorial experience, language, and sociability. Since the late 1980s, he has nurtured a vocabulary specific to his work, applying it in a unique way to each event or institutional relationship. Recent solo shows include *conjs., re-bancos*: exercícios&conversas*, Museu de Arte da Pampulha, Belo Horizonte (2011). His work has been exhibited at Documenta (2007) and the Shanghai Biennale (2008). This year, he has participated in the Busan Biennale and the Bienal de São Paulo.

Julia Bryan-Wilson

Julia Bryan-Wilson is associate professor of modern and contemporary art at the University of California, Berkeley. She is the author of *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (2009) and the editor of *Robert Morris*, forthcoming from the MIT Press in the October Files series. Bryan-Wilson is a frequent contributor to *Artforum* and has written criticism on artists such as Sharon Hayes and Carey Young. Some of her recent scholarly publications include "Practicing *Trio A*" (*October*), "Dirty Commerce: Art Work and Sex Work Since the 1970s" (*differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*), "Invisible Products" (*Art Journal*), and "Occupational Realism" (*TDR: The Drama Review*). In 2012–13, she is serving as the acting director of the Arts Research Center at UC Berkeley. She is completing a book about contemporary textiles and politics.

Dexter Sinister

Co-operated by Stuart Bailey and David Reinfurt, Dexter Sinister constitutes a triangle of activities: (a) a publishing imprint, (b) a workshop and bookstore, and (c) a pseudonym making site/time-specific work in art venues. David graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1993 and Yale University in 1999, and formed the design studio O-R-G in 2000. Stuart graduated from the University of Reading in 1994 and the Werkplaats Typografie in 2000, and cofounded the journal *Dot Dot Dot* the same year. Dexter Sinister was originally set up to model a "just-in-time" economy of print production, counter to the contemporary assembly-line realities of large-scale publishing. This involves avoiding waste by working on-demand, utilizing cheap local machinery, considering alternate distribution strategies, and collapsing distinctions of editing, design, production, and distribution into one efficient activity. Since then, their work has branched (pragmatically) into many different contexts and venues.

Ilse Lafer

Curator at the Generali Foundation, Vienna, since 2008. Various exhibitions (as assistant curator, cocurator, curator) and contributions to accompanying publications, among them *Raymond Pettibon. Whatever it is you're looking for you won't find it here* (2006–07); *Die Toten. Hans-Peter Feldmann. RAF, APO, Baader-Meinhof: 1967–1993* (2007); *Chen Zhen. The Body as Landscape* (2007); *Julius Popp. Bit Fall* (2007); *Under Pain of Death* (2008); *Syberberg/Clever. Die Nacht. Ein Monolog* (2008); *Ree Morton. Works 1971–1977* (2008–09); *Modernism as a Ruin. An Archaeology of the Present* (2009); *Behind the Fourth Wall. Fictitious Lives—Lived Fictions* (2010); *unExhibit* (2011); *Morgan Fisher. The Frame and Beyond* (2012). Organization of various lectures, performances, and symposia for the Generali Foundation; most recently, *Reproducing of History*, workshop, Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; "*The Frame and Beyond*—Challenge of an Exhibition," lecture in the context of *Morgan Fisher: Un cinema hors-champ*, INHA, Paris, and Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Paris (both together with Sabine Folie); currently, she has been curating *Counter-Production*, together with Diana Baldon.

Lili Reynaud-Dewar

Lili Reynaud-Dewar (b. 1975) is an artist and writer based in France. She is cofounder of *Pétunia*, a feminist publication for art and entertainment. She is also a professor at Haute École d'Art et de Design, Geneva, where she holds a class entitled "Teaching as a Teenager." Involving the use of her own body and those of her friends and families, as well as text, video, sculpture, and music, her work draws oblique connections between her own position as a contemporary artist and mythical figures of artistic radicalisn and political struggles. Pushing off from the links between media perception and personal biography, or between the artist's work and the artist herself, she blurs and questions these established polar forces. Recent solo exhibitions include *What a century of hands! I shall never have my*

hand! Afterward domesticity leads too far (Karma International, Zurich, 2012), *Ceci est ma maison / This is my place* (Magasin, Grenoble, 2012), *Some objects blackened and a body too* (Mary Mary, Glasgow, 2011), *Cleda's chairs* (Bielefelder Kunstverein, Bielefeld, 2011), and *Interpretation* (Kunsthalle Basel, 2010).

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