

***Curating Labour.
Troubles with gender and dispossession in the exhibition space.
A circular movement on historical traces***

PhD in Fine Art (PhD in Practice in Curating)

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ABSTRACT

Gender, class, and provenance have played a pivotal role in preventing access to the aesthetic sphere. I focus on exhibition making as a radical curatorial practice for addressing material conditions rooted in the struggle “for bread-and-butter.” In studying several exhibitory projects in Scandinavia and elsewhere in the 1960s and 70s, I examine curatorial feminist practices building spatial constructs that question how and why labour can overturn societal structures. Artists at times take the lead in exhibition making (curating) to point to otherwise undiscussed positions of power. The document facilitates novel and soft forms of curating.

During the three past years, I have partially retransferred these feminist strategies often happening in small- and medium-sized institutions and whose knowledge I acquired through research into my curatorial work. Therefore, the project includes collected writings about the non-conformant body as the site of trauma, problematising curating, often co-opting representation. Art produces in more places than one, and curating rests on an exceptionality of the arts where diverse practices remain under the radar. The exhibition space still needs to be considered an active public space to overthrow mainstream norms. In the aesthetic sphere, curating works as a counter-hegemonic tool to propose new forms of living together. I argue that curating continues to produce the yet unknown and yet-to-be accepted, a fundamental motor of emancipation for a more equitable society.

ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

Declaration: I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

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CONTENTS

9 Introduction

30 Part 1.

Local Norwegian feminist practices in the 1960s and 1970s: The Artists' Situation (1971), an exhibition by Aina Helgesen on immaterial work

This chapter explores the theoretical, aesthetic, and sociopolitical conditions connecting the work of feminist sociologist, and eventually curator, Aina Helgesen from throughout the 1960s in Norway to international preoccupations regarding building meaningful and novel expository practices that come closer to the socioeconomic conditions of artists. The shifting notion of labour is analysed through academic references influencing French students at the time (Karl Marx, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir, among others) to reconstruct a framework around Helgesen's curatorial strategies. Moreover, it gives an overview of how her thinking process intersects seminal artists' collectives within the country at the time (such as the Gras group) to create a critique of artistic strategies, crossing over with and giving rise to an alternative notion of curatorial labour.

- 31 (1.1) *The artist claims to be a worker in the Western world; introduction to the historical shifting discourse of the 1960s and 1970s*
- 32 (1.2) *In and out of Norway during the 1960s*
- 32 (1.3) *The political awakening in France and Southern Europe; the feminist discourse; Beauvoir and the existentialist movement*
- 33 (1.4) *The concept of need and subsistence within the existentialist movement in the post-war period; how need becomes connected to the financial during the 1960s capitalist expansion*
- 35 (1.5) *The concept of labour and transubstantiation in Sartre*
- 35 (1.6) *Helgesen's existentialist ideas meet the Marxist-Leninist theories of the Gras group*
- 36 (1.7) *Abstraction itself is a product of historical relations*
- 37 (1.8) *How the investigative process into The Artists' Situation began*
- 38 (1.9) *The exhibitory moment: An exhibition of charts and graphs*
- 40 (1.10) *Lacan and Gestalt theory*
- 41 (1.11) *Beauvoir's concept of aesthetics*
- 42 (1.12) *First conclusions.*

53 Part 2.

Unknotting the exhibitory: Problematising patriarchal exhibition making in the failures of the avant-gardes with a digression into the field of vision, around and about living art, ephemeralisation, and anamorphosis

This chapter counters the discussion initiated in the previous one to give a larger geographical perspective on curatorial practices that were becoming prominent during the same years in greater Scandinavia, and the more widely known experimental practices in continental Europe and the US. It looks into the notion of artists taking a leading role as exhibition curators, attempting to

expand power within the art system as a whole as well as to subvert display systems and communication channels within expository practices.

54 (2.1) *Work and intoxication*
58 (2.2) *The notion of welfare in Scandinavia through a reading of Jorgen Nash*
57 (2.3) *The return to magic*
60 (2.4) *Who is "I," what is an institution and deontic relationships*
62 (2.5) *Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out! (1974–78), a series of feminist exhibitions and a book with Ann Christine Eek*
64 (2.6) *The exhibitory moment: Nine stories of a struggle in ten chapters*
67 (2.7) *Shaping a self-positioning through the process of anamorphosis; sexuality in the field of vision*
69 (2.8) *The spirit of the time is in the air: The dematerialisation of the art object.*

80 **Part 3.**

A curatorial materialist approach: The forensic exhibitionary complex

This chapter looks into the document's role in substantiating dematerialised forms of exhibition making. Traversing aesthetic and political concerns, the document as the travelling exhibitory site prefigures the birth of the intellectual class (Antonio Gramsci's notion of the "organic intellectual"), coming closer to the working class. The materialist curatorial role is retranslated here as the archivist or the chronicler, trying to make sense of the fragments left behind by artists' or world events. In such a process, the "media conglomerate," used as part of Happenings and other Conceptual Art movements during the 1960s and 1970s, arises to potentially define a new curatorial approach. It is at the intersection of a complex fabricated reality that curatorial materialism (against other forms of exhibition making) takes a fundamental role in giving sense to the artwork by deploying an intermedia approach. Today, we can look at forensic practices to position the materialist curator's role both inside and outside its institutional role.

81 (3.1) *The document replacing the art object*
82 (3.2) *The popularisation of the document*
84 (3.3) *From object-based to document-based art*
86 (3.4) *The use-value of art*
87 (3.5) *Prefiguring an international division of labour*
88 (3.6) *The aesthetics of administration*
90 (3.7) *An esoteric genre of spectacle*
91 (3.8) *Second time around*
93 (3.9) *Are the secondary texts the primary texts?*
94 (3.10) *Are the secondary texts a media conglomerate?*
94 (3.11) *New Documents: The everyday re-enters the museum in the form of photography*
96 (3.12) *Piecing together the artwork*
96 (3.13) *The exhibition space becomes the space of the forensic.*

109 **Part 4.**

Transitioning from theory to practice: Towards curatorial projects

This chapter presents observations, presentations, and other texts commissioned during the research period by external entities, touching upon small- and medium-sized institutions' role in revindicating a different history and temporality. This includes topics such as how temporary institutions destabilise the work of museums and large collecting bodies, defining a transnational public sphere, and working on issues of equality and solidarity.

- 110 (4.1) *An Alliance of Bodies Reclaiming The Right to Appear: Introduction*
- 112 (4.2) *Materialising words, performing textiles: Fashioning unruly stories (on finding archival traces on modernity's ruins—feminist approaches through the work of Marianne Heier and Franz Petter Schmidt)*
- 116 (4.3) *Trembling institution (about the work of the queer-feminist platform FRANK)*
- 121 (4.4) *Gender, I'm in trouble (about the performance work of Harald Beharie and Louis Schou-Hansen)*
- 132 (4.5) *What new internationalism? (on attempting to claim a transnational public space through a reading of Geeta Kapur).*

141 **Part 5.**

Curating an institution: Practising forms of assembly through exhibition making

From August 2018, under my directorship, the Oslo-based institution Fotogalleriet (Norway's photography kunsthalle, and the oldest institution of its kind in the Nordic region) developed a new set of programmes aimed at unveiling the feminist strategies of the institution since its inception in 1977. Fotogalleriet commissioned a new generation of artists to produce works and launch historical investigations. The subject of investigation was artistic positions that had either fallen into oblivion or not been brought to the forefront of discussion within the institution, based first and foremost on positions of provenance and gender. In this final chapter, I collect writings about the non-conformant body as the site of trauma, problematising curating, which at times co-opts representation as an inherent act of violence, while curators look for exhibition making's egalitarian aspirations under the current predicaments of exhibiting. It concludes with a number of reflections about curatorial materialism, including queer and radical feminist thinkers, artists, and practitioners, to analyse, among other concerns, how feelings—a set of principles instrumentally manipulated during modernity—have been fictionally made atavistic to comply with the political economy of governance of our time, encapsulating one single view as universal in order to subjugate diversity, and thus shaping the space of representation—namely the exhibition space—to a univocal purpose.

- 142 (5.1) *The exhibition space as the non-conformant body: An introduction*

144	<i>(5.2) Displaying the politics of inactivity</i>
154	<i>(5.3) The missing image</i>
158	<i>(5.4) Let's talk</i>
165	<i>(5.5) Anger, love, and silence: Caring for emotions in the exhibition space</i>
175	<i>(5.6) Some conclusions.</i>
193	Conclusions: Curating between the No Longer and the Not Yet
220	Bibliography

Introduction

The radical moment of the 1960s and 1970s was pivotal within the arts for subverting predetermined art historical categories as well as shifting the meaning and substance of the artwork in connection to the changing role of labour within the renewed imperialist and capitalist ambitions of Western societies. As labour took on novel immaterial forms, with upward trends in outsourcing, the arts critically mirrored this process within and outside the exhibition space.¹ This research project looks at the formation of curatorial labour as a “migratory” role in continuous formation, including by “outside” practitioners such as feminist sociologist Aina Helgesen in Norway (where I have been based for the past decade), who, in an exemplary and underrated exhibition held in 1971, in Oslo, both devised strategies for the display system (i.e., the exhibition) and challenged the notion of what is to be considered an artwork.² In her seminal exhibition *Kunstnerkår (The Artists' Situation, 1971)*, involving several local artists whose identities were mixed in favour of creating a joint work, Helgesen presented the precarious conditions of the artistic community of the region “curated” into a temporal, spatialised format, shaking the preconceived expectations of the viewer. The exhibition had a twofold intention: first, to highlight art historical formation through both artistic and expository labour, by dissecting and showing the overall display format which facilitates artistic interventions and curatorial narratives; and, secondly, to assert the expanded state of things and of the world: social unrest, national and international labour movements demanding more political rights for underprivileged classes of workers, including artists, and unreported subjectivities within the art infrastructure at large.³ Focusing on the material conditions deeply rooted in the struggle “for bread-and-butter,” she unveiled exploitative conditions at work not only outside but within the arts.⁴

Helgesen’s sociological research intersected concurrent feminist claims coming from neighbouring countries such as Sweden, where in the capital city collectives such as Group 8 held heated discussions throughout the 1970s to push questions concerning work for all, shorter working days, accessible childcare, abortion rights, and the right to pain relief during child birth, among others.⁵ Its activities were varied, ranging from targeted actions, manifestations, and demonstrations to musical theatre and discussions. Here, in Stockholm, artist Ann Christine Eek, who would later move to Oslo, worked together with writers Kajsa Ohrlander and Ann Mårtens on an enquiry into women’s conditions, culminating in a book and exhibition titled *Arbeta—inte slita ut sig! (Work—Don’t Wear Yourself Out!)*. The project concerned the need to document and transform the increased demand put on workers by corporations and legitimised by state regulations. The stories of nine women’s everyday lives, particularly their “double work,” became part of a touring exhibition shown in Stockholm and Malmö in 1974–75, reaching Oslo in 1978. These four practitioners’ research—driven in particular by visual propositions pushing the space of representation to accept the unknown, the unspoken in the realm of the arts—intersects in their various works, eventually merging in the pivotal 1975 exhibition *Kvinnfolk (Women)* at Kulturhuset in Stockholm.

As the feminist approach of both Eek and Helgesen—one that activates an exploration of history formation both vertically and horizontally within the state apparatus—has deeply affected my curatorial practice, I look here towards finding a larger, paradigmatic context to frame their work within the changes formulated during those years, and especially during the 1960s, questioning how these radical ideas could potentially be retransferred, curatorially, into an exhibition space today.⁶ The research is also directed towards repositioning the attributes of the curator from those of a power figure to those of a more “organic intellectual” working to facilitate, and not to take, the space of the artist or others in the aesthetic space of appearance, the exhibition space. To do so, I retrace the formation of the term “curator,” as well as different struggles of recognition, including artists exercising the right to appear in these ongoing struggles for definitions, mirroring ongoing demands in the bourgeois public sphere (the street, the square, the pavement) to reach legislative political determination. This performativity of aesthetics and utterance taking place outside parliamentary modes of written and spoken contributions provides no less a call for justice.

The term “curator,” according to art historian and cultural critic Beatrice von Bismarck, crystallised as a job description after 1945, declassing artists and scholars who now maintained a “lower position” in the art world system.⁷ The term expanded as art became more discursive and attuned to context during the 1960s, both through the rise of immaterial production such as installation, Happenings, and performance art as well as with the increasing availability of easily reproducible documentation via photography in the expanded field; the event became the primary experience, rather than the artworks on display. Dematerialisation, an epic social process, began to delineate new contours in the capitalist mode of production and within the arts. Clearly, the “curatorial” in this era came to define a new set of material relationships between concepts of labour, value, and class, where a cultural hegemony is inscribed (not explicitly) under the ruling bourgeoisie, using cultural institutions to maintain the ruling classes’ power.

Curator and writer Paul O’Neill describes the shift to curator-as-auteur as being famously exemplified by the case of the exhibition maker Harald Szeemann and his *Großausstellung* (great exhibition) approach, in which artworks are commissioned, selected, and drawn to a central concept to provide new interrelationships through mere juxtaposition.⁸ As Szeemann blurs the domains of art and curatorship, he also embodies a new figure within a bourgeoisie enterprise system where the means of production belong to their capitalist owner, who can direct the enterprise’s production or entrust that task to a salaried director.⁹ Szeemann, in fact, inspired generations of curators (including curator-artists) to explore the role of such a subject position in the contemporary world, a power-based profession which has been constituted and retransmitted, in part, according to curatorial studies scholar Dorothee Richter, on Szeemann’s self-staging.¹⁰ When he resigned the Kunsthalle Bern directorship amid public controversies for his allegedly provocative programme in 1969, Szeemann began a phase of reflection on himself as a professional figure. This led to a seemingly unprecedented gesture: the foundation of an agency of which he was the sole employee, which he named the Agentur für geistige Gastarbeit (either Agent for Spiritual Guest Labour or Agency for Spiritual Work Abroad, according to different attempted translations).¹¹ It is important to note here how the curatorial role has become, even in Szeemann’s words, “migratory,” confounding mass movements of people in search of shelter and food with more privileged forms of

intellectual work moving beyond the servitude of one single nation state (modernity's dictatorship monitoring the movement of people and goods).¹² The "curator" left with no institution "institutionalises" himself to become an "enterprise" (impresario) at best, or a freelancer (independent), aligning himself to precarious work as designated by the capitalist system (I would say in Szeemann's case only conceptually, and mostly for strategic reasons).¹³ In Szeemann's dry gesture of pretending to take on the more general condition of immigrant workers in Western Europe (called *Gastarbeiter*) struggling for their daily sustenance and acceptance in their community of arrival, much has been read yet little has been critically addressed through his actual curatorial work.¹⁴ Namely, one should speak about appropriating both the means of production through his curatorial work as well as the space of appearance, that is, the political space of self-determination, where people can constitute their subjectivity and their normativities through a complex performance of assembling for the right to the image and all the technologies engaged in the definition of the right to appear, the right to have rights.¹⁵

I briefly navigate these Szeemannian roles in order to outline the mood of the era, to sketch the context where other subjective positions and struggles started to emerge. The first commission for the Agentur für geistige Gastarbeit took place in Norway at the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter with a project titled *Vår verden av ting—Objekter* (*Our World of Things—Objects*, 1970), an exhibition drawing a historical trajectory from Marcel Duchamp's readymades, through Surrealism and Pop Art, and plunging into the present day.¹⁶ Among more historical objects, the exhibition included works by German Fluxus and Happening artist Wolf Vostell and American Fluxus artist and avant-garde composer George Brecht. We should consider here—perhaps in contradiction with, but mostly adding to, O'Neill's and von Bismarck's arguments—that the formation of a curatorial position was still struggling against an artist subject position, but that these relations remained permeable, although the art system privileged this new impresario role.¹⁷ In an interview with journalist Petra Kipphoff, in the German weekly *Die Zeit* in 1972, Szeemann defines as part of his work a wide-ranging list including travel, research, administration, and being a sensitive art lover, writer of forewords, librarian, manager, accountant, animator, conservator, agent of finance, and diplomat, in a role close to that of an entrusted salaried director or managerial consultant.¹⁸ If this work is certainly more complex than curating as a two-stage process—a selection of artists for exhibition (following research) and then an organic development of work by the selected artists in the exhibition space,¹⁹ which interestingly and unwillingly resembles a division of tasks in a Fordist production chain—it is still far from showing the mechanisms guiding the working conditions pertaining to the exhibition space in itself. These structures continue to replicate patriarchal dictates as univocal and ontological givens, including predefined subjects and identities. The patriarchy of the white cube not only determines the meaning of what is being exhibited (the norm) but also shapes behaviour and forms specific subjectivities that move from the exhibition space outwards; the white cube serves as an aesthetic "training centre," first deceiving the eye and consequently normalising the body. One could argue that Szeemann not only maintains but "exports" the same unequal structural conditions of the exhibition space through his mobility, and only unconsciously brings the subversive nature of the "event" as a less stable category of display within the already consecrated spaces of the arts.²⁰ Operations of shaking the very constitution of such hierachal expository systems were, in fact, happening with Happenings, actions, Fluxus, and the Situationists, which turned against the art establishment, collecting institutions, and their ruling

system.²¹ Within this context, artists at times take an allegedly identical leading role (the curatorial) as *Ausstellungsmacher* (a maker of exhibitions). In such a naming, curator and critic Hans Ulrich Obrist finds more than semantics at stake.²² I would read even further into these semantics, as in such wording the curator is invoking the idea of a maker-creator of all existence. Not by chance is Szeemann defining himself simultaneously as archivist, conservator, art handler, press officer, accountant, and “accomplice” of a number of artists, which role equates to what, in retrospect, has been called and popularised as the space of the curatorial.²³ He defiantly glorifies the idea of self-sufficiency. As if he does not need anyone else, as if he never depended upon artistic and other relations or upon other social institutions and maintenance—including cooking, cleaning, coordinating, and secretarial work—in order to survive and to prosper. We do not know the material and immaterial structures of support that have enabled him to live a full life. Not about his parents or kinship. He originates from the current state of the arts “naturally.” We do not understand how he became individuated, nor why curating should be the base of art relations and for whom these relations are. He has, from birth, already been setting an agenda alone. There is no dependency or social assignment—an autonomous decision.²⁴ Such a univocal claim with universalistic views has grave consequences for what happens to the potential of developing a diverse space of representation. Why and for whom do we present, open, write, and instigate debate? How do we define and claim our curatorial function in relation to other functions in the space of representation?

It is in such respect, in antagonism and opposition to a unidirectional approach to individualist curating, that it is important to take into account a different kind of exhibition making, a “curatorial materialism,” one that is a critical investigation into the conditions of curatorial production, including self-organised productions and the infrastructures allowing curators, artists, technicians, builders, educators, intellectual producers, government officials, sponsors, donors, supporters, and publics alike to come together. Moreover, there is the need to become manifest, to reclaim representation as a heavily occupied (one could go so far as to say colonised) political space (by the bourgeois, defined as public space), and to consider which space we are given for appearance when particular bodies are not given such a right, and hence remain politically irrelevant and unrecognised (and here with “particular bodies” I also mean the consequent presence or lack of objects entering the space directly, connecting to people who are denied such privilege).²⁵ We should pay particular attention to the law and national jurisdictions, scientific, aesthetic, and academic categorizations defining what a body is, human and inhuman, and what is considered a person and a nonperson in different historical times.²⁶ It is here that early feminist curating, still underrated and underinvestigated, proves helpful in defining new relations and independent productions and reconsidering and transforming these given socioeconomic structures and categories, including the determination of production and reproduction of relations of power.²⁷

In this research project, I analyse a number of radical exhibitory strategies which could have potentially influenced Aina Helgesen’s curatorial thinking (directly or indirectly, in an Hegelian *Zeitgeist* where the reverberation of ideas loom larger than mere encounters), including exhibitions and events largely modulated by “artists” (Helgesen was appointed as curator and researcher by an artists’ union, *Unge Kunstneres Samfund* (UKS, Young Artists’ Society), in Oslo, in which we can read the formation of what cultural theorist Elke Krasny later defined as the curatorial materialist approach).²⁸ I draft thoughts around a number of less and more widely

known exhibitions in Scandinavia to create a context of readability for positioning these disruptive practices, including the role that small, medium-sized, and temporary institutions play in maintaining an oppositional role to the establishment. The exhibition *Destruction of the RSG-6* (with Guy Debord, J. V. Martin, and Michèle Bernstein) at Galerie EXI, Odense, in June–July 1963; an event held by the group Co-Ritus (led by artists Jørgen Nash and Jens Jørgen Thorsen) at Galerie Jensen, Copenhagen, in December 1962; and the exhibition *Piero Manzoni* at Galerie Køpcke, Copenhagen, in June–July 1960, all pushed the limits of the exhibition space, addressing to a certain extent the dematerialisation of labour and structural issues of power, and proposing other societal organisational forms, literally attempting to make the material conditions available to the public and to make the public the conscious producer of these conditions.²⁹ Guided by performance as a more open-ended form of gathering bodies around the space of appearance and representation, Fluxus tropes come to be equally present and relevant in the region, firstly in Copenhagen through the DUT music festival as early as 1962 (through Danish musician Jørgen Friis Holm, German Denmark-based artist Arthur Køpcke, and Danish artist Eric Andersen, among others), and through others efforts largely choreographed by George Maciunas, who acted as impresario (paradoxically the same title often applied to Szeemann) of the informal Fluxus group.³⁰

A curatorial materialism assumes in this context an avant-gardist's take on exhibition making. It is a laboratory transforming the conditions of production and distribution of art and the very idea of labour.³¹ The exhibition is seen as only a moment of the political call for justice, at times closely aligned to activism.³² The administering of the experience of art by selecting and reflecting on what is made visible under precarious living conditions contextualises and frames production, the distribution of funds, collaborations with the press, and working with politicians and other government bureaucrats, and it also acts as an intermediary between given power structures. In such a process, some artists take a leading voice or role, beyond the locus of the artwork (the historically defined domain of the artist), to encompass what today is defined as a “curatorial” role. This is equally a way of questioning the very structure determining the meaning of art, and therefore redefining the curatorial undertaking (the representational space as a space of struggle concurrent to other domains of exploitation), spinning criticality, and challenging overwhelming and at times inaccessible structures of power, where the curator is not a univocal and unifying voice but rather a node of propagation of precarious positions within society.³³ In the argumentation throughout the different chapters, the term avant-garde assumes different signifiers to adjust to different historical contexts and periods. Different uses of the same term with different connotations may appear contradictory. However, a contextual reading gives the term meaning according to contextual positions. Despite the early avant-gardes soliciting full artistic autonomy, they always urged social change, which is central to the thesis and still makes them relevant to this day. With successive decades and learning from earlier avant-gardes in the post-war era, reinvigorated avant-garde movements brooded and partially repudiated such autonomy and neglected their predecessors, pointing to their failures. Especially in the 1960s and the brewing students movement, the avant-gardes wish to move beyond the exhibition space as the sole locus of signification (autonomous) and the only place to provoke change by extending into and appropriating the street.³⁴

As dematerialised practices germinated around the world during the 1960s and 1970s, artists unveiled extreme politics, such as with *Tucumán Arde* (*Tucumán Is Burning*, 1968) in Buenos Aires and Rosario, Argentina, an intervention in mass communication staged by the Rosario Group, generating a circuit of counter-information in support of sugar mill and farm workers in Tucumán, where people were lead to poverty and starvation by the local dictatorship.³⁵ *Tucumán Arde* represents a situation where artists fully move into the realm of social justice struggles and see the possibilities of collaborating with workers and unions to spearhead demands for drastic structural changes of conditions within society.³⁶ It is here that forms of antagonism, opposition, dialogue, and art's negotiations can be found. A key cultural negotiator in Argentina during those years, Oscar Masotta, was an artist deeply invested in Lacanian theories, especially during the last part of his life, drawing particular opposition to knowledge as part of "spoliation."³⁷ In his anti-Happening movement, he mediated the anaesthetised performances of composer La Monte Young in events Masotta staged from New York to Buenos Aires, to address the struggles of the contextual political situations; these events included Happenings such as *To Induce the Spirit of the Image* (1966) at the Instituto Torcuato di Tella, Buenos Aires. The very violence of the labour conditions within the society of the spectacle was performed live in front of the eyes of the spectators: cultural and other elites, those managing the means of exploitation.³⁸ Both audience and performers were submitted to pitiless procedures through the manipulation of light, sound, and smell.

As I alluded earlier, there is an important and underrated strand in exhibition histories of the curatorial triumph of the individual curator, which would become prominent in the 1990s, something that was prefigured in the late 1960s and beginning of the 1970s with the likes of Harald Szeemann and his by now landmark exhibitions *When Attitudes Become Form* at Bern Kunsthalle in 1969 and documenta V in Kassel, Germany, in 1972, as well as with, for example, Kynaston McShine's *Information* at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1970. Such exhibitions renewed curatorial strategies aimed at drawing attention to the impromptu exhibition space as a politicised site for critical discussion, though they mostly failed to unveil the darknesses belonging to the field.³⁹ In Debord's words, "critical in its content, ... art must in its form be self-critical."⁴⁰ Masotta pointed out in his writings an art proposition which we should retranslate as a paradigm for curatorial materialism: 1. It situates the artwork on both a contemporary and a historical level of significance; 2. It opens new aesthetic possibilities while simultaneously airing the sociopolitical conditions; 3. It reveals something fundamental about both the art system and the economic system into which the art system is inserted; and 4. It calls into question the limits of the exhibitory space, while pointing out the need to overcome it.⁴¹

Through exhibition making and new curatorial undertakings, we can read the peculiarity of the 1960s in the era's flirtatious interrogation and manipulation of information media, which we might describe as the new bourgeois public sphere, which served as the base of production of new areas of invisible labour—something that has intensified in our days.⁴² These new spaces had to be reconverted and appropriated into a theme to be analysed self-critically because of the extended power of mass information: an "intermedia" exhibitionary form from which to learn and devise new strategies of diffusing and distributing "curatorship."⁴³

Working in an area of activity that sits in a hybrid of genres, these practices should be readdressed again today, because they continue to exist every time one speaks about a singular work (existing beyond its objectual form), complicating the material conditions of possible exploitation. They could bring forward the idea of curatorial materialism as a carefully produced and manipulated media conglomerate—a complex understanding of intermixed material whose fundament is the perceptual and temporal experience overcoming the objectual singularity; an ambivalence of inscriptive technologies and representational media, of which language is only one of the surrounding writings.⁴⁴ Increasingly today, people gather on the streets to demand not only rights but their very possibility to appear when at times they also lack the political rights to do so; such demands are constituted and supported through a complex interplay of performance, image, acoustics, and all the technology engaged in these productions. The “media” is no longer just reporting what people claim but has entered the very definition of “the people.”⁴⁵ In the arts, what has been largely addressed is how ephemeral practices have been digested by the voracious machinations of the art market after their first powerful inception and ambition.⁴⁶ What remains to be studied is how to strip the ideological rupture erupting through the arts in overindustrialised societies across the Pacific and the Atlantic, which today results in powerful anaesthetised versions in our self-claimed democracies, and in their spaces of political and aesthetic representation.⁴⁷ The question still remains today how to assert forms of curatorial materialism within a larger (and militarised) public sphere overtly defined by a complex media conglomerate intersecting the exhibition space’s reach. A conjunctive discussion of art and labour is deemed necessary to continue unravelling the origins of the division of labour. One needs to draw a systematic division between productive and reproductive labour within and outside the arts, to continue unravelling the automation of the hierarchical care of objects, emotions, and people, and to point out the aesthetic strategies impinging on social reproduction.⁴⁸ The challenge today is exactly how to use the intermedia at our disposal to keep producing experience (not the “authentic,” but simply experience without hiding the system producing it), in light of the “exhibitionary complex”—that is, the intersection of economic and political interests that constitutes and produces, according to sociologist Tony Bennett, an apparatus correlative to the art world that strategically presents itself as self-evident, transparent reality.⁴⁹

At the intersection of a search for forms of equality pursuing classless, genderless, unsubordinated, non-normalised subjects, we can develop new thinking around a curatorial materialism that takes its distance from the *beau monde*, providing answers to and propositions about our own worldly condition with precarious lives, preventing the intrinsic transcendence of the autonomous artwork to not speak about the here and now, the situatedness of the producer, and all the actors involved in exhibition making, to reclaim it as a politicised sphere of action for catalysing change. A need to persist with these revolutionary and subversive curatorial practices—including looking into non-professionalised forms of knowledge and grassroots networks, and a more radical curating—demands looking back as much as looking forward into the difficulty of simply or directly bringing these ephemeral strategies back into display. If we look at more contemporary projects, such as *Segunda Vez* (*Second Time Around*, by Dora García, 2014–18), Migrant Workers’ Video Collective (Song Yi, 2016–), *Dance with Farm Workers* (Wen Hui, Wu Wenguang, Song Dong, and Yin Xiuzhen, 2001), *A Haunted Biscuit and the Spectre of the Glorious Past* (Cihad Caner, 2018), and the *Speak2Tweet* project (Heba Y. Amin, 2011–), they all have attempted to question the overdefined space of representation determined by

exhibition strategies only and limited by mainstream and patriarchal curatorial models, while at the same time strengthening the power of art to reach beyond its designated audience and location. The space of curating (instead of curating in a space) becomes the site for production of the fleeting, factual “evidence,” in an attempt for art to move away from a sphere of autonomy and become *útil* (useful).⁵⁰ Curatorial materialism is still the realm of the potential, collecting particles of a fragmented and precarious body, which could constitute, in a teleological absence, an image of the artwork (or of reality), both available for critique and projecting yet-to-be-recognised bodies in the space of appearance and representation.⁵¹ Particularly by coming closer to the making processes of García’s *Second Time Around*, I became aware of the possibility of working trans-institutionally, of defining what I would call a trans-institutionality, that is, the possibility to work across existing institutional platforms and beyond institutional practices of determined times for commissioning and developing projects. Instead, different temporalities, alliances, and collaborative processes of agential reappropriation can be imagined. Projects can and should become nomadic to gain their own identity, moving between exhibitions, books, digitally accessible materials, and moving images, intersecting with the politics of the street, of what is happening at the threshold of the institution’s architecture—to bring the struggle of the street inside the purified exhibitory space. We can create the possibility of new institutions by crossing given spaces and times. In this study, for this reason, I rely on art historian and critic Geeta Kapur’s applied concept of the transnational public sphere in the field of aesthetics through a reading of the Venice Biennale curatorship. Kapur contends with the deterritorialisation of people and cultures and the “miracle of electronic communication.” There are coercive and liberatory forces in these transnational, transcultural contested spaces centred around forms of violent control. Here, a large part of the world population lives on the fringe of national jurisdictions. If we recognise such an exilic condition, we should also face the ethical and aesthetic responsibilities that come with it.⁵² Finding meaningful forms of curating (including moving away from normative curating) in such a trans-sphere is to construct a new grammar of the discourse of our contemporaneity in a process of both negotiation and confrontation with the adversary forces at stake.

Over the course of the last three years, while holding the post of Artistic Director at Fotogalleriet in Oslo, a space dedicated solely to the presentation of photography (image making) as a critical art practice, I transferred the research I had conducted in previous years, and partially collected through this research project, into the locus of the exhibition space, by dematerialising the objects of display (the expectancy of an exhibition space) and starting a programme which brought the artistic (not *the art*, but the intrinsic *revolutionary potential* of the art) “on view.” I started a new curatorial undertaking through a weekly series of discussions entitled *Let’s Talk about Images*,⁵³ constituting a platform for debating the role of images within our society, in the framework of the exhibitionary complex (the sphere of action of the institution), to show how simple gestures of disavowal may provoke artistic experience (indeed, a curatorial strategy I learned from Aina Helgesen and Ann Christine Eek). The labour—the usually hidden item deployed in the making of the exhibition—became the focus of knowledge production. The altercation of “staged” weekly conversations, the lack of visual material, and the presentation of the very emptiness of the exhibition space showed the very conditions of the white cube, in its material conditions of lighting and as the overall machine affecting our perception (especially so in the absence of the artwork). This programme revealed and reflected

on the void—so sought after in the 1960s—with the exhibition model as a critical space for reflection itself.⁵⁴ All this came about through research into strategies to articulate the hidden (or given) agenda of art, itself being questioned through the critical discourse of the 1960s and deployed in turn in the display systems of the visual arts, where exhibitions came to be interjected with actions deemed to craft a different framework for an active participation in the making and rewriting of history from below.⁵⁵ This is nothing necessarily new if one thinks of critical discourse being a natural part of the arts; however, if we think about the white cube itself becoming the exposition of critical thinking, revealing its own forms of exploitation and segregation, then this opens up a different sphere of action. As exhibitions cater to certain expectations and utopias, projecting them onto an audience considered a near-monolithic receiver of content, they also recklessly follow the economic and political interests that constitute and produce the “exhibitionary complex.”⁵⁶ Therefore, when thinking in terms of the exhibition space, and specifically of Fotogalleriet, we attempted to address how the discourse is not separated from its lived representation. For me, as a practising curator, it was a reflection on this moment of the 1960s that made me articulate a materialist curatorial stand within the art world, and find my roots as a subject coming from an underprivileged class and location.

The curator is a figure in and of potency, from whom various forms of curating ensue. The curator “plays” with the regime of representation, in the sphere of aesthetics, projecting a political space and predetermining the space of policy making. This figure has the potential to open and give access to unregistered and unrecognised bodies.⁵⁷ Today, still other forms of intersectional (non-pure, non-institutional) curating are still to be recognised as valid forms where curatorial power is at stake.

Since the collated material in this thesis was written over a period of five years, with a number of revisions, I have tried to maintain some agonistic thoughts and references to a more canonical art history, which were present at the beginning of my thinking. I further decided to include them to show a transition of thinking from the initial phase of my investigation to the end. Today I find some of these references redundant at best—at times “toxic”—and I feel one can very well live without them; however, I enjoy their hovering in the background almost as a trophy of an intellectual battle as such, in which they explicitly become outdated and disposable. Counter-writing given histories is also a practice of cleansing from such pollution, which has constrained our ability to breath freely.



Let's Talk About Images
Photo: Julie Hrcirova/Fotogalleriet



Let's Talk About Images
Contesting Images, Khaled Barakeh and Terje Abusdal in conversation with Sara R. Yazdani, 1 November 2018. Photo: Julie Hrcirova/Fotogalleriet



Let's Talk About Images

Imagining the Past, Writing the Future, Bouchra Khalili in conversation with Marianne Hultman and Antonio Cataldo, 15 November 2018. Photo: Julie Hrncirova/Fotogalleriet



Let's Talk About Images

Publishing from A Feminist Perspective, Eline Mugaas and Delphine Bedel in conversation with Tine Semb, 22 November 2018. Photo: Julie Hrncirova/Fotogalleriet



Let's Talk About Images
Technological Dystopias, Heba Y. Amin, 29 November 2018. Photo: Julie Hrncirova/Fotogalleriet



Let's Talk About Images
Screaming for Silence, Maria Pasenau, 13 December 2018. Photo: Julie Hrncirova/Fotogalleriet



Let's Talk About Images
The Place of The Image, The Space Of The Body, Knut Åsdam in conversation with Simon Sheikh, 10 January 2019. Photo: Julie Hrnčirová/Fotogalleriet

¹ Within the arts, I refer to Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009). Regarding the migration of labour, see also Joseph Ferrie and Timothy J. Hatton, "Two Centuries of International Migration," *IZA Discussion Papers*, no. 7866 (Institute of Labor Economics: December 2013).

² Little information is available in writing or images regarding this exhibition. I am conducting material reconstruction together with Aina Helgesen, through interviews and archive research. A little pamphlet from the time reports essential findings. See Aina Helgesen, "The Art Situation in Norway," 1971, translated and republished in English in 2014 in the context of the exhibition *Unwoven World: Beyond the Playable Plane*, which I curated at Office for Contemporary Art Norway, Oslo. Following his departure from his role as director at Kunsthalle Bern in 1969, the forefather of contemporary curating Harald Szeemann effectively became a freelance curator. Szeemann's Agentur für geistige Gastarbeit aligned his own practice to that of a migrant worker. See Joanna Szupinska, "Grandfather, a History Like Ours," in *HSz: As Is / As If*, ed. Julian Myers and Leigh Markopoulos (San Francisco: California College of the Arts, 2010), 31–41.

³ From an Althusserian perspective, one could say that the *superstructure* (political-legal (law and the state) and ideology (various ideologies: legal, religious, and political) cannot exist independently of the *infrastructure* (economic base, "unity" of productive forces and relations of production). Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 2009).

⁴ Elke Krasny argues how the late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed the emergence of a new type of work that radically transformed the art world's production, distribution, dissemination, study, and reception of art. On the one hand, independent curating was crucial to transforming modern art into contemporary art, while, on the other, many independent curators shaping this transformation were feminists. See Elke Krasny,

“Curatorial Materialism: A Feminist Perspective on Independent and Co-dependent Curating,” *OnCurating*, no. 29 (May 2016): 96–107.

⁵ Tina Harr, “Historien om Grupp 8 – det gör de i dag,” *Expressen*, 3 March 2014, <https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/historien-om-grupp-8--det-gor-de-i-dag/>.

⁶ Helgesen’s position contains a clear aim to rethink societal structures of inequality. Influencing the distribution of values and benefits (welfare) in society is part of a political activism, conductible to feminist political activity in two different ways. In very practical terms, some organisations, on the one hand, aim their activities directly at specific societal groups in need of establishing medical and other basic structures of support while, on the other hand, being concerned about lobbying at a state level for maternal and child welfare reforms, for instance. One could argue that these are, in fact, maternalist politics, as they address the relationship between indirect and direct, or horizontal and vertical, political activity, in order to improve the welfare of poor women and children, or as lobbying for other needy groups in society. See Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, “Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880–1920,” *American Historical Review* 95, no. 4 (1990): 1076–108. See also Eirinn Larsen, *Gender and the Welfare State: Maternalism—A New Historical Concept?* (Bergen: University of Bergen, 1996).

⁷ Beatrice von Bismarck, “Relations in Motion: The Curatorial Condition in Visual Art—And Its Possibilities for the Neighboring Disciplines,” *Frakcija*, no. 55 (2010): 50–57.

⁸ Paul O’Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2012).

⁹ One could draw a simple parallel to see how this is reflected in the larger social conditions of salaried work where the enterprise hires unskilled workers and other staff who are not workers (but managers and skilled and supervisory personnel) as wageworkers.

Wageworkers are individuals who, since they do not possess the means of production, cannot produce anything with “their own means” and, consequently, can sell only the use of their two hands to the owner of an enterprise possessing the means of production. Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (London: Verso, 2014), 154.

¹⁰ Dorothee Richter, “Artists and Curators as Authors—Competitors, Collaborators, or Team-workers?,” *OnCurating*, no. 19 (2013): 43–57; Dorothee Richter, “Artists and Curators as Authors—Competitors, Collaborators, or Team Workers?,” in *Cultures of the Curatorial*, ed. Beatrice von Bismarck et al. (Berlin: Sternberg, 2012), 229–50.

¹¹ Marina Biryukova, “Reconsidering the Exhibition When Attitudes Become Form Curated by Harald Szeemann: Form versus ‘Anti-form’ in Contemporary Art,” *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 9, no. 1 (2017): 1–12; Richter, “Artists and Curators as Authors—Competitors, Collaborators, or Team Workers?.”

¹² In the German-speaking world, *Gastarbeit* references foreign worker programmes in the 1950s and 1960s for which workers from the Mediterranean nations (Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey) were brought into industrial and manual jobs in another nations on a temporary basis. See Rita Chin, *Guest Worker Question in Post-war Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 111. This is one of the accounts used to create a parallel with Szeemann’s self-designated title, though no further explanation is given of how the precarious situation of the guest workers should be paralleled with Szeemann’s freelance position. *Gastarbeit* in Szeemann’s case does not describe a seasonal worker gaining a temporary visa to work in another country, exploiting someone’s labour force as belonging to the proletariat, a social class where belonging is based only on one’s labour-power. See Max Rosenberg, “Harald Szeemann and the Road Back to the Museum,” *Getty Research Journal*, no. 11 (2019): 107–32.

¹³ Christian L. Frock defines Szeemann’s 1960s Agentur für geistige Gastarbeit a one-man enterprise, as one of his slogans promised. Christian L. Frock, “From (Starry Eyed): Vision to Nail,” *Fillip*, Spring 2007, 6–19. Daniel Buren critiqued Szeemann, the original prototypical

independent curator, for “us[ing] artworks like so many brushstrokes in a huge painting.” Quoted in Hans Ulrich Obrist, “Mind Over Matter: Interview with Harald Szeemann,” *Artforum*, November 1996, 74–79.

¹⁴ Rainer Ganahl insists that the revolution in mobility, and Szeemann’s new way of curating and intersecting with new American art, would not have been possible without the jet revolution. Rainer Ganahl, “When Attitudes Become—Curating,” *Manifesta Journal*, 2006, 32–45.

¹⁵ The modernist politics of industrialisation, with its outsourcing and outlawing, thereby establishing imperial global actors with predetermined economic structures, supported the creation of a growing class of precarious people: migrants, refugees, and stateless persons, but also citizens now dependent on job security. See Sofia Näsström. “The Right to Have Rights: Democratic, Not Political,” *Political Theory* 42, no. 5 (2014): 543–68.

¹⁶ *Our World of Things—Objects* was exhibited at the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Høvikodden, from 11 September to 11 November 1970. The concept originated at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, and the collaboration with the Kunsthalle Nürnberg brought the involvement of Szeemann. See Tominga Hope O’Donnell, “Space as Curatorial Practice: The Exhibition As A Spatial Construct. *Ny kunst i tusen år* (1970), *Vår Verden av Ting—Objekter* (1970), and *Norsk Middelalderkunst* (1972) at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter” (PhD diss., Oslo School of Architecture and Design, 2016), https://www.academia.edu/28429224/PhD_thesis_Space_as_Curatorial_Practice_the_exhibition_as_a_spatial_construct_2016_.

¹⁷ The contemporary meaning of “curator,” as a term, is often attributed in retrospect to the moment of the 1960s and 1970s. See Von Bismarck et al., *Cultures of the Curatorial*. Szeemann called himself an “exhibition maker.” The primacy of the artist over that of the curator (here I use the term in its contemporary meaning) as author is not formalised through the practice of those years, not as a vocabulary; the terms are still porous: they work in juxtaposition within a nascent art world trying to escape designated exhibition spaces as core to the system. O’Neill assigns a change in understanding of the curator’s role to the 1980s. The title, previously attributed to the carers of institutional collections, goes now to somebody becoming an author engaged with the critical experimentation of the exhibition as a form. Formally the curator’s position (as much as the artist’s) is recognised primarily as that of an “author.” See Beatrice von Bismarck, “Relations in Motion”; Ambra Gattiglia and Hyo Gyoung Jeon, “Paul O’Neill: Curated Cultures and the Curator-as-Artist,” *Afterall*, 22 July 2013, <https://www.afterall.org/article/8400>.

¹⁸ Harald Szeemann, *Blick zurück fast ohne Zorn. Interview von Petra Kipphof*, *Die Zeit*, 27 October 1972, cited in Pietro Rigolo, *Immerseri nel luogo prescelto. Harald Szeemann a Locarno, 1978–2000* (Milan: Supernovae, 2013), 112.

¹⁹ Pablo Lafuente, “Introduction: From the Outside In—‘Magiciens de la Terre’ and Two Histories of Exhibitions,” in *Making Art Global (Part 2): ‘Magiciens de la Terre’ 1989*, ed. Lucy Steeds et al. (London: Afterall Books, 2013), 13.

²⁰ “The words ‘museum’ and ‘art’,” wrote Szeemann in his plan, “imply the idea of viewing objects and material property. ... *documenta 5* is not, in the first instance, a place for accumulation of objects, but a process of events rather than refer to one another.” See Harald Szeemann, “First Exhibition Concepts,” in *Harald Szeemann. Individual Methodology*, ed. Florence Derieux (Zurich: JRP|Ringier Kunstverlag, 2007), 93.

²¹ “That was both reactionary against, and inspired by, contemporary society.” See Margaret Sherer, “A Network of Experience: Community Building and Social Restructuring in Fluxus” (MA thesis, Washington University in St. Louis, 2016), 2,

<https://doi.org/10.7936/K79C6VQV>; Stewart Home, *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class War* (Edinburgh: Aporia and Unpopular Books, 1991).

²² Hans Ulrich Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating* (Zurich: JRP|Ringier; Dijon, France: Les Presses du réel, 2011), 99.

²³ Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*, 99.

²⁴ I am borrowing here important critiques formulated around the idea of the individual and individualism in modern times as a political subject through the work of Judith Butler, where I am attempting to retranslate such critique in the aesthetic and curatorial fields. Judith Butler, “Non Violence, Grievability, and the Critique of Individualism,” in *The Force of Non-violence* (London: Verso, 2020), 27–65.

²⁵ Krasny, “Curatorial Materialism.”

²⁶ The discussion around bodies alliance is still quintessential to demand a political space. Despite a wish to move away from such a category because of peril that these spaces exclude fragile, isolated, or suffering bodies, “body functions not as an abstraction, in Marx’s terms, but rather as one of the many incarnations of an ever more pervasive vital matter.” Marina Vishmidt, “Bodies in Space: On the Ends of Vulnerability.” *Radical Philosophy*, 2.08 (Autumn 2020): 33–46. We need to acknowledge that for the many to whom citizenship or asserting their rights is not given, their body claim in a physical space is the only possibility of asserting their presence. Such a right can be articulated, as I’ll clarify further in the last chapter, through a reading of Judith Butler and the surface. We should not intend to use the street only in its literal meaning but mostly and foremost by the very possibility of the street or the square still asserting the symbolic public space par excellence. Accessibility to public space is given through an intersection of technologies, where the street and the square are only one node of a complex network. In this sense, the body itself should be considered a surface, which works in alliance with other apparatuses. Other bodies (physical and represented) access the street or are represented by other bodies on the street. Only by accessing such a space of visibility, the public space of agency, can we claim space and make demands. We should also not forget that, despite their vulnerability, for people whose political identity or recognition is not given, asserting their bodily presence may be their only proof of recognition and existence under the law. Here, I also redirect to a reading of Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Absentees: On variously missing persons* (New York: Zone Books, 2021). Heller-Roazen formulates an important distinction between the person and the nonperson as (dis-)functional categories of the law. Besides biopolitical studies and preoccupations, he clarifies that the existence of a human as a subject of political preoccupation and political agency is given by being an active subject of the law. Unfortunately, and because of this inextricable representation of the body into the law, its physical assertion is fundamental in extricating policies of agency and presence to assert demands, today through politics of citizenship. Such predicates are so engraved in the Western system. Even literature, as he demonstrates, has been a site of exploration of its paradoxes and possibilities.

²⁷ Krasny, “Curatorial Materialism.”

²⁸ “The seventies locate its radical notions not so much in the art as in its attitudes to the inherited ‘art’ structure of which the gallery space is the prime icon. The structure is questioned not by classic resentment but by project and gesture, by modest didacticism and phasing of alternatives.” See Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 77. In 1969, Tommaso Trini used the term “museographical emergency” to define the problematic generated by the entrance of artworks with a process-oriented dimension into the museum context, due to the fixity implicit to the museum concept. See Tommaso Trini, “The Prodigal Master’s Trilogy,” *Domus*, September 1969, n.p. Irene Calderoni further argues the case for the fundamental step the 1960s took in displacing the institutionalised exhibition space, such as the museum, with impermanent works “commissioned” solely for the purpose of exhibition, and consequently reinforcing the authorial role of the curator: “Multiple aspects, ranging from display techniques to catalogue design and from advertising strategies to the artist-institution relationship, rendered these shows [January 5–31, 1969, Seth Siegelaub, New York, 1969; *Op losse schroeven: situaties en cryptostructuren*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1969; *Spaces*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1969; *Information*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1970; …] innovative with respect to traditional shows. In most cases, the works did not preexist the shows, but were created for and within them, with relevant consequences for the status of both the work and

the exhibition medium.” See Irene Calderoni, “Creating Shows: Some Notes on Exhibition Aesthetics at the End of the Sixties,” in *Curating Subjects*, ed. Paul O’Neill (London: Open Editions; Amsterdam: De Appel, 2007), 65.

²⁹ According to Jakob Jakobsen, the idea behind the Co-Ritus event in Copenhagen, in 1962, was that the public should become participant. The room contained art materials instead of artworks. Jakob Jakobsen, “The Artistic Revolution: On the Situationists, Gangsters and Falsifiers from Drakabygget,” in *Expect Anything Fear Nothing: The Situationist Movement in Scandinavia and Elsewhere*, ed. Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen & Jakob Jakobsen (Copenhagen: Nebula; New York: Autonomedia, 2011), 215–75.

³⁰ Covering graphic design, architecture, art history, and real-estate entrepreneurship, Maciunas devoted himself so extensively to organising, producing, and managing events that, in retrospect, we could say he acted as a curator staging the presence of Fluxus locally and internationally. See Julia Robinson, “Maciunas as Producer: Performative Design in the Art of the 1960s,” *Grey Room*, no. 33 (Fall 2008): 56–83.

³¹ Roger Rothman, “Fluxus, or the Work of Art in the Age of Information,” *symploka* 23, no.s 1–2 (2015): 309–25.

³² David Banash, “Activist Desire, Cultural Criticism, and the Situationist International,” *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies*, no. 19 (2000): 2–17.

³³ Though this position has been cleared when it comes to artists taking leading roles. See, regarding Fluxus: Robinson, “Maciunas as Producer”; and regarding Happenings and the Situationist International: Jon Erickson, “The Spectacle of the Anti-spectacle: Happenings and the Situationist International,” *Discourse* 14, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 36–58. Curating was still challenging its own positioning to be able to accept such mixed roles. Here one can attempt to update von Bismarck’s arguments reported in Bismarck, “Relations in Motion.”

³⁴ Movements like Dada, De Stijl, Surrealism, Constructivism, and Futurism pleaded a social change from within the institution of art, eventually leading to more significant societal changes as holders of aesthetic affection for more extensive behavior in society. Later movements such as Situationism International and Tucumán Arde continued using the exhibition space to make their claim. They addressed the limitations of the physical space of art in quests for social change and the need to take the street to involve the workers in such a battle. The autonomy of art in its “consecrated cathedrals” was undoubtedly affected in this process. Such fictional division between different historical periods and decades that may appear at first sight as a dichotomy in the development of my argument has more complex nuances and complexity. Therefore, each instance must speak for itself. One can read in each movement a genuine affection of society in its term, which is why we continue to study them. Today, they are still central part in inspiring change, taking into account an historical context from where we work. They show how specific transgressive tactics may be subsumed into the system, becoming less effective and demanding ever new strategies for real affection.

Maintaining each movement’s ambiguity in the writing of this work, with its achievements and failures, is essential in the overall argument, and to look for revolutionary strategies. They saw in this collective movement a dissipation of art into life, and therefore for art to become redundant after the revolution. Art historian and critic Claire Bishop notes some of these movements’ participatory aspirations. Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship* (London & New York: Verso, 2012), 103.

³⁵ Ana Longoni, “Is Tucumán Still Burning?,” trans. Marta Ines Merajver, *Sociedad Journal*, no. 24 (2006): http://socialsciences.scielo.org/pdf/s_rsoc/v1nse/scs_a03.pdf.

³⁶ Lucy Lippard apparently misunderstood Tucumán Arde as the total dematerialisation of art, because she missed their more theatrical presentation and staging; in fact, the Rosario group understood their work as a collective and as new forms of practice involving art, information, and tension. See Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers*, 136–37. The group also included radical feminists like artist Graciela Carnevale, who in her best-known piece padlocked the unsuspecting audience inside a gallery space.

³⁷ Such spoliation deploys labour-power to a commodity with a particular value thanks to the use of erudition in the ruling system. In *La logique du fantasme*, Jacques Lacan sets in opposition use-value and “jouissance-value.” *Jouissance* is only thinkable for Lacan if something is subtracted from it. In *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan notes that surplus-value comes from the socially necessary labour-time over and above the labour-time affected in order to maintain labour-power. This labour is paid in the same way as any other commodity: surplus-labour pays for a bonus of *jouissance*, a surplus-*jouissance*. Lacan also notes that the key to exploitation involves reducing labour-power to a commodity that has a particular value, and that such an achievement, which Marx calls “spoliation,” is allowed by knowledge. See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, book XVII (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2006), 92. Artist Dora García has dedicated a four-year study to the work of Oscar Masotta, “repeating” his landmark performances and commissioning research about his work to a number of curators, academics, and other practitioners. Some of the outputs of her projects are collated in Dora García, ed., *Segunda Vez: How Masotta Was Repeated* (Oslo: Oslo National Academy of the Arts and Torpedo, 2018).

³⁸ Inéz Katzenstein, “The Happening as Political Exorcism,” in García, *Segunda Vez. How Masotta Was Repeated*, 83–101.

³⁹ See the transcripts of Seth Siegelaub in conversation with Bartomeu Marí, MACBA Auditorium, Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art, 29 November 2010, https://img.macba.cat/public/uploads/20101122/siegelaub_eng.pdf; Lauren van Haaften-Schick, “Conceptualizing Artists’ Rights: Circulations of the Siegelaub-Projansky Agreement through Art and Law,” *Oxford Handbooks Online*, March 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935352.013.27>.

⁴⁰ It is also worth noting that this exhibition catalogue ends with graphs as a visual aesthetic and representation. Guy Debord et al., *Destruktion af RSG-6. En kollektiv manifestation af Situationistisk Internationale*, exhibition catalogue (Odense: Galerie EXI, 1963), 11.

⁴¹ Oscar Masotta, “After Pop, We Dematerialise,” in *Oscar Masotta: Segunda Vez, Cahier No. 2*, ed. Dora García (Oslo: Oslo National Academy of the Arts and Torpedo, 2017), 8–19.

⁴² In 1972, Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt published a book in German titled *Offentlichkeit und Erfahrung* (The Public Sphere and Experience) to address the structural changes happening within the public sphere and the mass media—in particular the media cartel. They noticed a wider restricted access of workers in their existing organisation to channels of communication, effecting forms of counterpublicity against the bourgeois public sphere. By studying the roles of mass media, Kluge and Negt call for proletarian publicity to intervene within mass media as the new public sphere determining visibility and representation, and hence ruling the new “urbanity” of struggles for rights and the definitions of citizenship, belonging, and equality. They state: “The characteristic weakness of virtually all forms of the bourgeois public sphere derives from this contradiction: namely that the bourgeois public sphere excludes substantial life-interests and nevertheless claims to represent society as a whole.” See Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, “The Public Sphere and Experience: Selections,” *October*, no. 46 (Autumn 1988): 60–82 (this was the first excerpt published in English of the original German book).

⁴³ It is Dick Higgins, co-founder of Fluxus, “polyartist,” poet, scholar, theorist, composer, performer, and publisher of the Something Else Press, who in 1965 restored the term “intermedia” to the English language, giving it a new dimension to recognise the dissolution of boundaries, the expansion of liminal spaces between traditional modes of art making, and opened fields for new forms that cannot be compartmentalised. See Steve Clay and Ken Friedman, eds., *Intermedia, Fluxus and The Something Else Press: Selected Writings by Dick Higgins* (Catskill, NY: Siglio, 2018). See also Dorothee Richter, “Artists and Curators as Authors—Competitors, Collaborators, or Team Workers?”; Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003); Alexander Alberro, *Abstraction in Reverse: The Reconfigured Spectator in Mid-Twentieth-Century Latin*

American Art (Chicago: University of Chicago, Press 2017); Maria Bremer, “Modes of Making Art History: Looking Back at documenta 5 and documenta 6,” *Stedelijk Studies*, no. 2 (Spring 2015).

⁴⁴ Dorothee Richter and Barnaby Drabble, “Editorial: Curating Degree Zero Archive. Curatorial Research,” *OnCurating*, no. 26 (October 2015): 4–8. Richter and Drabble sketch and sustain an idea that “contemporary curating exists as a media conglomerate; the production of meaning is achieved through a combination of artworks, photographs, commentary, publications, design, gestures, music, film, press releases, websites, and interviews. It is situated in a specific political and cultural context.”

⁴⁵ I am referring here to Judith Butler’s claim about the right for bodies to appear in public space at the intersection of use of media technology and pavements, squares, and the like. See Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 20.

⁴⁶ Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*.

⁴⁷ Seth Siegelaub, in conversation with Jo Melvin, in *From Conceptualism to Feminism: Lucy Lippard’s numbers shows 1969–74*, by Cornelia Butler et al. (London: Afterall Books, 2012), 250–62.

⁴⁸ Krasny, “Curatorial Materialism.”

⁴⁹ Tony Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” *New Formations*, no. 4 (Spring 1988): 73–103.

⁵⁰ Following the Argentine Revolution of 1966, artists mobilised against the military dictatorship’s repression. Eduardo Costa, a founding member of the art group Arte de los medio de comunicación masivo, had a credo that art should not belong to the elites. He visited New York between 1966 and 1971, encountering the Happening movement and the artist Scott Burton. The performances he conducted with Burton were recorded under the *Useful Art Manifesto*, written in English. Cuban artist Tania Bruguera has more recently cited this manifesto as inspirational to her Immigrant Movement International, an organisation advocating for the rights of migrants across the world. See Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, *Del di Tella a “Tucumán arde.” Vanguardia artística y política en el 68 argentino* (Buenos Aires: El Cielo por Asalto, 2000); Lorena Verzero and Yanina Leonardi, “La aparente resistencia: El arte Argentino entre la ética, la estética y el compromiso (1968–1973),” *Iberoamericana* 6, no. 23 (2006): 55–75. The concept of autonomy has occupied a central place in the German aesthetic tradition since the eighteenth century, specifically after Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Aesthetic judgment, according to Kant, is autonomous, as it does not rely on a concern with the object’s purpose, utility, or even its actual existence. For Theodor Adorno, the autonomy of art lies in the work of art, that is, in its production, and not specifically in the aesthetic judgments of the subject; this shifting autonomy from aesthetic judgments to art production continues to be a reservoir for human freedom within the arts. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London: Continuum, 1997), 225. “*L’art pour l’art* is ... in need of a defense.” Theodor W. Adorno, “Letters to Walter Benjamin,” in *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 1977), 122. See also Murray W. Skees, “Kant, Adorno and the Work of Art,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 37, no. 8 (2011): 915–33.

⁵¹ Borrowing from the field of architecture, law, and scientific disciplines, a vocabulary could be drawn for analysing and interpreting the work of art as a scattered entity whose unity or meaning can be read only through a forensic analysis of its remains. See Gareth Knight, “The Forensic Curator: Digital Forensics as a Solution to Addressing the Curatorial Challenges Posed by Personal Digital Archives,” *International Journal of Digital Curation* 7, no. 2 (2012): 40–63; Eyal Weizman and Tina Di Carlo, “Dying to Speak: Forensic Spatiality,” *Log*, no. 20 (Fall 2010): 125–31.

⁵² Geeta Kapur, “Curating across Agonistic Worlds,” in *InFlux: Contemporary Art in Asia*, ed. Parul Dave Mukherji et al. (New Delhi: Sage, 2013), 159–212.

⁵³ The programme launched on 1 November 2018 and ran until 19 January 2019. It included artists, curators, and practitioners Heba Y. Amin, Terje Abusdal, Khaled Barakeh, Delphine Bedel, Marianne Hultman, Bouchra Khalili, Eline Mugaas, Andrea Lissoni, Elise By Olsen, Maria Pasenau, Tine Semb, Simon Sheikh, Sara R. Yazdani, and Knut Åsdam.

⁵⁴ Irene Calderoni argues that a radical shift happened in the 1960s when installation art identified with its medium, erasing the distinction between the architecture and the work of art, which became a single entity. This can be seen in works such as Lucio Fontana's *Ambiente Nero* (1949), Yves Klein's *Le Vide* (1958), Arman's *Le Plein* (1960), and Claes Oldenburg's *The Store* (1961). Calderoni writes: "Space and time, architecture and theatre: it is between these poles, and within the precarious balance of these dimensions as well as in the hybridization of these 'other' genre that the museographical challenge, posed by art at the end of the 1960s against traditional exhibition structures, unfolds." Therefore, new curatorial and artistic challenges dictated by the time are present and in need of further exploration. See Calderoni, "Creating Shows," 66.

⁵⁵ There was a double movement in the 1960s and 1970s: an escapism from museum structures and predominant art forms and the rise of exhibition making, which brought personalities like Szeemann to lead exhibitions like documenta 5: *Questioning Reality—Image Worlds Today*, producing unconventional formats. This exhibition put on display, alongside works of art, science fiction images, political propaganda, work by the mentally ill, military insignia, and Swiss banknotes, and kitsch objects. The works of seventy contemporary artists working with performance, installation, and process art were gathered within a section entitled "Individual Mythologies." The overall structure and presence of artefacts other than art challenged the idea of "high art" as well as established Szeemann as the main authorial voice. See Claire Bishop, "What Is a Curator?," *IDEA: Area + Societate*, 2007, <http://idea.ro/revista/en/article/XOgqVhIAACIAfKxj/what-is-a-curator>. On the other hand, artists started adopting new strategies of being present within and outside the canonical art spaces. Fluxus impresario George Maciunas's newsletters and elegantly packaged boxed cards of Fluxus editions, the more traditional book format of Yoko Ono's *Grapefruit* (1964), the Something Else Press pamphlets, and Oscar Masotta's Happenings and writings crossed a number of spaces. La Monte Young's performance in churches provide another example. Curating assumes a more complex meaning, encompassing a number of dissident strategies apart from institutionalised systems.

⁵⁶ Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex."

⁵⁷ I feel there is a need for further translation of the concept of grievable lives within the aesthetic field—lives not considered of worth because they are unregistered as lives—as part of contesting patriarchal discrimination. Here I lean upon Butler, who formulates such concerns within philosophical, psychological, and ethical dilemmas, related to moral psychology. See Judith Butler, "Why Preserve the Life of the Other?," Tanner Lecture on Human Values—Interpreting Non-violence, Yale University, 30 March 2016, YouTube video, 1:11:24, posted by YaleUniversity, 30 June 2016, <https://youtu.be/4oYPnzb5JzM>.

Part 1.

Local Norwegian feminist practices in the 1960 and 1970s: *The Artists' Situation* (1971), an exhibition by Aina Helgesen on immaterial work

How can we curate an exhibition that embodies art labour and represents class inflictions as its actual content? What is its form and which kind of action or movement does it spearhead? What does it mean to see only indexes that expound layered societal contradictions? Should we not reconsider art's autonomy, and what art's "value" is? How is action transmitted, and how are artistic practices consequently being narrated? And what kind of "curatorial intervention" does this allow for?

(1.1) The artist claims to be a worker in the Western world; introduction to the historical shift in discourse of the 1960s and 1970s

During the 1960s, a major turn affected artists and the concept of the artwork within larger Western societal structures, including the institution of art. A shift occurred in the meaning of the artist as a "professional" category within the systemic politics of the post–World War II era—capitalism's golden age of economic expansion. In the US, artists pushed for their practices to be understood within the realm of workers, to align themselves with blue-collar labourers and consequently to expand the potential agency of revolution from within.⁵⁸ This aesthetic repositioning of artists as intellectual labourers implied a reinterpretation of the role of art subsumed in a professional category, with its ensuing implications in financial terms.⁵⁹ Some historians have come to define that phase as a collective period of intoxication and a moment in which a total worldview in a truly Western European perspective was claimed, in the genuine Renaissance tradition. This should perhaps be read also within a moment when anti-imperialist ideologies took hold within the more extreme factions of student- and minority-based organisations in Italy, France, Germany, Japan, and the US. The adherence to the "war" on/against imperialism spearheaded resistance movements that took urban guerrilla activity as a necessary model of a serious revolutionary movement. One of the central revolutionary art movements of the twentieth century, the Situationist International (SI), fuelled intoxication—metaphorical and literal—in private and public settings. People felt poisoned by the spirit of the time yet also found refuge in alcohol and drug experimentation to exit the determinacy of life offered to them; simultaneously, the SI operated as a sectarian exclusion based on ideology. "Intoxication" has a double sense here, referring both to a bodily affection of the wrongdoings of the coloniality of minds and bodies by state powers and to an active search for self-destruction in antagonism with the bourgeois ideology of life. Guy Debord, a co-founder and SI chief theorist, "was famously an unapologetic alcoholic."⁶⁰ The Scottish novelist and SI member Alexander Trocchi, "was a heroin addict who explicitly explored his addiction through literature."⁶¹ Enlarging the sphere of experience through the exaggerated use of poisonous substances, they move away from a lobotomised life captured in the image of the spectacle. Importantly, in "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action," Debord attacks a worldview, which "must be changed," where "the spectacle is *capital* to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image," and spectacle is the materialisation of worldview.⁶²

Europe was undergoing a rapid modernisation, or Americanisation, due to US political interests in containing communism in contextual geographies, which progressed into further exploitation of newly born nations and economies.⁶³ In the Eastern European countries, Western Europe became the basis of exchange of pervasive economic and cultural contacts, for instance.⁶⁴ In the Scandinavian context,

where workers' unions historically played a major organisational role, labour and macroeconomics were up against new modes of supply and demand, of national and international markets, where the redefining state apparatus and its macroeconomics became one and the same process of social construction. Such processes can be traced back to 1958 when the European Economic Community (EEC) was first formed to establish tariffs in six European countries. The European Free Trade Association followed in 1960, encompassing most Western European nations including the Nordic countries (which did not join the EEC).⁶⁵

(1.2) In and out of Norway during the 1960s

The wave of movements spreading throughout Scandinavia during the 1960s, liberating art from institutionalised forms of oppressed life, was a master form.⁶⁶ If in 1962 a report on the difficult situation of writers led to a commitment to cultural life on the part of the ruling Labour Party of Norway, only a small selection of writers, musicians, actors, art historians, and artists received their first grants in 1964. This did not necessarily mean that the situation was improved for the majority.⁶⁷ The article "Art for food and clothing" told that story,⁶⁸ while the *Barter Exhibition*⁶⁹ acknowledged the dramatic primary artists' need to exchange their work for essential tools and items for survival. The Norwegian artist Morten Krohg championed the need to liberate the artist from the myths and romantic notions that bourgeois society creates to make the artist harmless, meaning that under such a predicament, the actual working conditions of the arts cannot be seen and are not measurable as in other fields. He set a call for artists' wages.⁷⁰

In a society that had allegedly opened its doors to a period of affluence, with industrial development producing a stable economy, high standard of living, and desire for education, the difficult situation of the artist went hand in hand with a contestation of a conformist concept of art.⁷¹ If the local art scene in Norway seemed lethargic from the inside, the neighbouring countries inspired turmoil. Oslo-based artists received a running commentary on the state of Swedish art via artist Kjartan Slettemark, and Bergen maintained close contact with Copenhagen through the go-between Jens Jørgen Thorsen, a member of both the Second Situationist International and the Co-Ritus group.⁷²

(1.3) The political awakening in France and Southern Europe; the feminist discourse; Beauvoir and the existentialist movement

It was during these turbulent years of realignment of artistic, political, and economic interest in Norway that a pivotal alliance brought together, for the first time, the voice of a sociologist and that of underground artists. Artists' unions and artists' spaces championed a new language to bridge art and politics, and to entangle abstract financial values with the language of the visual arts. Aina Helgesen, a student of social economy and social psychology in Montpellier, France (1964–70), and no doubt affected by existentialist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir's principles, as entrenched by Jean-Paul Sartre's own theories and circulating among French students at the time, campaigned for artists' organisations and unions to reconnect them to their original histories.⁷³ In close dialogue with young artists, Helgesen was instrumental in recuperating historical modalities to push forward a new understanding of the arts that, from textual, became performative, visual propositions.⁷⁴ In line with historical figures such as the artist Christian Krohg (1852–1925), who had trained as a lawyer, and who became a driving force in the

organisational work of artists at the turn of the century, Helgesen once again made a reality of a visual language which could be turned into political action.⁷⁵

Helgesen foregrounded the artistic and cultural milieu using Sartre's lesson regarding action and praxis, together with the feminist aesthetics that Beauvoir had instilled within the French students' *stimmung* (mood).⁷⁶ In *The Second Sex* (1949), Beauvoir had already declared that "every concrete human being is always uniquely situated."⁷⁷ She points out modes of separation that are regrettably inscribed in our vocabulary and which history uses to objectify relations ("homo" for "humanity," as a good example of a first contradiction). If the category of "other" is to be found in all societies and in ancient mythologies to describe the "self," this very separation does not fall into the category of the division of the sexes.⁷⁸ In this antagonism, "a fundamental hostility to any other consciousness is found in consciousness itself; the subject posits itself only in opposition; it asserts itself as the essential and sets up the other as inessential, as the object."⁷⁹ Beauvoir asks why this relation of being "inessential" was not provoking a reciprocity of recognition so as to contest male hegemony, for instance, in its ruling governance; she inscribes this coercion as pre-existing even proletarian and class issues, and therefore calls for a "we" as a verb to prompt action. Claiming the plural "we" by bringing class and gender potentially together, Beauvoir invites a large collective body to oppose such a defined category of the "other."⁸⁰

One can read how Helgesen translates these lessons into practical strategies through a detailed analysis of the working conditions of the artists within the entire country of Norway by means of creating such a counter-community of a "we"; she made herself present to gather voices, and produced a collection of information which is shared across the entire field of art. Helgesen highlights economic and gender inequalities as paradigmatic challenges proving how discriminatory practices are structural impediments to being recognised within an artistic milieu.⁸¹ This is a societal problem to be addressed, not a singular problem.

(1.4) The concept of need and subsistence within the existentialist movement in the post-war period; how need becomes connected to the financial during the 1960s capitalist expansion

The exhibition *Kunstnerkår* (*The Artists' Situation*) was presented at *Ung Kunstneres Samfund* (UKS, Young Artists' Society) in 1971 by Aina Helgesen to provide a national survey on artists' demographic data from around the country. The exhibited charts presented the economic and social situation of Norwegian artists. Instead of compressing the findings into the space of the page in a written report and sharing it with authorities and the like, Helgesen decided to enlarge and present these statistical analyses in the form of an exhibition, with its powerful spatial construct. She elevated herself to a curatorial role, offering an overview on the actual situation which directly intertwined the exhibition as the site of opposition. The singular claims emerging from the research were drawn, framed, and installed to include certain colours, such as gold, and other mimicry strategies of the exhibitionary complex to foreground for viewers the actual artistic conditions which were the bases for the artworks' coming into display. The sociologist becomes curator, and the entire exhibition machinery is subsumed and made functional to the cause, its structure and claims made alive through not only exhibition visits but also a symposium and other talks that strengthened the findings.⁸²

Mimicking the financial world's language that creates separation, Helgesen here deploys a process of reciprocity to bring back a topical discussion, able to extrude theories into practical matters. In collecting material on how the artistic profession came to be characterised by risk with large investments (such as the long periods of education, deprivation of time for family life, continuous commitment to long working hours, and the invasion of other spheres of life), Helgesen exposes how these efforts are not always rewarded as expected. In addition, the artist's weak position in the labour market, with a lack of proper and stable income or work, makes alternative income essential for survival.⁸³

Helgesen demonstrates how the artist's way of life is still entrenched in a high degree of romanticism, surviving only in opposition to standardised social and economic functions dictated by a bourgeois life. In her analysis, Helgesen is particularly interested in breaking up these preconstituted categories; to also show how motherhood, for instance, is used and misused to exclude—in a Darwinian, progressivist thinking—the weakest link in the chain of the successful and productive artistic subject. She points out how women not only have to fulfil societal expectations of safe and good parenting but also have to maintain recognition of their artistic profession without the former affecting the latter, and with the scarce means at their disposal.⁸⁴

Here it is important to read how Sartre and Beauvoir had come to use subsistence and need as important categories of investigation for understanding alternative modes of being in relation to the subject's formation.⁸⁵ This primal thinking came to form a basis of the existentialist movement, at the heart of an intellectual European society grossly affected by World War II. Sartre, its major exponent, had lived through Germany's invasion of Poland and the launching of France into the "Phoney War." After the Fall of France, in June 1941, Sartre was imprisoned in a German war camp for nine months, where he worked on his essay *Being and Nothingness*. When he was released, he returned to an occupied France in which a resistance group among French intellectuals was beginning to form. The police state censored any form of public expression considered "subversive." Through the removal of freedom, Sartre believed himself to have become truly free.⁸⁶ Understandably, Beauvoir had argued that, from the very beginning, existentialism defined itself as a philosophy of ambiguity.⁸⁷

It is at the intersection of such ambiguity that one may formulate a more complex understanding of oppression and exploitation, one that perhaps forms an emancipation that necessarily needs to start from a conscious understanding of one's own conditions in order to be able to overcome them. By outlining the structural conditions and parameters of artistic success propagated by the hegemonic institutions of art, Helgesen makes visible the means of production behind the material work of art—something that is rarely shown. In doing so, there is a call for justice exercised by more precarious bodies in their right to appear and the inherent discrimination of institutions that deem themselves to be egalitarian, such as the museums with their golden frames (as used in the UKS exhibition), where successful artists are ultimately celebrated. Helgesen clearly calls for a new language, one that cannot be formed in the museum. In the generation of new forms of artistic expression, art needs to exit the "protected" (read: enclosed) space of the museum and seek a more equal space for the presentation and function of art within society.⁸⁸

(1.5) The concept of labour and transubstantiation in Sartre

In the first volume of *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre is preoccupied with understanding transubstantiation of materiality from inorganic to material life through labour.⁸⁹ Pursuing the structure of need and its intelligibility, Sartre starts with the individual before moving to social relations, encompassing a dialectical discussion. By pointing to a perspective based on matter, the dyad of individual/nature leads inevitably to scarcity. Like need, scarcity consolidates the practical field.⁹⁰

Through the totalising concept of praxis, this theory might open up the possibility for a complete inversion in the conception of the role of aesthetics within society. From a bourgeois perspective, the writings on aesthetics of Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schiller “presupposed the completed evolution of art as a sphere detached from the praxis of life:” autonomous.⁹¹ It might be equally important to articulate how this role might be intertwined with everyday life and the institution of art. Contrary to Jürgen Habermas’s formulation of art occupying a special position among the forms of the absolute spirit, art does intersect with tasks of economic and political governance, in addition to satisfying residual needs which cannot be met in society.⁹² Art can shape principles for its “progressive distanciation from real-life contexts, and the correlative crystallisation of a distinctive sphere of aesthetic experience,” but it cannot wholly detach itself from everything that is the praxis of a liveable life.⁹³

Such a claim of the avant-garde had to be renegotiated in light of the new sociopolitical conditions arising from the corporate expansion of the post-war period and the boom of Western economies, which Helgesen was attempting to tackle specifically in the Scandinavian context.

(1.6) Helgesen’s existentialist ideas meet the Marxist-Leninist theories of the Gras group

I would argue there is a resonant thinking around scarcity as a powerful force, which brings Helgesen close to a given community: that of artists conditioning the unity of a group, which, taken collectively, could organise itself to react as a force field in the expression of quantitative facts.⁹⁴ This is no longer a class which considers itself detached from the working class, but now actually identifies itself with other workers confined within a national system that determines their living conditions. Yet they work as an independent force that needs to be both recognised and remunerated for providing critical thinking within its system.

Following informal discussions while travelling back and forth from France to Norway, in 1969, upon the invitation of UKS and its chair Stanley Stornes (and later, in 1970, chair Rune Brynestad), Helgesen and the UKS board started working on the jubilee exhibition which was to celebrate the first fifty years of the founding of the artists’ society.⁹⁵ The committee included Olav Starheim, Eva Lange, Per Kleiva, and Rune Brynestad. Kleiva was a painter and graphic artist who had been an active member of the Gras group, a collective of artists who shared a workshop from 1969 to 1973. Their common starting point was the desire to awaken political commitment through a new language adopted for this purpose. This activity mainly consisted of creating silkscreen prints imbued with Pop Art reproducibility and Marxist-Leninist ideals.⁹⁶ Gras also identified with international avant-garde attitudes and Scandinavian “Situationists” such as Jens Jørgen Thorsen, whose primary intent was to attack the establishment.⁹⁷ Along these lines, Morten Krogh, one of the most vocal

members of Gras—who, in 1969, became director of Oslo’s Kunstnernes Hus (the Artists’ House), one of the largest non-collecting art institutions in the region—quoted the *Futurist Manifesto* on a famous TV programme in Norway, stating that museums should be burned.⁹⁸ From such an oppositional standpoint, Gras adopted very specific insubordination tactics within the arts, and it later affirmed it had “used” UKS as a strategic platform for art and politics, as they understood the need to siege an institution to be able to catalyse change.⁹⁹

Read in this light, it is not surprising that, in lieu of a conventional presentation of artworks, an idea was put forward for the main exhibition on the occasion of UKS’s fiftieth jubilee to not draw works from the institution’s history, nor from artists who had championed it, nor simply to exhibit the “new.” Instead, as part of the organisation’s actual operations, the idea was to chart the financial situation of artists at the time. The exhibition’s curated spatial form, precisely translating scarcity (of means, of representation, of diversity of artists based on their income) into a work of art. In a new world projected towards internationalisation, whose rhythm was increasingly being dictated by financial abstraction, Helgesen, the curator of the exhibition project, used the same economic language affecting the social and political conditions of analysis in the platform of display. This curatorial strategy prompted thinking about how such a new financial system affects spatial and temporal concepts, as well as the writing of art and art’s future within it.¹⁰⁰ Helgesen demonstrated that one cannot think outside history. Such an enterprise cannot but lay claim to a position within history, so that historicising simultaneously and necessarily is dehistoricising (unwriting what has been written by power, to overcome a subjugated position) or, expressed another way: the determination of the historicity of visual language “presupposes a meta level from which this determination can be made.”¹⁰¹

(1.7) Abstraction itself is a product of historical relations

Marx formulates, in the introduction to the *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, that labour is exemplary of the most abstract categories, and precisely because of this abstractness it reflects the very social relations of an epoch. Therefore, we should always read work as expressive of the times.¹⁰² Marx contends that perception, as deception, is the guiding principle of consumption. We need to read the production conditions as historically construed for that perception to become possible.¹⁰³ In the monetary system, he says, wealth is still interpreted as money, but the connection between labour and wealth is lost when we do not know which economic governance is underpinning such relations.¹⁰⁴ Professor of philosophy Roberto Nigro elaborating on the Marxist tradition clarifies how each form of work is abstract labour. In short: “work is the unit present in all commodities,” and it is the “common substance required in order to produce something.”¹⁰⁵ Such theory allows us to excavate and individuate work and its value, trace the global labour force, and denounce forms of exploitation. Geographical dispossession locates unskilled labour in low-wage countries. Migrations occur for many reasons, including wages, contextual forms of discrimination, religious, sexual, and racial. It continues to be a hegemonic struggle for territorial claims and over resources. Because of this “indifference” in production (under the global predicament, things can be produced everywhere), care in societies to treasure work retains an emancipatory power.

Perhaps Helgesen was trying to expose and bring the theory of abstract labour into the exhibition space through the display form—something that had not been done before. She did so by devising a curatorial strategy to not only address but unveil the prioritised part of the system that society was resting on and, from there, all the needed interconnections for envisaging alternative forms of production relations within the arts.

(1.8) How the investigative process into *The Artists' Situation* began

Helgesen, who started the research endeavour for the UKS exhibition when she was twenty-four and who later went on to found novel pedagogical institutes such as a higher institute of art education in the northern city of Trondheim, began the investigative work from scratch, due to a lack of statistics available on the particular living conditions of artists in Norway.¹⁰⁶ If census and statistical analysis had been used for other professional categories, artists were not included in the sample.¹⁰⁷ There was already suspicion of scarce means among artists, and of available governmental funds for the arts being used primarily for administrative purposes.¹⁰⁸ The central platform for the sale of artworks to public and private entities was through acceptance into the Høstutstillingen (National Salon of Fine Arts), whose jury was managed by the Bildende Kunstneres Styre (BKS, Board of Visual Artists). Helgesen's investigation started by making contact with BKS and its sister agencies in Finland, Sweden, and Denmark.¹⁰⁹

Helgesen collected the data through artists' interviews conducted across the entire country. To complement the interviewee form, she obtained additional information from other institutional sources to achieve qualitative research and find corresponding counter-evidence, providing a proper system of comparison. The analysis was mainly based on the medium of painting and included as artists' expenditures items such as art materials and studio rental, for instance.¹¹⁰ The picture that emerged was more alarming than anyone could have possibly expected, showing that the majority of artists were living in extremely precarious conditions; in terms of pure economic profit, the majority was working at a loss; their expenditures were higher than their incomes, and most artists depended either on other jobs or on their partners or families for subsistence. The research found that 80 percent of artists had an income deriving from elsewhere, mainly a second job. It also was found that 10 percent of the artists shared 50 percent of all income available for artists in the entire country, while the remaining 90 percent shared the other half. As of 1 April 1970, 834 people were artists (registered members in at least one artists' organisation) out of a population of 3,790,000.¹¹¹ The average age was fifty; 70 percent were men and 30 percent women; and 90 percent had education from within the art field, with an average of five years of study.¹¹² For the UKS exhibition, Helgesen prepared drawings and statements to chart the enquiry, with the help of the UKS board (all artists)¹¹³ and through the use of, among other tools, the first electronic calculators, which, in turn, gave the exhibited materials a specific visual form. The exhibition, given the title *The Artists' Situation*, opened on 29 October 1971, on the first floor of the UKS space in Christiania Torv on Rådhusgata, and was preceded by an exhibition of fifteen prints of Edvard Munch borrowed from the collection of the City of Oslo. *The Artists' Situation* was presented as both a spatial construct with large deployment of diagrams drawn mostly on millimetre paper and as a discursive programme. Helgesen gave the keynote address, followed by discussions among the artists present. What emerged from the exhibition was a sense of empowerment for artists, who had previously and secretly felt shame, thinking

their poor economic situation was a private matter; such perspective was overcome when they understood that this was a common situation shared by many.¹¹⁴

As part of this process of abstract analysis and pointing to the statistical situation of artists, the millimetre paper reappears, enlarged, as the background pattern in the pamphlet that accompanied the exhibition.

(1.9) The exhibitory moment: An exhibition of charts and graphs

In documents from the UKS archive, *The Artists' Situation* is repeatedly called an “information exhibition.” The exhibition consisted of, among others, thirty framed posters (approx. 100 x 70 cm each) and four larger banners (approx. 200 x 120 cm each), in addition to a map of Norway of approximately two metres in length. The posters contained “burning” data clearly showing artists’ conditions and their average income. “The Stipend Situation” was depicted in two posters mounted on a portrait of the culture minister.¹¹⁵ “Who Are We / What Are We” was illustrated in two posters: the first showed a comprehensive list of *kunstforeninger* (artists’ associations) and their mandates; the other, the number of members, age, and gender as of 1 April 1970. “Where Do Artists Live” was illustrated by a Norwegian map on which the artists’ locations were marked with nails. This was followed by a chart listing the criteria used for registration in the *kunstforeninger*. Education was demonstrated with a poster reporting the kinds of education the artists had and the duration of art education, in addition to a comment on the general situation concerning school. “The Artists Economy” was illustrated in five posters presenting:

1. The Registrable Economic Basis.
2. Successful Artist’s Budget.
3. How Much Does It Cost for an Artist to Hold a Solo Exhibition.
4. Comments to the Artist’s Budget.
5. Income.

“The Atelier Situation” was presented in one dedicated poster with relevant statistics and suggestions for improvement of conditions. “The Activities” provided a poster that illustrated the artists’ possibilities to make a cultural offer through exhibitions, through a map of Norway’s exhibition spaces, galleries (including private ones), and *kunstforeninger*. “The Development of Art Sales” was presented in a poster in permanent and nominal Norwegian krone (the development of prices in two curves from 1890 to 1970). “The Elderly Artists” issue was dealt with in a separate poster.¹¹⁶

Two excerpts from state budgets from 1971–72 were mounted in two pompous gold frames “speaking [their] own clear language.” A “provoplakat” closed the exhibition to give viewers the opportunity to write their own comments on a separate poster.¹¹⁷ This was reported as unsuccessful, and eventually people were asked to insert a note in a dedicated box.¹¹⁸

A seminar was arranged by Eva Lange, Per Kleiva, Olav Starheim, and Rune Brynestad and moderated by Kleiva on 30 and 31 October 1971. It opened with a speech by Helgesen titled “The Visual Artists’ Work Situation” and also involved group work and workshops. Seminar attendees included representatives from the

municipality of Oslo; artists' unions from across Norway; political party and parliament representatives; the art academy and musicians' and authors' unions; and artists from all over the country. Other contributors included Konstnärernas Riksorganisation (KRO, Swedish Artists' National Organisation), which introduced the second day with a lecture by KRO's chairman Georg Suttner titled "The Visual Artists' Situation in Today's Sweden" as well as an orientation on Konstnärcenter (The Artists' Center, a nationwide organisation of independent regional associations) in Sweden through artist Björn Sjöstedt.

The *Artists' Situation* exhibition travelled throughout 1972, going to Trondheim (Trondhjems Kunstforening, 26 April–14 May), Bergen (Galleri I, 25 May–11 June, arranged by Morten Krogh and Björn Melbye Gulliksen, supplemented by further material, and clearly steered by the Gras group), and Stavanger (Bildende Kunstneres Forening, 19 September–8 October, through John Onarheim). The exhibition also visited Folkets Hus and the Munch Museum in Oslo in 1971, and excerpts of Helgesen's speech at UKS were published in *Arbeiderbladet* and the magazine *Kunst og Kunstnere*. For touring purposes, the posters were numbered. The leaflet accompanying the exhibition in Oslo was made to be circulated, and hosting spaces were asked to make sure that people could "take home" part of the exhibition, in particular by stencilling the economic graph with the summary of all the numbers collected in the exhibition. From the documentation in the archives, it is clear that it was a struggle to make the exhibition physically travel despite high interest (the exhibition consisted of four crates: two small crates and two flat cases). Search for support was sought from the Norwegian Arts Council, Norwegian Ministry of Culture, and municipalities of Bergen, Trondheim, and Oslo.

The fact that the viewer would encounter Edvard Munch's work (a member of UKS during his lifetime) before arriving to *The Artists' Situation* is undoubtedly symptomatic of setting a tone of both criticality in financial terms and of abstraction of life in capitalist terms. Munch's work largely features landscapes and interiors, and he gradually increased the use of abstraction as a loose form with sharp textures of dark areas, muted earth tones, and pure pigments. This suggestion of motifs of abstracted landscapes, interiors, and ghostly humanity is assuredly essential when considering the primary claim posited by Helgesen, especially in terms of layered signifiers—literal and metaphorical ones. If the role of art and artworks is to detach themselves from the empirical world and bring forth another world, then a secularisation of art that exists beyond consolation—the declared autonomy of art—is self-evident in these works.¹¹⁹ We need to question what autonomous art means in a moment of a liberalised economy, where the artist comes closer to the worker, in Helgesen's take.¹²⁰ The usefulness and the uselessness of art are part of the dichotomy of such an encounter. Philosopher Theodor W. Adorno famously describes art's "double character" as both autonomous and social, to express the contradiction at its core.¹²¹ *The Artists' Situation* interconnected these two moments in the exhibitory; one condition cannot exist without the other, the empirical without the aesthetic. Adorno saw in art not a moment of communication but a moment of resistance to society (taking a step back, withdrawing to reflect), and, as such, art stands to reality not to discern a critique but to encapsulate an absolute negation (in a dialectical form).¹²² A similar principle is at play in Helgesen's exhibition. Instead of accepting the "reality" of art as such, it negated art through its form (including the "art for art's sake" principle). Art, a practice distilled from functional and practical interests, is supposed to hibernate in bad times (or for the bad times). It is not

enough for art to set itself apart from the struggle of everyday life; works are received not as single entities but within institutional frameworks and conditions that largely determine their function. It is in the historical context, in these frameworks and conditions, where we can act in resistance, drawing from the praxis of life with its institutions, and move beyond it.

(1.10) Lacan and Gestalt theory

Calling into question the perspectivalism established in the history of painting, primarily constructed during the Renaissance, Lacan, in his chapter “The Line and Light,” claims that the use of anamorphosis in painting in those very centuries shows that painting is not, in fact, a question of “realistic reproduction of the things of space”¹²³ but how the subject is “caught, manipulated, captured in the field of vision.”¹²⁴ In *The Ambassadors* (1533) by Hans Holbein the Younger, assuming the observer (us) deambulation, the singular anamorphic object floating in the foreground is there “*to catch in its trap*” the subject. The argument is that “as subjects, we are literally called into the picture, and represented there as caught.”¹²⁵ Besides, the allegorical and symbolic elements at play in the picture point to the “vanity of arts and science.” Our perishability represented anamorphically through the skull. In a Freudian tradition, the subject’s geometrical vision moves into relation to desire. Vision, for Lacan, is a trap that works like a screen where light works like a thread: “How can we try to apprehend that which seems to elude us in this way in the optical structuring of space?”¹²⁶ The deceptiveness of perception tells us that vision is not the visual.¹²⁷ Light fills the eye, and it necessitates organs as mechanisms of defences.

The second example that Lacan uses to explain geometrical vision is his memory of being at sea for amusement in his early twenties, as a young intellectual, and riding in a small boat of fishers, who in their precarious lives often took the risk to make meagre profits. In one of these excursions, a young person everyone called Petit-Jean notices something on the water surface: a small sardine can. Shining in the sun, this evidence of the canning industry the fishers supplied, Petit-Jean tells Lacan: “*You see that can? Do you see it? Well it doesn't see you!*”¹²⁸ Lacan, who did not immediately understand the meaning of Petit-Jean’s affirmation, probably due to a class difference, interprets this state of being “out of the picture;” the cannery company does not see the fishers’s struggle for life: “The picture, certainly is in my eye. But I’m not in the picture.”¹²⁹ For Lacan, there is a picture, a screen defined by light and a vanishing point. It does not mean that the subject is always situated in an complete overview, but instead that there exists a phenomenal domain enabling us to apprehend the subject. It is a process of mimicry to situate oneself in the picture “as a stain”; not adapting but, rather, being inoperant¹³⁰ to the resulting demands.¹³¹ Again, mimicry always implies sexuality, which is presented in a travesty of sort in natural phenomena. Notably, he acknowledges that imitation reproduces an image, and a function.¹³² The gaze always triumphs over the eye in the dialectic relation between the unconscious and the organs.¹³³ To gain a perspective means to produce an image, subjectivity.

In establishing alternative strategies for the production of subjectivity and the positioning of the self, Helgesen through *The Artists’ Situation* inscribes the exhibition beyond the field of the perceptible, but via twisting the means of production so that the system “sees me,” as Lacan addressed. Helgesen’s exhibition precisely addresses that vision is not the same as the visual. We need to overturn,

reframe, challenge, and disrupt the visual world to avoid Lacan's "tunnel vision." Entering the field of vision means rethinking paradigms of education (apprehension), consciousness (being part of the picture), and how class and sexuality are inherent in these aesthetic processes' formation and perpetuation. For Helgesen's visual exhibitory, information is a fundamental part of the struggle for visibility and recognition. The picture (the normalised artistic production) certainly is in my eye, but I (the artistic subjectivity I am speaking from: my class and gendered perspective) am not in the picture. If "I" am not in the picture, as for the fishers in the canning industry, "my" struggle is not in the picture, which means that the material conditions of production are unacknowledged as part of entering the vision field. It equally means that the aesthetic experience does not build trauma determined by the given normality. These are fundamental questions of unveiling the power of the aesthetic field through feminist perspectives, which I investigate further in the thesis (see chapter 2.6). Curating is, clearly for Helgesen, a way of unveiling these otherwise concealed truth-building processes.

(1.11) Beauvoir's concept of aesthetics

Beauvoir is convinced that the most optimistic ethics all began by emphasising the failure involved in the human condition; "without failure, no ethics."¹³⁴ As much as never stagnating in a defined identity, Beauvoir poses that the relation between every person in the world is penetrated with human meanings at the centre of theory. Since the Enlightenment and its pursuit of values based on empiricism and rational thought, the use of language has been seen as fundamental to reaching individual freedom.¹³⁵ One is not free if one cannot *will* oneself free. This position resides, for Beauvoir, not in the linguistic but in the aesthetic realm. The one who assumes it claims another relation with the world other than detached contemplation (outside of time and society, one still faces history).¹³⁶ Contemplating, with tranquil curiosity, the world's ruins—including metaphorical ones, like the poor conditions where one stands—is attesting to historical works in a position of withdrawal, a way of fleeing the truth of the present. The intellectuals' and the artists' responsibility is to look at the present not as a potential past but as the moment of choice and action to be lived through a project. No project is purely contemplative, since it casts something into the future, and leaves no possibility of an "outside" but only the inescapable fact that one is inside.¹³⁷ "To *will* freedom" is a form of action and the realisation of freedom's engagement with the world.

If art should reveal existence as a reason for existing, it should also reveal the transitory as an absolute. As this transitoriness is perpetuated through the centuries, art, too, through the centuries, perpetuates a never-to-be-finished revelation. It is a movement towards freedom, concretely. Artists, as well as workers, have to understand this word "freedom" differently and reclaim the present regime as a human fact. Oppression is justified by power as based on nature—as if wealth, for instance, were a natural fact. But "stealing from the worker" the product of one's labour presupposes the word "theft" as a social convention which authorises this type of exploitation, Beauvoir says.¹³⁸ Such is the reason why art must reclaim a project within the community it addresses.

In these changing social conditions, Helgesen asserts and vindicates art's substance, its transitoriness, and its responsibility to *will* freedom. In the process of abstraction from the actual reality, of making all labour productive in its natural and economic sense, and making the two coincide, a system of truth ensues the justification of the

very inequalities it perpetuates. For Marx, capitalist societies strip all objectivity from labour, turning it into absolute poverty: it is not a shortage but the exclusion from forms of wealth. Here, we should claim labour not as an object, but as an activity; not “itself value, but as the living source of value.”¹³⁹ Marx, first, and Beauvoir later see a form of freedom in art because the worker has a *specific* relation to labour.¹⁴⁰ The specificity of the art is not “abstract and irrelevant,” nor a mechanical activity or material activity regardless of its form. I believe it is at this intersection of demands that Helgesen grounds the power to deem oneself free, through process and actions of art, substantiating protest, action, and activism and making requests through asserting a change in the same means of economic production, allowing transitoriness to be maintained in its form and its specificity.

(1.12) First conclusions

As Marxist political theorist Frederic Jameson elaborates when analysing Sartre’s *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, “generosity, cooperation and the like are not false or fictional, but they are not features of human nature either (there is no such thing as human nature). They are, rather, other forms in which our freedom negates that initial fact of being.”¹⁴¹

Therefore, forms of freedom are forms of reciprocity that can be achieved only in opposition to exploiting standardised needs. In 1970s Norway, spreading new knowledge between different artists brought a larger understanding of the artists’ situation, and a new phase of history thus began. Referencing her work through the exhibition, Aina Helgesen, in a pure spirit of transitoriness, has recently said, “You can learn from history, but you can’t copy it.”¹⁴²

I feel it is important to mention here that currently important work is being brought forward by a generation of artists in Norway through reclaiming their own histories and genealogies, embodying curatorial roles only for a transitory moment so as to let history be shaken and move differently. Such is the case of Eline Mugaas, for instance, who first made me aware of Helgesen’s archives. Mugaas, together with Elise Storsveen, has been instrumental in recuperating a series of artistic positions which somehow had fallen out of Norwegian history.¹⁴³ I consider this movement initiated by these artists to be extremely important, as it calls for a multiplicity of histories to conflate and to renarrate genealogies of different pasts, voicing manifold positions and demonstrating that art goes beyond an idea of the genius as preserved in material objects. Art history should pay respect to artists and art professionals who have engaged their everyday lives to embed art in extended communities and who have not given curating a celebratory, nor a flirtatious, economic and social power, but rather initiate complexifying and layering discourses outside the overtly celebrated cathedrals of art, a discursive space long held by museums. Without artists (at times curators) like Mugaas and Storsveen with their trembling institutions, shaking history would not be possible.

To conclude with a note on real political affectations of the arts, the exhibition *The Artists’ Situation* was visited by influential authorities. It thus became the start of a discussion on artists’ economies, but also initiated a larger understanding of forms of deconstructing power within the country’s infrastructure.¹⁴⁴ The overall project set the basis for what would eventually become the Kunstneraksjonen-74 (Artist Action 1974), an interdisciplinary artistic coalition based on a three-point manifesto of demands for better economies and a better redistribution of wealth within the arts,

made by cultural practitioners to the state. These requests were met in part in 1976, with proper payment for artists' work, increased funding, and guaranteed incomes for art workers.



Kunstnerkår (*The Artists' Situation*, 1971), booklet from the touring exhibition curated by Aina Helgesen.

BOSTED TABELL Tabel 2	I Reg. nom	II Fagorg.	III Fagorg.	IV Stemme- berettigede kunstnere	Føde sted / 157 intervju- tep. et repre- sentativt utvalg av gruppe II
0 OSLO (med omegn)	745 (53%)	621 (63%)	563 (68%)	347 (70%)	49 (31%)
1 BERGEN (med omegn)	73 (5%)	42 (5%)	34 (4%)	14 (3%)	7 (5%)
2 TRONDHEIM (med omegn)	36 (2%)	25 (2%)	24 (3%)	14 (3%)	10 (6%)
3 STAVANGER (med omegn)	33 (2%)	23 (2%)	20 (2%)	14 (3%)	9 (6%)
4 SMÅBYENE	149 (11%)	159 (11%)	92 (11%)	51 (10%)	34 (22%)
5 LANDDISTRIKTENE	119 (8%)	87 (9%)	69 (8%)	38 (8%)	33 (21%)
6 UTLANDET	40 (3%)	23 (2%)	20 (2%)	9 (2%)	13 (8%)
7 UKJENT	225 (16%)	47 (5%)	12 (2%)	3 (1%)	
	1420 (100%)	951 (99%)	834 (80%)	483 (80%)	157 (80%)
0 Oslo og omegn	745 (53%)	621 (63%)	563 (68%)	347 (70%)	49 (31%)
1 Østlandet (+ Oslo)	113 (8%)	98 (9%)	93 (11%)	51 (10%)	25 (16%)
2 Telemarksfylkene	51 (4%)	39 (4%)	34 (4%)	19 (4%)	9 (6%)
3 Vestlandet (Hord./Rog./)	131 (9%)	79 (8%)	62 (7%)	26 (7%)	22 (14%)
4 Vestlandet (Sogn./Møre)	25 (2%)	17 (2%)	12 (2%)	6 (1%)	11 (7%)
5 Trøndelagsfylkene	46 (3%)	31 (3%)	28 (3%)	18 (4%)	18 (12%)
6 Nord-Norge	44 (3%)	22 (2%)	10 (1%)	4 (1%)	8 (5%)
7 Utlændet	40 (3%)	23 (2%)	20 (2%)	9 (2%)	15 (10%)
8 Vel ikke	225 (16%)	47 (5%)	12 (2%)	3 (1%)	
	1420 (100%)	951 (99%)	834 (80%)	483 (80%)	157 (80%)

FOLKETRYGDEN

ETTER DEN NYE ORDNINGEN MED FOLKETRYGDEN ER
MAN SOM KUNSTNER Å BETRAKTE SOM SELVSTENDIG
KARRINGSKREVENDE OG DERMED PÅKJØT TIL Å INNTELE
HELE FOLKETRYGDGÅVNINGEN, I MOTSETNING TIL EN
LØPSPOTTAGÅVNE SOM BETALER EN DEL AV FOLKE-
TRYGDGÅVNINGEN (ARBEIDSGIVEREN INNBEHOLDER RESTEN.)

FOLKETRYGDENS GRUNNSKJØPSSAUTILLEGG 1971
FOR EN PERSON : GRUNNSKJØP NR. 7500,-
SAUTILLEGG - 1050,-
NR. 8550,-

FOLKEKODENR. NR. 17300,-

VÅRT TRØNGDE SYSTEM ER BYGGET PÅ EN SKATT-
BARLE INNTEKT. FOLKETRYGDEN ER, BASERT PÅ
DE 20 BESTE INNTEKTSARENE AV 1150 INNTEKTER.
VI HAR SETT AT KUNSTNERNE ER Å BETRAKTE SOM
EN ENSTREMLAVLØNNSGRUPPE. DERFOR
TVENGES DE TIL Å TA BIERVERK, INNTEKT AV
KUNSTNERISK ARBEID KVALIFISERER, SJELDEN
TIL MER ENN FOLKETRYGDENS MINSTESATSER.
LIGEVEL PÅSTÅR DE FLESTE KUNSTNERE
LETET UT VED Å HA SIKRE INNTEKTER FOR
FØRSTE GANG I SITT LIV.

ANNEN STØTTE

STØTTE TIL ELDRE FORTJENTE KUNSTNERE OG
DERES ETTERLAATE VAR I 1971

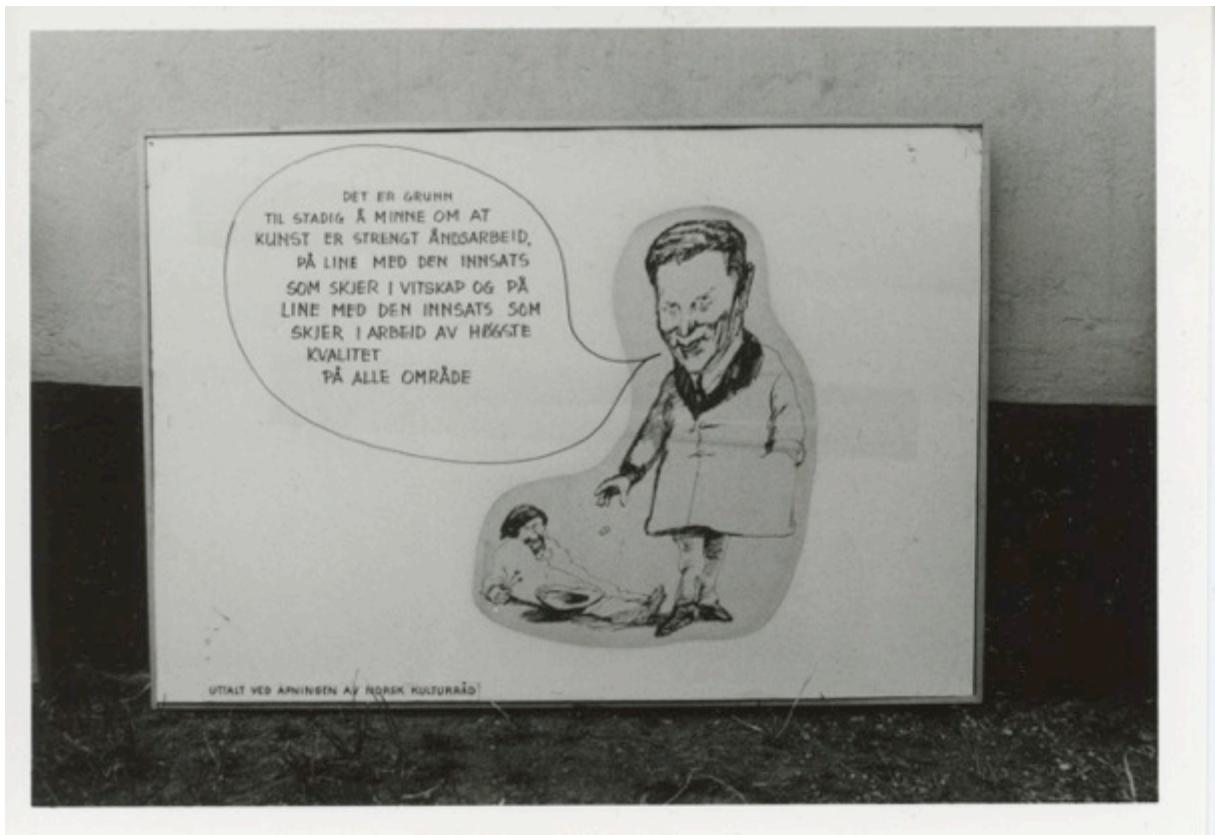
STATENS STIPEND 28 STK. & KR. 7000,-
" " 1 STK. & KR. 9000,-
STATENS KUNSTERLØNNER 8 STK. & KR. 15000,-

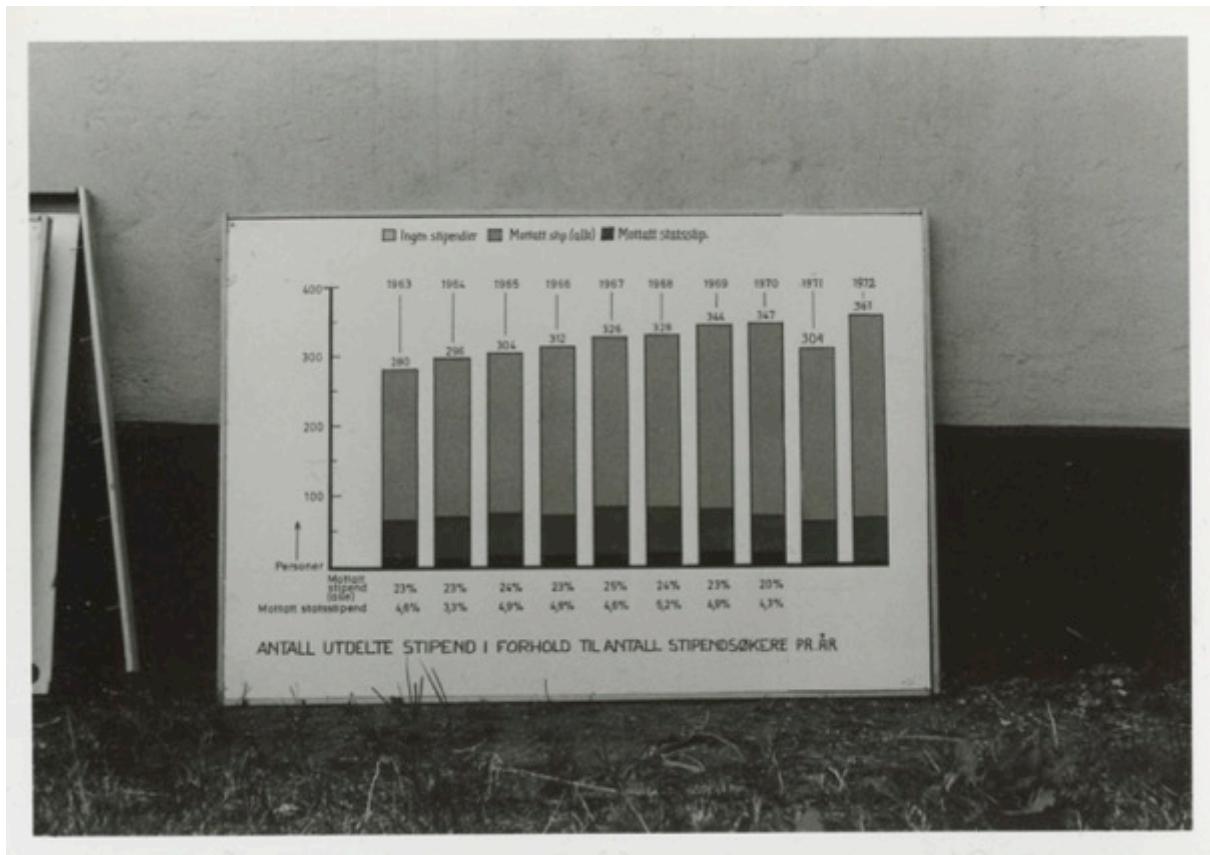
I TILLEGGBETALINGEN ER DET CA. KR. 100 000,-
FRA 3% FØRSTGT TIL ELDRE FORTJENTE
KUNSTNERE, ELLER DERES ETTERLAATE.

PROBLEMER

PLANGJEL. NR. 10 VISER AT DE FLESTE KUNSTNERE
ER AVHENGIG AV BUNNTAKTER. DETTE GJELDER
FREMDELES FOR EN DEL AV KUNSTNERNE MELLOM
60-70 ÅR. DISSE STÅR I EN VANSKELIGERE
SITUASJON ENN SINE YNGRE KOLLEGER NÅR
DET GJELDER Å SKAFTA SEG BUNNTAKTER.
GIENNOV ANNET ARBEID. DETTE SKYLDER DELS EN
STRUKTURELL FORANDRING I DET GENERELLE ARBEIDS-
MARKED. MENS ANDRE ARBEIDSSTAKERE I SAMME
SITUASJON, KAN FÅ LOST SINE PROBLEMER VED
PENSJONSPENSJONERING, FINNES IKKE DENNE
MULIGHET FOR KUNSTNERNE.

KONKLUSJON :
I STØDET FOR AT DET EKONOMISCHE PRISSET AVTAR,
BLIKK DET TVERR I MOT STÅD GØRRE - INNTIL
PENSJONSAlderen ER NÅD.





Installation (and other) views of *Kunstnerkår* (*The Artists' Situation, 1971*). From the UKS Archive (1921–1998)—part of The National Archives of Norway (Arkivverket)

⁵⁸ Julia Bryan-Wilson has argued that in the turbulent moment of the Vietnam War, artists intervened, through their activism and art making, to redefine their position. Their urgent plea called for the *artwork* to not describe aesthetic methods, acts of making, or art objects but to be recognised for its implications in artists' collective working conditions and against the capitalist art market through groups such as the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC), founded in New York in 1969, and in the New York Art Strike against Racism, War, and Repression, which grew out of the AWC in 1970. See Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

⁵⁹ Corina L. Apostol, "Art Workers between Precarity and Resistance: A Genealogy," in *Art Workers: Material Conditions and Labour Struggles in Contemporary Art Practice*, ed. Minna Henriksson et al. (Tartu: Greif, 2015), 103–18.

⁶⁰ Alastair Hemmings, "‘Beau comme le tremblement des mains dans l’alcoolisme’: A Cavalier History of Drugs and Intoxication in the Situationist International," in *Literature and Intoxication: Writing, Politics and the Experience of Excess*, ed. Eugene Brennan and Russell Williams (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 173.

⁶¹ Alastair Hemmings, "‘Beau comme le tremblement des mains dans l’alcoolisme’," 173.

⁶² Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), aphorism 34, 24.

⁶³ Andrew Ross and Kristin Ross, *Anti-Americanism* (New York: NYU Press, 2004).

⁶⁴ Lars Mjøset, "The Long 1960s in the Nordic Countries," in *The Nordic 60s*, ed. Maaretta Jaukkuri, exhibition catalogue (Helsinki: Nordiskt Konstcentrum, 1990), 19–21.

⁶⁵ Mjøset, "The Long 1960s in the Nordic Countries."

⁶⁶ Jack Steveson, *Scandinavian Blue: The Erotic Cinema of Sweden and Denmark in the 1960s and 1970s* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010).

⁶⁷ Grants were released from the newly created Norwegian Culture Fund and its advisory body, the Norwegian Arts Council. See Susanne Rajka, "Norway in the 60s: Image of a Decade," in Jaukkuri, *The Nordic 60s*, 158–59

⁶⁸ Rajka, "Norway in the 60s: Image of a Decade," 158–59.

⁶⁹ Rajka, "Norway in the 60s: Image of a Decade," 158–59.

⁷⁰ Rajka, "Norway in the 60s: Image of a Decade," 158–59. Morten Krohg had already addressed the disparities and inequalities of the art world in Norway in an op-ed in *Dagbladet* on 3 April 1971, arguing for the recognition of a factual divestment in cultural politics in the country from previous years. The article, titled "Kunstnerens forhold i vårt samfunn" (The Artist's Relation in Our Society), reveals a concern that "in a capitalist society, the value of money is the only relevant measure of the value of art." I think this is important background information, and so I here quote Krohg's article at length (my translation):

"It is only natural that art, in a society where it is a symbol of the special position of privileged classes, has as its only relevant measure: the value of money. There is little point in facing this unpleasant reality of changing the appearance of work. It just means changing the look of the product—its design. Art has little significance in the service of rebellion as long as the renewal and change it represents are the result of the existing social elite's demands for fields of investment for intellectual ingenuity, aesthetic fuss, and capital. The artist is not revolutionary, nor very radical, in his constant attempt to renew the collection of knick-knacks of individual groups or social classes. His activities in this field run all the time based on the conditions set by society.

"In our society, art is a symbol of power: cultural power and capital power. Every art has a political effect, whether it seeks to change or form pillars in a bourgeois and capitalist view of culture. Art life is based on a market situation where small, intellectually and economically motivated groups have a sort of monopoly on the maintenance of a few artists, therefore mastering and controlling both the political impact and the finely cultured, privately owned character of the life of art.

"The position of visual art falters in the face of an accomplished solemnisation, with three starting points: 1: Continuous habituation to myths and beliefs, which forms the basis

for a lasting, constant conception of culture, with a main emphasis on aesthetic fine art. 2: The maintenance of a constructed economic value that indicates which social classes the art is intended for. 3: Separation of art and artists from the rest of society, through depoliticisation of production and production conditions. ...

“Changes in the social and economic conditions of exploited groups are part of a change in the power relations in society. An assessment of the visual artist, the conditions of the visual artist, show that he [masculine pronoun maintained] belongs to the proletariat. He sells his labour by producing values that benefit state and private capital interests. He himself is only part of the production process, which is exchanged materially and mentally. He is part of a collective art life that forms part of society’s cultural status. In most cases, he receives little or no pay for his work. The artist is, with or against his will, a tool for the privileged classes. Like other groups, he is dependent on and bound by the power relations he lives under. The traditional dream of the free artist is in reality a romantic dream of an antisocial, individual freedom. It is a utopia, well suited to depoliticising the artist. The depoliticised artist is the best tool one has for maintaining the occupational group’s difficult material situation. Solidarity among artists is relatively small. The competition between different styles and professional views becomes more important than common rights. Art politics is considered dirty business [*geschäft*; German in the original text] for people without talent. With this rock-solid belief in their own isolation, the occupational group becomes incapable of imagining common rights, common policies.

“In addition to the few particularly expensive artists, there is a somewhat larger portion of saleable art that is adopted by the middle class, at somewhat lower prices. The private investments are not so small. In 1969, public sales of art amounted to NOK 12.3 million. In 1970: NOK 13 million. This includes everything, both old and new, but if we take the figure as an exponent of the financial ability of private interests, it is interesting to keep in mind that it corresponds to an annual income of NOK 25,000 for almost half of the 1,000 who are estimated to constitute the active state of visual artists. In reality, it ensures the maintenance of only 15 percent of the artists—along with all other income from artistic work! In order to prevent the private trade in goods from continuing to dominate and shape the art world, and to hold practitioners to an unfree, apolitical, and mutually unsympathetic system of competition, which entails reprehensible conditions for the majority, the work must in the first instance concentrate on an improvement of economic conditions independent of trade.”⁷¹

⁷¹ Morten Krohg, “Kunstnerens forhold i vårt samfunn” [The artist’s relation in our society], *Dagbladet*, 3 April 1971.

⁷² Rajka, “Norway in the 60s: Image of a Decade,” 160.

⁷³ Aine Helgesen, “The Art Situation in Norway.” The text was first published as its own pamphlet in Norwegian to accompany the exhibition *The Art Situation in Norway*, at Office for Contemporary Art Norway, Oslo, in 1971.

⁷⁴ Aina Helgesen, in conversation with the author, 5 February 2017. I have conducted and recorded a number of interviews with Helgesen over the past several years.

⁷⁵ Arne Martin Klausen, *Kunstsosiologi. Om kunstens stilling og funksjon i samfunnet—hos oss og i fjerne kulturer. Enn innføring* [Art sociology: On the position and function of art in society—Here with us and in remote cultures. An introduction] (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1977).

⁷⁶ As I go deeper into the argument, it becomes clear to the reader how these concepts coming from the French ideologists were retranslated into the artistic milieu.

⁷⁷ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009), 24.

⁷⁸ Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 25.

⁷⁹ Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 27.

⁸⁰ Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 28.

⁸¹ Helgesen, “The Art Situation in Norway.”

⁸² There is still some additional research to be done. Recently, UKS scanned some of the images from the exhibition, as part of the institution’s preparations for its centenary. Information is still scarce, and just as I am conducting interviews with Aina Helgesen, some

of the artists active during that period may help filling the gaps. Unfortunately, since March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has made in-person contact with this generation of practitioners highly precarious.

⁸³ Helgesen, “The Art Situation in Norway.”

⁸⁴ Helgesen was campaigning for the recognition of art as a profession, where the artist as a worker deserves equal treatment and recognition, as any other professional, and gender equality being a necessary part of such a process of acceptance. See Aina Helgesen, “Kvinnliga konstnärers villkor i Norge 1969” [Female artists’ conditions in Norway 1969], in *Kvinnor som konstnärer* [Women as artists], ed. Anna-Lena Lindberg and Barbro Werkmäster (Stockholm: LT’s Förlag, 1975), 173–202.

⁸⁵ Sartre writes: “Need is a function which posits itself for itself and totalizes itself as a function because it is reduced to an empty gesture, functioning for itself and not within the integration of organic life. And this isolation threatens the organism as a whole with disintegration—the danger of death.” Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, vol. 1, *Theory of Practical Ensembles* (New York: New Left Books, 1976), 81.

⁸⁶ Sartre would argue: “Never were we freer than under German occupation. We had lost all our rights, beginning with the right to speak. We were insulted to our faces every day and had to remain silent. We were deported *en masse* as workers, Jews, or political prisoners. Everywhere—on the walls, on the movie screens, and in the newspapers—we came up against the vile, insipid picture of ourselves our oppressors wanted to present to us. Because of all this, we were free.” Jean-Paul Sartre, “Paris Alive: The Republic of Silence,” *Atlantic*, December 1944, 39–40.

⁸⁷ “It was by affirming the irreducible character of ambiguity that Kierkegaard opposed himself to Hegel, and it is by ambiguity that, in our own generation, Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness*, fundamentally defined man, that being whose being is not to be, that subjectivity which realizes itself only as a presence in the world, that engaged freedom, that surging of the for-oneself which is immediately given for others. But it is also claimed that existentialism is a philosophy of the absurd and of despair.” Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1976), 9–10.

⁸⁸ Vinnie Nørskov, “Museums and Museology in Denmark in the Twenty-First Century,” *Nordic Museology*, no. 1 (2018): 89–95.

⁸⁹ “The meaning of human labour is that man reduces himself to inorganic materiality, in order to act materially upon matter and to change his material life. Through transubstantiation, the project that our bodies engrave in the thing assumes the substantial characteristics of that thing, without entirely losing its original qualities. Thus it comes to possess an inert future, within which we shall have to determine our own future. The future comes to man through things, to the extent that it has come to things through man.” Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, 1:178.

⁹⁰ “Scarcity can be seen, in the abstract, as a relation of the individual to the environment. Practically and historically, that is, in so far as we exist in particular situations, the environment is a ready-constituted practical field, which relates everyone to collective structures.” Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, 1:177.

⁹¹ Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Micheal Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984), 26. See also Jeffrey Barnouw, “The Morality of the Sublime: Kant and Schiller,” *Studies in Romanticism* 19, no. 4 (1980): 497–514.

⁹² Jürgen Habermas, “Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism: The Contemporaneity of Walter Benjamin,” *New German Critique*, no. 17 (1979): 30–59.

⁹³ Here I am reworking Peter Bürger’s words in order to find a new aesthetic claim that moves beyond art as a pure separated sphere. See Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 3.

⁹⁴ Sartre uses a paradigmatic example of quantitative value related to the individual unit and to society which I think is pertinent to recuperate in this case. See Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, 1:173–75.

⁹⁵ The board consisted of Stanley Stornes (chair), Jørn Nilsen, Rune Brynestad, Olav Starheim, and Magne Austad.

⁹⁶ A comprehensive study of Gras and its radical ideology is given in Nora Ceciliedatter Nerdrum, *Bildene er mitt våpen: En analyse av GRAS-gruppas silketrykk med fokus på ideologi* [The pictures are my weapon: An analysis of the GRAS group's silkscreen printing with a focus on ideology] (master's thesis, University of Oslo, 2007). See also Jon Ove Steihaug, "Kunstpolitikk på norsk—70-tallet revisited" [Art politics in Norwegian—The 1970s revisited], *Kunstkritikk*, 19 August 2004, <https://kunstkritikk.no/kunstpolitikk-pa-norsk-70-tallet-revisited>.

⁹⁷ Harald Flor, "Politisk grobunn for billedmessig mangfold" [Politically fertile ground for visual diversity], introduction to *Gras-10 år etter* [Gras 10 years after]," exhibition catalogue (Oslo: Hammerlunds Kunsthåndel, 1983).

⁹⁸ Krohg's time at the helm of the institution was short-lived. He had to resign after, on the TV programme *Epoke*, he polemically stated that one should burn down the National Gallery in Oslo and Henie Onstad Kunstsenter in Høvikodden, as well as close down Kunstnernes Hus in Oslo. See "Kunstnernes Hus 90 år: Anekdoter fra husets historie" [Kunstnernes Hus 90 years: Anecdotes from the organisation's history], accessed 16 January 2021, <https://docplayer.me/187407714-Kunstnernes-hus-90-ar-anekdoter-fra-husets-historie.html>.

⁹⁹ "In line with the pragmatic line chosen, it became clear to the members of Gras that changes could not be made directly through Gras but had to be initiated through already existing organisations. UKS served as a platform. Over the course of a few years, all members of Gras had either been a member of the board or the jury of UKS. Arne Sørensen, Asle Raaen, and Bjørn Melbye Gulliksen were chairman before and during the Gras era. The steering of the institution continued after Gras was dissolved: Gras member Eva Lange served as chairwoman of UKS in 1974–75 and Gras member Egil Storeide in 1976–77; later Marit Wicklund also sat for a period as chairwoman." Flor, "Politisk grobunn for billedmessig mangfold." My translation.

¹⁰⁰ Fredric Jameson famously notes that "finance capital sustains and underpins postmodernity as such." See Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983–1998* (New York: Verso, 1998), 149.

¹⁰¹ I am here drawing on a formulation developed by Peter Bürger to claim that this alternative view on a curatorial methodology, through the very process of reading history, also changes the way in which historiography is shown and made available. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 16.

¹⁰² "The example of labour strikingly shows how even the most abstract categories, despite their validity—precisely because of their abstractness—for all epochs, are nevertheless, in the specific character of this abstraction, themselves likewise a product of historic relations, and possess their full validity only for and within these relations." Karl Marx's *Grundrisse*, quoted in Beverly Best, *Marx and the Dynamic of the Capital Formation: An Aesthetics of Political Economy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 74.

¹⁰³ "The need which consumption feels for the object is created by the perception of it. The object of art—like every other product—creates a public which is sensitive to art and enjoys beauty." Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (Rough Draft), trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1993), 92.

¹⁰⁴ Marx, quoted in Best, *Marx and the Dynamic of the Capital Formation*, 74.

¹⁰⁵ Roberto Nigro, "Alienation, the Social Individual, and Communism: Marx in the 21st Century," *OnCurating*, no. 30 (2014): 44–52.

¹⁰⁶ Aina Helgesen, in conversation with the author, 28 January 2017.

¹⁰⁷ Helgesen, in conversation with the author, 28 January 2017.

¹⁰⁸ Helgesen, in conversation with the author, 28 January 2017.

¹⁰⁹ According to Helgesen, Konstnärernas Riksorganisation (Swedish Artists' National Organisation) was the only one to give access to the information it had collected through current research being done with artists in their country. Helgesen, in conversation with the author, 28 January 2017.

¹¹⁰ 157 artists were interviewed. Helgesen, in conversation with the author, 28 January 2017.

¹¹¹ 42.33 percent of this number is the working population.

¹¹² Helgesen, "The Art Situation in Norway."

¹¹³ More comparative research would be needed. Helgesen, in conversation with the author, 28 January 2017.

¹¹⁴ Helgesen, in conversation with the author, 28 January 2017.

¹¹⁵ From the correspondence with Galleri I in Bergen, it is clear that Finn Graff's portrait of Culture Minister Kjell Bondevik was quite well known in the field. From 1963 to 1988, Graff worked as an illustrator and political cartoonist for *Arbeiderbladet*.

¹¹⁶ In Norwegian, the titles read "Hvem er vi – hva vi er," "Hvor bor kunstnerne,"

"Utdannelse," "Kunstnernes økonomi," "Arbeidsplass," "Aktivitet," and "Kunstomsetning."

¹¹⁷ *Provoplakat* merges the words *provo* (meaning "political agitation to provoke responses from authorities, and common in the leftist vocabulary of the 1960s and 1970s, referring to political mobilisation) and *plakat* ("poster" in Norwegian).

¹¹⁸ UKS Chairman Rune Brynestad, letter to Svein Rønning at Galleri I, Bergen, 9 May 1972, UKS Archive (1921–1998), National Archives of Norway, Oslo.

¹¹⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London: Continuum, 1997), 80.

¹²⁰ Peter Osborne, "Theorem 4: Autonomy—Can It Be True of Art and Politics at the Same Time?," *open! Platform for Art, Culture and the Public Domain*, 1 May 2012, <https://www.onlineopen.org/theorem-4-autonomy>.

¹²¹ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 225.

¹²² Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 252–53.

¹²³ Jacques Lacan, "The Line and Light," in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (New York: Norton & Co., 1978), 92.

¹²⁴ Lacan, "The Line and Light," 92.

¹²⁵ Lacan, "The Line and Light," 92.

¹²⁶ Lacan, "The Line and Light," 93.

¹²⁷ "The essence of the relation between appearance and being which the philosopher, conquering the field of vision, so easily masters, lies elsewhere. It is not in the straight line but in the point of light—the point of irradiation." Lacan, "The Line and Light," 94.

¹²⁸ Lacan, "The Line and Light," 95.

¹²⁹ Lacan, "The Line and Light," 96.

¹³⁰ I am indirectly and loosely referring here to the Agambian term of "inoperativity." Though close in etymology, the English "inoperative" is far from *opera*: Italian for (art)work. For Agamben, the word "inoperativity" denotes no *opera*, no (art)work, either in the sense of an ongoing activity or the production of a finished product, though there is a potency for production or action. See Giorgio Agamben, "Work and Inoperativity," in *The Use of Bodies*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 245–48.

¹³¹ Lacan, "The Line and Light," 98.

¹³² Lacan, "The Line and Light," 100.

¹³³ Lacan, "The Line and Light," 103.

¹³⁴ Simone de Beauvoir, "The Positive Aspect of Ambiguity," in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 1947, trans. Bernard Frechtman, Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/ambiguity/cho3.htm>.

¹³⁵ "Enlightenment reiterates mythic sacrifice by striving to sacrifice it. But as a result, it unwittingly mimics the fatal compulsion which it intended to overcome. Only by 'working through' the sacrificial trauma that drives rationality—a working through which Adorno and Horkheimer characterize in terms of reason's reflexive commemoration of its own natural history—can reason renounce its pathological compulsion to sacrifice and thereby become

reconciled to the part played by nature within it.” We rely on an idea of rationality from the Enlightenment. In an attempt to destroy superstition, Enlightenment “reinstates myth.” Because we continue to rely on language, experience happens through historical mediation and memory considered on patterns of logic and rationality. However, Enlightenment marks that point when the subject of cognition does not express objective knowledge but becomes the object’s knowledge of itself. Here, other forms of knowledge have been continuously proposed to overcome pure verbal processes in a temporal and spatial transcendence provided by images and aesthetic forms of expression. Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and extinction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 33. Throughout the thesis, it has been essential to challenge accepted notions of Enlightenment, knowledge, and rationality to think about other experience forms. Art proves to be one of the most critical exercises in experimenting and welcoming other forms of knowledge production and recuperating rituals that the secularisation of Enlightenment had deemed to surpass. Adorno pays particular attention to feelings in the art as a unique form of knowledge: “It is true that theory, through insight into universal social mediation, has conceptually surpassed solipsism. But art, mimesis driven to the point of selfconsciousness, is nevertheless bound up with feeling, with the immediacy of experience; otherwise it would be indistinguishable from science, at best an installment plan on its results and usually no more than social reporting.” Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 259.

¹³⁶ Beauvoir, “The Positive Aspect of Ambiguity.”

¹³⁷ “If the creator simply projects into the work of art a subject as the matter of this work any subject may thus be admitted, a massacre as well as a masquerade and this aesthetic justification betrays the author’s aim. If a writer wants ‘to communicate the horror inspired in him by children working in sweatshops; he produces so beautiful a book that, enchanted by the tale, the style, and the images, we forget the horror of the sweatshops or even start admiring it.’ If death, misery, and injustice can be transfigured to our delight, it is not evil to have death, misery, and injustice.” Beauvoir, “The Positive Aspect of Ambiguity.”

¹³⁸ Beauvoir, “The Positive Aspect of Ambiguity.”

¹³⁹ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, 296.

¹⁴⁰ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, 297.

¹⁴¹ Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (New York: Verso, 2009), 228.

¹⁴² Helgesen, in conversation with the author, 28 January 2017.

¹⁴³ Eline Mugaas and Elise Storsveen collaborated with Kunsthall Oslo on curating a major survey addressing the impact of second-wave feminism on its art production. The exhibition “Hold stenhårdt fast på greia di: Norwegian art and feminism 1968–89” was held 8 March – 21 April 2013 at Kunsthall Oslo. Its long-lasting impact was reported by Artforum, with a review by Ina Blom in the magazine January 2014 issue. In 2017 they received the prestigious Ulrik Hendriksen’s Award for their novel perspectives on the local art scene. The book *Hold stenhårdt fast på greia di: Norwegian art and feminism 1968-89* came out in 2019, published by Kunsthall Oslo.

¹⁴⁴ The cultural sector was included under the Ministry of Church Affairs and Education (Kirke- og undervisningsdepartementet) in Norway until the 1980s and did not have a separate ministry.

Part 2.

Unknotting the exhibitory: Problematising patriarchal exhibition making in the failures of the avant-gardes with a digression into the field of vision, around and about living art, ephemeralisation, and anamorphosis

What happens when an exhibition loses its form? Especially following the failure of the avant-gardes, which aimed to change the world, not just its art? How can one still search for revolutionary forms that are collective and creative, in which life is lived differently from its imposed banalisation? Could we still think today about the exhibition as a “constructed situation,” enabling the formation and entrance of new subject positions in the representational sphere? A space, which in inscribing a set of rules, allows for a propulsive and antagonistic thinking?

(2.1) Work and intoxication

Shifting geopolitics and migratory production within the secondary sector has been prevailing over post-war bourgeois society, enhancing discussions about the meaning of both economic “boom” and crisis. In particular, an economy of penury (translating as an economy of waste) deriving from the United States reached Europe and resulted in a profound change in the nature of capitalism, classes, and the concept of work.¹⁴⁵ A new dimension embracing the legitimisation of cheap workforces outside Europe brought about a new phase of the colonisation of everyday life. The commodification of all aspects of life, and the militarised domination of other peoples and lands, disturbed the established order’s moral and social bases, that is, the family and schooling systems, religion and sexual taboos, the army, the judiciary system, the press, and traditional politics. The street became the centre of these heated discussions, starting with groups like CoBrA in Europe, where, for instance, Constant, one of its co-founders, through writings such as *For an Architecture of Situation* (1953) and projects like New Babylon (1956–74), claimed a complete new architectural transposition of daily reality.¹⁴⁶ Spinning from the idea of creating situations, Constant—who was also one of the theoretical drivers behind the Situationists alongside Guy Debord—was immersed in the Provo movement in Amsterdam, counting on the experience of drugs such as LSD to create new situations and imaginations that otherwise seemed impossible.¹⁴⁷ A search for portable city environments and advocacy for endlessly shifting landscapes—resulting in total “disorientation”—was necessary for the Situationist International to complete a transformation to raise consciousness of neglected desires through a panoply of revolutionary actions. To organise games was the SI’s “entire program, which is essentially transitory. Our situations will be ephemeral, without a future: passageways. The permanence of art or anything else does not enter into our considerations.”¹⁴⁸ The Situationists took their beliefs to the letter with the intervention of hostility at the separation of art and poetry from everyday life (in Raoul Vaneigem’s words in *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, 1967) and their demands for experiences disallowed by existing society. Following a straightforward reading of Debord’s “Theory of the Dérive” (1956), one could create new situations in the city by, for example, linking up parts of the city and neighbourhoods that were otherwise spatially separated. It is a reading of the urbanism of the modern city doctrine, and its creation of class divisions, provocation of deep inequalities, and generation of the idea of “the outcast”—the one not serving a productive purpose in the city’s ideology—as the first witness of the aesthetic experience. The structure of the city and the given mobility of the bodies traversing the urban landscape is a systematic dehumanisation of human subjects. It is part of an economic and political normalisation subsuming people to instruments and things in a purely economic calculus of profit. The Situationists’ desire to destroy the mediations of the spectacle became, over time, self-destruction and internal intoxication by way of not finding an exit.¹⁴⁹ The SI could be seen as the first fully acknowledged art movement to take to the street.

If Lettrism, the avant-garde artistic and literary movement that emerged in post-war France via the influence of Futurism and Dada, had railed against consumer society's banality, it did not necessarily mean its members were attacking the institution of art per se, nor was it a self-destructive movement. In a leftist tradition meant to spearhead a class revolution, motivated by the writings of Marx and Engels, Lettrism used surprise attacks famously by painting graffiti on the façade of the publisher Gallimard and interrupting public lectures and performances. It not only aimed at challenging society at large—and, within it, the institution of art—it slashed its most substantial criticism at the avant-gardes who had made themselves the bearers of rejecting established forms and conventions.¹⁵⁰ Images, utterances, hieroglyphs, musical notes, scribbles, and particles smaller than words, letters, created pieces that challenged dominant mannerisms for interpretations. Lettrism rejected the efficacy of language as coherent, using individual words as letters and sounds instead to prove its brokenness and artificiality. It turned to darkness and light in cinema, with black and white screens, with a voice-over, as in Debord's early film *Hurlements en Faveur de Sade (Howlings for Sade, 1952)*.

Art historian Frances Stracey traces the notion of “constructed situations” back to this film.¹⁵¹ At the film’s beginning, a voice utters: “The art of the future will be the overturning of situations or nothing.” Later, another voice declares, “a science of situations is to be created, which will borrow elements from psychology, statistics, urbanism and ethics. These elements have to run together to an absolutely new conclusion: the conscious creation of situations.”

A more rigorous formulation is elaborated in the first issue (1958) of the journal *Internationale situationniste*. “Situationism” is defined as the theory or the practical activity of constructing situations; and, consequently, those engaged in constructing situations: a collective organisation of a unitary atmosphere, a game of events.¹⁵² Debord developed a methodology (of tactics or actions, referred to as “operatives” and “perspectives”) aimed at revolutionising the material environment of life to give rise to radically transformed habits.¹⁵³ These included “unitary urbanism” stemming from acoustic, spatial, architectural, gestural, poetic, and cinematic actions realised at the level of the urban environment. The word “spectacle” was used instead of Marx’s “commodity” to signal the historical moment of post-war consumer societies, characterised by a shift in labour from factories to the newly developing service and leisure industries, increasingly dependent on the use of mass-media communications for the sale of their services. Through Situationist interventions, the passivity principle of the spectacle was to be broken. Here one could reflect of the paradoxical duality of scarcity/abundance, produced by the new consumerist society brought forward by North American society,¹⁵⁴ as well as power relations of the few over the many, between the newly constructed notions of “developed” and “developing” countries.¹⁵⁵ Ultimately, the city determines who has the right to appear in public space and which activities within it are legitimate. The exhibition is a membrane to the street and its politics.

Within the intertwined capitalist world, the Situationist International exhibition of 1963, *Destruction of the RSG-6*, with contributions from Guy Debord, J. V. Martin, and Michèle Bernstein, took place at Galleri EXI, Odense, and demonstrated an art explicitly aligned with political activism and aiming beyond itself. Debord describes *Destruction of the RSG-6* as “anti-nuclear” and “anti-Nashist.”¹⁵⁶ A space evoking the

atmosphere of an atomic fallout shelter was constructed in homage to the group of British activists who, one month prior to the exhibition's opening, had revealed the British government's secret plan to protect its officials in the event of a nuclear war. A pamphlet created by the English protest group Spies for Peace, which drew attention to the sites of these nuclear bunkers, was distributed. In *RSG-6*, the visitor passed first through the atomic shelter environment, complete with sensory assault via blue light, siren noises, the smell of deodorant, and the taste of medicine, to then enter a zone evoking "the direct negation of this type of necessity."¹⁵⁷ Here visitors were invited to shoot with air rifles at images of political leaders. Slogans, directives, and "thermonuclear maps" (large paintings by Martin depicting the world after the outbreak of World War III) hung on the walls. The last room presented a series of sculptures by Bernstein made out of toy soldiers and paintings by Jan Strijbosch.¹⁵⁸ The relation to the work was carefully orchestrated to prompt resistance and extend the political struggle's artistic front. Departing from the existing means of cultural expression, from cinema to painting, the exhibition makers ultimately aimed at getting rid of the entire artistic framework.¹⁵⁹ Against the totalitarian realm of the cultural imaginary, agitational forces need to shake the present. In the cultural field, "imaginary" refers both to images and tropes unconsciously exerted on representation and also to the apparatus providing identification forms in order to co-opt spectators. The imaginary ideologically drives towards structuring subjectivity through the operation of fantasy. The exhibition space is only a tool to eventually dismantle a suffocating, ruling cultural imaginary, and with it the replica of the white cube, which predominantly points to such a purpose. In the development of the SI's strong intentions and propositions towards the future, disagreements were not the exception.

Until the 1961 Situationist International conference in Gothenburg, all the group's positions on the role of art within society were aligned. For the Scandinavian branch, it was art that was important, whereas they considered the French section to be too close to Marxist theories.¹⁶⁰ The German members were highly sceptical of the idea of the proletariat as the driving force of history. For Gruppe SPUR and Scandinavian artists like Jørgen Nash and Hardy Strid, it was from the sphere of art that a possible attack on the grey world of post-war bourgeois society would be possible.¹⁶¹ For the whole Situationist project, a coherent critique of the society of the spectacle was a global unity; and the means to that end could not be only art in an ordinary sense. The inability of the majority committee to reach consensus about the role of art in all this led to the expelling of Gruppe SPUR in February 1962. In response, Nash immediately founded the Second Situationist International, based out of his newly acquired farm in Sweden at Drakabygget. The schism within the SI concerned the question of how to act in a culture while opposing the entire organisation of that culture.¹⁶² This scission problem is core to the interpretation of the Situationists' understanding of the role of art within society and its revolutionary potential. Was generating and living art in itself enough to institute a change? Or should art instead launch an immediate attack on society—liberating people from a spectator's role and battling with bourgeois culture, the entertainment industry, and modern technology in order to create a different world? The former was Nash's position, for whom art represented a subversive force capable of shaking the foundations of a sterile, boring, bourgeois existence, while Debord interpreted art as a practical critique—"art or war"—part of a ruthless class struggle after the collapse of the first proletarian offensive.

The superfluous categorisation of art as a separate category from life was also claimed by Co-Ritus, which emerged as a continuation of the Situationist International movement in Scandinavia, of which the Danish artist Asger Jorn was a co-initiator. The Co-Ritus group was formed by Jørgen Nash (Jorn's brother) and Jørgen Thorsen from Denmark; Hardy Strid from Sweden; and Gruppe SPUR members (who were wanted by the German authorities and lived in exile in Nash's home at Drakabygget). Its main tenet was the idea of a free society where the display of artistic skill was part of everyday life and not limited to a single group. The individual had to become an active participant, not an onlooker, in the creative process, which preferably took the form of a game.

Showing at Galleri Jensen in Copenhagen in 1962, Co-Ritus started out with a public action of distributing its manifesto in an empty room, where thirty boxes of material were used to build a special collage over the course of the exhibition. The room contained art-making materials rather than artworks and was filled with the creative efforts of gallery attendees. Moreover, the space was to be used for the performance of poems and music. In its manifesto, Co-Ritus asserts: "We say: from our point of view art is happening in the space between. In the space between people, in the space between the sublime and the banal. It is the functioning of art we want to change. It is here and now it is happening."¹⁶³ Using performative strategies in the streets, such manifestations increasingly took the form of demonstrations. In this respect, such actions became an instrument to understand art not in its autonomous function but as lived action.¹⁶⁴ Strategies were further developed and used to thematise spirituality in relation to a sense of cultural or political isolation. In so doing, the group even attracted politicians and others who participated in public debates. Their subsequent exhibitions included details such as dolls that symbolised industrial workers' shift work, where the dolls were attached to spinning wheels.¹⁶⁵ Organised with a certain degree of Actionism, Co-Ritus's exhibitions intermixed lectures and organised discussions, and resulted in the publication of books and periodicals in order to expand the frame for active participation. An interest in social engagement had the goal of preventing exploitation of the newly won leisure time of the middle class, and preventing its passive spectatorship. In this way, one could argue that the art somehow exited its autonomous space.¹⁶⁶

(2.2) The notion of welfare in Scandinavia through a reading of Jorgen Nash

Nash explained in a 1963 interview that, although the Scandinavian version of the welfare state had won the social sympathy of the Situationists, and it was true that working hours, for instance, had been made shorter, the unexpected consequence of these new regulations was that free time had arisen.¹⁶⁷ Artistic freedom of expression and human freedom, he thought, were as such given over to systems of monopoly. In communist countries, the workers had taken over the means of production, but non-assimilated artists were not accepted if they did not align with the dominant thought. By contrast, in Europe and the US, cultural entrepreneurs had control of publishing houses, film production companies, newspapers, and art exhibitions. Nash claimed that "spiritual intelligence" should make use of the artistic means of production, and that they should not be controlled by cultural entrepreneurs or commissioners who are part of an enormous control apparatus.¹⁶⁸ Recognising Co-Ritus as *avant-garde* artists, it was necessary, for Nash, to continue accelerating artistic development in order to destroy a post-war Fordist society in which people were reduced to passive consumers, including of art. Such liberation had to come through a new society. In

such a conundrum and under a “historical advancement” that had made a new life possible within existing capitalist production relations, people were still *surviving* instead of *living*. Instead of forced labour, he contended, human beings should be given full time for play.¹⁶⁹

The aesthetic field lives in the interstices of free time for the workers moving through the cityscape, and it is seen as the locus of potential liberation. It is only obvious, then, that such debate will arise: Where does art belong in this system? Does it belong to the capitalist entrepreneur or to the worker? Which interests are artists (and art institutions, as the supporting system for the arts) serving? Which sphere of life is art supporting: the practical or the spiritual one? Is all art bourgeois, or can it serve other bodies? To change art, should we change its institutions? What is the meaning of play and ritual within an otherwise strained life under capital exploitation? Should these discussions remain local, or have an international scope?

Free (or leisure) time is a contested category of these years; it is a space supposedly provided by a new phase of capitalism, whereby machines partly liberated workers from their practical tasks, therefore giving them more time to “enjoy” (or to have access to) life in general. Paradoxically though, through Nash, and through other cases studied in this chapter, we can see there was a clear unravelling of a society within a society (a different treatment reserved for different people, according to their provenance), with disparate interpretations of “free time” and different “enjoyments” of such a concept. The achievement of shorter working days in Scandinavian countries, for example, was in practice less considerate of the arduous living conditions in urban environments (the Situationists’ contested space), forcing less affluent families to live in small apartments or to undergo long commutes between home and work. In reality, the concept of free time, celebrated as an achievement for the majority of the populace, applied to only a tiny section of the population. Means of production and communications remained in the hands of few. For the rest, such freedom was no less than a projected spectacle. Debord’s society of the spectacle was thus caught in a double entanglement, by being subjected to strenuous working conditions, while their real condition was mystified through the new imperial commerce of desire diffused through mass media (moving images pervading public and private space).

(2.3) The return to magic

In Denmark, Galerie Køpcke, which opened in 1958, became an international meeting point and the foremost centre of debate.¹⁷⁰ Piero Manzoni, alongside a cluster of other international artists, including Dieter Roth, Robert Filliou, and Daniel Spoerri, executed some of their most important works here.¹⁷¹ These incoming artists were especially characterised by their effort to include reality in a direct way and to bring “life” into art. They mostly worked with ordinary, everyday objects, including garbage and scraps. Collages and assemblages filled space to form immersive environments. The nature of the material and the random form of the works marked an important break with the “high culture” that was otherwise exhibited in purified (and anesthetised) forms. Spoerri’s exhibition at Galerie Køpcke consisted of items bought at a grocery store and sold at market price; he stamped the products with the words “Attention—Oeuvre d’art.” Manzoni, convinced that the artist is a living work of art, presented his *Artist’s Shit* (1961), purporting his faeces in signed cans. Although Galerie Køpcke broke conventional display patterns and created the ground to enlarge the sphere of what could be considered art, the press did not acknowledge

their exhibitions.¹⁷² How the curation of the artwork can redefine the form and “nature” of the art institution is key to these years, as are the people behind such small and critical institutes who steered the presence or lack of representation within the aesthetic sphere. Forms of immaterial art, including “branding,” sound, and music, were used as tools for breaking barriers and to open debate both within and outside the given cathedrals—museums. Private matters (literally things such as food and excrement) entered the public sphere as the cultural and aesthetic sphere and intersected with the definition of power.

Fluxus artists were invited to Copenhagen as early as 1962 by Det Unge Tonekunstnerselskab (DUT, the Young Musicians’ Society). A Fluxus festival, titled *Musik og Anti-musik, det instrumentale teater, 6 pro- et contragrammer* (*Music and Anti-music, the instrumental theatre, 6 pro- and contragrams*), was held at Nikolaj Church, featuring Nam June Paik, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Emmett Williams, Arthur Køpcke, Wolf Vostell, Robert Filliou, George Maciunas, and Jørgen Friisholm. They introduced—probably expecting scandal—new technology used in workplaces and technical material used for scientific advancement, communications, and the weapons industry into a constructed space that seemed threatening to many people. The Fluxus movement wanted to rid art of its link with the object, to meld art practices into new forms of activity, replacing the concept of art with something different—Fluxamusement. Maciunas’s claim of the non-professional status of the artist aimed to demonstrate that “anything can substitute art and anyone can do it.”¹⁷³ Once a defined set of rules has been established, one may contribute to any project. Understanding the need to shift control, and concurrently the power over definition implicit in the curatorial role, Maciunas also took on the role of curator of the Fluxus movement by marking the movement’s entrance into crucial aspects of the definition of the arts.¹⁷⁴

Questions of authority, authoriality, and finding a legacy of excess, what’s left unbound by the norm in terms of the positioning of curatorial or other practice, have been fundamental in guiding my theoretical investigation and practical work. It has also been essential to individuate what had shaken the establishment within the arts within the Scandinavian territory (mainstream and minor), and yet-to-be acknowledged practices. “Fluxus sought to engage the world beyond the normative art world,” writes Ken Friedman.¹⁷⁵ Fluxus represents a unique attempt to shape an irreverent community enabling cacophony of experiences, forms of freedom, and acceptance of shortfalls of art and life.¹⁷⁶

Fluxus critiqued the carrying values of the white cube, which rested on the artist-genius figure, the artwork’s uniqueness, and the author’s intentions (which at that time was reaching its peak), as well as the passive contemplation of the sole experience of art. Where could this contemplative experience under Fluxus remain, however? How could an active contemplation define an experiential space, and why?

According to Jürgen Habermas, art has replaced that sacred space that bourgeois society has rejected chiefly.¹⁷⁷ These unsatisfied needs include finding a human position in nature beyond means-ends rationality, allowing imagination to be spontaneous.¹⁷⁸ Art does not take on economic or political tasks but “satisfies residual needs.”¹⁷⁹ With Manzoni’s case, we notice a movement of liberation of art from objectification in a physical space, demanding new forms of community and curation. “Living art” beats the tempo of the issues of the time. It is 1961, and Manzoni puts

people on pedestals with the *Magic Base* (1961), transforming them into works of art. In Herning, Denmark, that same year, he puts the entire world on an inverted *Magic Base—Base of the World*. The entire world is an expanded work of art. It becomes clear that art establishes and replicates rules: art is a mechanism of “spiritual” (per Habermas) inclusion or exclusion; or a reminder of the human need for transcendence. Works like the *Magic Base* provide access to these missing rituals by questioning the bourgeois society institution of art via its habits.

Once the entire world had been put upside-down on its bearing surface, why are we still so tight to rituals? Why do we need art? Furthermore, what is its institution or an institution? How are we to understand the social formation of reality in our societies, if we don’t first understand their smallest nucleus, institutions?

(2.4) Who is “I,” what is an institution and deontic relationships

Philosopher John R. Searle suggests that, contrary to common thought, there is no long ontological tradition of understanding what institutions are. Even language has been taken for granted. If we take language for granted, we already take institutions for granted. Language structures the reality for how we experience it through cognitive perception. Searle states: “I believe that unless an animal can symbolize something as having a status, which it does not have in virtue of its physical structure, then the animal cannot have institutional facts.” He calls language such a form of symbolisation.¹⁸⁰ The role of institutions is not to constrain people but, instead, to create “a special kind of power” relationships: from rights to obligations and documentations—that is to say, *deontic powers*.

While the concept of work and leisure—and within it play as well as magic, by now uprooted for being “primitive” and backwards—came to be heavily debated as either oppositional or interconnected values during the middle of the last century, the concept of art continued to depend on the same institutions and institutional meanings that had been determined by the petite bourgeoisie’s ruling norms, codifying constitutive rules as crucial elements of the deontology of the present. There is equally a need to analyse this phenomenon. Art—an institution, like religion, also based on the notion of “collective acceptance”—still marked a continuum complying with certain social practices that enthusiastically endorse separation. Institutions provide structures within which one can “create institutional facts,” asserts Searle.¹⁸¹ Within modernity and its evolutionist language and symbols, institutional facts have evolved out of so-called natural facts, upon which we continue to rely. For instance, the idea of a biological family consisting of parents and their biological children is an institution fundamental to capitalism’s exploitation of the people and the acceptance of its derivative social norms. Underlying such ideas of biology are elaborate formal and informal institutional structures, involving the statuses of the mother, the father, and the children, assigning roles and categories required for the functioning of an intricate inter-institutional system.¹⁸² These are institutional realities, involving enormous power given to private property, governments, marriages, stock markets, and universities, under which we have been told we can increase the human capacity for action.¹⁸³ Searle affirms that “without the recognition, acknowledgment, and acceptance of the[se] deontic relationships, your power is not worth a damn.”¹⁸⁴

Also in deontology—in private property, contractual agreements, informal relationships, to name a few—truth establishes itself first and foremost through the

claim of an “I.” It matters who the “I” stands for and who it represents in establishing a relation: an “I” presupposing a majority mirrors it. It is essential to acknowledge that a majority consensus based on deontological relations continues subsuming the non-consenting minority. It equally presupposes an active “I” as a subject and the equality of the contracting subjects. There is only a tacit understanding of such equality, though. To be considered part of such humanity (or society), “my” life needs to be registered as worthy of such relation, acknowledging my very life on the same level as both a universal and an individual subject. However “I” cannot be uttered by all people in the same way, especially not for those living on the margins of institutions or relations (or forced outside them) and who have no power to speak for themselves or others, due to systemic discrimination—the ones who cannot participate in the constitution of this reality, and who also do not have a choice to think about (counter-)institution and (counter-)relation building. In the aesthetic sphere, such symbolic power and status are transferred to an object, giving immediate political and institutional recognition to certain groups of people instead of others, and defining their lives’ (and afterlives’) worth. Because some lives are not registered as lives with the same political rights of others in the sphere of appearance, and because institutions precede subjects, such (governing) institutions work first and foremost as repressive (and exclusionary) machines, inevitably privileging certain lives over others, and not necessarily “enabling” deontic powers independently from institutions. Some lives are deemed worthy of asserting their positions, while others are simply not. It is naive to believe that “when I am engaged in collective action, *I* am doing what I am doing as part of *our* doing what we are doing.”¹⁸⁵ Such a statement already presupposes an equality. If status actually functioned as the glue that holds human societies together, then one could agree with such an argument (though it would be equally a totalitarian argument—taking the part for the whole and excluding antagonistic positions). After all, one may say, we live between collective beliefs and collective desires. We accept statutes and participate in their approval. Nevertheless, we are not always given the tools to understand that these are not necessarily conscious choices nor has one (“I”) founded or participated in accepting key governing institutions. Status is one of the ontological conditions on which exclusion is created. To be given a status, one needs already to have a status—that is, the possibility to participate in the making of such a status (for example, citizenship—including the museum as making the citizenship of objects). We accept as a human quality the assignment of function to objects. However, objects cannot perform function in virtue of their physical structures alone, but rather in virtue of the collective assignment or acceptance of the object (or person) as having a certain status. A function is part of institutional culture, and its unspoken rules accord with that status. One is not told nor taught to undo institutions (perhaps that is why the arts are often considered ground-breaking: because they speak about institutional undoing). Such collective intentionality—an intent directed at objects and states of affairs in the world, including beliefs, hopes, fears, desires, and emotions in general—can signal a direction, certainly, but one highly charged and qualified by its institutional context (that’s what we should read and emphasise: a dominant ontology determining the very institutional context and culture, creating intentionality). The investigation of art and the sphere of representation cannot, therefore, focus on only a tiny part of that more significant problem within society. Because institutions build a social reality, including aesthetic autonomy and determination, they participate and create a meaningful representational sphere. They create inclusion and exclusion, which are crucial in organising meaning. In the art world, the curator has the task of organising such

meaning visually. Our bourgeois institutions continue to pretend to have a universal claim, yet primarily consist of forces coming from (and representing only) a few privileged positions. There is a need to bridge these spaces for belonging and claims from different representational spheres and multiple “I.”

(2.5) *Work—Don’t Wear Yourself Out!* (1974–78), a series of feminist exhibitions and a book with Ann Christine Eek

The aesthetic field is a great bearer of both the oppression and the emancipation machines, which together with educational systems close or open doors for such procedures to take place. A shift in the concept of work—material, conceptual, and artistic—is essential to catalysing change, in rethinking an entire modality of governance at the height of the age of capital. Such was the claim of a number of artists who became active in the 1970s and 1980s, especially photographers who had committed to a new turn, one that took a less instrumental view on images read only univocally through textual descriptions in the more or less ideologised space of newspapers, to move instead towards empathy as well as feeling and self-expression.¹⁸⁶ In Stockholm, Christer Strömholm’s photography school was a nodal point of encounter in Scandinavia for a new generation of artists to come forward with new aesthetic and political claims. Sadly, even here in a region known today—and especially in the 1960s—as a territory of emancipation, most of his students were still men. Agneta Ekman and Ulla Lemberg were among the few women who attended the school at that time, as did Ann Christine Eek, who together with two journalists published an important book titled *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!* (*Work—Don’t Wear Yourself Out!*).¹⁸⁷ This textual and visual work is completely in line with the political commitment of the time, where the image is largely the bearer of the message.¹⁸⁸ It includes the life experiences that the project’s subjects—female workers Therese, Anniki, Karin, Barbro, Ellen, Alice, Gullbritt, Agneta, and Ingalis—told to the authors. Eek took the images while Ann Mårtens and Kajsa Ohrlander developed the text. The book deals mainly with the stories of the nine women and details their income, age, job, location of residence, size of house, rent, number of children, relationship status, and everyday life, and particularly their double work: each has the main responsibility for their homes and children as well as a job outside the household. Through this book work, the three authors identified a paradigmatic trend where women carried the sole responsibility for raising the coming generation and where most of them had to work an extra job outside their domestic engagements to make ends meet. These discussions bring forward an interesting paradox of the capitalist machinery. Society, the authors claim, is constructed as if there are no children. The work situation forces people to give it their all, no matter the amount of overtime, work shifts, long workdays, commuting and travel time, exhausting labour, and so on involved. The authors and participants of *Work—Don’t Wear Yourself Out!* address a societal dysfunction whereby factors of production impair emotions, relations, and care for children. They argue for both men’s and women’s rights to have time for children, community life, politics, and culture. “Nobody wants to wear themselves out!” recites the back cover of the book, which came out in 1974. A small exhibition was held at the bookstore Oktober in Stockholm that same year, and the poster images eventually became part of the exhibition *Kvinnfolk (Women)* at Kulturhuset in Stockholm, which opened its doors to the public on 14 February 1975. The poster images were later shown at Malmö Konsthall during the autumn of 1975, from 11 September to 19 October, and they additionally toured as a poster exhibition across Sweden. Finally, they reached the Norwegian capital as a photography exhibition in early 1978 at Fotogalleriet, where Eek’s images were framed for the first

time.¹⁸⁹ The main question asked with each iteration was: Who is benefitting from this system?

In 1971, Kajsa Ohrlander had already published the book *22 timmars arbetsdag* (*A 22-hour Workday*), in which she begins to deal with the “free time” and “free labour” one “gives” the company one works for, beyond the eight or eight-and-a-half hours per workday actually measured.¹⁹⁰ In big cities in Sweden, she states, one works extra overtime, and both providers (her focus is on nuclear families) work double, often for the same real income one of them had ten to fifteen years before or of people not living in cities. In the big city, the family providers should use up twenty-two hours of every day in order to achieve the necessary means to feed, clothe, and take care of their family.¹⁹¹ Commuting (an average of three hours) and breaks (an average of an hour, and instrumental to “recharging batteries” for “performance”) are not counted as working hours. In addition, people are obliged to take extra shifts to be able to support themselves in the city and pay their bills. Ohrlander importantly points out how women’s labour has been instrumental to balancing the unpredictability of supply and demand in the region, making them part of an “extra supply chain” that also includes people with disabilities and foreign workers.¹⁹² As she states in the book, it is not by chance that both unions and the government called women a “labour reserve.”¹⁹³

Discussions on equal pay for equal work were ongoing in the region. Group 8, a feminist organisation founded by eight women in Stockholm in 1968, was a militant feminist movement that took up issues of childcare and a six-hour workday. It also created a sense of political activism through the use of media, making sure, for example, that women columnists and writers were hired at the two major newspapers in Sweden—*Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet*—thus allowing feminist voices to reach everyone. Group 8 also sponsored housing solely for women, to help protect, strengthen, and empower the female population. It additionally published the magazine *Kvinnobulletinen* (*Women’s Bulletin*) every month starting in 1970, covering various feminist issues such as sex work, unionism, women in the workplace, heterosexuality, and homosexuality. The group started as a small internal circle that gathered to read and discuss women’s literature, government studies, and reports on women’s conditions, before becoming a stronger outreach organisation with an aim to shape public opinion.¹⁹⁴ Ann Christine Eek has recently recounted how her concurrent work was influenced by Group 8.¹⁹⁵ *A 22-hour Workday* was among the reasons Eek, as a photographer and artist, was brought into contact with its author, Ohrlander, and Ann Mårtens later joined the pair to produce *Work—Don’t Wear Yourself Out!* At the time of making the exhibitions, Eek was part of Safka, a photo agency founded in 1967 by Kenneth Gustavsson and Anders Petersen that focused on reportage and documentary intersecting with socially critical photography. Documenting people’s everyday lives, rather than being part of an ideological movement, seems to have been an essential motivation for Eek, who continues to refuse to pledge allegiance to radical leftist movements from that time, but declares her affinity to the people, and especially the women, with whom she sought out relationships.¹⁹⁶

One function of the *Work—Don’t Wear Yourself Out!* project seems to have been to bring concrete cases to Ohrlander’s claims from *A 22-hour Workday*. Visual testimony of precarious lives obtained the necessary attention and offered visible proof of capitalistic oppression on people in general, and women in particular. We

move inside people's homes and we learn all about their private matters, with their desires and denials determined mostly and foremost by their socioeconomic background and gender. As with the artists in Helgesen's 1971 UKS survey of the precariousness of the artists' economy and the disparity among the few and the many to achieve a liveable life, the actual conditions of workers are immediately revealed to show a systemic failure and a purposefully driven gap between people—and not a set of conditions that have accidentally arisen. The private is made public as part of a quest for change.

It is interesting to note how a concurrent movement of Marxist revisionism was taking place during those years as a way to explain issues of gender-based oppression in the field of work. Anarcha-feminist Silvia Federici, in her epochal book *Caliban and the Witch*, mentions how a number of inspirational works produced at the beginning of the 1970s addressed the housework movement, where women were inscribed as the producers of labour-power and unpaid work in the house, a subordinated oppression she considers a residue of feudal relations and proper to capitalist ideology.¹⁹⁷ For Federici, unpaid work is essential to the capitalism machine, where women's labour appears as a "natural resource."¹⁹⁸ In capitalist ideology, according to her and following Marx, there is a principle of "primitive accumulation" on which production relations are based, where we should reinsert women as a subjugated subject, which is absolutely instrumental for such primitive accumulation of capital to happen. The gendered division of labour, including the persecution of witches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was an important step in establishing a system for the colonisation and expropriation of land for capitalist development.¹⁹⁹ It is at the intersection of primitive accumulation and the appropriation of the means of production that feminism finds alliance with the proletariat struggle, Federici says. She adds that one should be suspicious of Michel Foucault's theory of the body, because he ignores techniques of reproduction in his analysis of discipline and power, and so the categories male/female collapse into an undifferentiated whole. He never mentions the persecution of women through witch hunts.²⁰⁰

(2.6) The exhibitory moment: Nine stories of a struggle in ten chapters

The photobook has been an important medium for guiding alternative forms of critique, exposition, and circulation, circumventing the heteronormative and not always accessible exhibition space. I addressed such preoccupations through the exhibition *Le Book Club*, which I co-curated with Norwegian artist Nina Strand and Paris-based duo Anna Planas and Pierre Hourquet in the early months of 2020 at Fotogalleriet, Oslo. In late 2020, I also co-curated a conference titled *Photography Bound: Rethinking the Future of Photobooks and Self-Publishing* with Professor and artist Adrià Julià. As I have researched and asserted during these events,²⁰¹ the photobook is a body in transition because of its ability to pervade diverse locations and times (not simply the commonly available official exhibition spaces). Its transient movement tests the exhibition space's political architecture and colonial patriarchy. To hold a photobook is to journey—politically, sexually, geographically, corporeally—radically transforming the travelling object and the receiver. The photobook looks for new contexts, communities, and nationalities and to contest borders.

The *Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!* publication starts with defining the "double work" women are unconsciously (and unwillingly) subjected to and why the historical achievement of the eight-hour workday needs to be re-evaluated in more general

terms. In the mid-twentieth century and still today, working hours have hardly become what workers at the turn of the century intended them to be when they demanded “eight-hours of work, eight-hours of rest, eight-hours of leisure.”²⁰² The right to participate in society and culture and to inform oneself through reading and spend with one’s friends and children had, by the 1970s, disappeared. The book’s case for a six-hour workday begins with a case study in the second chapter, titled “Shareholders Need Young Women.” Here we learn about individuals by coming into contact first with Therese, twenty-one years old and a metalworker, who asserts: “We stand there and work and work like robots.”²⁰³ Therese, who previously lived with Uffe and has a one-year-old child, recounts her personal story by unveiling factory managers’ and owners’ dark strategies: “They don’t want us to sit together, think together, or talk with one another. That would build too much fellowship; and there would be too much solidarity.”²⁰⁴ She lingers on that thought by revealing that Uffe and herself never had time for each other, as they could not deal with the early mornings, long workdays, and sleepless nights. They divorced and parted ways, and so Therese became one of the 135,000 single mothers in Sweden, bringing her to an even more unmanageable work situation. She cannot negotiate to work less, as the factory that employs her needs a lot of workers at the moment, bringing important questions to the table such as: “Is it the demand for the right to work, or the right to freedom, that is fulfilled today?”²⁰⁵ She points out that industrial development takes place only on the employer’s terms, and they have no concern for women’s liberation: “An impossible combination.”²⁰⁶

The third chapter, titled “Work—Don’t Wear Yourself Out,” focuses on Annikki, a forty-year-old health-care assistant, who claims: “I love my work.” Annikki is married to Reino, a pipefitter. They have three children and a foster child (ages three, six, fifteen, and nineteen). They live in Älta, in a five-room apartment (counting bedrooms and living room, per the Scandinavian standard). In contrast to Therese, who has a very monotonous workday, Annikki feels she is independent in her work and has a much more interesting routine. The book’s authors chose her to show that women are in need of more rewarding jobs. “We want a good job,” says Hildur, a shop assistant in her thirties, while Karin, a twenty-nine-year-old student, states, “Knowledge is power” and “my interest will become my work.”²⁰⁷ She is married to Lasse, has two children (seven and two), and lives in Uppsala in a three-room apartment. Though she begins with a very hopeful statement, it soon becomes clear that their life is more precarious than she initially wants to admit: “I have had to risk a lot. But what I do has always been stimulating. I think that I am incredibly privileged because it is my interest that will become my work.” She takes out a large student loan for every semester of study, and it is uncertain if by the end of her education she will get the job she is training for. She ends up noting: “Being unemployed is being worthless.”²⁰⁸ As it turns out, when she is speaking, there are half a million unemployed women in Sweden, out of a total population of eight million, making another reality readily available. “Shareholders and directors do not want just any woman,” and not just anywhere. They are looking for “young, healthy women.”²⁰⁹ They should live where the industry is. It means a gendered unemployment, not considered a state crisis because it is gendered. These numbers do not shake society. They would, the book states, if instead, it were half a million unemployed men. For most people, the right to work is obvious, but such a right applied fundamentally only to men for the labour movement. Women continue to be spatially divided, confined to the home as the private space of invisibility.²¹⁰

In “Come to Social Services,” chapter four of *Work—Don’t Wear Yourself Out!*, a history of social benefits is reported. It includes the story of Barbro, a shopworker and a single parent with a one-year-old child who lives in a two-room apartment in Stockholm, who says that “there are no emergency benefits.”²¹¹ She needed to go on social benefits when she was on parental leave. “You need to book a time” to speak with the agency, and one needs to report everything, including how you are going to make a living in the future. Barbro has a phone and a TV, both considered a luxury. She asks, “Are these social benefits for the children or for the landlords?”²¹² Such discussion continues in chapter five, “The Time Has Come to Demand a Right to Have Children,” where we encounter forty-year-old single mother Ellen, working as a waitress and living half on benefits and half on salary. She is a hotel porter with a twelve-year-old, and lives in Stockholm in a two-room apartment. She has always felt lonely in her profession. Most people are completely alone as single parents, she tells us. When her child was little, she was single. She kept a slower pace of life, working a seven-hour workday but living in economic hardship. She asks: “Can we afford to have kids?” According to her, the time has come to demand the right to have children, because the required conditions to do so are not provided.²¹³

Alice, thirty-five, is a map draughtsman married to Jan and lives in Stockholm in a four-room apartment. Her story about the problems with daycare is part of chapter six, “Children to No Avail.” Not only do parents not have time to look after their children—neither do the staff working at the daycare, we learn. She does not have the time to teach her kids basic things, and neither do the daycare workers. The staff do not have the time for extra tasks. The days at daycare are extremely long. Kids are dropped off at 7 a.m. and not picked up until 5:30 p.m. More than ten hours.²¹⁴ At the time of speaking to Alice, there are 350,000 children whose parents work; 60,000 children are in daycare and 60,000 are with a municipally employed childminder. “Is daycare for the children or for the men in power?” this section asks.²¹⁵

“A Demanding Work Situation” titles chapter seven, where we come into contact with Gullbritt, a thirty-four-year-old childminder married to Hasse, with whom she has two children (eight and thirteen years old). She lives in Stockholm in a five-room apartment. She works out of her home and explains how heavy it is both emotionally and physically to take care of kids, to lift them up, play, pick up toys, and bend down on the floor all the time. Home is her workplace and she wants to do her job well. A childminder is different than a nanny, who goes to work and works with children outside one’s own house. Gullbritt must constantly make trade-offs between what is required of her in her work and what is required of her as a private person. Establishing boundaries is difficult in such a constricted setting, where work and private life merge.²¹⁶ At the time of the book’s release, there were 51,000 childminders: mostly married women with children of their own, getting a meagre payment.²¹⁷

“The Fight against Loneliness” is the subject of chapter eight, addressing how urban society’s structure determines this status quo. During the period examined by the book, half of all households in Sweden were single households. We learn about solitude and silence in workplaces, means of transportation, and marketplaces. The chapter asks, “Have families ever been lonelier than they are today?”²¹⁸ After a divorce, with sole custody of a child, not everyone has another adult to talk to. Agneta, thirty-seven, is an instructor of PostGirot. Divorced. Two children, ages ten and twelve. Lives in Stockholm in a four-room apartment. She says that “the worst

part of being alone is planning the future.”²¹⁹ The children have often to be on their own during holidays—feelings of isolation and loneliness increase. “We need to start reaching out for each other,” she says.²²⁰

Many people fight to stay in the place where they feel at home, claims “Stay All Together and with Others,” the ninth chapter. People fight for their communities. They often know a move to a big city would destroy feelings of security. Here, we encounter Ingalis, a thirty-eight-year-old factory worker, saying, “We help each other.”²²¹ She is married to Bengt, unemployed. She has three children (sixteen, seven, and five). They all live with Ingalis’s parents. It becomes clear that this form of extended family, besides the standard nuclear family creates forms of solidarity impossible to maintain in the spatial setting that the city’s urbanity creates. She affirms that if they were to move: “We would be social cases—I am sure of it.”²²²

The last chapter of the book is titled “A Chance for Real Love,” strongly advocating for a six-hour workday. This is proposed as the real and only chance at equality in the workplace. The authors write: “Only when society’s responsibility for children is imposed by law, and when the municipality and state are required to administer part of the child’s upbringing, will women be able to dare to fully invest in a job.”²²³ The current situation, the book insists, is that employers dictate an interpretation of equality that violates the right to have children.

(2.7) Shaping a self-positioning through the process of anamorphosis; sexuality in the field of vision

In the struggle for equality and emancipation, contesting the social sphere’s ontological givens, the exhibition space has been less visible (less contested) and therefore much less questioned as a space asserting gender imbalances and gender formation; this in turn cemented the ruling power of modernity’s exhibitionary complex coming into effect. This process occurred through large museums and fairs alike from the nineteenth century on, as well as through the far-reaching power of the filmic form, shaping the aesthetic sphere and looming larger than any physical architecture of the exhibition palaces, through the film medium’s more nomadic and popular form of projection and accessibility. In the 1970s, critical theory entered the field visual arts field via psychoanalytic analysis of the subject in a formal analysis of cinema.²²⁴ To understand the function of the imaginary in the formation of identity, the gaze of cinema emerges as ideologically motivated by a society based on the male gaze. The male is the only subject. The spectator is gendered.²²⁵ As curators became mediators between the artwork and publics, a new museological practice critically examined society and proposed a new image of the world. Symptomatically, it’s also worth mentioning that the landmark article by Linda Nochlin, rhetorically asking the question “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?,” was published during those years, in 1971.²²⁶

More recently, humanities scholar Jacqueline Rose spearheaded a revisionist account of psychoanalysis, questioning its assimilation into literary methods, which infused them with phallocentric dogmas born of certain readings of Lacan and Freud.²²⁷ The cementation of identity is foremost politically motivated. Reading Lacan through Althusser’s concept of ideology, Rose explains further the relation of feminism and cinema through psychoanalysis. Feminism is a movement of recognition of gender inequality. The film medium perpetrates dual sexual identities and their consequent hierarchy in visual pleasure: one is the subject and the other the object. The ideology

machine continues to be effective because it works on these primordial drives. Psychoanalysis is the field where we can understand the persistence of these “oppressive social norms.”²²⁸ A biologically predetermined and socially assigned role have in common the image of passivity they produce: the woman, who receives a “natural destiny.”²²⁹ We need to add a “dimension of risk” in the normalised discourse to counter such image formation.²³⁰ In such process, one could attack theory itself as the product of a masculine fantasy and call for the dissolution of (knowledge) institutions and, consequently the destruction of language.²³¹ Rose reasons against the undoing of institutions because what we have learned to know as the unconscious can be used as a defence against a language otherwise frozen in fixed, institutionalised meaning. Sexuality, because it “unsettle[s] the subject, is a break against the intolerable limits of common sense,” she says.²³² In creating the difference in this system an image emerges, the woman. The image of such separation proposes a definition of what is not a “man” and consequently excess. Excess is what man needs to give up to fit such a category. Here Rose identifies a form of potentiality that this systemic imbalance has underestimated and unwillingly produced and that the unconscious enables us to speak about.²³³

Freud journeys into childhood and adult sexual life through a visual space. He hovers over moments when perception falters and is troubled by anatomical differences. In such cases, pleasure is registered as excess and functions as a mechanism of predestination, by witnessing a destiny based on experiencing the acts of others. Here, each time, we encounter a problem of seeing, of vision. Sexuality, therefore, lies less in the content of what is seen and rather rests on the relationship between the onlooker and their growing sexual knowledge, memory, or history. Rose writes: “As if Freud found the aptest analogy for the problem of our identity as human subjects in failures of vision or in the violence which can be done to an image as it offers itself to view.”²³⁴ These images—or fantasies, “archaic moments of disturbed visual representation”²³⁵—shake our knowledge of the past, our certainties. They are a memory trace, always derived and undermining memory’s previous status, the constant pressure of something hidden but not forgotten. Rose again: “Piles of cultural artifacts bring back something we recognise but in a form which refuses any logic of the same.”²³⁶ It is an acute problem of vision. Modernity tends to read these images as pure signifiers through language without confessing that we apprehend meaning through a language that already contains a sexual polarisation. It seems to be at the intersection of these psychoanalytic concepts of the unconscious and sexuality—specifically where the relationship to language seems to be lost—that Rose finds a link to psychoanalysis to develop her understanding of ideology as being determinative of the mechanisms that produce transformation within society, because through such mechanisms we recognise that something is left in excess, moving the unconscious away from a functionalist account of the internalisation of norms. Going back to the unconscious is, in this sense, a source of imaging. Optics (and therefore vision) is a quintessential phenomenon to analyse in the formation of the subject, that is, its power of identification and representation.

It is here that I find both allegiance to and resonance with the artistic approach (and I would argue curatorial work) of Ann Christine Eek, foregrounding the paradigmatic lives of nine, yet also countless, women. In the act of appropriating (artistic, photographic, and unconscious) images to undermine their previous perceived status through both repetition and insistence—by putting pressure on something hidden but not forgotten—she causes them to enter the realm of representation, and brings them

into focus by blurring the field of representation where our “normal” forms of self-recognition take place. Something about these images is left in excess. It appeals to our unconscious to rework our given optics. Decisively informing a whole strand of artistic production of the visual image, photography and psychoanalysis simultaneously move into practices of critique, alerting processes and undoing and rewriting institutions for the understanding of subjectivity and for feminism alike.

Excess in my curatorial practice means giving space to the unacknowledged. The normativity of the house, the architecture, and urbanity have become incredibly pressuring in my curatorial work while directing an institution that is positioned on street level and in one of the backside streets intersecting a capital's city center. The excess, what doesn't fit societal standards or an active refusal and challenging of the norm, is part of a disconnect between a lived reality and representation. One testifies to what the exhibition space gives every day at Fotogalleriet. Its large windows open on a park populated with petty crimes, drug use, studentship, parenthood, the cult of the body, and varied life: the potentiality and the systemic imbalance the institution contributes to maintaining. Calling performative actions “to fill the gap” into programming and working closely with neighbour institutions has been part of maintaining that excess actively operative and acknowledging the institution's unconscious (what's not immediately recognised) as a curatorial task.

(2.8) The spirit of the time is in the air: The dematerialisation of the art object

It is tempting and perhaps appropriate to draw here, while thinking about the work of both Aina Helgesen and Ann Christine Eek, a parallel with the dematerialisation of the art object proclaimed by curator Lucy Lippard in those same years.²³⁷ In 1969, Lippard told sculptor Ursula Meyer:

The new dematerialised art ... provides a way of getting the power structure out ... and spreading it around to wherever an artist feels like being at the time. Much art now is transported by the artist, or in the artist himself [sic], rather than by watered-down, belated circulating exhibitions or by existing information networks.²³⁸

Education for Lippard—as similarly for Helgesen and Eek, who in the following years attempted to find multiple forms for the permanent display and circulation of the artwork through books, posters, leaflets, and portable exhibitions (i.e., irreducible to one single object of value)—becomes part of a process of liberation of capitalist determinacy. She says, “Objects aren't very important for me anymore. ... I am trying to reaffirm the concept of art and creativity in the face of Marxist doctrine. ... For me the formation of the thought is already sculpture.”²³⁹

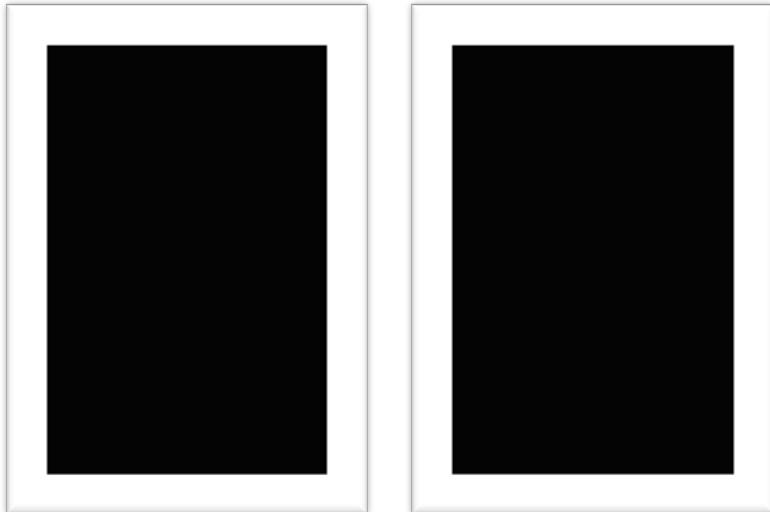
Returning from a trip to Argentina to sit on an art prize jury in 1968, she radicalised her thoughts, primarily through contact with the Rosario Group and their mixture of conceptual and political ideas. Lippard started approaching exhibition making entirely differently, where curating the circulation of thought predominates over the circulation of objects. Dematerialised art would travel from country to country via free airline tickets, for instance.²⁴⁰

Lippard has become known and a pivotal figure, including for my curatorial practice, breaking free from objects. It's not the art object making ideas circulate, but images. Such a turning point and claim of her practice makes small institutions and less financially demanding curating possible. It also makes it possible for works of art outside the canonised space of the museum to have a value and recognition otherwise denied outside these patriarchal spaces of exposition. For me, working in a small institution (and for feminism alike), her thinking is fundamental to overcoming otherwise apparently unreachable public realms.²⁴¹

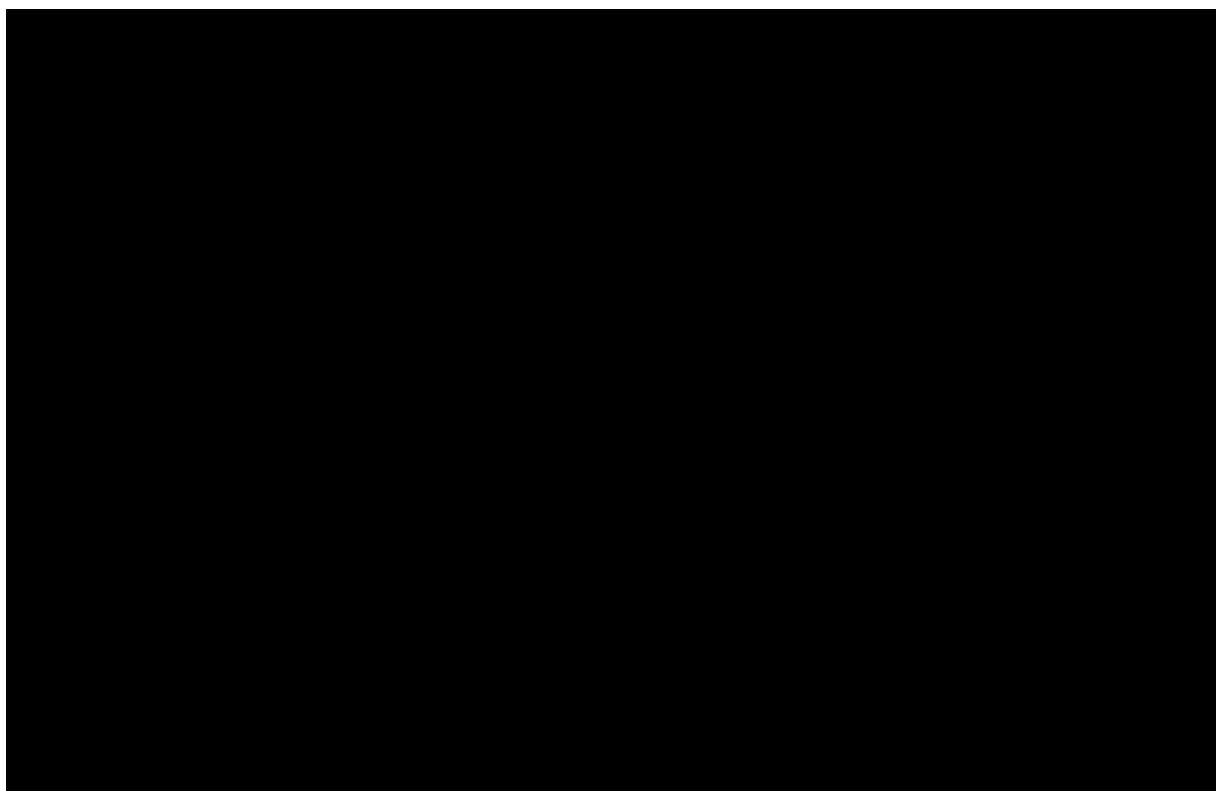
The early Conceptual artist Marcel Duchamp certainly had a major influence on Lippard's development of these ideas.²⁴² The 1950s to 1970s were the years in which Duchamp himself was rebuilding his own historiography and constructing a truth process along with it, often referring, in numerous interviews, to "objects turning into artworks," objects which had already been present in the artist's studio.²⁴³ Lippard seems to have embodied this Duchampian lesson, mostly in an attempt to free herself from preconstituted forms of exhibition determined by the narrowness of a place such as New York, which by the 1970s had once again cemented itself in secluded institutionalised forms. She writes: "Decentralisation and internationalism were major aspects of the prevailing distribution theories. ... In the sixties, however, New York was resting in a self-imposed, and self-satisfied, isolation, having taken the title of world art capital from Paris in the late fifties."²⁴⁴ Consequently, the easily portable, easily communicated forms of Conceptual Art made it possible for artists working outside the major art centres to participate in early stages of new ideas. These are Lippard's words, not mine.²⁴⁵

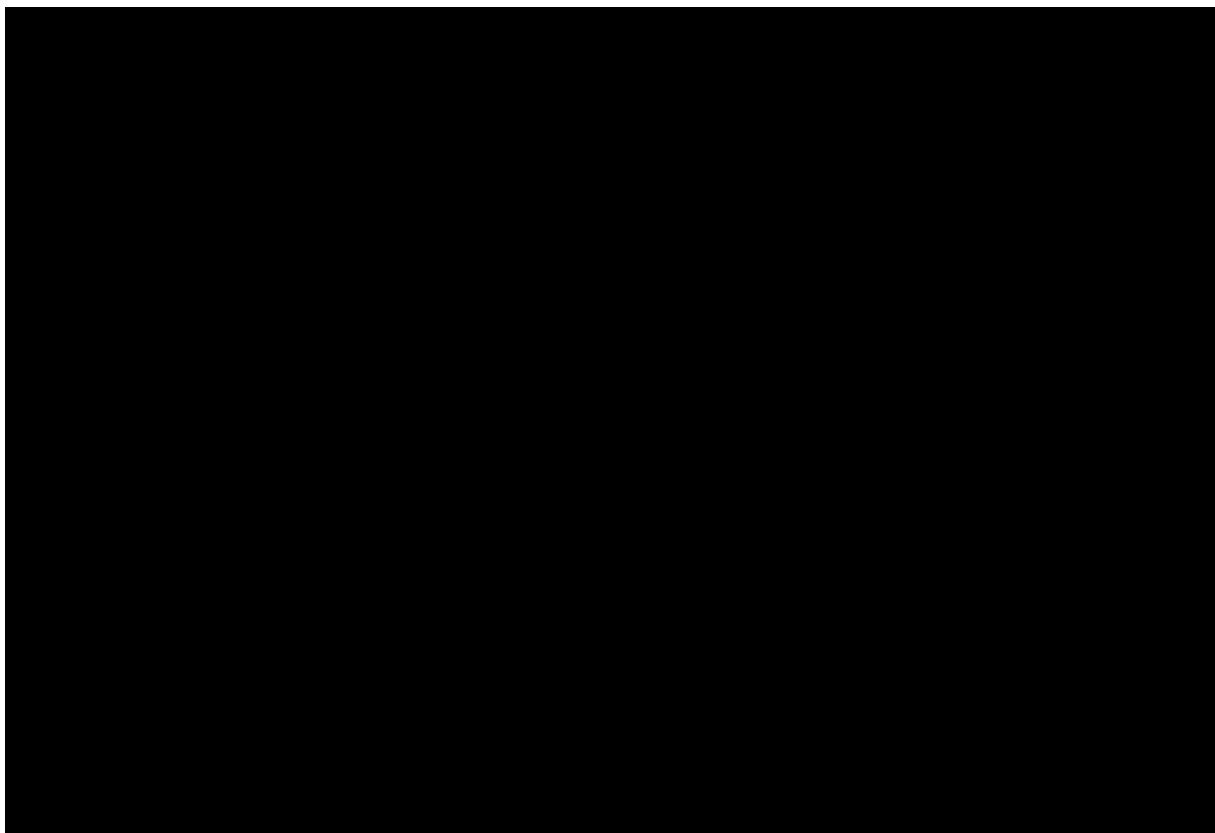
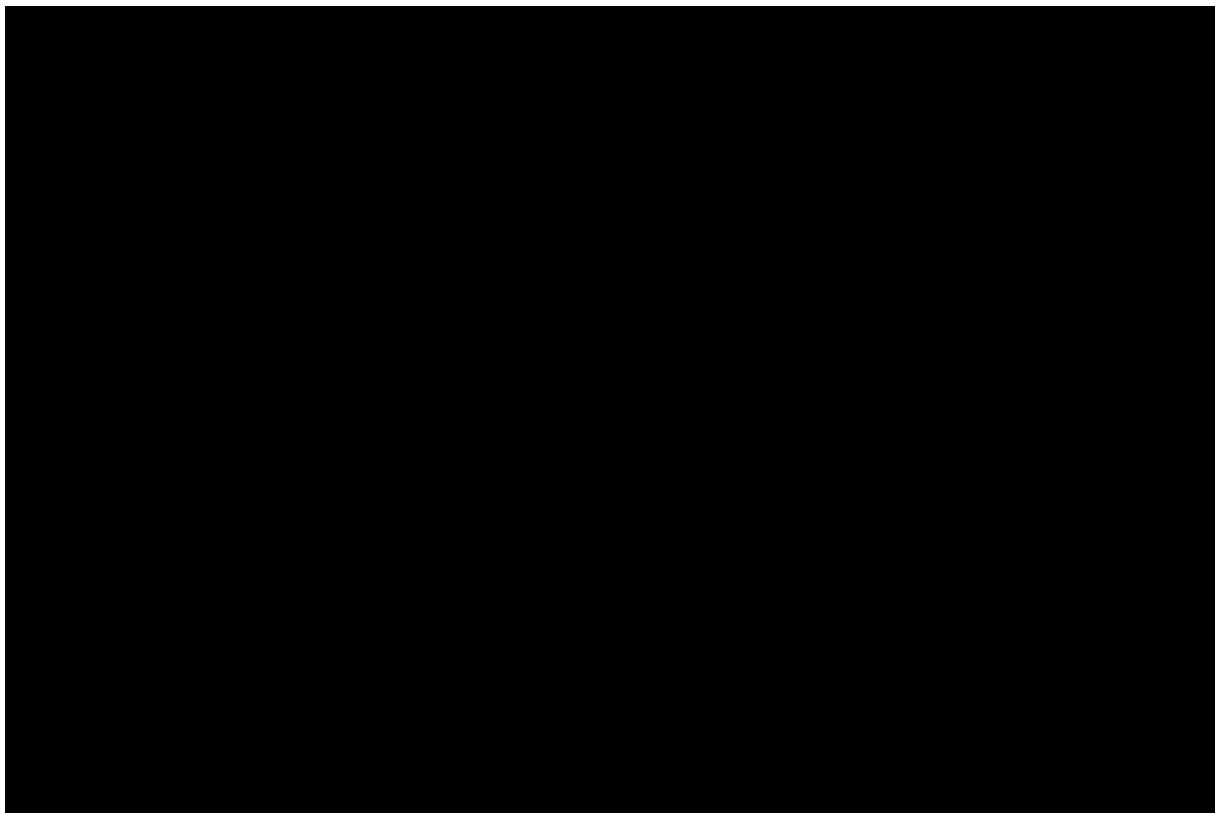
Certainly, this lesson comes from Dadaist practices which had been imported to the US through Duchamp. As theorist Walter Benjamin notes, "The Dadaists attached much less importance to the sale [exchange] value of their work than to its uselessness for contemplative immersion."²⁴⁶ As for Lippard's approach to writing on Duchamp, her poems were a "word salad" containing the waste products of language.²⁴⁷





Ann Christine Eek, *Arbeta—inte slita ut sig!* (Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!), 1974–78. © the artist
Installation views at Fotogalleriet, Oslo, 1978.





Ann Christine Eek, *Arbeta—inte slita ut sig! (Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!)*, 1974–78. © the artist



Ann Christine Eek, Ann Mårtens, and Kajsa Ohrlander, *Arbete, inte slita ut sig!: En bok om dubbelarbete idag och förr i tiden, för 6 timmars arbetsdag i framtiden* [Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out! A Book about Double Work Today and in the Past, for a 6-hour Workday in the Future] (Stockholm: Ordförnt, 1974).

¹⁴⁵ Nigel Whiteley, “Toward a Throw-Away Culture: Consumerism, ‘Style Obsolescence’ and Cultural Theory in the 1950s and 1960s,” *Oxford Art Journal* 10, no. 2 (1987): 3–27.

¹⁴⁶ Henri Lefebvre’s *Critique of Everyday Life* served as an inspiration for the group. Drawing from a Roma encampment and designed to facilitate a nomadic lifestyle, New Babylon was to be based on total automation and a collective ownership of land, no more work, and freedom to move around. These discussions intensified in the 1960s with the Provo movement, which became very powerful in Amsterdam, with its idea of keeping urban life intact, and preventing the city from being eviscerated by automobile routes and taken over by vehicles; Provo wanted the city to be conserved and transformed, instead of given over to traffic.

Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 121.

¹⁴⁷ Henri Lefebvre, “Henri Lefebvre on the Situationist International,” interview and trans. by Kristin Ross, 1983, *Not Bored*, <http://www.notbored.org/lefebvre-interview.html>. Originally published in *October*, no. 79 (Winter 1997).

¹⁴⁸ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 7.

¹⁴⁹ Alastair Hemmens, “‘Beau comme le tremblement des mains dans l’alcoolisme’: A Cavalier History of Drugs and Intoxication in the Situationist International,” in *Literature and Intoxication*, ed. Russell Williams and Eugene Brennan (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 173–84.

¹⁵⁰ During those years, the term avant-garde was under scrutiny to acknowledge and rejuvenate art tactics or push even further, for example, Dada and Surrealism contemporaneous and predecessors’ experiments in splintering “art” and “life.” Rejection of the terminology was a search for new words as no longer applicable to certain practices.

Karen Kurczynski, “Expression as Vandalism: Asger Jorn’s ‘Modifications,’” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 53/54 (2008): 298. David W. Seaman, “Letterism. A stream that runs its own course,” *Visible Language*, XVII, 3 (1983): 18–25.

¹⁵¹ Frances Stracey, *Constructed Situations: A New History of the Situationist International* (London: Pluto, 2014), 8.

¹⁵² “Definitions,” trans. Ken Knabb, *Internationale Situationniste* #1, June 1958, Situationist International Online, <https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/definitions.html>

¹⁵³ Guy Debord, “Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency’s Conditions of Organization and Action,” June 1957, Situationist International Online, <https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/report.html>

¹⁵⁴ Frances Stracey has argued that to understand the formation of the Situationist International in order to construct a new revolutionary praxis of life, one must recognise the failure of its point of departure: the inability of past avant-garde movements to achieve a revolution of life through art, and the decay of avant-gardism in the post–World War II period into decorative and theatrical forms of radicalism. See Stracey, *Constructed Situations*.

¹⁵⁵ Daniel Yergin and Joseph Stanislaw, eds., *The Commanding Heights: The Battle between Government and the Marketplace* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 88–90.

¹⁵⁶ Debord et al., *Destruktion af RSG–6. En kollektiv manifestation af Situationistisk Internationale*, 10.

¹⁵⁷ Debord, “The Situationists and the New Forms of Action in Politics and Art.”

¹⁵⁸ Cathy Turner, *Dramaturgy and Architecture: Theatre, Utopia and the Built Environment* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

¹⁵⁹ Debord, “The Situationists and the New Forms of Action in Politics and Art.”

¹⁶⁰ Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, *Playmates and Playboys at a Higher Level: J. V. Martin and the Situationist International* (Berlin: Sternberg, 2014).

¹⁶¹ Rasmussen, *Playmates and Playboys*.

¹⁶² “The Fifth SI Conference in Goteborg,” in *Situationist International Anthology*, rev. and expanded ed., ed. Ken Knabb (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), 114–17.

¹⁶³ Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Jørgen Nash, and Hardy Strid, “Co-Ritus Manifesto,” ca. 1962, trans. Jakob Jakobsen, Scandinavian Situationism, <http://scansitu.antipool.org/6105.html>.

¹⁶⁴ Knut Ove Arntzen, “Art Is Pop. Co-ritus Is Art: Artistic Strategy in Scandinavia Action Art in the 1960s and 70s. With Some Aspects of Postmodern Recycling,” in *Whatever Happened to Sex in Scandinavia*, ed. Marta Kuzma and Pablo Lafuente (London: Koenig Books, 2011), 376–79.

¹⁶⁵ Knut Ove Arntzen, “Gruppe 66, Co-ritus og kunsten som samhandling” [Group 66, Co-ritus and the art of interaction], *Kunst Plus*, no. 1 (2011): 8–11, https://monoskop.org/images/8/88/Arntzen_Knut_Ove_2011_Gruppe_66_Co-ritus_og_kunsten_som_samhandling.pdf.

¹⁶⁶ Arntzen, “Gruppe 66.”

¹⁶⁷ Jørgen Nash and Jens Jørgen Thorsen, “Art Is Pop—Co-Ritus Is Art—Divided We Stand. Co-Ritus” (interview), 1963, trans. Jakob Jakobsen, Scandinavian Situationism, <http://scansitu.antipool.org/6304.html>. Originally published in *Aspekt*, no. 3 (1963).

¹⁶⁸ Nash and Thorsen, “Art Is Pop—Co-Ritus Is Art.”

¹⁶⁹ J. V. Martin, “Antipolitical Activity,” in *Cosmonauts of the Future: Texts from the Situationist Movement in Scandinavia and Elsewhere*, ed. Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen and Jakob Jakobsen (Copenhagen: Nebula; New York: Autonomedia, 2015), 97–101.

¹⁷⁰ Anneli Fuchs, “New Phenomena: Danish Art and the Danish Art World, 1960–72,” in *The Nordic 60s*, ed. Maaretta Jaukkuri, exhibition catalogue (Helsinki: Nordiskt Konstcentrum, 1990), 109.

¹⁷¹ Fuchs, “New Phenomena,” 109.

¹⁷² Fuchs, “New Phenomena,” 109.

¹⁷³ George Maciunas, “Fluxmanifesto on Fluxamusement,” 1965, George Maciunas Foundation Inc., <http://georgemaciunas.com/exhibitions/flux-labyrinth-fluxus-gag/fluxmanifesto-fluxamusement-1965>.

¹⁷⁴ George Maciunas organised the most significant Fluxus festivals and edited and produced a large body of Fluxus publications and multiples. Dorothee Richter points out that Maciunas’s organisational activities resemble those of a curator because he acted as a “meta-artist.” “In retrospect, Maciunas’s role as organiser, arranger, presenter, funds procurer, public relations agent, and namer bears a remarkable resemblance with that of the independent curator, who emerged as a new actor in the cultural field from the 1970s and 80s. In his capacity as Fluxus organiser (and chief ideologist), Maciunas anticipated not only the attribution of creativity, the meaning-giving acts of establishing connections and recontextualisation, but also the authoritative gesture of inscriptions and exclusions.” In her view, Maciunas produced meaning and exercised power in the same way as a contemporary curator. See Dorothee Richter, “Artists and Curators as Authors: Competitors, Collaborators, or Teamworkers?,” *OnCurating*, no. 19, (2013): 43–57.

¹⁷⁵ Ken Friedman, “Fluxus Legacy,” *OnCurating*, no. 51 (2021), 109.

¹⁷⁶ For more research on the political shaking of structures pursued by Fluxus, see Margaret Sherer, “A Network of Experience: Community Building and Social Restructuring in Fluxus” (MA thesis, Washington University in St. Louis, 2016).

¹⁷⁷ Jürgen Habermas, “Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism: The Contemporaneity of Walter Benjamin,” *New German Critique*, no. 17 (1979): 30–59.

¹⁷⁸ Habermas, “Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism.”

¹⁷⁹ Habermas, “Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism,” 193.

¹⁸⁰ John R. Searle, “What Is an Institution?” *Journal of Institutional Economics* 1, no. 1 (2005): 1–22.

¹⁸¹ Searle, “What Is an Institution?,” 21.

¹⁸² I’m intersecting Searle’s argument on institutions with gender theorist Judith Butler’s studies on gender, where she references Simone de Beauvoir to assert that “any gender, is an historical situation rather than a natural fact.” Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender

Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 520.

¹⁸³ I am rereading Searle’s argument here to bring it in a different direction. He believes that institutions provide humans with deontological powers, but he fails to explicitly assert that deontological powers are also given through institutions with a determination relating to gender and provenance, therefore working also as repressive machines. Searle, “What Is an Institution?”

¹⁸⁴ He continues: “It is only worthwhile to have money or a university degree or to be president of the United States if other people recognize you as having this status, and recognize that status as giving desire-independent reasons for behaving in certain ways.” Searle, “What Is an Institution?,” 11.

¹⁸⁵ Searle, “What Is an Institution?,” 6. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁸⁶ I reported on such movements for liberation from the space of the newspaper and the magazine page in a longer essay titled “Sufficient to Have Stood, Yet Free to Fall: Intermittent Thoughts on Free Photography,” in *100 Norwegian Photographers*, ed. Ina Oztko (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2019).

¹⁸⁷ Ann Christine Eek, Ann Mårtens, and Kajsa Ohrlander, *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!: En bok om dubbearbete idag och förr i tiden, för 6 timmars arbetsdag i framtiden* [Work—Don’t Wear Yourself Out! A book about Double Work Today and in the Past, for a 6-hour Workday in the Future] (Stockholm: Ordfront, 1974).

¹⁸⁸ Iréne Berggren, “Kvinnliga fotografer intar scenen” [Female photographers take the stage] *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift* 15, nos. 3–4 (1993): 85–94.

¹⁸⁹ The research of both Helgesen and the larger work of the exhibition *Kvinnfolk* (Women) in Stockholm are discussed in Anna Lena Lindberg and Barbro Werkmäster, eds., *Kvinnor som konstnärer* [Women Artists] (Stockholm, LT, 1975).

¹⁹⁰ Kajsa Ohrlander, *22 timmars arbetsdag* [A 22-hour workday] (Stockholm: Gidlund, 1971).

¹⁹¹ Ohrlander, *22 timmars arb*, 33.

¹⁹² Ohrlander, *22 timmars arb*, 89.

¹⁹³ Ohrlander, *22 timmars arb*, 93.

¹⁹⁴ Kerstin Norlander, “Kvinnokamp” [Women’s Struggle], Umeå Universitet, 1970, <https://www.umu.se/sidan-68/tema-1-kvinnokamp/kvinnokamp>.

¹⁹⁵ Ann Christine Eek, “Work—Don’t Wear Yourself Out—A Life in Black and White Photography,” interview by Anna Tellgren, *Conversations on Photography*, ed. Antonio Cataldo (Heidelberg: Kehrer, 2021), 91–108.

¹⁹⁶ Eek, “Work—Don’t Wear Yourself Out,” interview by Tellgren.

¹⁹⁷ Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autopedia, 2004), 7.

¹⁹⁸ Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 97.

¹⁹⁹ Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 12.

²⁰⁰ Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 16.

²⁰¹ Propositions around the power of photobooks in subverting given expository categories were addressed in the exhibition *Le Book Club*, which I co-curated with Norwegian artist Nina Strand and Paris-based duo Anna Planas and Pierre Hourquet. Dedicated to the photobook as an exhibition space of its own, the exhibition was divided into different, weekly chapters during the period of 15 January to 16 February 2020, and it contained interventions from a number of practitioners, including, among others, Zines of the Zone, Wolfgang Tillmans, Christophe Daviet-Théry, Sara R. Yazdani, Marie Sjøvold, Nadine Wietlisbach, Fin Serck-Hanssen, Julián Baron, Carmen Winant, Librairie Yvon Lambert, and David Horvitz. From 13–15 October 2020, I also co-curated a conference titled *Photography Bound: Rethinking the Future of Photobooks and Self-Publishing*, with Adrià Julià, professor of photography at the University of Bergen, to address how photo-based books and self-publishing are a vital emancipatory motor of discussion bringing communities across space and time together, which included, among other speakers, Terje Abusdal, Abdul Halik Azeez,

Heidi Bale Amundsen, Delphine Bedel, Bruno Ceschel, Paul Gangloff, Erik Gant, Hans Gremmen, Roberto Figliulo, Cosmo Grossbach, Sohrab Hura, Kay Jun, Aglaia Konrad, Moritz Kung, Silja Leifsdottir, Hailey Loman, Catalina Lozano, Vijai Patchineelam, Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, Vijai Patchineelam, Anna-Kaisa Rastenberger, Mette Sandbye, Ursula Schulz-Dornburg, Ahlam Shibli, Æsa Sigurjónsdóttir, Ina Steiner, Niclas Östlind, Stanley Wolukau-Wanambwa, Antonio Zúñiga, Anne Lise Stenseth, Tom Klev, Henri Terho, Annika Thörn Legzdins, Klara Þórhallsdóttir, and Tine Vindfeld.

²⁰² Eek, Mårtens, and Ohrlander, *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 11.

²⁰³ Age, profession, civil status, city of residence, size of house, and monthly rent are all stated at the beginning of each chapter, together with a portrait of the person we encounter. A headline summing up their main claim, in first-person, is also immediately presented.

²⁰⁴ Eek, Mårtens, and Ohrlander, *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 15. All translations from this book were made for this thesis by myself and Nora Fremmerlid.

²⁰⁵ *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 27.

²⁰⁶ *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 31.

²⁰⁷ *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 45.

²⁰⁸ *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 52.

²⁰⁹ *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 53.

²¹⁰ All the data summarised here comes directly from the book. I report it through translation. *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 53.

²¹¹ *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 59.

²¹² *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*

²¹³ *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 73.

²¹⁴ *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 94.

²¹⁵ *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 100.

²¹⁶ *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 107.

²¹⁷ All the data summarised here comes directly from the book. I report it through translation. *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 114.

²¹⁸ *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 116.

²¹⁹ *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 124.

²²⁰ *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*

²²¹ *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 127.

²²² *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 133.

²²³ *Arbeta, inte slita ut sig!*, 142.

²²⁴ The most important figures of this movement are Christian Metz, Jean-Louis Baudry, Jean-Louis Comolli, Laura Mulvey, Peter Wollen, Colin MacCabe, and Stephen Heath. They used Lacan's theory of the mirror stage for the formation of the subject and politicised it from a Marxist perspective. The social aspect of this analysis offered the psychic effects of ideology. Cinema provides a necessary illusion of completeness and deception. Todd McGowan, *The Real Gaze: Film theory after Lacan* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 2.

²²⁵ McGowan, *The Real Gaze*, 4.

²²⁶ Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," in *Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness*, ed. Vivian Gornick and Barbara Moran (New York: Basic Books, 1971), 480–510.

²²⁷ Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 2020), 3.

²²⁸ Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 6.

²²⁹ Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 7.

²³⁰ Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 3.

²³¹ "To confront language at the point where it undoes itself, pushing against that illusion of safety through which alone it can function, uncovering the psychic forces which sustain that illusion but which equally put it at risk." Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 59.

²³² Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 4.

²³³ Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 219.

²³⁴ Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 227.

²³⁵ Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 227.

²³⁶ Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, 230.

²³⁷ However, there is no proof of Helgesen or the UKS board having knowledge of Lippard's work at the time, though there was active work with the international field. For example, on 1 June 1971, UKS hosted a solo exhibition of Clevon Pran, a painter from Alabama who was educated at the Art Institute in Chicago.

²³⁸ Lucy Lippard, interview by Ursula Meyer, 1973, Art Theory, <https://theoria.art-zoo.com/interview-with-ursula-meyer-lucy-lippard>.

²³⁹ Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966–1972* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), xvii.

²⁴⁰ Lippard, *Six Years*, ix. She eventually realised four portable exhibitions, with the first one initiated at the Seattle Art Museum's World Fair annex, and each of which was named according to the population of the city in which it originated: 557,087 in Seattle, WA, US (1969); 955,000 in Vancouver, Canada; 2,972,453 at Centro de Arte y Comunicación in Buenos Aires, Argentina (1970); and 7,500 at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, CA, US (1973–74).

²⁴¹ Lippard is also one of the references used by Elke Krasny to define curatorial materialism and feminist independent curating to create an alternative to mainstream and museum practices, inaccessible for non-canonicalised positions. See Elke Krasny, "Curatorial Materialism: A Feminist Perspective on Independent and Co-dependent Curating," *OnCurating*, no. 29 (2016): 96–107.

²⁴² Lippard, who had been a librarian at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, witnessed the historicisation of Duchamp's work in the US, occurring from the 1950s through the 1970s. Christian Berger asserts that Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, in their article "The Dematerialization of Art" (*Art International* 12, no. 2 (1968): 31–36), "do not deliver a consistent framework or theoretical explanation for what they referred to as 'the dematerialization of art.' Instead, they first situate their observations on the art object's imminent obsolescence in an evolutionary model drawn from the composer and music theorist Joseph Schillinger's (1895–1943) *Mathematical Basis of the Arts* (1943), then argue for the importance of Dada and the work of Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) as precedents, and close by claiming an 'ultimate zero point' of art that would always be pushed further." Christian Berger, "Wholly Obsolete or Always a Possibility? Past and Present Trajectories of a 'Dematerialization' of Art," in *Conceptualism and Materiality: Matters of Art and Politics*, ed. Christian Berger (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 15–53. In her early career, shortly after graduating from Smith College in 1958, Lippard worked as a page at the MoMA Library. In 1960, Lippard resigned, but continued to spend a lot of time at the museum, conducting research and translations and compiling bibliographies. Starting in 1969, as a leader of the Art Workers' Coalition, Lippard participated in demonstrations against MoMA. See "Modern Women: A Partial History," *Modern Women: Women Artists at the Museum of Modern Art* (mini site), MoMA, 2010, https://www.moma.org/interactives/modern_women/history/#lexicon21. In 1973, Lippard contributed an essay (in a readymade sort of form) to the *Marcel Duchamp* exhibition catalogue, jointly sponsored by MoMA and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

MoMA curator Kynaston McShine asked Lippard to write a text for the institution's 1974 catalogue dedicated to Duchamp. She responded with a readymade text. Lucy R. Lippard (collated by), "The Romantic Adventures of an Adversative Rotarian: or Allreadymadeso-muchoff," in *Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Anne d'Harnoncourt and Kynaston McShine (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1973), 117–24.

²⁴³ He would say, for instance, "in 1914, even 1913, I had in my studio a bicycle wheel turning for no reason at all. Without even knowing whether I should put it with the rest of my works or even call it work." Marcel Duchamp, "I Propose to Strain the Laws of Physics," interview by Francis Roberts, *Art News*, December 1968, 46, 47, 62–64. He refers similarly to *Sculpture for Travelling* (1918), which consisted of coloured bathing caps cut into various

lengths and strung up like strings in his studio. The work benefitted from the elasticity of the material, which would remain a sculptural memory and, therefore, act as a constant reminder of the readymade object. It could be easily packed into a suitcase for travel, as allegedly happened on a trip from New York to Buenos Aires in 1918, and then again in August 1919 from New York to Paris. It is through “sculptural memory” that Duchamp rebuilt his artistic genealogy, by constructing chronological moments which did not necessarily correspond to exhibitory ones, but rather to his artistic practice and everyday praxis in his studio. Marcus Moore, “Marcel Duchamp: ‘Twisting Memory for the Fun of It’ or a Form of Retroactive Interference? Recalling the Impacts of Leaving Home on the Readymade,” *Memory Connection* 1, no. 1, (2011): 393–402.

²⁴⁴ Lippard, *Six Years*, xviii.

²⁴⁵ Lippard, *Six Years*, xviii.

²⁴⁶ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 1–26.

²⁴⁷ I am referring for instance to Lippard’s approach to the 1974 MoMA exhibition catalogue on Marcel Duchamp, to which Lippard contributed. Benjamin had used “word salad” to describe the Dadaist approach of his “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.”

Part 3.

A curatorial materialist approach: The forensic exhibitionary complex

Why did the document become a fetishised site of experimentation in the post-war period? How did the document enter the exhibition space during these years, and in which forms? What curatorial strategies are connected to it? How does this exhibitory practice shape a different understanding of the art object? How does this movement express a different idea of labour? Does this exhibitory form speak the voice of the subaltern?

(3.1) The document replacing the art object

Using documents as a tool of imaginative expression was central to the arts of the post-war period. The creation of documents and techniques for managing them through collecting, archiving, arrangement, contextualisation, and manipulation was core to key artistic movements such as CoBrA, Lettrism, the Lettrist International, the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, Heatwave, Council for the Liberation of Everyday Life, and Enragé Lettrism.²⁴⁸ Within these movements, the discursive aspect of art making took a dominant role in developing, presenting, and disseminating the makers of such documents. This attitude reached a peak during the 1960s and 1970s, with Conceptual Art, Minimalism, and Happenings, as part of a continuous attempt to destabilise—through artistic intervention—institutionalised, factual records. In tandem with the new flow of information brought forward by the technological changes of the 1960s, enabling, for example, high-quality recording to be more readily available, a theory of interruption was formulated to overcome epistemological thresholds. During these years, Michel Foucault—who would further develop this theory of obstacles to knowledge in the field of history—argued for a much needed disruption in collating documents for the sake of historical claims, and for the creation of a theory of suspension in the “continuous accumulation of knowledge.”²⁴⁹ By way of questioning these categories, with their constructed historical continuities, Foucault queries disciplinary formation: “What is a science? What is an *œuvre*? What is a theory? What is a concept? What is a text?”²⁵⁰ It is important to note that Foucault’s argument against the accrual of knowledge is meant to reveal that accumulation is made up of more fallacies than constituencies—a search for stable structures which denies abandonment to the natural irruption of events. In a word, the subject position contends with the document.

The document should no longer be historiographically considered an inert material that enables a unity of relations. This one-way reading simply converts documents into monuments.²⁵¹ A new theory on the value of the document should be formulated.

It is not by chance, then, that Walter Benjamin’s work of his last years, including the *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (written 1940), came into the English-speaking world (1969) during the same years Foucault was reporting a similar predicament: “There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.”²⁵² Querying the document, which is purportedly institutionalised evidence, means examining an ongoing process of seizing power from the subjugated classes designed to expropriate them of their rights.²⁵³

Foucault’s and Benjamin’s theories had a great impact on the reconsideration of the role of simple “things” (documents that had ended up in archives) that, once framed or presented as evidence (statements), mobilised from their state as mere “things” to

give rise to “events.” To construct history, one needs to destroy that first—to destroy the first statement that had given rise to events.²⁵⁴ By entering the disciplinary institution, documents transform their status from a noun to a verb, from stasis to action: “a document” versus “to document.” As I will show further in my argument, the document assuming such a prominent role in the field of culture in general and art, in particular, becoming more meaningful in the 1960s and 1970s, defines “the space of the document” as the only space where the performance, including utterance, occurs in the arts. Increased dependence on the document as a noun (and documentation as an act of substantiating a verb) becomes instrumental in attaining status within culture, even though the camera is the ultimate stage for the produced images. Images are not constatives but performatives.²⁵⁵ Art used as alternative evidence—a strategy that also finds its historical inception during those years—can be connected to many of today’s practices and the research being conducted to transform material things that allegedly have no value, either in court or in other institutional settings, into documents of proof, factual matters. The trial space for gathering research and further evidence is via exhibitions, as sites of experimentation, which although they have no legal value in courthouses still represent a space of viable acceptance. I believe this is the effort structured over the past decade by members of Forensic Architecture, the independent research agency based at Goldsmiths, University of London.

(3.2) The popularisation of the document

As media historian Lisa Gitelman recently demonstrated, the popularisation of the document that took place in the 1960s was somehow both technologically unprecedented and unexpectedly successful. Haloid—which changed its name to Haloid Xerox in 1958 to reflect its belief that the company’s future lay in xerography—introduced the first automatic Xerox copier in 1960 (the 914 model), which was a large office machine weighing 650 pounds (295 kilograms).²⁵⁶ Documenting and the uses of documents were at times confused or conflated during this period: “to Xerox” was to affirm the item copied as a document, to electronically read that document during the duplication process, and to produce a copy (a record) for personal use.²⁵⁷ Gitelman cites two major events as paradigmatic of this shift: the Pentagon Papers, a 7,000-plus-page top-secret Vietnam War report photocopied by Daniel Ellsberg in 1969 and shared with the *New York Times* in 1971; and John Lions’s “Commentary on the Sixth Edition Unix Operating System” of 1977, documentation on a rare kernel²⁵⁸ compiled for students of the University of New South Wales in Australia and “shared” for many years only through photocopies passed among generations of students and researchers. The *New York Times*’ decision to publish the Pentagon Papers both outraged sections of the public for its content and brought up questions about the role of the press in publishing state secrets. Ellsberg’s actions—for which he was prosecuted at trial on felony charges—brought questions on the meaning of “sharing” into the public realm. While awaiting trial, Ellsberg documented his account of the ensuing events in *Papers on the War*, published in 1972. As he writes in the book’s introduction: “In releasing the Pentagon Papers, I acted in hope I still hold: that truths that changed me could help Americans free themselves and other victims from our longest war.”²⁵⁹

Despite their interest in the Pentagon Papers, neither newspapers nor the state spoke of the papers as “Xeroxes,” but rather used the word “copies,” focusing primarily on the papers’ linguistic meaning. Gitelman also argues that Ellsberg applied an “editorial approach” to the photocopying process, which ultimately gave the Papers a

specific style and a “constructed” meaning.²⁶⁰ To demonstrate the popularisation of the new Xerox machine among students at the time, Gitelman digs into the overall operation of the “multiples” that Ellsberg produced to ensure the leak could not be easily halted, in the event he was caught. Thus, Ellsberg’s photocopying happened not only through the use of a friend’s office at the RAND Corporation but also at commercial Xerox shops in New York City and Cambridge, Massachusetts, near Harvard University, which had just come to be known as the “Sunset Strip of copying.”²⁶¹

The word “document,” and with it, “copying” and “editing,” was undergoing a factual transformation of meaning. Harvard students had begun transferring entire Harvard libraries into homemade copies, a process not dissimilar to contemporary downloading of digital libraries. Here Gitelman’s argument indirectly (since she never uses the word) demonstrates that the document had become a counterculture tool of dissidence and resistance towards state apparatuses as repressive machines. Copying allowed a different mode of possessing, sharing, manipulating, and distributing documents that did not exclusively belong to state apparatuses for the purpose of creating a singular truth. A new mode of using documents was opening up, as availability grew to new scales. The inner sphere of specialised institutions entered people’s homes and other private spaces, which came to be part of this “archive fever.”²⁶² Trespassing of institutional knowledge to facilitate home archiving could be seen as a modus operandi to question the production of truth, through this massive availability and sharing of information. As historian Elizabeth L. Eisenstein explains in the preface to *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, it was only between 1968 and 1971 that the first preliminary studies were published to collect scholars’ responses to the distinct historical consequences of the communications shift perpetrated by Johannes Gutenberg’s press.²⁶³ She notes the late arrival of such a study, and how the term “print culture” continued to be used, even in her book, in a specific, insular, Western sense.²⁶⁴ The study focuses on the impact of printing on preserved documents. In doing so, it already privileges erudition as a form of knowledge. Eisenstein claims that, regarding this “unacknowledged revolution,” historians, contrary to other academic fields, have always based their research on cultures that have made sure to leave written records behind. In a Modern utopic perspective, the press also promoted and celebrated the free time left to people that instead of having to focus on transcriptions, could instead have more time for comparing documents and finding errors. In finding a stable form “preservative powers of print” barred “the wisdom of presenting views that were still in flux.”²⁶⁵

The great dilemma of these Xerox years seems to have been how to manage this greater availability of information leaving state institutions and entering the private sphere, where their original unity could now be questioned, dismembered, edited, and then reinjected into the public sphere. It marks an attempt to create alternative institutions. Private space turns into a counter-institution, potentially constituting other ensuing truth forms. Such a prevalence of the document independent from an authorised and located location (the library, the courthouse, the university: part of the ideological state apparatus for normalising knowledge) subscribes to the arts, in conceptual and dematerialised forms, challenging the stability of its acknowledged and permanent media in such institutions’ stable collections. The chance given to a constant reconceptualisation of material culture, independent from public institutions, turns knowledge into more volatile and unstable forms.

(3.3) From object-based to document-based art

During the post-war period, when modernism on the other side of the Atlantic was preoccupied with shifting canons and shifting centres of power, the prevailing ideology of autonomous art in Europe was being challenged concerning its objectification. American critic Harold Rosenberg offered a counterpoint to autonomous art in 1952, in the essay “The American Action Painters,” by proposing an indivisibility of the artist from the artwork, and therefore questioning the role of the art object as a static object of representation. The canvas became the site of action—the event itself—not a picture.²⁶⁶ Rosenberg argues that the proponents of Abstract Expressionism relocated the artist’s concern from the medium to the purpose, allowing the dialogue to move beyond representation. In refusing sketching as a separate act from painting, along with all such previous divisions in painting, the object itself, as much as the search for an aesthetic pleasure, had lost importance. According to Rosenberg, the *act* of painting had become an equal matter in the artist’s existence, marking the indistinguishability between art and life. An inscription of the action into the artwork—including inception, duration, direction, and, I would also add, labour—mirrors a process of concentration and relaxation of the artist’s will, passivity, and awakeness (as signs of experience), retransmitted to the observer on an intuitive level, without the prejudices delivered by history, symbols, or canonical knowledge.²⁶⁷ In this new reading, and by an act of transference, one could say that the canvas, more than representing a site of transcendence, became a document “registering” the artist’s life (and work), as well as his approaches to it. It is extremely important to note here how *gendered* such an intersection of art and life is, that is to say, the presentation of the intersection of art and life in the exaltation of the artist as one single model and form-of-life: the male genius. Rosenberg’s proposal of freeing oneself to witness the event (and therefore minimising the medium of art) was undoubtedly a precursor to several of the art movements that followed Abstract Expressionism in the US and elsewhere (thanks also to the ambassadorial propagation of US culture through the “soft diplomacy” of the Central Intelligence Agency during the Cold War era), which would come to monumentalise the role of the document over the following years. It seems logical, then, that when an exhibition like *Information* came to be presented at MoMA in New York, under the curatorship of Kynaston McShine, in 1970—addressing a culture “considerably altered by communication systems such as television and film, and increased mobility”—documents had by then become an accepted mode of exhibition. The document was the medium that rapidly connected and transmitted new thinking across long distances and national borders, enabling art to move beyond its confined physical space of exhibition and historical reception.

One of the participating artists, Joseph Kosuth, who presented, among other works, *One and Three Chairs* (1965), said at the time that art had become as “serious” as science or philosophy, which also do not have audiences: “It is interesting or it isn’t, just as one is informed or isn’t.”²⁶⁸ Kosuth is convinced that Conceptual Art offered the potential for the artist to come down from the pedestal, to retire from “being a high priest,” and to reduce art to its propositions to investigate the function, meaning, and use of art in general.

Questioning the concept of labour (and leisure) was undoubtedly the (unspoken) undercurrent of the artistic interventions in *Information*. Pervading concepts of landscape “abuse” and the transformation of work and land were transliterated into both immediate and undisclosed meanings of labour through the artworks, including

in Siah Armajani's stacking of all the digits between zero and one into a massive column, representing the 28,571 hours of printing time required to make visible one computer's activity during such a period; George Brecht's unrealised proposals to move mountains and islands; Michael Heizer's earthwork *Displaced/Replaced Mass* (1969); the *Art & Project Bulletin*, founded in Amsterdam in 1968; and the ordinary-looking platforms placed in various sites around Copenhagen as well as New York, including near the museum, by Danish artist Stig Brøgger.²⁶⁹

While *Information* seemed to open novel practices of commissioning and displaying artworks in the world, as the introduction to the catalogue states, "much of the work [was] already well known in Europe."²⁷⁰ A countermovement of experimentation was first conducted in Europe and elsewhere, and subsequently imported to the US.²⁷¹ What is equally interesting in the loose formulation of the exhibition concept of *Information* is the allusion to a disbelief in art for art's sake, secluded within the walls of a museum, which is particularly notable when considering the turmoil in the surrounding political and governing spheres.²⁷²

The museum is trembling, but also stepping back, as if the aesthetic sphere is not complicit with forms of power and repression, and not capable of stronger repercussions in society at large; as if the violence stands outside and it doesn't start from within the exhibitory machine participating in the ruling system. It may also be due to this reason that artists came closer to embodying the social role of workers, mimicry forms of salaried retribution, and addressing more primordial forms of art and work. It is an act of dealing with structures, reconstruction, and interrogating the basis of the institution of art itself to recompose the grammar of art.

Kosuth would say: "Art before the modern period is as much art as Neanderthal man is man. It is for this reason that around the same time I replaced the term 'work' for art proposition. Because a conceptual *work* of art in the traditional sense, is a contradiction in terms."²⁷³ If the reader is able to surpass the Darwinian reference that Kosuth's statement carelessly unleashes, what is at stake in his formulation is the emphasis on the word "work." Contrary to his attempt to pre-date art before art, art, as much as work, is an open and unresolved category, especially when artworks come together in the exhibition space, where their production relations have not been made explicit. What do we usually know about all the labour that goes into each singular "artwork"? About all the material conditions necessary to produce and bring it into exhibition? Moreover, what do we know about the material conditions producing and sustaining the very architecture (the building, the white cube) that monumentally (mostly) provides viewership conditions, asserting its importance through its violent, dominating physicality, internally and externally? The artwork's dematerialisation—its physical disappearance—allows us to ask these questions without hesitation.

In the construction of modernist ideals of progress, work has been defined as a distinctly human experience.²⁷⁴ Philosopher Hannah Arendt also sees in the inventive and imaginative (industrious) individual the possibility to rise above economic necessity, manipulating the world towards the "human artifice" of architecture.²⁷⁵ Work is the real and symbolic space both for exploitation and for political resistance, shaping social identity and social definition, "perceptible and imperceptible" social relations. Capitalism's global technological advancement and spreading of Western culture calls for a definition of today's post-industrial work. The hyper-rationalisation of work, with its racialised and gendered profiling, makes the question of work

urgent—who works and who does not—and likewise what cultural value may be attributed to this visible and invisible human activity. If work is a cultural concept, these changes are certainly signalled—if not guided—by aesthetic representation. In the technologisation (automatisation and consequent dematerialisation) of labour, a primacy on procedures and protocols heightens the frustration of bodies and senses. Moreover, it furthers the (by now given) dichotomy of work and worklessness, whereby current social history relies heavily on accomplishing such material and immaterial duties. Drawing attention to the inescapable issue of work, art historians Valerie Mainz and Griselda Pollock have studied the emergence of the modern concept of the worker and the working class in relation to the aesthetic field, in its presentness and in its absence. In *Work and the Image*, they project and study work in pre-industrial periods in an attempt to define the character of modern, capitalist society, and how that came to define our current Western identity.²⁷⁶

Forms of labour behind artistic productions have rarely been at the center of the display. Issues of work and image are fundamental questions behind my curatorial process, mostly programming from immaterial and discursive events to individuate the material conditions for logics of production and exposition before their temporal presentation.²⁷⁷

(3.4) The use-value of art

Could we go as far as to say that with the tech impulse of the 1960s, documents assumed a new commodity form? Equal to other commodities, are documents not brought to express social relations “whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses”? “A physical relation between physical things”?²⁷⁸ A phantasmagoric form of relation between things attaches itself to the products of labour. Marx defines such a relation as fetishism, which is perhaps a redefinition of social relations through the artwork. Because artists are unable to directly satisfy their wants with the products of their own labour, they indeed create “commodities,” even in the form of documents.

And in this process, do exhibitions represent a platform of exchange between commodities? How does a certain corporate and state terminology enter into the artistic work? How does the very bureaucracy itself come to be mirrored in the artistic work?

Suppose one reads and mirrors the conceptual work of Michael Heizer’s *Displaced/Replaced Mass* (1969), and outsources the labour to create it beyond the borders of the US (a typical Western imperial and colonial strategy of the epoch: looking for production sites where labour is “cheaper”). In that case, the mobility connected to artistic production assumes a different sense and sensibility through metaphorical or unconscious representation, as much as through prompting works to be readily available as travelling documents (instructions). Inside a society increasingly dependent on abstraction, work is a measure of the labour force. A concept, a practice, an autonomous sphere that once inhabited (or given) is “contaminated” by societal forces, incorporating its very production system. The question is, where does the artwork remain in this power game of forces? Things can be used, without having value, whenever their utility is given to us through ways other than labour: the air, virgin soil, meadows. Something can be useful as well as produced through human labour without being a commodity: things we produce for ourselves through our labour that are not commodities. These latter things, for Marx,

have a use-value for others, namely a social use-value.²⁷⁹ As art cannot extricate itself from the social relations of production of which it is part, it has to reflect on its commodity form, mainly to find its social use-values within a determined historical moment and class struggle. These productions of relations are perhaps the hidden agenda of the “documentisation” of art during the 1970s.

Marx also invites us to understand that the quantity of labour spent does not determine a commodity. The labour that gives value is “homogeneous human labour.” Labour is historically determined.²⁸⁰

A new system of value created by international capitalism gave rise to a new kind of society, a new world vision which in the mid-1970s digitised stock exchanges, boosted telecommunications growth, allowing global capitalism to work on an export-based subcontracting system.²⁸¹ As post-colonial theorist Gayatri Spivak demonstrates, this movement gave rise to the new world order’s subaltern, a new form of territorial imperialism and division of labour, and dislocation.²⁸² A group of Western countries generally invests capital in “Third World” countries with an entire system of administration created through laws and standardised education systems to maintain these subordinate positions. According to Spivak, telecommunications is instrumental in maintaining cheap labour on Western-determined peripheries, thanks to an absence of labour laws.²⁸³ Spivak in part developed her theories of the subaltern by reading the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci.²⁸⁴

(3.5) Prefiguring an international division of labour

The subaltern, for Gramsci, refers to any “low-rank” person or group experiencing hegemonic control from an elitarian ruling class that refuses them fundamental rights in the making of social history as an active citizen. The word comes from the military system to express hierarchical positions of power. Gramsci became interested in studying the subaltern classes as one possible way to make their voices heard, instead of relying on the rhetorical and historical narrative of the state.²⁸⁵ To study the subaltern’s history, Gramsci designed a plan in six steps: methodological criteria for historical research.²⁸⁶ These phases represent a process of development in which a subaltern group passes from a position of subordination to a position of autonomy. Identity formation and its exploitation processes were ascribed to a new history that came from below and was yet to be written. The circulation of Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* in the 1960s and 1970s ensured a future to conceptualise both the subaltern, histories from below, and critical and educational theory and research in cultural studies.

Gramsci, often considered the Marxist sociologist par excellence, also asserts that the prevailing matrix of power is less often exercised through force than consent. Unquestioned worldviews (universalising concepts manipulated through educational institutions) held by hegemonic machines that appear spontaneous compromise subordinate groups and secure their assent.²⁸⁷ Fighting a “war of position”—an ideological struggle to create a new and more just set of understandings—required mobilisation on the basis of collective forms of critical consciousness. For Gramsci, an emancipatory cultural politics could change the course of history and allow a more suitable existence.

Gramsci points out an important lesson in history and written history: always the same people have the right to speak. What’s at stake in this cultural battle between

different classes of people (or people having a different provenance) is a fundamental understanding of who has the right to speak. He thinks intellectual strategies and practical implementations to support the social mobility of ostracised groups, whose existence not only is always at stake but whose very right to speak and articulate their struggle is prevented from entering the public sphere of discussion. We can draw important lessons from Gramsci if we attempt to retranslate his arguments into the field of curating, as bridging solidarity and creating platforms of solidarity to change the very structures enabling certain voices to come to the fore, to speak their truth. Within the aesthetic field, the history that has yet to be written is tasked to curating, as an influential sphere of the hegemonic machines producing state narratives.

I will come back to how Gramsci's thoughts have influenced my practice in detail in chapter 5, where I return to the concept of provenance and the necessity of the organic intellectual for the yet unknown to enter the acknowledged representational sphere.

(3.6) The aesthetics of administration

In 1989, art historian Benjamin H. D. Buchloh devised a theory on an “aesthetic of administration” that he saw as pervading the unconscious of all artistic production after 1969. According to Buchloh, any historicisation of the movement had to question art historical paradigms traditionally based on the object to legitimately analyse artistic practices escaping the formal order of production, visuality and representation parameters.²⁸⁸

A linguistic dilemma had haunted the production of art since 1913, with the appearance of Duchamp's readymades, which he summarises as “a conflict between structural specificity and random organization.”²⁸⁹ The readymade represents, on the one hand, a desire assigned with a visual structure via perceptual data, and, on the other, a meaning assigned to an object as if it had none of its own. These works create a continuous conflict in the viewer-reader regarding the reliability of information, questioning whether inscription follows or precedes the linguistic entity. Traditional modes of artistic production are displaced (via Duchampian speech acts) and complexified by Robert Morris's *Document (Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal)* (1963), where the “literal negation” goes further.²⁹⁰ By the late twentieth century, the artwork, leaning upon the readymade as its originator of meaning, is “the ultimate subject of legal definition.”²⁹¹ The institution of art is there to attest to the validation of the artwork as a document. Through this operation, all visual judgment becomes programmatically void. Aesthetics veers into a linguistic convention, “a legal contract, and an institutional discourse.”²⁹² In Buchloh's argument, the aesthetic experience loses its hegemony over the visual and its perceptual autonomy. Piero Manzoni had already adopted this operative mode by defining people as works of art through issuing a certificate (1960–61).²⁹³ Between 1959 and 1962, Yves Klein performed the sale of a cheque as documentation of ownership of an empty space (the Immaterial Zone) in exchange for gold. The completion of the piece entailed a ritual in the presence of at least two witnesses (an art critic, a dealer, or a museum authority). The buyer would burn the cheque, and Klein would throw half the gold into a river.²⁹⁴ Legal language and “administrative style” enter the visual presentation to erode the visual significant autonomy traditionally assigned to the object as performing utterance.²⁹⁵ Negating representation, authenticity, and authorship (through the law of industrial production and serial repetition), Conceptual Art relocates the image of mass production to advance an aesthetic of administration, legal organisation, and

institutional validation. The privileging of the literal over the referential axis of visual language is vital to the artistic production of the Conceptual Art of the late 1960s. That artistic intention constituted, above all, a discursive self-reflexiveness.

Buchloh's argument may be misleading regarding the power the object (or the document in its place as its substitute) still maintains in the aesthetic sphere. The object may be eroded, yet the document is not: the paradigmatic figure exemplified in the document continues to be the one who has the power to speak. Additionally, the artistic subject, whose status and position is attached to the object, has not been challenged or disintegrated.

In the post-war condition, an embattled culture industry and the last stand of autonomous art, along with the rise of a newly established class—the middle class—which effectively assumed power in the 1960s, came together with a model of tautology and an aesthetic of administration. Class identity came to be structured around administering labour and production, and distributing commodities, rather than producing them. According to Buchloh, novelist and filmmaker Alain Robbe-Grillet, a reference for many Conceptual artists, clearly reflects the power of such an aesthetic of administration through his literary project of the *nouveau roman*.²⁹⁶

In such a restrictive definition of the artist as a cataloguing clerk, it is impossible to reconcile (or foresee) the subversive and radical implications of art. A “critical devotion to the factual conditions” of artistic production reaches pure evidence with Hans Haacke's *Visitors' Profiles* (1969–70), in its “bureaucratic rigour and deadpan devotion” to data.²⁹⁷ According to Buchloh, the use of this administrative vernacular “managed to purge artistic production of the aspiration toward an affirmative collaboration of forces of industrial production and consumption.”²⁹⁸ Using an aesthetic of operations embedded in the abstraction of late capitalism, expropriating and displacing workforce, production, and geographical locations as immediately evident, they mimic relations of violence instilled in the ideological apparatus. Social institutions coopt these habits factually and aesthetically in terms of representation. It is from here that their instrumentality emanates. Conditions of cultural consumptions and forms of ideological control begin from here.²⁹⁹ There is a crucial attack here on the art institution as the site of cooptation and subordination. It is here that art cannot be divided by other spheres of life nor considered less responsible in the processes of creation and perpetuation of exploitation and dispossession of both objects and people.

The intellectual (including the artist) is to be considered part of the new subjugated class of the 1960s capitalist turn, by being subsumed into spaces of power as a diffused worker. Therefore, this new workforce's massive production and exploitation must become a new object of study, whose voice(s) come from below. Philosopher Franco “Bifo” Berardi might come in handy here, in order to explain the alliance of the intellectual with the proletarian class at that time. Such an alliance was not only “in solidarity” with a different class, but an act of subsistence and survival of the general intellectual class provoked by the new diffused academic system.³⁰⁰ In this reading, the artist, as well as the intellectual, can no longer be considered a universal category, but a complex subjectivity.

(3.7) An esoteric genre of spectacle

In 1962, philosopher Susan Sontag wrote a text analysing a phenomenon that had emerged recently in New York: “a new, and still esoteric, genre of spectacle.”³⁰¹ She continues by describing such occurrences as “a cross between art exhibit and theatrical performance,”³⁰² which took place in lofts, art galleries, backyards, and minor theatres in front of small audiences. At times, bodily movements were accompanied by words, sounds, flashing lights, and smells. These were the events Conceptual artist Allan Kaprow named “Happenings” in 1958, “designed to tease and abuse the audience.”³⁰³ In 1961, Kaprow wrote that happenings had been largely rejected by theatre devotees due to both their “uncommon power and primitive energy” and their “derivation from the rites of American Action Painting.”³⁰⁴ The very term gives an idea of impermanence and unrepeatability. No structured beginning, middle, or end; open-ended and fluid. Chance, risk, fear, and failure are constitutive of what simply “happens.” Not literary, not narrative, Happenings aimed to be as lifelike as possible. They are art, not life, though, points out Sontag in her 1962 text. Part of the growing movement of ephemeralisation that was spreading across the world,³⁰⁵ the Happening was a new take on the exhibition as a form, and on its formulation of meaning. Moving beyond set parameters concerning the object, these formal concerns emerge out of the traditional visual arts. Collaborative, unique, and non-productive, the Happening radically questions the nature of authorship and the notion of the art object.

“One must uphold a modernist disciplinarity, a separation of mediums, to follow this argument,” asserts art theorist Judith F. Rodenbeck.³⁰⁶ The strong divide between the world of the arts and their designated spaces of reception, segmented between theatre, dance, and the visual arts, assumes a disconnectedness and a specialisation no different from the one demanded by labour within the liberal market.³⁰⁷ Kaprow’s collaborative, collage-like performances moved art out of the rarefied confines of museums and into everyday spaces; this performance practice focused on the everyday “task” rather than “acting,” highlighting the economics ruling everyday life. In canonical art history, Jackson Pollock’s Action Painting—to which Kaprow makes direct reference—is the natural antecedent of performance in the visual arts (through the act of labour: dripping and splashing on the canvas).³⁰⁸ It was allegedly Meyer Schapiro, Kaprow’s teacher at Columbia University in New York, an art historian and promoter of Abstract Expressionism, who unsettled Kaprow’s understanding of the position of the artist in the capitalist art market and encouraged him to extend the activity of art production out of the studio and off the gallery wall into found environments.³⁰⁹ Such an attempt to challenge, subvert, and reassess the city and its dwelling spaces—by addressing the urban theatre of social labour in front of everyone’s eyes, and inhabiting all the interstices of everyday life—provoked a radicalisation of the readymade as an aesthetic experience of collective (and individual), open-air critique. Composer John Cage, Kaprow’s other formative teacher, equally empowered the everyday and its connection to the European avant-garde of the early twentieth century. The found object implies “the found word, noise, or action, it also demands the found environment.”³¹⁰ Happenings’ alogical structures relied on organisational methods despite deploying chance: time intervals and choreographed signs kept the audience together.³¹¹ The audience is, within the space of the Happening, an additional *objet trouvé*—not actorly subjects (as they are “doing,” not “acting”)—somewhat mirroring the exploitative, non-specialised, alienated labour typical of modernity, as well as its divisions.

18 Happenings in 6 Parts, cited as one of Kaprow's first public, ground-breaking Happenings, was presented at Reuben Gallery in New York in the fall of 1959. With a tightly scripted score, Kaprow created an interactive environment.³¹² In September, while Kaprow was preparing this Happening, Fred W. McDarrah, who was to photograph the event in October, followed the development of the piece and shot images of Kaprow transforming the space of the gallery. One can read in these pictures and portraits a larger construction of the public event and, moreover, how Kaprow interpreted and understood the power of media apparatuses in disseminating the image of the artist within the larger reception of the artwork. In a legacy to Pollock's media portrayal by photographer Hans Namuth, Kaprow seems to have wanted to mirror such a process of slowly constructing an image of the artist at work.³¹³ As much as in the highly mediated act of Pollock's drippings on the canvas,³¹⁴ which established an image of the artist performing labour before the media lens, Kaprow's event was extended in time and retransmitted through a mediated act, which was otherwise at risk of becoming potentially invisible or reducible to one single object. McDarrah's photographs serve—one could assert—to instate an imagery of a continuous Happening. The photographic, considered a static medium by Conceptual artists, becomes here, for Kaprow, a tool to represent a scattered movement, mediating an idea of an ongoing *happening*. It also perpetrates the idea of the artist at work, labouring, moving, interacting, and ever present in setting “the action” in motion. Similarly to what the canvas could not by itself restitute in the work of Pollock, which instead found its form in its reliance on in-built media imagery, Kaprow finds presence within the new art world's space in the intermedia, the document, due to the alleged absence of a determined object of exhibition.³¹⁵

Because the Happening was so close to life, an apparatus was needed to surround and build it as an orchestrated act. This practice brings the televised present, the teleological, far closer and incorporates a new need for the arts to work across a number of media to reach the *public*. The exhibition space in itself “changes” its form or “dematerialises,” thanks to these devices, as the conglomerate of recording devices is what constitutes the artwork (or makes up for the artwork).³¹⁶

Issues of a televised present, the media conglomerate rendering visible aesthetic acts, immaterial artworks, and the intersection of theatre, performance, and the idea of repetition (as if we always need to refer to an original: in itself a patriarchal act), were questions I discussed with artist and professor Dora García. On 20 March 2019, Kunstnernes Hus Cinema invited me to discuss with the artist following the Oslo premiere of her latest work *Segunda Vez (Second Time Around)*. From here, I attempted to retrace her interest in Happening, both in her work and in the movement's history.

(3.8) Second time around

In March 2014, contemporary artist Dora García became invested in the work of *happenista* Oscar Masotta (1930–1979), an author, psychoanalyst, artist, and central figure of the Argentine avant-garde in the 1950s through the 1970s. Masotta, an eccentric figure who wrote the first book about Pop Art released in Argentina without ever visiting the countries where the movement was emerging, based his theories concerning the shifting dematerial conditions of the visual arts on black-and-white documentations of Pop Art works; that is, on a mediated knowledge through “poor” image reproductions. Through this, he proposed a semiotic theory on the movement. Masotta asserted that a direct exposure to Pop Art was not necessary for the effects of

the movement to be felt, as such work conveys “Pop painters have shown to what extent the plastic arts reproduce ‘symbols’ and not ‘things’.”³¹⁷ Masotta followed a similar line of criticism as developed by art critic and historian Hal Foster, that Pop demonstrates that the world is “nothing but an image.”³¹⁸ In a political economy promoting flatness of life and images, the artwork is the end of subversion and a disruption of vision. The artwork, according to Masotta, is no longer a sign but a codex, a type of construction of another nature.

Between January and April 1966, and again at the beginning of 1967, Masotta travelled to New York and found proof of his thesis as well as a correlation with a new movement that was being born in Argentina: Arte de los medios de comunicación de masas (Art of the Mass Media). Contrary to North American Pop Art, the Argentinian avant-garde inscribed itself in the circuit of the advertising codex (the mass media) to produce in the same circuit (which has different rules than the art world) as other materials and other audiences (what Masotta calls an “indeterminate audience”: an audience not informed of the artistic character of the experience).³¹⁹ Arte de los medios de comunicación de masas was born in 1966, following a seminar led by Masotta that stimulated three of his friends—Eduardo Costa, Roberto Jacoby, and Raúl Escari (two students of sociology and artists, one a writer and poet)—to launch an “experiment.” They invented a fact (*hecho*) that had not actually occurred and gave it a unique materiality produced only through its mass circulation, through its inscription in the mass media. They sent a press release describing in detail this occurrence that had not happened, and through the complicity of multiple people,³²⁰ had themselves photographed in different sites and situations that reconstructed the similarity of the story that was circulating. Arte de los medios de comunicación de masas was a short-lived experience (1966–67), yet it opened up a series of new patterns.

In a 1966, Kaprow referred to Argentina as a country of *happenistas*. Even if the Happenings actually made there were few, word of them spread through the daily newspapers, such as *La Nación* and *El Mundo*. According to Masotta, the prevalence of the Happening also allowed the public to take the political situation in Argentina less seriously.³²¹

For the first Happening (or anti-Happening)³²² that Masotta orchestrated, he contracted approximately twenty theatre extras between the ages of fifty and seventy and “obliged” them under a work contract to stand on a platform lit by a strong white light while subjected to an acute, perturbing sound for the duration of one hour. Of course, this was an unbearable situation. The public could leave after five minutes, or could stay for the entire hour while covering their ears, but the extras had to submit themselves to this treatment in exchange for a salary. When the public, indignant, asked Masotta what the meaning of the Happening was, he reiterated again and again that it was an explicit act of social sadism, which meant placing oneself within the work system and producing an alienating situation, making evident that, in exchange for a salary, people submit themselves to alienating conditions, including or nearing the conditions of police torture.³²³

Dora García repeated this Happening in Mexico for the opening of the exhibition *Oscar Masotta. Theory as Action*, thus initiating a series of restagings.³²⁴ She decided to film her re-creations of the three Happenings that Masotta had organised in October 1966—*El helicóptero* (*The Helicopter*), *Para inducir el espíritu de la*

imagen (*To Induce the Spirit of the Image*), and *El mensaje fantasma* (*The Ghost Message*). No documentation of the initial performance was available at the time. Details were known from Masotta's detailed descriptions in "After Pop, We Dematerialize" and "I Committed a Happening," both published in 1967. García scripted and repeated the Happenings.

Dora García's investigation around Oscar Masotta, eventually titled *Segunda Vez* (*Second Time Around*), was incredibly important to view from an artistic perspective the potential to address material processes of history formation in the act of repetition. Curating is not extraneous to such procedures, as it deals with the repetition of certain gestures, habits, some more conscious than others in the exhibitionary machine. Some exhibition gestures and choreographies (hanging, mounting, displaying, distance, contextualising the art object) represent an ontology of the exhibition as a structure we have learned to repeat in its happening, in the making, and experiencing the theatricality of its demands. I see in this potential demand that we see the second time (when we repeat these rules of research, preparation, install, display, promotion, and experience) always be the first one, also in curating. That we move away from what is given in what we know, and we try to relearn anew what we thought we already knew. Curating should give institutions the possibility of renewing habits and questioning their construction of truths.

(3.9) Are the secondary texts the primary texts?

Rodenbeck observes that "any examination of ephemeral works is necessarily conditioned by the artefacts remaining—photographs, scripts, anecdotes; such apparently secondary texts bear uneasy witness to crucial aspects of the works they describe."³²⁵ I would add that these artefacts, like these texts, though apparently secondary, are what produce the work, as is the case for *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*. Such artefacts not only bear witness to the work but are also the primary agents of how the work lives and lived, is framed, grounded, prescribed, positioned, and made, and how it launched the original performance. Like signs expressing meaning, they produce in a specific combination a new sense, like words in a sentence.

Kaprow often explicitly called for photographs of his Happenings.³²⁶ In the same year as *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* was performed, he planned with sculptor Charles Frazier a three-day event: *Gas* (1966). Enlisting the help of a producer at CBS television, Kaprow was able to work with local police, fire departments, and businesses to produce the event. The resulting documentary was televised, and critic Harold Rosenberg and collector Robert Scull responded with a commentary that goes as far as to say that the medium had become the message, hinting at a new connection between the art press and the museums, galleries, and other distribution and educational mechanisms, which had now been obliterated as the single significant channel for the presentation and life of the work.³²⁷

If we ask how much the original performance draws from the original texts, if the script describes the performance, or if the Happening is performing the script, we stick to the idea of an "original" (a hangover of modernity, which these "dematerialised" practices attempted to perturb and disturb). If we ask such questions, we refute the very idea of the Happening, whose final aim was to perform an idea and for the artist to disappear from the equation slowly. In ensuing years, Kaprow tried to get rid of his portrait and his presence as a performer, from whose position the (institution of) art was framed, as he makes clear in "Performing Life"

from 1979.³²⁸ He regrets that the artist must always be there to indicate to us (the public) this everyday, or this mechanical, gesture, concluding that one would have to think for oneself to live more. In such a context, the experience of the present is never made in its own right, by the voluntary impulse, but rather via a command determined by the given framework around it (“just another version of vanguard theatre”). Kaprow continues: “The Happening seemed to me a new art form. ... But soon, even experimental Happenings appeared saddled with the art history they would replace.”³²⁹ That is why he moved away from Happenings in the 1970s, towards an art of living, a knowledge of oneself. Kaprow abandons Happenings for a series of reasons: the culture industry appropriation of its form, the participants becoming increasingly comfortable and self-aware, and the presence of cameras dictating their same result as a performative ritual.³³⁰

(3.10) Are the secondary texts a media conglomerate?

Kaprow’s carefully produced and manipulated media conglomerate as a complex intermix of material would be further developed and built up by and through Fluxus practices, crossing between the two movements through “documentarians” such as Peter Moore, Manfred Leve, and George Maciunas. These primarily perceptual and temporal experiences overcame the singularity of the objectual form through photography and other such forms of documentation, due to their multipliable nature, representing the overall contextual discussion of meaning coming from these scattered ephemeral statements. An ambivalence of inscriptive technologies united these projects. Text-based scores underline a technological language’s profusion: brief, logical, without conjunctions. The challenge today, as much as at the time, is how to intertwine this mediascape (or media conglomerate) to produce experience (not the “authentic,” but simply experience); how to create *happening*, as presentness, a perpetual present;³³¹ how to form relations between autonomous subjects; how to produce the audience as a subject produced through an aestheticised presentation in the art institutional context.

If the Happening and Conceptual Art transfer the iterative principles from industrially produced objects encountered in the institution to mechanically reproduced images and signs, including language, typically encountered on the page and in the informational context of the mass media, then a media conglomerate should barely vitalise (in feeble forms) the idea and its experience.

Dora García expresses similar preoccupations asking if the second time is not always the first time. In referring (to the past or otherwise) inevitably, we recreate meaning, referring only feebly to something we uncertainly know in its entirety. She dismantles the idea of authenticity and tradition in terms of society’s norms: we should constantly challenge and reinterpret symbols through the presentness of knowledge. The dematerialisation of the artwork in the Happening brings the argument to its excess: because we do not have an object to rest upon, we need to recreate its presentness by repeating its demand and reconstituting its system of meaning.

(3.11) *New Documents*: The everyday re-enters the museum in the form of photography

It is symptomatic that the close-to-life practices of the Happening, in trying to escape the museum space to encounter improvisation, arose in tandem with everyday life entering the museum space through experimental photographic practices, as frozen in photographic stills. In 1967, MoMA organised an exhibition titled *New Documents*

(the original working title of which was *The New Document*). Its curator, John Szarkowski, focused on the work of three young photographers: Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander, and Garry Winogrand. As Szarkowski explains in his introduction, “Their aim has been not to reform life, but to know it. Feelings enter the exhibition space and are inserted behind the camera as potentially affecting vision and reception. Up until the entrance of these photographers to the doors of the foremost museum of modern art, photography was still purporting truth and evidence. The now infamous images by James Agee and Walker Evans were presented and accepted as truth-telling of the migrant workers in the American South (today, we know they captured the divide between the ones creating images and those under observation). According to photographic history, August Sander, Lewis Hine, Aaron Siskind, Helen Levitt, and the like expose particular subjects and worlds views. All conveyed alleged forensic objectivity and factuality.

MoMA subsequently curated the first major retrospective of Diane Arbus’s work in 1972, a year after the artist passed away, garnering the highest attendance of any exhibition in the institution’s history to date. Millions viewed the travelling exhibition between 1972 and 1979. Arbus’s work even reached the recently born photography kunsthalle Fotogalleriet in Oslo in 1978 (legend has it, the artworks arrived in the back of a car).³³²

If museums have been part of a national mandate registering the transition of power from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie, to educate the masses and to constitute the “new citizen” (like the hospital and the prison, these modern institutions were shaping people, here aesthetically, in the ways in which one should dress, behave, speak, and learn their history), then the mandate of a kunsthalle like Fotogalleriet, one would think, is to present the contemporary. More like a biennial than a museum, the kunsthalle attempts to make sense of what is happening *now*. Images have their grammar, and they are pretty telling. There was a significant struggle in the 1970s when art photography prompted the birth of non-collecting institutions, such as Fotogalleriet, to allow practitioners to move away from “traditional” work as newspaper reporters (or page fillers) to the exhibition space, and to be recognised as and qualified with the status of “artist.” Here, photography claimed to be a personal means of expression instead of an “objective” tool instrumental in illustrating newspapers’ words. In the context of Norway particularly, as well as in cities like London in 1971 with the opening of the Photographers’ Gallery, one can understand that Fotogalleriet was creating opposition to what existed in Oslo.

These were the late 1970s, a time when revolutionary and reactionary movements such as the Red Army Faction in Germany and the Red Brigades in Italy, but also the Indigenous revolts of the Sámi peoples in Alta, were taking place in the Western world, and when the youth were rebelling against nation states and their international imperialism, their co-opting of “the citizens” as an uncritical mass and in their name perpetrating violence against other peoples and cultures. Newspapers were, and still are to a certain extent, an ideological apparatus of the state, with little means to speak other truths. Photography, before this shift surrounding the medium and the rise of the kunsthalls and their ilk, either reported “reality” or ascribed to “pure” art, as defined by the museum. There was nothing in between. We cannot understand such shifts, even today, without understanding the material conditions guiding these processes within society at large.

(3.12) Piecing together the artwork

Joseph Kosuth, in his early works from 1965, *One and Three Chairs*, *One and Three Brooms*, and *Clock (One and Five)*, uses a combination of objects, photographs, and enlarged photostats of dictionary definitions. These presentations address the idea of representation itself via photographic and linguistic means.³³³ For Kosuth, photography is the “performative,” because it is a “temporal operation entering what is presented as a static, tautological structure.” In his 1965 work, the photographic is “a document of the actual object in the specific location” where it is displayed, giving the piece a site-specific and temporal dimension.³³⁴ Beyond the alleged equivalence of object, photograph, and text, Kosuth inserts another text—the “production instructions”—which erases (or dis-enables, in theory) the objectification of the exhibited pieces.³³⁵ These temporal arrangements with which photography “certifies” the event gives the artwork a feeble presence in its specific context, as well as un-values the artwork in its reiterative exhibitions, because this presence can be produced only through the production instructions—which are not supposed to be on view.³³⁶ Photography, with its logic of original and copy, is a notational system. It is not a representation or a reproduction of the project, but rather what enables the performance of the project in itself. Through their notational system, these projects relocate photography as a temporal, performative media. Photography is used as a ubiquitous means of responding to time, and though relegated to fixedness, it reconfigures itself to perpetuate shifting-ness and ungraspable positions, an idea or an intellectual exercise.

A forensic methodology pertains to these practices as an investigative technique that detects the object, as in a laboratory (or at a crime scene). The light in a photograph should correspond to the exhibition space’s actual light for displaying the same object. Like at a crime scene, all the details should be forensically observed. The replication should follow a particular method, which should not betray the instructions, which we cannot see.

(3.13) The exhibition space becomes the space of the forensic

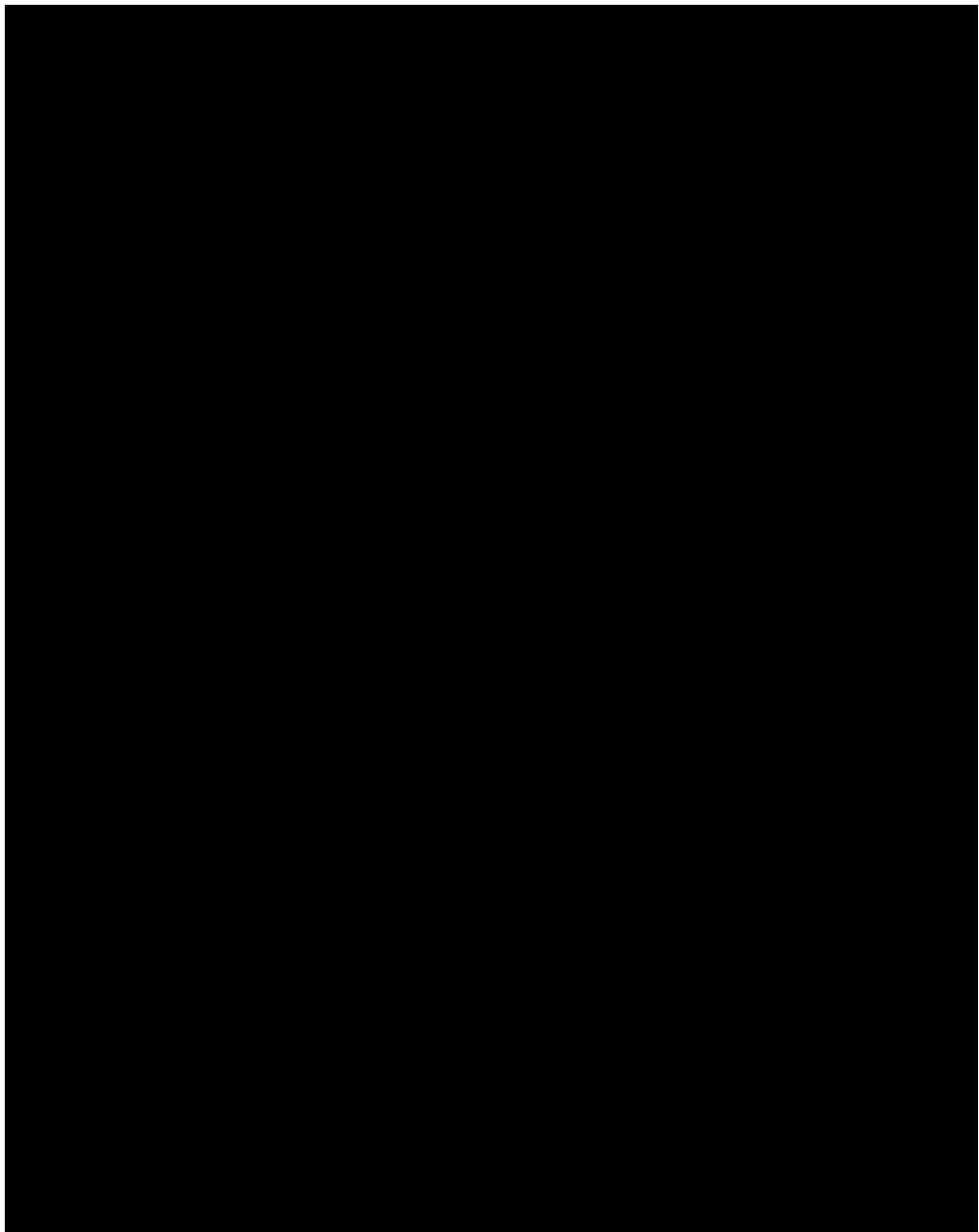
Today, exhibition spaces continue to be considered emancipatory sites of contested thinking, as documenta 14, held in 2017, once again reminded us with its practical claims. An expanded forum for public programmes, and a number of exhibition devices including publications, digital outreach, and ephemera, reached beyond a given physical location, calling for different forms of justice departing from the aesthetic field, including explicit comments on financial gambling among nations playing with the everyday lives of entire populations.³³⁷ documenta 14 reconnected and pointed out explicit intersections of economic and political interests that constitute and produce the “exhibitionary complex”³³⁸ as a way of “creating” reality. Establishing a second physical location in Athens—in addition to its historical location in Kassel, Germany, and in the immediate aftermath of the heated political, financial, and humanitarian relations between Greece and Germany³³⁹—gave rise to a complex matrix of social and aesthetic relations questioning ritualised forms of representation (including people gathering on the street in protest to visualise dissent). The exhibitions came to intersect and magnify the work of mass media, avoiding being co-opted in a streamlined thinking and contributing to shaping alternative political demands.³⁴⁰ It is here made clear that the object is no longer the sole site of evidence (and of critique). The exhibition is the collection of particles of a fragmented body which potentially could restitute, in a teleological absence, an image of reality through material and immaterial work made available for critique. If we use

Louis Althusser's terminology here, the intrinsic violence between the "repressive state apparatus" and the "ideological state apparatus"—which the exhibition itself may come to represent—is also the very object and site where the emancipatory struggle is carried out. Therefore, the exhibition makes critique in the cultural field powerfully move beyond physical borders.³⁴¹

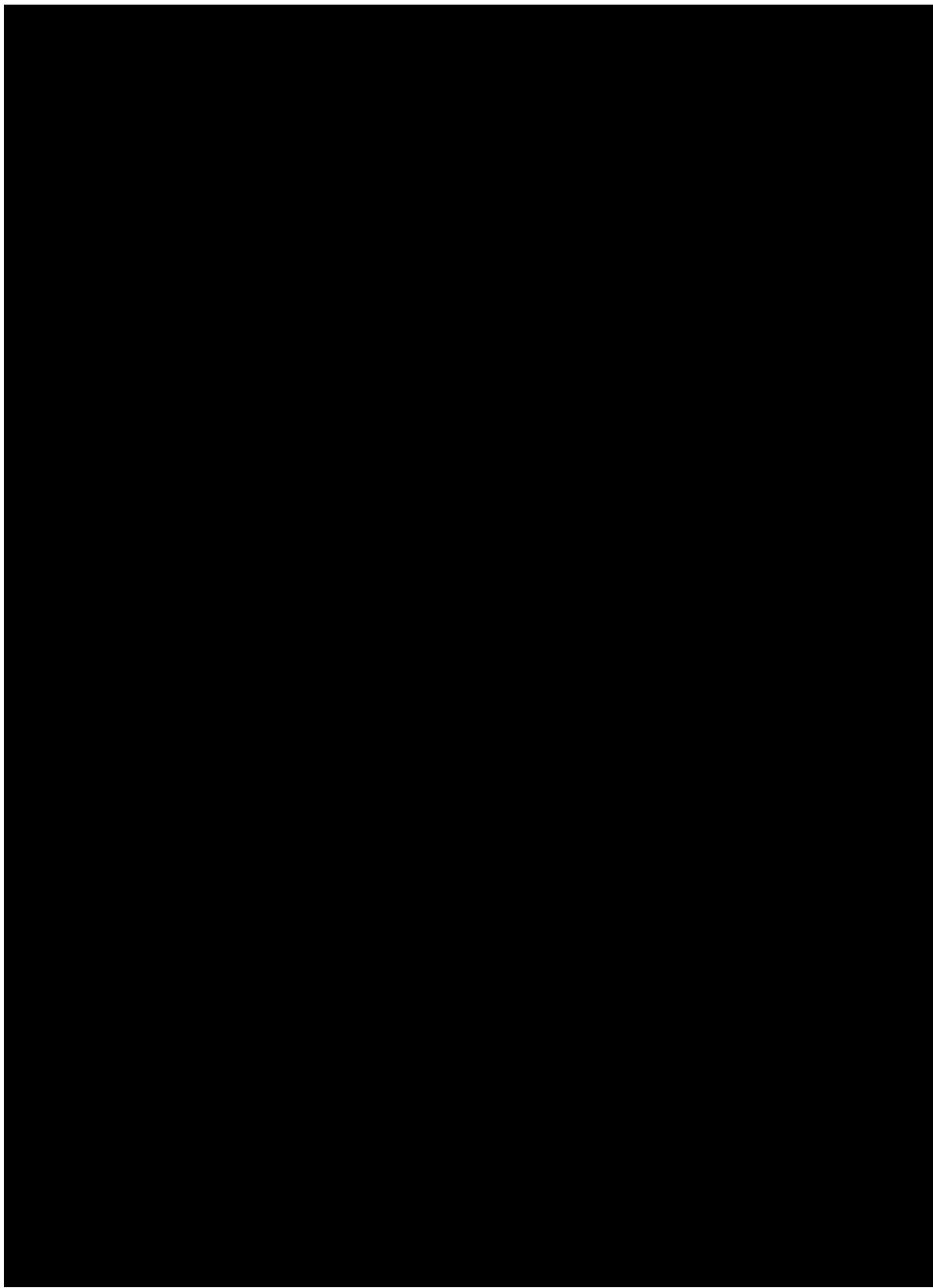
The exhibition space is the potential site for gathering neglected knowledges that have been dismissed by governmental subjects and state police and for bringing objects and their interrelated subjects within the space of appearance and representation. If fingerprints, the tracking of internet activities, and media representations have become a defining feature of contemporary culture (similar to how photographic evidence was used and misused in the nineteenth century for the identification and prosecution of revolutionary subjects), then this complex set of media surveillance we are now facing enters in a capillary fashion into the exhibition as a form. The materialisation of alternative, counter-, and speculative proof that escapes—willingly or unwillingly—courthouses enters more literally into the exhibitionary complex through forensic organisms, such as, for instance, organs like Forensic Architecture (FA).³⁴² FA "develops evidentiary systems" in relation to specific humanitarian cases connected to non-governmental organisations and human rights lawyers to uncover these stories and investigations, through which they try to make visible activities that are kept hidden in a world saturated by images and at a time when seemingly almost everything is exposed to view. This game of surveillance and data collection—undertaken by members of the FA group, which includes not only architects but also an investigative journalist, programmer, filmmaker, and conservationist—addresses the way in which architecture, as a topographical object with teleological functions, serves as evidence of violations of international humanitarian law. Its findings are to be used in political and media forums.

"Forensic" derives from the Latin *forensis*, or "forum," and as such is connected to the practice of presenting an argument through the use of objects. It is also a gathering of professionals with its own established rhetoric.³⁴³ And in this, the forensic is close to the practice of curating.³⁴⁴ Such a forum—like the exhibition, we could say—is an operative space, where the public is reinstated as opposed to the audience. Forensics is "the materialization of the event, [...] the construction of a forum, and the performance of the object within it."³⁴⁵ In this sense, curating, as much as exhibiting and the exhibition as a form, is not only the (re)writing of history, but also a constant construction of its very forums.³⁴⁶

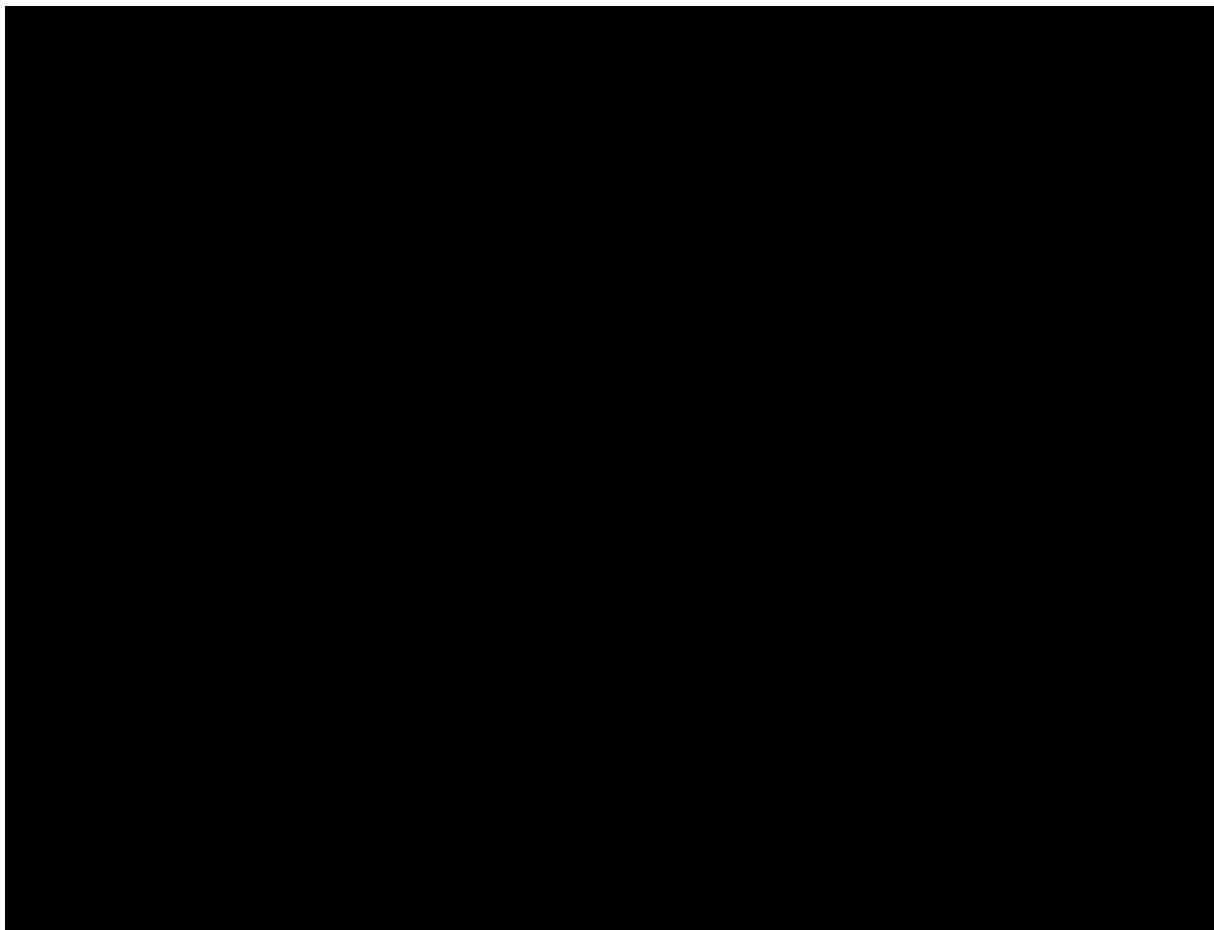
Despite new documentarian forms arising to bring evidence, including new imaging technologies, these procedures continue to ask how to make the object speak for the bodies that the object is deemed to represent.³⁴⁷ They bring witnesses; they are a testimony. In such interpretation of curating, curatorial forensics is essential as a non-self-explanatory method at work. A teleological practice informs the artwork coming to the art space both as a documentary and propositional device, in and outside the exhibition space. Objects, in such a view, are productive and representational things. Making the exhibition space gain the status of (or literally be recognised as) a court becomes a challenge of maintaining art institutions as the site of reconciliation of the politics of gender, identity, and class, in order to build new environments and distributed forms of knowledge.



Antonio Gramsci, *Alcuni temi della questione meridionale* (1935?), 24 pp., 14 cm, in Italian, published in France. Archive no: IT\ICCU\IEI\0033706, Fondazione Gramsci.



Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, manuscript's title page (1830).



Roberto Jacoby, Trabajo Cine Televisión (de Circuitos Cerrados de Comunicación) [Cinema Television Work (of Closed Communication Circuits)], (1967), Collage. Foto: Cortesía de Syd Krochmalny © Roberto Jacoby

²⁴⁸ I am here reading and referring to the following documents of the pre-Situationist archive, which in one way or another back my claim that documents took a prominent revolutionary and artistic role in the debates of these years: “Pre-Situationist Archive,” Situationist International Online, accessed 31 March 2021, <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/presitu/presitu.html>.

²⁴⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

²⁵⁰ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 5.

²⁵¹ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 7.

²⁵² Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 253–64.

²⁵³ Marx attacked the substance of the revolutionary eighteenth-century American and French political documents proclaiming the fundamental “rights of man” in liberty, equality, security, and property. Marx objects that these supposed rights are rooted in a conception of the human individual as having interests that can be defined without reference to others, as potentially always in conflict with others. The rights-bearing individual is an “isolated monad ... withdrawn behind his private interests and whims and separated from the community.” See Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question,” 1844, Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/index.htm>. Originally published in *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, February 1844.

²⁵⁴ Sigrid Weigel, *Body- and Image-Space: Re-reading Walter Benjamin* (London: Routledge, 1996), 36.

²⁵⁵ Performance theorist and critic Philip Auslander analyses the documentary and theatrical tradition of performance documentation to evidence the ontology of performance and document concerning the actual artistic event. He eventually comes to equal images that document performances to verbal statements instead of descriptions of events for how they occurred. Performance documents are not constative but performative themselves. The act is what constitutes the document as such, he asserts. The act itself produces “autonomous performance” and “states that it occurred.” Philip Auslander, “The Performativity of Performance Documentation,” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, September 2006, 28, 3, 1–10.

²⁵⁶ Lisa Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2014), 83.

²⁵⁷ Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge*, 102.

²⁵⁸ A kernel is a central component of an operating system. It manages the operations of computer hardware, including memory and processing time, by acting as a bridge between applications and data processing.

²⁵⁹ Daniel Ellsberg, *Papers on the War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968), 41.

²⁶⁰ Four volumes on diplomacy were not copied, and an effort to cut out the words “TOP SECRET—Sensitive” wherever he could was made. Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge*, 89.

²⁶¹ Gitelman, *Paper Knowledge*, 91.

²⁶² Ellsberg’s case was eventually dismissed in 1973 on grounds of government misconduct. I’ll come back to the concept of “archive fever” as developed by Jacques Derrida later in the thesis to further question archives as tools of power that establish ontological truths.

²⁶³ Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), xi.

²⁶⁴ Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, xiv. Here post-Gutenberg developments in the West are considered while setting aside pre-Gutenberg developments in Asia. And not only earlier developments in Asia, but also later ones in Eastern Europe, the Near East, and the New World have also been excluded.

²⁶⁵ Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, xii.

²⁶⁶ Harold Rosenberg, “The American Action Painters,” *Art News*, December 1952, 22, 23, 48–50.

²⁶⁷ Rosenberg, “The American Action Painters.” Rosenberg later expanded this concept as it applied to the 1960s: “Art communicated through documents is a development to the extreme of the Action-painting idea that a painting ought to be considered as a record of the creative processes rather than as a physical object.” Harold Rosenberg, *The De-definition of Art: Action Art to Pop to Earthworks* (New York: Horizon, 1972), 59.

²⁶⁸ Joseph Kosuth, “Introductory Note by the American Editor,” *Art Language* 1, no. 2 (1970).

²⁶⁹ An ongoing aim of mine is to find more examples of this process of conceptualisation of labour and outsourcing of labour abroad.

²⁷⁰ A number of exhibitions and other materials are equally cited as precursors, including Germano Celant’s theorisation of Arte Povera, *50 Jahre Kunsthalle Bern: 12 Environments* (50 Years Kunsthalle Bern: 12 Environments), Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland, 1968; *Op Losse Schroeven: Situaties en Cryptostructuren* (Square Pegs in Round Holes: Structures and Cryptostructures), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1969; *When Attitudes Become Form*, Kunsthalle Bern, 1969; *Verborgene Strukturen: Museum Folkwang Cryptostructuren* (Hidden Structures: Museum Folkwang Cryptostructures), Essen, Germany, 1969; *Plane und Projekte als Kunst* (Plans and Projects as Art), Kunsthalle Bern, 1969; *Poesin maste göras av alla! Förändra världen!* (Poetry must be made by all! Transform the world!), Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 1969; *Konzeption* (Conception), Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen, Germany, 1969; and *49 three-part variations using three different kinds of cubes: 1967–68*, Bruno Bischofberger, Zurich, 1969. Kynaston McShine, introduction to *Information*, exhibition catalogue (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1970).

²⁷¹ Among the suggested readings that likewise stand as precursors to the *Information* exhibition catalogue are: Germano Celant, *Arte Povera* (New York: Praeger, 1969); Garrett DeBell, ed., *The Environmental Handbook* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970); Ernst Fischer, *The Necessity of Art: A Marxist Approach* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963); Joseph Kosuth, *Function* (Turin: Editions Sperone, 1970); John McHale, *The Future of the Future* (New York: George Braziller, 1969); Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1962); Morse Peckham, *Man's Rage for Chaos: Biology, Behavior, and the Arts* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967); Jurgen M. D. Ruesch, and Gregory Bateson, *Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968); Tamatsu Shibutani, *Improvised News: A Sociological Study of Rumor* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966); Martin Shubik, ed., *Game Theory and Related Approaches to Social Behavior* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964); George Steiner, *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman* (New York: Atheneum, 1967); and Harold Rosenberg, “The Art World: De-aestheticization,” *New Yorker*, 2 January 1970. Some of the references overlap with Lucy Lippard’s book *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966–1972* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

²⁷² In McShine’s words: “The material presented by the artists is considerably varied, and also spirited, if not rebellious—which is not very surprising, considering the general social, political, and economic crises that are almost universal phenomena of 1970. If you are an artist in Brazil, you know of at least one friend who is being tortured; if you are one in Argentina, you probably have had a neighbour who has been in jail for having long hair, or for not being “dressed” properly; and if you are living in the United States, you may fear that you will be shot at, either in the universities, in your bed, or more formally in Indochina. It may seem too inappropriate, if not absurd, to get up in the morning, walk into a room, and apply dabs of paint from a little tube to a square of canvas. What can you as a young artist do that seems relevant and meaningful?” McShine, *Information*, 138.

²⁷³ Joseph Kosuth, *The Sixth Investigation 1969* (Cologne: Gerd De Vries, Paul Maenz, 1971), n.p., proposition 14.

²⁷⁴ Under the influence of John Locke and Adam Smith, labour became key to the modern economic systems based on property ownership. See Karen I. Vaughn, “John Locke and the Labor Theory of Value,” *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 2, no. 4 (1978): 311–26.

²⁷⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 139.

²⁷⁶ Valerie Mainz and Griselda Pollock, *Work and the Image*, vol. 1, *Work, Craft and Labour—Visual Representations in Changing Histories*, and vol. 2, *Work in Modern Times—Visual Mediations and Social Processes* (London: Routledge, 2018).

²⁷⁷ In its digital and physical iterations, *Let’s Talk about Images* are examples of programs I curated to address some of these issues. See <https://www.eflux.com/announcements/222118/let-s-talk-about-images/> and <https://www.fotogalleriet.no/en/exhibitions/lets-tal-about-images-2-1-0>. I also paused the publishing program The Nordic Photobook Dummy Award to look into its production structures, where artists lamented a sizeable financial risk to reach final publication. We held discussions and conferences in its place, including *Photography Bound: Rethinking the Future of Photobooks and Self-publishing*, organised by Fotogalleriet and KDM – Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design, University of Bergen, 13–15 October 2020. See <https://kmd.uib.no/en/Calendar/seminar/photography-bound-rethinking-the-future-of-photobooks-and-self-publishing-copy>.

²⁷⁸ “In other words, the labour of the individual asserts itself as a part of the labour of society, only by means of the relations which the act of exchange establishes directly between the products, and indirectly, through them, between the producers.” Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, 1867, Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/cho1.htm>

²⁷⁹ Marx, *Capital*.

²⁸⁰ Marx, *Capital*.

²⁸¹ “Under this strategy, manufacturers based in developed countries subcontract the most labour-intensive stages of production, for example, sewing or assembly, to the Third World nations where labour is cheap. Once assembled, the multinational re-imports the goods—under generous tariff exemptions—to the developed country instead of selling them to the local market.” Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Contracting Poverty,” *Multinational Monitor* 4, no. 8 (August 1983): 8.

²⁸² Gayatri C. Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 277.

²⁸³ Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 275.

²⁸⁴ In 1926, Antonio Gramsci began drafting a paper in response to an article published by the political magazine *Quarto Stato* that analysed the “problem” of Southern Italy. The publication’s young editors had asserted they were aware of the problem and its proposed solution. Gramsci soon apprehended that the simple directives of the Communist Party—located in the Northern part of the country—were forming “extreme opinions and violent protests on paper, without the [news]paper rebelling.” To formulate a revolutionary strategy (or a strategy for the revolution), Gramsci came to configure a theory based on an analysis of the peasantry’s life and its distance from the politics of the city, and, therefore, the lack of connectivity between different subalterns. He argued that Southern peasants were in an even lower condition than the Northern capitalist proletariat, and that solidarity between these classes was required. In non-advanced capitalist countries, there is an endemic opposition between the city and the countryside, between the worker and the peasant. The peasants ignore the idea of the modern liberal-capitalist state. They do not conceive of economic and political institutions or of historical categories that had a beginning, and that have undergone a process of development, and therefore that can dissolve once the conditions for higher forms of social coexistence have been created; institutions are instead considered “natural” and perpetual categories. Gramsci called for a solidarity between the peasant and proletariat classes, against the Northern bourgeoisie that had subjugated the South (and the Northern proletariat), reducing it to exploitable colonies. He considered the movement of historical-political economy in Italy within what can be seen as an allegory that prefigures an international division of labour. Antonio Gramsci, “Some Aspects of the Southern Question,” 1926, Marxist Leninist Archive,

http://marxism.halkcephesi.net/Antonio%20Gramsci/1926/10/southern_question.htm.

Originally published in *Selections from Political Writings (1921–1926)*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978).

²⁸⁵ “The subaltern classes by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a ‘State’: their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society, and thereby with the history of States and groups of States.” Antonio Gramsci, *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (Chennai: Orient Longman, 2004), 52.

²⁸⁶ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 52.

²⁸⁷ “Hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise in equilibrium should be formed—in other words, that the leading group should make sacrifices.” Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 161.

²⁸⁸ “Conceptual Art now instated the prohibition of any and all visuality as the inescapable aesthetic rule for the end of the twentieth century.” Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,” *October*, no. 55 (Winter 1990), 105.

²⁸⁹ Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969,” 111.

²⁹⁰ Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969,” 117.

²⁹¹ Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969,” 117.

²⁹² Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969,” 118.

²⁹³ Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969,” 119.

²⁹⁴ “Klein’s receipts verify the existence of an invisible work of art, which prove that a formal sale has taken place. As Klein establishes in his ‘Ritual Rules’, each buyer has two possibilities; If he pays the amount of gold agreed upon in exchange for a receipt, Klein keeps all of the gold, and the buyer does not really acquire the ‘authentic immaterial value’ of the work. The second possibility is to buy an immaterial zone for gold and then to burn the receipt. Through this act, a perfect, definitive immaterialization is achieved, as well as the absolute inclusion of the buyer in the immaterial. ... Klein presents capitalist trading strategies and illuminates his ideas about the indefinable, incalculable value of art.” Olivier Berggruen et al., eds., *Yves Klein* (Berlin: Hatje Kantz, 2004), 221.

²⁹⁵ Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969,” 118.

²⁹⁶ Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969,” 129.

²⁹⁷ Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969,” 141.

²⁹⁸ Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969,” 142.

²⁹⁹ Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969,” 143.

³⁰⁰ “The meaning of those movements was the emergence of a new historical alliance. It was an alliance between mass intellectual labor and the workers’ refusal of industrial labor.”

Franco Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), 28.

³⁰¹ Susan Sontag, “Happenings: An Art of Radical Juxtaposition” (1962), *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Picador, 1966), 263.

³⁰² Sontag, “Happenings,” 263.

³⁰³ Sontag, “Happenings,” 265.

³⁰⁴ Judith Rodenbeck, “Madness and Method: Before Theatricality,” *Grey Room*, no. 13 (2003): 55–79.

³⁰⁵ Sontag, “Happenings.”

³⁰⁶ Rodenbeck, “Madness and Method,” 58.

³⁰⁷ Rodenbeck questions Happenings as a closer descendent of the Living Theatre’s experiments in improvisation. Rodenbeck, “Madness and Method.”

³⁰⁸ Kirstie Beaven, “Performance Art Painting and Performance,” Tate, accessed 25 March 2019, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/performance-art/painting-and-performance>.

³⁰⁹ William Kaizen, “Framed Space: Allan Kaprow and the Spread of Painting,” *Grey Room*, no. 13 (2003), 81.

³¹⁰ Allan Kaprow, “Manifesto,” in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 81.

³¹¹ Rodenbeck, “Madness and Method,” 68.

³¹² The audience was given programmes and three stapled cards—instructions for their participation. As the title suggests, the performance consisted of six parts, each of which involved three Happenings occurring at once. A bell signalled the beginning and end of each part; two strokes of the bell marked the performance’s end. The instructions stipulated when audience members had to change seats or move to the next room. These rooms were formed by semitransparent, painted, and collaged plastic sheets that acted as panels, on which words were roughly painted. *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* was an experimental production, a temporal collage, using a vast notational apparatus. Audience members were part of the artist’s props. Other sources included ballet and calisthenics (notated by Kaprow using stick-figure diagrams); recorded test tones, sound effects, speeches, electronic music, old experimental tapes (cut-ups of Kaprow’s cut-up audiotape compositions), as well as sound produced on site; and slides of body parts, scrawled word fragments and interjections, children’s art, and close-ups of collages. Rodenbeck, “Madness and Method.”

³¹³ Pollock was the subject of a film directed by Hans Namuth in 1950, when Pollock completed the work *Number 29* (1950), painted on glass and made to demonstrate his technique for the film. The artist himself played the lead role. (Pollock’s success was also

supposedly scripted by others, including Clement Greenberg, MoMA, and the Central Intelligence Agency; see Manfred J. Holler, "Artists, Secrets, and CIA's Cultural Policy," 2002,

[https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.596.7152&rep=rep1&type=pdf. \)](https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.596.7152&rep=rep1&type=pdf.) "Despite an apparently near-total lack of talent," writes Kirk Varnedoe, curator of the 1998–99 MoMA retrospective *Jackson Pollock*, which subsequently travelled to the Tate Gallery, London, in 1999, Pollock "formed and held onto the notion that being an artist would be his life." Varnedoe continues: "After 1950, when photographs and films of Pollock painting were widely disseminated, imagery of process became inseparable from considerations of the final product." The catalogue accompanying the retrospective is obsessed with Namuth's photos and films. Varnedoe reminds readers that the photographs themselves are divided in allegiance, at times focusing on Pollock from ground level, at other times looking down from overhead to better view the prone canvas. The preceding quotations by Varnedoe are cited in Lane Relyea, "The Photogenic Splat Jackson Pollock Retouched. The Legacy of Hans Namuth," *Frieze*, March–April 1999, <https://www.frieze.com/article/photogenic-splat-jackson-pollock-retouched>.

³¹⁴ The widespread use of photographic media was completely instrumental in building Pollock's practice as iconic, as numerous theorists have reported. Francis O'Connor attributes an important power to the two films and to the approximately 500 still photographs of Pollock taken between 1950 and the end of the artist's life in August 1956. He says that Namuth's images "not only record the artist at work but, in certain instances, have come to symbolize the aesthetic roots of an entire school of American painting." They "make explicit Pollock's famous and seriously misunderstood painting technique," as they reveal the real work space in which Pollock was operating, enabling a proper analysis, for instance, of terms like "dripping" as unsuitable to describe a process which should be called "pouring" instead. See Francis V. O'Connor, "Hans Namuth's Photographs of Jackson Pollock as Art Historical Documentation," *Art Journal* 39, no. 1 (1979): 48–49. In the book *Assemblage, Environments and Happenings*, Kaprow, prior to his written essay, arranged a sort of photo-essay, titled "Step Right In," consisting of a large series of black-and-white photographs with text. The title refers to Pollock and shows works by Robert Rauschenberg, Yayoi Kusama, Robert Whitman, and Kaprow himself to extend Pollock's legacy into three dimensions and the post-painterly space. It starts with a Namuth photograph of Pollock at work in the studio, whereby, "[through the photograph,] Pollock the man and Pollock the work become one." See William Kaizen, "Framed Space": 81–107. We can also clearly trace an approach connected to ritualistic forms, psychoanalysis, and the symbolic as derived from anthropology. See Catherine M. Soussloff, "Jackson Pollock's Post-ritual Performance: Memories Arrested in Space." *TDR: The Drama Review* 48, no. 1 (2004): 60–78.

³¹⁵ The Reuben Gallery's images included a portrait of Kaprow appearing at the front of a fruit-filled shop window on a New York street, drawing attention to objects and space; beside him are stacked crates and the handle of a tool—all possible elements of a Happening. Preparation and performance ultimately intermixed, and became "the documentation" of the Happening, together with the artist's hand-lettered instructions, notes, programmes, posters, photographs, films, and audio recordings. It is also reported that none of Kaprow's environments were initially presented at museums. He was against museums in principle because they isolate and separate art from life. For a long time, he sustained an anti-museum stance, bypassing the museum altogether. See Julie Reiss, *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 29.

³¹⁶ I argue that this media conglomerate is what allows the experience of the piece today as well as at the time, the exposition of which determines its understanding in both historical (at the time) and present terms. The ensemble of all the scattered media—of this constellation—could potentially draw the piece together. The Happening and the media records are inevitably intertwined and indissoluble. Here I also rely upon research and assertions regarding the inevitable ensemble of these scattered media in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh and

Judith F. Rodenbeck, eds., *Experiments in the Everyday: Allan Kaprow and Robert Watts—Events, Objects, Documents*, exhibition catalogue (New York: Columbia University, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, 1999).

³¹⁷ “Los pintores pop han mostrado hasta qué punto las artes plásticas reproducen «símbolos» y no «cosas».” Oscar Masotta, *El “pop-art”* (Buenos Aires: Columba, 1967), 14.

³¹⁸ Hal Foster, “Death in America,” *October*, no. 75 (1996): 36.

³¹⁹ Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, “After Pop, We Dematerialize: Oscar Masotta, Happenings, and Media Art at the Beginning of Conceptualism,” in *Listen, Here, Now!: Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde*, ed. Inés Katzenstein (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004), 163.

³²⁰ *Happening para un jabalí difunto* (*Happening for a Dead Boar*, 1966) was a collaboration between Masotta, Costa, Escari, and Jacoby which relied on many personalities, among others Lea Lublin and Marta Minujín, to “sustain the game.” See Daniel R. Quiles, “Dead Boars, Viruses, and Zombies: Roberto Jacoby’s Art History,” *Art Journal* 73, no. 3 (2014): 38–55.

³²¹ In the same year that Kaprow christened Buenos Aires a “city of *happenistas*,” he collaborated with Marta Minujin and Wolf Vostell on *Three Country Happening* (1966), a simultaneous event in three cities: New York, Buenos Aires, and Berlin. Meanwhile, the Argentine trio of Costa, Escari, and Jacoby were devising their *Total Participation Happening* (1966), for which press releases and photographs of a Happening that never took place were given to various Buenos Aires newspapers. *El Mundo* (circulation 300,000) bought the story and ran it. See Juli Carson, “Aesthetics of Repetition: A Case for Oscar Masotta,” *X-TRA*, Spring 2012, <https://www.x-traonline.org/article/aesthetics-of-repetition-a-case-for-oscar-masotta/>.

³²² The anti-Happening is distinct from the Happening in that it aims to show the paradox of Happenings beginning from the relation that Happenings create with objects. It aims to critique how the lack of mediation of the Happening in turn requires a great deal of mediation of objects and events by the non-participatory receptor, perpetuating the conditions imposed by mass-media communications. See Roberto Jacoby, “Against Happening” (1967), quoted in Longoni and Mariano, “After Pop, We Dematerialise,” 164.

³²³ Longoni and Mariano, “After Pop, We Dematerialise.”

³²⁴ Oscar Masotta. *Theory as Action* was held 27 April–20 August 2017 at MUAC – Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City. Curated by Ana Longoni, it included works by Oscar Masotta (1930–1979), Eduardo Costa (b. 1940), Raúl Escari (1944–2016), Roberto Jacoby (b. 1944), Alberto Greco (1931–1965), César Jannello (1918–1985), Marta Minujín (b. 1943), Edgardo Giménez (b. 1942), Dalila Puzzovio (b. 1945), Charlie Squirru (b. 1934), Rubén Santantonín (1919–1969), Raúl Stoppani (b. 1935), Emilio Renart (1925–1991), Luis Wells (b. 1939), Tucumán Arde (est. 1968), Dora García (b. 1965), Cloe Masotta (b. 1977), Andrés Duque (b. 1972), Carlos Masotta, Pierre Bal Blanc (b. 1965), Guillermmina Mongan (b. 1979), and Un Faulduo (est. 2005).

³²⁵ Judith Rodenbeck, “Foil: Allan Kaprow before Photography,” in Buchloh and Rodenbeck, *Experiments in the Everyday*, 60.

³²⁶ Jill Dawsey, “The Uses of Photography: An Introduction,” in *The Uses of Photography: Art, Politics, and the Reinvention of a Medium*, ed. Jill Dawsey (La Jolla, CA: Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 14–89.

³²⁷ “Whether art is made as a package or as an antithesis to the package, it takes on the character of the package in its mode of transmission to the public, that is, through the communications system of the press, including the art press, the museums, galleries and other distribution and educational mechanisms.” Harold Rosenberg, “Art and Its Double,” in *Artworks and Packages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 21.

³²⁸ Allan Kaprow, “Performing Life,” in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, 195–96.

³²⁹ Allan Kaprow, “On the Way to Un-art,” preface to the expanded edition of *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, xxvii–xxix.

³³⁰ Rodenbeck, “Madness and Method,” 72. With time, Kaprow’s activities became increasingly dispersed, private, and wilfully undocumented, in what he called “un-arting.” See Kaprow, “On the Way to Un-art.”

³³¹ Art critic and art historian Michael Martin Fried speaks about time and duration in studying the difference between theatre and sculpture and painting. He claims a presentness and instantaneousness of sculpture and painting, which is superior to theatre because they produce a continuous self demanding knowledge. The “perpetual creation of itself, that one experiences as a kind of instantaneousness: as though if only one were infinitely more acute, a single infinitely brief instant would be long enough to see everything, to experience the work in all its depth and fullness, to be forever convinced by it.” Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” in Gregory Battcock (ed), *Minimal Art. A critical anthology* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1995), 145.

³³² No documentation of this exhibition is available. Fotogalleriet’s archives report that Diane Arbus’s works were on display at the institution in April 1978. Word of mouth has it that the works travelled in the back of a car, but no confirmation of such a claim exists. One of Fotogalleriet’s founders, artist Dag Alveng, recounts that the exhibition arrived from Camera Obscura, an exhibition venue for photography in Stockholm, which opened a month after Fotogalleriet. See Dag Alveng, “A Field of Norwegian Photographic Art Takes Shape,” interview by Susanne Østby Sæther, *Conversations on Photography*, ed. Antonio Cataldo (Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2021), 41–54.

³³³ Liz Kotz, “Language between Performance and Photography,” *October*, no. 111 (Winter 2005): 3–24.

³³⁴ Kotz, “Language between Performance and Photography,” 13.

³³⁵ Kotz, “Language between Performance and Photography,” 14.

³³⁶ Kotz, “Language between Performance and Photography.”

³³⁷ Besides local venues for the display of artworks and online and physical publications, documenta 14’s Parliament of Bodies programme was clearly staged for an extended audience (including digitally present or deferred) beyond its immediate physical reach. It further employed gadgets and massive advertisements in both Athens and Kassel, and spurred a collaboration with Greece’s Aegean Airlines to schedule a short season of flights between Athens and Kassel.

³³⁸ I am referring here to the theory of Tony Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” *New Formations*, no. 4 (Spring 1988): 73–103.

³³⁹ Following the financial crisis of 2007–08, Greece faced a government debt crisis widely known in the country as Η Κρίση (The Crisis), followed by a series of sudden reforms and austerity measures that led to mass impoverishment and losses of income and property, as well as a small-scale humanitarian crisis. The crisis led to a loss of confidence in the Greek economy and to rising costs and loans owed to other Eurozone countries, particularly Germany.

³⁴⁰ Lawrence Weiner has said that language in the 1970s changed from communication to information: “the work itself is information.” Lawrence Weiner, interview by Michel Claura, *VH-101*, Spring 1971, 65.

³⁴¹ Dorothee Richter, “Exhibitions as Cultural Practices of Showing: Pedagogics,” in *Curating Critique*, ed. Marianne Eigenheer et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2007), 47–52.

³⁴² Founded in 2011, Forensic Architecture is a research agency based at Goldsmith, University of London.

³⁴³ “Forensics” refers to the speech of *objects*. In forensics, a translator is needed to bridge the object to the forum. *Prosopopeia* refers to this speech on behalf of things. See Eyal Weizman and Tina Di Carlo, “Dying to Speak: Forensic Spatiality,” *Log*, no. 20 (Fall 2010): 125–31.

³⁴⁴ “Dying to Speak: Forensic Spatiality,” 126.

³⁴⁵ “Dying to Speak: Forensic Spatiality,” 126.

³⁴⁶ Thomas Keenan speaks about shame as a force, a feeling, that articulates knowledge through action. It becomes significant in a social network, through the exposure to others

under their gaze, and part of a process of publicity. Thomas Keenan, “Mobilising Shame,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, nos. 2–3 (Spring/Summer 2004): 435–49.
³⁴⁷ Weizman and Di Carlo, “Dying to Speak.”

Part 4.

Transitioning from theory to practice: Towards curatorial projects

(4.1) An Alliance of Bodies Reclaiming The Right to Appear: Introduction

A large part of curatorial work is maintaining active conversations with the wider artistic field and finding allies in the current and historical search for recognition, as I assert in the introduction of the thesis. As I strive to demonstrate a practical form of trans-institutionality, I weave thoughts around the alliance of bodies in the right to appear initially developed due to external textual commissions, which prompted a deep reflection and affectation of my curatorial practice and theoretical investigation. My historical and academic research ran in parallel with my curatorial work. There was inevitably a parallel of conversations around bodies and appearance in the sphere of representation that informed my practice and the other way around. This section pays homage to the developments of these thoughts in detail. It is also a section that allows understanding a movement from theory to practice without losing focus on either, and yet opening up to more concrete reflections on a particular approach from my side to curatorial issues. In the overall thesis, I address, research, and point out that curatorial work is not just about exhibition making but also about influencing curating by thinking and writing. Discursive practices are part of a curatorial undertaking. These discussions were fundamental in bridging and bringing concrete examples of such intellectual, collective movement. I draw from art historian and critic Geeta Kapur to introduce the concept of the transnational public sphere in processes of international aspirations while defining alternative and unstable institutionality. Kapur thinks about cruelty, control, administration, identification, nationality, and the intrinsic possibility of an in-between condition. In leaning upon a transitional realm, I address possible revived structures of curating: the process of confronting the aesthetic powers at play, which finds forms of freedom and alliances beyond the locus of the local.

Marianne Heier and Franz Petter Schmidt's exhibition *Aktiv materie* held in 2019, allows me to think about the material conditions for feminism in Norway through clothing production and the aestheticisation of life in small workers' communities. It furthers the situatedness of curating and performing archives and evidence to unleash previously unevoked narratives.

Through the queer-feminist platform FRANK (2012–20), run by artists and educators Sille Storihle and Liv Bugge, I practically demonstrate how undiscussed gender issues are dependent on institutional structures or the lack thereof. I come to lean upon FRANK to define the importance of a tremulous, trembling institution, one that disorients prescribed paradigms, creating the possibility to argue for a needed counter-community. In line with historical feminist salons, FRANK reclaimed private spaces as public spaces and possibly confronted mainstream narratives, slowly deconstructing them. FRANK decomposed truth-telling through curating events in unexpected times and distances. My encounter and the entire community with this tremulous institution greatly influenced my curatorial practice and theoretical understanding of sexualities. It also contributed, as I explain, to shake canonicity of art and institutional infrastructures locally and internationally, as their practice loomed large beyond physical confines.

Harald Beharie and Louis Schou-Hansen and their *Shine Utopians*' multifaceted and complexly constructed space for the performance held at Dansens Hus in November 2019 made claims on art, education, and the aestheticisation of the gendered body. I study Harald & Louis's performance to analyse further the space we are given to appear. Usually, this space is understood politically as the square, or the parliament,

as agents of political change. Together with their work, I argue that exhibition spaces and our curation are no less space of appearance. Here, we fight for equality and filter a different perception of what bodies can be.

(4.2) Materialising words, performing textiles: Fashioning unruly stories³⁴⁸

In February 1915, the revolutionary feminist thinker Alexandra Kollontai migrated to Norway, in exile from Russia via Sweden. Her radical thinking made her a palpably undesired guest. It was in the Scandinavian capital of Christiania (a.k.a. Oslo), on 8 March that same year, that she tried to organise an international working women's demonstration against the war. That autumn saw her embark on a journey to the US, delivering lectures as part of a five-month tour, during which she visited eighty-one cities. After returning to Norway, specifically Holmenkollen, in the spring of 1916, she then headed back to her "liberated" Russia, following the 1917 October Revolution. She took the post of minister of social welfare, becoming the only woman in the cabinet and the first woman in history to be recognised as a member of government.

Kollontai's political consciousness had arisen early in her life, particularly in connection with women textile workers, whom she considered the bedrock of the working class. She had directly witnessed the darkness of this capitalist industry in 1896, when she first visited a large textile factory where her engineer husband had been installing a ventilation system. It was this encounter that led her to leafleting and fundraising in support of the mass textile strike which broke out in the St. Petersburg area later that very year.

When we think about the last decades of the nineteenth century, we mainly focus on Europe and the US in their critical expansion of economic growth through the so-called Second Industrial Revolution. New technical innovations, including large-scale mechanised tools for manufacturing and increasingly advanced machinery in steam-powered factories, boomed throughout the 1870s. In the textile industry, this progress occurred in apparel, where electric-pedal sewing machines (whose numbers more than doubled), created what has become notoriously known as the sweatshop system—implicating a new struggling class of domestic workers (mostly women). Wool combing, which had long defied mechanisation, was automated, and the throste frame, dominating the scene until the 1860s, was slowly superseded by the ring spinning frame.

Though not the centre of the Industrial Revolution, it is less than coincidental that 1870 marks an important year in Norway too, with the foundation of the Ålgård Uldvarefabrikker (Aalgaards Woollen Fabrics) at the waterfall in Ålgård, by means of the Haugian entrepreneur Ole Nielsen. Nielsen carefully chose the waterfall at Ålgård both because it delivered the necessary and even power required for operating the factory as well as for its location in one of the country's most important sheep districts. In just a few decades (out of fear of competition), Nielsen created a system of shares allowing his enterprise to grow quickly enough to purchase five other factories in 1916. This new company, De Forenede Ullvarefabrikker (United Woollen Factories), was a "modest" conglomerate merging Ålgård Ullvarefabrikker, Nydalens Fabrikker in Nord-Trøndelag, the woollen department at Hjula Væverier in Oslo, and Grorud Textilfabriker with Skauger Fabrikker at Drammen, in addition to Fredfos Uldvarefabrik in Vestfossen; Nydalens Fabrikker had already become part of Ålgård Ullvarefabrikker before this merger.

The life of the United Woollen Factories runs parallel to the life of a specific economic period in Europe and in the Western world at the peak of its capitalist and colonial expansion, specifically in its movement from the Second Industrial Revolution to the

globalisation of the 1990s. It is the moment in which the “capitalist dream” is fully realised in Western countries, through the manufacturing of goods outsourced overseas, using cheap production labour in what were defined by “developed” countries as “developing” countries, while maintaining only the tertiary sector at home. The United Woollen Factories is paradigmatic of an arc of time in Western history and ambition, as well as of a sector of industry that constructed specific ideologies, classes, and subaltern gendered conditions—which today we simply call the fashion industry (as its sphere of influence reaches well beyond apparel). The United Woollen Factories is an exemplary case of ideological industry in Norway, undoubtedly yielding profits while trying to escape the mere darkness of goods production; in the Haugianist spirit, it had to reinvest a number of values into the local community. This pioneering corporate social objective was an integral part of the policies of the industry, and laid the foundations for schooling, sports, culture, and religion in Ålgård. Today we should probably call this, in Foucauldian terms, the discipline of fashion (the discipline of industrialisation), as merchandise production came hand in hand with a number of interconnected institutions disciplining the “body” of the workers’ community. This is testified to here by the total population of Ålgård, which in 1898 counted 592 persons, of which 246 were employees of the factory—meaning the entire community was implicated in the industry (either directly or indirectly).

As we move into this “history” today, we’ll first look precisely at 2017, when Marianne Heier and Franz Petter Schmidt, first intervening in Ålgård, started to connect the different shades of this industrial disciplining body by recuperating “traces” of the past and imposing them on Norway’s contemporary textile industry—precisely addressing its alleged absence. Through performative elements they speak about a loss (disavowal).

Marianne Heier developed a performance in front of Ålgård’s outlet (shopping malls are the cathedrals of today’s capitalism). She pieced together leading feminist texts critical of the textile industry and of women’s conditions within it, highlighting the industry’s obsession with gendered exploitation and the role of the contemporary consumer as a full-time, unpaid worker, complicit and inextricable from the exploitation of the self and the other. Her rioting—giving voice to intermixed figures who had real political intention—can only be rehearsed in her performance as a meme (a masquerade), as this is the only understandable language of democratic expression today, where public speech has been replaced by tweets and tele-appearances. Likewise, Franz Petter Schmidt’s work speaks about the same absence (disavowal), the one related to a lost *in situ* knowledge connected to these local enterprises and their very matter of production—fabrics of a specific tactile taste—retaining a contextual specificity which has quickly gone “out of fashion” (and “out of technology”), to follow a globalised, streamlined attire.

This first toil returns in *Aktiv materie (Active Material)* at Bomuldsfabriken Kunsthall in Arendal, where a number of intricate “documents” are simultaneously brought together: a re-enactment of Heier’s live performance in Ålgård, and its subsequent recording; recent images taken by Fin Serck-Hanssen of the remainders of machinery at the Sjølingstad Woollen Mill³⁴⁹ (in a “four-eyed” work with Schmidt); rolling waves of textiles from Sjølingstad Woollen Mill; emergency blankets; the laborious study of fabric technologies by Schmidt; and “lost” fabrics and techniques repurposed into use through a “new collection” sampled by art and fashion design

firm HAIK W/. This archival material from Norwegian textile factories fallen into disuse is a testimony, alongside manifestos and counter-manifestos, of fashion, feminism, and workers' movements in Europe, the US, and beyond, together with a number of other recent video-recorded and live performances by Heier.

This is a cohesive "scream," and in itself a manifesto. The exhibition space becomes an agora, where history is put on trial—in formal terms, "to examine" evidence, as well as in terms of testing the performance of history.

What should we take out of 200 years of the fashion industry determining the performance of our habits? What does it mean to rehearse this history? To bring all these phantoms together? To produce anew allegedly "surpassed" textiles? How do we reach a different form of knowledge by accessing and witnessing all these overlapping documents—where even the contemporary productions and reproductions of both words and fabrics constitute evidence for such a story to be retold? Does this story have explanatory potential? What standards of enquiry would have to be met if performed behaviours were to be recognised as socially legitimate ways of understanding the past?

The performance of history trumps official written history and entrepreneurial structures, and suggests a re-evaluation of old questions. In this act of rehearsing, performing, remaking, and "wearing" documents, Heier and Schmidt establish new indices of readability. They bring out something that has at times been named the "optical unconscious," a revelation of spaces rising from below the calm surface of the known, provided by technologies and offering claims of opacity, of repetition, of time. The re-enactment of a textile, and the re-embodiment of voices struggling for emancipation (being possessed by them), is demonstrative "evidence," equal or superior to photographs from the archive. It opens up the possibility to excavate and retell overlapping stories of the United Woollen Factories, the Sjølingstad Woollen Mill, the Bomuldsfabriken, and other textile factories in Norway (similarities which bring solidarity). Similar to old photographic documents, these frozen-in-time textiles and performative acts are an index maintaining the possibility for a ritual to be rehearsed, re-enacted, to enter in direct dialogue with the now. Rather than a commitment to the medium as such, this effort should be understood as being primarily part of a larger attempt to represent social relations, often those historically recorded through photography only. It is the suppression of the photograph in service of the possibility of reperforming the material that constitutes both the work's politics and the critique of history as such. In its continuous reference to an impossible original (as both Heier and Schmidt multiply the number of documents), the very method of representation is displaced (that is how history is currently retold). These enunciations by Heier and Schmidt are aesthetic tools creating a mimetic proximity to the material world, both to its physical landscapes and to the power relations that create them. Performing words and performing textiles entails the understanding of institutional technologies of suppression, as well as the social realms that allow for institutional appearance and disappearance (in Louis Althusser's reading). This means the works cannot be locked into a narrative and a linear trajectory from an image to a copy, but only read as a process of institutional unbuilding. It means questioning interrelated institutional technologies that have enabled this production to happen; technologies that still underlie our very societies; it means the understanding of herds, feeding procedures, food patterns, environmental conditions, and so on and so forth, which become the narration of an

entire community, the current state of affairs, the way to look at our society and, accordingly, a nation state. Their work, as a loose referent to things and events, can be constantly retranslated anew, entering and exiting these specific situations with porous borders.

Performance is often thought of as an ephemeral practice, as taking place only in the here and now, giving evidence of past behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes; but in this case it becomes material evidence. This impossible archive (as the new material is interspersed with documents, records, ruins) sustains an ongoing enquiry, an *anti*-historical repertoire of performed acts. Performing this “archive” (or these material documents) is a liberatory act freeing the force that structures embody in relation to social claims. It is testing the desire of our “democracies” for disciplining stability. The physical mechanics of re-enacting these words and materials keeps the opportunity to dissent from organisational infrastructure alive; it is a practice, an episteme, and a politics that goes beyond the explicit topic.

The tension between “high” and “low” (in terms of how documents are interpreted and classified) usually mobilises a number of normative exclusions, replete in this expository work which brings together factory and home, industrial scale and domestic dimensions, assembly line and outlet. Where photography is engaged in its offering of social detail, these performative acts are a deception unframing differences (of gender, class, and origin). The documentary elements are converted into mobile words and objects, where social detail is both recorded and, equally, absorbed by the performative act, which makes it trembling and unstable; the real element of a revolution to come.

Such is the power of stories which matter more than history, as they foster energetic movements of people which can and should eventually provoke real change.

(4.3) Trembling institution³⁵⁰

During the summer of 2019, I spent much time with Paul B. Preciado—figuratively, as we weren't physically together. Actually, when I told him in a bookshop in Venice in May 2019 that we were supposed to meet and we never did, he penned a surprising inscription for me in *Terrore Anale (Anal Terror)*, which further deferred any material rendezvous. “Real encounters happen through books” is handwritten on my copy of his book. “Anal Terror,” a companion essay to the Spanish translation of Guy Hocquenghem’s *Homosexual Desire*, was first published in Italian as a standalone book. It ridicules the constructs of modern science that invented the gender categories in which we are still trapped today, by recuperating and questioning, among others, early scientific tropes describing women as fish and men as bicycles. These symptomatic paradigms unavoidably overdetermine understandings of production and reproduction to accompany the capitalist ideology at the basis of modern society. Preciado playfully asks: How can fish reproduce themselves with bicycles, if such was the dawn of a new civilisation?

Arts as a legal theatre

An obsession with the functional body drawn through the theories of Sigmund Freud—which marks the genesis of psychoanalysis’s great emphasis on physiology and Western medicine—is turned on its head in order to redirect the castration complex from the penis to the anus. The “male”—understood as an interconnected self-affirmation and popularisation of phallocentrism—has in effect been the real subject of the castration complex, of the anus. That is, the male is the impossibility of being fully open to pleasures and to experiencing sexuality in all its complexity. It is in this way that Preciado dismantles a binary construction, in the refusal to oversimplify human sexuality to such a minimised, functionalised degree. In the past two centuries, for governance reasons, narrow parameters have been established to lead us into normalisation through such institutionalised forms as the nuclear family. These forms have been contextualised through the unique economic model under which our bodies speak and are subjected to the architectural determination of capitalism.

How loud can we speak in such a context? How excessive can we be? How deep do we hide? How do we get the “right” job, the “right” salary, the “right” life in this milieu? Should we all today live in this sterile, nonsexualised, pixelated image? Or, to put it another way: Is this the society we want to be part of? Or are other forms of coming together possible? Can we tremble together? Can we learn subjective and institutional perspectives from first-hand experience? Is a deconstruction of the forms of private and public life conceivable? What about the establishment of other forms of openness and dialogue for reimagining a porous community that maintains its internal, undeterminable relations as a whole, within and beyond the financial determinations that society presets?

Calling on the arts to be a legal theatre for questioning what is given and to originate aesthetic and political desires that can resonate into the future under new conditions is what Preciado more recently staged with the Parliament of Bodies (POB).³⁵¹ The POB is a form of gathering in an art-institutional setting to challenge traditional and regulated forms of democratic politics that are otherwise connected only to citizenship and nationhood and that discard other forms of connectivity.

I first encountered such practices in Oslo through the work of FRANK³⁵²—a “trembling institution,” one whose feeble (read: non-institutionalised) presence disclosed and manifested discontinuities and apertures to devise a discourse for desires otherwise condemned by history to silence. Its unique form as an entity living between the private space of the household, of what is usually understood as intimate—what matters only among friends, family, and lovers—and the institutional setting of the arts, that is to say, what is allowed to become and is accepted as public, was a way of coming together that did not rest on commonplaces but on common grounds. Relationships were generated and woven together by sharing with others phantasmagorias, forms of affection and the possibility of resisting systemic truths. FRANK placed the form of the gathering (both a fully political and pre-political parliamentary form) into contemplation, learning and sharing to reinvest a locality with new imaginaries and poetics, and shedding light on unrecognised lives. A form whose watchwords were destined to be “opacity” and “orality.”³⁵³ If gender, desire, and sexuality—the centre of FRANK’s political claim—is “performing the trouble,” such claims of representing or of being represented by others are made to resist the univocal logics of industrialisation, capitalism, and governmentality.³⁵⁴

Beyond binary and coherent identities: “quakeful thinking”

I was registered as a male on my birth certificate, so I continue to live under the pronouns of he/him/his. I have “feminine” gestures, and on first meeting I am more often than not identified by others as gay. I have never had sex with “men,” and therefore, by exclusion, I am labelled as heterosexual. I have never found in this category, though, a true representation of myself, as it would mean accepting its current given meaning, as well as respecting its interconnected behaviours of conformity and subordinations of power.³⁵⁵

These coherent identities are politically constructed under an economic regime that impedes any proliferation beyond the binary frame.³⁵⁶ Language, instead of easing human contact, is the source of misunderstanding and even violence, as research in cognitive neuroscience has recently demonstrated. Language allows us to deny what our bodies are experiencing.³⁵⁷ Language is a form of vulnerability.³⁵⁸

Analysed from this perspective, we find a problem not only of representation³⁵⁹ but of how language as such affects the space of the “we,” of a prelinguistic encounter between individuals. A critical investigation of sexuality therefore requires an analysis of “the *effects* of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin.”³⁶⁰

The most standardised forms of sexuality (the bicycle and the fish) are icons for predicting movements and behaviour.³⁶¹ As such, “unstable” definitions are the designated enemy of the epistemic regime of presumptive heterosexuality under which we live. Language, in commonplaces—the spaces where our power of advocacy should be the strongest—is poor, inadequate, and standardised to make it coincide with what the norm wants us to enunciate. Moving across political and financial fields, our precarious labour goes hand in hand with our precarious words, which we can speak only in opposition, through practices of reappropriation.³⁶² Language not only reflects but also enacts the power relations in society.

Is not art's function, however, to propose language as shock, antidote, non-neutral, through which the problems of the community can be restated? Is it not where the articulation of a collective consciousness, trying to be, finds expression?

It was not until the FRANK platform became active in Oslo that I became aware of the possibility of articulating such a lack of perspectives related to sexuality. In their locality, FRANK's initiatives served to scatter processes for creating a common space for a collective subjectivity in search of these nomadic desires to find ground as part of a process of social conjunction, and to express affective and political solidarity that does not rely on conventional codes or marks of belonging. Through FRANK I came across the work of Catharine Hermine Kølle (1788–1859),³⁶³ as well as of Marie Høeg (1866–1949) and Bolette Berg (1872–1944), radical individuals who broke the continuity of history during their lifetimes and continue to maintain the potential to break that same continuity today. Kølle is the first known Norwegian woman to adventure on foot through Europe, from Norway to Italy, alone. She is described as a practical person, bringing with her only the essential: an umbrella and a gun for protection from animals, and materials to paint watercolours. Høeg was a photographer known for her commercial work, and perhaps less known, or maybe not at all, for portraying the private moments of her and her partner Bolette Berg's life. These historical figures express a nomadic desire through the practice of both their lives and their work; they create multiple directions beyond our present and our given genealogies and expose how bodies that should have been imprinted upon by history have forces and impulses with multiple directionalities and are nonconformist, precisely destroying a given history for the sake of linearity. They show that art is not polished and finished but rather an unregimented flow able to reach the collective unconscious. They practise a "quakeful thinking," making the other tremble and trembling with the other, to move away from historical dispossession and give way to the possible reparation of imaginaries.³⁶⁴

Safe space and counter-community

When the distinction between the individual and the collective has been blurred, when crowds are involved in automatic chains of conduct driven by proxy patterns and other avatars' behaviour, the need to find a community of proximity is an enormous and all-encompassing task. It provides long-term meaning and motivation in one's life, as well as fulfilling day-to-day life purposes. If you do not belong to the mainstream, then you *do* belong to a counter-community, in private and in public life; such is the coming community that stands against historical fallacies and questions what is "valorised," why, and for whom. It is a community that breaks the silence. It is an unorthodox family, one that comes together in the same house not through relations of blood, DNA, or imposed genealogical lineage, like a tree with roots and determined growth, but rather through a rhizomatic concatenation of belonging, of bodies converging on a path they share provisionally for a time. FRANK is the subject and object of political dissidence, of collective existence, of an enunciation that brings about self-consciousness to understand a collective unconscious, a "we" expressing light and darkness, self and other, solitude and solidarity; a chain of bodies transferring knowledge on behalf of the ones who cannot otherwise do it. They share a path for a time, trembling together.

I still vividly remember when, in 2012, word spread in town of a new "entity" in Oslo.³⁶⁵ Rumour had it that someone was opening their house every now and then and inviting people to join discussions, presentations, screenings, and their form-of-

life—which promised so much more than an artistic experience. And that is when, by actual word of mouth—probably because of my staunch non-Facebooker status—I got an address and a time, and I entered this time capsule a few blocks away from where I used to work. I climbed some flights of stairs into a Kafkaesque room, with chairs, a screen, and numerous escape corridors that reminded me more of a labyrinth than of any possible getaway. It was a sensorial experience I would not repeat again until the following year, when I was brought unknowingly to Ilya and Emilia Kabakov’s atelier in Moscow. That night, in Oslo, I sat in a trance in front of Los Angeles–based artist Wu Tsang’s captivating work *Wildness* (2012).

Wildness is an audiovisual portrait of Silver Platter, a long-running nightclub that has catered to the Latino LGBT communities of Los Angeles since the early 1960s. The bar itself becomes one of the main characters, capturing generational tensions and the peaks and valleys of the lives of individuals who are united by their forced marginalisation. Again we have a family that is not constituted by blood but has been pushed together under the same roof by outside forces. The film was recently released, and when speaking about it after the screening, Wu was overcome with emotion.

How could one not be strained? Are we not all looking for a safe space? One where we can be and rest for a moment, or for a long time? How could one not tremble together with them? Living in between, transiting to find recognition, their community, or a community, at least. I think that was my first encounter with FRANK, and ever since then, I have considered it an entity, a living substance that is more than people or its organisers, manifesting during these encounters as a séance. An event. An apparition.

I returned to several of these apparitions throughout the years to witness erotic tapestries, images of lives long gone yet so close to us, brought back from the archives, and the power of words and images coming together in this coming community.

Trembling institutions

FRANK is a tremulous, or to put it better, a *trembling* institution, one that disorients prescribed paradigms, creating the possibility of arguing together for a necessary counter-community of desire and sexuality. Under the mainstream processes of domestication and containment, life would be a walking nightmare without deconstructing facts and replacing them with other imaginaries, a legitimate search for a continuous decomposition of unstable positions. To make such a multiplicity of stories reach the surface, we are tasked with acting on a collective memory, with reconstituting forms of dispossession and injury—physical as well as mental. An imaginative reconstruction needs subjective and intuitive memories that are anchored to trembling institutions like FRANK, whose lifespans are just a few moments or a few years. It is a journeying through time and space. It is an exploration reaching for the multiplicity in our bodies, awaiting awakening. It is through such trembling institutions that new territories are reached and covered, and that the possibility for new political claims is created.

FRANK prepared the ground in Oslo for a quakeful thinking regarding sexuality and desire, with the potential to induce political and civic actions and anticipating a needed reparation of our imaginaries—changing and exchanging among ourselves by means of friction and being with the other. Thoughts need to tremble to not repeat

systemic truths. To tell stories, our stories. A trembling institution is one that resonates with both individuals and institutions, a profusion retranslating the knotted and passionate nature of our collective experience. A new grammar of affects to be externalised. Space is left open once this trembling institution ceases to be, but in this interregnum, a great variety of regenerative symptoms appear.³⁶⁶

Soft curating

There are many fundamental issues that FRANK posed as a unique institution of the sort, questioning the unspoken gender binary character that we encounter in the exhibition space. Though the patriarchy of the white cube is self-evident, we continue to pay homage to the same genealogy of art history and consequently of curating, with geniuses in both spheres. The ambition to be unapologetically speaking from a perspective bringing gender at the center of the preoccupation of the visual realm served as a powerful motor, not only as an artistic gesture but as a curatorial gesture demanding that the very structures of exhibiting change. My proximity and allegiance to FRANK were fundamental to think what a coming community may mean as a curator to formulate demands and imaginaries when creating other institutional structures beyond the ones we know. It helped me define curatorial power and how space for knowledge production can create financial and other conditions of alliance with existing institutions, maintaining institutions porous and independent yet ready to meet and touch each other's thoughts. They show a form of soft (or tremulous) curating, where curating actively produces and makes available archives of knowledge otherwise resting only in informal networks and not breaking the norm dictated by mainstream culture. FRANK unleashed for me the possibility of curating to bear witness to networks of independent thought and mobilising a new form of knowledge to come to the surface. Art and life merge in a joint struggle for diversity to survive, away from a one-dimensional thought and aesthetical representation.

(4.4) Gender, I'm in trouble³⁶⁷

Studying the genealogy and historicity of gender should be a mandatory step for scholars and students, of any age, who are convinced that the first task on humanity's agenda is emancipation from and finding alternatives to capitalist society. Such claims were prominent among Marxist intellectuals in the 1960s and 1970s as they sought to uncover untouched ground of exploitation and resistance, by revising claims of why and how gender categories had become valuable to the political economy, and what these categories had really been directed towards. Why shit, the anus, perversion, and polymorphism related to the body and sexuality—elements not serving reproduction, which under capitalism means not serving reproduction of the labour force for the market—were secluded and hidden, together with death, in the reign of moral evil. In order to rethink the ethics of social change leading to different congregations of communities or societies, one cannot but discuss the body as the primary site leading to such a change. That is to say, one cannot underestimate the influence that a motivated notion of “normal” sexuality, with its stereotyped gender impositions and divisions, has had on specific forms of economic governance and the consequent imparting of regulatory frameworks upon bodies under customs of educational systems supported by alleged scientific claims.

The space of appearance and the right to appear

When I met Harald & Louis in October 2019, they had only recently graduated from the academy, and they were genuinely worried about gender stereotypes continuing to be cast upon the students' body (an individualisation working both on the student body as a whole and on the singular body of each individual student). They claimed that there was no reason in dance, for instance, for the body to be gendered, for enduring the imposition of such biological divisions, coming from the Enlightenment and continuing on into the everyday lives of students today, not only in the way their bodies were trained, modelled, but also in the way their bodies were *thought*, in order to almost and literally fulfil a representational task of society that they thought they would have escaped by entering a free space of appearance such as that of academia—a space for research which should not be monist or unitarian. The “space of appearance,” a term coined by philosopher Hannah Arendt, is, according to her, created anew wherever individuals gather together politically. It is the space of the *polis*, where political decisions are being made by an encounter among equals.³⁶⁸ Not all social spaces can be classified as spaces of appearance. One could argue that in certain corners of the internet and among certain sexual subcultures, invisibility shapes subjectivity and enables various forms of power; some forms of power depend mostly on inequalities in the distribution of certain resources rather than on the visibility of those who either exercise power or are subjected to it. Still, appearance occurs in a great number of the spaces where the activity we normally call “politics” takes place—for example, within state institutions, at workplaces, and behind street barricades. As this space of appearance is highly fragile and exists only when actualised through the performance of deeds or the utterance of words, wherever people assemble, it is potentially always there, Arendt argues. Gender theorist Judith Butler later questioned and complexified such a claim about the space of appearance—that is, being democratic and sufficient to create equality—through introducing the idea of the right to appear, because Arendt's formulation assumes that such space is always there and publicly accessible, meaning everyone is already equal. Not everyone has equal rights, especially when it comes to the right to appear (one could think about citizenship as the most obvious example). Butler argues that, instead, our current systems determine how certain lives are deemed worth living,

while others are not; such mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion from such a space are not “natural,” as we are made to believe, but rather they are determined by a lack of applicability of rights, by a lack of proper systemic recognition of a right to have rights which is universal and not contextual. She shows us the other side of the coin to reveal how it is the very system of public accessibility that denies the equality of positions. Such a system of unrecognition is equally gender based, and makes it so that certain lives are more vulnerable than others—precarious lives that at times encounter precarious genders.³⁶⁹ If the academy is a space whose function is to generate a community of memory, both to open up and to preserve the words and deeds of a *polis*, of its citizens, from oblivion and the ravages of time, to leave a testament for future generations, is not its task also to create the utopic—what we long for but have not yet reached—to aspire, to create the structures to serve equal rights, including the right to the image? Why, then, are some bodies encapsulated within a “male” label, Harald & Louis pondered, and why do they remain a structural support for a labelled “female” body—one presupposed to be strong, the other delicate, one masculine, the other feminine, one strong and virile, the other vulnerable—without the possibility for the two to be confounded or simply intertwined, instead associated with evolutionist organic principles and biological claims, which, forcibly marked on a student card (similar to a passport in replicating structures of surveillance and power), stand as an economic and governance determination as to which subjectivity one can be? The frustration and violence they felt in submitting their bodies to these ongoing labels, replicated through an educational system promising a free space for thought, and their uncertainty about what possibilities existed to remove the gendered body from such a constitution of the self, was still one of the main ongoing struggles they had with academia, which, in turn, they thought—with great fear—they were likely to bring into the outside world as professional choreographers and dancers. Should not instead such change start from the academy, as the space of the thinkable and possible (which in turn means a space where one can think the unthinkable and the impossible, the utopic, the equal)? And that is what this text is perhaps about: Should we not further analyse the institutions we create, their borders and thresholds, and how they belong not only to the sphere of thought but also to the sphere of politics, effecting deeds and actions, the right to look, the right to the image and to image, the sphere of aesthetics—in short, a world of perception heavily affecting in turn the space of appearance, “where I appear to others as others appear to me,” not merely like other living or inanimate things, but, in the words of Arendt, explicitly?³⁷⁰

A reclaimed presence against a determinist biological appearance

As a cultural producer not specialised in dance, I was quite surprised to be called into such a conversation by Harald & Louis. I came to understand only later their silent claim. Dance certainly exacerbates something that perhaps is liquefied in other visual art forms (most often such an aspect is cast in a higher degree of invisibility, in the work itself; thus, in fields other than dance, one’s body does not immediately encounter gendered prejudice when it enters through the academy’s institutional doors). The effect of this liquefaction is that, in most visual arts fields, we cannot claim gender divisions as something immediately visible and discriminatory (or incriminatory: accusing, charging, calling to account with regard to a cause), as the site of ideological thinking about which we are not immediately conscious—yet not meaning that it is in fact less present or less normalised. A residue in the space of academia, Harald & Louis identify that, though one does not need to discuss it every time one enters a room, one is immediately divided and identified on the basis of how

one will biologically perform (yes, for the possible, in the future tense) based on one's immediate biological appearance—not a reclaimed presence (“explicitly,” for Arendt) but rather a prejudicial narrative. I do not come together with others in an act of speech and action to gain a subjectivity. I am not performing. I am being choreographed. This is an act of interpellation which is at once incriminatory and discriminatory, because it expresses something more formal and more grave: it conveys a destination or a goal of motion determined not by one's will to perform, not by a coming as an equal into a space of appearance, but rather by someone else who has decided a priori not only who am I and what I represent, but also my future—that is, how my subjectivity will perform—based solely on how my body is read. (In following such a formulation, one could go as far as to say “my body” is considered, in such an instance, a public property, in the sense of “publicly labelled for a publicly determined use.”) There is no construction of a subject if I am not shaping the perception of myself as an equal with others.

Unitarian and totalitarian: The separation created by the autonomous work

In the extended art field, we have been taught to look at the work first, to its aesthetic claim, separated from the artist that is the producer of its meaning (Immanuel Kant).³⁷¹ The artwork, the *oeuvre*, should speak for itself, have an end in itself. What surrounds the *oeuvre*, if the *oeuvre* is not autonomous, is considered at times not only superfluous but a failure of the work itself. It is in this separation between the artist (the human) and the artwork (the object), in this ideological make-believe independent life of one from the other, that a false pretence is built for the work to appear genderless and classless, universal; yet in this assumption and reprojection onto the work, there is an intrinsic impediment to raising a critique on gender politics. It is in this purported abstraction that gender makes its utmost incriminatory and unconscious mark. As philosopher Michel Foucault has remarked, “geometry alone must be taught in oligarchies, since it demonstrates the proportions within inequality.”³⁷² Because if we were to rethink such a claim from education, such a division within the *oeuvre*'s autonomy (including from the artist), upon seeking and establishing its situated perspective (the one coming from the producer), would cause us to unveil and oblige us to uncover a whole biography behind the work itself: the genealogy of its author(s) as a constitutive part of the work that is, on many levels and at the same time in its particular and universal claims, situatedness. At once we would understand that no separation really exists between the two, the *oeuvre* and the producer, one being a higher reflection of the other and their common will, only to create further degrees of readability and transcendentality, but grounding us in a somewhere, where that somewhere, that particular view, is a constitutive part of what I'm looking at: at how someone is looking at the world, and at what is being claimed, that is, speech and action in the space of appearance. We would gain some form of equality because I would have a consciousness of the other's perspective. The work is the centre of such a politically motivated gathering, and of struggles for equality. This has also been an important struggle of feminist strategies in reclaiming a different materiality and autonomy outside and within the art world, to address how gender politics risk being frozen in universalist claims within the white cube's predicament, granting a past tense to the artwork and its current validity, and at the same time legitimising struggles in the past while preventing the recognition of inequity as a condition in the present.³⁷³ Impeding the ability to continue to reflect on why and how the artwork arrives into a container, to project within it a popularised and universal life—the structures of power behind which are ongoing sites of negotiation. Why are some artworks brought inside a space and provided time and context for

reflection, while others are cut out, abandoned to a more precarious life? These may seem to be minor issues if one thinks about such positions not affecting other spaces of appearance, the *polis*. That is, if one does not see such a space of representation as having real effects outside the space of the academy or the particular educational institution. And it is for this reason one should ask: Is such a space of appearance only possible for non-living beings (the object) or for the temporarily performed, or are certain bodies (material and immaterial) entering and being granted citizenship as an indelible right—some artefacts gaining the right to speak and the right to appear—while others remain precarious bodies, becoming lives which are not grievable? For Butler, the right to have rights is one that depends on no existing particular political organisation or institution. Its legitimacy is exercised every time people come together. Such a right predates and precedes any political institution that might codify or seek to guarantee that right, and at the same time it is derived from no natural set of laws. That right comes into being when it is exerted by those who act in concert, in alliance.³⁷⁴ Those who are excluded from existing political polities, who belong to no nation state or other contemporary state formation, may be deemed unreal only by those who seek to monopolise the terms of reality. And yet even after the public sphere has been defined through their exclusion, they continue to act and exist whether they are banned to precarity or left out through systemic negligence. Does not this representational space, the right to have rights, start from here, from the very place where we learn about the thinkable and the possible (and with it the unthinkable and the impossible, the utopia of equality, of education), from the container, from the educational structure that should provide an idea of the right to have rights, independently from citizenship, implied in the concerted action of acting together? If one looks at academia through these lenses, one can easily see how gender roles are a constitutive part of the very institutional choreography of education, in the humanities as much as in the scientific fields, because before one even learns about form, one is captured by its divisive container, whereas behaviour is segregated and propagated as departing from biological constrictions reinforced by contended Darwinian truths of evolutionary reproducibility (the arts have their own Darwinian truths). Representation continues to be dual and polarised at best, if not simply the assumption of one single dominating gaze and point of view—unitarian and totalitarian, biologically determined.

Shame, witnessing and the “I:” Production and reproduction of the norm

I am not speaking in this context as an expert of dance, but as a witness of the societal partitions built around a gendered identity and body normativity that foster ideas of function constructed around, in my case, a penis, as an allegedly active reproductive machine, interconnected to a shame for its malfunctioning if it does not fulfil its ultimate evolutionist credo—whose only aspiration in the age of capital is the systematic breeding of a nuclear family: the one and only accepted, smallest working atom of a Westernised view of a globalised world and society. Under the idea of a global condition, we are made to believe there is one world, one paradigm and one systemic law. Shame, in my educational world, as apprehended from the age of four, when I moved to Southern Italy with its heavily patriarchal and immovable divisions casting inescapable shadows—a feeling reinforced through religious injunctions—made it clear that no escapades were ever going to be possible, not even regarding ideas of an afterlife, and especially not in a small society whose centuries of exploitative powers reproduced no other but the pauperism of the poverty of experience (guided by a domineering middle class). Such a ruling petite bourgeoisie did not necessarily take down or open up existing barriers following the feudalist

reach that came from the city aristocrats in the post-war period, but only cemented its structures by delaying a future redistribution of the wealth of experience—something that could be achieved only by following the unrooting of ancient practices and traditions, including the final eradication of the world of magic with its witches and warlocks under the imperative to modernise (meaning “normalise”), through reproductive machines regulated by the new impending state apparatus, centralised in the North and slowly de-plebeicising the South by deeming it retrograde (read: “unindustrialised”).

Gendering has been therefore key in projecting, reproducing, and maintaining such a class system, and has operated as a functional machine whereby social mobility is to be sought or achieved only if fitting the new standards of the family nucleus, with smaller and larger loans and so on and so forth, in a series of policies reinforcing one ideology and assimilations—of language, habits, traditions, and even memories (or memorabilia, the arts). Education primarily served such molecular systems; it was firstly instrumental in creating an idea of a nation. These are the historical processes whose formation one only suddenly understands, but where antagonism in the face of them is still not always thinkable as a social demand or right, but only as an individual choice at best, or at the cost of exile—meaning leaving your immediate society behind—at worst. The latter is not only my migratory choice, but a more widespread phenomenon proved by the depopulation of small- and medium-sized towns, not only in Southern Italy but just as much in the non-urban centres of the rest of continental Europe. The role of reproductive work in demarcating gendered social spheres (public and private: such a division is still at work), together with the economic definitions of productivity and unproductivity transferred to biological conditions, as such valued as market forms according to biological assignations institutionalised under the state’s control, is part of banning the desiring body. The biologically based criminalisation of our bodies is part of a hidden social contract, part of the untold. Focus on your penis and not your anus. Do not have sex, or otherwise maintain high sexual desire for the sole purpose of reproduction; be virile and monogamous; refuse other forms of sexuality; do not masturbate; do not acknowledge other forms of desire; do not go against the reproductive self of “nature,” of what is “natural” (the unnatural belonging to the realm of the laughable, most often presented as the monstrous). As if nature’s only purpose is reproducing itself; as if nature, which we have learned to separate from culture, is aimed only at self-preservation through simple reproduction. This still remains to a certain extent the belief of an ideological scientific view. Such is the setting around a body treated as public property, turning it into a commodity serving the interest of a higher aim—that is, to succumb to the capitalist modes of production. The body cannot be used for anything other than an alleged origin reconducted to a presumed Mother Nature. In fact, we have learned that there are only families, and families constituted by fathers and mothers, and nothing else in between. The in-betweenness is unfit, a remainder, that which does not fit into what is supposed to be productive.

Primitive accumulation: Degrading genders for the sake of capital

Drawing from Karl Marx, feminist scholar Silvia Federici has spoken about a fundamental rule allowing such a gendered exploitation to be possible—that is, primitive accumulation—upon which capitalism designed a violent division of bodies according to their gendered assignations. Federici reconducts the formation of capital from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries as being gendered on a central axis of social organisation and control, demonstrating how violence against women, for

instance, is congenital to capitalism's formulation. A return of the most violent aspects of primitive accumulation—which has accompanied every phase of capitalist globalisation, including the present one—demonstrates that the degradation of gender is a necessary condition for the existence of capitalism in all times.³⁷⁵

Something is unavoidably missing: bodies coming together in alliance; bodies that have nothing to share except being together. When bodies come together, they bring alliance beyond representation, beyond politics, beyond other forms of determined aggregation, simply demanding space for a different mode of being, a different kind of society—a society less based on segregated structures, one standing for love, solidarity—and to occupy space and time outside any immanent need, citizenship without the constriction of land. The question is, therefore, how can we reach a space of equality under these given conditions? How can we move from repressive technologies of power to recognising more mobile forms of interdependency connecting varied bodies and their reciprocal need for subsistence, maintenance, and life in general? How might it be possible to formulate equality on the basis of such relations that define our enduring social existence as living creatures? How can we make a collective claim on society through which we could imagine freedom and justice? How might it be possible to reclaim a different presence for bodies and objects that supports a space of appearance, a space for not assimilating, not being subsumed, not being consumed and discarded before our bodies awaken a conscious subjectivity?

Reclaiming visibility in the space of appearance

I think that is the question behind Harald & Louis's piece *Shine Utopians*, which was presented, following our initial discussions, in November 2019 at Dansens Hus in Oslo, where they gathered a number of bodies in a place, to possibly gain a space of appearance, literally, by coming together and becoming visible. The stripped-down theatre revealed its maintenance structure in full, whereby windows regained their role as transparent membranes to the outside; the stage returned to being a floor; and no distinction was made between the audience, the performers, or the people charged with the theatre's upkeep and providing food and beverage to performers and audience alike. Finally, a branching platform invited the display of the body of the audience as a living object, as the central act on stage equal to the act itself. Initially Harald & Louis had not wanted to schedule a time for the performance but rather to simply take over the theatre space for the overall period allotted to them, a month or so, and for the performance to be ongoing, open to constant visitation, so that there would be no rehearsal and no show, but instead the piece, the oeuvre, would be in a sort of perennial preparation, inviting over and over, or over and again, bodies to come in, to congregate, to join a molecular movement, in an attempt to find both synergy as well as forms of aggression and antagonism.

Upon entering *Shining Utopians*, one found that the usually dark cube of the ready-for-the-magic-to-happen theatre space was stripped bare (in direct opposition to its usual appearance): pure light. Imaging is not created in darkness, but by the persistence of movement on the retina; an aggregation of colour produced by body movement. Your untrained body lays down, stands, sits. Nothing is about to come; everything is already there. You are part of an aggregation from beginning to end. You are intertwined into the conjoinedness, within which you need to recognise that you are performing, that you have an active role, even if simply standing still or sitting. You become aware of your own potentiality, because usually you are simply

called in to testify, in darkness, to the event that is about to happen. Such is the role of the spectator. Standing in a grey zone. I am here, but I am not participating. Here, as performers shape themselves into different aggregations, as they push themselves to find new forms of being together without exhausting themselves; you are not the object, but you are a participating subject. You are a body in an entangled multispecies future. I figured, during the performance, that if I ever were to witness paradise by following the Christian tenets imposed on me—one of the unfortunate utopias of equality—I would see something similar. Pure light, subtle and unexpected movements; nothing happening, yet something constantly changing; as in Dante's vision, one follows an arresting light, and one moves together with other bodies though standing still, equidistant.

Body, member, the head, corporation: The gendered corporeal retransferred to institutional functioning

When I started looking into the history of dance, and the formation of its institutions, I found, unsurprisingly, that its dictates come from Louis XIV. The Sun King established the Académie Royale de Danse in Paris in March 1661, the first of many royal academies later founded throughout Europe, in order to "improve" artistic standards. The story goes that thirteen experts met regularly to deliberate, to be emulated, and to test and teach skills, while being encouraged to invent a notation system that codified positions of feet, arms, and the body. Penalties were introduced if procedures were not followed, and fines were given to practitioners to prevent attempts at deviations from the academy's professional standards. The thirteen academicians were the legislators as well as the adjudicators of their own system. The king required that they pass aesthetic judgment upon every weekly choreographed dance, both social and theatrical, before it could be either taught or performed in Paris or in the suburbs. This extraordinary provision, apparently unique in the history of dance, would appear to reflect an attempted censorship—not necessarily of content, but of form alone, leading theoreticians to read into these encoded questions a control over pleasure, representation, and accessibility.³⁷⁶ By studying this period during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we can also learn that few states were as obsessed as France with the body, to the point that body metaphors entered the general language and the political discourse. "Corporation," "body," "head," and "member" all came to be prolifically used in legislation, public speeches, and more. Dance similarly occupied a large role at Versailles. Everyone danced. This was part of a "technique of power," attests Foucault, one of the scholars of the period, as part of, in his words, "disciplining bodies." What is more obscure, apparently, is Louis XIV's reasoning for performing regularly between 1651 and 1668 as an androgynous figure. As dance represented order, as well as power over representation, the body of the king stood for its terrain and divine duality, with the individual and society merging together within such a figure, where the prosperity of the person reflected the prosperity of the nation and, correspondingly, "his" and its fertility. Dance and its high performativity should not be considered a marginal space of entertainment but clearly a space of politics, where politics are played, in the space of representation. For representation to work as power, the visible should be readable and should, reciprocally, be read as an image.³⁷⁷

Paraphrasing Mark Franko, a "war" of positions was at stake with the establishment of the Académie Royale de Danse. Franko is concerned with the intrinsic royal ostracism of burlesque ballets, a form of dance in court ballet popular in the 1620s that was openly political and disruptive of traditions. Here bodies did not move

geometrically according to patterns and proportions or follow symbols of social stability and political harmony; instead, they engaged in play, were open to chance. Whereas choreography is a plan, performance is unpredictable. Franko addresses how burlesque ballets contested—even put at stake—monarchical power by questioning its ordered representation. For him, the *letters patent* coming to dictate the newly established academy of dance addressed how people should be trained and how they should move. This educational diktat was, for Franko, a measure meant to prevent the unsettling return of burlesque performance. It is both aesthetic and ideological power.³⁷⁸ Power exists only as a representation. Cross-dressing was a regular feature of burlesque ballets. They were self-conscious, structurally open-ended, and politically allusive and, as such, disrupted prior court ballet traditions, all of which had been characterised by composite spectacle. Yet the burlesque moment was short-lived. At the time of Louis XIV, there were no longer any obviously burlesque ballets. So, one could speculate that even when Louis XIV performed a cross-dressed role, he may have done so at the intersection of several appropriations. He was not subverting stereotypes but, in reality, only emphasising the self-sufficiency of the king's body, its absolutism. There is an enormous difference in cross-dressing as a way of examining gender constructs as a result of religious and moral teachings, versus cross-dressing in sharp contraposition to defined attributes assigned to gender conformation based on the contemporaneous medical knowledge and understanding of physiology, versus cross-dressing based on transgressing codes of food consumption that conform to the societal prescriptions of the masculine and the feminine paradigms studied elsewhere.³⁷⁹ Here the body politics impersonated by the king are still reproductive. He stands on his own intransigently self-sufficient. He pretends he does not need any other. He pretends he never depended upon parents, relations, and social institutions to prevail and thrive. He pretends he does not depend on sexuality, sustenance, or tangible and intangible support structures for a liveable life. He pretends his social function is cast and preemptively independent of society. Such is the fiction we have been taught to believe and leave unquestioned through the sphere of representation.

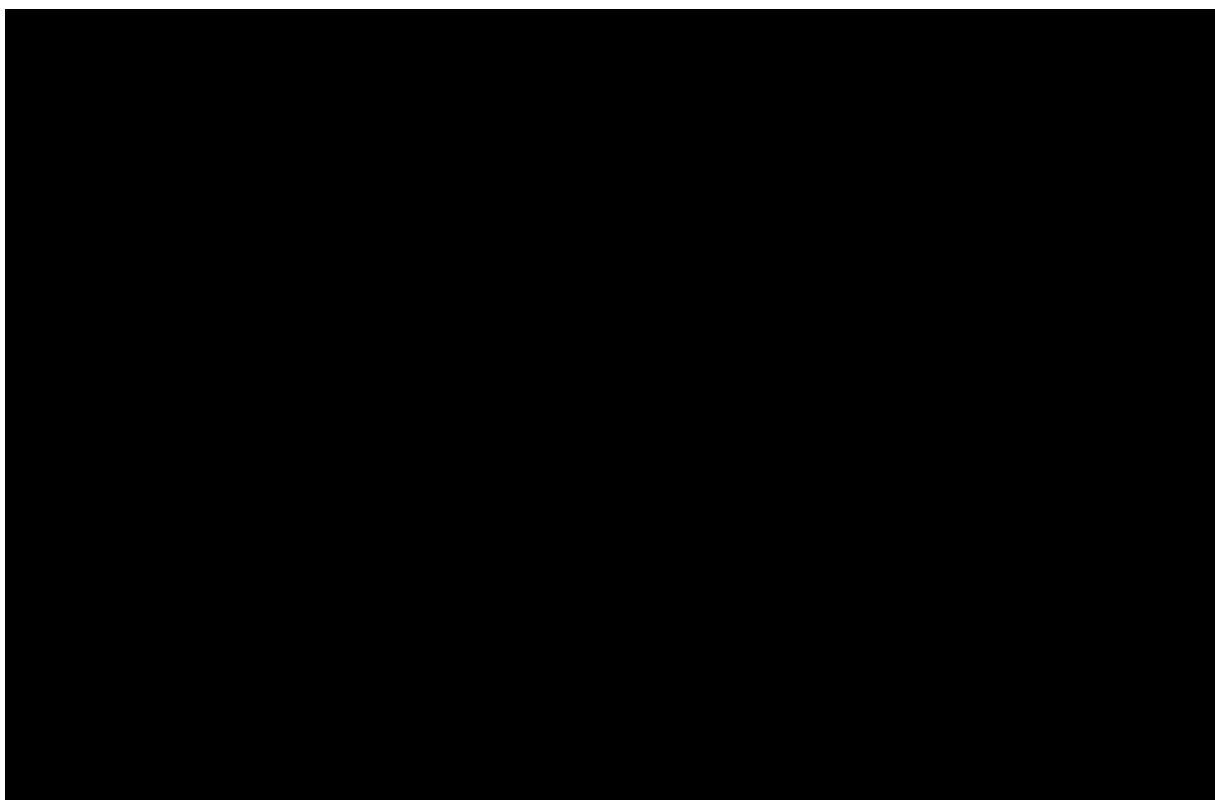
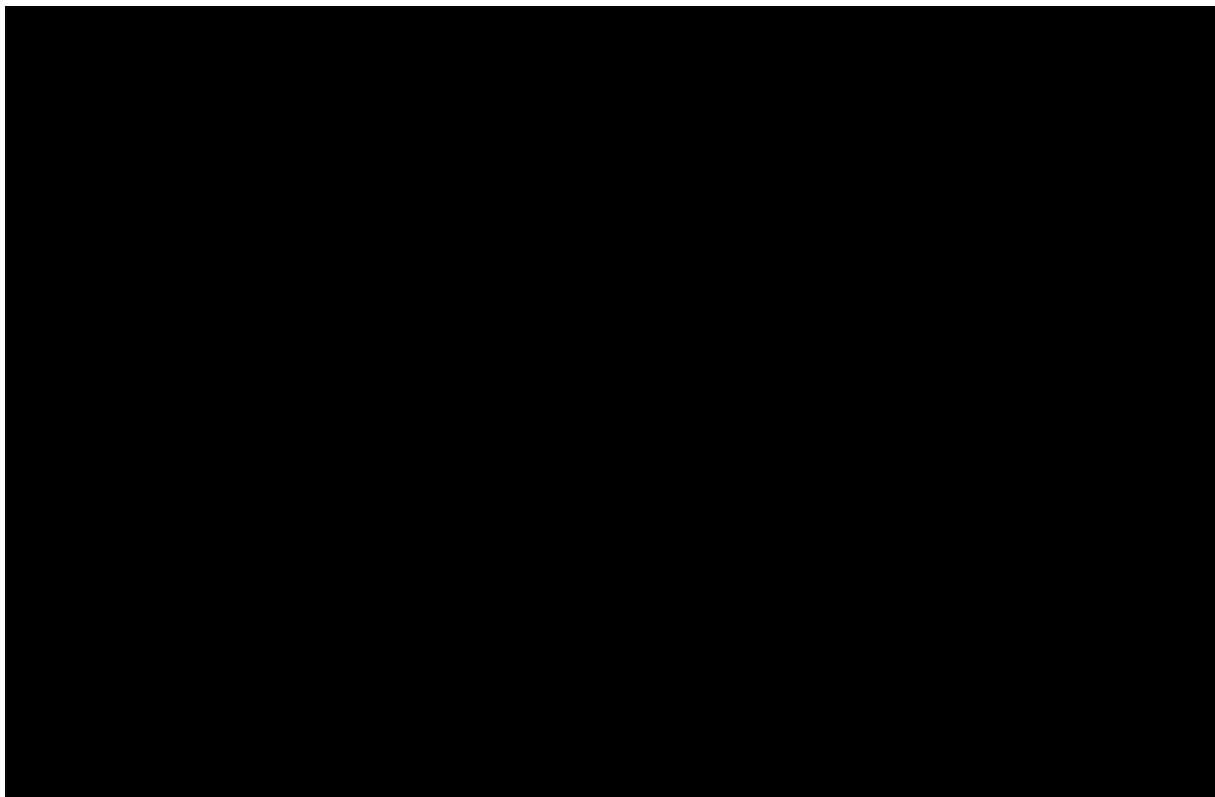
Urban space and choreography as *natural* spatial organisations

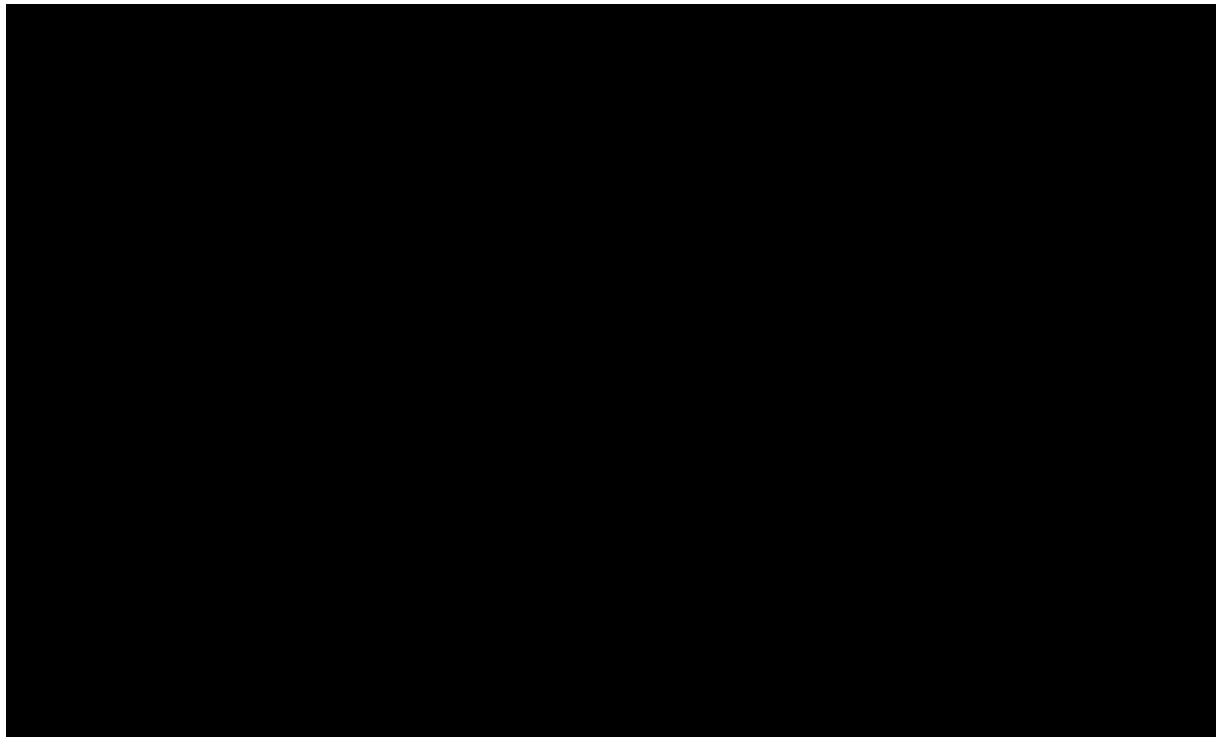
Of course, we have also come to know that the revolutionary republicans despised these monarchical rites and abolished them, though they created new rituals in which bodies played just as important a role. How state power inscribed itself onto the body of the new national subjects through performance, ritual, and text forms and gives shape to a genealogy and legacy of our contemporary body politics, in which such mechanisms continue to be at play. Within the arts, ideas of the public sphere converge in such an unresolved category. Accessibility to the arts for all is today thought to be a given, at times because institutions are publicly funded, or self-define themselves as public, or because entry is given in exchange for a small fee. However, in the arts, as in the sphere of politics, the public sphere can emerge only under certain conditions. For Arendt, there is no space for freedom if we do not create the democratic conditions for experiencing freedom. Freedom of the mind is an illusion for her, revealing a totalitarian state unleashing itself over bodies. That space of freedom needs to be built.³⁸⁰ If, as we have seen, dance functioned, and still continues to do so, as part of the organisation of a public sphere of representation, we should be able to analyse how it can open and make space, and structure support for what is cut out, what is unacknowledged. Exclusion from such a public sphere is justified and “naturalised” through a social space of representation presented as a substantial unity that must be protected from conflict. This was the take of Louis XIV,

which continues to reach us, diluted, in our own times. Performance, as Harald & Louis demonstrate, is more intrinsically “burlesque” in the sense of tactical confrontation, approximation, and irony towards “naturalised” choreography. Like urban space, choreography still pursues a spatial organisation presented as the *natural* product of the biological, social, or technological order of an apparently “organic” (though unitary) society. It is exactly these concepts of *natural*, biological, social, and evolutionary modernities that are in need of being deconstructed as affecting our understanding of individuals—only functional to produce a marginality, of what does not fit into these constructed categories, where some lives become grievable and some others remain ungrievable. The asymmetry and proliferation of differences in advanced industrial societies magnifies a surplus of meaning of the social—that there exists something more in such a pretended unity—thus making it difficult to attempt to fix these differences as just moments of a stable structure. Situations of antagonism inevitably develop in society when the presence of others makes one not be completely oneself. Antagonisms are not internal but external, because of society’s impossibility of constituting itself as one single self; otherwise, that single self would be absolutism. As it becomes clear—because everything penetrates its own limits, and prevents it from becoming an objective reality—a society should never be one, a unity. And it is here that we have the possibility to keep a struggle for a more equitable society alive. If dance functions as part of organising a public sphere, consequently it contributes to keeping open such positions. Equality is thus a feature of social relations whose articulation depends on an increasingly avowed interdependency, of letting go of the societal body as a “unity,” to instead understand boundaries as relational.

The bare space

Harald & Louis curated and presented a theatrical space stripped of its spectacular constructions. *Shine Utopians* opens up the possibility of beginning to think again of institutions as a bare space, a space of potential, a space where we can deal with the unknown, more than cement the known. A space for learning new tactics for training—to untrain more than to train the body. This is why, in Harald & Louis’s piece, simple gestures repeated over and over again find new concatenations of meaning. They hint at the potential of our bodies as molecular transitions of form, meaning, and encounter, in constant movement, pushing determined boundaries. A cultural determination is broken apart, by re-engaging these bodies in collective and individual movements. By performing collective movements, the trained body provokes the untrained body, the educated body demands a negotiation. Antagonism. Uneasiness. They invite us to rethink the ethics of gestures through constantly reidentifying the borders of the body. Not only is the body of the dancer put in question, but also the body of the institution. The dancer’s body as well as the institutional body are in their potentiality, that is, in their inoperative mode; they do not long to produce only the perfect gesture, but instead show what gestures in an assembly can lead to. A revolutionary potential is embedded in these orgiastic bodies, whose lustful demands are together put forward for an audience ready to participate. A question thus arises effortlessly: Can freedom and equality be taught?





Harald Beharie & Louis Schou-Hansen, *Shine Utopians*, Dansens hus, Oslo, 7–10 November 2019. Photo: Thale Hendnes.

(4.5) What new internationalism?³⁸¹

I close this chapter by opening the floor to further analysis for “unstable institutionality,”³⁸² which I’ll retread in the conclusions. In the various typologies of curatorial functions, it is worth studying the biennale curator, endowed with a higher degree of autonomy. This relatively irregular, unstable figure is not restricted to a specific tradition and negotiates a value system outside traditionally established ideological and economic pressures. New kinds of events and curating emerge. The practice of biennale curating, especially after the end of the Cold War period, not only escapes traditional notions of curating but creates new domains of thought. To delve into the argument, I will make a few points regarding the Venice Biennale, an event I have been engaging in for at least the past ten years in different capacities.³⁸³ It is not only because of my personal engagement, though, that I write about the Venice Biennale, but because, as I’ll address further during the course of my argument, the Venice Biennale seems particularly relevant when speaking about narratives ensuing from national ideologies, within and outside national borders. The Venice Biennale is probably the only art event in the world that is still based on national representation, and therefore it can truly be said that it aims to be inter/national from a historical perspective while retaining the modernist concern of building a space of negotiation between specific nations. Rather than commenting on the world at large, I want to talk about the formation of the idea of international as a word with wider political reverberations, specific affects and effects.

The history of the Venice Biennale is an important reference point when thinking about how the dynamics of the world were construed in the European landscape of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with sovereign countries, their supposed independence, interdependence, hierarchies, alliances, dominances, betrayals, and conspiracies, the taking shape of a certain formation of new Western concepts of citizenship, migration, borders, cultural elites, their movements across territories and communities, markets, tourism, education—all matters that directly and indirectly started with terms such as “internationalism.”

In the case of the Venice Biennale, “internationalism” points backwards towards London’s Great Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations in 1851 (it is important to provide its name in full), the first international world fair, which set the standard for Britain’s industrial production and design in both an artistic and scientific sense. Visited by over six million people, the exhibition was integral to the popularising of spectacular events for large crowds, and in setting the pace for greater modernity to enter every aspect of human life, from the texture of the cityscape through the proto-functional architecture of the Crystal Palace, to a new abstraction in interiors by proposing a harmony of colours and technology of patterns. In the wake of the Industrial Revolution and with the rise of capitalism, the exhibition publicised itself as a celebration of commercial liberalism and free trade among nations, promoting the British political and social model, as well as progress through technology, machinery, urbanisation, and scientific discovery. By demonstrating the East India Company’s exploitation of the wealth of the empire in terms of the raw materials that it was unable to produce itself, it unwittingly admitted to Britain’s dependence on other lands.

I am looking backwards at this exhibition instead of forwards, because these events allow one to re-examine the very meaning of “internationalism.” The arrival of “international” as a new English word came in 1789, when Jeremy Bentham used it in

the field of law to define how the bourgeoisie could move capital across borders, a mercantile preoccupation.

I think it is important to retrace these lines connecting Venice back to London, and then forwards towards an international modernism that passed through Germany, and then moved on to New York, because such change would not have been possible from within the arts alone. It needs to be considered within a larger ambition of the time: to redesign the world according to the modernist paradigm that would outline, embrace, and project an image of progress, a concept that was in itself in formation, and in need of dissemination.

Then we could ask, what kind of space for internationalisation does the International Art Exhibition of the City of Venice open when it replicates the machinery of a “world marvel”?

It was not the first time that Venice had attempted to reinvent itself and attract the attention of the “world.” The events that took place in Venice at the end of the nineteenth century, of which the Biennale was to be the most successful of all, were set in place as a reminder of the cosmopolitan gaiety for which the city was once famous. At the pinnacle of its prosperity in the mid-fifteenth century, the cosmopolitan character of Venice was pronounced in all aspects of life, with large Greek, Armenian, Muslim, Turkish, and African populations within the city, and with Jewish communities and other groups who were persecuted elsewhere finding refuge and work there. Over 3,000 merchant ships were trading, and many of them could have been easily converted into warships or for military transport; a reserve of up to one hundred war galleys was harboured in the Arsenal—nowadays one of the two main exhibition venues of the Biennale. But when the city lost dominion over the Adriatic Sea, Venice changed tack and began conquering Europe with charm. The city became a playground for Europe’s upper crust. Venetian art was incredibly daring, bringing sensuous colour and sly social commentary even to religious subjects. Nunneries in Venice held soirées rivalling those in the casinos, and the Carnival lasted for up to three months. The illegitimate daughters of Venetian nobles were trained as musicians by the likes of Antonio Vivaldi, and Venetian courtesans were widely admired tastemakers. By the end of the sixteenth century and onwards into the eighteenth, Venice was known across Europe for its irresistibly catchy music and for its thousands of registered sex workers.

In order to understand the extent of the worldly project embarked upon by Venice in 1895, it is important to throw light on the context of Italy at the end of the nineteenth century.³⁸⁴

Firstly, one has to acknowledge that, from its very beginning, the Italian nationalist movement had dreamed about Italy joining the modernised world powers. In the North, extensive industrialisation and the building of a modern infrastructure was well underway by the 1890s. Alpine railway lines connected Italy to the French, German, and Austrian rail systems. Considerable investment was pouring into businesses from Germany, Britain, France, and other countries. Subsequently, the Italian state decided to help initiate heavy industry such as car factories, steelworks, and shipbuilding.

Secondly, it is essential to look at the internal demographics of the country's unification a few decades earlier, when the capitals had been centralised from the South to the North, as I alluded already in Chapter 3. Investment in international relations mattered more than national investments in infrastructures—not my words, since I am paraphrasing here the philosopher Antonio Gramsci again during those years. He contended that this continued and constructed a North-South divide within Italy characterised by a colonial relationship with a racialised dynamic, pursued through a displacement of capitals to the North.³⁸⁵

What interests me here is the attempt to trace parallels between the nation-building process in Venice and those in the foremost centres of modernity (London, Paris, Berlin, and later New York), and how that very modernising principle implied the deletion of native (Indigenous) identities within territory brought under one sovereign country by military force.

As an event unique at this time—not in its international format,³⁸⁶ but in its focus on fine art (the model is the same, but not the genre)—the Venice Biennale was part of a cultural agenda put forth by the city council and, by extension, the state, to use tourism and culture as part of the economic regeneration and nation-building ambitions of Italy. The excuse was the celebration of the silver wedding anniversary of King Umberto and Margherita of Savoy.

What is also interesting to note is that, although claiming to be embarking on a “world enterprise,” for more than fifty years the “international” world in which Venice was interested was very small, differing little from Italy’s primary alignment of trade and commerce.³⁸⁷

“Were it not for the force of custom,” as Bentham puts it, the term “international,” as first set into action by the Great Exhibition, “would seem rather to refer to internal jurisprudence.”³⁸⁸ What the Great Exhibition had already revealed was exactly this delicate interdependence of nations, and the need to establish a scale of each nation’s importance globally by demonstrating the advancements that could be reached through technology and the capitalist process of production.

As a platform for modernist capitalist ideals, with the ambition to represent the world at large, the Venice Biennale is still today a battleground of outgrown and dying world powers that have not all found a definite form.

Last year, 2015, eighty-nine countries participated in the Venice Biennale, an increase from just fifty-nine back in 1999, and the popularity of the Biennale continues to grow. Therefore the event still seems to represent the besieged fortress of modernism’s ideals. No example of this could be more pertinent than New Delhi-based Raqs Media Collective’s intervention *Coronation Park* last year, where sculptural elements spread across the historical space of the Giardini, referencing the site that hosted the coronation of King George V and Queen Mary as emperor and empress of India in 1911.³⁸⁹ In Raqs’s words, no matter how strong the forces of power seem today, in time inevitably they decline, and so *Coronation Park* is talking about the fear of the inevitability of abdication.³⁹⁰ Seen in this light, the Giardini pavilions become phantasmagorical monuments to world powers—of yesterday but also of tomorrow, a space for destruction and recognition, which is also a space for provocation to think about a possible future.

Because of the very investment that such a space holds in terms of local and foreign politics, with state representatives, embassies, and civil servants operating in a fictionalised and miniaturised worldly space, the possibility of performing a political intervention presents itself. Such a gesture was enacted by the Mexican artist Gaston Ramirez Feltrin, when in 2003 he participated as a Biennale artist even though not authorised or invited. Ramirez Feltrin, born in Tepic, and who lived for many years in Venice, was one of the “invisible workers” of the Biennale. He gathered discarded materials and built a pop-up structure that he called *Favela Pavilion* so as to initiate a shantytown in the surroundings of the world’s powers. In the same year, with *Stateless Nation*, Alessandro Petti and Sandi Hilal situated themselves between the national pavilions in the Giardini, presenting enlarged travel documents and passports of Palestinian refugees in order to question social, political, and spatial relations between people, state, and territory beyond the liberal notion of citizenship.

In 1968, when the Situationists threatened guerrilla acts at the Biennale, Lawrence Alloway—one of the first art historians to look at the Biennale’s history and its larger logics—defined the Venice Biennale as objectless, not in the sense that there are no objects, but in the sense that even if the artwork, the object, is present, it is a movable concept within the context of the exhibition. He goes so far as to say that independently of the single exhibitions being hosted in each pavilion, the entire machinery becomes an assembly of information with a communicative purpose.³⁹¹ That is, independently of single artworks being presented at the Biennale, the overall structure is an aesthetic signifier that determines what is acceptable in aesthetic terms and in attributing it a value (which of course becomes a financial value, too). Even though the pavilions present a “vivid array of national self-images,” according to Alloway “the exhibition has a structure and hence a message as much as the art it shows.” This message reinstates aesthetic principles determined by the most powerful countries.³⁹²

Such a disappearance of the object—a ghostly presence, or a present absence—occurred in 2015, when the Syrian collective Abounaddara asked a seemingly simple question that is, in fact, one of the most complex questions of our time: Who has the right to the image? Claiming censorship, they withdrew from the Biennale before it even started, instead continuing to produce and independently distribute weekly video clips,³⁹³ dispatches from Syrian life in all its hues and complexity, that they diffused via digital means in order to deconstruct a unified, normalised version of how reality is portrayed, presented, and mediated all over the world,³⁹⁴ even—and especially—in a territory of war such as Syria.

It is therefore fitting to start concluding with this quote from art critic Geeta Kapur’s *Global Visions* of 1994: “Here is a strength and a problem: the need to negotiate with powerful cultural élites ... and the inevitability of measuring success in terms of the positions gained in the control of culture and the media that attends to it. If the aim is to turn the centre-periphery model inside out, then the positions may change but not the model. We should continue to question the radical import of this.”³⁹⁵ Kapur’s words have the urgency of a military campaign—in this case the attempt to march upon an art world that is denying the useless purposefulness of art.³⁹⁶

In a different text, though, Geeta Kapur addresses the potential of spaces like the Venice Biennale to access a transnational public sphere fully. In the wake of 1989, a

regained independence and interdependence of regions, nations, and cities, local cultures, electronic communications, and new mass-migrations have brought about the term “transnational transculturalism.”³⁴⁷ “Transculturalism,” we learn from Kapur, “is not, however, a matter of free choice.” Nevertheless, she sees in this movement a “liberatory” potential. In the tension of what’s happening in the emergence of post-colonial civil societies and globalisation, we need to study what political theorists call a transnational public sphere. The translation is part of this transcultural aesthetic, where the artist constructs the grammar of the discourse of global contemporaneity and conducts the process of negotiation and confrontation. I would add here that the curator is the actual mediator of such a transnational public sphere, which negotiates the space between different traditions and finds points of connection and networks of an alliance for speaking together. Kapur posits the struggle outside the “original” national ground and on forming a global citizenry where through transnational public spheres, we nurture new forms of governance in search of civil rights against state power.

What’s worth notice is that Kapur seems to individuate a new form of sovereignty in this transnational public sphere, where a new subject-position can be formed through the curatorial. She also questions art sovereignty within and without the institution of art: to move beyond given preservation structures (museums) by focusing instead on the production and discussion of art as the actual motor of change.

Raqs Media Collective, Gaston Ramirez Feltrin, Alessandro Petti and Sandi Hilal, and Abounaddara are all actual recent examples of gaining a fleck of dust from the vast terrain occupied by world powers by shearing through their screens and gaining access to transnational public spheres. The continuous absorption of new nation states that decade after decade have gained momentum on a global financial scale has allowed Venice, as in previous centuries, to reinvent itself as a “world marvel.” For this reason, the Biennale will remain important for future development, not only of the arts but also for showcasing the world’s dynamics and inequalities and providing a safe space for cross addressing societal issues otherwise hidden under national agendas global matters.

³⁴⁸ Marianne Heier and Franz Petter Schmidt initially commissioned a version of this text to accompany the exhibition *Aktiv materie* (Active Matter), curated by Harald Solberg and held at Bomuldsfabriken Kunsthall, Arendal, Norway, 27 April–2 June 2019; the exhibition and the text later travelled to Sandefjord Kunstforening, Norway, 5 September–4 October 2020.

³⁴⁹ Sjølingstad Woollen Mill (Sjølingstad Uldvarefabrik) mirrors a certain history of fraternalism with the United Woollen Factories. Established in 1894, it produced yarn and fabrics, sold in large parts of Southern Norway until 1984. Today it operates as a living museum, where part of the machinery can still be used to produce small batches of textiles and serve for training. Schmidt has a long-standing relation to this mill, and has developed a number of works there, contributing to the recuperation of knowledge connected to the production of historical textiles that had fallen out of fashion. The Sjølingstad Woollen Mill forms part of the Vest-Agder Museum, a union of cultural heritage museums in the county of Vest-Agder in Norway.

³⁵⁰ A version of this text was published in the anthology on the queer-feminist platform FRANK: Sille Storihle, ed., *FRANK* (Oslo: Torpedo, 2021).

³⁵¹ The PoB was originally conceived as part of the public programme for documenta 14, in Kassel, Germany. In acknowledging the paradoxical nature of transforming institutional

structures and economies from within, the PoB has since mutated into a stateless institution-in-becoming without constitution, seeking bonds with other institutions to provoke politicisation and critical metamorphosis.

³⁵² FRANK was an Oslo-based platform (2012-20) established to nurture art and critical discourse revolving around gender, desire, and sexuality. The platform operated in different locations and with various co-curators. Its aim was to build a community and create discussions that address hegemonic structures in society. FRANK was run by the artists Liv Bugge and Sille Storihle.

³⁵³ In *Philosophie de la relation*, Édouard Glissant defines *lieux-communs* as those sites where ideas emerge, illuminate, and influence other ideas from other places in the world. See Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

³⁵⁴ Here, I am clearly reflecting on the theories of gender performativity developed by Judith Butler. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

³⁵⁵ Despite wanting to move beyond binary categories, I still ought to maintain a binary terminology throughout the thesis to respect and acknowledge powerful practices such as feminism which were fundamental in recognizing bodies otherwise not given full agency under certain jurisdictions, and historical periods. While some of these rights have been fully achieved primarily in Western countries, several genders remain unrecognised, and is not an open discussion in our societies either. Therefore, we need not forget and recuperate antecedents or concurrent struggles from which we can learn. We should also acknowledge such struggles and movements as Donna Haraway offers a fundamental reading. “This chapter is an argument for *pleasure* in the confusion of boundaries and for *responsibility* in their construction. It is also an effort to contribute to socialist-feminist culture and theory in a post-modernist, non-naturalist mode and in the utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis, but maybe also a world without end.” Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist- Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” in Simians, *Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York, Routledge: 1991), 150.

³⁵⁶ Butler has developed an entire analysis of the problematics of hegemonic heterosexuality building a binary opposition. See Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 33.

³⁵⁷ Departing from the recently discovered mirror neurons, discovered by the psychobiologist Vittorio Gallese, and ensuing theories around them, Paolo Virno demonstrates that language itself is a deterrent to the immediacy of emotional life within the “we-centric space” (a space of the “we” created by mirror neurons, which activate empathy among individuals at first sight). See Paolo Virno, *An Essay on Negation: For a Linguistic Anthropology* (London: Seagull Books, 2018).

³⁵⁸ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge (1997).

³⁵⁹ See Peggy Phelan, “The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction,” in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 146–66. See also Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 519–31.

³⁶⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, ix. Emphasis in the original. Butler continues: “The notion of ‘sex’ made it possible to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures, and it enabled one to make use of this fictitious unity as a casual principle, an omnipresent meaning: sex was thus able to function as a unique signifier and a universal signified.”

³⁶¹ For Michel Foucault, the body is not “sexed” in any significant sense prior to its determination within a discourse through which it becomes invested with an “idea” of natural and essential sex. The body gains meaning within discourse only in the context of power relations.

³⁶² Feminist analyses have greatly contributed to our understandings of how gender matters for the study of the “global assembly line” and its implications for development processes. These analyses have a long history, starting with economist Ester Boserup’s early concerns of how industrial development could potentially marginalise women. See Ester Boserup *Woman’s Role in Economic Development* (London: Earthscan, 1970). Subsequently, as export-oriented industrialisation seemed to erase women’s industrial “marginalisation,” feminist studies evolved into the rich literature on labour “feminisation.” See Guy Standing, “Global Feminization through Flexible Labor,” *World Development* 17, no. 7 (July 1989): 1077–95, and Cristina Morini, “The Feminization of Labour in Cognitive Capitalism,” *Feminist Review*, no. 87 (2007): 40–59.

³⁶³ It was through FRANK that I came across Kølle. FRANK organised a salon with Karen Røise Kielland, who, in the summer of 2011, walked from Norway to Venice, Italy, over a four-month period, following the footsteps of Kølle, who walked the same path in 1841.

³⁶⁴ I am borrowing the term “quakeful thinking” (*la pensée du tremblement*) from Glissant in *Philosophie de la relation: Poésie en étendue* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009), 55–56.

³⁶⁵ FRANK later on in its activities connected itself directly to previous forms of aggregation, referring to Høeg’s Den Selskabelige Diskussionforening (Sociable Association for Discussion) from more than a hundred years before. In the summer of 2014, FRANK gathered a small number of practising artists, activists, and thinkers from different fields and countries to point back at Den Selskabelige Diskussionforening, founded in 1896. The gathering was held in the Lofoten islands and hosted by artist Elin Már Øyen Vister and her artist-run association Røst AiR.

³⁶⁶ In this last sentence, I am, paraphrasing Antonio Gramsci, who in the *Prison Notebooks* from the 1930s identifies the decadence of his historical moment: “The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born.” It is in these moments of passage that we should read the symptoms of what will later appear, hopefully a coming revolution. See Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del Carcere*, book 1, *Quaderni 1–5* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977), 311. English translation quoted from *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), 276. In the Italian original, Gramsci says “*fenomeni morbosi*,” literally “morbid phenomena.”

³⁶⁷ Harald Beharie and Louis Schou-Hansen initially commissioned a version of this text in conjunction with the premiere of their *Shine Utopians* piece at Dansens Hus, Oslo, 7–10 November 2019. Beharie and Schou-Hansen were choreographers, part of the dancers’ team, and the curators of the overall *Shine Utopians* event, which integrated several discursive events before the performances, where I participated by moderating one of the conversations at the invitation of Karmaklubb*, a nomadic queer club concept and discursive platform.

³⁶⁸ See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

³⁶⁹ Judith Butler, *The Force of Non-violence: An Ethico-Political Bind* (London: Verso, 2020).

³⁷⁰ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 198–99.

³⁷¹ The autonomy of art has entered the common art vocabulary as a view on works of art that are devoid of any practical function and thus devoid of instrumental value. This view is traditionally traced back to Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, first published in 1790. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* (London: Macmillan, 1914).

³⁷² Michel Foucault, “The Order of Discourse,” in *Untying the Text: A Post-structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (London: Routledge, 1981), 55.

³⁷³ Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry, “How to Be Seen: An Introduction to Feminist Politics, Exhibition Cultures in Curatorial Transgressions,” in *Politics in a Glass Case: Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions*, ed. Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 1–21.

³⁷⁴ Judith Butler, “Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street,” transversal texts, September 2011, <https://transversal.at/transversal/1011/butler/en>.

³⁷⁵ See Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004).

³⁷⁶ Georgia J. Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure: Louis XIV and the Politics of Spectacle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 47–48.

³⁷⁷ See Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

³⁷⁸ Mark Franko, “Double Bodies: Androgyny and Power in the Performances of Louis XIV,” *Drama Review* 38, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 71–82.

³⁷⁹ See Sylvie Steinberg, *La confusion des sexes: Le travestissement de la Renaissance à la Révolution* [Gender confusion: The travesty of the Renaissance to the revolution] (Paris: Fayard, 2001).

³⁸⁰ Hannah Arendt, “What Is Freedom?,” in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Viking, 1968), 143–71.

³⁸¹ A version of this text was presented during the seminar *What New Internationalism?*, Litteraturhuset, Oslo, on 28 April 2016, which included a keynote presentation by Ruth Noack and other contributions from Tominga Hope O’Donnell, Kjetil Røed, Adriana Alves, and Anawana Haloba.

³⁸² In the “Conclusions: Curating between the No Longer and the Not Yet,” I analyse in-depth Carlos Basualdo, “The Unstable Institution,” in *Curating Subjects*, ed. Paul O’Neill (London: Open Editions; Amsterdam: De Appel, 2007): 39–52.

³⁸³ I was employed at Office for Contemporary Art Norway, in various positions, including that of curator, from 2010 to 2018. In 2015 I was co-curator, with curator Katya García-Antón, of Camille Norment’s *Rupture* in the Nordic Pavilion at the Venice Biennale.

³⁸⁴ Although the Venice Biennale foundation’s polity wishes today, in rewriting its history, to align itself to phenomena such as the Secession in Munich, an artist-led disjointment to move away from paternalistic and conservative policies. See “Biennale Arte: History,” Venice Biennale website, accessed 7 February 2021, <https://www.labbiennale.org/en/history-biennale-arte>. As the Biennial National Artistic Exhibition (the fair’s first name in 1893), the national aspect was stressed over the international one.

³⁸⁵ Antonio Gramsci, “Some Aspects of the Southern Question,” 1926, Marxist Leninist Archive, http://marxism.halkcephezi.net/Antonio%20Gramsci/1926/10/southern_question.htm. Originally published in *Selections from Political Writings (1921–1926)*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978). See note 286.

³⁸⁶ The format is the national participation inaugurated by the London World Exhibition. The genre is the kind of artefacts shown. Venice exhibits only fine arts and not any other art form. Perhaps one day it will open up to the genres of architecture, film, music, and dance, which do not always follow the same structure as the art sector.

³⁸⁷ Today we imagine European nations as a set of determined territories. Italy came to be unified and a sovereign territory in 1851, Germany in 1871, the French Republic in 1870, the Kingdom of Belgium in 1830, the Kingdom of Denmark in 1814, and the Kingdom of Netherlands in 1815, the Kingdom of Sweden in 1814, Switzerland in 1848, the Soviet Union in 1922 (prior to that, the Russian Empire in 1812), and Austria-Hungary in 1867; the Kingdom of Spain and Kingdom of Great Britain have been the most stable, since the eighteenth century.

³⁸⁸ It was Bentham who first coined the word “international” in a book published in 1789. See Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (London: Athlone, 1970).

³⁸⁹ One could go so far as to look at the perfect alignment of the pavilions along the alleys of the Giardini, which *Coronation Park* emphasised somehow. The UK, France, and German pavilions are triangulated at the very top of the hill, and the Russia, Switzerland, and Scandinavian pavilions open up on to the US pavilion, defining their historical role as played from the twentieth century onwards and during the two World Wars.

³⁹⁰ Giulia Crisci and Monica Narula (Raqs Media Collective), “All That Falls: A Tale of Monuments,” *Roots & Routes*, accessed 7 February 2021, <https://www.roots-routes.org/all-that-falls-a-tale-of-monuments-by-giulia-crisci-and-monica-narula-raqs-media-collective/>.

³⁹¹ Alloway coined the term Pop Art and was equally interested in how art integrates consumerist culture.

³⁹² It is very important for me that it is understood there is an aesthetic canon to which new and upcoming countries have to adhere to in order to be accepted by the leading world countries (the UK, France, Germany, and the US).

³⁹³ From April 2011 onwards, the Abounaddara collective, a group of self-taught filmmakers in Damascus, has been producing one short documentary every Friday and launching it on the internet. Their work is a kind of “emergency cinema”—like “emergency healthcare, only by way of cinema,” in the words of Charif Kiwan, spokesperson for the collective. See Christy Lange, “Emergency Cinema: How the Anonymous Film Collective Abounaddara Represents Daily Life in Syria,” *Frieze*, 18 March 2016, <https://www.frieze.com/article/emergency-cinema>.

³⁹⁴ Abounaddara specifically refers to the role of news agencies here.

³⁹⁵ Geeta Kapur, “A New Inter Nationalism: The Missing Hyphen,” in *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts*, ed. Jean Fisher (London: Kala Press, 1994), 39–49.

³⁹⁶ I am indirectly quoting Theodor W. Adorno, “Functionalism Today,” *Oppositions*, no. 17 (Summer 1979): 32–41.

³⁹⁷ Geeta Kapur, “Curating across Agonistic Worlds,” in *InFlux: Contemporary Art in Asia*, ed. Parul Dave Mukherji et al. (New Delhi: Sage, 2013), 159–212.

Part 5.

Curating an institution: Practising forms of assembly through exhibition making

(5.1) The exhibition space as the non-conformant body: An introduction

The overall last chapter addresses the non-conformant body as the site of trauma, problematizing curating, which sometimes co-opts representation: an inherent act of violence. At the same time, curators look for exhibition making's egalitarian aspirations under the current predicaments of exhibiting. I focus on the curatorial work I developed in the past three years at Fotogalleriet in Oslo to bring forward observations, notes, and research developed in this period. It concerns small- and medium-sized institutions, revindicating their role for different histories and temporalities to arise. It includes a reflection on how small- and medium-sized institutions (and temporary, trembling institutions, as addressed in chapter 4) destabilise the work of museums and large collecting bodies, giving rise to new forms of curating. An equal claim is made on Fotogalleriet to be a kunsthalle, meaning a public institution that depends on public support and a public remit and, therefore, holds a social responsibility.³⁹⁸

In 2019 I curated the first solo exhibition of artist Maria Pasenau, born in 1994, whose work addresses issues of normality and the body and its portrayal as the site of unleashing otherness and the possibility of being. She produced an artist's book for the exhibition, for which we invited several other contributors to address their perspective on her work from a personal view.³⁹⁹ Amid the European rise of right-wing movements coming to power and attempting to appropriate women's rights to their bodies, I lean upon her work to reflect on the term "new." Philosopher Michel Foucault defined this lack of novelty as a lack of vision (images). We confine to the self for expression, and it is there that the personal turns political (or, in his words, the biopolitical).⁴⁰⁰ Simple gestures, modest and alternative forms of life (the great fear of governance) sometimes provoke shock. To appear, to be seen, the body must also enter the visual and audible fields, a public space.⁴⁰¹ The personal, obscenely penetrated by the capitalist market through images, is once again the sphere that requires liberation, where one can find a potential emancipatory motor for change. The overwhelming technological advancement, new disembodied forms of life, spaces of intimacy, and material bodies have escalated the aesthetic and conceptual experience of the "image sphere,"⁴⁰² where life only seems worth living on the threshold between waking and sleeping, worn away by the steps of multitudinous images flooding back and forth. Through her images, Pasenau emphasises the need for a different understanding of space and time (technology plays a significant role in understanding these categories) and a liberated intimacy for our times. Self-portraiture, a natural part of Modern life and identity formation with the creation of alter egos transmitting a perfect image, is the search of the subject's life. Highly interconnected with sexuality, it continues to be a ritualised repetition of norms. In such a binary production, these constraints produce a domain of the intelligible, and consequently of the unthinkable, and the abject. Bodies form according to these aesthetic means through an attack on privacy.⁴⁰³ It becomes clear that the digital age has affected intimacy and the private realm. Therefore, I claim private and public space notions producing images, eventually reaching the exhibition space and demanding curatorial work and display.

I develop these preoccupations and the curation of Maria Pasenau exhibition by reading curating itself as a form of freezing politics while bringing the artwork into the exhibition space. Here I do a parallel reading with a subsequent exhibition I curated at Fotogalleriet with artist Daisuke Kosugi, questioning bodies' functionality in our over-driven capitalist politics, where non-normalised bodies lose their position

in society through the architecture of its urbanisation. A family matter becomes the motive to analyse more extensive societal infrastructures for exclusion, with uncanny parallelism between the house, considered a private sphere, and the exhibition space considered a public space. If curating means curare, both curing and care, its task indicates acting in solidarity by carrying a weight together.

Working as the artistic director of an institution devoted to the life of images, I claim that curatorial practice should revolve around speaking the yet unknown: the missing image. A missing image speaks about the unrecorded or the misrepresented, which continues to be absent for one too many reasons. To unveil curatorial questions on exhibition making, the institution needs to transgress its given limitations of a space that continues to be dominated by the very logic of the nation-state formation and oppressions: the patriarchal nuclear family.

If digital infrastructures were the site of analysis of intimacy formation with Maria Pasenau, curatorial strategies looking for a transitional space outside the physical space of encounter became a reality unwillingly because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Issues of material production and immaterial labour, previously made invisible in the exhibition space through digital and other technologies, became even more hidden in the digital exilic condition of the years 2020–21. Cure, instead of curation, became the obsession of our time. Art lost its social function and urgency, prompting questions about why we even do what we do. Driven by their work with students and the expository programme of *Salonul de proiecte* in Bucharest, an influential Fotogalleriet collaborator in 2020–21, a troubling period, I analyse Fotogalleriet's engagement with curating in the digital sphere.

The politics of emotions, which had entered the institution through a collaboration with artist Dora García became prominent during these months. All sentiments focused on curing while non-conformant and migrant bodies drifted into the mediatic unknown, the invisible. The nuclear family structure, which has come to dominate Western and other societies, silenced these non-national, non-conformant bodies under the aegis of a new global crisis. In the words of FRANK, whose work I analyse in the previous chapter: “Rage is a terrible thing to waste,” and it's from there we need to restart our curatorial work.

As the first research conclusion for the overall investigation, I initially wrote *Anger, love, and silence: Caring for emotions in the exhibition space*. In this text, I retrace historical formation that from personal becomes universal. Emotions, a state of mind academia has taught us to stay away from since the Enlightenment, have served as a powerful tool for repression and infantilisation of otherness. I demonstrate the importance of regaining a relation to emotions and their role in our lives in exhibition spaces through a reading of feminist literature.⁴⁰⁴

(5.2) Displaying the politics of inactivity⁴⁰⁵

“I can’t unsee this.” This is not a philosophical quotation, but an eight-year-old child’s immediate reaction while visiting the exhibition of the rather explicit photographer Maria Pasenau.

Kids and teens are some of Fotogalleriet most beloved audiences and the ones for whom exhibition spaces will probably not look like the ones we have today, where hierarchies are still perpetrated through aesthetic forms. For them, as well as for us, whose intimacy is lost for the sake of being always public, a deconstruction of the exhibition space can mean deconstructing our understanding of how we experience art in order to challenge our vision, instead of normalising it.

I tackle some of the issues, contextualised in a much broader perspective to analyse curating and exhibition spaces as we have inherited them today. First, I problematise the word “curator” to recuperate the violence inherent in such a word. To rethink such a practice today and its potential, we need first to acknowledge its problematic past (“Curare is a death-in-life practice”). Second, I focus on the historical construction of the exhibition space to reflect on the theatricality of modernity and its need to normalise its ideology. I am not attempting to create further separation but to demonstrate that we cannot speak about the institution of art outside society. Working in a publicly funded institution, I reclaim a public responsibility towards society as a whole (“The exhibition space as the locus of pure observation”). Third part, I go into my curatorial practice to connect the programme to more extensive societal preoccupations that are too broad to be overlooked. I clarify how I have worked with artists, mainly through the production of new works, and how curating does not enter as an end product of display but instead challenges the artwork’s physical apparition and hopefully supports its revolutionary potential.

Curare is a death-in-life practice

The modern notion of curating is often associated with “taking care.”⁴⁰⁶ In this reading, the curator is designated as a guardian or spiritual guide, beginning in the late fourteenth century. In records of the Church of England, “*curare*” is first used in the 1550s to describe a paid “deputy priest of a parish,” and the word is attributed to a person in charge of minors, lunatics, criminals, and the sick (a forced group of outsiders to mainstream society) in the 1660s.⁴⁰⁷ The moment in which the above-mentioned use of the word “curate” takes shape corresponds to the transformative centuries in which European missionaries played a large role in ferociously evangelising populations of the Americas, as part of a savage colonialism.

As part of this process of cultural appropriation, I propose that today we look back at the word “curator”—a noun which has come to define the person in charge of a museum, a zoo, or other place of exhibition—to re-root it in the Spanish *curaré*,⁴⁰⁸ a word that came into use in Europe during the sixteenth century to describe the poison that Indigenous Peoples in Central and South America put on their arrow tips in order to “seize” their victims. In an attempt to draw affinities, we would also acknowledge the violence of “curare” as a looted practice of managing death-in-life.

Probably the first written information on curare, the poison, is from Pedro Martir de Anglería, who at the end of the fifteenth century referred to the preparation of a poisonous substance in the Antilles.⁴⁰⁹ Curare (also called urara and woorali), the aqueous extract of a tree that grows in the Guianas and northern Brazil, was deployed

by local populations for hunting and protection.⁴¹⁰ Upon entering the bloodstream of its victims, it causes complete paralysis of all the nerves of motion, and possibly death, by preventing the affected body's ability to breathe.⁴¹¹

This mysterious compound slowly came to define a generic poison with specific anaesthetic properties, and was then imported to the western hemisphere.⁴¹² When it entered the laboratory—the medical institution—modern physiologists availed themselves of the paralysing property of this drug to keep animals they desired to vivisect absolutely motionless, but not allowing them to die by losing their power to breathe. They made a hole in the windpipe of the animal, and through a small pipe steadily pumped wind into the lungs via machines.

The peculiarity of curare—though—is that while it completely paralyses the nerves of motion, it does not affect the nerves of sensation; actually, it makes them more alive to pain.⁴¹³ The Victorian and Edwardian anti-vivisectionists movement in the nineteenth century defined this procedure as “death-in-life practice,” providing a powerful symbol and propaganda tool to describe the totality of the animals’ suffering.⁴¹⁴

The exhibition space as the locus of pure observation

The dehumanising medical separation of the patient’s body from the patient’s person (as in vivisection procedures) is what philosopher Michel Foucault termed the “clinical gaze” in 1963. According to Foucault, in order for the human and the animal body to be desecrated, the subject of scrutiny had to lose its holiness, and secularism had to begin. A scission had to happen between the religious and non-religious institutions maintaining authority over the sick body.⁴¹⁵ Modern medicine—whose date of birth is fixed in the last years of the eighteenth century—focused on more than the mere knowledge of specific medical cases; it attributes a value to the founding of scientific knowledge in itself as a movement. Scientific knowledge “grouped all experience around the play of a verbal unmasking that was not simply its form of transmission, theatrically retarded.”⁴¹⁶ In a tautological way, medicine testified the experience of itself as a discipline.⁴¹⁷

If we look into these medical transformations, and how their theatrical practices consequently transferred to other fields of knowledge, we can look at how, as modernity grew, the French Revolution turned objects previously belonging to the church and the aristocracy into artworks to be exhibited in museums.⁴¹⁸ Here the objects became devoid of “function”—instead made the locus of pure observation. Rather than physically destroying objects, as happened in previous violent revolutionary moments, a new way of dealing with dethroned items of the past was offered. In this process, art itself, according to the art critic Boris Groys, was produced through a “modern form of iconoclasm.”⁴¹⁹

What is key here is that Groys assigns the objectivisation of things to human beings. He compares this new protection for art objects to the sociopolitical care which was, in tandem, being instilled in the human body through the entrenchment of human rights. That is, human beings could only be contemplated, not actively used.⁴²⁰

The question thus becomes: Where does the revolutionary potential of art, and consequently of curating, reside in this new institutional setting (in what we can also call the exhibitionary complex), which we continue to inherit to this day? Is curating

the act of maintaining a theatrical threshold of separation from the world of politics? And what political remit do we gain through these “anaesthetised” presentations of artworks?

If we follow Groys’s argument here, the function of such spaces is to make art objects easily accessible to the gaze of the visitor. The curator administers this space in the name of the public, because an individual artwork cannot assert its presence by itself.⁴²¹ The work of art “is originally sick, helpless.”⁴²² It lacks “vitality, energy, and health.”⁴²³ The curator, as hospital staff, takes visitors to see the patient.⁴²⁴ Groys concludes, “Curating cures the powerlessness of the image, its inability to show itself by itself.”⁴²⁵

If we take this metaphor literally, there are of course a number of others who require acknowledgement in this newly defined clinic—from technicians to cleaners, to all the people surrounding the institutional set up and building; that is to say, the workers. Where do all these other operative forces, material and immaterial, human and non-human, through which such a process as *curing* is made possible, give presence and visibility, and bring the object to public judgment?

It seems as though to accept the role of the curator within such a prescribed structure means to acknowledge curating as a means of normalising subjects.

In a Derridean sense, though, the object brought to public judgment—and, by extension, curating as a mediating tool (at least in my view)—could be considered as working like a *pharmakon*, as both poison and remedy, introducing all of its ambivalence into the discourse.⁴²⁶ Philosopher Bernard Stiegler recuperates Jacques Derrida’s commentary on Plato’s *Phaedrus*, as laid out in Derrida’s essay “Plato’s Pharmacy,” to define the pharmakon in relation to the current state of affairs, where the future is under unprecedented urgency. In Stiegler’s terms, the pharmakon is a transitional object carrying the feeling of why life is worth living; it is what gives individuals sovereignty, autonomy, and heteronomy.⁴²⁷ It is at once what allows care to be taken and that of which care must be taken. As such, this object always has the ability not only to engage in curative projections but also to enhance poisonous processes (addictions, melancholy, self-destructive drives). Care is to be given to paying it the necessary attention.⁴²⁸

Curating, in Stiegler’s view, or by extension of its reading, is a pharmacological question of finding forms of protection and learning from this transitional object, as well as of regaining trust from the result that arises from the loss of care.

If we were to read this proposal through the lens of curare (the drug), would curating mean providing this doubled-edged role of opening up all the necessary space for the artwork by instituting artificial breathing, which is awaiting its revolutionary potential to be released? Where normative sanity, decorum, and cleanliness are displayed, and the ludic, violent, obsessive, and neurotic are potent? And, once this moment of stasis is finally completed, the artwork and its symbolic system of power can be destroyed, to eventually testify that the next violent revolution has happened, and a new historical moment can begin.

It is here I find that curating is a *means*, not an end.⁴²⁹ That is, it is not an end in itself, as Groys asserts, but merely a tool to maintain the artwork in its potency.

Curating is a means not an end

In the past months we have witnessed a worldwide raising of discontent, with people coming to the streets in protest in Hong Kong, in New York, in Chile, and in France, for that matter, because of growing inequalities and lack of representation. Museums and large art institutions have reached the paramount impossibility of dealing with such struggles, when class, gender, and race discrimination prescribe them to reflect the complexity of their peoples, as well as their problematic historical holdings. The widening gap between the rich and the poor is equally reflected in the fact that smaller institutions are being squeezed out of new urban developments, all while public authorities give an impression of advancing the new, while risking the suffocation of critical voices.⁴³⁰ I demonstrated a public antagonism towards museums recently in Oslo by coming out in the press to address such unbalanced funding distribution and financial retribution.⁴³¹

As the artistic director of Fotogalleriet, Scandinavia's oldest *fotohalle*, I find myself within an exhibition space that, together with the photographers' union, the Norwegian Association for Fine Art Photographers, formed a vocabulary for photography and for the medium to be freed.⁴³² Of course this was no French Revolution, but simply a refusal to accept what the establishment was offering;⁴³³ something we are called upon to reflect on in different ways today, when shopping mall museums are becoming a reality for an art which is overcommercialised and patronising, and that prompts the same inequalities already at work in society at large. Groys points out the fact that "today, the museum presents not a universal history of art but, rather, its own history, in the chain of events staged by the museum itself."⁴³⁴

Upon my arrival at Fotogalleriet, I found it necessary to stop the institution's pace of and focus on exhibitions, to instead consider both the inside and the outside of the institution as a physical architecture determining meaning, while inverting the expectations of the white cube, a patriarchal space whose significance is often predetermined. So we held talks in lieu of exhibitions, and "froze" our library.

If the body of the art institution is a body in crisis—*krisis*, in Stiegler's terms, means "decision"⁴³⁵—then to rethink how architecture effects our bodies, and how a different take on the space would determine a different demand for art to live, we determined we would focus on such a body in transition, as both a subject and an object of analysis of institutional programming. We chose artists who intersect the materiality of architecture and the immateriality of their imagery, and focused on fostering new artistic productions, revindicating the original meaning of a *kunsthalle*,⁴³⁶ and, in terms of curating, on addressing this space of support, to accompany the artwork in finding its exhibitory form.

When artist Maria Pasenau took over the institution in August 2019, she boarded up the windows.⁴³⁷ On the visible side of the window, she left several casts of her crotch (a sculpture), on which a poem was chiselled, reading: "The day i was born/ i bord in to this boring word, / i left all i knowd/ was forsed, / put in to this clinical shit hole."⁴³⁸ The tone of the exhibition was a departure from Fotogalleriet's historical programming, I hope. Pasenau, one of the youngest artists to have entered the collection of the National Museum in Oslo, refused to present her images within a white cube. The hanging was low and dense. Thoughts interspersed. Visitors were

able to sit down on the floor and find a relation with the images, and even hide and lock themselves within the exhibition architecture. A box within a box within a box (or a womb).

Wencke Mühleisen, a professor of gender theory and an artist who lived in artist Otto Muehl's AAO commune in Austria in the 1970s, brought attention to how, in the 1960s and 1970s, a worshipping of an aesthetics of negativities, refusal, and failings was dragging artists into the streets like zombies.⁴³⁹ In looking for new forms of subversion, it was “easy to run into the body again: Everything began with the body. Everything ends there as well.”⁴⁴⁰ Especially when the “structure of the subject implodes.”⁴⁴¹ Pasenau’s art can constitute an answer to this question (Mühleisen’s take, not mine).⁴⁴²

We know very well how such disciplining of the body is morphed through the exhibitionary complex, by showing itself more than concealing.⁴⁴³ But how can exhibitions really move our senses? Creating meaningful discussions about the taboos of our always-public beings, left with no intimacy and no attention?

As much as architecture produces gendered spaces, in capitalist-driven societies it also reproduces ableness, generating subjectivities by manipulating movements and predicting bodily experiences. Architecture prescribes a one-way identification with the sick, disabled, vulnerable, or exhausted, by creating and dividing such categories and reinforcing them through class and accessibility, and determining how bodies are distributed when they change over time in our relation to time and space.

Philosopher and feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz underpins that the theories and practices of Modern architecture in Western society refer to “epistemic domains where the body’s neutrality, transparency, and universality is all assumed.”⁴⁴⁴ Mind and consciousness have been at the heart of subjectivity formation studies. She revindicates instead that identity and knowledge formation are corporeal. We need to move away from the synchronicity equalling the body to a machine and architecture to societal order,⁴⁴⁵ serving functional and reproductive politics. Human bodies are a material part of a universal flow. They become ill, age, and dissolve in the flow of material processes. The body conceived in classical terms is constituted as self-sufficient: before and beyond, socialisation or culture.

What if we observe such an abstractedness of how our bodies slowly disengage from their day-to-day architectural routines?

Daisuke Kosugi’s new film *A False Weight* (co-produced with Jeu de Paume in Paris, and contemporaneously presented in exhibitions at Jeu de Paume, CAPC musée d’art contemporain de Bordeaux, and Museo Amparo in Puebla, Mexico, in parallel to its presentation in Oslo) is an experimental production that shows an interplay between Masanori Kosugi (b. 1951) and Toru Iwashita (b. 1957).⁴⁴⁶ In the fall of 2017, Masanori, Daisuke’s father, is diagnosed with an unusual and incurable brain disease. The illness affects the body’s movement and balance before eventually inhibiting speech, cognition, and mobility. As a construction engineer, Masanori lived by rational and constructive ideas, which he also implemented on his body in the form of bodybuilding. As the symptoms continue to develop, Masanori tries to fight the disease with rehabilitation and the use of prostheses. Toru Iwashita, a butoh dancer, performs Masanori’s daily routines in a repetitive pattern. What at first glance is

perceived as the depiction of a normal retirement becomes the backdrop of the portrait of a syndrome. The dance conveys the loss of control over one's own body. Throughout the production, Masanori worked with Iwashita on details of his movements, and how the body feels in scenarios portrayed in the work.

The film explores a domestic space which is a public space in the sense that architecture historian, theorist and curator Beatriz Colomina defines it, meaning Modern architecture having brought a publicness of the private.⁴⁴⁷ Architecture is another tool of control and publicity, a functionalist structure that affects not only objects (buildings and design). Bodies need to fit the requirements of productivity and reproductivity of the given economic system (including a nuclear family system). “The politics of space are always sexual, even if space is central to the mechanisms of the erasure of sexuality,” Colomina argues.⁴⁴⁸ The body, a pre-formed, fixed, and known entity, is standardised (invariable, normal, vigorous, and healthy) in architects' practices, necessarily leading to the production of the standard-fit design. For this reason, to accompany the film in the exhibition space, Kosugi produced *Recliner* (2019), a bamboo version (with clear burning marks on the parts being curved) of Charlotte Perriand and Le Corbusier's iconic modernist chaise longue LC4. The chair was initially designed to follow the standard body's natural shape. By replacing the industrial steel tubes with organic bamboo, and with a highly unstable and “burned” material, Kosugi questions the idea of the universal body of the chaise longue, the same kind of body the seemingly functional apartment the film portrays. Underpinning the exhibition is the propagation of an engineering aesthetic based on the idea that pure design could produce similar standardised human beings (healthy, unageing, asexual). Such essentialism has its roots in classical theories where the body, in naturalistic terms, is the cause and motivation for the design of cities to replicate order, harmony, and proportions (for example, the Vitruvian depiction of bodies in geometric proportions in decontextualised, one-dimensional, architecture).

Daisuke Kosugi was inspired by Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Commerce Quay, 1080 Brussels* (1975) and *No Home Movie* (2015)—an influence that is immediately visible in the film. As viewers, we learn how to see, step by step, each scene in a socioanalytical way. Kosugi uses a technique which he calls “crop time.” Everyone is a little bit annoyed by the amount of time the first sequence takes. And this is how we can come closer to understanding the frustration of differently abled people. They can perform tasks, but it takes longer. In our capitalist-driven societies, we are given a time frame within which to perform. Even when we watch the film, we may feel we do not have the time. Paradoxically, we constantly feel that we need to help the other, because we do not have time, not realising that there are different concepts of time and that we are imposing our own. Differently abled bodies can perform their tasks but in a different time. This is “crop time.”

At Fotogalleriet, the exhibition was not accessible from the main entrance (as it is not immediately wheelchair accessible), but only from the backyard. Inside the space—as much as with Maria Pasenau's show—the movement was circular. The screen was a bit low. Betraying expectancies.

How does it feel to enter from the back? That you have gone the wrong way? Does it feel less accessible?

A critic in a review was not so happy about having to walk in from the other side. Not the usual way. But how must one feel when one is always using the other way?

Beatriz Colomina studied the entrance as a meaningful concept of its own in Modern architecture, especially for how Le Corbusier envisions it. “To *enter* is to *see*. But not to see a static object, a building, a fixed place. Rather, architecture taking place in history, the events of architecture, architecture as an event.”⁴⁴⁹ She argues that the right to privacy has become the right to remain “out of the picture,” which means not only away from the press but credit reports and medical records. That is being out of public view. Without fear of explicitly referring to sexual organs and sexuality when reading Le Corbusier’s strategies for thinking in terms of buildings and visibility, Colomina addresses key issues often hidden behind architecture universalist claims. She is bringing back functionality and the politics of visibility and archiving that buildings create. The entrance, presupposing gendered ableness, is not only part of the Modernist architecture “spectacle” of enabling or concealing access but of creating an image of accessibility and visibility. Provenance (the commissioner) is vital in her study.

The exhibition space, the white cube, envies as the patriarchal locus of recognition other forms of freedom that are more fragile, seductive, proletarian, sharp; or such is a claim we made for the beginning of 2020’s programme with artist and editor Nina Strand and Anna Planas and Pierre Hourquet (Temple Office), to acknowledge other forms of display and resistance, with a lower architectural threshold. Photobooks and zines are able to travel fast and far, escaping the world of normality and normativity. We are looking at the photobook and the zine as a body which is able to permeate different spaces and times, bringing undefined change in its migratory movement that challenges the political architecture of the exhibition space.

Through this new form of programming, we have seen a considerable difference in our publics, the becoming public of the institution, its availability crossing time and space.

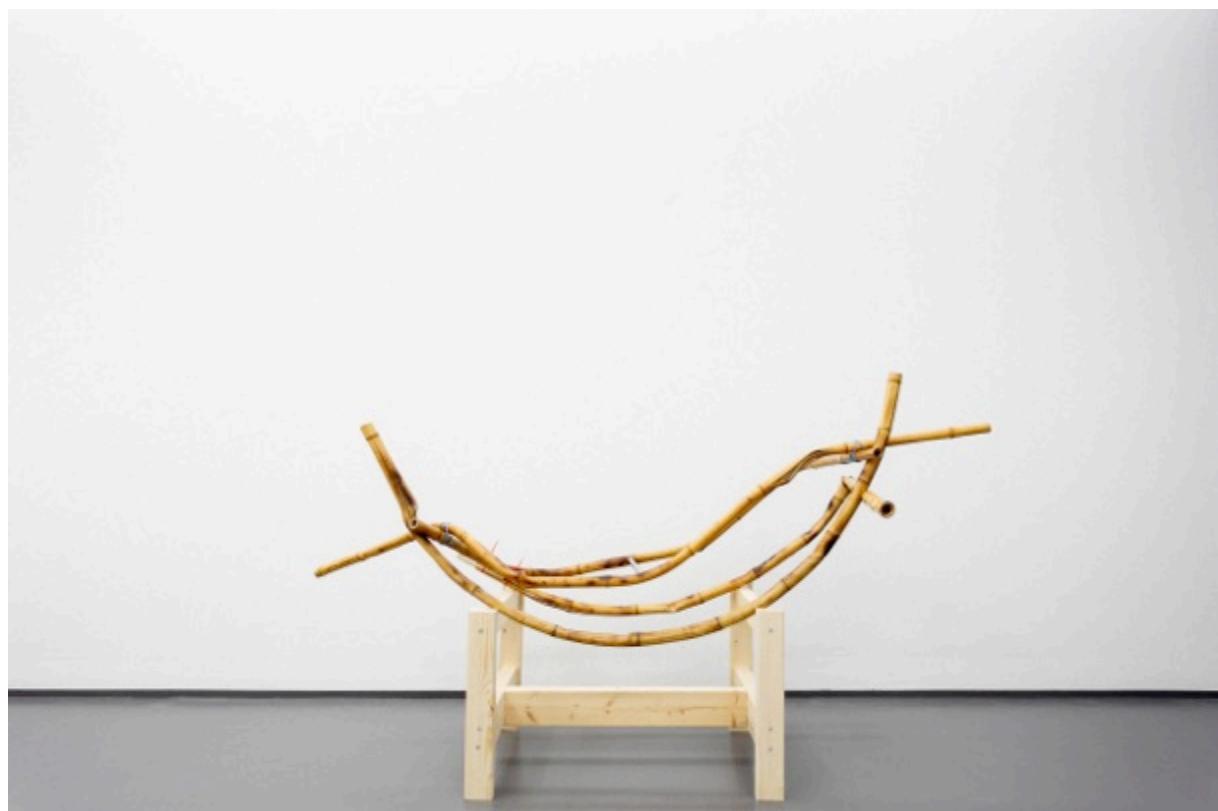
If curating means *curare*, acting as a *pharmakon*—that is, maintaining the revolutionary potential of an artwork—it also means acting in solidarity, in the sense of carrying a weight together. It means taking care as well as cleaning up the mess after hegemonic structures collapse, or prove themselves useless for the majority.

Can we really bring the artwork to public judgment in our time of crisis, to reinject vital fluids into the space of assembly, which perhaps the exhibition space is? What kinds of actions can we spearhead to stand in solidarity, to write grassroots histories?

Borrowing a sentence from artist Bouchra Khalili describing the work of writer Jean Genet—who did not speak for the people he stood in solidarity with—and attempting to retranslate such a practice into the field of curating, in order to see if curating can be reimagined to reinvent institutions that “bear witness to those whose words remain unheard or are silenced.”⁴⁵⁰



Maria Pasenau, *Pasenau and The Devil*, 30 August–12 October 2019. Installation views (and details). Photos: Julie Hrncirova/Fotogalleriet





Daisuke Kosugi, *A False Weight*, 2 November–14 December 2019. Installation views (and details). Photos: Julie Hrnčirová/Fotogalleriet

(5.3) The missing image⁴⁵¹

Tom Sandberg, a photographer and one of Fotogalleriet's co-founders, in 1977, speaking to the press on behalf of the working group about the reasons behind the institution to come, stated: "We are art world realists. Impressions through film and photography are a daily diet for everyone, but nonetheless, many in this country have an immaterial relationship with photography as art. It is that which we will try to correct."⁴⁵²

I find such a comparison of images to food quite fitting, especially in our neoliberal era of consumption, where image-related disorders are directly interconnected to or provoking eating disorders, due to unhealthy images, genetically engineered images— allergies, abstinences, and intolerances triggered by the immune system reacting significantly to images that "hurt us" on a bodily level.⁴⁵³ I lean on Sandberg's claim here, as it may help us rethink our institutional habits concerning image consumption. As he points out, we assume the visual language of images as given, instead of analysing the role of images in the constitution of institutions.⁴⁵⁴ Institutions *enable* images, because they create power, "a special kind of power." His question, simplified, would be: Images master us, but do we master them? We incorporate food into ourselves, but do we understand what we are eating?

Institutions define habits (and a status), of *how* we get accustomed to certain ways of seeing (of looking), directly shaping rights, duties, obligations, authorisations, permissions, empowerments, requirements, and certifications.⁴⁵⁵ It is in this setting that class and other forms of belonging are shaped and projected as universal social realities giving way to "desire-independent reasons for action."⁴⁵⁶ Meaning basically that we are often inactive towards what the institutional system projects on us. The "it is as it is" of the status quo leading to commonplaces such as that there are too many images in the world already—uttered, for instance, even by someone who is considered a pivotal figure in the history of photography: Robert Frank.⁴⁵⁷ These are constructs mostly aimed at keeping us from finding the right image, and from giving us a "right to the image."

Upon assuming my position at Fotogalleriet, I immediately launched a weekly programme of conversations titled *Let's Talk about Images*, to delve into questions regarding the absence of images, the absentees in images, the image of the absentee, and what images can do. Cultural hacking, the construction and negotiation of identities in relation to normative power structures, movements of solidarity, feminist perspectives, asserting presence through the absence of words and objects, who has the power to speak, victims and bodies in techno-utopian visions, creative storytelling, and narrative rifts were all performed in the emptied space of the institution, the white cube of the patriarchal bourgeoisie. We opened the possibility of the institution inverting its own given expectations, in an anthropophagia of sorts.⁴⁵⁸ In dialogue with local and international artists, we analysed the work of Syrian artist Khaled Barakeh and Norwegian visual storyteller Terje Abusdal, both working to reshape a country's image (providing the "missing" image). Barakeh's work attempts to reclaim the right to a different image, when a territory of war is expropriated by the right of its people to represent themselves—their image literally owned by media outlets only. Abusdal's work equally attempts to present a multilayered image of a country, Norway, by showing a weathered landscape also scarred by violence and informed by occupations, migrations, and imminent geopolitics, setting this against its mainstream image of utopian flatness as peacemaker. Abusdal goes back to a

moment in time too close to be forgotten and yet too painful to continue to be acknowledged, namely World War II as unravelled in the Finnmark region. Landscape, a charged concept, is made devoid of its “nobody’s land” label, equally depicted in Romantic paintings and early photography attending to an alleged uninhabited, vacant, and deserted land, to strategically serve the ideology of the dominant culture, while in fact being the territory of Indigenous populations and of a number of untold stories of belonging and exploitation. These ghosts (impossible images)—past and present—come back in Abusdal’s photographs, as both human and non-human witnesses; the survivors of World War II, who decided to stay behind despite the destruction of their land, cattle, and belongings, are superimposed alongside projected traces of the Syrian population arriving from the border town of Kirkenes in 2017. Their portraits could be identified by facial-recognition technologies and provoke inescapable retaliations by their homeland regime on their loved ones who were left behind.

The missing image: this is the hidden matrix of a curator. A missing image makes space for the unrecorded, as well as that which has been represented but that, for one too many reasons, is now absent. Making space for the institution to transgress its given limitations is the exhibition, a space dominated by the very logics of the nation state’s formation and oppressions. I believe that was also Sandberg’s call, to move away from the documentarian space of the page and into the democratic tensions of the arts.

How these practices of art institutions resist normalisation is the ultimate role of institutions—not to constrain people as such, but rather to create new sorts of power relations.

When we opened the first solo exhibition of Maria Pasenau, a self-taught artist—or to say it better, a non-normativised artist—it was to bring visual claims to the space, experiential claims connected to the body as the site of trauma. Pasenau brought to the exhibition space a sociality of emotions, or missing emotions—unexpressed emotions—which question cultural social practices determined by our market-driven society, unconsciously reaching our bodies.⁴⁵⁹ In a culture where our feelings are constantly being manipulated and we are constantly being told what we should “feel” or “not feel,” do or not do, which ideas of success to pursue or not pursue, Pasenau’s practice conveys a search for freedom, through her images, that I have rarely experienced, which connects people through missing images. Trying to find images that escape the stronghold of mainstream movements and false ideas of happiness, Pasenau provides the possibility for a different institution to be—one of such material encounters.

In providing annotations to Pasenau’s work, artist Bjarne Melgaard ponders whether he should rather write about tears and about different reasons why one cries or is unable to cry. He asks, “Does grief make it possible to finally navigate around the landscape we call our lives?” We learn that when he asked Pasenau what the content of the photographs was, she told him that it was just a form of documentation of when she “felt so damn bad for a while,” which makes him wonder if sadness can simply escalate at times, and one just “feels worse and worse and worse.”⁴⁶⁰ Actually, he confesses, he gets happy when people tell him they are depressed: Does Maria feel that her life is a long crisis? Or, is her work one long crisis? This is something we have all probably felt, because of what we are constantly asked to be, and the consequent

failure we feel. There is something extremely powerful in admitting such shame, inadequacy, because it is actually an acknowledgement of society's wrongdoings—past and present—on our collective bodies, and therefore it absolves individual guilt. In such negation there is a form of love and awkwardness, for the witness of such confirmation, as well as the detachment of shame from individual bodies to instead potentially affect and transform collective thinking. "In showing my shame in my failure to live up to a social ideal, I come closer to that which I have been exposed as failing," writes feminist theorist Sara Ahmed.⁴⁶¹

Emotions accumulate over time, and, in the capitalist process, histories of production and labour are erased in favour of consumers' value. This is a lesson not only from Marx but from Maria, too.⁴⁶²

If we turn given paradigms around, the ones claiming that emotions are either inside or outside the body, to instead say that they are actually circulating, that they are signifiers with a real effect, we could understand emotions as a contagion, and images as contagious—meaning they have the power to affect and shape other imaginaries. A different food. Such feelings and images become "sticky," saturated with affect, as the site of personal and social tension.⁴⁶³ Emotions and images constitute therefore a movement, and that is what I believe Pasenau is guiding us through.

Rightfully, Bjarne Melgaard also attempts a speculative alignment of Pasenau's practice to Viennese Actionism, not by chance but because in such practices the body is the ultimate site, the image of dissent. Trapped, we could say, in its biopolitics, the human flesh is a site of suffering and shame in response to specific political climates. For Günter Brus, Otto Mühl, Hermann Nitsch, Anna Brus, Johanna Schwanberg, and Valie Export, the body is perhaps the site of repressed memories of Nazism in the stagnant conservative culture of post-war Austria; obtuse Catholicism and bourgeois compliance to liberalism; the Vietnam War resurfacing in aestheticised forms through their skin. For Pasenau, it is the new conservative turn of politics. The body rebels because it is captured and co-opted by a nation state under whose violence and entanglement this indiscernible belonging perpetrates violence. It is here that the nakedness of the body moves in tandem with blood-sacrifice rituals, together with the artist's flesh turning into art-object simulacra as the site of critique. Genuinely shocking images against images of shock. Seeking action instead of reaction. Pasenau is not asking for our sadness, which in return would make us feel justified through what could be called co-suffering, ensuring that what we feel sad about remains the object "of feeling." We should not accept the imperative to feel sad about the pain of others. The pain is not overcome, but simply leaves us disconcerted. Emotions are not only about movement but also about attachment; it is what makes us feel, but also what keeps us in place, where we inhabit and where our bodies connect to other bodies.

The individual's memories are part of an intersubjective symbolic system grounding ideas of collective memory in society through verbalisation, narrativisation, and visual images' representation. It was essential to understand how memories and emotions are exchanged, shared, confirmed, amended, disputed, and appropriated. Anglicist and cultural scientist Aleida Assmann formulates how institutions such as family, neighborhood, peer group, nation, and culture become meaningful for identity processes and forming a "we." "We" presupposes shared practices and discourses defining principles of inclusion and exclusion. A collective group adopts a

shared history, she claims.⁴⁶⁴ Anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli reminds us that it is also imperative to keep in mind anticolonial practices pushing for greater attention to methods foregrounding an intersectional engagement with gender, class, sexuality, nation, disability. These axes of identity, often excluded by academia, shape knowledge production in more ways than one. Moreover, new technologies renew some of the gaps already present in knowledge systems assigning positions of power.⁴⁶⁵ Emotions or alleged lack of emotions in academic knowledge equally shape history and the formation of such a “we.” To look it through the lens of “what sticks” from a theoretical perspective was a guiding principle through the reading of Sara Ahmed. Ahmed asks, through emotion and their manipulation, what becomes a salient effect in such collective transference. What gets stuck and unstuck. What engenders new and more adhesive forms of sticking. Adhesion involves not just sticking to a surface but giving one’s support and allegiance.⁴⁶⁶ A conscious and theoretical approach to emotions foregrounds the possibility for multiple histories to emerge instead of cemented legends and truths.

Investigating memories and emotions, while looking at the presentness of Fotogalleriet as an active space of production of both, I was looking back into histories of production and “value” for a forthcoming book on the institution’s life. It was here I came across other missing images, memories, and remembrances connecting bodily traumas and escaping the singular subject, “sticking” in between subjects and society. Bente Geving, a Sea Sámi artist, repeatedly prompts a reflection on bodily memory, both personal and collective, as well as brings forth discussion on events, realities, and societal aspirations. During the summers of 1985 and 1988, she thoroughly studied the lives of Anna, Inga, and Ellen, eventually leading to her first solo exhibition at Fotogalleriet at the end of 1988. These three sisters belonged to the last generation who fluently spoke Sámi (in the process of assimilation, their children were forced to learn Norwegian). They maintained a leading role in their families and in their society, embodying the life cycle, courage, and identity of a people. Geving photographed them at a late stage in their lives, when “Ellen … has forgotten everything, but she remembers singing and dancing.”⁴⁶⁷ Returning often to the theme of recollection and forgetfulness as a compilation of forbidden habits reconstructed in the everyday objects and the organisation of one’s home, Bente’s photographic series associate sequences where feelings are rarely self-evident. Involuntary memory erosion articulates an experience where the loss of tradition is the loss of history.⁴⁶⁸

When we look at the work of Geving we see an intergenerational trauma—her work attempting to capture this impossible image. Memories, which have been stored in this circular emotional movement, reappear through the body of the image.

Photography is about leaving an impression; it is an act of perception and cognition as well as an emotion; it is about how objects impress upon us, and can effect feelings, can be a mark on the surface as well as perform a collective experience. And because of this function, we continue to be in a need of new images to readjust our diet, to understand what we are eating and why, and not only to consume pre-packaged food; we “feel” what we eat.

(5.4) Let's talk⁴⁶⁹

On 15 December 2020, I met students of the National University of Arts in Bucharest, and the Centre of Excellence in the Study of the Image from the University of Bucharest to reflect on digital programming strategies. Usually this would be a time of the year for celebrations, for thinking about the kind of year we've just had—we can see it has passed, and just move on, looking forward to the next one. Yet 2020 has been such a turning point. It will be difficult to let it go, because the ways in which our habits have been affected will have long-lasting results. It has been a year of losses, metaphorical and literal ones, and these lacerations will take a long time to heal. It has also been a year where capitalism's desire has reached its maximum profitability, under the paradigm of collective safety through which new normative choreographies have been imposed on us: consume do not gather; speak do not talk; complain do not protest.

While emotions are skyrocketing and mental balance is under pressure, what happens to art? Why would we even need to talk about art during this time? And what is the role of exhibition spaces during these times of crisis? Is democracy still to be debated in some “public” spaces even while we have no right to congregate, to take collective actions?

Such disciplining of our bodies through telecommunications technology has reached maximised popularity these days. Informal discussions, the movement of ideas, are hovering below in underground secrecy, a constipation of the individual body, as much as the basis for new totalitarianisms coming. It is important to say that if we simply accept such dichotomies of “comprehension,” or cause and effect, we are supporting ideas of global conquest and total domination.⁴⁷⁰ The reality we live in is not new, yet we cannot escape the grimness of the present by looking to a nostalgic past, or fall into the oblivion of a better future.

During the second wave of pandemic “confusion” in Oslo, resulting in the second wave of Covid-19 regulations, yet again, the institution was facing closure for an indefinite time, with an exhibition that had just opened. At the same time shopping malls (the reign of consumerism) were still open, gathering hundreds of people in queues for Black Friday. Museums and cultural events drastically shut down. Under capitalist predicaments, fast fashion is more necessary than art. No doubts and not even a paradox: it speaks of our time when culture is an added decoration to the cityscape and as part of an economic system—of society—only if it sustains growth. There is no danger to putting an institution on hold, to putting culture on hold for a day, a month, or a year because if tourism is not growing, then capital is not moving—and art can wait. Culture is not seen as vital (counter-)information to rethink the normative structures we are constrained within, and how we got here.

As feminist Marxist political theorist Silvia Federici recently stated, what we are witnessing is not an unforeseen catastrophe but an orchestrated profit-driven machine whose signs have been there for years, at least from the 1970s with the inception of the neoliberal phase. Since then, we have witnessed a careful dismantling of all the infrastructures that have been most important for the reproduction of daily life, including lack of a proper budget for health care, a general divestment of social services, and the double-edged impact of overworking: on the one hand, a rise in unemployment and, on the other, an extension of working hours and working days, reducing the time for self-care while increasing the use of fast food, leading to obesity

and undermining our immune systems, contributing to the deterioration of the quality of the air, and so on and so forth, broadly affecting the global system we know and are part of.⁴⁷¹

“We don’t want a theory of innocent powers to represent the world,” says technology theorist Donna Haraway, nor to act “in terms of Global Systems, but we do need an earthwide network of connections, including the ability to partially translate knowledges among very different—and power-differentiated—communities.”⁴⁷²

When the Fotogalleriet team sent out a message to simply revindicate presence beyond our physical space, by sharing the staff (private) phone numbers and inviting people to call us and get in touch, it was not an act of generosity, but, quite selfishly, one born of believing that art institutions’ power in general was under attack.⁴⁷³ It was a call to awaken ours and others’ consciousnesses. “What’s happening? Let’s talk!” Let’s talk, at this time when our ability to keep a space of “antagonism” feels under siege and we stand divided. When we wrote, “The intimacy of our conversations related to small and large societal questions gets lost in the coldness of digital space. Here we can only speak formally conjuring up an atmosphere of division where we are literally boxed in screens,” this was a message of frustration for how minimised such power felt throughout 2020.

A month later, following the delivery of this message, an artist and colleague called me. I had not spoken with him for a while and I was happy to hear from him, up until the moment he said he was recording our phone conversation for a conference to be held digitally the next day. He had some “questions” around the publicness of an institution, and why institutions were still getting receiving funding; he asked if institutions were still working, and the kind of work institutions had done over the past year.

“I cannot but speak about the institution I know best and that I’m responsible for,” I answered, and so we went on to speak about a number of things, including changes in budgets for artists in a pandemic year. What surprised me most was the question about the institution’s message being part of a “Relational Aesthetics” project (as it apparently reminded him of such practices), as if we had gotten a special Covid-19 grant to realise it. I was uncertain what to answer. I pick up the phone every single day, and we do not get a special grant every time I or anyone on our team answers a call or an email from artists, colleagues from other institutions, or our publics. You can imagine my surprise, as I came to think that, under the Duchampian umbrella that “everything can be art” which continues to prevail in the art world today, we tend to forget that this trope matters very little to the outside world (especially in such a critical sociopolitical moment, when culture is not the centre of any discussion), including the coming together as a collective of cultural practitioners to defend one’s space and work as such.

Nicolas Bourriaud book *Relational Aesthetics* was translated into English in 2002. At the time, I was a student and came to study with a number of people associated with Relational Aesthetics practices, including Molly Nesbit, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Pierre Huyghe, who gave lectures and presentations at the school I attended.⁴⁷⁴ I had dissected the book then. In it, Bourriaud says:

We feel meagre and helpless when faced with the electronic media, theme parks, user-friendly places, and the spread of compatible forms of sociability, like the laboratory rat doomed to an inexorable itinerary in its cage, littered with chunks of cheese.⁴⁷⁵

One may think he is speaking about today, but he is actually speaking of the abstraction, and the abstract processes of, the 1990s.

Much has been read into what Bourriaud wrote in such an epochal book (“epochal” meaning here “of our epoch”). At the time, though, he was referring to the fact that relations had become reified as the site of consumerism (although I’m not sure what was new in such a claim). He was speaking of the pleasure sellable through consumer goods and gained through separational channels (the same thing Guy Debord had already famously stated in the 1960s), in a society where relations are not experienced any longer but only blurred into their “spectacular” representations.⁴⁷⁶

Bourriaud was asking if such lost relationality—unmediated by goods or commodities—could still be possible by being generated through the space of art, within the art world, or through the artwork. His claim is for an extended context of art in its social space (basically moving beyond the object). In the 1990s—in the spirit of the information age—he recalls practices of people’s interaction with social systems and open-ended circulation and the mutation of objects, with an absence of dividing walls, shifting from the artist’s body and with a focus on the interaction with the audience; his exhibitions were made for people to sit, talk, listen to music, and engage in everyday activities. The only problem is that in reclaiming (or in not claiming) that there was no past to these practices, Bourriaud continues to reproduce the very capitalist means of exploitations he was seen as criticising, where he denies gender, provenance, and class as vital elements of performing the exhibition space (in presence or in absence of such bodies). Bourriaud does not speak of such practices as valuable for the unveiling of the structures of exploitation—the invisible work behind exhibition making—which had been part of a long tradition of feminist art practices since the 1960s. His work hovers over pure aesthetics.

What we are discovering under the pandemic days is a fragility that is not universal but rather contextual to specific sections of society, specific institutional structures. So, Fotogalleriet’s message was a call to an art system which may feel divided, disempowered, and under a great deal of vulnerability, affecting small and medium-sized institutions.

As a counterpoint to Bourriaud, and to claims of Relational Aesthetics, I want to quickly bring into the discussion the work of Mierle Laderman Ukeles, specifically *Maintenance Art* from 1969. Ukeles is an artist whose relation to the idea of process in Conceptual Art, for instance, has been defined as relating to domestic and civic “maintenance.” Connecting the “high” cultural status of art and the “low” status of the routines of maintenance, which still underlie divisions of care, she showed how art can literally disappear before your eyes, as we continue to praise the norm. Working against such an easy understanding, Ukeles decided to recode *all* her activities as art, and that is how we know of her ground-breaking work. As part of the *Maintenance Art Performance Series* (1973–74), she performed *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance Outside* on 23 July 1973 at the Wadsworth Atheneum, in Hartford, Connecticut,

literally working at the threshold of the museum. Here she drew attention to institutional mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, validation and denial.

In this particular performance Ukeles addresses our power to redefine through performativity and labour the confines of our work and the definition of the art space as an active sphere of action and normativity. She even said that during the days of the Vietnam War, when institutions were viewed as corruptible, many artists chose to do most of their work on the street, as dematerialising their art meant being unfettered and unowned, and I read this with great respect and admiration.⁴⁷⁷ Such action is not decentring the power of institutions but actively seeking and working for inclusivity in the sphere of representation, by recognising the political dimension of cultural projects.

The message we sent out as Fotogalleriet—which was not by an artist, was not a piece of art, and was addressing a different threshold, making a great difference to reclaiming such a powerful sphere for art to occupy, and a different institutional vulnerability—was not Relational Aesthetics in the terms we commonly know, as formulated by Bourriaud.

Curatorial practice in the time of a pandemic

Fotogalleriet is gendered, as, contrary to the patriarchal space of the museum, a kunsthalle has a modest budget, modest power, and a great deal of fragility. Our maintenance is more porous, less divided, less hierarchical—inevitably because of how vulnerable we are. Such vulnerability is exposed in moments like the year 2020, when we have just been set aside, meaning we are not the centre, so to speak, of anyone's preoccupations.

So, on 3 April 2020, as the world was shaking under our feet, and it felt more fluid than solid, and we witnessed a deceleration of cultural and social life, we publicly said we felt a duty to continue analysing what is happening *now*, at this moment, and the effects the produced (or unproduced) images are provoking on us.

Because we sit on the margin of cultural life—as small and medium-sized institutions—we are also the ones keeping critical discussion active, generating new thinking, and fighting for democratic processes within and beyond the arts. “Instead of taking a break,” we said, “feeling under siege, or meditating on our past nostalgically, we continue conversations with artists and we make their work available to extended audiences.”⁴⁷⁸

Let's Talk about Images 2.1.0 was a series of what we called “exercises in thought,” unfolding over eight weeks, for the mind to bring order to all sensory data, whatever its nature may be, and thus make experience still possible.⁴⁷⁹

We did not want and we do not want to turn digital—this was very important for me to make clear, in order to not be subsumed into a new given world order we had not asked for, where labour is moved into the private sphere to maximise profit and resources.⁴⁸⁰ Facing the impossibility of occupying the physical space, we planned to hijack the only available platforms at our disposal at that moment to continue to maintain discussions. Nomadism was part of planning to maintain freedom and independence. This was equally a move to avoid political claims of redundancy and offering the power to somebody else to put us on hold. In turn, it was a strategic move

to support the artists' economy the best we could, by continuing to do what we could do—that is, share with others different worlds, other forms of being, and hopefully keep affecting thinking.

Let's Talk About Images 2.1.0 was a #stayhome art programme. The program took place from 16 April to 7 June 2020. The participating artists were published on the institution's Instagram account every Monday. Artists, curators, and journalists from seven countries participated: Norway, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, India, and the USA. The participants were: Manuel Pelmus, Katalin Erdödi, Anushka Rajendran, Salvatore Vitale, Philip Di Salvo, Vilde M. Horve, Bjarne Bare, AA, RG, Anahita Alebouyeh, Håkon Hoffart and Anders Eiebakke. The entire Fotogalleriet team worked as a production team to commission and realised within a short period discursive and artistic interventions fostering awareness around relevant topics and challenging habits determined by the pandemic. We can adapt curatorial thinking to digital platforms that are not necessarily designed for such purpose and attempt to give voice to artists in an otherwise oppressing regime. New artistic expression forms ensue under strained societal conditions by maintaining a critical voice and pushing the given limits.

Excercises 1–8: Conspiracy theories, surveillance technologies, racism, family ideals, memory, and empowerment

We launched *Let's Talk about Images 2.1.0* with artist Manuel Pelmus. Pelmus accepted the offer to conceive a new performance based on previous work concerning the economy of presence, value production, and strategies of disappearance. His acclaimed solo piece *preview* (2007), where his presence is discernible only through his voice describing movements made by his body behind a veil of darkness, was merged with *Borderlines* (2019), for which he returns to his own memories of border crossings or borders falling, from the Berlin Wall coming down to Eastern European countries re-entering continental powers in Europe.

Personal experiences speak about hegemonic powers, which give us the freedom to move, or not, where we, as individuals, count too little in the randomness of such decisions. Pelmus's (hi)stories aggregate notions of visibility and invisibility, moving between different politics of representation, from East to West, from visible borders becoming invisible, and from outside into the body. Such confining within national borders does not always feel like protection and safety, depending on one's own set of privileges, beliefs, and even chosen sexual identity. It exposes the power to speak—if any, for some. Citizenship assumes a new meaning and a potential threat.⁴⁸¹

Curator Anushka Rajendran addressed this further. "From a position of isolation, it may seem as if we are all equal—the virus does not discriminate. However, as the Indian doctor Jagadish Hiremath pointed out: 'Social distancing is a privilege—it means you live in a house large enough to practice it.'" Rajendran, who was to curate Colomboscope, Sri Lanka's only festival platform for contemporary art and interdisciplinary dialogue. Alongside issues of "interpollination"—simply meaning organisms trespassing human-built borders as micro-agents travelling through the air, and therefore questioning how limited human views are, and how the openness of language and poetry can lead us to more-than-human perspectives.⁴⁸²

As the idea of "the nation" returned strongly to justify a number of "necessary" actions, including prohibiting gathering for demonstrations, severe immigration

procedures, and prioritising the rights of national citizens (most often in favour of Western countries and other elites); the concept has been made more visible, and more violent, including in Europe.⁴⁸³ This was among the reasons why we invited Switzerland-based artist Salvatore Vitale to speak about his long-running research-based project *How to Secure a Country* (2014–19).⁴⁸⁴ Much like Norway, Switzerland is known for being one of the safest countries on earth, and a prime example of efficiency and efficacy—including preparing for moments of pandemic. State and private actors ensure this valuable commodity—safety—which is as much a basic need as it is a billion-dollar business. Vitale invited to witness a photographic livestream of an invisible military facility in the Swiss Alps. Titled *ABC—Attitude/Behavior/Code* (2020), the work combines archival images from Swiss biomedical facilities and texts from official national pandemic protocols to reflect on the nature of invisible threats and what we are willing to sacrifice to neutralise them.

Security is based on experiences, which rely on emotions. The military and bureaucratic tasks become managing our emotions, infrastructurally and representationally. Humans are the weakest link in the security equation. They are unpredictable, and their emotions even more so. Changing human behaviour through technology provides valuable forms of control for nations.

Bjarne Bare speaks about nature as the invisible enemy of capitalism.⁴⁸⁵ Bare addresses a gripping stillness through his work, and that standing still does not create friction. The standstill is the tyranny of the photographic lens, which has given way to linear perspectivism with one single vanishing point. He proposes to discover new forms of navigation, and new temporal perspectives, through what Bare calls a conjunctive concatenation of details—an emotional understanding in contrast to a logical construction of the world; empathy instead of intellect; a nomadic desire instead of an idea of belonging.⁴⁸⁶

The Society of the Friends of the Virus spearheaded a counter-view to the pandemic, giving full agency to the virus. Since mid-March 2020, the Society distributed a series of political writings through different epistolary forms.⁴⁸⁷ For Fotogalleriet they launched *Contagious New York*, a video diary in five chapters.⁴⁸⁸ Here, Annie Chambers, a former Black Panther Party member based in Chicago, speaks from an interview in 2006 to denounce the violence of the capitalist system preceding the pandemic. It is the law written by nobody like us, she says, for which I have no equal rights.⁴⁸⁹

Anahita Alebouyeh turned her gaze inwards. She shared her artist's manifesto to suggest how “the artist” may move forward. Through satire and humour, she aims to suggest new ways of looking at and processing our immediate surroundings. She also points out a poetic change in these cultural phenomena, focusing on what occurs when they are translated and performed in a new context.⁴⁹⁰

Håkon Hoffart's work took the form of a digital installation consisting of images, sculptures, and videos, channelled through a content farm. In Norway, Hoffart pioneered the idea of the internet as a habitable space (beyond its given function), when, in 1997, at the age of thirteen, he created an interactive website with Javascript games, an image gallery, discussion forums, and the world's first “internet café,” where one could eat virtual food on the internet. Håkon's world reached 800,000

unique hits in 1998. So we found inspiration in our conversations with him about the suburbia of the internet, its caves, and the underworld of the yet-unknown.

For the final week of the programme, we “screened” *The Park* (2020), a project by Anders Eiebakke which addresses the most monolithic work of public art in Norwegian history: the Vigeland Park.⁴⁹¹ Still referred to in City of Oslo cultural policy documents as “one of the most successful works of public art in the city’s history,” the Vigeland Park, studio, and subsequent museum were first proposed by Norwegian sculptor Gustav Vigeland in 1914. Construction began and continued over three decades, including during World War II, with Vigeland’s vision continually evolving in scale and ambition. Even today, the park is one of Oslo’s most visited and iconic locations, but its history and Vigeland’s life are seldom critically examined or discussed. The film *The Park* addresses essential issues related to conspiracy theories, surveillance technologies, racism, family ideals, memory, and empowerment, all associated with producing an aesthetic realm and ideal heavily dominated by a normative body built on the model of functionality and “purity.” The site of the park becomes an unspoken monument to the Holocaust. It calls for a different history to be told and made accessible.⁴⁹²

To conclude—as we all continue to witness a very fragile public space for discussion worldwide—analysing as well as providing alternative images is of a political nature, and the clear task of culture is to shape our present condition.

Exploring images as a free tool of personal expression is inscribed within institutions like Fotogalleriet and their mandate, and as such, the aim is in no way ever concluded, it is an aspiration that guides us ever forward.

(5.5) Anger, love, and silence: Caring for emotions in the exhibition space

Is love an emotion? Is anger an emotion? Are these pulsations? Or are love and anger organising principles, both private and political? What would the consequences be if they were to be treated like deals, duties, obligations, authorisations, permissions, empowerments, requirements, and certifications?

A bit of background to perform a position

I am a creature of a certain moment in time, of post-1960s life in Southern Italy, and one allowed to enter higher education systems despite my origins.⁴⁹³ I was born in the centre of the country, home to a dialect which came to dominate the entire peninsula's ruling by the nation state. My parents were migrants from the South, a land expropriated during the unification of Italy; it's also a place "conflicted" by a multiplicity of languages—hugely flattened and dismissed as dialects, while in fact survivors and bearers of spoken Latin, ancient Greek, and other "lost" languages.⁴⁹⁴ My parents' migration was guided by the so-called dream of a better life, escaping the consequences of decades of political policy that impoverished peasant life, agriculture, and local livelihoods; they left the South behind in favour of the strong industrialisation policies that advantaged the ruling North.⁴⁹⁵ Their complacency regarding that life did not last long, and when I was still a small child, they went back to farm life, in a form of both co-option and resistance, stranded between two worlds: the decadent industrial model (soon to decline) and the bypassed peasant livelihood (unsustainable under the newly designed state of things).

As an outcast child, ostracised for my class belonging, I carry with me into adulthood an inherited trauma.⁴⁹⁶ The roots of my critical interest in the machinery of aesthetic affection, of vision, perhaps derive from some of those very early formative experiences in an upbringing of insults, of being abused on the street for the way I spoke and moved, my effeminacy,⁴⁹⁷ for my parents being abused because of their low level of education, and for a local Southern society enraged by unfulfilled promises and aspirations and scarred by vicious alternating dominations, branching out from city lords.⁴⁹⁸ The psychosocial dynamism of the violence of prejudice, regulated by regimes of theoretical discourses, is the seed of my anger today.⁴⁹⁹

What came to be defined as "situated knowledge" by Donna Haraway at the end of the 1980s is what I experienced first-hand by being the object of a social experiment: a "map of tensions and resonances between the fixed ends of a charged dichotomy."⁵⁰⁰ Haraway clarifies how the dismissal of local knowledges has also created tension by forcing diverging interpretations and inequalities into the entanglements of knowledge and power. It is also here that Haraway comes to define "resonance," in the sense of bodily vibration registering complex, contradictory, and structuring views, as a positive tool against polarisation and dichotomy.⁵⁰¹

I start from this line of thought, not by chance, but because I think it is important to reflect on such polarities, which we have inherited consciously or unconsciously, and which have created a grammar determining who has the right and a voice to speak.⁵⁰² It is in these processes of visibility and invisibility, of the production of what is thinkable and sayable, that "scarcity" in discourses gains a form of invisible governance.⁵⁰³ I am attempting both to speak from a situated position as well as to apply a situated knowledge and perspective, inherited through a contrarian thinking, to a claim of objectivity, a colonial discourse manufactured out of the technologies of

vision, because “one cannot relocate in any possible vantage point without being accountable for that movement.”⁵⁰⁴

Archive trouble

During the winter of 2018, while diving into the archives of Fotogalleriet for an upcoming book, I was mechanically and unwillingly pushed to retrace, enforce, and further “construct” a history which had already been somewhat sketched out. Yet, I was still surprised by the discursive absence of women photographers in the recently systematised archive, especially relating to the founding period of the institution in the late 1970s, as well as by a disturbing photograph on the institution’s website replicating presumptuous hierarchies of gender.⁵⁰⁵ The archive is a domicilation, a space of commencement, because it is the physical place where documents are filed for the power of interpretation, in “the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded.”⁵⁰⁶ The archive is a “house arrest,” where the private becomes public (meaning not necessarily available, but not secret either, which is the power of such a consignation).⁵⁰⁷ This is the place where social order is established and exercised. Therefore, the archive is an apparatus of perception, reproduction, and recording, and a place of inscription, ciphering, repression, displacement, and condensation.

Nonetheless, there is always not only one commencement. With performance artist Marthe Ramm Fortun, we started discussing a visceral affect-based presence in the exhibition space at Fotogalleriet with an intertextuality of “being with” (resonating with the physical space itself, with the other artists), to identify a general narrative where silence—what Michel Foucault would call a “scarcity of discourse”—in educational institutions as well as in art institutions leads to the perpetuation of the idea of the nonexistence of women artists and photographers, making it impossible to get beyond the preliminary despondency of rediscovery and on to an actual analysis of individual practices and their distinct qualities.⁵⁰⁸ With her overflowing energy, Ramm Fortun immediately drew our attention to the possibility of physically transgressing the given borders of the institution, moving into the city’s geography, by acknowledging the context of its architectural skin, that is, the institution’s pouring onto the streets and into parks. This action was undertaken in order to explore the double life of an institution refusing to “live” the outside, the night, the drug taking, needle using, pissing, drunkenness, fucking—the “otherness”—through its clean normative space, activated only during “office hours.” Ramm Fortun was inviting us to imbibe the entirety of the locale in its material presence by simply “crossing” the street and the clock, rebelling against the given white cube—the ghost of a patriarchal past. Instead of relying on her bodily presence—as she usually would in her performances—she mounted a bed-type structure on a pedestal, a supporting structure, to be climbed so one could touch the ceiling of the exhibition space, to “measure” the physical space in its bodily distances, and to observe how it constricts the possibility of any given movement, as in a hospital or a mental institution. Or as with any piece of modern architecture itself, its preventing and pre-empting of movement—a mechanism so well reproduced by the exhibition space.⁵⁰⁹

As part of her performance, Ramm Fortun “homed in” on works by Lill-Ann Chepstow-Lusty (a British-born artist “exiled” to Norway in 1980) and Bente Geving (a Sámi artist who used an early exhibition at the institution as part of claiming her Indigenous roots), as well as Astri W. Goksøyr, Cecilie Lønne, and Henny Lie.⁵¹⁰ All linger ambiguously between documentary photography, Conceptual Art, sculpture,

and painting. These artists have no common denominator except that they all exhibited at Fotogalleriet during its first decades and shared an absence of exhibition reviews, demonstrating an external attempt to reduce their expressions as being unmediated and amateurish.⁵¹¹

If the opening of Fotogalleriet as an institution in 1977 coincides with the establishment of photography as an art form in its own right in Norway, Ramm Fortun asks, then was the problem that the “male artist” could not afford to let the fight for the canonisation of the medium be cramped by women and marginalised voices, already unrepresented in the art world, nationally and globally?⁵¹²

A first performance, titled *When I'm not near the slide I love, I love the slide I'm near*, was held in March 2019, and a second performance, titled *Look Around in Joy*, was held at midnight at the end of April 2019. As of June 2021, a third performance is yet to come, meanwhile supplying time and duration as the material for “transgressive” action.

If a science of the archive should include the theory of its institutionalisation, then it should also investigate the laws ascribing it the capacity to control and perpetrate memory.⁵¹³ Ramm Fortun’s intervention exposes what I would term “archive trouble,” in order to question the series of processes that are woven together to construct discourses of knowledge, precise institutional identities normativised by the collecting of strategic information to constitute a determinacy, and a radical dependency on established photographic authorities such as Edward Weston, Bill Brandt, Helmut Newton, August Sander, and Weegee (all exhibited during the first decade of the institution), without which an autonomous “other” becomes illusory. I am mirroring the jargon of Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* because the archive is, like gender, an improvised performance.⁵¹⁴ The archive pretends to have a universal aspect of truth, one equal to that of constructed notions of gender, uncomplicated by factors such as class, ethnicity, and sexuality. The limits of studying archives and democratically participating in them for the sake of the politics of memory are on par with the limits on the power to control the law—that is what is undoubtedly expressed in the archives of coercion. The violence of the archive itself is an archival violence, because it is both constitutive and conservative.⁵¹⁵ Jacques Derrida attempts to produce a death-drive theory of the archive itself, what he names the “archiviolithic,” to attest to a revolutionary potential of the archive—that such a drive “leaves no monument,” “bequeaths no document of its own”; as an inheritance, it leaves only its erotic simulacrum, impressions; the archive can never be memory, because it always takes the place of the original and is a breakdown of memory.⁵¹⁶

As the Fotogalleriet team was writing an application for financial support—which went unfunded—with the artist Nikhil Vettukattil, we also came to further analyse the institution’s archives in search of a different “trouble,” or perhaps to stay with the trouble, or to get in trouble, as Butler so convincingly proposes. We were studying and looking for non-European subjects in the overall story of Fotogalleriet’s programming. Not surprisingly, what we found instead were expropriated bodies, objects of representation only, with no actual agency. No memory. By dissecting dozens of boxes, slides, posters, publications, catalogues, internal documents, and visitors’ logs, Vettukattil came to assert:

Norway is no exception to the fact that all nation states promote myths of monoculturalism and monolingualism that are reinforced through a fabricated national identity, forged through imperial history, that intentionally misrepresents the variety and interaction of dialects, languages and cultures within the geographical region. This identity is instrumental in the commodification of national exports for the international capitalist market, where cultures are packaged with branding, flags and trademarks, and high prices reward “authenticity” and origin.⁵¹⁷

More recently, we continued discussions with Vettukattil, touching upon institutional structures and financial support, and how funding is determinant of the production of culture, especially in welfare-state nations such as those of Scandinavia, where being an artist is deemed a profession and therefore connected to rules of work and restitution and not only considered an act of passion and love.⁵¹⁸ Funding is part of structuring ideas, framing eventual productions, and effecting a politics of vision. As our initial project proposal had by now been discarded by grant-giving bodies and so would never make it into their archives—for not being “approved” and for not seeing the light of realisation—we found ourselves imagining how many projects over Fotogalleriet’s five-decade history had been omitted from archives, remaining simply in the memory of some people. Did other struggles for recognition reach the doors of the institution without making it onto its walls? Were these discussions simply absent? Where can we find that other commencement to which Derrida points? Would the archiviolithic be too feeble here to even become a force? Or would the archiviolithic simply take over the entire archive and burn it down with all of its force? How can we “curate difficult knowledge” that should eventually become publicly available through archives when allegedly there are no traces left, if not in absence. Though tangibly this demonstrates the infamous life of archives, which at times capture some historical traces only unwillingly—something Foucault reports on in “The Life of Infamous Men,”⁵¹⁹ asserting that certain people’s stories are made visible only through their encounter with the law (the hospital, the clinic, the prison, and, by extension, we could add the white cube); their lives, contrary to aristocratic or bourgeois figures who willingly recount their deeds, are registered precisely by their transgressiveness—such a void is purely left to the original, to memory which is not there and not inscribed. There are no impressions.

A deconstruction of what the archive calls for entails overcoming its limits—limits that have been declared insurmountable. If the archiviolithic is an aggression and a destruction drive inciting forgetfulness, amnesia, and a radical effacement that can never be reduced to memory, what are we then to lean upon?⁵²⁰ According to Derrida, Sigmund Freud, in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929–30), claims to worry about having invested himself in useless expenditures, stressing about certain “printing” technologies of archivisation, to build a perhaps useless archive and “to expound things which are, in fact, self-evident.” The movement of this rhetoric leads elsewhere, namely to the possibility of a radical perversion, a “diabolical death drive,” an aggression or a destruction drive: a drive of loss. Allegedly, Freud is repeating everything which had already, since *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), introduced the destruction drive into the psychic economy of a pure-loss expenditure. Freud seems to draw the conclusion here with respect to civilisation: “Why this wasted time?” “Why archive this?” Why these investments in paper, in ink, in characters?” “Does this merit printing?”⁵²¹ Derrida argues that, in Freud’s theory, loss is a form of resistance. The death drive incites resistance everywhere, despite its

operating in silence and destroying its own archives in advance—the motivation of its movement.⁵²²

Likewise, perhaps, Nikhil Vettukattil's claim on Fotogalleriet's archive: a drive of loss, motivating his very writing. Rage. We can hold on to the archive to point out its failures, its crimes, its ongoing repetition of the same, its unchallenged holdings.

Infamous caring: The kunsthalle is a form of archiving in itself

If there is no archive without consignation allowing memorisation, repetition, and reproduction, then what permits archivisation exposes the possibility of its destruction, of starting anew. Another economy is at work: the transaction between the death drive and the pleasure principle, between Thanatos and Eros.⁵²³ It is this resonance, in the ability of the archive to show itself, that the work of the archive comes closer to that of a kunsthalle—an eternal possibility for a new beginning. Is not the work of a kunsthalle similar to a death-drive expenditure, to possibly working on this loss expenditure and leaving no traces behind, forced into the institution's presentness?⁵²⁴ Is it not also here that we can question the ontological status contingent to the bare-institutional condition?⁵²⁵ Moreover, the kunsthalle is a form of archiving in itself, as it aspires to democratic forms of governance but lives within an unresolvable tension: its memory cannot be fully grasped (contrary to the museum, where memory is constantly reprocessed and histories are either static or in a self-reflective motion).

Kunsthalles—pushing novel understandings of art forward, and contributing to the making and unmaking of these given categories, though with little financial means and precarious personnel—are also “cut out” from larger art histories.⁵²⁶ Perhaps, then, to analyse these concurrent silencing structures is the real task of a curatorial materialism.⁵²⁷ These struggles against this continuous suppression, inflicted first and foremost by social circumstances of provenance, mirror larger societal structures and views. (Contemporary) art (as a global system) maintains a high threshold while feigning accessibility through its glass-ceiling system.

As much as we have learned ideals of life achievement based on the failures and successes of individual artist-heroes, we continue looking at institutional and curatorial achievements based on the failures and successes of individual institutions and curators, mostly of leading world museums and biennales. In a practical, aesthetic, and theoretical manner, these processes form subjectivities and collective behaviours, silencing what has been defined as and relegated to being “minor”—that is, small institutions, with their own curatorial roles being no less part of this suppressing movement.⁵²⁸

Though central to the production of the “new”—because kunsthalles’ processes are dedicated to speaking to and about the current moment—they have neither an “obligation” (so to speak), nor the capacity to register such tremors determining historical changes, nor the influence of museums to historicise what has been shaken through these movements. Such is the paradox of being contemporary.⁵²⁹ The kunsthalle lives within the very moment it needs to support, and therefore becomes concurrent with the artwork; there is no separation between the two. Because the kunsthalle has not overcome the “struggle for daily bread,” a true emancipatory role for her is not possible.⁵³⁰ It is here, though, that new forms of curating have been and are imagined, where one can find forms of assembly, of aggregation, in the exhibition

space, assenting to autonomous forms of governance, investigating and challenging the critical conditions of production and the platforms of display, and redefining the structures of governance, production, and support as well as the given ruling relations.⁵³¹

It is in regard to these congregative structures, precursors to or contemporaries of kunsthalle formations, newly born spaces “of becoming” pushed together by adversarial external forces—in absence of or requesting and producing the new—that I have used the term “trembling institutions.” With this term, I wish to speak of a temporary coming together of ideas, of opposition, and therefore of ideas of citizenship, of belonging, which come under the umbrella of a physical and a mental space encompassing a period of time of a few hours, a few years, or a few decades, enhancing the formation of aesthetic propositions.⁵³² The power of such gatherings remains in their indefinable status, in their literal “trembling,” as they can always change form and escape what is requested by the norm *to be*. It is a “respectful dissent” as well as a claiming of the right to congregate and disperse.⁵³³ Something happens when subjects come together; independently from their given statuses, a new chemistry arises. Novelist and non-fiction writer Elias Canetti defines five types of congregations, or masses, or crowds: baiting, flight, prohibition, reversal, and feast. What they all have in common, though, is growth, equality, density, and a goal.⁵³⁴ The kunsthalle is a call for a gathering, a mass finding unison. Is not the curatorial—“caring for”—articulating these aesthetic forces? Resonating with the vision expounding from these more or less temporary and unstable congregations?

These forces bringing bodies together and inducing them to “tremble”—or making institutional models “tremble”—including curatorial and other aspirations for change, are more often than not guided by emotions; frustration, for instance, in the case of the founding of Fotogalleriet, but also love, anger, and other passions finding support in a temporary mass.⁵³⁵ Emotions “shape the very surfaces of bodies”—one could say both institutional and human bodies—through the repetition of actions over time, and by finding proximity to or distance from others. All actions are reactions, in the sense that what we do is shaped by our contact with others.⁵³⁶ Though emotions have been relegated to the margins of theory, their presence in the field of theory has been consistent. This is not a manipulation of emotions aimed at luring audiences into the exhibition space, but rather an attempt to catalyse the exhibition form as a sounding board, taking the time and space to analyse what is in the exhibition space and what the exhibition space is.⁵³⁷ It is here we can ask: What does it mean to literally “care,” to “love” an exhibition object, to feel grief, anger, attachment, shock, guilt, pain, anger, depression, or hope towards it. Emotionality is a claim on a subject or a collective dependent on relations of power.⁵³⁸ If we stop thinking of emotions as “in” the individual or the social, or completely on the outside, then we can see that they produce the surface, the boundary. The objects of emotions take shape as effects of circulation. That is, it is not emotions that circulate (as a contagion) but the objects of emotion. Such objects become “sticky,” saturated with affect, as the site of personal and social tension. Emotions are a movement. Their circulation involves the transformation of others into objects of feeling.⁵³⁹

Love as a social emotion

Although we may say informally, “I *love* this or that artwork,” we have been taught that art objects, as museum objects, are the subject of study, not the subject of emotions. The study of “museality”—“musealia,” in the terminology of Zbyněk

Zbyslav Stránský, the “father of scientific museology”—is the museum object, a scientific subject with its own set of methods, a specific terminology, and, at last, a theoretical system. This set of specifications has been part of forming a *habitus* to the content (the actual object), which allows justifying the container (the museum). It is a form of isolation of, and at times alienation to, cultural heritage and living artworks.⁵⁴⁰ A museum, for Boris Groys, is that which can only begin “after a collapse of an old social order.”⁵⁴¹ Museums collect precisely “from the rubbish pits of history.”⁵⁴² Documents, symbols of power, objects of the cultic and of everyday life are stripped of their previous function to become “a pile of rubbish.” The modern museum was politically motivated and created to save treasures from the *Ancien Régime*, preventing their destruction. Therefore, they stand as the symbolic heirs of old supranational regimes that supersede the nation state, bearing a universal representation with “a kind of symbolic universalist empire inside a national cultural identity.”⁵⁴³ The museum collects everything that is outmoded, exceptional to modern life, including the foreign, the strange, and the exotic. The museum represents otherness inside the homogenous context of the modern nation state. It is the place where the cultural identity of this state is formulated, because there is no possibility to define your own cultural identity other than in comparison with other cultural forms. Because the museum exhibits things which obviously do not belong to this identity, it simultaneously threatens the nation’s cultural identity, always maintaining this internal subversive aspect. There is a tension and, at the same time, an inner complicity between the museum and the state. It would be a mistake for Groys to confuse the modern museum with a public institution.⁵⁴⁴ With the advance of the Enlightenment and secularisation, the role of God’s eternal memory transmitting the unchanging laws of reason and nature to secure identity, including cultural identity, was substituted in the modern age with an artificial memory, a cultural archive, a museum, where memories are recorded in the form of books, pictures, and other historical documents. Modern subjectivity defines itself in the world by way of collecting, by creating an archive of objects.

In contraposition to standpoints of objectivity, I lean upon a methodology developed by Kimberley Moulton, a Yorta Yorta woman working and researching in museums in Melbourne, but adopting, in my view, *kunsthalle* strategies. As a curator, she pushes given boundaries, claiming instead that these relations of affection to objects are real, and not scientifically manufactured. She states: “As an Aboriginal woman working in an institution, my responsibility is not only to my employer but importantly to my community. My connection to the collection is both professional and personal, since it holds photographs of my grandparents.”⁵⁴⁵ Moulton bears witness to a brutal history of dispossession, where grieving the “artwork” condenses the material site of trauma still traceable back to the community and where forms of healing are still possible. She reflects on these objects being “dormant,” remaining “asleep” until becoming recharged when they find—or better, are restituted to—the life of their community. Visiting a number of museums all around the world to “touch” and find an emotional relation to museified holdings, Moulton enacts care, with gestures of love, embrace, abandon, and hope for rejoining.⁵⁴⁶

A study about love could be framed in many ways, taking up sexuality, sovereignty, death and life worlds, or new social imaginaries. Pondering on resonances between Indigenous people living in a small community in the Northern Territory of Australia and the social worlds of radical queers in the US, anthropologist Elizabeth A. Povinelli identifies a collision between individual freedom and social constraint.

Intimacy comes to be the term on which she measures social connections in the formation of identity. Here she defines the “autological subject,” the “genealogical society,” and the “intimate event” in order to understand the intersection of freedom and constraint.⁵⁴⁷ She invites us to consider these discourses to understand the phantom of real-world effects of societies, as they still rest on how practices of love, work, and civic life articulate subjects and institutions and act “as if there is such a thing as the sovereign subject.”⁵⁴⁸ In accepting such Enlightenment-era diktats as true, all other potential practices are deemed perverse or aberrant. Povinelli calls for “immanent dependencies” to dislodge a certain common-sense view from the social matrix.⁵⁴⁹ Love, intimacy, and sexuality are not only desire, pleasure, or sex per se, but geographies, histories, culpabilities, and obligations connected to wealth extraction, the distribution of life and death, and hope and despair. They are part of a grammar of “concatenation” and “transformation,” a politics of trespassing, refusing to “sequester, to ghettoize, women’s issues, gender issues, and queer issues to a subset of social life.”⁵⁵⁰

Since May 2019, I have been thinking further about love as not a private but a social matter, in dialogue with artist Dora García, who started research for a film on Alexandra Kollontai, a major figure of the Russian socialist movement. Kollontai spent close to forty years in Scandinavia, between her youth with her maternal grandparents in Kuusa, Finland, and later through diplomatic positions in Norway and Sweden, where she developed claims of love as a political weapon for emancipatory practices. She elevated matters related to sex and love in the public sphere, positioning them as a relevant part of discussion of the normalising structures within society, which, in the world of politics, are instead wilfully relegated to the private sphere, as private matters, as abashing subjects.⁵⁵¹ For Kollontai, emancipation cannot happen if sex is not troubled together with class. This double entanglement reveals a complex segregation based on provenance and language that supports societal divisions and justifies repression, where gender is one vector and class the other. Not divided, but together.⁵⁵²

García, drawing from her reading of Kollontai, affirms that love is a “social emotion,” and not a private matter concerning only the love of two people; rather, it describes a social cohesion.⁵⁵³ Kollontai is critical of Marxist claims of sexual relations being the foundation of society. Sceptical of monogamy, she writes, “The more such threads connecting soul to soul, heart to heart, and mind to mind, the more strongly will the spirit of solidarity be inculcated.”⁵⁵⁴ Through her legacy, we can read that affective relationships where sexuality has been sharply separated from class are only part of the normativised emotional and psychological realm at the base of social repression. Sexual oppression is political oppression. García’s investigation looms large in its aim to understand the direct and indirect contemporary effects of such claims, as brought “to the streets” by Kollontai, who maintained important contradictions in both her life and her writings.⁵⁵⁵

Structurally, I am also indebted to García because she has, through her artistic practice, created forms of long-term inter-institutional work that I believe both challenge and concede existing institutions’ co-dependency as well as forms of independence, and also create a “civil disobedience” between the artist, the curator, the technicians, and the other actors involved in the making of art, where the generative process is naturally gleaned and dispersed. Similar to an ecclesia, these projects function as magnetic forces keeping resistance alive and allowing

confrontation to shape itself into the expression of participation. Curating in this case does not mean selection, or the directorial creation of a discourse, or bureaucratic management; rather, curating here means finding dialogic encounters, “tak[ing] into account relatedness to the world as a way of producing, including the production of new epistemologies and emergent histories.”⁵⁵⁶ It also means following the unravelling of ideas as they happen, jumping in and out of material interactions and their inherent political and economic struggles, and letting go of forms of control.

Through the *Mad Marginal* project (2011–), García started, in fact, creating inter-institutional, interlinked works under a research umbrella that has spanned years, institutions, and publications, to create communities of peers, framed to last beyond the usual “commission” of the exhibition. She literally plays on art being capitalised on through the idea of artists as “emotional” subjects, asking: “Are artists crazy? Is being an outsider a requirement for creating truly tradition-shattering art?”⁵⁵⁷ By bringing together anti-psychiatric and anti-institutional movements, and redefining what the outsider is, she explores the relationship between radical politics and radical art during the 1970s, and our inheritance of such concepts today. The project has so far moved across institutions in Italy, Spain, Canada, Germany, the US, and Norway, among other countries.

Instead of submitting to the usual institutional pace—moving from exhibition to exhibition—García proposes, equally for the institution, the artist, and the curator, a different methodology for the creation of long-term practices and structures from which we could potentially learn, and perhaps (in my opinion) rethink curatorial labour, curatorial love, and a curatorial materialism, pushing for novel institutional and relational forms. These connectivities also pave the way to finding intersectionalities at the junction between different institutions, as the artwork itself continues to organically live through all the actors involved, in their accord and discord. Similarly, with *Segunda Vez (Second Time Around*, 2014–18), a filmic work, and with exhibitions, Happenings, cahiers, and books all based on the figure of Oscar Masotta (1930–1979), García’s larger project has “enjoyed” the support of a number of institutions. The Argentinian essayist, critic, artist, and psychoanalyst acts as a catalyst to speak about art, politics, and psychoanalysis. Here, the notion of the event is crucial to thinking about the genealogy of repetition, and for claiming a new methodology for memory.⁵⁵⁸ As García asks: “Is it true, as they say in psychoanalysis, that the second time is always the first time?”⁵⁵⁹

It is through these forms of looking for emerging knowledges in their spatial, material, and public dimension that we also look for memories not encoded by state policies and archives.⁵⁶⁰

Anger?

The relation between, love, silence, anger, and who has the right to speak is still to be fully investigated. How can these struggles of provenance surface alongside a tradition of anger? How can Povinelli’s theories of intimacy and Haraway’s theories of situatedness help us with these problematic processes? Elucidating who is speaking and from what position is the very struggle for emancipation and the form of renegotiation for an autonomous political body.

In the 1960s, Pier Paolo Pasolini, the Italian author and filmmaker, was trying to create a cinematographic language in its own right, to narrate stories and history

through images—a pre-grammatical cinematic language close to the oneiric, the dream, the ghostly, but also based on the position of alliance, to give people who usually did not have a voice the opportunity to enter historical narration through what he called “free indirect speech.”⁵⁶¹ It is here, Pasolini claims, that the principal difference between literary work and cinematic work lies. That is, the linguistic and grammatical domain of the filmmaker is constituted by images. Images for Pasolini are always concrete, embracing millennia of image-symbols “which would know an evolution similar to that of words.”⁵⁶² Originally concrete, images have become abstract: “If the images or im-signs are not classified in a dictionary and if they are not ordered by a grammar, they nevertheless constitute a common heritage.”⁵⁶³ Borrowing a literary technique, this free indirect discourse becomes a longing for a possible cinema of poetry. Cinema is bound to a particular form of free indirect cinematic discourse by which “the author penetrates entirely into the spirit of his character, of whom he thus adopts not only the psychology but also the language.”⁵⁶⁴ The author constructs a character speaking an invented language as a pretext to allow for a particular interpretation of the world; a narration “studded” with many borrowings.

There is a different anger in Pasolini than in Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci speaks in personal terms of his country’s history and politics, fulminating against politicians depredating the lower classes—especially in the South—and people who became second-class citizens through the creation of the Italian nation state. He illuminates the hegemonic cohesion that led to a history of exploitation of the South through law and policy making. Pasolini, by contrast, ponders his rage, transforms it into a poetic language vexed with a disappearing world; for him, he was one of the last to be able to catch it disappearing, a world which Gramsci was still fighting for—for the maintenance of a diversity of livelihoods flattened under the ideology of one nation; for Pasolini, this was fading before his eyes.

Cultural theorist and poet Fred Moten asserts that we never talk only for ourselves: we always speak for a community, or through a community. Literally. Each word, each expression of emotion, is an utterance of a collective, irreducible to an individual subjectivity. What I speak is what I have read, the food I have eaten, the people I have met. For him, therefore, my anger is not my singular anger, but a collective anger, for the repressive methods which have been inflicted on me, on my community, and on my ancestors.⁵⁶⁵

My relationship to curating certainly cannot be reduced to anger, but it is certainly part of articulating a position motivated by a “for-ness,” one that does not simply take the shape of what it is against, though it prompts a political urgency.⁵⁶⁶ To find a different relation and direction towards these feelings through material objects, including images, a sense of “care” is needed, allowing us to face and be faced with them, “as if” we are encountering them for the first time. Wonder is a passion that motivates the desire to keep looking; it keeps alive possibilities otherwise denied.⁵⁶⁷ Curating is this form of creating wonder, to create a movement of bodies and of emotions, a different pedagogy of affection.

(5.6) Some conclusions

While reviewing institutional models during a recent conversation about building and unbuilding institutions, especially in the field of art and curating, it became clear that a multiplicity of curatorial approaches first need to be acknowledged in order to then dissect “other” ways of curating and to pave the way for more sustainable practices that can guide institutional change. If we consider the birth and canonisation of curating as happening during the 1960s, beginning with Harald Szeemann—the self-proclaimed *Austellungsmacher* (exhibition maker) who gave rise to the notion of “the curator as creator”⁵⁶⁸—we should also identify and distinguish other strands of independent or interdependent curating, mostly driven and reclaimed in feminist terms as a *confrontation* with art world institutions, through a “politically mindful, theoretically alert investigation.”⁵⁶⁹ The original curatorial strand is still an act of normative power, based on an authorial and authoritative figure following, fostering, and forging new heteronormative views to frustrate the display and experience of art, while the latter feminist versions looks sceptically at institutions, as they have enhanced and popularised split positions, contributing to ideas of marginalisation and otherness. The transformation from maker to creator, from craft to art, grew steadily until the “curatorial gesture” of the 1990s, with its resulting proliferation of discourses and increased professionalisation of curatorial studies, bound especially to the promotion of a Szeemannian figure and his polarising vision.⁵⁷⁰ These newly formed authoritarian models, further developed throughout the 1990s and the 2000s, increasingly tribalised the art world, centralising power and art making through curatorial positions at museums and biennales,⁵⁷¹ as well as curatorial summits.⁵⁷² Emphasis was placed on the individual practice, on a first-person narrative and self-positioning, articulated through interviews, statements, and the exhibition as a form of authorial representation. This becomes of particular concern for the way in which art institutions have become dependent on such figures, assuming a certain idea of what it means to be a curator, to work in a public institution, and to produce a public sphere: the idea of the curator as a “capitalist entrepreneur” instead of an “organic intellectual.” The capitalist entrepreneur as derivative of new class structures, created alongside globalisation and neoliberal accumulation, in the separation of new social “types,” was brought into prominence by such violent developments.

Within the arts, ideas of the public sphere converge in an unresolved category. Accessibility for all publics is still thought to be a given, at times because institutions are publicly funded or self-define themselves as public, or because entry is given in exchange for a small fee. However, in the arts, as in the sphere of politics, the public sphere can emerge only under certain conditions. That space needs to be built. If the artistic and curatorial function is the organisation of a public sphere, we should be able to analyse how these figures open and make space.⁵⁷³ As with mass media, which allegedly defines itself as belonging to a public sphere, hardly any ordinary people have access to these outlets—meaning that, beyond readership, “the people(s)” is the object and not an active subject of such relations of production, or an agent of representation.

Art historian Rosalyn Deutsche contends that exclusions of certain people from the city are justified and “naturalised” through a social space of representation presented as having substantial unity, which must be protected from conflict. Though her focus is on literal evictions in relation to urban-aesthetic discourses in the US, the processes Deutsche exposes unveil the authoritarian strategies that construct a

unitary image of what is defined as social space. She argues how conflict, “far from the ruin of democratic public space, is the condition of its existence.”⁵⁷⁴ Looking at the locale of New York City, she observes how, under the false pretences of how art functions in public space, an aesthetic ideology posits art and architecture as transcending social relations; the urban space as spatial organisation is presented as the *natural* product of biological, social, or technological evolutions of an apparently “organic” society.⁵⁷⁵ It is exactly these concepts of the *natural*, the biological, the social, and the evolutionary, engraved into the project of modernity, that need to be deconstructed and recognised as affecting our understanding of singularities, only functioning within and functional per a specific economic system, that is to say, capitalism. Through capitalism, and its binary model of male/female, nature/culture, soul/body, and so on, marginality is presented in a selective Darwinian process as a given, acknowledging the body solely as a site of commerce, as private property.

A public space (not only in the urban or geographical sense) is the result of debate breaking out among the ones around us. Specifically, debate intended as conflict,⁵⁷⁶ or what political theorists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe would call agonism.⁵⁷⁷ Studying the failure of historical political mutations and struggles of the 1960s onwards, Laclau and Mouffe praise the incoming phenomena underlying these historical mutations, demanding a theoretical reconsideration of them: the rise of new feminisms, the protest movements of ethnic, national, and sexual minorities, the anti-institutional ecology struggles, and the social struggles in countries on the peripheries of capitalism. These movements showed “no more than the potential”—only *the potential*, as they say—for a more free, democratic, and equal society.⁵⁷⁸ The asymmetry and proliferation of differences in advanced industrial societies magnifies “a surplus of meaning of the social”—that is, that there is something more in such a pretended unity—making it difficult to attempt to fix these differences as moments of a stable structure, or what we call society.⁵⁷⁹ For Laclau and Mouffe, “the multiformity of the social cannot be apprehended through a system of mediations, nor can the social order simply be understood as an underlying principle, because in such a reading of society no revolution would ever be possible.”⁵⁸⁰

Curating can be understood as one of the practices of articulation in the “formation of a discourse,” in Laclau and Mouffe’s terminology.⁵⁸¹ Here, articulation is intended as a relation among elements, where, as a result, the identity of each element is modified. If we accept this account of the formation of a discourse, and consequently curating as one articulation of such a discourse, then there is no logical coherence between the elements of articulation; these arising contradictions between elements, though, will not necessarily—or will not be enough to—produce agonistic relations.⁵⁸² A situation of antagonism develops when the presence of the “other” does not let one be completely oneself; Laclau and Mouffe present the case of a peasant who cannot be a peasant when an antagonism arises whereby the landowner expels him from his land, for example.⁵⁸³ There is a negation of a full presence at stake here.

Antagonisms, in such cases, are not internal but external, because of society’s impossibility of constituting itself as one single self—otherwise that single self would be totalitarianism.⁵⁸⁴ As becomes clear, a society never manages fully to be a society, because everything penetrates its limits and prevents it from becoming an objective reality—the dream of modern science.⁵⁸⁵ Laclau and Mouffe demonstrate how antagonisms cannot be overcome, and this is the reason why passions cannot be eradicated from politics. If politics is about collective identities, and if collective identities work by way of identification, then passions are part and parcel of politics.

More recently, Mouffe has asserted that it was through “right-wing populist parties that people were able to vent their anger against such a post-political situation [as is widespread in Europe]”⁵⁸⁶ (positing here the failure of the left?), thus recognising the emergence of other ways of reacting against the democratic deficits of our times. A profound dissatisfaction with the given order, she says, brings people to the street, because they feel that their voices cannot be heard through traditional political channels.⁵⁸⁷ In this movement, she notices, there is an important call for a radicalisation of existing democratic institutions, and not a simple rejection of them, wherein people’s demands are clearly aimed at more inclusive forms of representation.

If the curatorial function (as the articulation and organisation of a discourse) is part of the organisation of a public sphere, consequently it contributes to the organisation of such an antagonism. Political theorist and philosopher Oliver Marchart thinks that that antagonism cannot be organised, since politics (as far as we have known it) consist of institutionalised rituals, devoid of conflict—or, rather, where conflict is a predictable element in this ritual. Yet a *real* conflict (or antagonism) can break out; such as, for instance, a revolution. Such a conflict is not a privilege of a single social system but rather a part of the political that can emerge in any social system—even in the field of art, Marchart asserts. Such an eruption (antagonism) becomes political and “opens up” a public sphere.⁵⁸⁸ It is here, in this ambition and impossibility to organise the public, that the curatorial reaches a paradoxical task: curating is, for Marchart, the organisation of the impossible (perhaps it is a form of longing for the revolution?).

Gramsci speaks about the impediment to growth of the “organic intellectual” in certain strata of the population—within the non-ruling classes, the peasant, the worker, and so on. The new intellectual, for him (as he experimented with through his *L’Ordine Nuovo* periodical), can no longer be based on eloquence—“an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions”—but should instead actively participate in practical life, as a constructor, an organiser, a “permanent persuader.”⁵⁸⁹ The intellectual, for Gramsci, always has a social function true to the hegemonic powers it serves.

In the curatorial function defined in practical terms by Harald Szeemann within the constructed order of entrepreneurs, the elite and the organisers of society in general are not changed or challenged but only enhanced;⁵⁹⁰ this is contrary to feminist curating, the politics of which demand a change of the very structures we operate within. The recognition of any education, no matter the level of its labour and its designation as high or low, should be acknowledged as the basis for the new type of intellectual—or curator—to paraphrase Gramsci.⁵⁹¹ It is no surprise that even the word *cura* (care) completely changes meaning in the two readings, the Szeemannian and the feminist. The former is interpreted and creates a tradition—the individual genius curator preserves or prepares collections of objects within a defined space—while the latter interprets its function as taking care, first and foremost, of the bodies coming together in such assemblies and together redefining the means and conditions that articulate a discourse driven by and aimed at changing the relations of power (taking care of objects against taking care of feelings, one could say?). This feminist take on curating defines the curatorial as collective, as organising a collective activity, performing an antagonism. Counterhegemonic thought is not individual, as

organisation can only be part of a greater collective project.⁵⁹² A feminist curator never appears alone (this, perhaps, is Dora García's claim).⁵⁹³

Institutions can serve counterhegemonic power too, through antagonism, to create a public sphere, and to produce their organic intellectuals out of the unacknowledged positions and representatives of groups pushed to the margins by the consent culture of the bourgeoisie. I think this situation is in part the untold story of institutions like Fotogalleriet as a free-form space for curatorial experimentation. Independently established in 1977 by a group of artists, practitioners, supporters, and "friends,"⁵⁹⁴ it from the start laid a different claim on images and their social function and value within society. In a Gramscian "war of position," we read in the institution's founding statute that its main purpose was to "develop an interest in photography ... as a free, personal and artistic means of expression."⁵⁹⁵ Consensus existed in society for photography to be subsumed into the larger bourgeoisie's ideology of the newspaper, objectively illustrating through pictures—or reporting—"reality" as a singular, given concept of the state apparatus. Making a different claim and recognising others' skills or techniques proper to photographic production, thinking through images as a different way of producing organic intellectuals, and opening up for a differently literate class (a visually literate intellectual) of practitioners may be an emancipatory task, engineering a powerful antagonism to given positions and producing a common cause for missing forms of representation (or the lack thereof) in the public sphere, where the aesthetic sphere is fully occupied by bourgeois ideology.

We cannot understand such shifts without understanding their material conditions. In the process of photography moving from the magazine or the newspaper page into the exhibition space, more than an aesthetic demand arises. There is also the unveiling of financial forces trying to unify thought. We should not forget that when photographs first appeared in newspapers, people clipped and collected them in albums, therefore creating new meaning.⁵⁹⁶ Gisèle Freund, one of the first photography theorists we can identify as such, reads a twofold reasoning behind such a movement, claiming that one kind of photography was more invested in social issues (realism) and the other was closer to the arts. Realist photography quickly came to be used for ideological purposes, for instance, enlarging images of leaders in Russia, via Soviet film directors Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin, to "fix" their "image" in people's subconscious. No wonder other artists were trying to escape such a given meaning.⁵⁹⁷ We can witness this transition directly in one of the first exhibitions ever held at Fotogalleriet, dedicated to the work of Alfred Stieglitz. His work at Fotogalleriet was, in fact, presented through his commitment to the magazine *Camera Work*, where he was editor from 1902 to 1917, and the Photo-Secessionist movement, which he led, thus literally showing the transition from page to space. Stieglitz was one of the first acknowledged photographers to claim photography as art, and also one of the first to have their work acquired by a museum and shown alongside other artworks produced in already accepted media.

This discussion about page versus space continued thereafter within specifically the exhibition space, especially from a feminist perspective. A year after Fotogalleriet opened, in 1978, the Swedish photographer Ann Christine Eek, in describing her exhibition in *Morgenbladet* (one of the leading national newspapers), would state:

I was starting to get tired of all the superficial images of women in the mass media. Not to mention the superficial, prejudiced, and often denigrating images of women in advertising, men's magazines, and photography journals. My responsibility as a photographer was to penetrate this wall of platitudes and prejudices and to portray the reality for women that I saw around me.⁵⁹⁸

At the time of this interview, Eek had been invited to exhibit *Arbeta—inte slita ut sig!* (*Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!*) in Oslo, after its original showing in Stockholm at the bookstore Oktober a few years earlier, in 1974. The companion book had likewise been released in November 1974, and it was further included in the large *Kvinnfolk* (*Women*) exhibition at Kulturhuset, Stockholm, in February 1975, where large prints of its pages were mounted on cardboard. That exhibition was later shown at Malmö Konsthall in the autumn of 1975, and finally, in 1978, at Fotogalleriet.

I do not intend to insinuate that this kind of antagonist work is in any way concluded, but only to show how the aggregation, through such an institution as Fotogalleriet, claimed a space for battling against such positions as Eek describes in the above quote within society at large, and hopefully opened up a public sphere. As the issue of representation is still hugely unsolved and other new issues are at stake today, I believe that there is a lot to learn and take from these inspiring strategies.

There is an entire deconstruction of invented traditions to be carried out within the institution of Fotogalleriet itself after fifty years of work, including a fictionalised and “normalised” mission that has been augmented by the creation of an archive. Archival logics assign, in retrospect, the exhibition programme as the institution’s method.⁵⁹⁹ We are told very little about Fotogalleriet’s background structure, its original intentions and discussions, or the institutional structure organising its antagonistic position.⁶⁰⁰ Unveiling this structure as incohesive will reveal the potential behind the institution to keep creating antagonism in different ways, and especially through a technical knowledge, first and foremost, guided by a different way of making and producing images, and asking for whom and by whom these images have been made.

The curatorial organisation of a public sphere sits at the crossroads of institutional functions and the exposition (not only the exhibition), where the potential to become a public space lies in taking a stand.⁶⁰¹ Ex-position holds a commitment, if it is a place for debate and not just for display. From standing together in a struggle for potentially endangered “differential” positions, we also make room for solidarity. In such a process, a place becomes public because it contemporaneously has a deinstitutonalising effect. In its public agonism, it creates disruption in relation to the dominant ideology, because it interrupts regulated processes, responsibilities, and hierarchies. The curatorial ex-position opens the institution of which it forms a part. It breaks the walls; it domesticates conflicts.⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁸ In such a claim, there is more than words but accountability. Small and medium-sized institutions have a heavy responsibility, especially in Norway, to fulfill demands regulated by the artists' unions when it comes to artists' expositions in their space based on the duration and retribution of honorarium. Moreover, Fotogalleriet is part of Kunsthallen in Norway,

which has set ethical guidelines for good practices. Fotogalleriet annual budget and expenditure as a public institution is public information. As a public-funded institution, Fotogalleriet is accessible to all. We have made this clear through public statements and others to reinstate such availability, which does not only come from “good heart” but by its very statutes and mandates. Revindicating such principles is part of restoring institutions democratic power and ambition by “giving them back” as dialogue sites. Such status of public institutions should be intrinsic, but it is our responsibility to make it extrinsic. Because of this, the material conditions for the use of these institutions are equal to other material conditions given in Scandinavia for citizens to have equal and free access to education, health, and other public services as much as culture.

³⁹⁹ The artist’s book and exhibition catalogue Maria Pasenau, Pasenau and the Devil (Oslo: Fotogalleriet, 2019) included contributions by Elise By Olsen, Kristoffer “Cezinando” Karlsen, Bjarne Melgaard, and Stina Högvist.

⁴⁰⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁴⁰¹ “We have to ask why, if this is so, the body is itself divided into the one that appears publicly to speak and act, and another, sexual and labouring, feminine, foreign and mute, that [is] generally relegated to the private and pre-political sphere.” Judith Butler, “Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street,” transversal texts, September 2011, <https://transversal.at/transversal/1011/butler/en>.

⁴⁰² The term “image sphere” is used by Walter Benjamin in “Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia,” 1929, Generation Online, <http://www.generation-online.org/c/fcsurrealism.htm>.

⁴⁰³ We learn from art history that intimacy is not the domain of law—where privacy was partly created—but of art. The right to secrecy means the right to freedom for the weakest. Intimacy, deriving from the aesthetic field of painting, particularly with Leon Battista Alberti, who established modern painting as a concept in itself in the fifteenth century, through the so-called open window. According to this Cartesian idea, wo/man has the right to gaze the world (together with God, as Renaissance elevates the role of man higher), and they define a place from which they can secretly contemplate it through the window: out of sight they can look at themselves. It is both the movement of wo/man’s power to appropriate the world through the gaze, and the cradle for the internal territory where interiority unfolds, intersecting and expounding our interiorities. In modern times, intimacy, the secret territory of opacity, is the very place of the subject. The real condition of intimacy can be related to the right of secrecy: against the background of an importune, intrusive, or invasive gaze, which wants to see and know all, all the time, the predicament of our times is being visible at all times. Intimacy, secrecy, and freedom are tied together. Here, we are not speaking about a metaphorical freedom, but about real freedom—material freedom. I draw this argument from Gérard Wajeman, “Exposed Intimacy, Extorted Intimacy,” 2007, Lacan Dot Com, posted Summer 2012, <https://www.lacan.com/symptom13/exposed-intimacy.html>. Due to urgent threat, Jacques Lacan invented an antonym for “intimacy” that does not exist: “extimacy.” Weighing upon intimacy, it weighs upon every subject. The term “extimacy” is an English translation of the French neologism *extimité*. See Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire. Livre VII. L'éthique de la psychanalyse* [The seminar: The ethics of psychoanalysis] (Paris: Seuil, 1986).

⁴⁰⁴ It seems unavoidable and historically due in these times of global unrest and rightful demands for social justice to question categories such as universalism and the Enlightenment. In the world of their reason, they have projected knowledge as univocal, resting on apparent objective criteria. Instead, they fostered forms of societal discrimination and colonialism, including the mind. Achille Mbembe denounced universal knowledge dictated through the academic model and the Enlightenment, calling for *pluriversal* knowledge through a “knowledge production that is open to epistemic diversity.” “Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive,” <https://wiser.wits.ac.za/system/files/Achille%20Mbembe%20-Decolonizing%20Knowledge%20and%20the%20Question%20of%20the%20Archive.pdf>

Further, Mbembe calls upon forms of infantilisation institutionalised through “psychology about peoples and emotions, and other false knowledge inherited from the nineteenth century.” Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, trans. Laurent Dubois (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2017), 42. As I will develop and show further in the chapter, several feminist academics equally reclaim a revision of emotions from an intersectional perspective because these categories and exclusion constitute binary and universal subjects as the only possible and valued subjects.

⁴⁰⁵ A version of this text was presented during the conference *Curate Your Context: Methods on and of Curating* at the Institut national d’histoire de l’art, Paris, on 16 November 2019.

⁴⁰⁶ One could use different etymological sources, but this is one of the most accepted roots of “curating.” See, e.g., *Online Etymological Dictionary*, s.v. “curate (n.)”, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/curate>.

⁴⁰⁷ *Online Etymological Dictionary*, s.v. “curate (n.)”

⁴⁰⁸ Anne H. Soukhanov, *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992).

⁴⁰⁹ María Susana Cipolletti, “El tráfico de curare en la cuenca amazónica (Siglos XVIII y XIX)” [Curare trafficking in the Amazon basin], *Anthropos*, no. 83 (1988): 527–40.

⁴¹⁰ *Strychnos toxifera*, among other plants.

⁴¹¹ If ingested in moderate quantities it did not cause paralysis; and animals killed by means of such weapons were eaten with impunity. *First Series. “My Doctor Tells Me”*: (and *Second Series “My Friend Tells Me”*) (London: Victoria Street and International Society for the Protection of Animals from Vivisection, 1893).

⁴¹² Curare is a poison used by a number of Indigenous communities in South America, including the Siona, Witóto, Karijóna, Bara-Makú, Witóto, and Kofán (in what is currently known as Colombia); Canelo (Ketchwa), Kofán, Quijo, Shuara, Coaquer, Kafán, Quijo, Canelo, Waorami, Achuara, and Shuara (in Ecuador); Lamista Quechua (Lama, Chazuta), Yagua, and Koto (Orejone) (in Peru); Yagua (Peba), Makú, Jarauára, Yamamadi, and Tikuna (in Brazil); and Waraú (in Guyana). See S. William Pelletier, *Alkaloids: Chemical and Biological Perspectives* (Berlin: Springer, 2012), 17. Curare was reported again in 1731 in the pages of the Jesuit priest Joseph Gumilla on the natural history of the Orinoco river region; in *Plantae Surinamenses* [Plants of Surinam] by Carl Linnaeus’s Swedish pupil Jacob Alm; and *Histoire des Plantes de la Guiane Francoise* [History of the plants of French Guiana] by Fusee Aublet, published in 1775. As the existence of South America became known in Europe, the pace of scientific explorations and of such “discoveries” quickened—and the paralysing effects of curare samples grew. Obtained in Peru in 1742 by the French scientist and explorer Charles Marie de La Condamine, curare demonstrations were undertaken in Cayenne, French Guiana, and later in Leiden, Holland. Using Surinam plants, Johann C. D. von Schreber was, in 1783, the first person to describe precisely which plant species make up curare.

⁴¹³ *First Series. “My Doctor Tells Me”*: (and *Second Series “My Friend Tells Me”*).

⁴¹⁴ The immense distress caused to animals was thus actually realised in this period. See Greg Murrie, “Death-in-Life”: Curare, Restrictionism and Abolitionism in Victorian and Edwardian Anti-vivisectionist Thought,” in *Animal Death*, ed. Jay Johnston and Fiona Probyn-Rapsey Fiona (Sydney: Sydney University, 2013), 253–76.

⁴¹⁵ It was not that this had not been done before (desecrating bodies), but the theatricality of building such a medical discipline implied its popularisation, and its communication, through creating its own legends and making them known. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (Abingdon, UK: Taylor & Francis, 2003), 43.

⁴¹⁶ Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, 62.

⁴¹⁷ Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*.

⁴¹⁸ Of course, as the first instance, we are speaking about the Louvre Museum in Paris here. See Boris Groys, “Art, Technology, and Humanism,” *e-flux journal*, no. 82 (May 2017): <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/82/127763/art-technology-and-humanism/>.

⁴¹⁹ The French Revolution brought about a secularism whereby the abolishment of the contemplation of God was replaced by “beautiful” material objects. “In other words,” writes Groys, “the French Revolution introduced a new type of thing: defunctionalized tools.

Accordingly, for human beings, becoming a thing no longer meant becoming a tool. On the contrary, becoming a thing could now mean *becoming an artwork*. And for human beings, becoming an artwork means precisely this: coming out of slavery, being immunized against violence.” Groys, “Art, Technology, and Humanism.”

⁴²⁰ In this new logic, human bodies could not be killed, violated, or enslaved, or such is the generic prescription assigned to this new era by the ideals of the French Revolution. Groys, “Art, Technology, and Humanism.”

⁴²¹ As a representative, the curator safeguards the public character of the exhibition space, meaning, we assume, that this institutional space becomes almost a parliamentary assembly. Groys, “Art, Technology, and Humanism.”

⁴²² Groys, “Art, Technology, and Humanism.”

⁴²³ Boris Groys, “From Medium to Message: The Art Exhibition as Model of a New World Order,” *Open*, no. 16 (2009): 58.

⁴²⁴ To curate is to cure. Groys, “From Medium to Message.”

⁴²⁵ Groys, “From Medium to Message,” 58.

⁴²⁶ I am pointing out here how curating both cures and further contributes to the illness of the artwork. Though Groys refers to the Derridean pharmakon, he deprives this concept of its revolutionary potential. Groys, “From Medium to Message.”

⁴²⁷ For Stiegler, the pharmakon is the primary object connecting the mother to the child through a transitional object. See Bernard Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living: On Pharmacology* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), 2.

⁴²⁸ As the first pharmakon is the origin of the work of art, its power is curative to the immeasurable extent that is also destructive. Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living*, 4.

⁴²⁹ I refer here to Giorgio Agamben’s take on the subject. “If politics today seems to be going through a protracted eclipse and appears in a subaltern position with respect to religion, economics, and even the law, that is so because, to the extent to which it has been losing sight of its own ontological status, it has failed to confront the transformations that gradually have emptied out its categories and concepts.” See Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010), ix.

⁴³⁰ Margaret Carrigan, “How These Small Galleries Are Surviving Despite Wave of Closures,” Artsy, 21 July 2017, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-small-galleries-surviving-despite-wave-closures>.

⁴³¹ Antonio Cataldo, “Verden blir mindre. Investeringen i de store kunstmuseene er en investering i turisme, ikke kunstfeltet” [The world goes small: Investing in large museums is an investment in tourism, not in the art field], Subjekt, 30 October 2019, <https://subjekt.no/2019/10/30/a-investere-i-store-kunstmuseum-er-ikke-en-investering-i-kunstfeltet/>.

⁴³² SNL, a Norwegian-language online encyclopedia, reports that Fotogalleriet played a “significant role in the understanding and institutionalising photography as an artistic medium in Norway.” <https://snl.no/Fotogalleriet>. My translation.

⁴³³ The establishment’s refusal in the institution’s history is reported by several of its funders and contributors. See Dag Alveng in Conversation with Susanne Østby Sæther, in: *Conversations on Photography*, ed. in Antonio Cataldo (Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2021), pp.41–54.

⁴³⁴ Boris Groys, *In the Flow* (London & Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2018), 19.

⁴³⁵ Stiegler clarifies the genealogy of the “crisis of spirit” in modern times in a chapter titled “Apocalypse without God.” Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living*, 9–26.

⁴³⁶ The kunsthalle emerged in Europe in the nineteenth century as a means to present temporary exhibitions of art and science. It was conceived as an alternative to the museum since its very beginnings, originating with the goal of educating the public rather than

preserving art for the ages. This means a freer approach to exhibition strategies as compared to museums with permanent collections. A kunsthalle puts things up for evaluation and discussion and deliberately provokes clashes between rival positions. It does not present art history, but contributes to it. See John Zarobell, *Art and the Global Economy* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 81.

⁴³⁷ I curated the exhibition *Pasenau and the Devil* by artist Maria Pasenau, which took place at Fotogalleriet from 31 August to 12 December 2019.

⁴³⁸ What we may here perceive as typos are in reality part of Pasenau's vernacular English: "In school, she stood out for having dyslexia. In the first grade, she got a tutor she describes as absolutely awful. Because Maria enjoyed writing and creating her own stories and the teacher forced her to correct all the errors in the sentences—'I started to cry, because then the story wasn't how I wanted it to be any longer. So, I sat at home with my mom in the evenings and changed it back. I wanted to tell the story in my own way.'" Pål Vegar Hagesæther, "Maria Pasenau (24) lager kunst av sin egen kropp" [Maria Pasenau makes art of her own body], *A-magasinet*, 30 August 2019. My translation.

⁴³⁹ Wencke Mühleisen, untitled lecture (Fotogalleriet, Oslo, 21 September 2019). This talk was delivered in the context of the seminar *Freedom of Artistic Expression in the Digital Age* at VEGA SCENE, Oslo, with contributions by Mühleisen, Tore Slaatta, the White Pube, and Maria Pasenau, and moderated by Danby Choi.

⁴⁴⁰ Mühleisen, untitled lecture.

⁴⁴¹ Mühleisen, untitled lecture.

⁴⁴² A group of eighty-years-old ladies from Bærum (the municipality in Norway with the average highest level of education and income), whose wanderings are usually confined to the National Museum and the Munch Museum, visited the exhibition, after an appeal by the daily news (*Dagsrevyen*)—a privilege we almost never have at Fotogalleriet, as small institutions do not usually receive attention from such large news outlets. These women were shocked by what they saw: "I had no idea when I was waking up this morning I was going to speak with you [as reported by Annika Hagstrøm, my colleague and former head of mediation at Fotogalleriet] and my friends about how I experienced my period, my body changes, menopause, and the importance of masturbation." Another added: "It's kind of a little bit liberating." They wanted to challenge themselves. Throughout the exhibition period, my colleagues on the mediation team also hosted kids aged eight to twelve, as well as teenagers.

⁴⁴³ Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," *New Formations*, no. 4 (Spring 1988): 73–102.

⁴⁴⁴ Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion. Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (London & New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), 83–84.

⁴⁴⁵ Functionalism and machine aesthetics held their influence in modern architecture. The machine's arrival was of such revolutionary significance that Machine Age became an architectural term. Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity. Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 156.

⁴⁴⁶ At Jeu de Paume, the exhibition was curated by Laura Herman as part of the Satellite 12 programme, and co-produced by Jeu de Paume, CAPC, and Museo Amparo.

⁴⁴⁷ Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 8.

⁴⁴⁸ See Beatriz Colomina, Introduction, in *Sexuality and Space*, ed. Beatriz Colomina (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University School of Architecture, 1992), n.p.

⁴⁴⁹ Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 6.

⁴⁵⁰ Bouchra Khalili and Hendrik Folkerts, "Twenty-Two Hours: Bouchra Khalili and Hendrik Folkerts in Conversation," *Mousse Magazine*, June 2018, 241–47.

⁴⁵¹ A version of this text was presented in the context of an event series titled *Positions in Nordic Photography*, Fotografihuset, Oslo, on 25 September 2020, at the invitation of curators Jonas Ekeberg and Lisa Bernhoft-Sjødin and as part of a double presentation with Anna Tellgren, curator of photography at Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

⁴⁵² “Vi er kunstverdens realister. Inntrykk gjennom film og fotografi er daglig kost for alle, men allikevel har mange her i landet et likegyldig forhold til foto som kunst. Det er dette vi skal prøve å rette på.” Sissel Keyn, “Kunstens realister får sitt eget galleri” [Artist-realists get their own exhibition space], *VG*, 13 August 1977. My translation.

⁴⁵³ Guy Debord attempted an analysis of how capitalism brought about a constant decline of use-value, giving rise to a new form of poverty and a different idea of survival, where alongside the old poverty the vast majority of people are still forced to labour for wage in a system where there is no alternative to such submission. He writes: “The dictatorship of the bureaucratic economy cannot leave the exploited masses any significant margin of choice because it has had to make all the choices itself, and any choice made independently of it, whether regarding food or music or anything else, thus amounts to a declaration of war against it. This dictatorship must be enforced by permanent violence. Its spectacle imposes an image of the good which subsumes everything that officially exists, an image which is usually concentrated in a single individual, the guarantor of the system’s totalitarian cohesion.” Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), aphorism 64.

⁴⁵⁴ A more accurate comparison may be made here in order to draw from Sandberg’s claim as an artist working within the visual field and pushing for institutional novelty and change and the need for new institutional models, and to understand the philosophy of institutions and how they create habits, normativities, and other forms of formal and informal power relations. For a more accurate reading on the role and self-referential power of institutions, I refer the reader to John R. Searle, “What Is an Institution?,” *Journal of Institutional Economics* 1, no. 1 (2005): 1–22.

⁴⁵⁵ Searle refers to these markers as “deontic powers”: “By creating private property, governments, marriages, stock markets, and universities, we increase the human capacity for action. But the possibility of having desires and satisfying them within these institutional structures—for example, the desire to get rich, to become president, to get a Ph.D., to get tenure—all presuppose that there is a recognition of the deontic relationships. Without the recognition, acknowledgment, and acceptance of the deontic relationships, your power is not worth a damn.” Searle, “What Is an Institution?,” 11.

⁴⁵⁶ “The answer, which again is essential to understanding society, is that institutional structures create desire-independent reasons for action. To recognize something as a duty, an obligation, or a requirement is already to recognize that you have a reason for doing it which is independent of your inclinations at the moment. By creating institutional reality, we increase human power enormously.” Searle, “What Is an Institution?,” 11.

⁴⁵⁷ I find it symptomatic that Frank’s words were reported in a widely distributed magazine such as *Vanity Fair*. See Charlie Leduff, “Robert Frank’s Unsentimental Journey,” *Vanity Fair*, 17 March 2008, <https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2008/04/frank200804>.

⁴⁵⁸ The idea of the white cube stems from a basic rule where the outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off, walls are painted white, and the ceiling becomes the source of light—because art should be free “to take on its own life.” As in religious buildings, the artwork should appear intact over the passage of time and its vicissitudes; so the work appears already ready for posterity in “an assurance of good investment.” For a full account on the role of the white cube, I refer to the seminal book by Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

⁴⁵⁹ I curated the exhibition *Pasenau and the Devil* by artist Maria Pasenau, which took place at Fotogalleriet from 31 August to 12 December 2019.

⁴⁶⁰ Maria Pasenau, *Pasenau and the Devil*, artist’s book and exhibition catalogue (Oslo: Fotogalleriet, 2019), n.p.

⁴⁶¹ I am retranslating here some of Ahmed’s claims on shame into a different but still meaningful context. See Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 102.

⁴⁶² Karl Marx links capitalists with the poor in their “boundless drive for enrichment” and “passionate chase after value.” Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1976), 254.

⁴⁶³ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 11.

⁴⁶⁴ Aleida Assmann, “Transformations between History and Memory,” *Social Research*, vol.75, no.1, (2008), 49–72.

⁴⁶⁵ Elizabeth Povinelli, “The Woman on the Other Side of the Wall: Archiving the Otherwise in Postcolonial Digital Archives,” *differences*, vol.22, no.1 (2011), 146–71.

⁴⁶⁶ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 11.

⁴⁶⁷ From the press release for Bente Geving’s solo exhibition *Anna, Inga and Ellen*, Fotogalleriet, Oslo, 29 July–30 October 1988. My translation.

⁴⁶⁸ Sigrid Lien, “The Aesthetics of the Bear Hunt: Contemporary Photography in the Ecology of a Sámi Museum,” in *Uncertain Images: Museums and the Work of Photographs*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards and Sigrid Lien (New York: Routledge, 2016), 122–140; Torild Gjesvik, “Minne,” in *Glemte Bilder*, by Bente Geving, exhibition catalogue (Horten, Norway: Preus Museum, 2005), n.p.

⁴⁶⁹ A version of this text was presented for a digital workshop with Saloulul de proiecte, Bucharest, on 15 December 2020, on the occasion of the collaborative archival and exhibition project *The Photographic Image between Past and Future*.

⁴⁷⁰ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland, OH: Meridian Books, 1958), viii.

⁴⁷¹ Silvia Federici, “Corona Virus: A Health Crisis or a Political Crisis?” (livestreamed lecture, Kunstinstituut Melly, Rotterdam, 18 September 2020), YouTube video, 1:47:24, <https://youtu.be/W--GpXpWOfo>.

⁴⁷² Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575–99.

⁴⁷³ On Monday, 9 November 2020, while facing a new wave of lockdown in Oslo, I, together with my colleagues at Fotogalleriet, decided to distribute a message through our newsletter channel and social media, inviting people to contact us despite our physical location being temporarily closed. The board supported the message, and our contacts (telephone numbers and emails) were made public. The same message was printed and pasted to the Fotogalleriet main entrance. The core of the message read as follows: “The intimacy of our conversations related to small and large societal questions gets lost in the coldness of digital space. Here we can only speak formally conjuring up an atmosphere of division where we are literally boxed in screens. To counter this we invite you to call and ask us any questions you may have regarding images and more: what do they want, how to install them, or how they affect your life, love, work and beyond. To keep finding motivation and feedback amidst this period where a great number of physical exhibitions, projects and public presentations are temporarily closed, you can simply reach out to us to hear a friendly voice. We want to see you, more formally, in our digital gatherings, but you can also count on us to help combat these challenging times in a more personal way. [...] Fostered by what we know how to do best, and through our daily love and care for people, art can act as an engine driving civil society, where we can collectively challenge structures of inequity in a climate of social dissonance. [...] we are invested in our public responsibility to find different forms of collectiveness, which cannot be limited by the restriction of not meeting physically. We are already imagining programmes for the future and we welcome propositions, formal and informal thoughts, in order to come together with a common desire for change, and also, simply, just to hear from you.

⁴⁷⁴ From 2003 to 2006, I was enrolled in the Exhibition Studies programme at the Iuav University of Venice, where Tiravanija was a professor.

⁴⁷⁵ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon, France: Les Presses du reel, 2002), 8.

⁴⁷⁶ I am of course referring here to Guy Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle*.

⁴⁷⁷ Mierle Laderman Ukeles, quoted in Helena Reckitt, “Forgotten Relations: Feminist Artists and Relational Aesthetics,” in *Politics in a Glass Case: Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions*, ed. Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 133.

⁴⁷⁸ The sentence is part of a Fotogalleriet newsletter distributed through the institution's database and social media on 3 April 2020.

⁴⁷⁹ I curated *Let's Talk About Images 2.1.0*, a programme running for eight weeks from 16 April to 12 June 2020. Participating artists, commissions, and contributors included Anahita Alebouyeh, Bjarne Bare, Herman Breda Enkerud, Philip Di Salvo, Katalin Erdödi, Håkon Hoffart, Vilde M. Horvei, Manuel Pelmus, Anushka Rajendran, AA, RG/the Society of the Friends of the Virus, and Salvatore Vitale. The production was coordinated by Fotogalleriet's Una Mathiesen Gjerde and Håkon Lillegraven, graphics and digital communication by Herman Breda Enkerud Fotogalleriet's Niels Munk Plum, with the further advice of Fotogalleriet's Arash Shahali.

⁴⁸⁰ The redomestication of labour into the private sphere hints at important discussions for the emancipation and recognition of unwaged work central to socialist feminists' discussion during the late 1960s and into the 1970s. One should retheorise what today's “domestic labour” means within a framework of Marxist political economy. Such an analysis would provide a foundation for understanding new forms of intersectional subordination. Departing from the changing meaning of domestic labour and its literature could bring new relevant discussions to issues of class exploitation and primitive accumulation. Such early domestic labour theorists' unfinished projects still deserve further attention. I refer here to, for instance, Lise Vogel, “Domestic Labor Revisited,” *Science & Society* 64, no. 2 (2000): 151–70.

⁴⁸¹ Here I should acknowledge my migrant worker condition in a land where non-native labourers constitute nearly 20% of the total population. The immigrant population comprises 221 countries and autonomous regions, where 25% are from one of four migrant groups: Polish, Lithuanians, Swedes, and Somalis. See *Statistics Norway*, <https://www.ssb.no/en/befolking/innvandrere/statistikk/innvandrere-og-norskfodte-med-innvandrerforeldre>. According to a report from Statistics Norway, 2020 saw the lowest number of people immigrate to Norway since 2005. It also registered a decline in the number of refugees granted residence. See Frazer Norwell, “How did Covid-19 affect immigration in Norway in 2020?” *The Local*, 25 May 2021, <https://www.thelocal.no/20210525/how-did-covid-19-affect-immigration-in-norway-in-2020/>. Though I am a privileged “skilled worker,” one needs to understand what can happen when you move and do not belong, or when your “privileges” can be revoked any given day, sometimes without too much explanation, and become an object of inclusion or exclusion. One is not considered an active subject (a citizen), but a worker whose rights are regulated on availability of work, and not on legal rights as a human body and a human being. Political theorist Hannah Arendt distinguishes between the Nation and the State. “The state far from being identical with the nation, is the supreme protector of a law which guarantees man his right as man, his rights as citizen and his right as national. [The legal order] is not affected through the number of nationalities which are protected within the framework of its legal institutions.” See Hannah Arendt, “The Nation,” in *Hannah Arendt: Essays in Understanding 1930–1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 210.

⁴⁸² The 2021 edition of Colomboscope was inspired by Cecilia Vicuña’s poem “Language Is Migrant”: “Language is migrant. Words move from language to language, from culture to culture, from mouth to mouth. Our bodies are migrants, cells and bacteria are migrants too. Even galaxies migrate.” Cecilia Vicuña, “Language Is Migrant,” 2016, Poetry Foundation, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2016/04/language-is-migrant>.

⁴⁸³ Hannah Arendt had advised against the troubling association of nation and state leading to totalitarian regimes of governance. See Hannah Arendt, “The Nation,” 206–211.

⁴⁸⁴ *How to Secure a Country* was presented as an exhibition curated by Lars Willumeit and held at Fotomuseum Winterthur from 23 February until 26 May 2019. The book project

features essays by political scientists Jonas Hagmann (ETH Zurich), Philip Di Salvo (Università della Svizzera Italiana), and Roland Bleiker (University of Queensland, Australia) provide an analysis of the structure of the Swiss security system and a view on the politics of photography. Lars Willumeit, curator and social anthropologist, discusses attitudes, behaviors, and codes in 21st-Century statehood. See *How to Secure a Country. From Border Policing via Weather Forecast to Social Engineering—A Visual Study of 21st-Century Statehood*, eds. Salvatore Vitale, Lars Willumeit (Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2019).

⁴⁸⁵ Artist Bjarne Bare brought to our attention the use of the word “mono-technologism,” addressing how, since the Enlightenment, after the decline of monotheism, the cult of a single god was replaced by the cult of technology as part of a promise to reach a higher level of immunity and immortal life. See Yuk Hui, “What Begins after the End of the Enlightenment?,” *e-flux journal*, no. 96 (January 2019): <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/96/245507/what-begins-after-the-end-of-the-enlightenment>. He also pointed out that while the environment seemed to recover during the pandemic, the enemy is now fighting back. At least this was, in a very Christian way, philosopher Slavoj Žižek’s reading of the viral epidemic as a message from nature: “What you did to me, I am now doing to you.” Slavoj Zizek, *Pandemic!: COVID-19 Shakes the World* (New York: Polity, 2020), 81.

⁴⁸⁶ Antonio Cataldo, “Falling into the Image,” *OSL contemporary*, 2020, <http://oslcontemporary.com/exhibitions/bare-bjarne>.

⁴⁸⁷ “Dear Virus, We want to write to you this communication, as a short note of thank you. To our human companions on this planet, such a gesture would appear a betrayal, since at this very moment you have been declared as an enemy of humanity. Not since the events of September 11 has there been such unanimity and propagation of fear and the mobilization of uncritical construction of an enemy toward relinquishing further power to states and exposing our most intimate details. ... / But as the Society has neither a great trust in the state nor in the Capitalist ‘Community’ enterprise we also try to see and perceive how we may embrace your arrival. For years we have been told that an illness, malady, disease is above all a carrier of a message. Sometimes that message is simple, to stop, to rest, to change fully (in the severest of cases) our habits, the way we live, our foods, our diets, our form-of-life.” *The Society of the Friends of the Virus*, vol. 1, Centre Parrhesia, March 2020, http://centreparrhesia.org/vol_1_society_of_the_friends.pdf

⁴⁸⁸ Annie Chambers asserts: “You know, I tell them no, the law wasn’t made for me. If this is the law, who made the law? And where did I come in to help make that law? You know, if I wanna talk about my civil rights, wouldn’t I have a right, or somebody like me to help make the law, help make the laws of this country? No people look like me made any laws. When they talk about the constitution, nobody who looks like me was up there making no constitution. ... So it’s not for me, but I say treat me like a human being—that’s what I want to be treated like, a human being. ... When they were making the laws of this country nobody who looked like you made no law, so why are we giving credence to that? Stand up and say “treat me like a human being.” The full film is available at <http://centreparrhesia.org/nyc/>.

⁴⁸⁹ The interview is part of “Variatio V” of the video *Contagious New York*, video, 17:06, June 2020, <http://centreparrhesia.org/nyc/>.

⁴⁹⁰ Anahita Alebouyeh, “Hi, My Name Is Anahita,” Facebook video, 5:21, posted by Fotogalleriet, 20 May 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2652564731731053>.

⁴⁹¹ The Vigeland Park is the largest sculpture park in the world featuring the artworks of just one single artist; they count over 200.

⁴⁹² Eiebakke worked closely with historians and other relevant people to find material revealing the closeness of Vigeland (1869–1943) to the Nazi regime. The main gate of the sculpture park also served as one of the main pickup points for people from Oslo sent by the regime to concentration, prisoner-of-war, and other work camps. The entire work is available at the artist’s website at <https://www.anderseiebakke.no/monday>.

⁴⁹³ Corrado De Francesco, “The Growth and Crisis of Italian Higher Education during the 1960s and 1970s,” *Higher Education* 7, no. 2 (1978): 193–212.

⁴⁹⁴ Antonio Gramsci, “Some Aspects of the Southern Question,” in *The Southern Question* (Toronto: Guernica Editions, 2005), 27–72.

⁴⁹⁵ Gramsci, “Some Aspects of the Southern Question.”

⁴⁹⁶ I’m leaning on William Grier and Price M. Cobbs here, who brought to attention fundamental psychiatric research regarding how provenance and class give rise to inherited trauma, by examining mental illness and the psychic stresses engendered by discrimination. They equally demand a more localised knowledge against the universal knowledge projected by privileged subjects. See William Grier and Price M. Cobbs, *Black Rage: Two Black Psychiatrists Reveal the Full Dimensions of the Inner Conflicts and the Desperation of Black Life in the United States* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992).

⁴⁹⁷ I refer here to new research on the word “feminism” being conducted by Delphine Bedel. She traced a genealogy of the word going back to 1826, when, in the medical language of the time, “feminism” comes to be defined as a word connecting to “effeminate”; in such a way, “feminism” was formed by mirroring the female body on the male body, as the latter was inscribed with a disease in which the patient showed female attributes in “his” gestures. Bedel presented this research and claim during the digital conference *Photography Bound: Rethinking the Future of Photobooks and Self-publishing*, organised by Fotogalleriet and KDM – Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design, University of Bergen, 13–15 October 2020.

⁴⁹⁸ I refer here to processes of stigmatised traumas produced by the utterance of words, causing the internalisation of the barrier created by the insult. “The act of naming produces an awareness of oneself as other, transformed by others into an object.” Didier Eribon, *Insult: And the Making of the Gay Self* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 16.

⁴⁹⁹ Foucault emphasises that his goal is to treat discourses as practices that “systematically form the object of which they speak.” Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 49.

⁵⁰⁰ Haraway, “Situated Knowledges,” 588.

⁵⁰¹ Haraway, “Situated Knowledges.”

⁵⁰² I came back to Pasolini, and his theory of “free indirect speech” as a tool to give voice to people who otherwise may not have one, thanks to the work of artist Bouchra Khalili, who has often reflected on Pasolini in her practice, as well as the role of the witness and the problematic aspect of who is given the right to speak.

⁵⁰³ Foucault places at the heart of his analyses the system that defines, in a given epoch, what is thinkable and sayable. “Instead of studying the sexual behavior of men at a given period … , instead of describing what men thought of sexuality … , one would ask oneself whether, in this behavior, as in these representations, a whole discursive practice is not at work; whether sexuality … is not a group of objects that can be talked about (or that it is forbidden to talk about), a field of possible enunciations … , a group of concepts.” Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 93.

⁵⁰⁴ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 93.

⁵⁰⁵ Upon my arrival at the institution, I noticed a picture on the website from 1977 portraying a group of people, naming a few as the founders of the institution; the only woman in the picture had not been deemed visually “independent” from her male counterparts, and instead was playfully subjugated to a hierarchy of gendered roles.

⁵⁰⁶ Derrida traces the archive to the Greek *arkheion*: the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded. Jacques Derrida, “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,” *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 9–63.

⁵⁰⁷ Derrida, “Archive Fever.”

⁵⁰⁸ Ramm Fortun was at the time the acting dean of the Academy of Fine Art at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts.

⁵⁰⁹ To think it with Foucault: “Transgression, then, is not related to the limit as black is to white, the prohibited to the lawful, the outside to the inside. … Rather, their relationship takes the form of a spiral which no simple infraction can exhaust. Perhaps it is like a flash of lightning in the night which, from the beginning of time, gives a dense and black intensity to

the night it denies, which lights up the night from the inside, from top to bottom, and yet owes to the stark clarity of its manifestation, its harrowing and poised singularity.” Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. D. F. Bouchard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), 35.

⁵¹⁰ Marthe Ramm Fortun’s intervention started within the exhibition *Women in Three Acts*, curated by Kati Simon, which opened on 14 March 2019. A second performance, *LOOK AROUND IN JOY*, was held at the stroke of midnight on 27 April 2019. A third one is forthcoming. For more, see “Women in Three Acts,” Fotogalleriet, 2019, <http://www.fotogalleriet.no/en/exhibitions/women-in-three-acts>.

⁵¹¹ This is Ramm Fortun’s take. Martha Ramm Fortun, email to the author, 22 February 2019.

⁵¹² Ramm Fortun, email to the author, 22 February 2019.

⁵¹³ Derrida claims that there is no political power without control over the archive, because it is a control over memory. The democracy of a society for him can be measured through how much participation is given to archives. Derrida “Archive Fever.”

⁵¹⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), viii.

⁵¹⁵ Derrida, “Archive Fever.”

⁵¹⁶ Derrida, “Archive Fever,” 14.

⁵¹⁷ Nikhil Vettukattil, “Politics in the Image of Blackness,” *Conversations on Photography*, ed. in Antonio Cataldo (Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2021), 285–303.

⁵¹⁸ A general overview is available in Merja Heikkinen, *The Nordic Model for Supporting Artists: Public Support for Artists in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden* (Helsinki: Nykypaino, 2003). On the contemporary relation of the welfare state to the arts, I refer to Marta Kuzma and Peter Osborne, eds., *Art of Welfare* (Oslo: Office for Contemporary Art Norway, 2006).

⁵¹⁹ Michel Foucault, “Life of Infamous Men,” in *Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy*, ed. Meaghan Morris and Paul Patton (Sydney: Feral, 2006), 76–91.

⁵²⁰ Derrida, “Archive Fever.”

⁵²¹ Derrida, “Archive Fever,” 13.

⁵²² Derrida, “Archive Fever.”

⁵²³ Derrida, “Archive Fever.”

⁵²⁴ Techniques of material exchange, instruments of communication, but also the property rights, publishing rights, and reproduction rights it institutes.

⁵²⁵ Searle, “What Is an Institution?”

⁵²⁶ To paraphrase an email between myself and Marthe Ramm Fortun on 22 February 2019: If the opening of Fotogalleriet coincides with the establishment of photography as an art form in its own right, to challenge the exhibition space as such (i.e., the white cube), in the case of Fotogalleriet, Marthe Ramm Fortun asked, could the “male artist” not afford to let the fight for meditation and canonisation of the medium be cramped by women and marginalised voices, already unrepresented in the art world nationally and globally? Was this the problem?

⁵²⁷ Elke Krasny, “Curatorial Materialism: A Feminist Perspective on Independent and Co-dependent Curating,” *OnCurating*, no. 29 (May 2016): 96–107.

⁵²⁸ This was partly Ramm Fortun’s claim. Wendy Brown articulates the subversive potential of silence: “Even dreams of emancipation cannot take shape unless the discursively shadowy or altogether invisible character of those subjects, injuries, events, or activities are supplanted with articulation, whether through slave ballads, the flaunting of forbidden love, the labor theory of value, or the quantification of housework.” Wendy Brown, “In the ‘Folds of Our Own Discourse’: The Pleasures and Freedoms of Silence,” *University of Chicago Law School Roundtable* 3, issue 1, article 8 (1996): 185–97.

⁵²⁹ Giorgio Agamben’s “What Is the Contemporary?” could be useful here to understand that there is an impossibility of capturing your own current moment. It’s included in Giorgio

Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus? And Other Essays* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 39–54.

⁵³⁰ As I have noted elsewhere in this manuscript and attempted to demonstrate, the kunsthalle has to be considered gendered, in order to reclaim her power to speak from a situated position and, with it, to claim her propulsive emancipatory role within the arts.

⁵³¹ When Elke Krasny uses the term “curatorial materialism,” she’s speaking about independent curators. One could take this as a hint to bring the argument further to the *kunstalle* space as the work of small- and medium-sized institutions. Krasny, “Curatorial Materialism.”

⁵³² Antonio Cataldo, “Trembling Institution,” in *FRANK*, ed. Sille Storihle (Oslo: Torpedo, 2021), 82–88, and also reproduced in the present volume.

⁵³³ Cataldo, “Trembling Institution.”

⁵³⁴ Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (New York: Viking, 1962).

⁵³⁵ Frustration because something is missing and there is a need to verbalise or visualise such an absence. I refer here to informal conversations with Dag Alveng, one of Fotogalleriet’s founders, who has agreed with my assignation of such a feeling to their collective emotion regarding establishing Fotogalleriet.

⁵³⁶ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 4.

⁵³⁷ Tony Bennett has formulated a view of the museum as an educational place. Gaynor Kavanagh’s *Dream Spaces: Memory and the Museum* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 2000) shifts that view by arguing that our imagination, emotions, senses, and memories enter as a vital component of the experience. The volume Suzanne Macleod et al., eds., *Museum Making: Narratives, Architectures, Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 2012) touches upon the museum’s ambition to reach the spiritual and emotional side of visitors, and that recognising narratives around identity is central to museums’ endeavour (pp. xix–xxiii).

⁵³⁸ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 4.

⁵³⁹ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 11.

⁵⁴⁰ Ivo Maroevir, “Museology as a Discipline of Information Sciences,” *Nordisk Museologi*, no. 2 (1997): 77–92.

⁵⁴¹ Boris Groys, “The Role of the Museum When the National State Breaks Up,” *Proceedings of the ICOMON Meetings Held in Stavanger, Norway, 1995, Vienna, Austria, 1996* (Madrid: Museo Casa de la Moneda, 1997), 99, http://icomon.mini.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2018/12/The_role_of_the_museum_when_the_national_state_breaks_up.pdf.

⁵⁴² Groys, “The Role of the Museum When the National State Breaks Up,” 99.

⁵⁴³ Groys, “The Role of the Museum When the National State Breaks Up,” 99.

⁵⁴⁴ Groys, “The Role of the Museum When the National State Breaks Up,” 100.

⁵⁴⁵ “I’m a curator of culture, of the old and the new. I write and I dream up ways in which our stories can be shared, and our cultural material accessed. ... I work in culture, with communities and with objects that hold the energies of the people who made and used them.” Kimberley Moulton, “I Can Still Hear Them Calling,” in *Sovereign Words: Indigenous Art, Curation and Criticism*, ed. Katya García-Antón (Amsterdam: OCA & Valiz, 2018), 197–214. I co-curated (together with curator Katya García-Antón) the original conference *Sovereign Words: Facing the Tempest of a Globalised Art History*, held as part of the Dhaka Art Summit, 2–10 February 2018.

⁵⁴⁶ “There must be a collaboration between the institution in supporting the transformation of these spaces and creating opportunity for agency with the communities. Engaging and building relationships with First People curators must have actual work outcomes: it is not enough to just talk; we need action.” Moulton, “I Can Still Hear Them Calling,” 213.

⁵⁴⁷ Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *The Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 4.

⁵⁴⁸ Povinelli, *The Empire of Love*, 8.

⁵⁴⁹ Povinelli, *The Empire of Love*, 6.

⁵⁵⁰ Povinelli, *The Empire of Love*, 12.

⁵⁵¹ By providing an analysis of the social bases of women's oppression, Friedrich Engels questions the "normality" of a biological basis providing some first steps towards women's liberation. See Paul Blackledge, "Frederick Engels, Social Reproduction, and the Problem of a Unitary Theory of Women's Oppression," *Social Theory and Practice* 44, no. 3 (2018): 297–321.

⁵⁵² I'm also referring here to studies on pronouns for claims of universal and particular positions and how the legal framework around such universal claims paradoxically allowed for emancipation of underrepresented groups within society. I find this illuminating when looking back at the historical claims and research of Kollontai. See Amia Srinivasan, "He, She, One, They, Ho, Hus, Hum, Ita," *London Review of Books*, 2 July 2020, <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v42/n13/amia-srinivasan/he-she-one-they-ho-hus-hum-ita>.

⁵⁵³ Alexandra Kollontai, *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai*, ed. and trans. Alix Holt (New York: Norton, 1977), 278–79.

⁵⁵⁴ Alexandra Kollontai, "Make Way to Winged Eros," 1923, quoted in "The 'Sex Question' Glass Floweth O'er: The Bolsheviks' Insatiable Thirst for Answers," *College Russian* (blog), 2 September 2008, <https://collegerussian.com/2008/09/02/the-sex-question-glass-floweth-oer-the-bolsheviks-insatiable-thirst-for-answers/>.

⁵⁵⁵ Friedrich Engels and August Bebel located the family as the site of economic and sexual oppression. Feminist thinkers have criticised the monogamous family and also assumptions related to a "natural" sexual division of labour. See Jinee Lokaneeta, "Alexandra Kollontai and Marxist Feminism," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28 April–4 May 2001, 1405–12.

⁵⁵⁶ Krasny, "Curatorial Materialism," 97.

⁵⁵⁷ Dora García, ed., *Mad Marginal*, Cahier #2 (Berlin: Sternberg, 2011).

⁵⁵⁸ Juli Carson, "Aesthetics of Repetition: A Case for Oscar Masotta," *X-TRA*, Spring 2012, <https://www.x-traonline.org/article/aesthetics-of-repetition-a-case-for-oscar-masotta/>.

⁵⁵⁹ "Dora García: Segunda Vez Open Seminar," Academy of Fine Art, Oslo National Academy of the Arts, 24 October 2017, <https://khio.no/en/events/454>.

⁵⁶⁰ Erica Lehrer et al., eds., *Curating Difficult Knowledge: Violent Pasts in Public Places* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 2.

⁵⁶¹ Pier Paolo Pasolini, "The Cinema of Poetry," in *Movies and Methods*, vol. 1., ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 542–58.

⁵⁶² Pasolini, "The Cinema of Poetry," 545.

⁵⁶³ Pasolini, "The Cinema of Poetry," 545.

⁵⁶⁴ Pasolini, "The Cinema of Poetry," 547.

⁵⁶⁵ Fred Moten spoke on Sunday 14 June 2020 in the context of weekly, ongoing (digital) assemblies organised by 16 Beaver and the Society of the Friends of the Virus.

⁵⁶⁶ I am here borrowing a position from Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 168.

⁵⁶⁷ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 168.

⁵⁶⁸ Bruce Altshuler, *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition: New Art in the 20th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 236. Altshuler also refers to "dematerialisation" in relation to curatorial practices of the 1960s and 1970s, citing projects by Lucy Lippard, Seth Siegelaub, and Harald Szeemann.

⁵⁶⁹ Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry, eds., introduction to *Politics in a Glass Case*, 1. Dimitrakaki and Perry coined the term "museum materialism" to investigate what it means for feminist practices to enter the hyper-institutionalised space of the museum.

⁵⁷⁰ Paul O'Neill, "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse," in *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance*, ed. Judith Rugg and Michele Sedgwick (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2007), 13–28.

⁵⁷¹ O'Neill, "The Curatorial Turn."

⁵⁷² Szeemann is also ascribed as one of the founders of IKT International Association of Curators of Contemporary Art, demonstrating his interest in creating a power figure with their own set of demands and power role. See also Dimitrakaki and Perry, introduction to *Politics in a Glass Case*, 10–11. They clearly address blockbuster shows, prizes, and biennials as part of an economic growth in which they inscribe neoliberal evolution of the curatorial, with signature exhibitions and the building of literature on the curator as such.

⁵⁷³ Oliver Marchart, “The Artistic Function,” in *SITAC VI: What’s left ... What Remains?*, by Ute Meta Bauer (Mexico City: Patronato de Arte Contemporáneo, 2009), 161–67.

⁵⁷⁴ Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), xiii.

⁵⁷⁵ Deutsche, *Evictions*, xiii.

⁵⁷⁶ Marchart, “The Artistic Function.”

⁵⁷⁷ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985).

⁵⁷⁸ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 1.

⁵⁷⁹ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 96.

⁵⁸⁰ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 96.

⁵⁸¹ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 105. The emphasis on curating is mine.

⁵⁸² Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.

⁵⁸³ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 125.

⁵⁸⁴ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 125.

⁵⁸⁵ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 127.

⁵⁸⁶ Chantal Mouffe, “Democratic Politics and Conflict: An Agonistic Approach,” *Politica Comun* 9 (2016): <https://doi.org/10.3998/pc.1232227.0009.011>.

⁵⁸⁷ Mouffe, “Democratic Politics and Conflict.”

⁵⁸⁸ Marchart, “The Artistic Function.”

⁵⁸⁹ Antonio Gramsci, “The Intellectuals,” in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 3–23.

⁵⁹⁰ In their introduction to *Politics in a Glass Case*, Dimitrakaki and Perry assert this in more general terms, not only in relation to Harald Szeemann.

⁵⁹¹ Antonio Gramsci, “The Intellectuals.”

⁵⁹² Marchart, “The Artistic Function.”

⁵⁹³ Dora Garcíá affirmed such preoccupations with collective work and equal power relations between the artists and other figures involved in the making and presentation of the work. Dora Garcíá, interview with the author (unpublished), 19 November 2020.

⁵⁹⁴ In the first two years of its existence, Fotogalleriet was structured and supported through what was called Fotogalleriets venner (Fotogalleriet’s Friends), contributing a modest amount to meet the rent for the institution’s building.

⁵⁹⁵ Fotogalleriet’s statutes, as ratified in 1979.

⁵⁹⁶ Gisele Freund, *Photography and Society* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1980), 194.

⁵⁹⁷ Freund, *Photography and Society*, 194.

⁵⁹⁸ *Morgenbladet*, 4 April 1978.

⁵⁹⁹ The entire archive is marked “EXH,” meaning you move from exhibition to exhibition, month after month, year after year.

⁶⁰⁰ Indirectly and tacitly, the archive lays a claim that Fotogalleriet has always been there, that there has always been an artistic director, a board, employees, technicians, cleaners, a landlord, funders. But this has only been the structure of the past twenty years or so.

⁶⁰¹ Marchart, “The Artistic Function,” 166.

⁶⁰² Oliver Marchart elaborates on the term ex/position, the deinstitutionalising effect of exhibitions as places in between public and private procedures. Oliver Marchart, “The Curatorial Function. Organizing the ex/position,” *OnCurating*, 9/11 (2011): 43–46.

Conclusions: Curating between the No Longer and the Not Yet

Throughout my thesis, I have shown how my research and my curatorial practice influence one another. Starting from the curatorial work developed by sociologist Aina Helgesen and artist, writer, and editor Ann Christine Eek during the 1970s, I have developed programmes for Fotogalleriet according to the radical thinking embedded in the historical projects *Kunstnerkår* (*The Artists' Situation*, 1971) and *Arbeta—inte slita ut sig!* (*Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!*, 1974–78). This approach has included (a) involving several artists and contributors whose identities are mixed over time with the aim to create a joint, long-term work that addresses the precarious conditions of previously underrepresented (or misrepresented) bodies within the arts, curated into a temporal and spatialised format, to overcome preconceived notions of art; (b) interrogating the economic consequences of artworks, artists, and people being attributed value—artistic or otherwise—by entering (being curated into) the space of art, especially in periods of economic transition, and studying how the arts are affected directly and indirectly by larger economic and social movements; (c) unveiling the expository labour in foetal art history—before museal and canonical acceptance—by diving deep into the structure of the overall display format (the institution of institutions, the canonisation of the canon through curating); (d) asserting the expanded state of things—what happens on the street—to push the space of appearance and representation to make room for the unknown, the unspoken, in the realm of the arts: to focus on the given material conditions; (e) documenting, transforming, and creating visual propositions through targeted display formats, the validity and acceptance of which rests on the exceptionality of the art space, which in turn enables the longevity of their claims that is not possible in other realms and disciplines.

In the spirit of historical enquiry and its contemporary application, I developed a new set of programmes at Fotogalleriet starting from the autumn of 2018—coinciding with my appointment as artistic director and curator—that was explicitly aimed at unveiling the feminist character of the institution, which had been stripped down since its inception in 1977 through the progressive institutionalisation of the organisation: the slow cementing of bureaucratic practices resembling larger art institutions' logics (such as museal aspirations), which in my view “betrayed” the core roots of the institution as a flexible entity; its founding mission was to act as a motor of disturbance and a generator of fresh and organic thought, hovering in from other spheres of the public—namely what's happening on the margins of society and art, on the street, in alternative publishing, and in other sites of social unrest and dissent, the yet to be accepted. In the late 2010s, I initiated discussions tackling both the then recent systematised history of Fotogalleriet and the contemporaneity of issues such as feminism and the queer body, to struggle with the continuous attempt to reveal as false the conception that the only possible base for society are subjectivities first and foremost determined by mainstream norms, the art market, and class and gender, and to uncover how the perpetuation of the nuclear family structures normative logics. These preoccupations slowly unravelled over a long period of time, and these interests intersected and fed on each other (including the before and after of each exhibition period: preparatory applications, meetings, partaking in the artists' work with other practitioners, and the newly made singular works eventually entering public view in the singular exhibition).

The theory was fundamental to entering such complex discussions and to unravelling the practicality of how an institution (in my case, Fotogalleriet) comes to be what it is over forty years of history: from an organic aggregation of people and ideas outside

what's given, then normativised into a set pace of practices affecting not only what's on public display but also the everyday lives of the creative and administrative contributors inside the institution, and consequently expanding out into its publics. My theoretical understanding of a number of issues pertaining to the formation of institutions, norms, and canonical perspectives—and within this curating as well as tools for rethinking such ontological givens—was developed through the reading of Elke Krasny (“Curatorial Materialism,” which I discuss in my introduction), Simone de Beauvoir (*The Second Sex*, discussed in chapter 1.3), Antonio Gramsci (*Subaltern Social Groups*, chapters 3.4 and 3.5), John R. Searle (“What Is an Institution,” chapter 2.4), Jacqueline Rose (*Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, chapter 2.5), Dorothee Richter (“Artists and Curators as Authors,” for the notion of the curatorial genius, introduction), Silvia Federici (*Caliban and the Witch*, for the notion of primitive accumulation, chapter 2.5), Tony Bennett (“The Exhibitionary Complex,” chapter 3.13), Valerie Mainz and Griselda Pollock (*Work and the Image*, chapter 3.3), Édouard Glissant (*Poetics of Relation*, for the notion of orality, chapter 4.2), Judith Butler (*Bodies That Matter*, chapter 4.4), Hannah Arendt (*The Human Condition*, for the notion of the space of appearance, chapter 4.4), Bernard Stiegler (*What Makes Life Worth Living*, for the notion of the pharmakon, chapter 5.2), Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry (*Politics in a Glass Case*, for the notion of gender encased in museal structures, chapters 4.3 and 5.5), Geeta Kapur (“Curating across Agonistic Worlds,” for the notion of transnational public sphere, chapter 4.4), Donna Haraway (“Situated Knowledges,” chapter 5.4), Eva Illouz (*Why Love Hurts*, for the notion of the political economy behind romantic love, chapter 5.4),⁶⁰³ Sara Ahmed, (*The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, chapter 5.2), Didier Eribon (*Insult and the Making of the Gay Self*, chapter 5.4), Michel Foucault (*The History of Sexuality*, for the notions of power, knowledge, and transgression, chapter 5.4), Jacques Derrida (*Archive Fever*, for the notion of origin, chapter 5.4), Elizabeth A. Povinelli (*The Empire of Love*, for the notion of intimacy, chapter 5.4), Oliver Marchart (“The Artistic Function,” for the notion of the curatorial function, chapter 5.5), and Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (*Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, for the notion of agonistic pluralism, chapter 5.5).

Artist and writer Dave Beech has contended that “exceptionalism is not an economic argument for autonomy.”⁶⁰⁴ Art is produced in more places than one, and not only based on critical and commercial success. We need to realise the enormous possibilities that are still intrinsic to the art system that can't be summoned under a capitalist production logic. Only measuring the art that generates capital engenders a biased reading of its role in society. Nevertheless, there is a need to define and analyse a context—economic and social—from which art operates. Beech's position describes labour within the arts in a novel reading where the power relations and production conditions are not capitalistic per se. For him, artistic labour is not a commodity because it doesn't respond to the same rules of other sectors. I lean upon his definition of labour to complexify my take and create moments of agreement and disagreement with him, especially when it comes to the curatorial field.

The title of my thesis, “Curating Labour” both refers to labouring as moving with difficulty through something and to something still being in the process, and simultaneously signifies the continuous struggle to overcome relations of production that are still unconscious, which is the very struggle preventing bodies from entering the space of appearance⁶⁰⁵ (the exhibition as a public space for recognition), which demands constant rethinking and redistribution of aesthetic power, while different bod-

ies move within, as well as reach, the exhibition space. In the process of making space for the new in the aesthetic field (the “no longer and not yet”),⁶⁰⁶ curatorial work often disappears (falls into the background), is rendered invisible, or aims at staying invisible while favouring other claims (such as the artistic), to protect (and accompany) artistic and other positions as they come to the fore and to bring visual propositions (and arguments) to life.

To avoid situating curatorial positions as ontological givens—“naturally” embedded in the cultural sector—we need to question curating’s reaching power and ability to enable the speaking of certain subjectivities instead of others. Labouring (working through the struggles of the exhibition space) and overcoming such struggles (coming to curate or to be curated within an exhibition space) may seem separate, but they are to be read as one and the same struggle where privileges in the exhibition space exclude not only people of different classes and varied provenances but also the possibility of a pluralism of visual propositions entering the discourse of art (such was the case made by *Work—Don’t Wear Yourself Out!*). In an environment of intensive art production, curatorial labour often doesn’t dare to (or can’t) unveil the darkest structures of a system of privileges. This was one of the main claims of *The Artists’ Situation*: that only a small percentage of artists was rising to the top and achieving artistic and economic success, while the rest—and especially female-identifying subjectivities—were easily excluded over time, not only economically but by disappearing from the canon due to a set of patriarchal rules granting long-term recognition through continuity, genealogical academic writing, and musealisation.⁶⁰⁷ Over time, these rules are to be considered economic and societal, and cannot simply rest under the exceptionalism promised by the arts.

Unavoidably, in directing Fotogalleriet, the archaeology of knowledge I was excavating through historical positions (some cases rose to the surface more willingly than others, as we still, unfortunately, rest on an idea of art history formation which is heavily West-centred and undoubtedly patriarchally dominated) entered into the commissioning of new work, or to say it better: set out to find allies, in this historical search and cultural battle. Curating, I argue in my case, is to make space and create the ground on which allies can speak—as one could easily put it in Gramscian terms.⁶⁰⁸ This movement from theory to practice influenced my understanding of what it means to be a curator in a more profound sense than I’d ever experienced before. Because my readings had to find the actuality of the present moment—theory could not escape the day-to-day practice of my work—the theory came to inform my very self, moving in a presentness in search of a different future. The administrative intersects with human and financial resources and the very structure of a vulnerable institution. Exclusion and inclusion—even of emotions—were materially measured. Concurrently, the space of curating could not simply remain located within the four walls of the institution but needed to move into the outside world and connect to my claims. Here arose an intensity of work done daily, by finding allies in other institutions and networks of peers within and outside the visual arts, including Nøkkel til byen (Keys to the City), Oslo World Music Festival, and SPACE (Syrian Peace Action Center) in Oslo and Salонul de proiecte in Bucharest, Romania, which brought an incredible amount of curatorial energy into my practice.⁶⁰⁹ Some of the curatorial projects described in this thesis couldn’t have reached their full potential, or full theoretical understanding, without such enriching collaborations.⁶¹⁰ They activated intersectional thinking in youth engagement from so-called minorities in the city, indicating material exclusion from the arts, demands for inclusion of more

extensive cultural backgrounds and for social justice, and interests in images connecting to more forms (or disciplines) than one. At the same time, similar institutions in the former Eastern bloc engaged with material recollection and institutional building and questioning, thinking concretely about building museums from the perspective of a small institution; this made me question Fotogalleriet's grounding and its future. Indeed a matter of curatorial practice.

Two of the last projects in this period of intensive research (and curatorial practice) were *Softwalks* by Andreas Angelidakis and *If I Could Wish for Something* by Dora García, both presented at Fotogalleriet in 2021.⁶¹¹

Andreas Angelidakis is an architect who never built. Architecture in his work stands for an image of infrastructure with its own agency and will—cumulating, moving, and producing ruins.⁶¹² In his world, the physical and digital realms merge through the use of software and hardware in video and sculptural works, turning hard surfaces into soft and differently, sociably experienceable material. Combining these elements, *Softwalks* consisted of a site-specific installation within the urban setting of Oslo's city centre and concurrently circulated digitally. Fotogalleriet was approached as a point of departure, questioning the institution itself as both a physical and a theoretical entity producing a constructed system of meaning through its physical and digital geolocation.⁶¹³ Originally—in 1977—a space exclusively dedicated to photography, Fotogalleriet has transformed from a static take (site-specific exhibitionary) to a moving-image take (time-based exhibitionary), therefore forcing us to question its embrace of contextual material and immaterial surroundings (one could think it as a sort of unchosen Situationist *dérive*, because we are constantly “displaced” in the digital world—affecting our perception of the physical world—and forced to make new associations with spaces which are not immediately connected to one another).

To whom does the city belong to? To whom does the street belong? Do we continue needing a physical exhibition space to exhibit photography, and images, if these represent patriarchal statuses only? Where is Fotogalleriet really located? At Møllergata 34 in Oslo (a geophysical location) or on a server somewhere that “I” (Angelidakis or a viewer) can experience from Athens, Greece, or from any another location in the world, fed by millions of data users in Oslo and synchronously manipulated elsewhere—and contributing to building a different understanding and usage of what the institution is? Where does the publicity (the being public) of the institution rest?⁶¹⁴

Social scientist Leslie Kern has argued that as “industry norms are structured to permit harassment, protect abusers, and punish victims, urban environments are structured to support patriarchal family forms, gender-segregated labour markets, and traditional gender roles.”⁶¹⁵ That these questions should be asked is clear and unavoidable, especially for people for whom the urbanity of the city wasn’t built.⁶¹⁶ Even though we like to believe that society has evolved and moved beyond the confines of gender, non-conforming bodies are incredibly limited by the social norms of the city, and no less by its exhibition spaces. I was motivated to engage in these conversations and to invite Angelidakis (back) to Oslo,⁶¹⁷ particularly due to the “architecture” he crafted for documenta 14’s public programming—collectively titled the Parliament of Bodies—hosted in the Athens Municipality Arts Center at Parko Eleftherias in September 2016. The building housed the military police headquarters

during the junta (1967–74) and the edifice behind was used as a detention and torture facility. Neither a conference nor an exhibition, participants of the Parliament of Bodies were invited into the headquarters of the former military police and were confront with no individual chairs and no fixed architecture (or the typical semi-circular amphitheatre symbolising the equality of democracy); rather, they faced the political potential of the “open form.”⁶¹⁸ What was transmitted through images beyond the Athens convenings, though, were hard concrete blocks (moving outside its locale through documenta 14’s digital public outreach). An in-person visit would instead have revealed that the meeting room consisted of sixty-eight soft blocks, which could be endlessly assembled and rearranged, creating multiple stagings and scripting visibility for heterogeneous and dissenting narratives. Through *DEMOS* (2016)—the title given to this work—Angelidakis refers to the constitutive extremes of Athens: ancient stone steps (that can be said to have initiated the formation of democracy), and the modernist reinforced-concrete frame (a new form of the architectural democratisation of Athens, and many others locales, in modern times).

How can we start a discussion on exclusion, dispossession, and repression based on gender in the exhibition space if we don’t question something larger: how gender is a prejudicial and pre-emptive tool affecting our bodies (their pluralism) when traversing the city. Especially while the city has been clearly written around one symbolic patriarchal subject. Isn’t architecture an image, travelling and affecting bodies in soft and hard ways?

“Our cities are patriarchy written in stone, brick, glass and concrete,” experimental filmmaker Jane Darke writes.⁶¹⁹ Built environments reflect how society is structured, and most often it is structured around the white, male, able body. “Stone, brick, glass, and concrete don’t have agency, do they? They aren’t consciously trying to uphold the patriarchy, are they?” asks Kern.⁶²⁰ Perhaps not, but they form an understanding of what’s “normal” and “right,” and not what’s out of joint in this enforced normativity. They structure a grammar we are all made to use, which is naturalised through glass, steel, and cement. But “physical places like cities *matter* when we want to think about social change,” Kern continues.⁶²¹ And it is from within this position that I entrenched my curatorial choice to ask Angelidakis to address the problematic but also the potential position of the exhibition space within and beyond the physical contours of the city, and it is also the reason why I believe his *Softwalks* intervention was so important in the sphere of the city of Oslo in general and Fotogalleriet in particular. It represents a long-term curatorial choice to demand that we restart from structures (similarly to Helgesen’s *The Artists’ Situation*). A different kind of labour is at stake in the exhibition space today: to expose the institution, as well as the formation of its publicness (to be an example, to be exemplary). The artist and the curator, labouring around these questions, as I’ll explain, are part of a process of unveiling structural dependency on ontological givens when we can’t yet imagine the new. When we can’t start abandoning forms of labouring (architectures) we already know. What is no longer and not yet. These demands are not only artistic but curatorial, allowing us to ask for the long-term work (labour) of an exhibition space and its situatedness. Extending Kern’s argument, one arrives from the whole (the city’s urban planning) to the singular architectonic building still imparting the same patriarchal meaning. Within it, the individual building shapes curatorial form and its ability to speak (and consequently for whom). The concept of leaving such a determined kind of space was fundamental to the curatorial discussions I had with Angelidakis. Following these tropes and the invitation to work on the architectonic

positioning of Fotogalleriet (the situatedness of the building and the building itself as a signifier), the artist even questioned—in some humorous (and no less serious) conversations—if the name “Fotogalleriet” shouldn’t be put in a sort of citational form to stress the institutional questioning institutions should always undergo. I believe that all curating today should always maintain a citational form—“curating,” quotation marks included. A critical discourse should always be self-critical. In discussing what marks the inside and the outside of the institution—the institution’s windows (which again have a powerful digital counterpart)—the question becomes how to deconstruct these patriarchal spaces that the exhibition space represents in a smaller scope: control over body movement and behaviour, and how to move away from such unidirectionality.

Fotogalleriet is positioned near the historical police station and jail of Oslo at Møllergata 19, which became prominent especially in the 1940s and for infamous reasons.⁶²² Several queer intellectuals were imprisoned in these facilities, including Per Aabel (1902–1999), Willy Laumann-Olsen (1904–1973), and Erling Bauck (1924–2004), to name but a few. A park with nocturnal life dotted with drug use and petty crime (the crime of being bodies on the margins of the law) faces Fotogalleriet’s exhibition space. Increasingly, the area is under pressure from capital investors trying to render it more uniform through more glass, more cement, more stones—the same materials Darke speaks about as being so pleasing to the patriarchy.

Educator, researcher, and urban planner Deland Chan notes that “planning from below, and ‘soft,’ people-centred work like community outreach, aren’t ascribed the same kind of value [as architectonic infrastructure].”⁶²³ “Real” planning is considered extensive in scope, focused on “hard” infrastructural improvements and bringing in heavy know-how. Fotogalleriet is at street level and has four large windows that reveal the entirety of the interior space, translating into an alleged transparency between the inside and the outside. Yet this seemingly porous entrance is no less of a “vertical glass ceiling” for what the institution represents. In modernist thinking, “glass culture” was to completely transform humanity together with steel and concrete structures, encompassing electric lighting, heating and cooling systems, vacuum cleaners, cars, and airplanes, and so oppositional to the ideals of “floating” (as a synonym of transparent) architecture. This ideal took us from closed rooms to glass architecture, “which lets in the light of the sun, the moon, and the stars, not merely through a few windows, but through every possible wall, which will be made entirely of glass—of coloured glass,” recites German polymath and architecture theorist Paul Scheerbart,⁶²⁴ reflecting positivist ideals at the turn of the twentieth century that today reach us, unmediated, through common building practices. Walter Benjamin already criticised this purified ideal of space in the early 1930s, saying glass structures engender a culture of erasure, because nothing really sticks to glass. Its surfaces are designed to leave no trace.⁶²⁵

Angelidakis’s exhibition at Fotogalleriet consisted of the three-channel video work *ScreenWalker* (2021), which occupied the central part of the main room, facing the street. The screens were installed on wooden poles placed around the perimeter of a clearly demarcated circle of carpet on the floor, facing each other. The *KION* (2020) seating system, made of composite foam and resembling pieces of Greek columns, was arranged in a pyramid reaching the ceiling in the small room visible through the other windows, while other pieces of *KION* were dispersed throughout the rooms, like a ruin site. Small 3D-printed sculptures—“antibodies” in Angelidakis’s words—

sat on several bases hanging on (floating on) the walls of the exhibition space, together with prints of the *KIONs* on textile, which imaginatively inhabited various famous modernist dwellings, like Philip Johnson's Glass House (1949). Text interspersed both the videos and the textile works. The lighting in the entire space was inverted, instead coming from below through construction lamps—establishing the idea of the work being an extension of the artist's studio (that is, not an exhibition space, but a space under construction, under thinking, “unstable”). The exhibition was open 24/7 and the videos could be accessed through a QR code posted on the window.⁶²⁶

ScreenWalker made it unclear if one was sitting “in” the videos: because one simultaneously watched a moving maquette of the installation (the entire physical space) on the screen. The staging of on-screen bodies made it hard to discern if the videos had been digitally animated or recorded in a physical scenography. My conversations with Angelidakis are reported in sections of these videos (possibly playing on and criticising the idea of the artist-curator-commissioner dialogue), and he also used our recorded conversations to study the space from afar, in Athens, to gain enough data about it as a discrete digital entity and consequently as a “real” space, to enable him to work on the overall exhibition on the inside and the outside of Fotogalleriet. The street is a fundamental part of this in-out movement, through real-time access through phone technology and other intersecting information taken from satellite imagery, aerial photography, and street maps. The 3D-printed “antibodies,” complementing the intersection of different worlds, are both fictitious architectural elements (digital and immaterial, and yet reproduced in fragile materiality) and parts of bodies—one and the same body, indiscernible—attempting to understand what happens when we cross the digital. That is, in digital space, the body is two-dimensional—an image—yet some parts of our body “cross” the screen and remain trapped in its infrastructure: what modernity defines as “monstrous,” simply the non-normative body.⁶²⁷

KION sits between being an art object and a usable object. People can decide how to use the pieces: these “soft ruins” that reflect the foam furniture produced in Italy during the early days of postmodernism, when architectural design was considered a critical tool; but they are also social tools.⁶²⁸

In *ScreenWalker*, Angelidakis asks: “Do we even know what real space is anymore?” “Do we care?” “Is there any other way to walk?” “Show me a different path so I can lose my way in this vast amount of data.”⁶²⁹ One could take a seat at Fotogalleriet on these “domesticated ruins”—*KION*. Within the exhibition, one could “softwalk”—I came to use this word often as a neologism (and a verb) to signify, following Angelidakis’s take, wandering through space and time independently, whether on-screen or physically (definitely the ambition of a Situationist *dérive*). Because we come—through his work—to traverse hard spaces in a soft manner (digitally and physically), these spaces are not hard (cement, glass, steel) anymore. The exhibition didn’t exist in a bare manner at Møllergata 34, but rather manifested at the intersection of different locations produced by the usership. Angelidakis has shown over the past decades that we have learned more and more to experience buildings through travelling images (digital ruins, not only physical ruins), and we inhabit the digital space through online virtual worlds, where we meet to talk and create other geographies, bringing these habits back into other spaces, a heterotopia.⁶³⁰ Over the course of the last year alone, our formerly separated notion of the self—our presumed and unquestioned access to physical spaces—has ultimately merged into a frame of mind where social life and travel have moved into a “new somewhere”: an endless multiplication of sites.⁶³¹ *Softwalks* traversed and materialised these contemporary ruins—

ruins that can come to live in the interior space, and with which one can even play. They never break because they are soft. Sometimes soft stands in for queer, Angelidakis says, and therefore these ruins queer the space.⁶³² The artist invites us to invert our traditional roles and perspectives of seeing, seating, and spectating through experimentation with multiple non-linear sequences (moving in time instead of space). Not by chance he says that these in-between spaces lure us into the psychedelic, the realm in which to trip and explore different domains of knowledge and cultures.⁶³³ Psychedelia is the realm of time.⁶³⁴

My utmost curatorial interest behind inviting and working closely with Angelidakis over an extended period came from an attempt to understand situatedness today, as a matter of time.

In postmodernism, being situated, positioned, and in place has been all about space. Time has fallen flat. The “postmodern is all about space,”⁶³⁵ says literature professor Robert T. Tally, following Jamesonian notions of “hyperspace.”⁶³⁶ If curating means to pluralise forms of care in the space of appearance, it also means labouring through time for that appearance to surface, reinterpreting the site-specificity of the exhibition space as also a time-specificity—situating events in context beyond the physical alone. Because Angelidakis embraces questions of time and space infrastructurally (architecture as a tool for measuring infrastructures), he allows to move the institution, and the curatorial work within it, outside its given geolocational shell to explore different durations and cycles, beyond corporeality.

The inside and the outside, the tension between public space (the street and the square) versus the domestic space (the living room), has also been part of Dora García’s latest research under her project *If I Could Wish for Something*—the shared title of her latest filmic work, her multisite exhibition at Netwerk Aalst in Belgium and Fotogalleriet in Norway, and a book published by the two institutions and edited by the artist, all in 2021. For *If I Could Wish for Something*, García departs from the classic Weimar song sung in 1930 by Marlene Dietrich—a translation of the original German title, “Wenn ich mir was wünschen dürfte.” Sadness is, for García, the sign of political strength and acquires an even deeper significance when related to women’s struggle. The disappointment of women has been going on for so long, and the promise made to them by the revolution (*any* revolution) has remained denied, according to the artist.⁶³⁷ In this abandonment, sadness turns into a weapon. Instead of victimhood, pain is used as a conduit to recognising others’ suffering and the possibility for ethical encounters.⁶³⁸

García asked the singer La Bruja de Texcoco, a trans woman known and celebrated for her revival of traditional Mexican and Indigenous compositions, to write an original song freely inspired by Dietrich’s 1930s earworm. In the film *If I Could Wish for Something*, La Bruja’s song is a soundtrack to the demonstrations which have been altering public space and discourse in Mexico over the past five years. The film follows the writing of the song in an interior space, from where La Bruja speaks and unveils both her singularity and the plurality of demands shouted on the streets of Mexico City, looking for confrontation with militarised space as well as attacking the patriarchy of streets, buildings, and sculptures for how they are built as symbols of repression. It wasn’t until I saw García’s film that I realised how what’s commonly described as vandalism during these demonstrations (because certain symbols are struck) is a search to alter the grammar of the city: the way in which we are

channelled, imposed upon to idealise symbols, and subjected to power. We see women whose faces are fully covered in black textile (feminist black-bloc protesters) to protect their identity in this quest (brick is used against brick and fire against protective wood, while steel returns as barriers and the channelisation of protests). Other women confront the police directly and use their phones as weapons. The technology of recording turned against the technology of surveillance. It is a renaming of the street.⁶³⁹

When people gather (and in Mexico City today, particularly women), they demand a bodily recognition: “the freedom to choose over our bodies.”⁶⁴⁰ In *If I Could Wish for Something*, we see the city’s transparent wall protectors and the police’s clear shields spray-painted by the protesters, to make their materiality visible. Women protesters stomp off and take down street barricades made of steel. They break glass and attack construction-site signs of (capitalist) progress. Fire and smoke indirectly recall witch-hunting practices, while they chant as if always accused and “criminalised”: “We are bad, we could be worse.” The evident change of positions and cameras filming remind us, the viewers, of the pluralism of perspectives. “Police, listen, your daughter is in the fight” is a recurring chorus, addressing the paradox of patriarchy as both inflicted and suffered by the nuclear family and family ties.

Protesters assert presence over a city that “isn’t really for you,” affirming that the right to the street precedes any speech act. The inability of corporate and state media to adequately report simple demands (to treat the protesters like free subjects) is a clear argument for citizen journalism in the film. Techno-media infrastructure has proved effective at registering events from the protesters’ perspective, though it remains to be disseminated, transposing the protest scene onto the space of appearance, enlarging the public sphere, and producing increasing networks of bodies acting in concert (on and off the street).

“The very term ‘mobilisation’”—we learn from Judith Butler—“depends on an operative sense of mobility, itself a right, one which many people cannot take for granted.”⁶⁴¹ Butler brings her argument far, but always tied to the basic, saying that bodies’ movement is always enabled by a screen—“a surface of some kind”—providing the technical supports for the movement to take place.⁶⁴² The pavement, the street, is a requirement for the body to exercise its right of mobility. “No one moves without a supportive environment and set of technologies,” she says of being provided with screens.⁶⁴³ In García’s film, these vulnerable bodies address the failure of their infrastructural conditions, and their plural and performative resistance shows how bodies are acted upon by social and economic policies that determine their livelihoods. The screens of phones, which we see actively participating in the film, are a technology that enhance and mobilise other bodies to join the protest. Similar to Angelidakis’s work, the exhibition space is here, in turn, being called to action (interpellated), to function as a surface—asking it to stand as another technology patching together resistance and the possibility for a different future.

In Oslo and Aalst, *If I Could Wish for Something* was shown together with posters specially produced by the artist, installed facing the street on walls blocking the windows—a new screen demanding intimacy for what’s to come (what’s to be seen inside). Shown alongside the poster were the film *Love with Obstacles* (2020), centred on the legacy of Alexandra Kollontai (1872–1952), a Russian writer and sexual activist who was ambassador to Mexico in 1926–27, and books tracing

Kollontai's migration of thought in a number of regions of the world where she was (and her thought continues to be) active, including the Nordic countries, where she dwelt, in total, for forty years of her life. Her writings and unfulfilled legacy continue to fuel feminism in Latin America.

Threatened by any form of dissent, the capitalistic and patriarchal structure of society is perpetuated through the gendered nuclear family. Kollontai explored how traditional bourgeois sexual and family relations could transform once freed from the demands of property and dependence, and she called for a liberation of bodies from cyclically performing a given normativity. Her indignation reverberates in García's overall project and, through the writings of artists and writers Sayak Valencia, Andrea Valdés, Hilde Methi, Agnieszka Gratza, Paloma Contreras Lomas, Carla Lamoyi, Saddie Choua, and García herself, in the new publication accompanying the exhibition.

Ann Christine Eek had already analysed the trouble brought about by the dictatorship of the nuclear family during the 1970s, and likewise brought her concerns to the exhibition space—this was one of her main claims in *Work—Don't Wear Yourself Out!*⁶⁴⁴ As García's project shows, Kollontai was effectively trying to move away from this dichotomy of love and gender as a twofold entrapment for women while collectivising reproductive responsibilities and exiting marital contracts.⁶⁴⁵ Such concerns undoubtedly required a spatial (urban and architectonic) reconfiguration, for Kollontai, as well as for Eek and for García.⁶⁴⁶ We can't envision a different society without transforming the economic and architectural infrastructure determining our mobility as surfaces (screens) enabling mobility.

The overall project *If I Could Wish for Something* lives beyond the physical container of the exhibition spaces, through both a multisite presentation at Fotogalleriet and Netwerk Aalst and the filmic medium (a time-based media, a screen), transforming the two art institutions' into nomadic spaces to debate local and worldly issues critically. It furthermore demanded that this networked alliance form a new politics of love, by suggesting other ways of living together.

Femininity is specifically claimed by La Bruja de Texcoco as a question pertaining to time: circling around the possibility of becoming a composer (of time) instead of remaining its interpreter.⁶⁴⁷ "I couldn't give a definition of femininity because it is something I'm living in this process of transition (that never ends)," she says in the film. "Femininity gave me the opportunity to experiment [with] my creativity, especially as a musician. Before I didn't compose, I was just an interpreter." She continues: "My story wouldn't make sense if I wasn't The Witch [La Bruja]. I would just be another interpreter."⁶⁴⁸

Interior space (the home as well as the exhibition space) becomes essential in this discussion—where La Bruja is positioned. It is from here that she is represented (she herself says to "refer to people ... how they 'appear' to you")—inevitably reminding us of Silvia Federici's reflections on witch-hunting in her formative text *Caliban and the Witch*. For Federici, the devaluation of women is spatial, because it starts from the unrecognition of their domestic labour—of their right to conduct economic activities—through a "sexual differentiation of space."⁶⁴⁹

Though Kollontai was central in prompting a feminist consciousness in Norway (in 1915, Women's Day was celebrated with a speech by Kollontai held on Youngstorget in Oslo, close to Fotogalleriet, in a square where battles for emancipations are repeatedly waged), she is still a marginal figure, in some senses, especially when it comes to her radical theories on sexual liberation. Today, within a political landscape in Norway that, as elsewhere, is increasingly endangering women's (and other non-conforming) bodies, speaking about Kollontai through the eyes of these revolutionary movements from around the world can help catalyse a much needed global sisterhood in these struggles. The exhibition space is the site (the screen) for creating a different understanding of time as a reverberatory machine, which doesn't stop the actions in and requests of the square, but retranslates them in the space of appearance, where they can be further mobilised. It makes space tremble through time (duration).

These discussions have not only informed my practice in more ways than one but are also curatorially informing a public space from which an institution speaks, asking for whom, and on whose behalf, we speak. I first encountered the work of Kollontai during research for a piece I was requested to write for an exhibition by the performance artist Marianne Heier and textile artist Franz Petter Schmidt in which they were looking at looms and textile history in Norway, which, of course, as in other countries, is highly charged with issues of (un)regulated labour and the anesthetisation of life. Labour today enters the exhibition space in complex ways, and gender inequality still predominates in this discussion.

Throughout this thesis, I, as a practising curator, have attempted to show both the visibility and the invisibility of curatorial work, as well as the longevity of perspectives that move along a different axis of time. To become an ally in struggles for emancipation, I, like many others, take on an incredible amount of administrative labour, at times working around the clock in order to help projects reach their full scope and completion. Working from the site of a small institution like Fotogalleriet, with limited funding for production and limited staff capacity (purely in the number of positions), the presentation of the projects I have written about would have never been possible without the labour and support of a number of colleagues inside and outside the institution.

“Even things that are most categorically evident can occasionally seem invisible,” wrote Carlos Basualdo more than a decade ago.⁶⁵⁰ The Argentinian-born curator refers to an intellectual conjuring hiding actions behind perceptions—concealing curatorial intents and work in favour of other details that the critic and the audience foreground in the exhibitionary machine, not paying attention to the “original” curatorial claim. In Basualdo’s case, his “frustration” focuses on large-scale exhibitions, which critics condemn for their culture industry complex.⁶⁵¹ He names here the need for an “unstable institutionality,” which should be core to the curatorial role, to create a subversive character—with an insistent intent to decentre the canon and artistic modernity.⁶⁵² There are two paradigmatic notions at stake in Basualdo’s argument that I would like to retain for further discussion and to here touch upon in closing my analysis. First, it becomes immediately clear through his unravelling of his argument that the term “curator” is a floating signifier, where the sign does not refer to a concrete presence and neither to its messenger. A substitution is possible as is transmutation. A certain perversity exists in the curator’s “present absence,” which attempts to look for an “origin,” something which Freud would make coincide with

childhood or the origin of the law of sense. It is there that perversity begins, etymologically speaking, meaning to be able to turn away, to invert and to overturn oneself or situations.⁶⁵³ Secondly, in the idea of the “unstable institution” is a tension between the national and the international field, various economic forces and interests, and utilitarian and autonomous demands that automatically, for him, frees the curator “by force” from canonical apparatuses. What’s unfortunate in Basualdo’s analysis, though, is that he makes no mention of small- and medium-sized institutions doing this job, though they seem to perfectly fit the picture he draws. What escapes Basualdo’s analysis unfortunately also escapes the many, possibly because curatorial work in small institutions truly occupies a multiplicity of roles, fleeing, as it does, capitalist logics of production and reproduction.

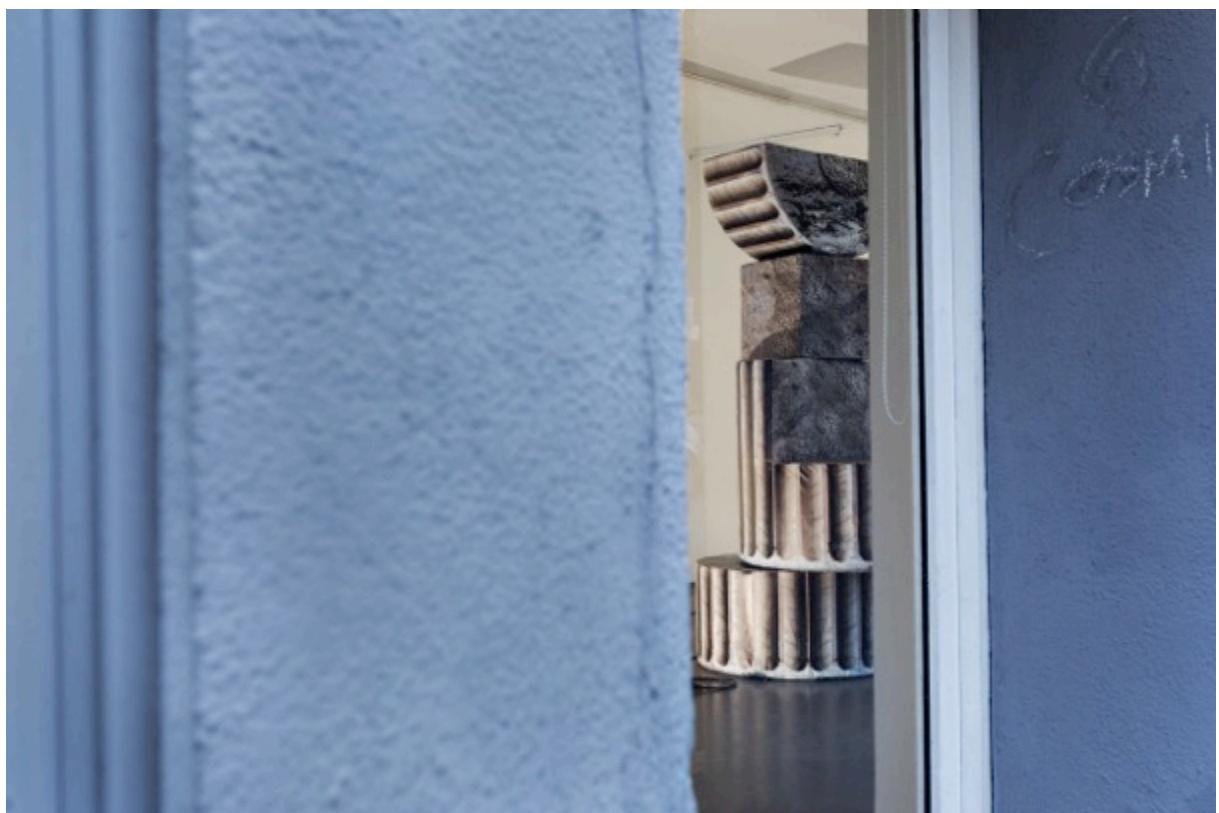
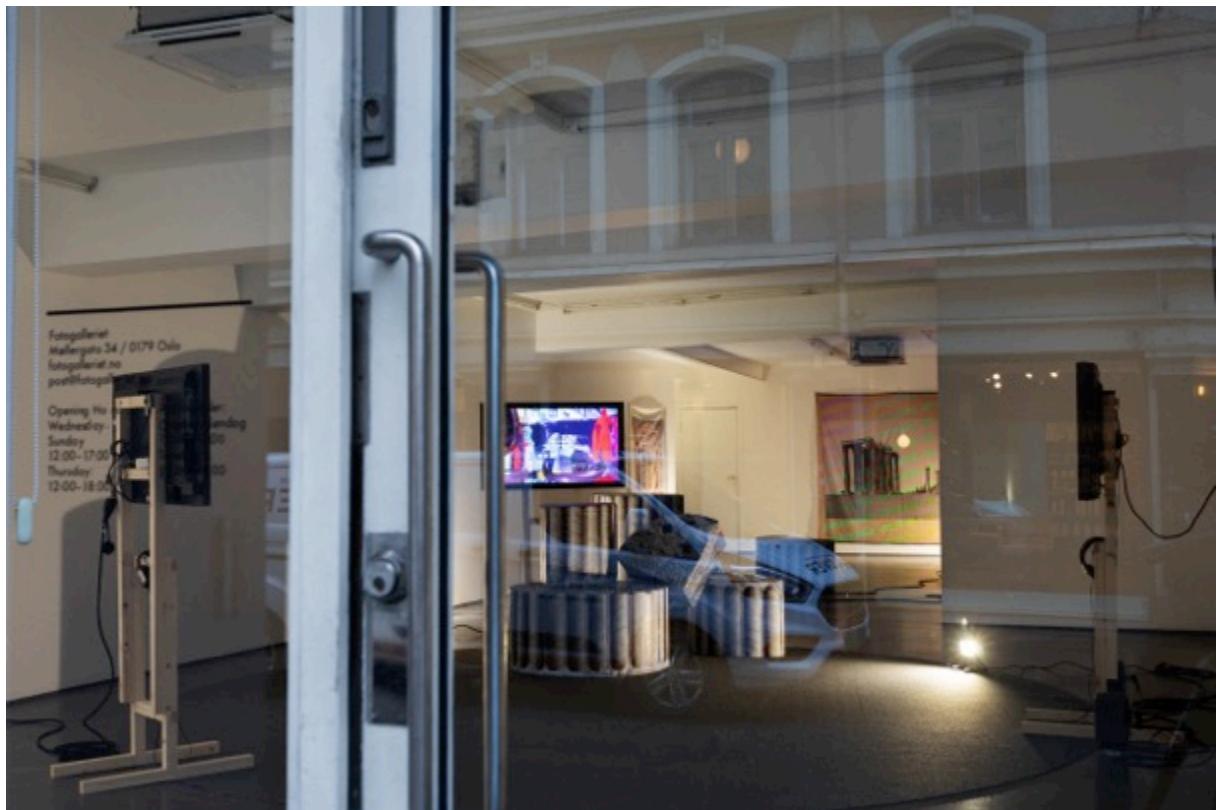
I take it upon myself to ask, therefore: What about small institutions like Fotogalleriet, institutions whose work sits at the crossroads between theoretical discourses, artistic practices, and curatorial undertakings? Aren’t these institutions occupying a subversive curatorial space (at the crossroads of international and national interests)? Aren’t these institutions standing in a battleground with the draconian museum’s ideology claiming the master signifier and cementing it? Isn’t Fotogalleriet a precarious, “unstable” institution, contributing to maintaining the curatorial as a floating signifier? Isn’t Fotogalleriet contributing to creating a “durational curating,” meaning a perversion of the canonical machine and its curatorship? Aren’t institutions like Fotogalleriet fundamental vessels of transformation and a fundamental part of creating the exceptionality of the arts and a real alternative to the culture industry?

The exhibition space is a powerful space for representation. Art institutions still bridge this power from the aesthetic sphere to the larger society demanding new forms of acceptance, equality, and solidarity via curating and enabling speaking the yet unknown in the public space. A public exhibition space for art, Fotogalleriet is a place for representation and image production that influences material inclusion and exclusion. Exhibitions and its curation can bridge such a lack of knowledge and vocabulary, provoking exclusion and promoting discriminatory structures and languages; use the exhibition space as a visibility space to address such structural shortages; address architecture function as an infrastructure of hindrance, a high threshold rather than organically creating a surface enabling discussion.⁶⁵⁴

I don’t think one can identify paradigms of curating and curatorial materialism out of a single exhibition; rather, this is accomplished by enduring in one’s practice in the process of building dialogues. As I have evidenced in previous chapters, feminist curating cannot be reduced to a singular approach (that’s what we blame patriarchal structures for—the inability to recognise pluralism: every single practice counts and is irreducible to a universalism of curating). Instead, feminist curating means a constellation of approaches unveiling a discourse. Such is also the claim of art historians Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry in *Politics in a Glass Cage*.⁶⁵⁵

The exceptionality of the arts rests on a multiplicity of practices, most of which remain under the radar. It is in these minor practices that the potential of the arts and curating remains. We have become so accustomed to star curators that we don’t recognise the power of a curating that is less visible, but no less meaningful. We are so used to the discourse taking over (which is what Basualdo ultimately wishes to overturn: the entirety of the exhibitionary machine)—where curating does not work in

alliance but as a totalising claim that impedes other meanings from ensuing and developing over time. If we can speak of art exceptionality, though, it is only thanks to all the art which exists beyond the mainstream—which is what Dave Beech and Carlos Basualdo assert willingly and unwillingly. There is a need to recognise this becoming “minor” of curating as a way to constantly deconstruct despotic power relations. Because the exhibitionary machine replicates nuclear family norms of productive and reproductive relations, the exhibition space is still a site of labour—both represented and real. Changing the relations of production—including curating as mastering and freeing these relations—can give rise to a true understanding of sexuality and love in time as a political weapon.





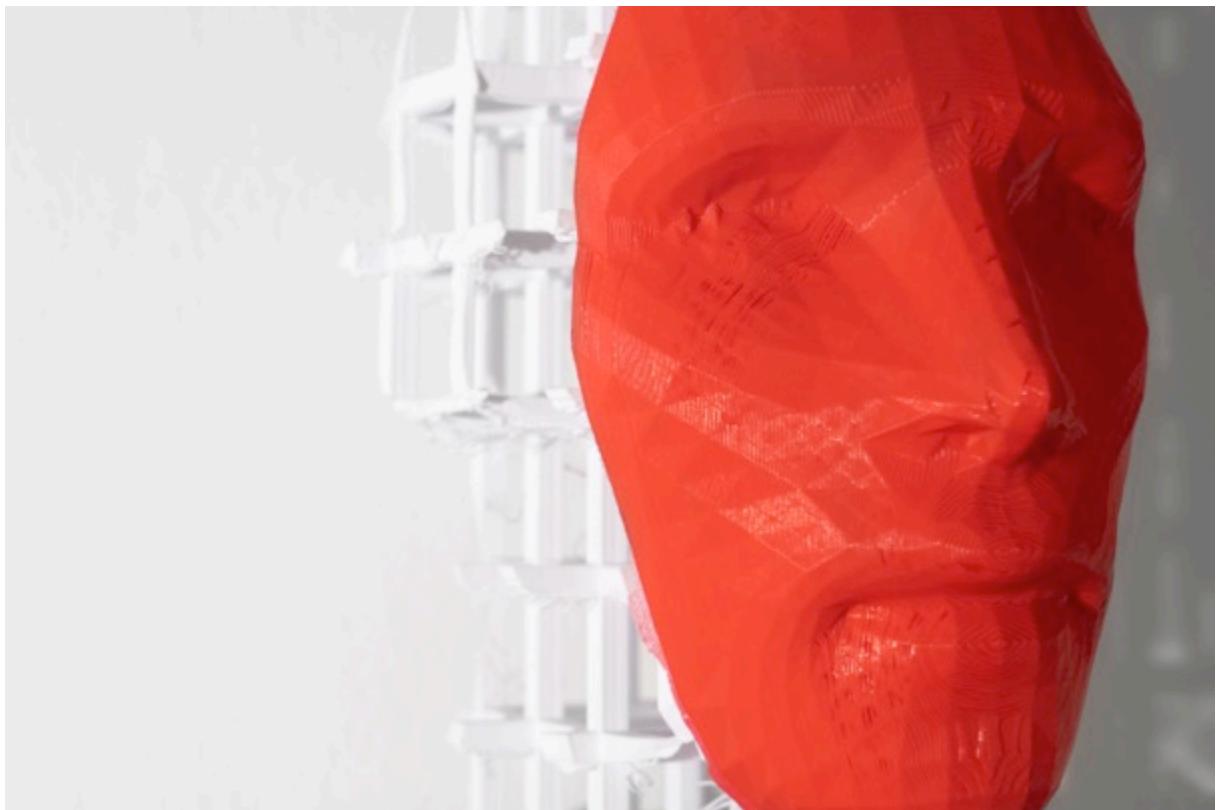
Andreas Angelidakis, *Softwalks*, 20 January–18 April 2021. Installation views (and details). Photos: Julie Hrnčirová/Fotogalleriet



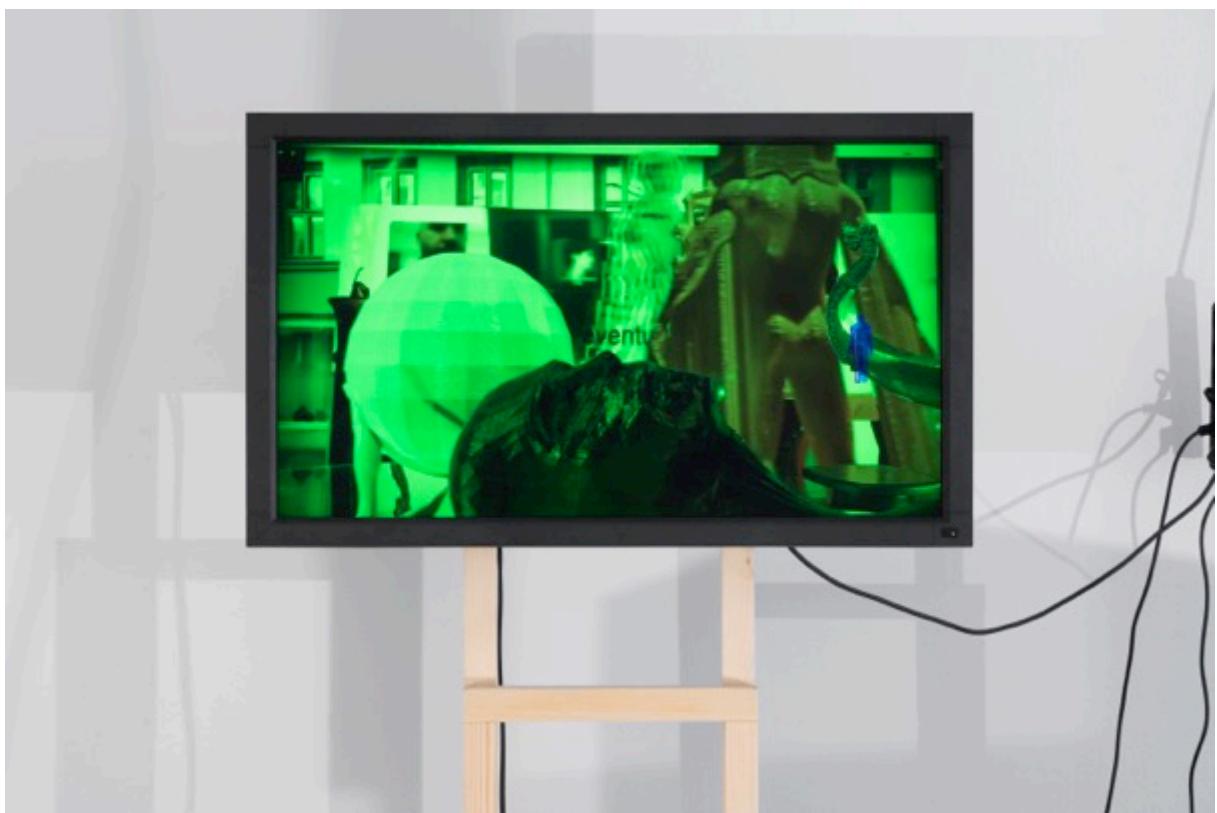
Andreas Angelidakis, *Afterlife*, 2020. Installation view, Fotogalleriet, Oslo. Photo: Jon Gorospe/Fotogalleriet



Andreas Angelidakis, *Screenwalker (black)*, 2020, installation view, Fotogalleriet, Oslo. Photo: Jon Gorospe/Fotogalleriet.



Andreas Angelidakis, *Screenwalker (red)*, 2020, installation view, Fotogalleriet, Oslo. Photo: Jon Gorospe/Fotogalleriet.



Andreas Angelidakis, *ScreenWalker* (3 video channel), 2020, installation view, Fotogalleriet, Oslo. Photo: Jon Gorospe/Fotogalleriet.



Dora García, *If I Could Wish For Something*, 3 September–17 October 2021. View of the street's windows posters. Photo: Julie Hrnčirová/Fotogalleriet



Dora García, *If I Could Wish For Something*, 3 September–17 October 2021. Photo: Julie Hrnčirová/Fotogalleriet



Dora García, *If I Could Wish For Something*, 3 September–17 October 2021. Installation views. Photo: Julie Hrnčirová/Fotogalleriet



Dora García, *If I Could Wish For Something*, 3 September–17 October 2021. Installation view of the film *Si pudiera desear algo* (68', 2021, dir. Dora García). Photo: Julie Hrnčirová/Fotogalleriet



Dora García, *If I Could Wish For Something*, 3 September–17 October 2021. Installation view of the film *Love with Obstacles* (60', 2020, dir. Dora García). Photo: Julie Hrnčirová/Fotogalleriet

⁶⁰³ Despite the fact that Illouz's thought acts as background material for my thesis, I want to foreground it here because the reading of Eva Illouz, *Why Love Hurts: A Sociological Explanation* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013) was fundamental to the writing of chapter 5.5 in understanding the generation of gendered positions in romantic love and the subjugation of one given gender over the other.

⁶⁰⁴ Dave Beech, *Art and Value: Art's Economic Exceptionalism in Classical, Neoclassical and Marxist Economics* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 27.

⁶⁰⁵ The "space of appearance" is a term coined by Arendt to define the coming together of individuals politically, where decisions are made through an encounter among equals. I explain my take on the concept in detail in chapter 4.3.

⁶⁰⁶ Such was the "empty space" defined by Arendt to describe the fact that continuity is not the only option in unravelling the state of affairs, but that we also need to recognise that there are things in between, especially in moments of crisis. See Hannah Arendt, "No Longer and Not Yet," in *Hannah Arendt: Essays in Understanding 1930–1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 158.

⁶⁰⁷ "Citationality is another form of academic relationality. White men is reproduced as a *citational relational*. White men cite other white men: it is what they have always done; it is what they will do; what they teach each other to do when they teach each other. They cite; how bright he is; what a big theory he has. He's the next such-and-such male philosopher: don't you think; see him think. The relation is often paternal: the father brings up the son who will eventually take his place. Patriarchy: it's quite a system. It works." Sara Ahmed, "White Men," feministkilljoys, 4 November 2014,

<https://feministkilljoys.com/2014/11/04/white-men/>. Emphasis in the original.

⁶⁰⁸ I'm taking the argument further to contend that the role previously occupied by artists has been taken over by curators, making space for and protecting artists in their claim process. Where they stood alone, we stand together. "To exhibit is to find friends and allies for the struggle," said Édouard Manet in 1867, cited in George H. Hamilton, *Manet and His Critics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1954), 106. Contrary to the usual practices of his contemporaries Manet, in 1867, at great expense, rented an ample space to mount a significant exhibition, which he organised himself. In the catalogue he articulates his wish to reach the public. I'm quoting his direct words as reported by Hamilton, and curator Ekaterina Degot offers a similar argument: "It is clear that the artists of the early twentieth century, who were basically a self-proclaimed elite, had to find allies in the real elite, at that time financial—their first collectors." Ekaterina Degot, "Questionnaire," in "Contemporary Art Biennials—Our Hegemonic Machines," special issue, ed. Ronald Kolb, Shwetal A. Patel, and Dorothee Richter, *OnCurating*, no. 46 (June 2020): 98.

⁶⁰⁹ In chapter 5.4, I report some of the conversations with Saloulul de proiecte based on a lecture originally delivered for a digital workshop on 15 December 2020, on the occasion of the collaborative archival and exhibition project *The Photographic Image between Past and Future*.

⁶¹⁰ I address these thoughts in chapters 5.3 and 5.4. I also speak about curating as a practice of solidarity to "bear witness to those whose words remain unheard or are silenced," in chapter 5.2

⁶¹¹ Angelidakis's *Softwalks* was held 20 January–18 April and Dora García's *If I Could Wish for Something* on 3 September–17 October.

⁶¹² Andreas Angelidakis, "Letting Go," *Positions*, e-flux Architecture, 25 June 2019, <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/positions/287537/letting-go/>.

⁶¹³ In chapter 5.5, I point to a curated project for which Marthe Ramm Fortun was commissioned to address the local material presence of Fotogalleriet as an exhibition space by crossing the street and the clock and rebelling against the white cube.

⁶¹⁴ I partly address some of these questions in chapter 5.4. This project with Angelidakis was developed digitally during the Covid-19 pandemic, which made me heavily question what happens to cultural institutions during times of crisis under capitalist and neoliberal predi-

ament. How can we still demand a place for thought and public space while access to these spaces is being denied by preventive health-regulatory measures?

⁶¹⁵ Leslie Kern, *Feminist City: Claiming Space in a Man-Made World* (London: Verso Books, 2020), 9.

⁶¹⁶ Kern could also not foresee the incredible crisis connected to access to public space brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, bringing an unforeseen and additional layer of patriarchy to the street and the square.

⁶¹⁷ Angelidakis is a Norwegian and a Greek citizen and taught at Oslo School of Architecture and Design for some years in the early 2010s.

⁶¹⁸ I'm quoting here from, "Opening of the First Public Venue and the Public Programs of documenta 14," press release, documenta, 9 August 2016, <https://www.documenta14.de/en/news/1611/opening-of-the-first-public-venue-and-the-public-programs-of-documenta-14>.

⁶¹⁹ Jane Darke, "The Man-Shaped City," in *Changing Places: Women's Lives in the City*, ed. Chris Booth et al. (London: Sage, 1996), 88.

⁶²⁰ Kern, *Feminist City*, 14.

⁶²¹ Kern, *Feminist City*, 14.

⁶²² Møllergata 19 was the address and popular name of the main police station in Christiania/Oslo from 1866 to 1978. During World War II, the occupying German authorities immediately began using the facility. In August 1940, the prison exclusively used as a political prison for opponents of the National Socialist government. After the main police station in the Oslo neighbourhood of Grønland was completed in 1978, Møllergata 19 was demolished. The main building facing Youngstorget was renovated in 1980 to function as part of the government quarter.

⁶²³ Deland Chan, "What Counts as 'Real' City Planning?," Bloomberg CityLab, 26 March 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-26/the-case-for-a-broader-definition-of-urban-planning>.

⁶²⁴ Detlef Mertins, "The Enticing and Threatening Face of Prehistory: Walter Benjamin and the Utopia of Glass," *Assemblage*, no. 29 (April 1996): 6–23.

⁶²⁵ Walter Benjamin, "Experience and Poverty" (1933), trans. Rodney Livingstone, *Atlas of Places*, <https://www.atlasofplaces.com/essays/experience-and-poverty>. Originally published in *Die Welt im Wort* (Prague), December 1933.

⁶²⁶ The text on the window read:

Our doors may be closed, but the exhibition is always open!

Softwalks by artist and architect Andreas Angelidakis is specifically built for Fotogalleriet's space to be experienced from both the inside and outside.

Angelidakis, an architect who has never built, invites you to look around and enjoy a "softwalk"—a walk that happens digitally on the screen as much as physically on the pavement. How do we differentiate and distinguish between the two? Is our body an impediment or a vessel for moving between these different realms?

In Angelidakis' work, architecture is an image with its own agency and will. Instead of concrete and immovable structures, he invites you to consider architecture as a speculative and social structure in which we meet and act. Architecture can be soft, subjective; you can even sit on it.

We invite you to softwalk with us from where you stand.

By scanning the QR code on the window, you can experience the sound and video part of the installation.

Please follow Fotogalleriet's social media and website for updated opening times, and do leave us a message or comment. We are eager to hear from you!

⁶²⁷ Under modernity, the idea of the monstrous has been associated with evil or moral transgression or is used to symbolise anxieties of aberration and innovation, especially when associated with the body that economically and sexually does not conform to a productive and

reproductive society. See Sibylle Erle and Helen Hendry, “Monsters: Interdisciplinary Explorations in Monstrosity,” *Palgrave Commun* 6, no. 53 (2020).

⁶²⁸ Angelidakis speaks about these objects and their relation to postmodernist Italian design in “Letting Go.” See note 617.

⁶²⁹ From the video installation *Screenwalker* (2021), a trilogy commissioned as part of *Soft-walks* and presented at Fotogalleriet.

⁶³⁰ Angelidakis has tested these ideas for many years by working at the intersection of digital culture and architectural production. In the parallel realities of these worlds, he treats the internet (with immersive gaming platforms like *Second Life*) as a place giving rise to new ideas and social behaviours. Some of these ideas are collected in Andreas Angelidakis, *Internet Suburbia* (Seoul: Damdi, 2008).

⁶³¹ I’m of course referring to the incredible amount of digital space we have learnt to inhabit on an increased scale because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The concept of the “heterotopia” is elaborated by Foucault to describe cultural, institutional, and discursive spaces that “have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect.” Heterotopias are worlds within worlds, mirroring and upsetting what is outside. Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” *Diacritics*, no. 16, (1986): 22–27.

⁶³² The reference that “soft” sometimes stands for “queer” comes from the *Screenwalker* trilogy.

⁶³³ The reference to the psychedelic part of the digital also comes quite clearly and explicitly from the *Screenwalker* trilogy, where the association of fully experiencing the digital is explicitly paralleled with taking psychedelic drugs.

⁶³⁴ Angelidakis makes reference to theorists such as the American ethnobotanist and mystic Terence McKenna, who advocated for the use of psychedelic plants. Andreas Angelidakis, in “Digital Artist Talk: Andreas Angelidakis in Conversation with Tominga Hope O’Donnell,” organised by Fotogalleriet on 25 March 2021, Facebook video, 53:08, posted by Fotogalleriet, https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=298715674933255&ref=watch_permalink. To quote McKenna directly: “Because our maps of reality are determined by our present circumstances, we tend to lose awareness of the larger patterns of time and space. Only by gaining access to the Transcendent Other can those patterns of time and space and our role in them be glimpsed.” Terence McKenna, *Food of the Gods* (London: Rider, 2021), 8.

⁶³⁵ Robert T. Tally, *Kurt Vonnegut and the American Novel: A Postmodern Iconography* (London: Continuum, 2011), 8–9.

⁶³⁶ Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983–1998* (London: Verso, 1998), 14.

⁶³⁷ These thoughts were formulated for the press release of the exhibition and as part of the introduction by myself, Pieterneel Vermoortel, and Dora García for *If I Could Wish for Something*, ed. Dora García (Oslo: Fotogalleriet; Aalst: Netwerk Aalst, 2021), 12–23.

⁶³⁸ García makes clear reference to feminist scholar Sara Ahmed, who asserts that this “longing for sadness” stands very far from “the acceptance of defeat.” Rather, to the contrary: “I think of how sadness can be an inheritance, a feminist inheritance. I think of all the books that caught my attention not just because of the sadness they expressed, but because of the rebellion they enacted in this expression. It can be rebellious not to be made happy by what should make you happy.” Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 62.

⁶³⁹ For example, a protester named Erika Martinez recounts how she no longer calls the colonial-style building in downtown Mexico City, previously known as the Human Rights Commission building, by that name; now she calls it the name printed on a banner attached to the front of the building: the Okupa Cuba Casa Refugio (Cuba Occupation-Shelter House). Madeleine Wattenbarger, “Inside Mexico’s Feminist Occupation,” Al Jazeera, 29 October 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/10/29/block-feminists-okupa>.

⁶⁴⁰ So it reads on a banner featured in *If I Could Wish for Something*, dir. Dora García, 2021, digital film, 68:00.

⁶⁴¹ Judith Butler, “Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance,” Building Interdisciplinary Bridges across Cultures and Creativities, June 2014, <http://bibacc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Rethinking-Vulnerability-and-Resistance-Judith-Butler.pdf>.

⁶⁴² Butler, “Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance.”

⁶⁴³ Butler, “Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance.”

⁶⁴⁴ I analyse the role played by the nuclear family in the performance of the exhibitory in different chapters of the thesis, including chapters 2.5, 4.2, and 4.3.

⁶⁴⁵ Alexandra Kollontai, “Communism and the Family” (1920), in *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai*, trans. Alix Holt (London: Allison & Busby, 1977), 258–59.

⁶⁴⁶ Christina E. Crawford, “From the Old Family—to the New,” *Harvard Design Magazine*, Fall/Winter 2015, <http://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/41>.

⁶⁴⁷ La Bruja de Texcoco, in *If I Could Wish for Something*, digital film.

⁶⁴⁸ La Bruja de Texcoco, in *If I Could Wish for Something*, digital film.

⁶⁴⁹ Federici argues there was a slow disappearance of women from public space in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Automedia, 2004), 100.

⁶⁵⁰ Carlos Basualdo, “The Unstable Institution,” in *Curating Subjects*, ed. Paul O’Neill (London: Open Editions; Amsterdam: De Appel, 2007), 40.

⁶⁵¹ The term “culture industry” comes from critical theorists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. They propose that popular culture is similar to a factory producing standardised cultural goods to manipulate mass society into passivity. Adorno and Horkheimer perceive mass-produced culture as dangerous, cultivating false psychological needs that can be met and satisfied only by the products of capitalism. See Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” in *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1989), 120–67.

⁶⁵² Basualdo, “The Unstable Institution,” 50.

⁶⁵³ Sense, like sexuality, we learn from philosopher Catherine Malabou, is necessarily perverse, twisted from childhood as a floating signifier looking for a master signified. Catherine Malabou, “Polymorphism Never Will Pervert Childhood,” trans. Robert Rose, in *Derrida, Deleuze, Psychoanalysis*, ed. Gabriele Schwab (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 64.

⁶⁵⁴ I have been working at Fotogalleriet since August 2018. Coming from a larger institution with way more resources, my first years at the institution have been about structures. Not only in a metaphorical sense of internal structures and routines, but taking care of structural problems of the building, offices, how people interact with the institution, where, and why. I also came to work for an institution that is potentially immediately available on the street and therefore closer to people. Nevertheless, art institutions can continue to be a glass ceiling. We need to acknowledge the distance between art institutions and the outside to fill the gap. These questions I addressed with former and current colleagues. During the first semester of 2020, with Fotogalleriet, I started a conversation with Skeiv Verden (Queer World) to address structural issues related to societal racism and, consequently, lack of more varied forms of expression, discourses, and representation within the art world which in turn reflect in society at large. As a nationwide interest organization for LGBTIQ + people with a minority background, Skeiv Verden works for expanded diversity in representation in society. Its mission is a society where everyone can live full lives, with the freedom to openly express their sexual orientation and gender identity without fear of discrimination. By giving Skeiv Verden the role of curator, which in the art field has great definition power, we believe different audiences and demands come together to contribute actively and ask for new measures within and outside the art field. Skeiv Verden exhibition opened its doors to the public on 21 January 2022. At Fotogalleriet, we see it as part of our social responsibility to challenge the typical curatorial voice (white, heteronormative, middle-class background),

enabling more people to speak their voice. The project aims to provide an opportunity to reshape a sensory experience in the given white cube canonicity with a more significant take-over to impact how an institution thinks about exhibitions. It also strives to break with structural patterns part of the art institution's unconscious: aesthetic normativization.

Unavoidably, the discussion addressed yes, what is on view, and most importantly, how the very display works as a signifier. Skeiv Verden's taking the curator role with its leader Bassel Hatoum speaking on the organization behalf is twofold: the first part consists of an architectural commission embracing the exhibition as an overall environment, including the urban context of Fotogalleriet, and the second of a series of events engaging activists, artists, and spokespersons for individuals and groups in different backgrounds and disciplines where Skeiv Verden's world, which is in no way uniform and includes asylum seekers, labor immigrants, students, Norwegian citizens with minority backgrounds among others can be made available and enter into dialogue with a broader public. Working across several disciplines in the politics of acceptance and belonging sets demands for changing the production and distribution of images in a renewed worldwide political turmoil. Several other programmes are upcoming and include changes in the organigram of the institutions. These are curatorial concerns historically motivated by the research I conducted. Curating has undoubtedly gained more and more prominence in the last decades as a practice determining what enters the public space of discussion within and beyond art institutions. With an increasing number of schools and independent study programs, it acquires more importance in specialized discourse. However, it remains in the hands of few, the few who include or exclude narratives, the ones who hold decision making. Art rarely fits the promise of being an immediately rewarding economic sector providing stability. Searching for a pursuable future, many young people, therefore, engage with art too late, determined by where one comes from in society.

Inclusion and exclusion are prevalent in society. In the aesthetic sphere mastered under the aegis of neoliberalism, the curator emerges as a dominant figure when it comes to what enters the visual discourse and what is left out. Curating is a practice, and in its approach and execution, it can advance the future. We have addressed these questions through conferences, collaborations, and establishing a curatorial position with TrAP for people from a particular stratum of society, usually not frequenting art institutions or believing these are not for them. We launched a Curatorial Fellowship at Fotogalleriet starting in January 2022 to secure the opportunity for young practitioners with diverse backgrounds continuity into the art field. The fellowship is a network-building and research opportunity through one-year full-time employment leading to curating an exhibition at Fotogalleriet in its first edition in the first quarter of 2023.

⁶⁵⁵ Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry, "How to Be Seen: An Introduction to Feminist Politics, Exhibition Cultures in Curatorial Transgressions," in *Politics in a Glass Case: Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions*, ed. Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 1–21.

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