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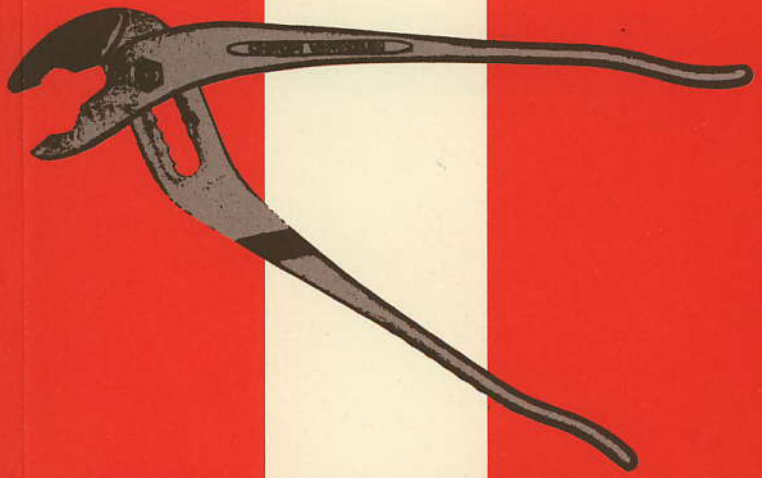

HIEROGLYPHS OF THE FUTURE

BRIAN HOLMES

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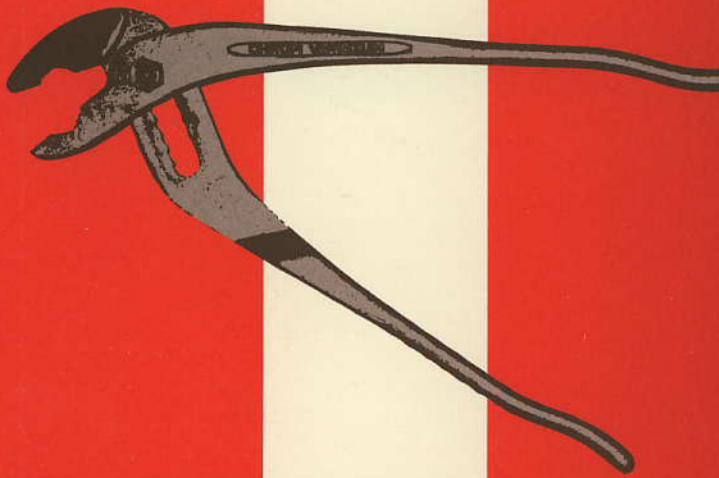

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...radio is one-sided when it should be two-. It is purely an apparatus for distribution, for mere sharing out. So here is a positive suggestion: change this apparatus over from distribution to communication. The radio would be the finest possible communication apparatus in public life, a vast network of pipes. That is to say, it would be if it knew how to receive as well as transmit, how to let the listener speak as well as hear, how to bring him into a relationship instead of isolating him.

BERTOLT BRECHT
THE RADIO AS AN APPARATUS OF COMMUNICATION [1932]

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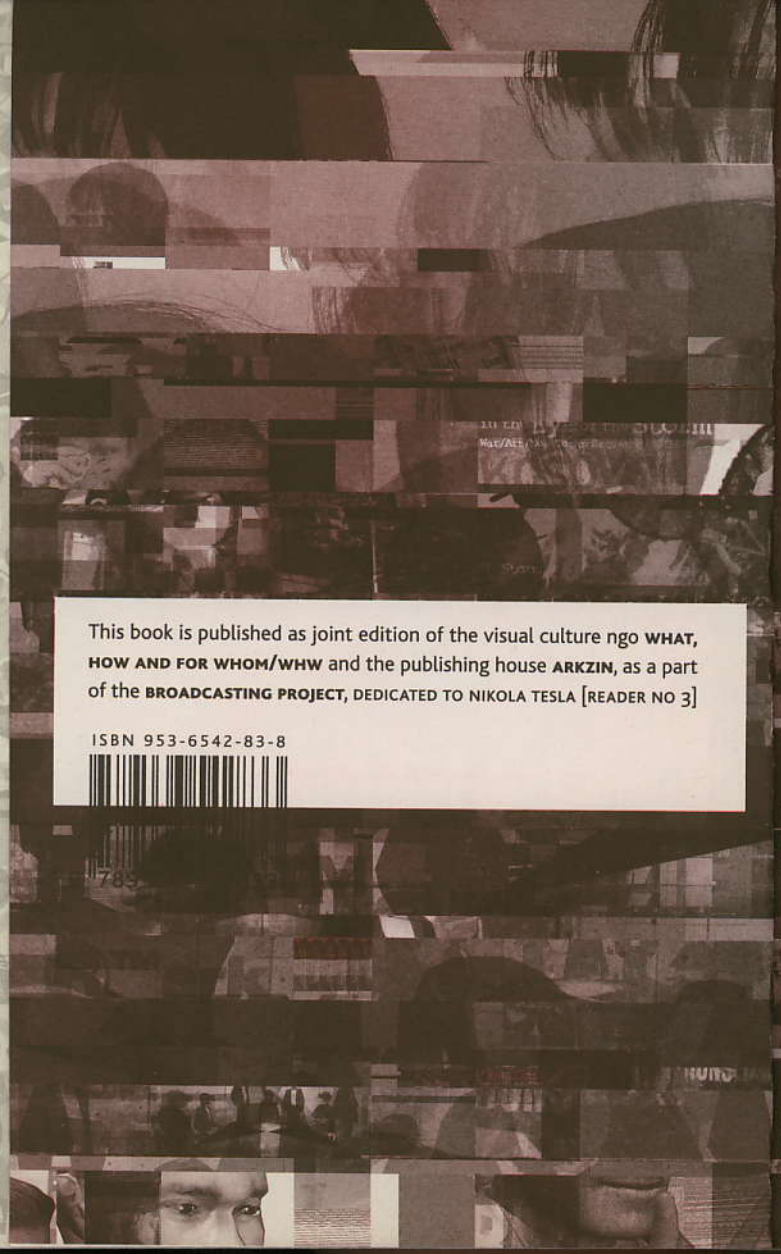
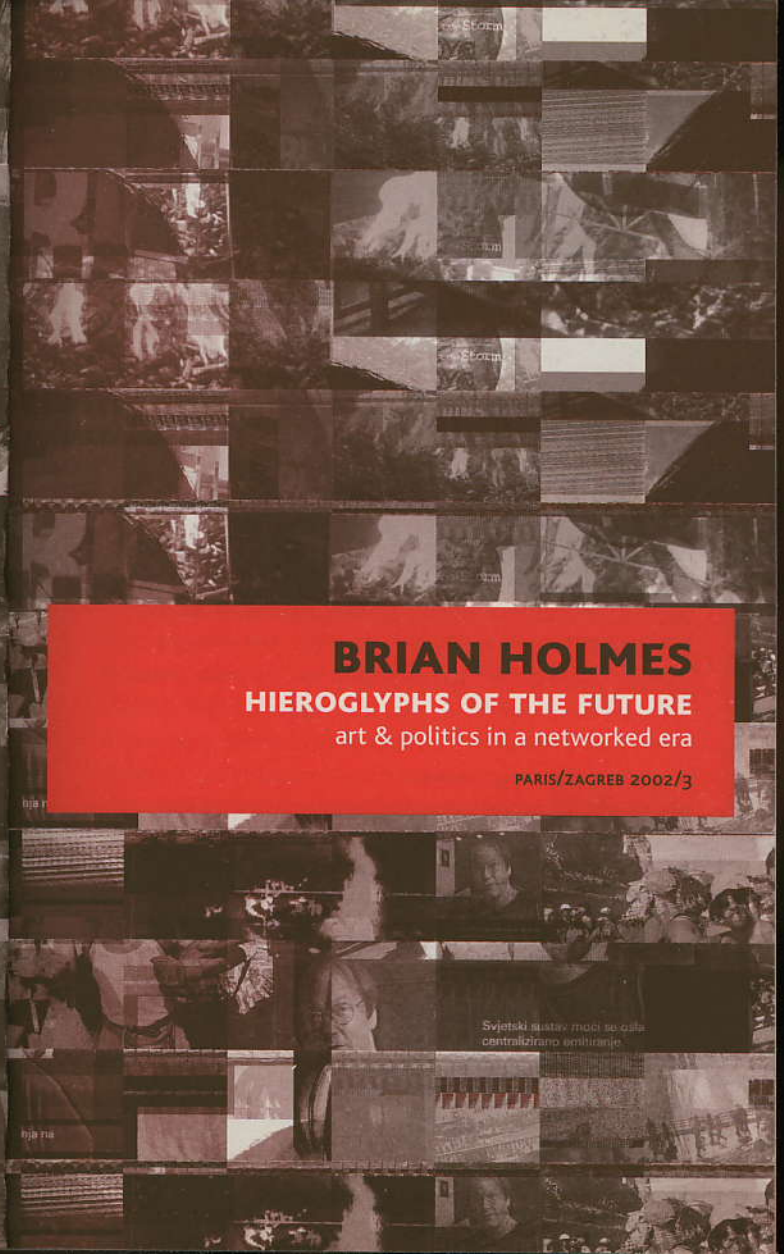


BRIAN HOLMES

HIEROGLYPHS OF THE FUTURE

art & politics in a networked era

PARIS/ZAGREB 2002/3



PREFACE

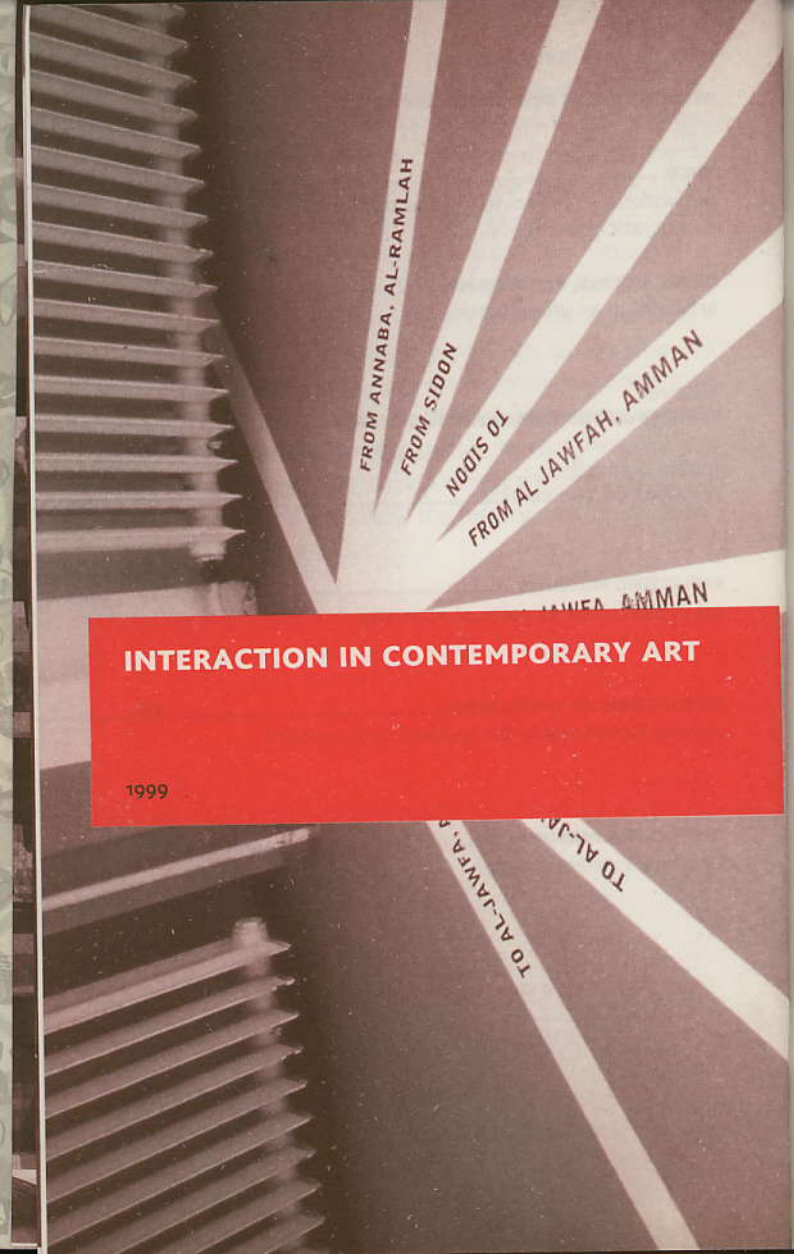
There is room, in the networked world, for an overarching theory of artistic experience revised by political practice, and vice-versa. But that's not what you'll find in this book.

The essays gathered here are aesthetic and intellectual aftershocks, singular responses to the accelerated process of systemic change that we attempt to name, imperfectly, with the word "globalization," and that we feel we know, intangibly, via our own travels, the media and the Internet. Imperfect names, intangible knowledge: these have been good starting-points. Faced with an onslaught of extremely different yet inescapably connected events – art exhibitions, stock-market booms, political demonstrations, wars – I have attempted, each time, to locate the immediate experience within the larger process, and to use it as a springboard for analysis, in hopes of discovering new forms of subjective and collective agency. A style of cultural critique has been invented along the way.

The first three texts emerge directly from on-line debates; taken together, they define this peculiar style. **ON INTERACTION IN CONTEMPORARY ART** deals with two very different stagings of networked exchanges, and tries to distinguish an enabling, empowering form of interaction from an opportunistic representation. The second essay, on **TRANSNATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY,** is an initial attempt to characterize both the hard infrastructures that underlie the communications networks, and the ideologies that legitimate and/or obfuscate them. The third, written under the media clouds of a not-so-distant war, takes that characterization a few steps further, and uses a concrete example to speculate on what art and exhibition practices might achieve politically within this new context. The following essays continue that reflection from very different angles, recomposing and dissolving the institutional and experiential frames of art, from the museum to the uncertainties of virtual environments and then to the naked protest of political demonstrations.

The title essay, **HIEROGLYPHS OF THE FUTURE,** refers directly to the philosophy of **Jacques Rancière**, whose ideas on the role of artistic metaphor as a catalyst of democratic confrontation, and indeed of democratic subjectivity, I have been able to verify more than once in the streets. On the cover of this book, I hope the same title can also refer to the promise that the recent upsurge of dissent may hold, if the best of its metaphorical threads are spun out further and woven more tightly into the real. For that to happen, the clumsy simulacra of yesterday's utopias, served up today as an increasingly recognizable and systematic ideology, must be swept out of the way. I have tried to help do that with an essay on **THE FLEXIBLE PERSONALITY,** the most detailed and sustained analysis in the book. Perhaps if you finish reading it, you will glimpse, if only by antithesis, the subject that occupies me presently: the history and future of the revolutionary imagination.

BRIAN HOLMES
PARIS | JANUARY 2002



One of the consequences of the rise of Internet is the possibility to engage in public debates on a wide range of subjects, in open but often structured forums that offer you various protocols for speaking your mind. Far from neutralizing the expression of opinions, the reign of the virtual seems to sharpen the appetite for polemical exchange, which inevitably spills over into physical places: lectures, round tables, philosophical coffee houses, associations, seminars, political formations. The effect is to shake up the consensus of our somnolent societies – to the point where the mass media, and television first of all, begin to worry about losing shares of what had been a captive market. The media then start to simulate an interaction which their conditions of production and distribution do not really allow, and a complex joust emerges between "traditional" channels of distribution and independent actors on the margins, who seek to develop new architectures of debate. The art world, itself divided between well-established distribution systems and particularly imaginative fringes, naturally becomes one of the testing grounds for this larger confrontation, pitting a kind of direct democracy with a more-or-less anarchist spin against every force that would seek to channel the expressions, to restore the audience ratings and the hierarchies.

However, it is not easy to give artistic form to practices of communication. You may agree with **Nicolas Bourriaud** when he says that *'the relational sphere... is to art today what mass production was to pop art and minimalism'*.[01] But once that observation has been made, a kind of paradox or formal contradiction arises, which could be called "the law of visibility in interactive art." It runs like this: the more communication there is, the less it's visible. Pop and minimalism didn't have that

01 | **Nicolas Bourriaud**, *Esthétique relationnelle* [DIJON: PRESSES DU RÉEL, 1998].

problem; they could only engage with the world of consumer desire by producing *objects*, marked by various degrees of irony, distance, sensuality or humor. But in networked art, which in many cases is an enlarged, genuinely dematerialized conceptualism, the most interesting part is played out in the participation that the artistic concept makes possible; the reflections or traces of the interplay almost always prove disappointing, whether they are masses of accumulated writing or abstract schemas that try to replicate the patterns of exchange. Representing the relations often amounts to a suggestive play of forms, where the practices themselves get lost in a metaphor for the eye, evacuating any direct experience. And so **Bourriaud**'s relational aesthetics quickly becomes an aestheticization of communication, which hides the real stakes by rendering them visible.

The realities are clear: no "relational" work in the galleries can be as radically participatory as the ***nettime*** list, organized collectively out of Amsterdam and other cities, or the ***eyebeam forum***, a three-month experiment launched in 1998 on the initiative of **Jordan Crandall**. These are essentially social formations, whose architecture is succesful when it disappears, overtaken by the participation of the users. But the artist's share disappears at the same time, in a structure of debate which is able to realize the utopias that others merely represent. To take an extreme case: who would say that the thirty-some revolutionary festivals sparked around the world on May 17-18 by the English group ***Reclaim the Streets*** are art? Yet these direct actions, halfway between the techno movement and political protest, have all the elements of an enlarged performance art, along with a creative or even "conceptual" use of electronic communications. There's also a certain social effectiveness to uprisings that revealed a world-wide opposition to the annual **G-7** summit... Enough to catch the eye of any self-respecting dadaist, lettrist or situationist, I'd say. But relatively little in the way of plastic forms, nothing to compare with **Asger Jorn** and **Guy Debord**'s famous ***Naked City***, that extraordinary cartographic representation of the mobility of urban desire, subtitled *"Illustration of the hypothesis of switching-zones in psychogeography."* How to give form to the drifting dynamics of electronic communication?

A BLUR IN THE FOREST OF SIGNS

The exhibition of ***The Trial of Pol Pot***, coordinated by **Liam Gillick** and **Philippe Parreno** at the **MAGASIN DE GRENOBLE** from December 8, 1998, to January 3, 1999, tried to take up just that challenge – or at least to make a little artistic profit off the breakdown of the legal system, with the spectacular trials proliferating in both Europe and the United States. The faltering procedures of justice mark one of the places where the communication society enters into crisis, inextricably mingling the dimensions of private and public, fact and opinion, individual morality and collective representation. To deal with this crisis, the artists chose to shift toward the most distant story possible, that of the former leader of the **Khmer Rouge**, who died in the Cambodian jungle just before his trial was to be conducted by his former followers. But this story, according to the artists, is "illegible" because it has left no images for the media. The best way to approach it artistically is therefore to constitute an international committee of a dozen or so artists and exhibition organizers [the "supervisors"] in order to debate about the whole thing over email, and multiply the subjective points of view. What takes form is a "psychological portrait of the event" in fragmented phrases, projected on the wall as a kind of typographical decor. Colored spotlights of varying intensities – "the only element that couldn't be sent by fax or email" – slowly sweep through the exhibition space, which the visitor crosses like a "forest of signs".[02]

02 | All the quotes are from the exhibition brochure or the walls; some have been translated from the French.

Apart from the title, the show's only reference to historical reality is the word "Khmer," half hidden in a corner. On the other hand, a great deal is made of "multiple and divided judgments," in other words, of the impossibility of forming any clear opinion on the subject. The casual visitor might feel shocked by such an inconsequential treatment of one of the bloodiest episodes of the twentieth century. But that's clearly the effect being sought, when the exhibition walls are covered with phrases like these: *'To what degree will it be necessary to judge the effectiveness of the proposed solutions?'* Or better yet: *'What do I care about the stupid things I did yesterday?'* As to the psychological dimension of the show, it seems to be distilled by this poetic hesitation: *'At what/moment will it be necessary to stop/ once again to envisage a series of singular/ constructions applied/ simultaneously to the full set/ of these non-questions...'* So do we conclude that in the communication society, any possible judgment just dissolves into random subjectivity?

It's probably more interesting to examine the articulation of this "relational" project, as carried out by the artist-curators. The crux of the matter is there, in the organizers' treatment of the different viewpoints that make up the semantic material of the exhibition.

The power of the interactive paradigm can be measured by the prestige that now attaches to the figure of the artist-curator, whose work is the articulation of subjectivities. **Bourriaud** gives an explanation of this development: *'The artists seek interlocutors: since the public remains a rather unreal entity, they include the interlocutor in the production process.'*

Here the interlocutor-producers are a limited circle of artists and exhibition curators, referred to as the "supervisors." But how exactly are they included? Gazing at the anonymous phrases scattered over the walls, the visitor can only answer, "by fragmentation." No distinct speaker emerges from this verbal remix. And the observation is confirmed by the poster offered

to the visitors: against an orange background, an accumulation of superimposed sentences produces an illegible blur. The exhibition brochure identifies the object: *'A series of singular proposals made by the supervisors.'*

Speaking out, the political *prise de parole*, or what **Michel de Certeau** called "the *constitutive principle* of society",[03] is no longer prohibited in any of the contemporary media. But it can be neutralized by fragmentation and blurring. That's exactly what the media have excelled at since the 1980s. Investigating the process, reflecting it, displaying it from every angle, has paradoxically become one of the favorite means for professional artists to maintain their positions in the institutional market. And so one is scarcely surprised, in an exhibition that claims to deal with debate and judgment, when the results are finally described by their authors as "a decor for a televised scene" in which the actor **Robert De Niro** will be invited to appear and "explain everything"! Is it the ultimate irony, or just an involuntary mimesis of the dominant media? Whatever your answer, the artists have clearly left all the hierarchies in place, like worthy inheritors of the feigned struggles between pop and advertising.[04] The desire for a real debate is channeled into aesthetic forms, and resolves into its opposite. As **Serge Daney** said in 1991, at the inaugural moment of BENETTON's shock-value ads:

> *In a period when contradiction is no longer the driving force of anything, the* compromise formation, *well known to Freudians, risks becoming the primary figure of social communication'.*[05]

03 | **Michel de Certeau**, *La prise de parole* [PARIS: SEUIL, 1994/1968], p. 50.
04 | The link between pop and this thoroughly semantic, "relational" art seems to be postmodern neopop, for instance the exhibition and catalogue entitled, coincidently enough, *A Forest of Signs* [MOCA, LOS ANGELES, 1989].
05 | **Serge Daney**, "Bébé cherche eau de bain [II]," *Libération*, 1/10/91; English translation, "Baby Seeking Bathwater," in *Documenta Documents 1* [KASSEL, 1996].

FRACTURES AND TIES

Still you can avoid being part of the symptom. That's what **Fareed Armaly** showed with the exhibition ***From/To***, presented at WITTE DE WITH in Rotterdam from January 28 to March 21, 1999. Like any artist who seeks to reveal or constitute a network, **Armaly** took the role of exhibition organizer, articulating the production of researchers, artists, political activists and filmmakers, in an attempt to create a complex cartography of the "contemporary topos" that is Palestine. The artistic goal was to make visible a web of ties linking actors and institutions whose work deals with the political and cultural situation of a people, inside its fractured territory or along the far-flung paths of exile.

To establish this cartography, the artist began with on stone, *'the smallest unit of landscape, which links to architecture and, after the decade of the Intifada, to media'*.[06] The stone undergoes a process of computer analysis, yielding an irregular, mesh-like structure, part of which is projected in the form of converging and diverging lines on the floor of the WITTE DE WITH galleries. Pairs of these white lines serve to define colored fields on the walls – like the fields of possibility that can arise between one or several people, working on lines that are not parallel and do not necessarily meet. If the colored fields are metaphors of the distant collaborations that provided the contents of the exhibition, the lines on the floor retrace a quite different geography: they represent the labyrinthine paths that link the Palestinian refugee camps and territories across an almost inconceivable tangle of internal borders. In this structure of obligatory passageways that determines the possible movements of the Palestinians, the hubs are most often cities under Israeli control, where the person in transit will be forbidden from stopping.

06 | Brochure of the exhibition *From/To*.

Thus the structure of constraint traced on the ground is metaphorically overcome – but hardly erased – by the fields of possibility opened up through contemporary means of communication. The visitor moves through this complex representation like a kind of living cursor, pausing over the different works which his consciousness will activate. Here, nothing is anonymous. **Stéphanie Latte Abdallah** has carried out a series of interviews with Palestinian women living in Jordanian refugee camps: you hear the grain of the voices in Arabic, while reading passages in English translation. **Aemen Salman**, born in the Netherlands of Palestinian parents, bears witness to his daily round through his home city of Vlaardingen. **Sylvie Fouet** shows maps demonstrating a change in the application of discriminatory power, which is exercised today not only at territorial borders, but on continuous flows of people, goods and information. **Annelies Moors** and **Stephen Wachlin** carry out a critical ethnography of the way Palestinians are represented on tourist postcards, from the invention of photography to the present. A computer screen leads to a set of texts and maps, as well as a register of web sites dealing with Palestine. And above all, three monitors allow one to view some thirty works by Palestinian filmmakers, most of them previously unavailable to the European public.

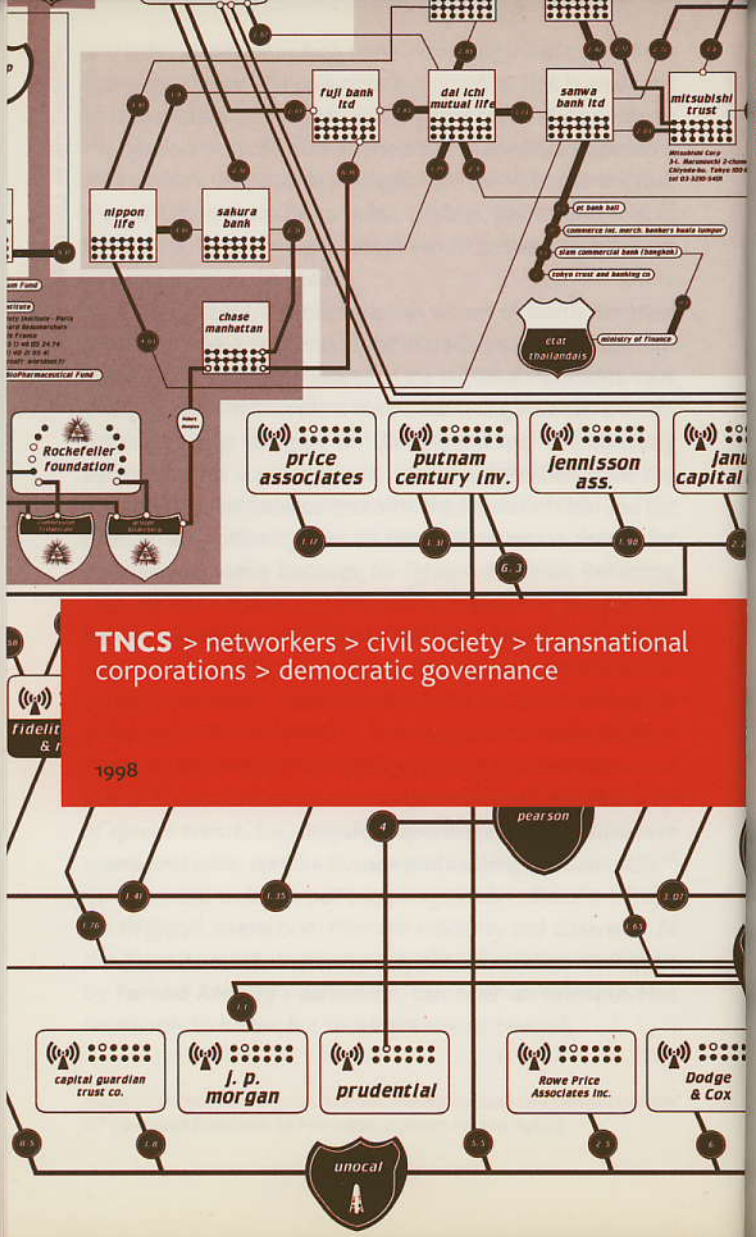
Fareed Armaly's exhibition is not perfect in every detail. It's hard to enjoy the almost exclusively graphic treatment of the images, digested and flattened by computer, sometimes leaving a sense of void in the physical space. A potentially interesting element, the transmission by fax of a weekly journal done by five women in refugee camps, seems not to have functioned. In a general way the exhibition could have come more fully to life, through an augmentation and renewal of the information over time. But it had the great merit of not only rendering visible a complex interweave between the work of different individuals, but also of indicating the geographical, institutional, disciplinary

and political contexts which these individuals inhabit, and which make their work and collaboration possible. This human and institutional articulation, which is anything but random, promises the development of future intersections or common endeavors. As if to mark the possible passages from the virtual to the real, the exhibition gave rise to public debates, particularly that of February 2, between eight Palestinian filmmakers whose work was presented in the space.

For a moment, the network was woven of words. Far from resolving into a consensus, the discussion of the future of Palestinian cinema, and indeed of the nation it represents, took diverging paths in discordant voices, oscillating between the calls for continuing struggle on the ground and the contrary perspective of a postnational identity, detached from the aspiration to territorial control after the failures of Oslo and the Palestinian Authority. On all sides there was a search for openings, for viable fractures, for figures of survival. Reflecting back on this solidarity in difference, I recall the philosopher **Jacques Rancière** and his analysis of the way that a political subject emerged in the recent past: *The political subjectivization of the 'proletarian'... is not a form of 'culture,' a collective ethos given voice. To the contrary, it presupposes a multiplicity of fractures separating the working bodies from their ethos and from the voice that is supposed to express its spirit, a multiplicity of speech events, i.e. singular experiences of litigation over speech and voice, over the division and sharing of the sensible.*[07]

If we must seek new paths to political subjecthood in today's era of global interaction, then the solidarity and dissension of this Palestinian debate, like the complex articulation attempted by **Fareed Armaly**'s exhibition, can offer an example. Not necessarily to follow, but to admire and go beyond.

07 | **Jacques Rancière**, *La Mésentente* [PARIS: GALILÉE, 1995].



Transnational corporations – **TNC**s – are the bogeymen of global dreams. They are imaged, on the left at least, as roving post-mechanical monsters, outfitted with fantastically complex electronic sensors and vicious trilateral brains, driven by an endless appetite for the conversion of resources, labor, and consumer desire into profit for a few. There's some truth in that image. But the power of transnational capital is inseparable from the capital "S" of subjective agency, expressed in social, cultural, and political exchange. Which is why I'd like to discuss **TNC**s in relation to what you might call **TNC**s: *transnational civil society.*

Let's start with the bogeyman. It became apparent in the 60s that private corporations were taking over the technological and organizational capacities developed initially in World War II: the coordinated industrial production, transportation, communication, information analysis, and propaganda required for multi-theater warfare. Corporations such as **Standard Oil** or **IBM**, operating through subsidiary companies in every nation which did not allow direct penetration, were projections of a [mostly American] military-industrial complex into both the developed and the undeveloped world, as part of the globe-girdling Cold War strategy. Yet already in the 60s these "multinational" enterprises were achieving autonomy from their home bases, for instance through the creation by British financiers of the Eurodollar, a way to keep profits offshore, out of the national tax collector's hands. The offshore economy took a quantum leap in the mid-70s after the first oil shock, when the massive capital transfers to the **OPEC** countries were channeled by inventive Western bankers into the new, stateless circuits of financial exchange. That's about the time when the new system of transnational capitalism began to emerge, with the collapse of the nationally based Fordist-Keynesian paradigm of labor-intensive industrial production complemented by socialized welfare programs. The immediate cause for the collapse was the inflation brought on by the policies of stimulating consumption

through public spending; but the durable factor prohibiting any return to the postwar social contract was the competitive pressure of what is now known as flexible accumulation, based on geographically dispersed yet highly coordinated "just-in-time" production, cheap world-wide distribution through container transport systems, and the complex management, marketing, and financing made possible by telecommunications. The flexible production system allowed the **TNC**s to avoid the concentrated masses of workers on which union power depends; and so much of the labor regulation built up since the Great Depression was sidestepped or abolished. At the same time, new technologies for financial speculation pushed levels of competition ever higher, as industrialists struggled to keep up with the profit margins that could be realized on the money markets. With the demise of the Soviet Union and the nearly simultaneous resolution of the **GATT** negotiations, eliminating almost all barriers to international trade, the world stage was cleared for the activities of the lean-and-mean corporations. The favors of unprecedentedly mobile enterprises would now have to be courted by weakened national governments, which increasingly began to appear as no more than "executive committees" serving the needs of the transnationals. And the **TNC**s grew tremendously, with spectacular mergers that haven't stopped: witness **BP/Amoco** in oil, **Daimler Benz/Chrysler** in auto manufacturing, **Morgan Stanley/Dean Whitter** in investment banking, or the proposed *Oneworld* alliance that would group nine international carriers around the two giants, **British Airways** and **American Airlines**...

This thumbnail sketch of economic globalization could go on and on, as it does in an incredible stream of recent books and articles from all schools of economics and all frequencies of the political spectrum. But what's generally left out of the hypercritical, alarmist discourse that I personally find most compelling, is some theoretical consideration of the roles played by the individual, human hubs of the world network: I mean *us*, the networkers, the people whose labor actually maintains the global economic webs, and whose curiosity and energy is sucked up into the tantalizing effort to understand them and use them for our own ends. I'm trying think on a broad scale here: the pioneers of virtual communities and net.art are only the tip of this iceberg. What's fascinating to see is the emergence on a sociological level of something like a *class or caste of networkers*, people who are increasingly conscious of the welter of connections that make up the global economy, who participate and to some degree profit from those connections, who suffer from them too, and who are beginning to recognize their own experience as part of a larger pattern. The massification of Internet access in the last few years, only since the early 90s, has finally given this social formation its characteristic means of expression. But precisely this expanded access to world-wide communications has made it pretty much impossible to go on fingering a tiny corporate elite as the sole sources and agents of the global domination of capital. We are now looking at and sharing in a much larger phenomenon: the constitution of a transnational civil society, with something akin to, but different from, the complexity, powers, and internal contradictions that characterized, and still characterize, the nationally based civil societies.

Civil society was initially defined, in the Enlightenment tradition, as the voluntary social relations that develop and function outside the institutions of state power. **Tocqueville**'s observations on the importance of such voluntary initiatives for the cohesion of mid-nineteenth-century American society established an enduring place for them in the theories of democracy. The idea recently got a lot of new press and some new philosophical consideration with the upsurge of dissidence in the Soviet Union and the other east-bloc countries in the 70s and 80s; and at the same time, as the neoliberal critique of state bureaucracy resulted in the dismantling of welfare functions and

the decay of public education systems, the notion of self-motivated, self-organizing social activities directed toward the common good became something of a Great White Hope in the western societies. So-called non-governmental organizations could then be seen as the correlates of civil society in the space of transnational flows. Nowadays, with the environmental and labor abuses of **TNC**s becoming glaringly violent and systematic, and with their cultural influence ballooning through their sway over the media, a lot of people in non-governmental organizations are understandably keen on promoting a notion of global civil society as a network of charitable humanitarian projects and political pressure groups operating outside the precinct of *corporate* power [with attempts to develop institutional agency focusing mostly around the **UN**]. I sympathize with the intention, but still I'd like to point out that the individual rights and the free exchange of information on which this global civil society depends are also necessary elements of capitalist exchange and accumulation. The internationalization of law and the fundamental demand of "transparency," i.e. full information disclosure about all collective undertakings, are among the great demands of the **TNC**s' financial managers. To the extent that it wants to participate in capitalist exchange, even a regime as repressive as that of China, for example, has to open up more and more circuits of information flow, and so it pays the price of higher scrutiny, both internal and external, on matters of individual rights and freedoms. The whole ambiguity of capitalism, in its concrete, historical evolution, is to combine tremendous directive power over the course and content of human experience with a structurally necessary space for the development of individual autonomy, and thus for political organizing. The networkers, those whose bodies form hubs in the global information flow, and who therefore can participate in an enlarged civil society, are subject to that ambiguity. Which means, pragmatically, that

the expansion of **TNC**s is inherently connected to the possibility for any democratic governance by a transnational civil society.

As **Gramsci** made clear long ago, civil society is always fundamentally about levels or thresholds of tolerance to the pressures and abuses of capitalist accumulation. The specific forms and effects of civil society are determined by a complex cultural mood, a shifting, partially unconscious consensus about who will be exploited at work, and how, about whose intelligence and emotions will be brutalized by which commercial media, and when and where and how, about whose land will be polluted,

and with what – and, of course, about whose land will just get suburbanized or left tragically undeveloped, about who will be able to refine their intelligence and emotions and in which ways, about who must work and who gets to work and who no longer "needs" to work, who just gets left on the sidelines. Thus **Gramsci**, writing in the 20s and 30s, had a somewhat jaundiced view of really-existing civil society. He conceived it as the primary locus of political struggle in the advanced capitalist societies, but he also saw it as a directive, legitimating cultural superstructure, generally engaged in the justification of brutal domination; and he recalled the violence of petty bureaucrats and clergyman in the Italian countryside, keeping the submissive classes in line. **Gramsci**'s key concept of hegemony expresses both the role of this legitimating function of civil society in maintaining dominance and also its potential mobility, its capacity to effect a redistribution of power in society. I think that the emergence of the transnational class of networkers, operating as a significant minority in most countries, is effectively shifting the articulation of political power in all the world's nations. I'll try to describe how with just a few examples.

Consider the United States, the country that launched the Internet, where an important fraction of the population is extracting new wealth out of what **Robert Reich** termed the "global webs" of multi-partner industrial, commercial, and financial ventures, where many people not directly involved as operative nodes in such webs are still very conscious of them because they have their savings or retirement funds invested in global financial markets [as almost half of Americans now do], and finally, where long lists of NGOs and alternative communication networks are based, many of them with roots in the idealistic social-reform movements of the 60s and 70s. This is also a country where the least wealthy 40% of the population has actually seen their wages go down and their working conditions deteriorate over the last twenty years, where chronic social exclusion has become highly visible in the forms of homelessness and renewed racial violence, and where, last but not least, a very powerful **Christian Coalition** has emerged to reject almost every kind of consciousness change attendant on the recognition of cultural diversity. To marshal a workable political consensus out of such intense divisions, **Clinton-Gore** had to simultaneously push even harder toward the flexibilized information economy than their Republican predecessors had done, while making [and then breaking] lots of promises to restructure the country's welfare safety net, maintaining a high-profile international human-rights discourse [for instance with respect to China], and combining talk about environmentalism with a hip and tolerant style to woo all the former 60s radicals whose capacity for cultural and technological innovation fuels so many growth markets. Continuing economic growth has, of course, been the only thing to render this juggling act possible, making the strident neoliberal critique of the Republican right seem redundant – and forcing the Republicans into even greater dependence on the extreme right, as defined and prosecuted by the moral order of Christian fundamentalism.

Europeans tend to look on media-driven American politics with consternation and a powerful will to deny any resemblance to the situation in their own countries. But if **Tony Blair** enjoys so much prestige in the rest of the EU right now, it is because of **New Labour**'s ability to juggle the contradictions of an unevenly globalized society, somewhat as **Clinton** has done. The hegemonic formula reflected by **New Labour** seems to be a fun, flexible lifestyle, good for stimulating consumption, a fast-paced managerial discipline to keep up with global competition, and a center-left position that shows a lot of sympathy for casual workers and the unemployed while eschewing any genuinely socialist policies of market regulation and restricting the state's role to that of a "promoter" [**Blair**'s word]. However, there are of indications that this formula, tantalizing as it is, will not really work in the rest of Europe, stricken by unemployment and yet still reticent to dismantle the remains of its welfare systems. The very interesting resurgence of support for state interventionism and economic regulation in France is one such indication. A more disquieting sign is the rise of populist neofascist parties, not only in France, where the NATIONAL FRONT clamors against *mondialisme* [globalism], but also in Austria, Italy, Belgium, and Norway. These betoken major resistance to the neoliberal path that the European Union – or more accurately, *Euroland* – has taken under the economic leadership of the *Bundesbank*. The compromise-formation between a transnational elite subordinating everything to its privileges and an excluded popular class looking to vent its frustrations seems to be the scapegoating of poorer immigrants. The sight of two immigration officers savagely beating an African in a transit corridor of Schipol airport has stuck in my mind as an all-too possible future for *Euroland*.

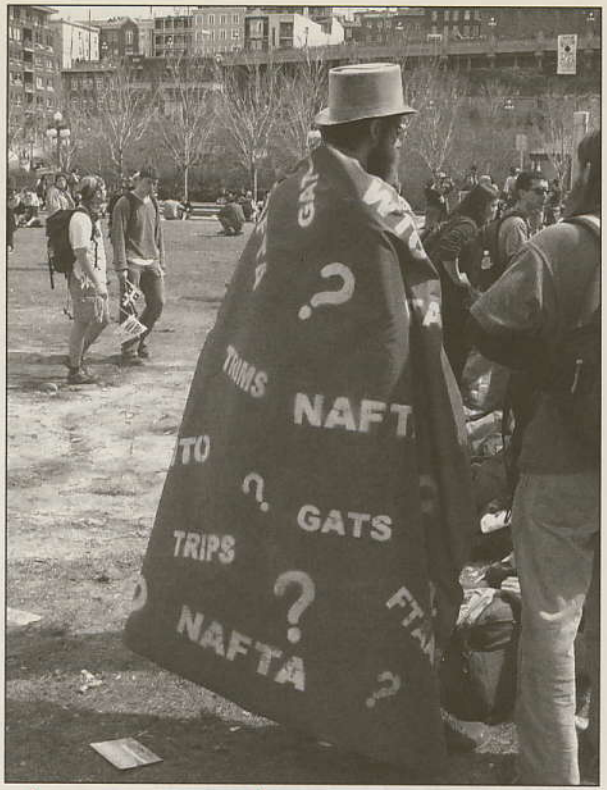
The powerfully articulated national civil societies of Europe are likely to falter and distort rather than break under the pressure of the split introduced by the transnational class.

Hegemonic dissolution occurs when a majority of a country's or region's people can no longer identify themselves with *any* aspect of the institutional structure that purports to govern them. A case in point is Algeria. Here we see the steadily increasing inability of a recently urbanized and relatively educated population to identify with a government that no longer even remotely represents a possibility to share the benefits of industrial growth – because there hasn't been any for the past twenty years. The government is now an oligarchy drawing its revenues from **TNC**s in the fields of resource-extraction and consumer-product distribution. For many Algerians who have left their former village environment but can no longer get a job or use their education, the only ideology that can render a regression to pre-industrial living conditions tolerable is not democracy, but Islamic fundamentalism. If transnational capital continues to exploit the new international space which it has [de]regulated for its convenience, without any consideration for the daily lives of huge numbers of people, such violent reactions of rejection are inevitable and will spread. The current crisis of the global financial system is all too likely to fulfill this prediction.

Paradoxically, it is the global financial meltdown [of 1997-98] that may offer the first real chance for transnational civil society to have a significant impact on world politics. Not because networkers will have any direct influence on the few transnational institutions that do exist: only the richest states and the lobbies of the very large corporations can sway the **IMF**, **OECD**, and **WTO**; and despite all the inroads made by non-governmental organizations, the **UN** is only really effective as a kind of mega-forum for debate. But in the context of a world-wide economic crisis, networkers may be able to use an understanding acquired by direct participation in global information flows to effectively criticize the institutions, ideologies, and economic policies of their own countries. In other

words, transnational civil society may find ways to link back up with the national civil societies. There is already an example of networked resistance to economic globalization that has operated in just this way: the mobilization against the **MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENTS**. This ultraliberal treaty aims not at harmonizing but at *homogenizing* the legal environment for transnational investment. It would prohibit any differential treatment of investors, thus making it impossible for governments to encourage locally generated economic development. It would allow investors to sue governments in any case where new environmental, labor, or cultural policies entailed profit losses. And its rollback provision would function to gradually eliminate the "reservations" that individual states might initially impose. Negotiations on the **MAI** began secretly in 1995 among the 29 member-states of the **ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT**, and might actually have been concluded in April 1998 had the draft text of the treaty not been obtained and made public, first by posting it on the Internet [see the **Public Citizen** site, at **www.citizen.org**]. This plus the resultant press coverage brought cascading opposition from around the world, including a joint statement addressed to the **OECD** and national governments by 560 **NGO**s. The result was that member-states were forced into questioning certain aspects of the treaty and negotiations were temporarily suspended, though not definitively adjourned.

Detailed information on the **MAI** can be obtained over the Internet, for instance from the **NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABILITY** in Canada [**www.islandnet.com/~ncfs/maisite/**]. The diffusion of this information remains important at the date I am writing [September 1998], as further negotiations are upcoming. Opponents say that like **Dracula**, the **MAI** cannot stand the light of day. What I find particularly interesting in this context is the way the angle of the daylight differs across the world. Canadian activists, having seen their local in-



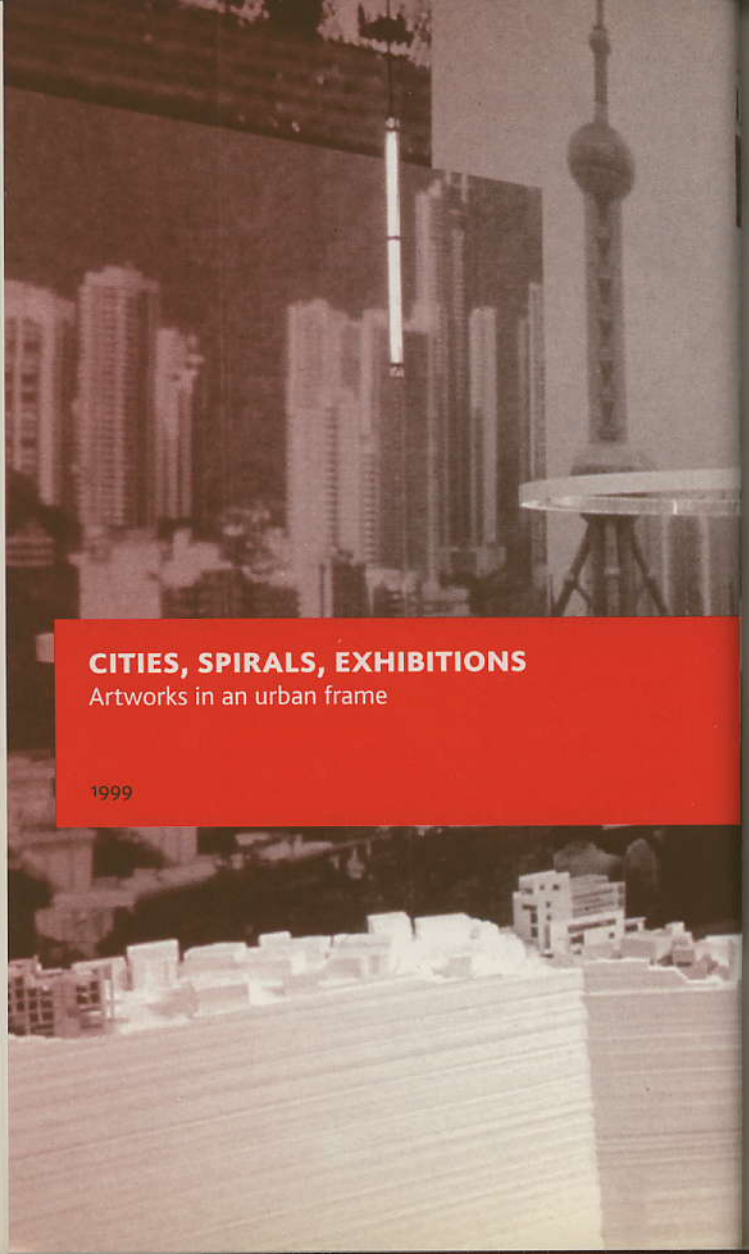
QUÉBEC FTAA SUMMIT PROTEST | PHOTO: BRIAN HOLMES

stitutions weakened by **NAFTA**, are extremely concerned with preserving national sovereignty. Consumer advocates and environmentalists were able to exert the strongest influence on the US Congress. In France, the threat to government subsidy of French-language audiovisual production tipped the balance of indignation. **NGO**s in developing countries which may be incited to join the treaty immediately pointed to the dangers of excessive speculation by outside investors. Underlying these and many

other specific concerns there is no doubt a broad conviction that the single, overriding value of capitalist accumulation by any means, and for no other end than accumulation itself, is insane or inhuman. But even if the current financial crisis is almost certain to reinforce and extend that conviction, still it will have no political effect until translated into more tangible issues, within an institutional environment that is still permeable to those whose only power lies in their intelligence, imagination, empathy, and organizing skills. Like it or not, that environment is still primarily to be found in the nation, and not in some hypothetical *Oneworld* consciousness. Which is tantamount to saying that transnational civil society, if developed for its own sake, would probably end up as homogeneous and abstract as the process of transnational capital circulation that structures the **TNC**s. The only desirable global governance will come from the endless harmonization of endlessly negotiated local differences.

I have evoked the position of networkers as human hubs in the global information flow. What are the implications of that position? In his three-volume study of *The Information Age*, sociologist **Manuel Castells** gives the following definition: '*A network is a set of interconnected nodes. A node is the point at which a curve intersects itself.*' This definition is either fatalistic or provocative. Fatalistic if it defines the network of information exchange as an entirely autonomous system, interlinked only to itself in a structure of recursive proliferation. But provocative if it helps push the human hubs to assert their autonomy by seeking connections outside the recursive feedback-system. Can we hope that a redirection of priorities will arise from the aberrant spectacle of financial short-circuiting and resultant material penury in a world whose productive capacities are so obviously immense? I suspect that in the near future at least some progress toward the reorientation of the world economy is likely, particularly in the European Union where the rudiments

of transnational democratic institutions do exist. Even in the US, real doubt may grow about the sustainability of the speculative market in which so many have invested. In this context there may be a chance for activists to talk political economics with the far larger numbers of networkers who formerly had ears only for the neoliberal consensus. But a real change in the hegemony will not come about without an expansion of the magic circle of empowerment to people and priorities which have been marginalized and excluded. There is a tremendous need right now to spend some time away from computers and out of airports, not to ideologize people in the national civil societies but just to find out what matters to them, and to discover other levels of experience that can feed one's own capacities for empathy and imagination. Such experience can help requalify the transnational networks. In this respect I continue to think there has been something compelling in the **Zapatista** electronic insurgency, despite the aura of exoticism it is often reduced to. Not only has it been a vital force in shifting the hegemonic balance in Mexican civil society by giving uncensored voice to the demand for greater democracy. Not only has it been able to mobilize support from far-flung nations at a time when "Third Worldism" was becoming a term of insult and disdain. But in addition to these considerable accomplishments it has been able to infuse the global network with stories and images of the Lacandon forest, evoking experiences of time, place, and human solidarity that seem to have been banished from the accelerating system of abstract exchanges. The thing is not to romanticize such stories and images, but to look instead for the real resonances they can have in one's own surroundings. Call it transnational culture sharing, if you like.



CITIES, SPIRALS, EXHIBITIONS
Artworks in an urban frame

1999

What are the powers of art in the face of organized violence?[01] The answer can only lie in the public's encounter with the artworks, in the emotions they release, the reactions they provoke, the dialogues they foster. The critic and the curator offer frames for that encounter, the first in the mind's eye, the second in the space of exhibition. Today, if we want the artistic experience to contribute to any kind of political confrontation with the sources of violence, we have to radically change those frames. And that means measuring the depth and the historical nature of the current conflicts in the world.

RANGE FINDER AND TARGET

The Kosov@ war was incredibly divisive. The left – or whatever's left of it – had tremendous difficulty in even identifying the aggressors. Every kind of confusion made it into the media: from complete disculpation of the **Milošević** regime in the name of anti-imperialism, to unqualified support for US geopolitical strategy on humanitarian grounds. **Slavoj Žižek** summed it up: *'The supporters of the bombing make their stand on depoliticized human rights. Their opponents describe the post-Yugoslavian war as an ethnic struggle in which all sides are equally guilty. But both sides miss the political essence of the post-Yugoslavian conflict'.*[02] For **Žižek**, the real issue was the political struggle between two different understandings of the state: the pre-WWII concept of Yugoslavia as an entity held together by the sheer power of Serbian hegemony, and **Tito**'s more complex conception of Yugoslavia as a federation, whose rules included the right for its members to secede.

01 | The question was raised during summer 1999 in the "Union of the Imaginary" or VOTI Internet forum on "Cultural Practice and War." Cf. the initial statement at <www.blast.org/agencies/index.html>.

02 | The quote is from a text posted on the VOTI forum – apparently an initial draft of *Nato as the Left Hand of God?/NATO kao lijeva ruka Boga?* [ZAGREB: ARKZIN, 1999].

By framing the conflict in constitutional terms, **Žižek** insists we give priority back to political relations. That appeal goes far beyond the Balkans. It speaks directly to cultural producers today, whose work has no room to exist within the simplifying opposition between bloodthirsty ethnicity and surgical humanitarianism. The notion that group identities are fundamentally pathological acts to disqualify any work on culture as a symbolic space for the development of solidarities. But the association of humanism with high-tech interventionism has an equally devastating effect.

Consider the testimony of the new media artist **Aras Ozgun**, who writes in a text called *'Bomb's Eye'* that *'seeing itself has become an act of aggression.'* The phrase was borrowed from the German writer **Ernst Jünger**, who theorized the subjectivity of industrial war. The feeling came home to **Ozgun** one night while watching news reports on the web. The headline was about bombs on Belgrade:

> *What followed was an image filling my computer screen after I clicked on the link. It was taken from a camera placed in front of a bomb just before it hit its target. In the black and white, grainy, low-resolution sight of the bomb there was a bridge which came bigger and bigger and then suddenly disappeared into blackness.* [03]

Ozgun had been to Belgrade, he had photographed that bridge himself. He was part of a group working to develop the emancipatory potential of the new visual technologies. But what he saw on the screen was an updated version of the "cold consciousness" that **Jünger** had already experienced as a solider in WW I. For **Ozgun** as well, it is a photographic consciousness, *'embodied in one's ability to see oneself as an image.'* This was the ability granted by the bomb's eye. The promise of techno-

03 | Text posted on the VOTI forum – like those of the American colonel and general quoted subsequently.

logical emancipation seemed to be shattered: *'We were beaten, surpassed, defeated in our imagination,'* he wrote.

For **Aras Ozgun**, the war demanded a questioning of everything he was most deeply involved in. That's an ethical position. So let's pursue this examination of the bomb's eye view. **Jordan Crandall** has published an essay on *'Armed Vision,'* with essential clues about the kind of subject configured by advanced military technology. Far from being purely instrumental, such technology shapes our perception, it *'helps to format a cognition that is more conducive to the demands of its algorithms.'* There is an effect of distancing between the targeted victim and the individual on the other side of the range finder, who *'is protected, sheathed in a kind of obfuscatory prophylactic as a mechanism of control in relation to a exterior danger produced for that purpose'*. [04] The construction of the perfect enemy assures that all the individual's capacities, not only intelligence and quick reflexes, but moral qualities like independence, self-respect, and honesty, can be mobilized within the formats of aggression systems. As Col. **Charles M. Westenhoff** of the US Air Force wrote in a text posted on the VOTI forum: *'The most prized military trait of airpower, flexibility, stems from individual performance, trustworthiness, and initiative.'* The concentration of military power into a highly flexible, individualized system like a jet requires a similar concentration on the psychology of the pilots, who must conceive themselves as a thoroughly free, democratically legitmate elite – because if they don't feel completely free they can always just escape with their F16.

High-tech warfare leads to a new subjective economy. The stress on individual excellence and initiative brings the military into perfect synch with the imperatives of neoliberal capitalism.

04 | "Armed Vision," posted on VOTI, is available at <www.ctheory.com/article/a072.html> and in **Jordan Crandall**'s book *Drive* [forthcoming, MIT PRESS].

As Gen. **Thomas S. Moorman** writes: *'Commercializing selected space functions and adopting processes and practices from space's business world offer enormous opportunities for efficiency.'* So in the name of efficiency, a new space race can serve both the power appetites of the state and the money appetites of the corporations. This pattern is transnational, like the corporations. In France during the Kosov@ war, the newly privatized **Matra-Aerospatial** corporation was selling shares on the so-called public market. *»Never has the stock market watched the heavens with such interest,«* read the ad posted in all the remaining public buildings. On the poster were images of satellites, launchers, rockets, missiles, military helicopters and planes, all behind a commercial airliner. *Fly the friendly skies,* it seemed to say. *You'll be a hell of a lot safer up there.*

The bomb's eye view has become tremendously pervasive. Yet it remains the perspective of an elite within the planetary balance of power. What does it feel like to be a target? The best testimony I have found is the article ***Why I am Returning to Russia,*** published in *Le Monde* of June 30, 1999, by **Alexander Zinoviev**, a former dissident who came to Europe in 1978. He explains how the impossibility of distributing his literary and scientific works in the Soviet Union led him to the West, where he discovered *'the flowering of democracy, of liberalism, of free thinking, of creative pluralism.'* Yet in the early nineties, the collapse of the Soviet regime was not followed by the renaissance the West had promised, *'but on the contrary, by an accelerated decline in all the areas of society - political, economic, ideological, moral and social.'* **Zinoviev** began to write about that, *'following the principle of truth at any price.'* His work, he says, was confronted by de facto censorship:

> *I personally went through the concrete experience of the narrowness, the exclusivity, the arbitrary and tendentious character of Western-style freedom of creation.*

He continues:

> *Although that also played a role, it is not what determined my decision to return to Russia. The fundamental factor was the change in Western Europe, after the end of the Cold War and the debacle of the Soviet Union. The essence of this change is the total Americanization of Western Europe. While the Soviet Union existed and was the second superpower of the planet, it protected Western Europe from this Americanization, which proves deadly for its best achievements - including its liberalism, its pluralism and freedom of thought.... I had already begun to think about the problem of a return to Russia a few years ago, when the designs of the masters of the Western world with respect to Russia and the Russian people had become perfectly clear to me - that is, to bring Russia to its knees so that it should never be able to rise to the level of a strong power amid the world community, and to transform its territory into a zone of Western colonization. As to the Russian people, it is a matter of reducing them to the level of a primitive ethnic tribe of sparse population, no more than thirty to fifty million, incapable of even governing themselves autonomously. But the last straw resulting in my definitive and irrevocable decision to leave the West was nonetheless the cynical and brutal aggression of the United States and Nato against Serbia, which revived my memories of the years of Hitler's aggression against my homeland.... As a Russian, I cannot remain an observer on the sidelines of my country's death. I believe it is my moral duty to be with my people in this tragic moment of their history, and to share their fate.*

The point here is not to take sides in a conflict. It is to stress the widening gulf between the reasoning of a man like **Zinoviev** and the reasoning of our efficiency-minded colonels and generals, of our neoliberal system as a whole. How does cultural solidarity becomes dangerous ethnic identity? One would have to be unconscious not to grasp the way that the acceleration of

finance-driven, military-backed, networked capitalism is producing its enemy in the former Soviet Union, in China, and in the Arab world – an enemy which, once firmly in place, can only be combated militarily. Yet this unconsciousness seems to be the rule. It is the condition of the range-finder in the face of the target, whose human face it scrupulously avoids. It gives rise to a new, culturalist ideology of inevitable conflict: what the conservative sociologist **Samuel Huntington** calls the *Clash of Civilizations*. [05] This is how the stage is being set for new spirals of organized violence. These are the faces that the bomb's eye doesn't even allow us to see. Under these conditions I think everyone, even those of us mainly involved in art, should take a look at another face that the networked society is currently excluding: the hidden or unconscious face of the world's recent economic history.

THE LATE, GREAT TRANSFORMATION

Economists seem to agree that levels of international trade and work-force mobility are only now returning to the heights they struck just before World War I. The question that divides the economists is, did that war violently interrupt or directly result from the long economic boom that preceded it? Critics of today's economic boom often look back to *The Great Transformation* [1944], **Karl Polanyi**'s study of the break-up of nineteenth-century capitalism. Its thesis is that the integrating institutions of society were necessarily shattered by the triple fiction of economic liberalism: the belief that land, labor, and money itself can all be treated as commodities, more or less valuable goods to be bought and sold on a self-regulating market.

05 | **Huntington**'s original article, published in the journal *Foreign Affairs* in Summer 1993, is available at <www.alamut.com/subj/economics/misc/clash.html>. The book, unfortunately, has become increasingly popular.

Polanyi showed that far from being a natural function, the so-called free-market relation was a deliberate political creation, and a dangerous one: because it tended almost inevitably to destroy the land off which it fed and the human bodies that it made into its instruments. Even when this destruction concerned land use, it was above all cultural: the ecological balances of the English countryside were shattered by the new social organization of the Industrial Revolution. Recently we have again become aware of the ecological dangers and shocking labor conditions brought on by pure free-marketeering. But what seems to have been forgotten in the current stock-market fever is the way that market mechanisms in the past finally destroyed the medium of exchange itself: the gold standard on which the nineteenth-century financiers depended for their transnational affairs. The main point of **Polanyi**'s book is to demonstrate how the treatment of money not as an institution of human exchange, but as a commodity that can be sold and then resold and resold again in increasingly derivative forms, led to the stock market crash of '29 and ultimately to the Second World War.

The abandonment of golden commodity money and its replacement by nationally regulated paper notes coincided with the rise of the social or fascistic state of the thirties, whether in Stalinist Russia, in the dictatorships of Western Europe, or even in New Deal America. The early forms of what **Polanyi** calls the "crustacean nation" were desperate and mostly failed attempts to ensure societal survival in the face of a fragmentation of all the bonds and solidarities on which even the market ultimately depended. After the war, **Polanyi** saw the chance for a newly regulated articulation of natural resources, human efforts, and institutional forms of exchange. This creation of new solidarities would be a Great Transformation. In his eyes, the effort to achieve a harmonious regulation of the social fundamentals, a mode of regulation respectful of individual differences and rights, was the only open road to freedom in a complex society. And this was

more or less the path that the postwar societies took within the strictly national framework of their socialist or Keynesian policies, after the world had at last escaped from the chaos that accompanied the liberal economy's disintegration.

How close has history brought us to the former peak of globalization, around 1900? Are we experiencing, as though in a spiral, the same dynamics expressed at a higher power, developing at even greater speed? How threatening are the pressures on exploited labor, on the environment, on the instituted currencies? Is the intertwining of economic and military priorities likely to further accelerate the rate of technological and organizational change? Doesn't the recent emergence of nationalism, neofascism, and religious fundamentalism in the world have something to do with globalization, i.e. the resurgence, since the early 1980s, of an unregulated [or "self-regulating"] world market economy?

In the wake of the so-called Asian crisis, the need to regain some control over market forces is being formulated again by economists. At the same time, certain nations – witness Malaysia – are beginning to close in on themselves, imposing currency and trade controls. A "sovereignity" movement has emerged in France, calling for a restoration of national prerogatives. Most disturbingly, neofascism continues to gain power, in Norway, Belgium, Switzerland, and Austria among other countries. The national framework is no longer an effective space of solidarity. For those of us who work on the international art circuit, the enigma remains of how we can bring cultural balances – or cathartic forms of cultural conflict – to the powerful arena of transnational space. How can we step into this "space of flows" without leaving every local reality behind, and without contributing to the gulf of misunderstanding that threatens to produce more war? How can we navigate that space without adopting the "cold consciousness" of the bomb's eye viewpoint?

EXPERIMENTS WITH THE URBAN FRAME

In terms of exhibition-making, what we need is an imaginary frame that can help the viewer probe the relations between economic globalization and cultural change as they take form within the city, or more broadly, within the globally connected urban realm. When I speak of a frame, I literally mean the physical setting within which art works are displayed, which is still normatively defined as the white cube, the neutral environment of the museum or gallery, based on the presuppositions of an individualist phenomenology. Can we radically alter this frame? The aim would be to stage an exhibition that tells its public something concrete about the mesh of historical, cultural, and economic relations within which artworks are made and interpreted. The aim would be to saturate an exhibition with enough detail, to structure it with enough generality and complexity, that it becomes a model of a city within the city itself, a precise and metaphorical frame allowing artistic works to develop their full power of reflection on the dynamics of locality and translocality. Such an exhibition might help its visitors to better grasp the political essence of conflicts in the world today.

The London version of ***Cities on the Move: Urban Chaos and Global Change***, curated by **Hou Hanru** and **Hans Ulrich Obrist**, gives a foretaste of these possibilities. This thematic exhibition intends to deal with the visual culture of East Asian cities – an impossibly vast ambition, by all traditional criteria. But the staging of the show by architect **Rem Koolhaas** at the HAYWARD GALLERY in London acts to transform the criteria, shifting the frame of reference and making it possible to ask new questions. With pragmatic extremism, **Koolhaas** divides the exhibition into five spaces: *Street*, *Building*, and *Decay* on the first floor, *Commerce* and *Protest* above. The first floor is the most successful. Into a relatively narrow, almost corridor space, *Street* disgorges a fascinating tangle of videos, photo projects, intimate

and kitsch installations. The more severe display of *Building* accumulates intricate, expansive scale models, sometimes on multi-level wood-frame displays; while *Decay*, tightly packed with display volumes like a slum district, and placed appropriately at the exit to the show so that you can't avoid it, brings in the seamy side of the city with explicitly pornographic images of prostitution, drug use, and gang violence, plus a gigantic inflatable goddess and satirical fiberglass angels floating overhead. Upstairs, the obligatory blandness of *Commerce* faces off with the disappointing blandness of *Protest* – more about that later. *Street* and *Decay* have been cinematically treated with **Koolhaas**'s "urbanpaper," translating the endless square kilometers of East Asian technological congestion into looming square meters of urban blur, choked horizons, skyscrapers, and brutalist cement façades – like those of the HAYWARD GALLERY itself. An imaginary Asian sprawl within the implacably monumental sprawl of London.

What I want to do now is to unfold and to a certain degree idealize the possibilities of this exhibition model, with specific reference to economic history and cultural change. It is telling that **Mohsen Mostafavi** should begin his catalogue essay, *'Cities of Distraction,'* with reference to **Marinetti**'s exaltation of speed in the Futurist manifesto of 1909 – before going on to evoke the breakneck urbanization of Far Eastern seaboards and *'the impact of global financial networks that simultaneously exploit and benefit East Asian cities'*.[06] The turn-of-the-century reference is inevitable. **Hou** and **Obrist**, in their catalogue essay, raise the problem of high-speed change in ways that relate directly to **Polanyi**'s thinking: *'An inevitable tension exists between the desire for a capitalist economy and the traditions of Asian culture.... often, the desire for a modern, Western economy leads to a paternalistic structure of social management, and to the perverse pursuit of 'hyper-capitalism.''* The curators continue: *'Currently, East Asia exists in a state of permanent and frenzied transformation, with almost unbearable urban density, uncontrollably rapid expansion, profligate exploitation of natural and human resources and the loss of social, cultural and political stability.'* Under these conditions, the big question is obviously: What does the future hold? But there is a smaller, subordinate question, important for those of us working with the visual arts: How can an exhibition both represent these current conditions *and intervene in them*?

Koolhaas's choices in the staging of the show can obviously be criticized for lack of cultural specificity. The presupposition of the generic, the brutal reduction of cultural nuances to a physical anthropology of sprawl, is at first glance shocking. Only after a longer look – and with some conceptual extrapolation – does a series of compelling issues emerge. Here as everywhere in his work, **Koolhaas** is registering certain structural invariants of the contemporary economy. This is the power of his pragmatic extremism. By subordinating form to program, he creates an architecture at once wildly inventive and coolly lucid, a carefully articulated mirror of our age, in all *its* extremism. In the case of this exhibition, the scenographic program involves a confrontation between specific cultural practices and an urbanization process driven by the flow-structure of transnational capital. Borrowing a concept from the geographer **David Harvey**, we could say that **Koolhaas** is making visible the "urbanization of capital".[07] What does this mean? It is well known that investors seek quick returns on their money. It is equally well known that the speed and magnitude of the returns offered by the financial markets has led all the materially productive industries, and not least the building industry, to seek increasingly large and rapid returns, with a consequent distortion of what is produced. The urban realm becomes a spatial playground for financial specu-

06 | *Cities on the Move*, cat., LONDON, HAYWARD GALLERY, May 13-June 27, 1999, p. 8; following quotes from p. 13.

lation, growing at what **Koolhaas** calls "Shenzen speed".[08] And yet the urbanization of capital inevitably involves its temporary immobilization as built form. In the intervening time between the creation and destruction of a building, it will inevitably be used; and despite the efficiency of the circulation pattern, despite all the calculations of production and consumption, still the use that unfolds in the time before profit is realized will inevitably overflow the profit-making program and imbue the built form with variant meanings, rhythms of the past or the imagined future, the revolt of the individual or the group – values at odds with the market priority of investment return. Paradoxically, in the HAYWARD GALLERY exhibition it was the merciless insistence on the generic urban functions demanded by transnational capital that made the artworks visible in their double specificity, all of them traversed by the homogenizing forces of the present that effectively fashion the urban environment, yet each one struggling and succeeding to some degree, like the inhabitants of a city, in gaining a toehold, a niche in a towerblock, a twist in the common language. By their contrast to the relentless *movement* of contemporary urbanism – **Archigram**'s "walking cities," realized in East Asia – the artworks inscribed moments of cultural lag, perceptual delay, existential *durée*, amidst the dissolving flux of capital's incessant valorization, transformation, flight. It is the contrast between this cultural lag time and the relentless march of capitalist urbanization that establishes a relation between the art exhibition and the everyday perception of the urban world.

07 | **David Harvey**, *The Urbanization of Capital* [BALTIMORE: JOHN HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1985]. Drawing on **Harvey**'s work, **Fredric Jameson** speculates on contemporary architecture as an expression of finance capital in the essay "The Brick and the Balloon," in *The Cultural Turn* [LONDON: VERSO, 1998].

08 | See the work of **Koolhaas** and his students on the Pearl River Delta, in *Documenta X, The Book* [OSTFILDERN: CANTZ, 1997].

The art works, in this environment, dramatize a situation common in everyday life: if you want understanding and not just sensation, you've got to look for it. The struggle to get to the heart of something amidst the cities of distraction offers a convincing metaphor for the problem artists face. To watch **Yukata Sone**'s video *Night Bus*, to peer into **Aaron Tan**'s photographic studies of **Kowloon**'s slowly decaying "Walled City," is to touch the moments of disoriented intimacy and the strange, forgotten corners of history that form the other side of the generic megalopolis. By directing attention to the particularisms of experience within the accelerated uniformity of economic processes, the urban frame can offer the public access to different visions of the fundamental tension between use value and exchange value that impinges on all inhabitants of the contemporary urban realm. This contrast invites viewers to a deeper understanding of cultural and geographical specificities, and at the same time provides an intuitive grasp of the overarching stakes of art production everywhere – which is a way of saying that the generic urban frame can restore a problematic universality to the aesthetic experience, at a time when the traditional criteria of aesthetic quality are increasingly perceived as irrelevant. Art in the urban frame appears not as an upper-class luxury, not as a spinoff of advertising or as an academic canon propagated by the state, but as a vital tool for particular, culture-specific processes of self-construction and social communication – a vital tool for pleasure but also for survival. And this vitality, this urgency, promises not only a new public, a truly transnational public which is also the multi-ethnic public of the new world cities; it also promises a renewed political role for art.

THE POWERS OF ART

Everything depends, not only on the size of the public, but on its capacity to perceive an effective link between artworks in a museum and the world outside. We know that the museum

formerly served the national bourgeoisies, and then more broadly, the citizens of the modern democracies, as a space for critical self-reflection, where the question of the beautiful could achieve political significance through correlations with the questions of the real [the true] and the desirable [the just or the good, to use the old language]. During the roughly thirty-year period after World War II, the vastly enlarged population of museum-goers could effectively dispute over the usefulness and universality of the objects of their aesthetic contemplation, because during that time of expanding entitlements, the "cultural mass" of critically trained individuals produced by the democratic educational systems effectively exerted a margin of control over the locus of societal power, which lay in the state. The museum, that neutral site of aesthetic experience, appeared as one of the places where the democratic individual could exercise freedom of choice, while exploring the relation between that freedom and democracy's central norm of equality. In short, the museum was something like the aesthetic answer to the voting booth. Today, one can hardly be surprised that the art shown in museums appears increasingly inconsequential, an indifferent "matter of taste," with nothing to contribute to notions of the desirable or the true, i.e. the norms on which institutions are founded. The locus of power having shifted to the realm of transnational exchanges, the art shown in museums has little more political resonance than any other of the "universal products" we are offered, none of which includes any connection to an effective democratic institution. In so far as power is transferred to the transnational sphere, art exists in an institutional vacuum, and therefore becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish from the globalized aesthetic products of cinema, fashion, and design.

The urban frame cannot fill the institutional void; but it accomplishes two things for the public. First, it identifies the effectively globalized realm of the contemporary city as the common background against which each specific work of art can

appear as an ideal or an impossibility, a utopia or a denunciation. And second, it lucidly stresses the fact that the power of each member of the viewing public derives from combinations of the two essential poles of exchange value and use value: that is, either the transnational circulation of industrial and above all finance capital, or the stabilization of available resources in more-or-less enduring social structures. The urban frame reveals that the old ideal of a purely individual judgment – favored by the white cube no less than the voting booth – is now an illusion.

When we have evacuated that illusion, then we can enter the political theater of *Commerce* and *Protest*. For it is here that the essential struggle takes place: the struggle to identify the new forms of alienation and exploitation and to invent the will and the means to politically and culturally oppose them. Here, in an exhibition making a rich and sophisticated use of the urban frame, we would no doubt find far more complex realities than the simple opposition of commodity and rebellion would suggest. The element of use value, of existential time, would be apparent in many operations of capitalistic exchange; and the social formations of revolt would be shot through with the characteristics of the omnipresent market. The two poles would define a space of tension leaving none of their contents unchanged. I say "would" because that tension was not very apparent in the HAYWARD GALLERY exhibition. Commerce reduced to the banality of pop iconography shows little of the extraordinary cruelty that characterizes the financial economy, and little of the ambiguity that flourishes between commercial practices and social institutions [even if this ambiguity was touched upon in **Ken Lum**'s photographic record of Chinese restaurants across the suburbs of the world]. Protest, however, was the real loser in the show. Though certain works could claim aesthetic qualities and political "content," none gave much of an inkling that a social construction and a set of cultural references lay behind the gestures of revolt, which appeared purely individual

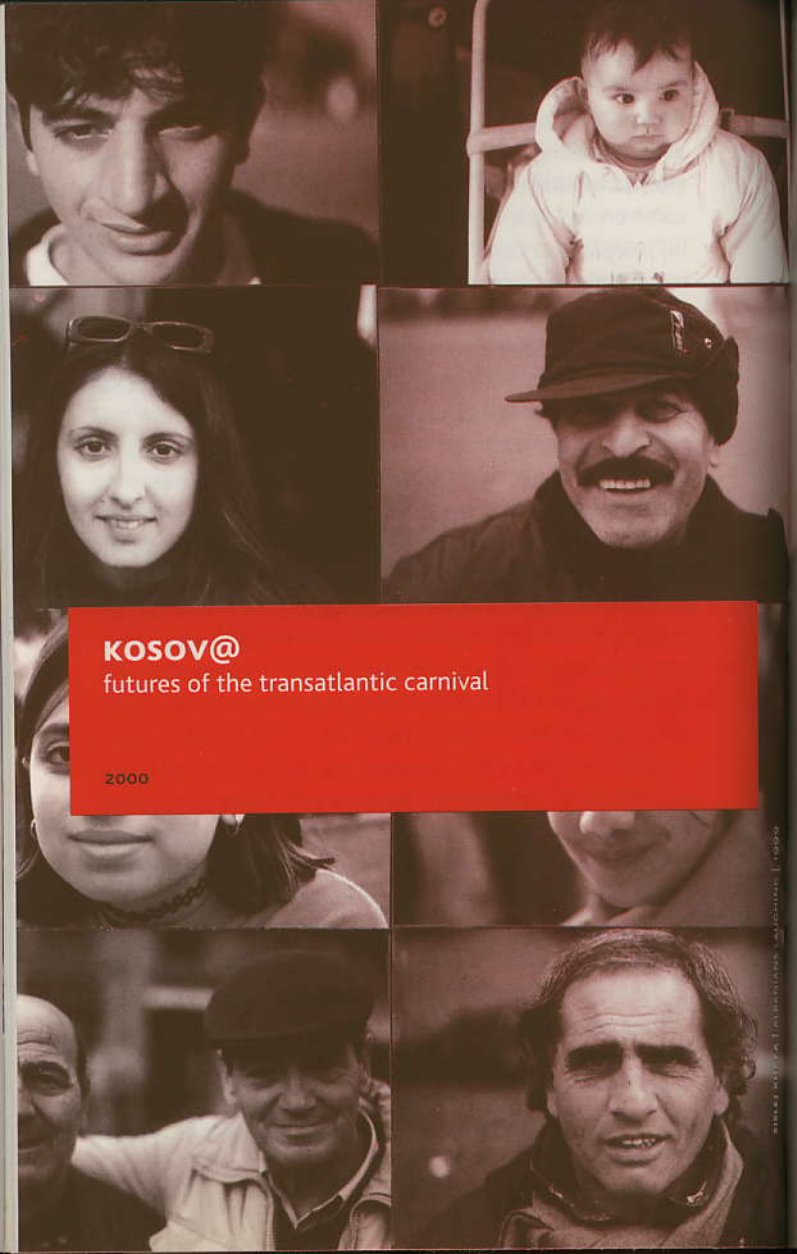
[like **Tsang Tsou-choi**'s one-man graffiti protest against land expropriation by the Hong Kong government]. The chance to make contact with or even become aware of a social movement was missing – and yet this, to my mind, should be the major interest of an exhibition today. The possibility, offered by one work, of taking out roughly thirty-five seconds to address a humanitarian postcard in protest against the decline of the justice system in Malaysia, just did not fill the gap. The urban frame can provide a magnificent window on distant realities; but in the age of air travel and telecommunications it can also be a door. This is the promise of such an exhibition, and the key to its attractiveness: by revealing the similarity of world conditions, it suggests a possible solidarity between the proponents of particular, local responses to those conditions.

The global city is an alienating reality when it remains a distant spectacle, like the spectacle of one's home city when there exists no effective political community, no context in which aesthetics can become political. But it is a realm of possibility when it opens the door of understanding to the effective practice of collaboration, for those who find the energy to cross the threshold. It is by increasing the possibility of this step across cultural, geographical, and class divides – divides which are operative both within and between cities – that exhibitions today could make their greatest contribution. To do this it is necessary to provide the feeling of proximity that comes from the representation of the same, along with the tools of understanding and communication that make collaborations possible between the different. This is the direction that art exhibitions could explore, in the effort to elevate the conflicts between operators and targets into political confrontations between people with voices and faces, needs, desires, and differing conceptions of the law.

The new importance of debate at contemporary art exhibitions is a step in this direction. But too often – for instance at

DOCUMENTA X which helped institute the trend – these debates are still held between academic experts, and lead only to the accumulation of passive, detached knowledge. In the same way, artists dealing with the themes of communication and interactivity still too often produce abstract models, or utopian communities closed to all but a chosen few. There is room for a lot more cultural ambition. Artists, critics, and curators with a real grasp on the uses of communications media have a whole new practice to invent, turned toward a public which is not necessarily that of the national institution of the museum. The interest of the urban frame I have been describing lies not so much in what it makes happen in the museum, but in the possibility it lets us glimpse for the museum to open up again to the city outside. Working on such possibilities is a way that the cultural sector can actually help further some kind of transnational solidarity, precisely by opening up more complex spaces of disagreement and dissent. I think it's the only way that we could help put a brake on future wars.

[WRITTEN FOR **VOTI FORUM** ON CULTURAL PRACTICE & WAR | JULY 1999]



KOSOV@
futures of the transatlantic carnival

2000

...radio is one-sided when it should be two-. It is purely an apparatus for distribution, for mere sharing out. So here is a positive suggestion: change this apparatus over from distribution to communication. The radio would be the finest possible communication apparatus in public life, a vast network of pipes. That is to say, it would be if it knew how to receive as well as transmit, how to let the listener speak as well as hear, how to bring him into a relationship instead of isolating him.

BERTOLT BRECHT
THE RADIO AS AN APPARATUS OF COMMUNICATION [1932]

Brecht's reflection on the radio comes home today with not one but two jolts of recognition. The first has to do with the prescient glimpse it seems to offer of the Internet, that inconceivably vast network of pipes which receives just as well as it transmits. But the second jolt comes from the realization that radio in the 1930s could easily have functioned in the two-way channels that **Brecht** describes – if the social and political will had not been lacking. The implication for today is that the Internet, despite its evident technical advantages, could easily *cease* functioning in a communicational mode, that it could rapidly give way or regress to new forms of central-broadcast content [masked by the push-button charms of "interactivity"].

A new media technology only acquires what **Raymond Williams** called its "cultural form" when dominant uses emerge from the initial welter of experimentation with the technology, to begin jockeying for position in the habits of everyday life.[01] If radio became predominantly a vehicle for state propaganda during the age of total mobilization from the First to the Second World War, if television in its turn became the indispensable

01 | **Raymond Williams**, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* [HANOVER, NH: WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1974/1992].

device for training in the reflexes of mass consumerism, what then will become of globalization's leading medium? What will be its dominant uses, and above all, what kind of society will they articulate?

To begin answering these questions today – that is, to experiment and at the same time, to jockey for position – it is hardly enough to design another website, or invent a better mouthpiece for the network of pipes. One must try out the possibilities for a new *social formation*, permitted by the available technology, but able by the quality of its uses to guide that technology to a still unrealized form. This is what the artist **Trebor Scholz** has attempted, by exploring the possibilities of the contemporary communicational sphere, between the intimacy of globalization's autonomous subjects as expressed in art, and the violence of globalization's systemic contradictions as expressed in war. The terrain of this exploration was a theatrical event – not just an exhibition – entitled ***Kosov@: Carnival in the Eye of the Storm.***

AFTERMATH

As many commentators pointed out at the time, Kosov@ was "the first Internet war" – i.e. the first in which person-to-person messages could be transmitted across all borders. That sheer fact seemed destined to change the nature of the conflict. But as bombs fell to the blare of propaganda from both sides, while pistols and knives did their work in utter secrecy, the promise of the two-way communications medium came to seem maddening, hollow, absurd. The email you received from a flesh-and-blood individual could be tragic or hilarious – intimate, situated, uncannily near, yet absent from the real equation. A

virtual theater played out endless dramas, seemingly without incidence on the actual course of the war.[02]

Trebor Scholz, who lived through a version of the experience, seems to have accepted neither the apparent failure of the networked exchanges, nor the oblivion that turned the war into a non-issue just months after it was over. A native of the former East Germany with life-experience in both Western Europe and America, **Scholz** set about weaving together an encounter around the recorded traces of the conflict, the ways it was experienced by people on all sides, and its artistic, sociological, and political interpretations. Drawing both on his art-world knowledge and on the wide-open spectrum of contacts offered by email listservs such as NETTIME and SYNDICATE, he was able to fill an unlikely corner of the United States – the PACIFIC NORTHWEST COLLEGE OF ART in Portland, Oregon, where he was teaching for a year – with a migrant population of art and media works, documentary and fiction films on Kosov@ and the former Yugoslavia, and speakers from across the region and the world.[03]

The mix of exhibition, Internet site, film program, and lecture series was a chance to embody some of the disjointed conversations and polemics that had sprung up on the margins of the conflict between states. Journalists and human-rights activists shared the microphones with critics and theorists. Electronic media brushed up against the sensual materiality of painting and sculpture. Art verged on politics, politics on art. The "@" sign in the title of the event pointed to all the places and

02 | Cf. the essay by **Thomas Keenan**, himself a participant in the "Carnival" event: "Looking Like Flames and Falling Like Stars: Kosovo, the First Internet War," in *Mutations*, cat. [ARC-EN-RÊVE, CENTRE D'ARCHITECTURE/ACTAR 2000].

03 | The exhibition was held from April 6-29, 2000; see <http://projects.pnca.edu/kosovo>.

connections, highlighting the feeling of uncanny nearness – but it also sought to mediate between the differing ways that the Albanian and Serbian languages pronounce the very name of the territory at stake. Kosova or Kosovo? The event couldn't stop asking that territorial question, even as it tried to take it elsewhere, to open up another terrain of encounter and exchange.

DISPLACEMENTS

There are models for the actualization of a virtual social formation: one of them would be the meetings of the European political underground, such as **THE NEXT FIVE MINUTES**, last held in Amsterdam in 1999. Media activists from around the world, all knit together by previous Internet contacts, share a festival space for three densely threaded days of presentations and conversations, criss-crossing at a rhythm that makes the title's meaning abundantly clear. But **THE NEXT FIVE MINUTES** hangs together as a formation by the practice of a common idiom, so-called "tactical media," which cuts across the different world situations.[04] ***Carnival in the Eye of the Storm*** took a different approach, focusing exclusively on a territorial reality with its specific conditions, constraints, and determinants, and at the same time emphasizing artistic expression in all its imaginary freedom, its metaphorical disjunction from events.

The territorial focus appeared most powerfully in the cinema program and through the presence of artists and intellectuals from the former Yugoslavia. A collaboration with the **NORTHWEST FILM CENTER** made it possible to see documentaries such as **Aleksandar Manić**'s *The Walls of Kosovo* [1999], shot just before the outbreak of the war by an expatriate Kosov@ Serb, who returned to ask questions on both sides of the ethnic dividing lines. Another memorable film was **Leslie Woodhead**'s *A Cry from the Grave* [1999], with extensive testimony on the Srebrenica massacre. This documentary approach was not undermined but intensified by fictional looks into the territory. They ranged from Serbian director **Srđan Dragojević**'s *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* [1996] – a surreal replay of the neighbors' war in Bosnia – to **Michael Benson**'s brilliant *Predictions of Fire* [1995], which recounts the "retroguardist" strategies of the Slovene art collective **NEUE SLOWENISCHE KUNST** in the late 1980s. **NSK**'s work was an attempt to exorcise the kinds of aesthetic ambiguities that **Dragojević**'s film reveals: the "taste" for torture and destruction, which **NSK** saw smoldering in a repressed totalitarian symbolism bound up with the origins of the Yugoslav state.

04 | See <www.n5m.org>.

Film remains unparalleled, among the contemporary media, for its ability to combine a density of visual and verbal information, a diversity of perspectives, and an illusion of presence. These qualities make it an ideal complement to more allusive, metaphorical artworks – particularly in a situation of geographical displacement, where essential references may not be readily available to the public. But in the end, film is always a screen which must somehow be traversed, lest it immobilize the spectator. The speaking presence of artists, media activists and critics from the former Yugoslavia, or people somehow connected to the region through their research and life history, acted as the hinge between past and present, here and elsewhere, actualizing the web of relations that ties all contemporary places together. Artist

PREDICTIONS OF FIRE | MICHAEL BENSON, KINETIKON PICTURES

Sislej Xhafa commented on his photographic grid of smiling Kosovars, and asked the unexpected question: *'Don't you think it's aggressive to show so many people laughing after a war?'* **Aferdita Kelmendi**, the director of Priština's local channel **TRV 21**, projected examples of her work and gave personal testimony of her flight from Kosov@. **Glenn Bowman**, an American anthropologist, offered a close-up look at the social and psychic conditions of art production in contemporary Serbia; **Renata Salecl**, a Slovene psychoanalytic critic, asked about high technology's role as a fantasmatic shield against the trauma of mortality in a "video-game war"; representatives of the Portland-based organization **MERCY CORPS** spoke about their humanitarian efforts in the Balkans; and **Boris Buden**, an alternative journalist from the **ARKZIN** group in Zagreb, exposed the absence of any genuinely political dimension from the mainstream media coverage of the conflict.

The lecture and debate series extended over three days, during which one could see almost all the twelve films – while returning again and again to the exhibition, where the artworks resonated with all one had seen, heard, and said, raising new

OOOPS! [NOBODY LOVES A HEGEMON] | MARTHA ROSLER | INSTALACIJA

questions, offering personal insights and perceptions, posing paradoxes, displacing the terrain.

Much of the artwork was concerned with the relation to information, whether from the conventional media or the Internet. For instance, **Martha Rosler**'s installation *OOOPS! [nobody loves a hegemon]*, consisted of an oil drum suspended from an open parachute, flanked by plummeting *Coca-Cola* cans attached to smaller chutes. Behind the metaphor of American imperialism was a computer with links to dissenting webzines like **Zmag**; the computer was mounted on two more oil drums, as if to show that the very basis of empire is shot through with threads of opposition. Video artists assembled critical montages of the TV coverage of the war [**Claus Bach**, **Paul Sargent**, the group **APSOLUTNO** from Novi Sad], or explored the new status of satellite photography, between fuzzy, uncertain "proof" and digital "memorial" [**Laura Kurgan**'s work *SPOT 083-624, Kosov@, June 3, 1999*]. **Jenny Perlin** offered a more subjective take on the relation to information with her wall piece *Documents for a Report*, in which she used pencil and tracing paper to copy weirdly detailed casualty and damage statistics from a **UN** website – as though experimenting with the affective transmission of data from screen to a parchment-skin.

But many pieces had nothing to do with technology: **Emily Jacir**'s installation *Untitled [Kosov@/Baghdad]* consisted of small, handleless cups of the kind used to drink coffee all across the region stretching from the Balkans to Iraq. The cups were arranged simply on the floor in a circle, not unlike the circle of stars that symbolizes the European Union; half of them were painted black inside, half left white, creating a graphic divide and various metaphors: the black-and-white value judgments applied to the targets of **NATO**'s bombs, the coffee grounds where people try to read the future... A message from the everyday, from ordinary lives that continue. I thought of **Aferdita Kelmendi**'s reflection during her presentation, on the way that everyone, in

the most trying moments, has to rely on something very personal, secret, insignificant to the outside world – what she called "an art of survival."

To stage the interrelations between films, lectures, Internet sites, and artworks, **Trebor Scholz** allowed himself a single curatorial gesture, which was to install a piece called *Atopic Site* in the center of the exhibition space. It is a great, hexagonal fish net, suspended from orange buoys attached to the ceiling. Originally created by the group **OCEAN EARTH DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION** for an exhibition dealing with Tokyo Bay, the installation functioned here as a metaphor of criss-crossing ties in the information age – a net-structure floating on invisible waves, with openings that are actually traps, and vice-versa. It pointed to the mesh of a network that contains, articulates, and periodically releases the fundamental violence of globalization.

CARNIVAL

Where one stands within this global mesh was the question of the Portland event. But it was a loaded question, particularly since the event borrowed its title from a chapter of **Slavoj Žižek**'s text, *Nato as the Left Hand of God?* **Žižek** points out that advocates of the **NATO** bombing invariably presented it as assistance to the victims of ethnic hatred, justified only in the emotional terms of vicitimization and depoliticized human rights, thus rendering any critical discussion of the war impossible. He draws a surprising parallel with the much-televised displays of Serbs brandishing paper targets at outdoor rock concerts or staging all-night parties on strategic bridges:

> *The Serb counterpart to the NATO fantasy of war without casualties, of a precise surgical operation sustained by the ideology of global victimization, was - in the first weeks of the NATO bombardment - the faked carnivalization of the war.... Although it may fascinate some confused pseudo-Leftists, this obscene carnivalization of social life is effectively the other, public, face of ethnic cleansing.* [05]

Would an art exhibition claiming to subjectively and metaphorically "treat" or "deal with" the Kosov@ conflict on American soil then inevitably be the other, trivially public face of the Atlantic alliance's "new world order" – a pseudo-leftist symptom of what **Žižek** calls "global capitalist logic"?

The risk is there, in a world where the various displacements effected by increasing personal mobility and new communication techniques have only intensified the processes of psychoanalytic displacement – i.e. the disconnection between fundamental, behavior-shaping psychic energies and the ideas or signs that represent them. **Boris Buden** forcefully turned this accusation of the "culturalization of politics" onto the *Carnival* event itself, raising some of the most significant debate.

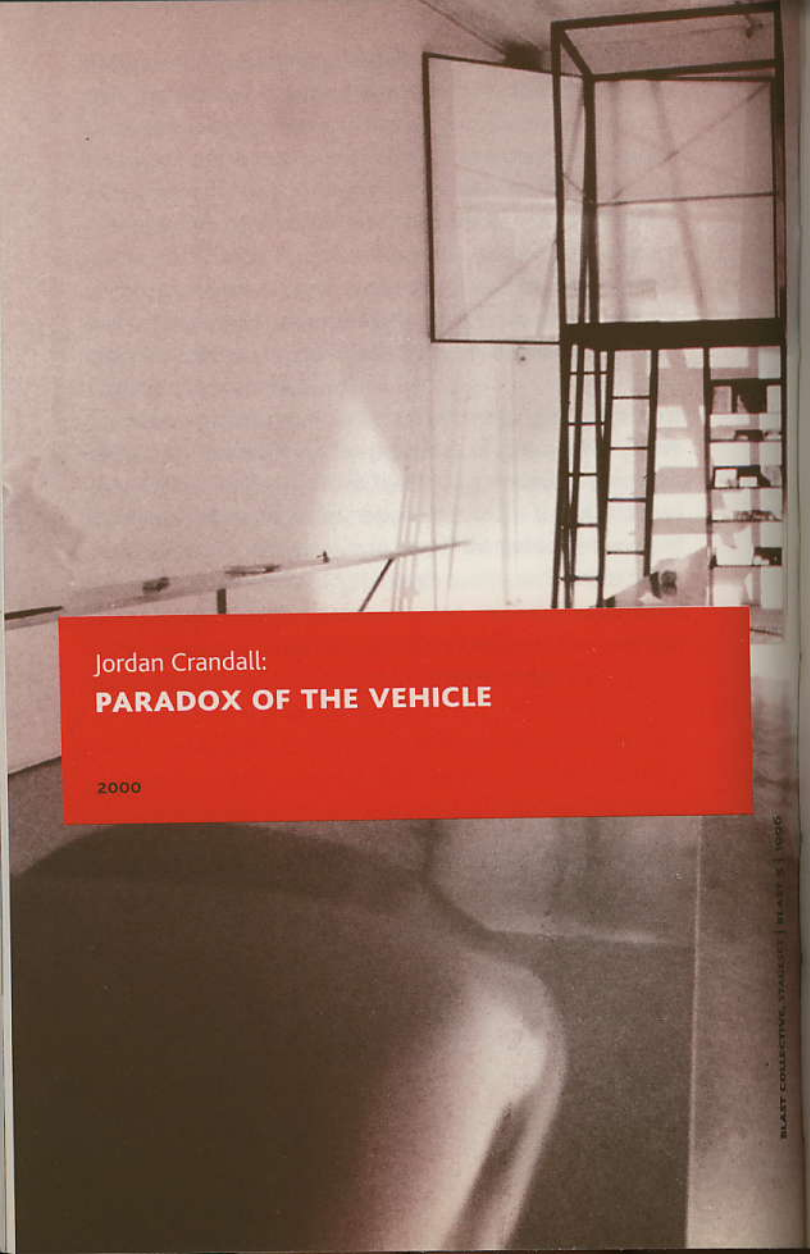
Yet despite the pertinence of **Buden**'s and **Žižek**'s critiques, the "symptoms" of cultural displacement cannot simply be reduced to literal economic or power-political realities. As the French Marxist **Etienne Balibar** puts it, the symbolic and the imaginary dimensions of human coexistence are the "other stage" of economic power, and vice-versa: the two are tied together by reciprocal, irreducible displacements, such that each produces effects within the other's realm. [06] But this also means that the interest of *Carnival in the Eye of the Storm* was not just to "take the risk" of venturing out onto this other stage – because we are there every day. The influence of the media carnival on

05 | **Slavoj Žižek**, *Nato as the Left Hand of God?/NATO kao lijeva ruka Boga?* [ZAGREB: ARKZIN, 1999], pp. 39-40. Excerpts printed in the "global" [i.e. English] edition of **ARKZIN**'s journal *The Bastard*, edited by **Boris Buden**.

06 | Cf. **Etienne Balibar**, "Globalization-Civilization," in: *Documenta X, The Book* [OSTFILDERN: CANTZ, 1997], pp. 774, 788-89.

political realities has amply been demonstrated, and we all know that the Internet is adding new levels of manipulation and confusion. The challenge is to find ways in which the new social relations can be clarified. What this event attempted, experimentally and at a small scale, was to transform the everyday fact of unconscious displacement into a conscious practice of *political theater*: a **Brechtean** social space in which all the possibilities of communication are used to confront social and political issues, without denying their complexity [here, the complex position of individuals between historical-territorial conditions and global flows].

In the international movement now emerging to regain some democratic control over the processes of globalization, there may well be a place for such theatrical encounters, which put inherently subjective artistic experiences to the test of informed political debate, and vice-versa. And if the public demand and the creative offer are of a high enough quality, such events might even replace a highly internationalized, relatively well-funded and now largely irrelevant social formation – the one that generally goes under the name of "contemporary art."



In a classic Frankfurt School text, *The Eclipse of Reason* [1946], **Max Horkheimer** remarked on the degree of freedom involved in driving a car, as compared to riding a horse. The car goes much faster, carries us much further, but brings a multitude of new constraints: *'There are speed limits, warnings to drive slowly, to stop, to stay within certain lanes, and even diagrams showing the shape of the curve ahead.... It is as if the innumerable laws, regulations, and directions with which we must comply were driving the car, not we.'* **Horkheimer**'s point applies to the information highways, where we both drive and are driven. But mechanics and rationality can't account for the entire story. It was with the figure of animal transport that **Freud** caught the relation between human reason and unconscious impulses: *'Often the rider, if he is not to be parted from his horse, is obliged to guide it where it wants to go; so in the same way the ego is in the habit of transforming the id's will into action as if it were its own'.*[01]

For a decade now, **Jordan Crandall** has been exploring the ambiguous zones between autonomous agency and obsessional compulsion, as they emerge in the use of the networked devices that he calls "vehicles." His early, performance-oriented collaborations with the **BLAST** group incorporated computer technology into combinatory systems designed to catalyze collective creations – utopian experiments in non-hierarchical communities. Yet as the Internet developed at a pace with economic globalization, **Crandall** came increasingly to see heightened individual mobility as the flip side of a *total mobilization* of human energies in the technologically driven societies. The "degree of freedom" that preoccupied **Horkheimer** and **Freud** became an open question within the new communications media.

01 | **Sigmund Freud**, *The Ego and the Id* [NEW YORK: NORTON, 1962], p. 15; the first quote is from **Max Horkheimer**, *The Eclipse of Reason* [NEW YORK: CONTINUUM, 1996], p. 98.

Crandall's response to the massive corporate penetration of the Internet was double. On the one hand, he drew on the experience of the interactive performances to organize large-scale email forums, contributing to an immanent critique of the Internet and the art practices it supports. But he also began to create video-based installations for museum spaces, visually representing the ways in which military tracking and targeting systems are now able to reach through the screens of our computer vehicles, to mingle with the subjective experiences of flesh and psyche. The development of his projects since the early 1990s offers sharp insights into the paradoxes of existence within a networked society.

OFF THE PAGE

The **BLAST** boxes, multiples created in New York from 1991 to 1996, were collaboratively produced sets of artistic proposals – objects and texts, but also descriptions and maps of actions. Conceived as publications, they sought to redistribute the traditional hierarchy of roles implied by a printed page [editor, author, illustrator, reader]. In the tradition of the artist-audience relations developed by *Fluxus* and the more participatory forms of conceptual art, they suggested decentered, "horizontal" structures of cooperation and feedback, predating the Internet linkages we know today, but already influenced by the branching model of hypertext scripts. The boxes themselves were conceived not as objects but as *vehicles* – devices *'to orient the reader and to make this reader aware of the procedures of orientation'*. [02] By substituting a provisional assemblage of elements for the permanent binding of a book, the boxed sets offered the potential of a combinatory system to be played out in space, rather than contemplated statically in the mind's eye. Indeed, *Blast 2* dealt explicitly with *'The Spatial Drive.'*

02 | From an interview by **Brian Holmes** with the artist, in **Jordan Crandall**, *Drive* [MIT PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, MASS. 2003], p. 218.

Already in 1991-92, the **BLAST** artists were experimenting with feedback loops and the relations of virtual to actual reality – *before* the Internet had made such notions the stuff of everyday life. The establishment in New York of an electronic bulletin board system [BBS] called "The Thing," then access to the online text-based virtual environments called MUDs and MOOs beginning around 1993, made it possible to experiment with interactive, real-time fictions, and to combine this spatially disjunctive role-playing with embodied performances in a gallery. In this way the computerized "page" could effectively be created by the reader, but also embodied, materialized, acted out in three dimensions. One of **Crandall**'s key references at the time was the Brazilian artist **Hélio Oiticica**, whose *Parangolé* garments had brought the color combinations of the constructivist picture plane into social space, realizing a virtual utopia. In a similar way, the participants of **BLAST** could now drift and dance through the city and the Internet, exchanging desires, cultures, identities, realizing a utopian dream of freedom.

This flamboyant, fictionalized experimentation reached its peak in 1996 with the stageset of *Blast 5*, inspired by the avant-garde architectural designs of the Soviet artists **Klucis** and **Lavinskii**. It was conceived as a multimedia performance space, with video projections from the web appearing behind the stage and printed materials displayed in racks on the architectural frame; video recordings of the performances were uploaded live into the rapidly expanding Internet. At this point the box had become a solid sculptural object, a real prop and a purely virtual vehicle, to signify that the **BLAST** project had moved beyond its initial publicational format – into the worldwide electronic networks.

DISTRIBUTED ENVIRONMENTS

Utopianism mingles politics with pleasure, exuberance, play. But

it can only be sustained by communities that have managed to carve out an exceptional social space, at a distance from prevailing norms. This state of grace would rapidly evaporate for artists using the Internet – just as their dreams were becoming technically feasible. **Crandall** began to sense the shift around 1995, when he did a show at the GALERIE DES ARCHIVES in Paris. Entitled *Blast Conversional Archive*, it brought the boxed sets together in a gallery space, but also included an interactive online component and a web site in which scattered **BLAST** projects are indexed to a random pattern of floating, hyperlinked bubbles [this "conversional archive" is still online, at **www.blast.org**]. The archive was a first attempt – though still too abstract and randomly structured – to create a broader, more accessible platform for the distribution of the utopian adventure. For the same occasion, **Crandall** began drawing diagrams of the phenomenological relations between various spaces and formats of perception and interaction. This theoretical reflection on the structures of networked relations contains the germs of what would be his first major museum installation, *suspension*, at DOCUMENTA X in 1997.

Suspension appears to the visitor as a room bathed in washes of colored light, modulating at rhythms which seem to inhere to the environment. Gradually we realize that certain patterns register our own movements; another projection is visibly a website. Polished stainless-steel shelves hold strange, hand-sized design elements, the so-called *Rhythmic Fittings*, which do not quite fit comfortably in the hand. Through pacing and the bodily incorporation of rhythms, the visitor seeks a tentative fit into a cross-formatted space of technologically mediated perception – an interface where part of the input is coming from elsewhere and is perhaps being manipulated by other people. These "distributed environments" are an increasingly important part of experience today. They are accessed through virtual transportation machines, mass-produced or customized vehicles which aim

to configure to the human body, and which in their turn demand an adaptation of the flesh, the intelligence, the imagination; thus they exert a normative influence on society. *Suspension* offers an indissolubly theoretical and experiential model of immersion into such spaces. Like the **Blast** vehicles, it configures a pliable, tactical space, orienting the visitor while pointing to increasingly complex, socialized procedures of orientation.[03]

The nature of distributed environments is to distribute intelligence, indeed subjectivity itself, exteriorizing aspects of what were formerly considered interior, conscious operations [paying attention, focusing, orienting oneself, predicting circumstances, seeking information or interlocutors]. Philosophers in the seventies and eighties spoke of a decentering of the subject, which they conceived as an opening of the self to the other. But what this has also come to mean, under the conditions of networked globalization, is that part of the deck you are playing with is under the control of someone or something else, far away. And the question arises very practically, politically, today: if we are not fully present to ourselves, how can critical judgment be effectively taken?

At DOCUMENTA X, **Crandall** began an attempt to answer this question, launching a program in which **BLAST** "docks" with another institutional partner to set up a worldwide email debate. To date, four of these large-scale projects have been undertaken: with DOCUMENTA X; with the digital arts foundation **EYEBEAM ATELIER**; with the "Union of the Imaginary" freelance curators' association; and with the London-based **INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF THE VISUAL ARTS** [INIVA].[04] These forums, reaching as many as 800 subscribers at the height of the <eyebeam>

03 | The theoretical ground of *suspension* is covered, quite independently of any relation to **Crandall**, in the recent book by **Jonathon Crary**, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* [CAMBRIDGE, MASS.: MIT PRESS, 1999].

<blast> collaboration, are rhythmically structured with a series of invited guests appearing at more-or-less regular intervals, and also include a certain number of attentive "hosts" who accompany the discussion. The structuring acts not to inhibit but rather to encourage spontaneity, polemic, intervention. Many people form extremely tight bonds through these forums. They create an intimate, yet also highly public space which remains close to the concerns of the artistic milieu, but is at least partially unburdened of its customary hierarchies and orders of speaking. There is an attempt here to pursue the experimentation of the early nineties into the full-blown space of transnational exchanges – to transform the naive and hopeful constructivist stageset of *Blast 5* into a pragmatically effective platform, a credible and functioning architecture of engagement.

TRACKING

In the early, utopian period of experimentation, telecommunications interfaces were mainly conceived in terms of a possibility to interact with distant partners, opening up new intersubjective freedoms. Today we are faced with the looming reality of the database, informed by technologies of tracking and capable of implementing a multitude of targeting devices and strategies. These technologies, of overwhelmingly military origin, are currently being used for marketing, taking advantage of the multiplication of networked environments where electronic windows both provide and gather information. **Crandall** now speaks of a "body-machine-image complex," which structures *'a provisional interiority… in terms of routings through the body that help to determine acceptable parameters of movement, gesture, and behavior'*.[05] This means that the militarized image

04 | Information about the **Blast** forums can be found at www.blast.org; a complete archive is available for <eyebeam><blast> and a book version is forthcoming from D.A.P.

sees us, as much or more than we see it; that it informs us in the double sense of the word, extending its stimuli into bodily and psychic intimacy, and remodeling the perceptual and communicational environment on the basis of the information gathered.

It is this active, sighted image that **Crandall** has attempted to represent in the video installation *Drive*, first shown at the NEUE GALERIE of Graz, Austria, in February 2000. Divided into seven "tracks," the installation experiments with multiple presentation media [individual viewing goggles and a portable DVD deck, in addition to wall projections], but above all, with different registration- and analysis-protocols *inside* the image. The green traceries of movement-tracking software configure around a running body. Coordinate grids appear within images shot from the eyes of smart bombs or missiles. Reddish thermal imaging plays against the eerie green of night-vision video recordings. Certain tracks oscillate between recording formats, for example: a hand-cranked camera using black-and-white film, Hi8 video, a surveillance camera, digital video from a wearable DVcam. Although some of the footage is borrowed [demonstration films from arms manufacturers], the majority of the tracks have been filmed with actors under **Crandall**'s direction. Perhaps the most successful follows a woman through passive-aggressive sexual scenarios, mirror and telephone scenes, and into the molded seats of a sensual automobile – with the camera inciting, configuring, and registering the drives. Another track stages the permutating subject-positions of a fantasmatic matrix, based on **Freud**'s case-study, *'A Child is Being Beaten.'* Gunshots, explosions, sounds of slapping flesh, voices and the pulses of light sink into the rhythm of your own footsteps, perhaps your own heartbeat, as you pace from room to room.

None of these images yet register the presence of the visitor

05 | This and the following quotes are from *Drive*, p. 24.

– we are still dealing here with the *representation* of a process-image, and not with a live instantiation of tracking technologies or modulating environments. Yet one can suspect that real-time dataprocessing will make its appearance in **Crandall**'s future installations, given his extraordinary capacity for research and his curiosity not just for technology, but for the way that it evolves in tune with social and intimate relations.

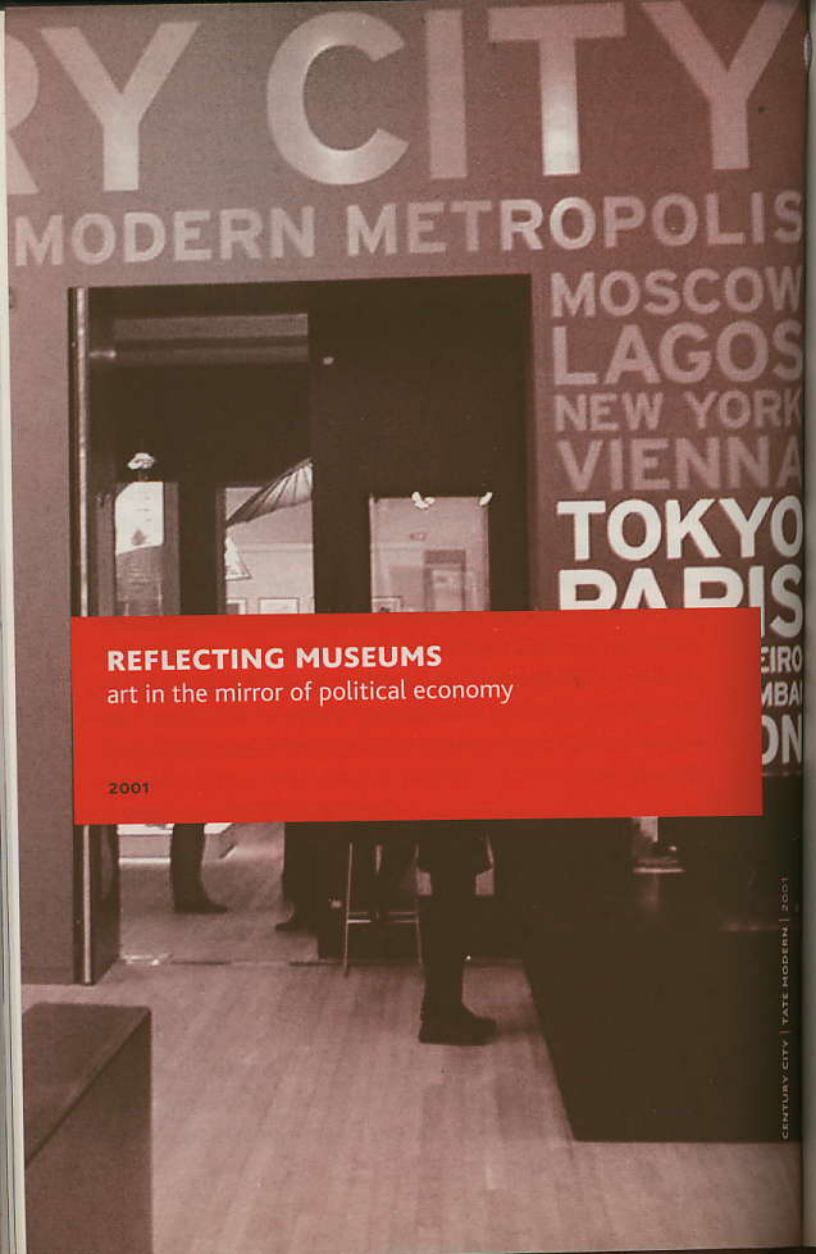
SEEING BACK

What appears uncertain is the future of the **BLAST** collaborations. Prolonging the breakthrough of the conceptual artists who first integrated space for critical dialogue into the form of their work, the email debates have sought to open up a new, intersubjective field of reflexivity, responding to and displacing the norms of distributed environments. Will such initiatives be able to answer the powerfully normative machinery represented in the tracks of *Drive*? In his theoretical writing, **Crandall** describes the dataprocessing capacities of the corporate and state powers as giving rise to a demographic realm that constitutes an "image of the people" through *'a calculus of manageable interests, opinions, patterns, and functions.'* He seeks to understand *'how the logic of demography has become a particular kind of improved democracy,'* how its feedback circuits produce and depend on "statistical persons."

The degree of freedom that we may enjoy within such an "improved democracy" becomes an urgent question, as the military-economic engines reach beneath our animal skins, again showing their enormous power to convince the human species that we are driving in directions of our own choosing. In this context, situations of collective performance, of theatricalized communication, can open up the social space of a learning process where the drives and the possibilities of self-conduct can be played out in contact with and under the gaze of others. Such spaces, which experiments like the **BLAST** forums allow us to

glimpse, must be at once technological and cultural, geocultural, involving a great diversity of persons, experiences, languages, histories. One can imagine – particularly in light of the emerging transnational social movements – that the chance to learn, not one's proper place, but a rhythm of displacement through these diverse and diversely mediated communities, would contribute to the possibility of exercising collective judgments about the evolution of the vast "distributed environment" that is our planet under the regime of globalization.

But appropriate and innovative uses of technology, as well limits to its use, will also be essential to avoid standardization and the outright repression of differences. The opening to the other and to his or her particular time is surely an ontological condition, an availability of being, as the philosophers tell us; but it is also a question of technics, of tactics. And the role of artistic experimentation is there. The challenge today, for artists working with networked environments, is to continue creating interactive protocols that straddle the online/offline divide; to deploy richer, more sophisticated archives, and to link them into shared situations which may offer some chances for seeing back through the screen of a normalizing "image of the people," an image that has already begun to see us and to take form even in our eyes.



REFLECTING MUSEUMS
art in the mirror of political economy

2001

What does a museum produce? You have to wonder, looking at the new **TATE MODERN** – a huge factory reconverted for artistic use. Enter, like I did, by the little door along the Thames. There, during the exhibition ***Century City***, you found an information booth: sleek, silent, implacable, an almost administrative sort of thing. Colored panels of text will answer all your questions, with a collage of theoretical phrases like these:

> *Through larger audiences, a core funding issue, encoded by vague ethnic and underclass ideology, museums are schooling a new order of citizens for an information society.... Culture education is needed because not only has the versatility of thought and character become necessary survival skills in the super-fluid work/consumer society, but a prerequisite for prosumers of the new corporate political ethos.... The cultural becomes economic, and the economic and political are turned into so many forms of culture.... It is no longer useful for art to offer up, in traditional ways, a critique of control institutions, these structures are now part of the 'knowledge' with which institutions are constructed.*

Presented like a public service, these complicated statements give you a rather anxious feeling, particularly because their sources are indicated by logos that distort the names: **THOMAS**, **Harry Clever**, **Felix Stlder**, **MEDEA Network**, **Hardt & Negri**... Who exactly is educating us this way, about the reasons for our own education in the museum? After some searching you find a title card for the piece: "Johnny Spencer 1954, *Inquiry Unit 2000.*" And as you move upstairs toward the rest of the show, an enigmatic statement lingers:

> *There are times in life when knowing if one can think differently and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all.*

GLOBAL *FLÂNEUR*

Enter the exhibition itself, where a barrage of capital letters announces what's ahead: MOSCOW, LAGOS, NEW YORK, VIENNA, TOKYO, PARIS, RIO DE JANEIRO, MUMBAI/BOMBAY, LONDON. *Century City* isn't exactly hiding its tourist appeal. But this is a sophisticated form of tourism, moving through time as well as space. We're supposed to take a trip across the twentieth century, through nine significant moments in the history of nine cities.

The exhibition is skillfully done, without being systematic: each module has been framed by local curators, to ensure originality. In the best of cases, like 'LAGOS 1955-1970,' the results are impressive, mixing the visual arts with a range of cultural practices. To describe fifteen years in the life of a great African city, the curators of 'LAGOS' decided to split their space in two. On one side, paintings and sculpture gesture towards a vitrine filled with literary works, while a video monitor presents theater. In the other, more "ethnographic" section, a large city map helps set the location, which is fleshed out by selections of magazine and record covers, pages from an architectural journal, black-and-white snapshots from inhabitants' archives, and an astonishing group of images showing women's hairstyles. The sounds of Highlife music float in the air, like the vital rhythms of an ambience, the immanent beat of a cultural scene.

The relative success of 'LAGOS' lets you judge the other modules: fantastic graphics and paintings for MOSCOW, but not much in the way of popular culture; NEW YORK, brash and stagey and typically overdone; RIO, very elegant, but austere when you've been there – and TOKYO is intriguing, VIENNA a bit dry, etc. These are the kind of comparisons the exhibition asks you to make. And such interpretations are the museum's primary production, that's exactly what the visitor can learn: how to distinguish the cities that really count, how to consume their images more intelligently, as world-class sites in an economy of tourism. Because

there's no more passive consumption. As sociologist **John Urry** says, in echo of **Anthony Giddens**, this is the age of the "reflexive tourist".[01] Travel around the globe has become a way for post-traditional subjects to compare where they are with where they have been, to situate themselves in time and space even as they move to discover their margins of freedom. What one learns to produce and to express is precisely this mobility between cities, between mental frameworks, between different levels of hierarchy and spontaneity.

What then would be the special relation between this production of the self as interpretive mobility, and the physical space where the museum is located? That's what we'll find out in the London module, under the title *'Picturing the City.'* It is the existential experience of London that is valorized here, as a trademark quality in the metropolitan competition: the show *'reflects the working processes and lives of artists, the networks, attitudes and structures which have helped make London one of the most important sites for the production of contemporary art, design and fashion in Europe'*.[02] The transformation of the city into an image begins at a moment of decadence, and continues with a revolt. The cultural effervescence of London is said to originate with the financial crisis at the close of the eighties, when *'artists, designers and cultural entrepreneurs of all kinds are welcomed back into the empty properties that the speculators can no longer fill.'* Cassettes produced by the **UNDERCURRENTS** collective or the artist **Jeremy Deller** show the political protests that punctuated the nineties, notably on the initiative of the youth movement ***Reclaim the Streets***; and photo and video documents of all sorts seek to give us the feel of a care-

01 | **John Urry**, "Tourism, Travel and the Modern Subject", in: *Consuming Places* [LONDON: ROUTLEDGE, 1995], pp. 141-170.

02 | **Emma Dexter**, "Picturing the City", in: *Century City: Art and Culture in the Modern Metropolis*, pp. 70-95, cat., TATE MODERN, LONDON, Feb. 1 - April 29, 2001.

free artistic lifestyle built up on a shoestring, far from the stock-market cares of the City. Fashion photographer **Jürgen Teller** compiles a catalogue of the girls who've knocked at his door, searching for the glory of glossy paper; and curator **Emma Dexter** quotes thoughts by **Henri Lefebvre** on the spontaneous popular uses of "urban objects." She explains: *'The work suggests the myth of the 'undiscovered' beauty found on the city streets, a raw material waiting to be transformed.'* Yet it is not in the world of high fashion, but rather in the style magazines that this transformation of use-value reaches its peak. Huge prints of images created for the magazine *Dazed and Confused* hang in the great hall, at the main entry and exit of the museum: portraits haloed with sexy grunge or intriguing deformity, according to the canon set long ago by *The Face*. It is in the multicultural diversity of these identity shots that the TATE MODERN's publics should learn to see themselves, as inhabitants and producers of the city.

Thus it is an aestheticized use-value that the TATE MODERN offers to its local publics and to the rest of the world, as a trademark urban image. The image can be consumed, in a shiver of experience, by any visitor who accepts to go seeking for that particular London. Its advertising appeal serves the aims of the real-estate operations on this side of the Thames, where the speculators can easily make good business deals today.[03] And in a longer-term educational sense, this image can also help integrate a part of the British population – but only a part – into the cultural and informational economy of globalized capitalism.[04]

03 | One might recall that Century City, near Hollywood, was born of a real-estate scheme fueled by the film industry. **Sharon Zukin**'s essay in the catalogue, "How to Create a Culture Capital," provides a program for the new real-estate booster: what she calls "the artistic mode of production."

04 | The term "informational economy" comes from the book by **Manuel Castells**, *The Rise of the Network Society* [LONDON: BLACKWELL, 1996]; it indicates the key role of information-processing in all types of contemporary production. Cultural products and services are therefore only a part of the larger informational economy.

The museum is definitely an educational institution, responding to the imperatives of **Blair**'s Third Way. But what it offers are mobility lessons for a "sovereign individual".[05] It is a training ground for what **Leslie Sklair**, the business sociologist, calls in a violently Marxist turn of phrase, "the transnational capitalist class." **Sklair** believes he has identified the dynamics of a "globalizing project," pushed ahead by business interests, but also supported by a state sector ["globalizing bureaucrats and politicians"]. This project, whose unfinished character he underlines, is upheld and rendered desirable by the "culture-ideology of consumerism," manifest notably in the emergence and consolidation of "global brands." With a Gramscian analysis, **Sklair** shows how this globalizing project [and its supporting coalition of interests] could offer a series of answers to the hegemonic crisis of the Welfare State. Answers inconceivable without the involvement of intellectuals and cultural programmers:

> *A central part of the work of the transnational class is to facilitate corporate globalization through economic, political and culture-ideology work.*[06]

That last is what the TATE MODERN provides – whether its directors and curators have reflected on it or not. To visit the museum, to consume the experience with one's own particular style, is to become a global *flâneur* – and to increase one's chances of becoming a property owner, or a *rentier*, in a "world-class" city like London.

05 | See **James D. Davidson** and **Lord William Rees-Moog**, *The Sovereign Individual: How to Survive and Thrive During the Collapse of the Welfare State* [NEW YORK: SIMON AND SCHUSTER, 1997].

06 | **Leslie Sklair**, *The Transnational Capitalist Class* [LONDON: BLACKWELL, 2001], p. 54.

INSIDE THE SPECTACLE

Parisian institutions will probably never produce such an overt celebration of art's role in real-estate speculation. But France's ideological history permits other figures of adaptation to the flows of globalized capital. I'm thinking of a Franco-American exhibition that draws a strange conclusion from the insights of **Guy Debord**, by proposing to go "beyond" – or maybe just inside – the spectacle. Presented at the POMPIDOU CENTER from November 24, 2000, to January 8, 2001, ***Au-delà du spectacle*** reads as a synthesis of two currents of thought: one developed in France in the 1990s under the name of the "relational aesthetic"; the other of British origins, but now established in all the English-speaking countries under the name of "cultural studies."

The challenge that the relational aesthetic set itself was to individualize the reception of mass-produced images, in order to transform them into more-or-less intimate means of communication. There was a use-value to be found in the commercial image, in response to the situationist critique of contemporary alienation by the media.[07] Beyond the passivity of the spectacle, there would now be a society of active bit-players or "stand-ins" [*figurants*], each constructing a personalized tissue of relations with the symbolic materials made available by the culture industry. The role of the artist is to produce subversive models of a free, "interactive" behavior within a thoroughly commodified media society.

The history of Anglo-American cultural studies is obviously somewhat more complex, but it too turns centrally around reception. In a 1973 article, theorist **Stuart Hall** suggested that the televised message, "encoded" at the moment of its transmission by a dominant emitter, has then to be "decoded" by all

07 | See **Nicolas Bourriaud**, *Esthétique relationnelle* [DIJON: LES PRESSES DU RÉEL, 1998], pp. 9-10.

the people and social groups to whom it was addressed. Again it is an active process: *'If no 'meaning' is taken, there can be no 'consumption'.'* And it is precisely through the use of the message that the activity becomes significant in a full sense: *'If the meaning is not articulated in practice, it has no effect'.*[08] One can then distinguish a "preferred" meaning [the one sought by the dominant emitter], a "negotiated" meaning [which answers certain concerns of the subordinate addressees], and a frankly "oppositional" meaning [denying the legitimacy of the established order altogether]. The negotiated reading got the most interest from cultural studies. This type of analysis, applied to working-class groups, could make visible forms of resistance where pure passivity seemed to reign. The idea was used to study the "subcultures" of alienated urban youth, who identified themselves by their particular reception of commercial music and fashion. But the same approach could also serve the needs of middle-class college kids [and professors], unwilling to conceive themselves as the pure products of advertising. Today this logic has become a way to celebrate the supposedly infinite local differences that spring from a worldwide distribution of standardized commercial goods.[09]

The two approaches – relational aesthetics and negotiated reception – crop up everywhere in the exhibition at the POMPIDOU CENTER. The installation *Fanclubbing*, carried out by **Alexandre Perigot** in collaboration with young music-lovers, is a perfect example. The artist has asked each of the participants to "sign" the name of their favorite star in bright colors on large

08 | **Stuart Hall**, "Encoding/Decoding", in *Culture, Media, Language*, eds. S. Hall et. al. [LONDON: HUTCHINSON, 1980], first published as a "stenciled paper" in 1973] pp. 128-138

09 | The sea-change seems to come about with the massive exportation of cultural studies to the USA in the early 1990s, as registered by an extremely thick anthology: *Cultural Studies*, eds. L. Grossberg et. al. [NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE, 1992].

white sheets of paper, like graffiti tags on the subway. The walls and floor of the installation space are lined with these signatures. The investment of the musical product with personal energy, expressed in a rhetorical figure of identity and assembled in an ephemeral community, could hardly be better illustrated.

Not far from there you find a more enigmatic proposal by **Douglas Gordon**, *Something Between My Mouth and Your Ear*. The title seems to designate an expressive or aesthetic production that floats somewhere between the creative subjectivity of the artist and the perception of the spectator. And yet the installation space is entirely empty, except for a hi-fi set playing pop tunes from the 1960s. Here it is the spectator who should create the work directly, through a personal reception of the music. But how can we be sure that simply listening is enough to produce an artwork? The artist has a way to fend off this obvious question, with a little help from his own biography. The hits we hear made the charts in 1966, during the nine months of **Douglas Gordon**'s gestation. The title could then be addressed to the artist's mother, referring to the songs that resonated in the intra-uterine space between her ear and his mouth, in a moment of pure receptivity before he gave his first cry.

With this detour through childhood, the passivity of reception becomes a productive naiveté. And to "activate" the artworks, the spectators will be infantilized, constantly. On opening night they can admire look-alikes of their favorite stars, ordered from a catalogue for teenage festivities; or they can put on furry animal costumes to amuse their friends. Nearby they can play billiards or foosball on an elevated platform that captures all the gazes. For a little more fun, just throw in the facile kitsch of **Jeff Koons**, some titillating sex courtesy of **Paul McCarthy**, and above all lots of rock'n'roll. But there are also the "theoretical" works that explain the hidden secrets of the show: the piece by **Pierre Joseph**, *Snow White* [*Character for Reactivation*], which is a commercial costume to be animated

by our memories of a **Disney** creation; or the video by **Pierre Huyghe**, *No Ghost just a Shell*, which "diverts" a Japanese manga character in the grand situationist tradition, to make it into a "deviant sign," a product momentarily endowed with life. Yet deviance as a sociological reality – one of the great concerns of cultural studies in the 1970s – is totally absent from the exhibition. Rather it is a question of imposing new productive and consumptive norms, legitimated by a residual conception of the spectator's freedom.

Can we speak of a "reflecting museum" when the public looks into the mirror of its own narcissism, in order to feed a cycle of cultural production? The unfortunate fact is that all this has been conceived quite consciously, as a chance for art to survive in the era of globalized entertainment.[10] At stake is the way each spectator will individually rework an experience of collective reception. And "work" is the key word here. Because the public of contemporary art counts a high percentage of "immaterial laborers": journalists, stylists, graphic artists, photographers, cinematographers, musicians, designers, architects, audiovisual technicians, advertising creatives, etc. For these "prosumers," the museum can be an excellent place for the production of new ideas, not because it offers an encounter with abstract form, pure style or absolute originality, but because it allows one to experience and observe the reception of new behaviors, new informational products – products as sophisticated as the general

10 | In the American catalogue, curator **Philippe Vergne** quotes artist **Philippe Parreno** on an "aesthetic of alliance" with the cultural industries, while defending himself [three times in a row] against any charge of populism: "This idea is not about populism, but if art is to engage an audience in this day and age, it behooves us to look at how the entertainment industry engages its audience.... What kinds of lessons on being "customer-savvy" and providing a pleasurable experience can museums learn from Disney or the Mall of America?" *Let's Entertain: Life's Guilty Pleasures*, cat., Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Feb. 12 - April 30, 2000, p. 23.

public, but close to each of its members, open to creative appropriation. Participating in this appropriation, understanding it and instigating it anew through the fabrication of objects or signs, is a way to be part of a productive cycle, even when you're momentarily "on vacation." As **Maurizio Lazzarato** and his colleagues have written: *'Immaterial labor gives form to the tastes, needs and imagination of the public/consumer, materializing them in products which, in their turn, become powerful producers of needs, tastes, imagination...'* The authors give sharper focus to the same idea: *'The use-value of this type of work [the informational and cultural content] itself feeds the cycle of production'*.[11]

The TATE MODERN sublimated the lived experience of the city, creating an image that adds to the cultural skills of the globalizing *flâneur*. The exhibition at the POMPIDOU CENTER takes one step more. Going not beyond, but inside the spectacle, it situates the use-value of art entirely within the realm of the commodity, "relational" as it may be. Artistic practice becomes nothing more than a way to move fluidly between the fields of fashion, design, music and cinema [which is exactly the program of **Nicolas Bourriaud** and his collaborators at the new PALAIS DE TOKYO in Paris]. No longer is any relationship to the territory needed; and the museum, with its fashionable public – all those who have learned to play the right games – can indulge in infinite self-reflection, before the mirrors of the informational economy.

THE MUSEUM AS A SOCIAL LABORATORY

Writing in 1986, the German sociologist **Ulrich Beck** showed how impossible it is for modern democratic governments and administrations to carry out a critique of the major orientations

11 | **A. Corsani, M. Lazzarato, A. Negri**, *Le Bassin de travail immatériel* [BTI] *dans la métropole parisien* [PARIS: L'HARMATTAN, 1996], pp. 42, 83.

of society ["progress"]. Faced with the risks of techno-economic development, embodied at the time by the nuclear industry, such a critique appeared extremely urgent: modernity had to learn to reflect on its own priorities.[12] **Beck** predicted the growing importance of social movements as the "sub-political" agents of this critique; he also pointed to the importance of ethical stances within the professional disciplines. Throughout the 1990s, and now again with the demonstrations against corporate globalization, events have proved him right.

Can the museum become a site for artistic demonstrations of this social reflexivity? Can it become a social laboratory, redefining the meaning of progress? With the intensifying grip of the informational economy on all aspects of human communication, we reach one of those moments *'when knowing if one can think differently and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all.'* To bring about this shift in perception and thought, one would first have to dispel the postmodern enchantment, and cease to believe that culture, politics and the economy are always inseparable, caught in a system of reciprocally produced effects with no exit. Concretely, for an artistic institution, that would mean seeking other publics, outside the flows of international tourism, outside the productive loops of immaterial labor. The museum has to open its doors, or better, shift its resources toward the sources of a salutary alienation, located in social and psychic spaces at a distance from the dominant systems, or in opposition to them. But this is extremely difficult for museums to do, because not only must they invent new processes for working with their publics – at the risk of upsetting the internal hierarchies of the institution – but at the same time, they must also legitimate the

12 | **Ulrich Beck**, *Risk Society* [LONDON: SAGE, 1992, 1st German edition 1986].

results before funding bodies and trustee boards, without any help from the usual criteria, which only relay the logic of the market.

For some years now, the **MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART** in Barcelona has been trying to do just this. The radicality of its attempt only became visible recently, in October 2000, with a program of presentations and workshops aimed at sparking an encounter between artists and social movements. To launch the program – which draws the consequences of a series of seminars on art and political economy – the museum turned to an artist-activist, **Jordi Claramonte**, who for his own ends brought together a dozen international protest groups under the ironic title *'On Direct Action as One of the Fine Arts.'* In a moment of necessary confrontation, the institution had to recognize the distrust of Barcelona's marginalized inhabitants toward the museum and its white building, a pseudopictorial monument designed by **Richard Meyer**, and installed in a deteriorated neighborhood as a bridgehead for advancing gentrification. To stave off rejection it was decided that the events would be held outside the building, in the meeting hall of an anarchist union. The week-long program took place to a packed house, before audiences that would usually remain aloof from the museum.

So far, that's nothing really new – because such events happen relatively often in or around museums, bringing an aura of radical chic before they dissolve back into international space. Yet this time the museum prolonged its support to local groups that had sprung up after the week-long exchange, renting a space for their activities and supplying some funds for the purchase of equipment and materials. For the young people involved, it is primarily a matter of developing alternative media and contemporary strategies of political performance in the streets. The first actions of these groups – now called **LAS AGENCIAS**, each with its own specialty – were conceived for a meeting of the **WORLD BANK** in Barcelona in late June 2001. They were

carried out during huge demonstrations that were there held despite the cancellation of the meeting by the **BANK**, plagued by its ongoing crisis of legitimacy.

Such support of local activist groups is anything but ordinary; yet it only constitutes the most openly transgressive aspect of the museum's program. In parallel to the political activities of **LAS AGENCIAS**, the exhibition ***Documentary Processes*** seeks to initiate local publics to contemporary trends in a much longer history of "alternative media," on the borderline between art and journalism. Workshops given by two documentary artists, **Marc Pataut** and **Alain Sekula**, help to deepen the transmission of this history. The political side of the program is completed by the opening of the exhibition ***Antagonisms,*** which directly inquires into the forms of political commitment within the field of contemporary art. The exhibition will no doubt help legitimate the local protest activities, which in their turn will allow for a critique of international artistic norms, almost invariably reinforced by such large thematic exhibitions.

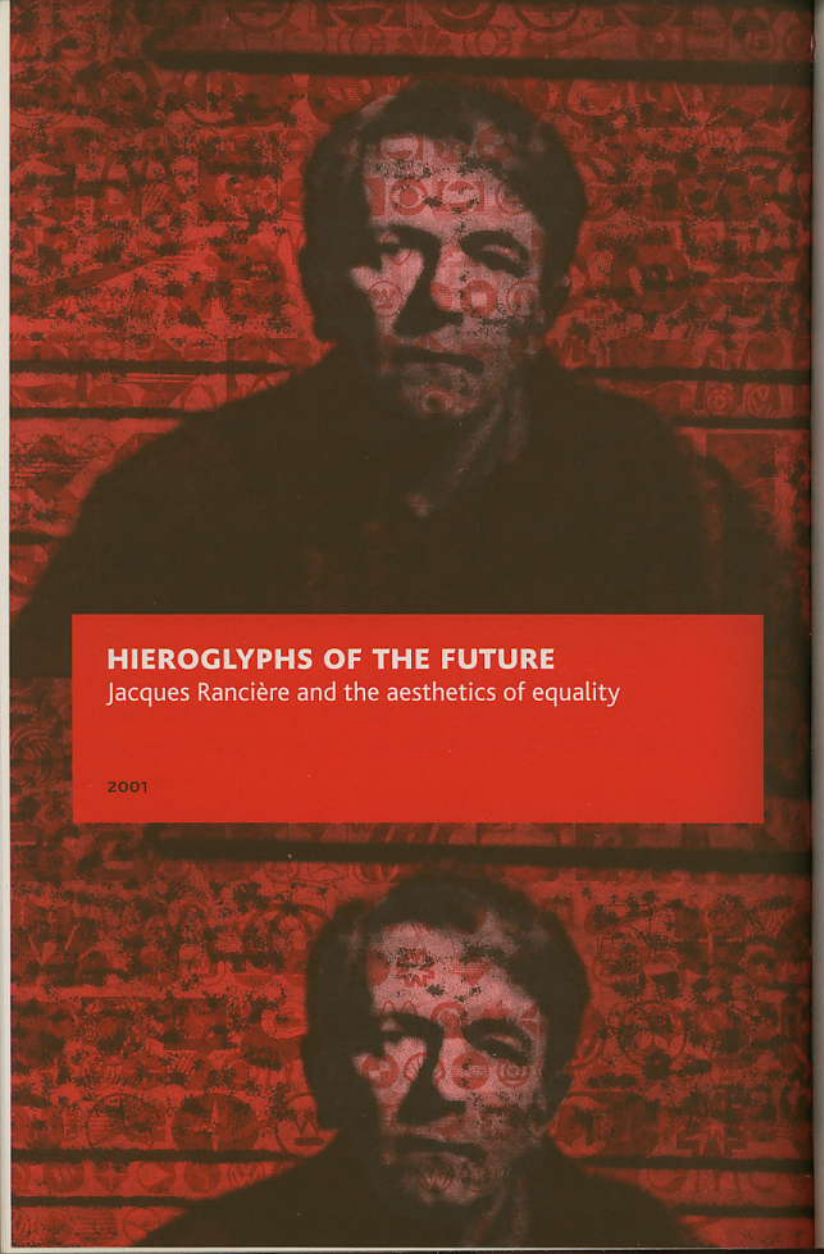
That kind of local/global dialectic is at the heart of the museum's program, which attempts to reinscribe a specific cultural history – that of Barcelona, Catalunya and Spain – into the standardizing, exclusionary narrative of Euro-American modernity. An exhibition of the cinema of **Pere Portabella**, mounted in February-March 2001 by the artist **Marcelo Expósito**, offered an extraordinary access not only to the work of this half-forgotten filmmaker, but also to the universe of his critical and creative references [presented in the form of books, journals and video tapes]. The visitor could consult the materials freely, or follow different critical itineraries through **Portabella**'s work; and at night in the museum auditorium, one could see screenings of the films introduced and commented by Spanish filmmakers and scholars. Such an initiative mobilizes professions and disciplines with a history longer than that of corporate globalization, drawing on ethical and existential interests outside

the seductions of the transnational capitalist class.[13] With similar intentions, the museum has begun to organize small reading groups around, for example, the work of a philosopher like a **Jacques Rancière**, almost unknown in Barcelona. The aim seems to be to question and stimulate individuals, but also to answer intellectual needs, to fill hitherto unsuspected gaps.

Maybe the more modest aspects of the program can best suggest its possibilities. An exhibition of drawings from the PRINZHORN COLLECTION – the first to bring together artworks by mental patients – allowed the museum's visitors to relive an experience that had helped launch the aesthetics of surrealism: the artistic experience of mental alienation, the most absolute line that can be drawn between self and society. For the surrealists, these works expressed an intense desire to think and to perceive differently. They opened up a space for collective reflection on the forms of modernity after the disaster of the First World War.

The PRINZHORN exhibition was an occasion for a highly specific public – psychiatrists, with their intimate understanding of the fragility of social norms – to enter the museum as a professional discipline, with a particular ethical position. One can hope that some of them may have encountered the protesters along the way.

13 | In the book that accompanies the exhibition, **Marcelo Expósito** claims a critical potential for Spanish cinema's "peripheral" status. See "Introducción," in: *Historias sin argumento: El cine de Pere Portabella* [VALENCIA/BARCELONA: EDICIONES DE LA MIRADA/MACBA, 2001].



HIEROGLYPHS OF THE FUTURE

Jacques Rancière and the aesthetics of equality

2001

'We're not surplus, we're a plus!' The slogan appeared at the demonstrations of the French jobless movement in the mid-nineties, in journals, on banners, on tracts printed by the political art group **NE PAS PLIER**. It knitted the critical force and the subjective claims of the movement into a single phrase. To be "surplus" [laid off, redundant] was to be reduced to silence in a society that effectively subtracted the jobless from the public accounts, that made them into a kind of residue – invisible, inconceivable except as a statistic under a negative sign. Excluded, in short: cut out of a system based on the status of the salaried employee. Until they finally came together to turn the tables, reverse the signs, and claim a new name on a stage they had created, by occupying unemployment offices in a nation-wide protest during the winter of 1997-98. The people with nothing erupted onto the public scene. "We're a plus," they said, intruding through the TV cameras into the country's living rooms. Which also meant, "We'll drink champagne on Christmas eve."

One way to grasp the aesthetic language of the French social movements in the nineties – and of the transnational movements now emerging – is to read **Jacques Rancière**'s work on equality. In *La Mésentente* [*The Disagreement,* 1995], he confronted the philosophy of government with the scandal of the political.[01] Government fulfills an ideal of order when it administers, manages, and tries to totally account for a population; but its reality is the police. The police keeps everyone in their place, imposes the calculations of value, apportions out the shares in society. The political is an opposite process, and it's rare. It happens when outcasts stand up to say that the calculations are wrong, when they refuse the names and the places they've been

01 | *La Mésentente* [PARIS: GALILÉE, 1995]. [Throughout this text I will quote and summarize ideas by **Jacques Rancière**; but the contemporary examples of political and aesthetic practice, and the conclusions drawn from them, are my responsibility alone – B.H]

QUÉBEC FTAA SUMMIT PROTEST | PHOTO: BRIAN HOLMES

given ["*we're not surplus*"], to claim both a share in society and another name, which will signify their particular addition to universal equality ["*we're a plus*"]. Because the equality of one speaking being with any other – the fundamental presupposition of democracy – does not exist in the abstract. It only becomes universal each time it's proven, in a new language and on a newly visible stage. Equality is the groundless claim of a minority to have the rights of any other group, to be the *demos*, the people. But it's a claim whose naked truth does not suffice, it has to be put to the test, publicly verified. Which is why the political always takes the form of a *demonstration*: a logical proof, against all prevailing logic, and the mobile presence of a crowd, against the fixed frames of an institution.

Rancière's description was in synch with its time. It anticipated the general strike of French state workers in December 1995, massively supported by the public, and it accompanied the later revolts of the homeless, the jobless, the paperless – the "mouvement des *sans*" – who rose up to demand a new division and sharing of the social whole, beyond the accounting systems of the industrial state. But it also offered a key that could reopen the airlocks between the aesthetic and the political.

In an essay written just after *La Mésentente,* **Rancière** explained that the political always involves a disidentification with some aspect of the existing community – for example, with the police state that expels the jobless or the paperless. At the same time, it requires an impossible identification with "the cause of the other".[02] This impossible identification suggests a new, subjective figure of political commitment. Its paradigm in France is the identification of an entire generation on the left with the Algerian demonstrators thrown brutally into the Seine by the police in 1961. To identify with the murdered Algerians was not to speak *for them* – an absurd idea, while their fellows were com-

02 | "La cause de l'autre," in: *Aux bords du politique* [PARIS: LA FABRIQUE-EDITIONS, 1998].

CARNIVAL AND COUNTERPOWER

QUÉBEC FTAA SUMMIT

...I went to the FTAA summit protests in Québec as a member of **NE PAS PLIER** [*Do not bend*], which is a small French association that distributes graphic art productions in collaboration with social movements. We deliberately went as a network, inviting artists and graphic designers from England, Spain [the Barcelona **'AGENCIES'**] and ex-Yugoslavia [**ŠKART, EMIGRATIVE ART**], as well as two members of a French social movement [**L'APEIS:** ASSOCIATION FOR EMPLOYMENT, INFORMATION AND SOLIDARITY FOR JOBLESS AND CASUAL WORKERS], and a sociologist working with **Pierre Bourdieu** – whose recent statements on the need to encourage a European social movement make a lot of sense to us. We basically wanted to see a translocal social movement in action on a hemispheric scale, and to support it, with the aim of finding out what we could do about that sort of thing at home in Europe.

We held an exhibition in a Québec city gallery called LE LIEU, which invited us, got housing for us all [through the local network OQP2001] and helped us in many ways. The English friends brought along the

pleting a revolution in Algeria – but to live on *in their place*, in opposition to a national institution that excluded certain citizens [those of the former colonies] and included others [those of the metropole]. That impossible identification would return in the transnational, transhistorical assertion of the students in May '68, "*We are all German Jews.*" And then again in the specific legal and political context of the late nineties, with the public act, often performed in theaters, of *parrainage* or "god-parenting," which meant taking a quasi-familial, quasi-legal responsibility for an undocumented individual.

This theatrical fiction, like the poetics of the '68 slogan, points to the specifically artistic aspect of political engagement, sketched out in a few pages of *La Mésentente*. **Rancière** begins by opposing **Habermas**'s view that the surprise of aesthetic experience, the opening to the world effected by metaphor, must be distinguished from the norms of communicative action. He claims instead that the uncertain reality of art, the shift or transport of meaning that defines metaphor, is an inherent part of every political dispute, where the argument itself bears first of all on the legitimacy or even the reality of one of the fundamental elements that configure the disagreement [its place, its object, its subjects]. The place-changing action of metaphor – one thing or person for another – is what allows the creation or extension of a community of speaking subjects; and this potential extension of a community is needed for any argument about equality. This is why the modern forms of political group-formation, or subjectivization, are historically linked to the emergence of an autonomous aesthetic dimension split from any practical manipulation of usable objects: an unpredictable, infinitely extensible realm defining *'a world of virtual community - a demand for community - superimposed upon the world of orders and parts that lends everything its use'*.[03]

03 | *La Mésentente*, p. 88.

mask project, which four of us developed early on in Montreal with the help of some very generous people, teachers and students, at Concordia university. Some 3,500 of these "masks" – bandannas printed with a laughing face on one side, a gagged face behind cyclone fencing on the other – were silkscreened by hand, at personal expense and with the help of twenty or thirty other people. They were all given away free by the first day of protest. **NE PAS PLIER** itself brought posters and stickers [a few hundred thousand of them] for the "exhibition," conceived as a temporary agit-prop center in support of the movement. The stickers included slogans mostly in French, saying things like UPSTANDING UTOPIAN, MONEY WORLD, and ARTISTS, TOUCH REALITY. Another showed the earth as a hamburger, waiting to be consumed. Another said "free" in various languages. Our idea was to play the political gift against the totalitarianism of the economy, to practice a dispersive art, to spark off conversations through the act of giving signs to strangers – an act which could be performed by anyone, since we gave quantities to people we didn't know. The images we distribute are all enigmatic, they ask people to think, to speak and to play. The city was flooded with them, everyone seemed to love it, it was a fantastic pleasure to do. And all around us, people were doing similar sorts of things.

By the nature of it, the work in the street brought me closest not to the more formal counterpowers of the Peoples' Summit, the unions or the research groups, but to the local activists: OQP2001, who struggled to organize logistics on the ground in Quebec City, and the anarchist alliances, CLAC

Metaphors are the hieroglyphs of an unknown language, the demand for an unheard-of community. When the group **NE PAS PLIER**, in collaboration with the jobless association **L'APEIS** [L'ASSOCIATION POUR L'EMPLOI, L'INFORMATION ET LA SOLIDARITÉ], raised **Marc Pataut**'s anonymous portraits above the crowd in 1994 – singular faces above a sea of demonstrating humanity – the question was not whether these meter-high photographs, carried on a wooden picket, really represented identifiable jobless people. The question was whether a social issue could be extended beyond individual cases, to call for a general reconfiguration of society; whether each anonymous face was potentially the face of the unemployed *peuple* reclaiming its right to speak; and whether the gesticulating debates on Republic Square could compare to the ones in the National Assembly. A visual uncertainty, a metaphoric possibility of "one-for-another," intertwined with a political argument bearing on proper or improper names, on the proper or improper division and sharing of resources, of roles, of sensuous reality. In lieu of an answer, the question itself gestured toward a possible future that could only be opened up, among the existing divisions of the world, by an argumentative logic knit together with an artistic metaphor.

A CHANGE OF REGIME

Rancière's thinking of the political was formulated in the early 1990s, during the long French slide into recession and racism, when the status of salaried labor was falling into tatters along with welfare-state guarantees, when immigrants were being outlawed in the name of union jobs and the unemployed were being proclaimed the impossible political subject. Yet the threat of the flexible, transnational, networked regime – the so-called "economic horror" – sparked original forms of protest and debate. A breach was reopened, marked in political economy by the work of **André Gorz**, *Misère du présent, richesses du possible* [*Poverty of the Present, Wealth of the Possible*], which turned the

and CASA. With **NE PAS PLIER** we also tried to make contacts with popular education groups and elements of the more traditional cultural and workerist left – something which I plan to continue doing, during future trips to Canada. In the demonstrations by the fence though, what you saw most was anarchy. So what's the anarchist program? Right-thinking people are always deploring them for being apolitical, spontaneous, violent – not me. I think diversity of tactics is the key.

Mass protest movements, including direct confrontation, are at the heart of any chance we may have to transform society today, and the anarchists seem to know that, maybe better than the others. In these actions, where art has a central role to play and everyone can act artistically, three things happen at least, which can change your life. The first is that you touch the concrete limits of your rights: you face the police, the gas, the fence, you feel the worst of the system in your own body, and you need that. Touch the state and be radicalized. It's a way to get beyond the cool media screen, to verify what oppression is, to better imagine how it works far away. It was clear that people needed that, and particularly clear in the stories of everyone who left the union march to climb the stairways up to the fence and find out where the real protest was. The second thing is solidarity, mutual support: we're all here to help each other, with almost nothing on our backs, no armor, no hierarchies, and when someone has the courage to throw the tear gas canister back at the police, you love that someone. Love on the barricades. You can talk to anyone in the crowd, say things you never said for years to your colleagues or

questions of flexible work and unemployment back on an entire system, to explore the reasons for maintaining a politics of scarcity in a society of automated production.

That breach seems to have closed today. *La Mésentente* had already shown how certain forms of political consensus act to freeze social identities, eliminating the disruptive claims of equality. There is the welfare-state conception of society as an interplay of "partners" [unions, businesses, public services]; there is the neoliberal idea that society does not exist, only desiring, enterprising individuals; there is the multicultural vision of separate, Balkanized communities, each bound by their own beliefs. All exclude the political conflict formerly brought by the subject called "proletariat" – the most recent name of the antique *demos* or the revolutionary *peuple*. After integrating much of the **National Front**'s racism, the French socialist party has now found an original mix of the first two forms of consensus: they intensify the neoliberal program of flexible transnational labor relations, in hopes of *returning to the salaried employment* on which the postwar social contract of the nation-state was based! As though the challenges raised by the "mouvement des *sans*" never even existed.

But what is happening now, far beyond France, is that similar movements are expanding, proliferating, in an attempt to meet their adversaries on another stage: the stage set by the transnational corporations. This proliferation involves an identification with the cause of an impossibly distant other, Mayan peasant, Brazilian autoworker, Nigerian tribesman, Indian farmer... What are the metaphors that can speak on a world stage? To explore the role of art in these movements, I think we had better start with something much closer to home: the language machine that knits the transnational system together, and the kind of labor that is done with it.

The Internet has widely [and rightly] been seen on the left as providing the infrastructure for what is called "digital

even your friends, you can act collectively in simple but essential ways. And the third thing is freedom, the freedom of the city. Walk on a freeway, dress in an outlandish costume, give away your art, build a bonfire on the street at night. Dance in the streets. The power of the drumming, hundreds, maybe thousands of sticks and stones on the roadside barriers, beating out a wild, threatening, supportive, joyful, dionysiac rhythm that could come together at times into an incredibly sophisticated beat: that's something you can never forget, you carry it within you. The carnival is a counterpower too.

Quebec City looked a lot like the beginning of what I'd seen the end of back in the early 70s: a countercultural movement with a powerful, articulated politics. We know how that older movement was dismantled, not only through its own internal contradictions, not only through the secret police picking off key people [as they're already doing now], but also by channeling rock music and other spaces of freedom into commodity zones. What I see today, in the wake of that, is a situation where the only party in town, the only one that can really get you high, is 100% political. Quebec City, my friends, was the biggest party you've ever seen, maybe the beginnings of a new political party. It was collective dionysian political theater. And everyone knows it. There was no real violence: almost no gratuitous smashing of private property [some would say not enough broken banks], no deaths as there might easily have been, not even many broken bones. That level of sublimation was deliberate, and Canadians can be proud of forcing compliance from their cops, who simply

capitalism".[04] But what the leftist commentators forget – one wonders why? – is that the simplest net application of them all, email, has offered an extraordinary chance to what **Rancière** calls "the literary animal." As large parts of the former working classes gained education, refused industrial discipline, and split away from their former position in the social hierarchy, they became "immaterial laborers" facing the new predicament of flexibilized conditions[05] – but they also found themselves in possession of a new writing tool. And as they taught themselves to use it and invented more applications every day, what did they claim, against all prevailing logic? That *here, everyone is equal.* The virtual realities of the 1990s saw the return of a utopia whose emergence **Rancière** has chronicled in his accounts of the self-education of the artisan classes in the early nineteenth century:

> *Thus one can dream of a society of emancipated individuals that would be a society of artists. Such a society would repudiate the divide between those who know and those who do not know, between those who possess or who do not possess the property of intelligence. It would recognize only active minds: humans who act, who speak of their actions and thereby transform all their works into ways of signaling the humanity within themselves and everyone.*[06]

That dream was bound to run up against what **Rancière** has called "the society of disdain." In the late twentieth century it took the usual form of the expropriation of a popular language, and its replacement by manipulated simulacra. Yet even as the dominance of the Internet by the commercial and financial

04 | Cf. **Dan Schiller**, *Digital Capitalism* [CAMBRIDGE, MASS.: MIT PRESS 1999].
05 | On the refusal of industrial discipline and the emergence of immaterial labor, see the arguments and references in **Michael Hardt** and **Toni Negri**, *Empire* [HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2000], chapters 3.3 and 3.4.
06 | *Le maître ignorant* [PARIS: FAYARD, 1987], pp. 120-121.

were not given the right to break bones and kill. Because the idea is not for us to become the terrorists they want us to be – the idea is to go somewhere we've never been before, to change politics, to change life. To express the violence of contemporary capitalism, to make it real here and now where the power is, and to go beyond it in the same movement.

We don't know what "the revolution" will look like. But we know so many things, about the nature and structure of exploitation and domination in the present, about the way it is ideologically supported and engineered to bypass any democratic political process, about its key points of weakness, about the new possibilities for organization and the sharing of both information and decisions – and about the course of radical democratic and socialist movements in the past, about the traces and resources they've left in our societies and our hearts, about the political and social rights we've gained collectively over centuries, rights that the state can't take away without losing all its legitimacy and increasing the force of the movement, as it is doing right now. We know all that, and that's why no one is allowed to dominate, why no one's in control. But more and more people are starting to play the great revolution game: carefully, with love and intelligence and urgency and foresight, and with the sense that if you make the right moves now, someone else may surprise you tomorrow. As 60,000 people surprised us, beyond all hopes, and in ways we still have yet to thoroughly understand, last week in Quebec City.

[POSTED ON **NETTIME** | MAY 1 | 2001]

spheres became clear, even as the figure of the *shareholder* emerged as the only one with a right to participate politically in the new economy, political activism took a new twist, and disruptions began appearing in the fabric of corporate and governmental speech.

Since 1993, the anonymously run **®TMark** group has been launching parodies into the ideological mix: consultancy and funding for consumer-product sabotage, following the actions of the infamous *Barbie Liberation Organization;* direct email campaigns promoting subversion, like the *Call-in Sick Day* to celebrate the non-holiday [in Anglo-Saxon lands] of May 1st; pseudo-official sites like gwbush.com, voteauction.com, or gatt.org.[07] Masquerading beneath a corporate-bureaucratic veneer – lackluster logos, deadpan graphics, pompous speech – the **®TMark** websites start off believable, waver in midflight, then tailspin into scandalous denunciation by an excess of liberal truth. Another movement, **KEIN MENSCH IST ILLEGAL**, more recently took up the same kind of strategy with its *Deportation-Class* campaign: websites, a poster contest, information kits, super-activist mileage programs... all opportunities for **Lufthansa**'s stockholders to find out just how much it could cost them to go on deporting illegal immigrants for the police. Then, in a parody of the *'Oneworld'* airline alliance, the *Deportation-Alliance* emerged, with collaboration from **®TMark** and many others. Meanwhile, a group of slow-thinking Austrian lawyers stumbled on the **gatt.org site** and wanted **Mike Moore** of the **WTO** to come pep up their meeting in Salzburg. "Mike Moore" declined, but sent two substitutes – later revealed to be the "Yes Men" – who stood before the unwitting lawyers to explain a vast but rather shocking program for the extension of free trade... The whole incident was documented on video ["tactical

07 | The first two sites were forced to change names and can now be found at **rtmark.com**, along with the other **®TMark** projects.

embarrassment," as the activist **Jordi Claramonte** likes to say].

Through mimicry and imagination, groups like **®TMark** create a short-circuit between the anonymous, abstract equality of immaterial labor and the subjective exceptionalism of art. *'The mimic gives the 'private' principle of work a public stage. He constitutes a common stage with what ought to determine the confinement of each to his place'*, writes **Rancière** in *Le partage du sensible*. But this "common stage" is a scene, not of stifling unity, but of *dissensus*: the mimic transmits *'blocks of speech circulating without a legitimate father'*, literary and political statements that *'grab hold of bodies and divert them from their destination'*, that *'contribute to the formation of collective speakers who throw into question the distribution of roles, of territories, of languages - in short, political subjects who upset an established sharing and division of the sensible'*. [08]

®TMark or *Deportation-Class* are ways for immaterial laborers to claim a voice, a non-economic share, against the stock-market rules of a shareholder's society. They are also vectors of a new kind of transnational collaboration or reciprocity. They offer a way to rejoin the direct action movements, **ART AND REVOLUTION**, **ATTAC**, and hundreds of other organizations – the newest way into a much older configuration of the aesthetic and the political, which is also called democracy.

Because the duplicity of art/work hardly began with Internet. It reaches back to what **Rancière** calls the aesthetic regime of the arts, which emerged, not coincidentally, at the end of the Ancien Regime. Aesthetics is the name of an indistinction, where fact is inseparable from fiction, where the lowest can become the highest and vice-versa. The aesthetic regime of the arts ruins the historically prior regime of representation, with its hierarchies, decorum, and strict separation of genres, but also its

08 | *Le partage du sensible: esthétique et politique* [PARIS: LA FABRIQUE-ÉDITIONS, 2000], pp. 68, 63-64.

Aristotelian distinction between chaotic, accidental history, and well-constructed, plausible fiction. Working initially through mimetic or testimonial techniques – realist literature or painting, photography or cinema – the new regime determines the paradoxical beauty of the anonymous subject, of *whoever* or *whatever*: *'The ordinary becomes beautiful as a trace of the true... when it is torn away from the obvious and made into a mythological or phantasmagorical hieroglyph'*. [09] Before and beyond any "modernist" or "postmodernist" program, the aesthetic regime *'makes art into an autonomous form of life, thus simultaneously positing both the autonomy of art and its identification with a moment in a process of life's self-formation'*. [10] The understanding of activist art begins right here, with the notion of life's *self-formation*.

FICTIONABLE FUTURES

The originality of **Rancière**'s work on the aesthetic regime is to clearly show how art can be historically effective, directly political. Art achieves this by means of *fictions*: arrangements of signs that inhere to reality, yet at the same time make it legible to the person moving through it – as though history were an unfinished film, a documentary fiction, of which we are both cameramen and actors.

That would be one way to describe an event like the *Carnival against Capital*, staged by the ten thousand actors of *Reclaim the Streets* in the City of London on June 18th, 1999. Wearing masks of four different colors, the crowd wove converging paths through the City, displaying signs, creating images, knitting its mobile music and language into urban reality – weaving another world in order to tangle with the one managed by finance capital [and to tangle directly with the police]. June 18th taught us to

09 | Ibid., p. 52.
10 | Ibid., p. 37.

read a new story at the center of finance capitalism. But no privileged viewpoint could wrap up the film, gather the whole of this "artwork" into a totality and reduce its contradictions – because the idea had already crisscrossed not just Britain but the earth, spreading and dividing like the wildfire of equality. By tracts, images, Internet, and word of mouth, by collaboration and spontaneous reinvention, the "disorganization" of *Reclaim the Streets* and the **PEOPLES' GLOBAL ACTION** network had mapped out a new kind of world, in which collectives in over 70 different countries could protest against the same abstract processes of neoliberal capitalism, under vastly different local conditions but on the same day. Did the "film" of Seattle, Prague and so on begin right here, with this "artistic" event? But where was "here"? And what did the "event" really consist of?

QUÉBEC FTAA SUMMIT PROTEST | PHOTO: BRIAN HOLMES

If anarchic, artistic demonstrations like June 18th are political, it is because they involve a disagreement, a direct confrontation with the existing divisions or shares of sensuous reality. They make visible the "invisible government" of the international financial institutions [i.e. the new world police]. But if they are aesthetic, it is because they bring a blur of indistinction to the proper subjects, objects, and places of the debate. They create *another stage* for politics: like the protesters in London opening a fire hydrant to symbolically return a long-buried river to the surface of the street, to reclaim that stream from the layered abstractions of capital. Or like the social forces in Porto Alegre displacing the wintry Davos economic forum to the summer weather of the South, turning the agenda and the very seasons of capitalist globalization upside down.

It is certain that such confrontations must become more precise, more reasoned, more explicit, if the new claim to equality is to have any effect on the existing divisions of the world. The aesthetic "plus" of the demonstrations must find a way to return to each local environment, to the specific frameworks that govern the homeless, the paperless, the unemployed. This is the risky gambit that the far left is now making, on a world scale. But to be explicit is not to speak the opponent's language [neoclassical economics] – which would always be to play an unequal hand in a losing game. Instead, it is to engage in an unstable mimicry that seeks to prove its claim to equality on a public stage, while inventing new signs, new pathways through the world, new political subjectivities.

THE FLEXIBLE PERSONALITY
for a new cultural critique

2001

THE YES MEN IN TAMPERE, FINLAND

BRIAN HOLMES

The events of the century's turn, from Seattle to New York, have shown that a sweeping critique of capitalist globalization is possible, and urgently necessary – before the level of violence in the world dramatically increases. The beginnings of such a critique exist, with the renewal of "unorthodox" economics.[01] But now one can look further, toward a critique of contemporary capitalist culture.

To be effective, a cultural critique must show the links between the major articulations of power and the more-or-less trivial aesthetics of everyday life. It must reveal the systematicity of social relations and their compelling character for everyone involved, even while it points to the specific discourses, images and emotional attitudes that hide inequality and raw violence. It must shatter the balance of consent, by flooding daylight on exactly what a society consents to, how it tolerates the intolerable. Such a critique is difficult to put into practice because it must work on two opposed levels, coming close enough to grips with the complexity of social processes to convince the researchers whose specialized knowledge it needs, while finding striking enough expressions of its conclusions to sway the people whom it claims to describe – those upon whose behavior the transformation of the status quo depends.

This kind of critique existed very recently in our societies, it gave intellectual focus to an intense and widespread dissatisfaction in the sixties and seventies, it helped change an entire system. Today it seems to have vanished. No longer does the aesthetic dimension appear as a contested bridge between the

01 | **The World Social Forum**, held for the first time in Porto Alegre in January 2001, is symbolic of the turn away from neoclassical or "supply-side" economics. Another potent symbol can be found in the charges leveled by economist **Joseph Stiglitz** at his former employers, the **World Bank**, and even more importantly, at the **IMF** – the major transnational organ of the neoclassical doctrine.

psyche and the objective structures of society. It is as though we had lost the taste for the negative, the ambition of an anti-systemic critique. In its place we find endless variants on Anglo-American "cultural studies" – which is an affirmative strategy, a device for adding value, not for taking it away. The history of cultural studies argues today for a renewal of the negative, of ideology critique.

When it emerged in the late fifties, British cultural studies tried to reverse aesthetic hierarchies by turning the sophisticated language of literary criticism onto working-class practices and forms. Elevating popular expressions by a process of contamination that also transformed the elite culture, it sought to create positive alternatives to the new kinds of domination projected by the mass media. The approach greatly diversified the range of legitimate subjects and academic styles, thereby making a real contribution to the ideal of popular education.[02] What is more, cultural studies constituted a veritable *school* on the intellectual left, developing a strategic intention. However, its key theoretical tool was the notion of a differential reception, or "negotiated reading" – a personal touch given to the message by the receiver. The notion was originally used to reveal working-class interpretations of dominant messages, in a model still based on class consciousness.[03] But when the emphasis on reception was detached from the dynamics of class, in the course of the 1980s, cultural studies became one long celebration of the particular twist that each individual or group could add to

02 | For a short history of cultural studies as a popular-education movement, then a more theoretical treatment of its origins and potentials, see **Raymond Williams**, "The Future of Cultural Studies" and "The Uses of Cultural Theory," both in *The Politics of Modernism* [LONDON: VERSO, 1989].

03 | See **Stuart Hall** and **Tony Jefferson**, et. al., *Resistance through Rituals* [LONDON: ROUTLEDGE 1993, 1st edition 1975], esp. the "theoretical overview" of the volume, pp. 9-74.

the globalized media product. In this way, it gave legitimacy to a new, transnational consumer ideology.[04] This is the discourse of alienation perfected, appropriated, individualized, ethnicized, made one's own.

How can cultural critique become effective again today? I am going to argue for the construction of an "ideal type," revealing the intersection of social power with intimate moral dispositions and erotic drives.[05] I call this ideal type the *flexible personality*. The word "flexible" alludes directly to the current economic system, with its casual labor contracts, its just-in-time production, its informational products and its absolute dependence on virtual currency circulating in the financial sphere. But it also refers to an entire set of very positive images, spontaneity, creativity, cooperativity, mobility, peer relations, appreciation of difference, openness to present experience. If you feel close to the counter-culture of the sixties-seventies, then you can say that these are *our* creations, but caught in the distorting mirror of a new hegemony. It has taken considerable historical effort from all of us to make the insanity of contemporary society tolerable.

I am going to look back over recent history to show how a form of cultural critique was effectively articulated in intellectual and then in social terms, during the post-World War II period. But I will also show how the current structures of domination result, in part, from the failures of that earlier critique to evolve in the face of its own absorption by contemporary capitalism.

04 | The reversal becomes obvious with **L. Grossberg** et. al., eds., *Cultural Studies* [NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE, 1992], an anthology that marks the large-scale exportation of cultural studies to the American academic market.

05 | The methodological device of the ideal type was developed by **Max Weber**, particularly in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*; as we shall see, it was taken up as a polemical figure by the Frankfurt School in the 1950s.

QUESTION AUTHORITY

The paradigmatic example of cultural critique in the postwar period is the INSTITUT FÜR SOZIALFORSHUNG – the autonomous scholarly organization known as the Frankfurt School. Its work can be summed up with the theoretical abbreviation of Freudo-Marxism. But what does that mean? Reviewing the texts, you find that from as early as 1936, the INSTITUT articulated its analysis of domination around the psychosociological structures of authority. The goal of the *Studien über Autorität und Familie* was to remedy *'the failure of traditional Marxism to explain the reluctance of the proletariat to fulfill its historical role'*.[06] This "reluctance" – nothing less than the working-class embrace of Nazism – could only be understood through an exploration of the way that social forces unfold in the psyche. The decline of the father's authority over the family, and the increasing role of social institutions in forming the personality of the child, was shown to run parallel to the liquidation of liberal, patrimonial capitalism, under which the nineteenth-century bourgeois owner directly controlled an inherited family capital. Twentieth-century monopoly capitalism entailed a transfer of power from private individuals to organized, impersonal corporations. The psychological state of masochistic submission to authority, described by **Erich Fromm**, was inseparable from the mechanized order of the new industrial cartels, their ability to integrate individuals within the complex technological and organizational chains of mass-production systems. The key notion of "instrumental reason" was already in germ here. As **Marcuse** wrote in 1941:

> *The facts directing man's thought and action are... those of the machine process, which itself appears as the embodiment of rationality and expediency.... Mechanized mass production is filling the empty spaces in which individuality could assert itself.*[07]

The INSTITUT's early work combined a psychosociological analysis of authoritarian discipline with the philosophical notion of instrumental reason. But its powerful anti-systemic critique could not crystallize without studies of the centrally planned economy, conceived as a social and political response to the economic crisis of the 1930s. INSTITUT members **Friedrich Pollock** and **Otto Kirchheimer** were among the first to characterize the new "state capitalism" of the 1930s.[08] Overcoming the traditional Marxist portrayal of monopoly capitalism, which had met its dialectical contradiction in the crisis of 1929, they described a definitive shift away from the liberal system where production and distribution were governed by contractualized market relations between individual agents. The new system was a managerial capitalism where production and distribution were calculated by a central-planning state. The extent of this shift was confirmed not only by the Nazi-dominated industrial cartels in Germany, but also by the Soviet five-year plans, or even the American New Deal, anticipating the rise of the Keynesian welfare state. Authority was again at the center of the analysis, *'Under state capitalism,'* wrote **Pollock**, *'men meet each other as commander or commanded'*.[09]

Or, in **Kirchheimer**'s words:

06 | **Martin Jay**, *The Dialectical Imagination* [BERKELEY: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS, 1996/1st ed. 1973], p. 116.

07 | **Herbert Marcuse**, "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology," in **A. Arato** and **E. Gebhardt**, eds., *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* [NEW YORK: CONTINUUM, 1988], pp. 143, 158.

08 | The term "state capitalism" is more familiar as an indictment of false or failed communism of the Stalinist Soviet Union, for instance in Tony Cliff, *State Capitalism in Russia* [LONDON: PLUTO PRESS, 1974]; however, the concept as developed by the Frankfurt School applied, with variations, to all the centrally planned economies that emerged after the Great Depression.

09 | **Friedrich Pollock**, "State Capitalism: Its Possibilities and Limitations" [1941], in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, op. cit., p. 78.

Fascism characterizes the stage at which the individual has completely lost his independence and the ruling groups have become recognized by the state as the sole legal parties to political compromise.[10]

The resolution of economic crisis by centralized planning for total war concretely revealed what **Pollock** called the "vital importance" of an investigation *'as to whether state capitalism can be brought under democratic control.'* This investigation was effectively undertaken by the INSTITUT during its American exile, when it sought to translate its analysis of Nazism into the American terms of the Cold War. What we now remember most are the theory and critique of the culture industry, and the essay of that name; but much more important at the time was a volume of sociological research called *The Authoritarian Personality*, published in 1950.[11] Written under **Horkheimer**'s direction by a team of four authors including **Adorno**, the book was an attempt to apply statistical methods of sociology to the empirical identification of a fascistic character structure. It used questionnaire methods to demonstrate the existence of a "new anthropological type" whose traits were rigid conventionalism, submission to authority, opposition to everything subjective, stereotypy, an emphasis on power and toughness, destructiveness and cynicism, the projection outside the self of unconscious emotional impulses, and an exaggerated concern with sexual scandal. In an echo to the earlier study of authority, these traits were correlated with a family structure marked not by patriarchal strength but rather weakness, resulting in attempts to sham an ascendancy over the children which in reality had devolved to social institutions.

10 | **Otto Kirchheimer**, "Changes in the Structure of Political Compromise" [1941], in ibid., p. 70.

11 | **T.W. Adorno** et. al., *The Authoritarian Personality* [NEW YORK: HARPER, 1950].

The Authoritarian Personality represents the culmination of a deliberately programmed, interdisciplinary construction of an ideal type: a polemical image of the social self which could then guide and structure various kinds of critique. The capacity to focus different strands of critique is the key function of this ideal type, whose importance goes far beyond that of the statistical methodologies used in the questionnaire-study. **Adorno**'s rhetorical and aesthetic strategies, for example, only take on their full force in opposition to the densely constructed picture of the authoritarian personality. Consider this quote from the essay on *'Commitment'* in 1961:

Newspapers and magazines of the radical Right constantly stir up indignation against what is unnatural, overintellectual, morbid and decadent: they know their readers. The insights of social psychology into the authoritarian personality confirm them. The basic features of this type include conformism, respect for a petrified façade of opinion and society, and resistance to impulses that disturb its order or evoke inner elements of the unconscious that cannot be admitted. This hostility to anything alien or alienating can accommodate itself much more easily to literary realism of any provenance, even if it proclaims itself critical or socialist, than to works which swear allegiance to no political slogans, but whose mere guise is enough to disrupt the whole system of rigid coordinates that governs authoritarian personalities...[12]

Adorno seeks to show how Brechtean or Sartrean political engagement could shade gradually over into the unquestioning embrace of order that marks an authoritarian state. The fractured, enigmatic forms of **Beckett** or **Schönberg** could then be seen

12 | **T.W. Adorno**, "Commitment" [1962], in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, op. cit. p. 303.

as more politically significant than any call to rally collectively around a cause. Turned at once against the weak internal harmonies of a satisfied individualism, and against the far more powerful totalizations of an exploitative system, aesthetic form in **Adorno**'s vision becomes a dissenting force through its refusal to falsely resolve the true contradictions. As he writes in one of his rhetorical phrases: *'It is not the office of art to spotlight alternatives, but to resist by its form alone the course of the world, which permanently puts a pistol to men's heads'.*[13]

The point is not to engage in academic wrangling over exactly how **Adorno** conceived this resistance of contradictory forms. More interesting is to see how a concerted critique can help give rise to effective resistance in society. The most visible figure here is **Herbert Marcuse**, whose 1964 book *One-Dimensional Man* became an international best-seller, particularly in France. Students in the demonstrations of May '68 carried placards reading "MARX, MAO, MARCUSE." But this only shows how **Marcuse**, with his directly revolutionary stance, could become a kind of emblem for converging critiques of the authoritarian state, industrial discipline and the mass media. In France, **Sartre** had written of "serialized man," while **Cornelius Castoriadis** developed a critique of bureaucratic productivism. In America, the business writer **William Whyte** warned against the "organization man" as early as 1956, while in 1961 an outgoing president, **Dwight D. Eisenhower**, denounced the technological dangers of the "military-industrial complex." Broadcast television was identified as the major propaganda tool of capitalism, beginning with **Vance Packard**'s book *The Hidden Persuaders* in America in 1957, then continuing more radically with **Barthes**' *Mythologies* in France and above all, **Debord**'s *Society of the Spectacle*. **Ivan Illich** and **Paul Goodman** attacked school systems as centers of social indoctrination, **R.D.**

13 | Ibid., p. 304.

Laing and **Félix Guattari** called for an anti-psychiatry, and **Henri Lefebvre** for an anti-urbanism, which the Situationists put into effect with the practice of the *dérive*. In his *Essay on Liberation*, written immediately after '68, **Marcuse** went so far as to speak of an outbreak of mass surrealism – which, he thought, could combine with a rising of the racialized lumpen proletariat in the US and a wider revolt of the Third World.

I don't mean to connect all this subversive activity directly to the Frankfurt School. But the "Great Refusal" of the late sixties and early seventies was clearly aimed at the military-industrial complexes, at the regimentation and work discipline they produced, at the blandishments of the culture industry that concealed these realities, and perhaps above all, at the existential and psychosocial condition of the "authoritarian personality." The right-wing sociologist **Samuel Huntington** recognized as much, when he described the revolts of the 1960s as *'a general challenge to the existing systems of authority, public and private'.*[14] But that was just stating the obvious. In seventies America, the omnipresent counter-culture slogan was "Question Authority."

What I have tried to evoke here is the intellectual background of an effective anti-systemic movement, turned against capitalist productivism in its effects on both culture and subjectivity. All that is summed up in a famous bit of French graffiti, *On ne tombe pas amoureux d'une courbe de croissance* ["You don't fall in love with a growth curve"]. In its very erotics, that writing on the walls of May '68 suggests what I have not yet mentioned, which is the positive content of the anti-systemic critique: a desire for equality and social unity, for the suppression of the class divide. Self-management and direct democracy were the fundamental demands of the student radicals in 1968, and by far the most

14 | **M. Crozier, S. Huntington, J. Watanabi,** *The Crisis of Democracy* [TRILATERAL COMMISSION, 1975], p. 74.

dangerous feature of their leftist ideology.[15] As **Jürgen Habermas** wrote in 1973: *'Genuine participation of citizens in the processes of political will-formation, that is, substantive democracy, would bring to consciousness the contradiction between administratively socialized production and the continued private appropriation and use of surplus value.'*[16] In other words, increasing democratic involvement would rapidly show people where their real interests lie. Again, **Huntington** seemed to agree, when he in turn described the "crisis" of the advanced societies as *'an excess of democracy'*.[17]

One might recall that the infamous 1975 **TRILATERAL COMMISSION** report in which **Huntington** made that remark was specifically concerned with the growing "ungovernability" of the developed societies, in the wake of the social movements of the sixties. One might also recall that this specter of ungovernability was precisely the foil against which **Margaret Thatcher**, in England, was able to marshal up her "conservative revolution."[18]

15 | In the words of the Parisian *enragés*: "What are the essential features of council power? Dissolution of all external power – Direct and total democracy – Practical unification of decision and execution – Delegates who can be revoked at any moment by those who have mandated them – Abolition of hierarchy and independent specializations – Conscious management and transformation of all the conditions of liberated life – Permanent creative mass participation – Internationalist extension and coordination. The present requirements are nothing less than this. Self-management is nothing less." From a May 30, 1968 communiqué, signed ENRAGÉS-SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE, COUNCIL FOR MAINTAINING THE OCCUPATIONS, made available over the Internet by **Ken Knabb** at: <www.slip.net/~knabb/SI/May68docs.htm>.

16 | **Jürgen Habermas**, *Legitimation Crisis* [BOSTON: BEACON PRESS, 1975/1st German edition 1973], p. 36.

17 | *The Crisis of Democracy*, op. cit., p. 113.

18 | The origins of the "conservative revolution" are described by **Keith Dixon** in an excellent book, *Les évangélistes du marché* [PARIS: RAISONS D'AGIR, 1998].

In other words, what **Huntington** called "the democratic distemper" of the sixties was the background against which the present neoliberal hegemony arose. And so the question I would now like to ask is this: how did the postindustrial societies absorb the "excess of democracy" that had been set loose by the anti-authoritarian revolts? Or to put it another way: how did the 1960s finally serve to make the 1990s tolerable?

DIVIDE AND RECUPERATE

'We lack a serious history of co-optation, one that understands corporate thought as something other than a cartoon,' writes the American historian and culture critic **Thomas Frank**.[19] In a history of the advertising and fashion industries called *The Conquest of Cool*, he attempts to retrieve the specific strategies that made sixties "hip" into nineties "hegemon," transforming cultural industries based on stultifying conformism into even more powerful industries based on a plethoric offer of "authenticity, individuality, difference, and rebellion." With a host of examples, he shows how the desires of middle-class dropouts in the sixties were rapidly turned into commodified images and products. Avoiding a simple manipulation theory, **Frank** concludes that the advertisers and fashion designers involved had an existential interest in transforming the system. The result was a change in *'the ideology by which business explained its domination of the national life'* – a change he relates, but only in passing, to **David Harvey**'s concept of "flexible accumulation".[20] Beyond the chronicle of stylistic co-optation, what still must be explained are the interrelations between individual motivations, ideological justifications and the complex social and technical functions of a new economic system.

19 | **Thomas Frank**, *The Conquest of Cool* [CHICAGO: THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS, 1997], p. 8.

20 | **Frank**, ibid., p. 229; the references to **Harvey** are on pp. 25 and 233.

A starting point can be taken from a few suggestive remarks by the business analysts **Piore** and **Sabel**, in a book called *The Second Industrial Divide* [1984]. Here the authors speak of a *regulation crisis*, which *'is marked by the realization that existing institutions no longer secure a workable match between the production and the consumption of goods'*.[21] They locate two such crises in the history of the industrial societies, both of which we have already considered through the eyes of the Frankfurt School: *'the rise of the large corporations, in the late nineteenth century, and of the Keynesian welfare state, in the 1930s'* [P. 5]. Our own era has seen a third such crisis: the prolonged recession of the 1970s, culminating with the oil shocks of 1973 and 1979, and accompanied by endemic labor unrest throughout the decade. This crisis provoked the institutional collapse of the Fordist mass-production regime and the welfare state, and thereby set the stage for an *industrial divide*, which the authors situate in the early 1980s:

> *The brief moments when the path of industrial development itself is at issue we call industrial divides. At such moments, social conflicts of the most apparently unrelated kinds determine the direction of technological development for the following decades. Although industrialists, workers, politicians, and intellectuals may only be dimly aware that they face technological choices, the actions that they take shape economic institutions for long into the future. Industrial divides are therefore the backdrop or frame for subsequent regulation crises.* [P. 5]

Basing themselves on observations from Northern Italy, the authors describe the emergence of a new production regime called "flexible specialization," which they characterize as "a strategy of permanent innovation: accommodation to ceaseless change, rather than an effort to control it" [P. 16]. Abandoning the centralized planning of the postwar years, this new strategy works through the agency of small, independent production units, employing skilled work teams with multi-use tool kits and relying on relatively spontaneous forms of cooperation with other such teams to meet rapidly changing market demands at low cost and high speed. These kinds of firms seemed to hark back to the social relations between craftsmen in the early nineteenth century, before the first industrial divide that led to the introduction of heavy machinery and the mass-production system.[22] But the reality, within and beyond Northern Italy, has proven more complex; and in 1984 **Piore** and **Sabel** could not yet have predicted the subjective and organizational importance that would be acquired by a single set of products, far from anything associated with the nineteenth century: the personal computer and telecommunications devices.[23] Nonetheless, the relation they drew between a crisis in institutional regulation and an industrial divide can help us understand the key role that

21 | **Michael J. Piore** and **Charles F. Sabel**, *The Second Industrial Divide* [NEW YORK: BASIC BOOKS, 1984], p. 4.

22 | The research inspired by the industrial innovations of Northern Italy is pervaded by culturalist or "institutional" theories, holding that forms of economic organization grow out of all-embracing social structures, often defined by reference to a premodern tradition. Such a reference is mystifying. As **Antonio Negri** writes: "It is not the memory of former types of work that leads the overexploited laborers of massive Taylorist industries first to double employment, then to black-market labor, then to decentralized work and entrepreneurial initiative, but instead the struggle against the pace imposed by the boss in the factory, and the struggle against the union... It is only on the basis of the 'refusal of work' as the motive force in this flight from the factory that one can understand certain characteristics initially taken on by decentralized labor." **M. Lazarrato**, **Y. Moulier-Boutang**, **A. Negri**, **G. Santilli**, *Des entreprises pas comme les autres: Benetton en Italie et Le Sentier à Paris* [PUBLISUD, 1993], p. 46.

23 | **Piore** and **Sabel** did, of course, grasp the importance of programmable manufacturing tools in flexible production [cf. *The Second Industrial*

social conflict – and the cultural critique that helps focus it – has played in shaping the organizational forms and the very technology of the world we live in.

What then were the conflicts that made computing and telecommunications into the central products of the new wave of economic growth that began after the 1970s recession? How did these conflicts affect the labor, management and consumption regimes? Which social groups were integrated to the new hegemony of flexible capitalism, and how? Which were rejected or violently excluded, and how was that violence covered over?

So far, the most suggestive set of answers to these questions has come from **Luc Boltanski** and **Eve Chiapello**, in *Le Nouvel Esprit du Capitalism*, published in 1999.[24] Their thesis is that each age or "spirit" of capitalism must justify its irrational compulsion for accumulation by at least partially integrating or "recuperating" the critique of the previous era, so that the system can become tolerable again – at least for its own managers. They identify two main challenges to capitalism: the critique of exploitation, or what they call "social critique," developed traditionally by the worker's movement, and the critique of alienation, or what they call "artistic critique." The latter, they say, was

Divide, op. cit., pp. 26-20]. More generally, they remark that "the fascination of the computer – as documented in the ethographic studies – is that the user can adapt it to his or her own purposes and habits of thought" [ibid., p. 261]; but they did not predict just how far this would go, i.e. how much of the new economy could be based on such a fascination.

24 | **Luc Boltanski** and **Eve Chiapello**, *Le Nouvel esprit du capitalisme* [PARIS: GALLIMARD, 1999]; for what follows, cf. esp. pp. 208-85. The authors use Weberian methodology to propose a new ideal type of capitalist entrepreneur, "connectionist man." They do not systematically relate this ideal type to a new sociopolitical order and mode of production/consumption, nor do they grasp the full ambivalence determined by the origins of the flexible type in the period around 1968; but they provide an excellent description of the ideology that has emerged to neutralize that ambivalence.

traditionally a minor, literary affair; but it became vastly more important with the mass cultural education carried out by the welfare-state universities. **Boltanski** and **Chiapello** trace the destinies of the major social groups in France after the turmoil of '68, when *critique sociale* joined hands with *critique artiste*. They show how the most organized fraction of the labor force was accorded unprecedented economic gains, even as future production was gradually reorganized and delocalized to take place outside union control and state regulation. But they also demonstrate how the young, aspiring managerial class, whether still in the universities or at the lower echelons of enterprise, became the major vector for the artistic critique of authoritarianism and bureaucratic impersonality. The strong point of **Boltanski** and **Chiapello**'s book is to demonstrate how the organizational figure of the *network* emerged to provide a magical answer to the anti-systemic cultural critique of the 1950s and 60s – a magical answer, at least for the aspirant managerial class.

What are the social and aesthetic attractions of networked organization and production?

First, the pressure of a rigid, authoritarian hierarchy is eased, by eliminating the complex middle-management ladder of the Fordist enterprises and opening up shifting, one-to-one connections between network members. Second, spontaneous communication, creativity and relational fluidity can be encouraged in a network as factors of productivity and motivation, thus overcoming the alienation of impersonal, rationalized procedures. Third, extended mobility can be tolerated or even demanded, to the extent that tool-kits become increasingly miniaturized or even purely mental, allowing work to be relayed through telecommunications channels. Fourth, the standardization of products that was the visible mark of the individual's alienation under the mass-production regime can be attenuated, by the configuration of small-scale or even micro-production networks to produce limited series of custom objects or personalized serv-

ices.[25] Fifth, desire can be stimulated and new, rapidly obsolescent products can be created by working directly within the cultural realm as coded by multimedia in particular, thus at once addressing the demand for meaning on the part of employees and consumers, and resolving part of the problem of falling demand for the kinds of long-lasting consumer durables produced by Fordist factories.

As a way of summing up all these advantages, it can be said that the networked organization gives back to the employee – or better, to the "prosumer" – the *property* of him- or herself that the traditional firm had sought to purchase as the commodity of labor power. Rather than coercive discipline, it is a new form of internalized vocation, a "calling" to creative self-fulfillment in and through each work project, that will now shape and direct the employee's behavior. The strict division between production and consumption tends to disappear, and alienation appears to be overcome, as individuals aspire to mix their labor with their leisure.[26] Even the firm begins to conceive of work qualitatively, as a sphere of creative activity, of self-realization. "Connectionist man" – or in my term, "the networker" – is delivered from direct surveillance and paralyzing alienation to become the manager of his or her own self-gratifying activity, as long as that activity translates at some point into valuable economic exchange, the *sine qua non* for remaining within the network.

25 | **Andrea Branzi**, one of the North Italian designers who led and theorized this transition, distinguishes between the "Homogeneous Metropolis" of mass-produced industrial design, and what he calls "the Hybrid Metropolis, born of the crisis of classical modernity and of rationalism, which discovers niche markets, the robotization of the production line, the diversified series, and the ethnic and cultural minorities." "The Poetics of Balance: Interview with Andrea Branzi," in **F. Burkhardt** and **C. Morozzi**, *Andrea Branzi* [PARIS: EDITIONS DIS-VOIR, undated], p. 45.

26 | In *L'individu incertain* [PARIS: HACHETTE, 1999, 1st ed. 1995], sociologist **Alain Ehrenberg** describes the postwar regime of consumption as being "characterized by a passive spectator fascinated by the [television] screen, with a dominant critique marked by the model of alienation." He then links the positive connotations of the computer terminal in our own day to "a model of communication promoting inter-individual exchanges modeled on themes of activity and relationships, with self-realization as the dominant stereotype of consumption" [p. 240]. Note the disappearance of critique in the second model.

Obviously, the young advertisers and fashion designers described by **Thomas Frank** could see a personal interest in this loosening of hierarchies. But the gratifying self-possession and self-management of the networker has an ideological advantage as well: responding to the demands of May '68, it becomes the perfect legitimating argument for the continuing destruction, by the capitalist class, of the heavy, bureaucratic, alienating, profit-draining structures of the welfare state that also represented most of the historical gains that the workers had made through social critique. By co-opting the aesthetic critique of alienation, the culture of the networked enterprise was able to legitimate the gradual exclusion of the workers' movement and the destruction of social programs. Thus – through the process that **Raymond Williams** calls the "selective tradition"[27] – a selective, tendentious version of artistic critique emerged as one of the linchpins of the new hegemony invented in the early 1980s by **Reagan** and **Thatcher**, and perfected in the 1990s by **Clinton** and the inimitable **Tony Blair**.

To recuperate from the setbacks of the sixties and seventies, capitalism had to be become doubly flexible, imposing casual labor contracts and "delocalized" production sites to escape the

27 | The phrase "selective tradition" is from the essay "When was Modernism?" in **Raymond Williams**, *The Politics of Modernism*, op. cit.; this text and the one that follows constitute what is perhaps **William**'s deepest meditation on capitalist alienation in the historical development of aesthetic forms.

regulation of the welfare state, and using this fragmented production apparatus to create the consumer seductions and stimulating careers that were needed to regain the loyalty of potentially revolutionary managers and intellectual workers. This double movement is what gives rise to the system conceived by **David Harvey** as a regime of "flexible accumulation" – a notion that describes not only the structure and discipline of the new work processes, but also the forms and lifespans of the individually tailored and rapidly obsolescent products, as well as the new, more volatile modes of consumption that the system promotes.[28] For the needs of contemporary cultural critique we should recognize, at the crux of this transformation, the role of the personal computer, assembled along with its accompanying telecommunications devices in high-tech sweatshops across the world. Technically a calculator, based on the most rigid principles of order, the personal computer has been turned by its social usage into an image- and language machine: the productive instrument, communications vector and indispensable receiver of the immaterial goods and semiotic or even emotional services that now form the leading sector of the economy.[29]

The computer and its attendant devices are at once industrial and cultural tools, embodying a compromise between control and creativity that has temporarily resolved the cultural crisis unleashed by artistic critique. Freedom of movement, which can be idealized in the figures of nomadism and roving desire, is one

28 | **David Harvey**, *The Condition of Postmodernity* [OXFORD: BLACKWELL, 1990], pp. 141-48.

29 | In the text "Immaterial Labor," **Maurizio Lazarrato** proposes the notion of aesthetic production: "It is more useful, in attempting to grasp the process of the formation of social communication and its subsumption within the 'economic,' to use, rather than the 'material' model of production, the 'aesthetic' model that involves author, reproduction, and reception.... The 'author' must lose its individual dimension and be transformed into an industrially organized production process [with a division of labor,

of the central features of this compromise. The laptop computer frees the skilled intellectual worker or the nomadic manager for forms of mobility both physical and fantasmatic, while at the same time serving as a portable instrument of control over the casualized laborer and the fragmented production process; it successfully miniaturizes one's access to the remaining bureaucratic functions, while also opening a private channel into the realms of virtual or "fictitious" capital, the financial markets where surplus value is produced as if by magic, despite the accumulating signs of environmental decay. In this way, the organizational paradigm of the network grants an autonomy which can be channeled into a new productive discipline, wherein the management of social relations over distance is a key factor, constantly open to a double interpretation. To recognize this profound ambivalence of the networked computer – that is, the way its communicative and creative potentials have been turned into the basis of an ideology masking its remote control functions – is to recognize the substance and the fragility of the hegemonic compromise on which the flexible accumulation regime of globalizing capital has been built.

Geographical dispersal and global coordination of manufacturing, just-in-time production and containerized delivery systems, a generalized acceleration of consumption cycles, and a flight of overaccumulated capital into the lightning-fast financial sphere, whose movements are at once reflected and stimulated by the equally swift evolution of global media: these are

investments, orders, and so forth], 'reproduction' becomes a mass reproduction organized according to the imperatives of profitability, and the audience ['reception'] tends to become the consumer/communicator." *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, eds. **Paolo Virno** and **Michael Hardt** [MINNEAPOLIS: UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS, 1966], p. 144. The computer is the key instrument allowing for this industrial organization of the author function, in constant feedback relations with the communicating public.

among the major features of the flexible accumulation regime as it has developed since the late 1970s. **David Harvey**, in quintessential Marxist fashion, sees this transnational redeployment of capital as a reaction to working-class struggles, which increasingly tended to limit the levels of resource and labor exploitation possible within nationally regulated space. A similar kind of reasoning is used by **Piore** and **Sabel** when they claim that "social conflicts of the most apparently unrelated kinds determine the course of technological development" at the moment of an industrial divide. But even if they do not seem to grasp the full ambivalence of the ideal type they describe, nonetheless it is primarily **Boltanski** and **Chiapello**'s analytical division of the resistance movements of the sixties into the two strands of artistic and social critique that allows us to understand how the specific aesthetic dispositions and organizational structures of the flexible personality began to crystallize from the mid-1980s onward, to complete capitalism's recuperation of – and from – the democratic turmoil of the 1960s.

BENEATH A NEW DOMINION

If I insist on the *social form* assumed by computers and telecommunications during the redeployment of capital after the recession of the 1970s, it is because of the central role that these technologies, and their diverse *uses*, have played in the emergence of the global informational economy of today. Describing the most advanced state of this economy, **Manuel Castells** writes that *'the products of the new information technology industries are information processing devices or information processing itself.'* [30] Thus he indicates the way that cultural expressions, recoded and processed as multimedia, can enter the value-adding loop of digitized communications. Indeed, he believes they *must* enter it: *'All other messages are reduced to individual imagination or to increasingly marginalized face-to-face subcultures'.* [31] But **Castells** tends to see the conditions of entry as fundamentally technical, without developing the notion that technology itself can be shaped by patterns of social, political and cultural relations. He conceives subjective and collective agency in terms of a primary choice or rejection of the network, followed by more or less viable paths within or outside the dominant system. The network itself is not a form, but a destiny. Any systemic change is out of the question.

30 | **Manuel Castells**, *The Rise of the Network Society* [LONDON: BLACKWELL, 1996], p. 67.

A critical approach can instead view computers and telecommunications as specific, pliable configurations within the larger frame of what **Michel Foucault** calls "governmental technologies." **Foucault** defines the governmental technologies [or more generally, "governmentality"] as *'the entire set of practices used to constitute, define, organize and instrumentalize the strategies that individuals, in their freedom, can have towards each other'.* [32] At stake here is the definition of a level of constraint, extending beyond what **Foucault** conceives as freedom – the open field of power relations between individuals, where each one tries to "conduct the conduct of others," through strategies that are always reversible – but not yet reaching the level of domination, where the relations of power are totally immobilized, for example through physical constraint.

The governmental technologies exist just *beneath* this level of domination: they are subtler forms of collective channeling, appropriate for the government of democratic societies where

31 | **Manuel Castells**, ibid., p. 374.

32 | **Michel Foucault**, "L'éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté," interview with **H. Becker**, **R. Forner-Betancourt**, **A. Gomez-Mueller**, in *Dits et ecrits* [PARIS: GALLIMARD, 1994], vol. IV, p. 728; also see the excellent article by **Maurizio Lazarrato**, "Du biopouvoir à la biopolitique," in *Multitudes* 1, pp. 45-57.

individuals enjoy substantial freedoms and tend to reject any obvious imposition of authority.

It is clear that the crisis of "ungovernability" decried by **Huntington**, **Thatcher** and other neoconservatives in the mid-1970s could only find its "resolution" with the introduction of new governmental technologies, determining new patterns of social relations; and it has become rather urgent to see exactly how these relational technologies function. To begin quite literally with the hardware, we could consider the extraordinary increase in surveillance practices since the introduction of telematics. It has become commonplace at any threshold – border, cash register, subway turnstile, hospital desk, credit application, commercial website – to have one's personal identifiers [or even body parts: finger- or handprints, retina patterns, DNA] checked against records in a distant database, to determine if passage will be granted. This appears as direct, sometimes even authoritarian control. But as **David Lyon** observes, *'each expansion of surveillance occurs with a rationale that, like as not, will be accepted by those whose data or personal information is handled by the system'*.[33] The most persuasive rationales are increased security [from theft or attack] and risk management by various types of insurers, who demand personal data to establish contracts. These and other arguments lead to the internalization of surveillance imperatives, whereby people actively supply their data to distant watchers. But this example of voluntary compliance with surveillance procedures is only the tip of the control iceberg. The more potent and politically immobilizing forms of self-control emerge in the individual's relation to the labor market – particularly when the labor in question involves the processing of cultural information.

33 | **David Lyon**, *Surveillance Society* [BUCKINGHAM: OPEN UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2001], p. 44.

Salaried labor, whether performed on site or at distant, telematically connected locations, can obviously be monitored for compliance to the rules [surveillance cameras, telephone checks, keystroke counters, radio-emitting badges, etc.]. The offer of freelance labor, on the other hand, can simply be refused if any irregularity appears, either in the product or the conditions of delivery. Internalized self-monitoring becomes a vital necessity for the freelancer. Cultural producers are hardly an exception, to the extent that they offer their inner selves for sale: at all but the highest levels of artistic expression, subtle forms of self-censorship become the rule, at least in relation to a primary market.[34] But deeper and perhaps more insidious effects arise from the inscription of cultural, artistic and ethical ideals, once valued for their permanence, into the swiftly changing cycles of capitalist valorization and obsolescence. Among the data processors of the cultural economy – including the myriad personnel categories of media production, design and live performance, and also extending through various forms of service provision, counseling, therapy, education and so on – a depoliticizing cynicism is more widespread than self-censorship. It is described by **Paolo Virno**:

> *At the base of contemporary cynicism is the fact that men and women learn by experiencing rules rather than 'facts'... Learning the rules, however, also means recognizing their unfoundedness and conventionality. We are no longer inserted into a single, predefined 'game' in which we participate with true conviction. We now face several different 'games,' each devoid of all obviousness and seriousness, only the site of an immediate self-affirmation ‡ an*

34 | For an analysis of the ways that [self-] censorship operates in contemporary cultural production, see **A. Corsani, M. Lazzarato, N. Negri**, *Le Bassin du travail immateriel* [BTI] *dans le métropole parisien* [PARIS: L'HARMATTAN, 1996], pp. 71-78.

affirmation that is much more brutal and arrogant, much more cynical, the more we employ, with no illusions but with perfect momentary adherence, those very rules whose conventionality and mutability we have perceived. [35]

In 1979, **Jean-François Lyotard** identified language games as an emerging arena of value-production in capitalist societies offering computerized access to knowledge, where what mattered was not primary research but transformatory "moves" within an arbitrary semantic field.[36] With this linguistic turn of the economy, the unpredictable semiotic transformations of **Mallarmé**'s "roll of the dice" became a competitive social gamble, as in stock markets beset by insider trading, where chance is another name for ignorance of precisely who is manipulating the rules. Here, cynicism is both the cause and prerequisite of the player's unbounded opportunism. As **Virno** notes: *'The opportunist confronts a flux of interchangeable possibilities, keeping open as many as possible, turning to the closest and swerving unpredictably from one to the other.'* He continues: *'The computer, for example, rather than a means to a univocal end, is a premise for successive 'opportunistic' elaborations of work. Opportunism is valued as an indispensable resource whenever the concrete labor process is pervaded by diffuse 'communicative action'... computational chatter demands 'people of opportunity,' ready and waiting for every chance'.*[37] Of course, the true opportunist consents to a fresh advantage within any new language game, even if it is political. Politics collapses into the

35 | **Paolo Virno**, "The Ambivalence of Disenchantment," in *Radical Thought in Italy*, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

36 | **Lyotard**, *La condition postmoderne: Rapport sur le savoir* [PARIS: MINUIT, 1979], esp. pp. 13-14 et 31-33.

37 | **Paolo Virno**, "The Ambivalence of Disenchantment," op. cit., p. 17. Compare Sennet's discussion of a 1991 U.S. government report on the skills

flexibility and rapid turnover times of market relations. And this is the meaning of **Virno**'s ironic reference to **Habermas**'s theory of communicative action. In his analysis of democracy's legitimation crisis, **Habermas** observed that consent in democratic societies ultimately rests on each citizen's belief that in cases of doubt he could be convinced by a detailed argument: *'Only if motivations for actions no longer operated through norms requiring justification, and if personality systems no longer had to find their unity in identity-securing interpretive systems, could the acceptance of decisions without reasons become routine, that is, could the readiness to conform absolutely be produced to any desired degree'.*[38] What was social science fiction for **Habermas** in 1973 became a reality for **Virno** in the early 1990s: personality systems without any aspiration to subjective truth, without any need for secure processes of collective interpretation. And worse, this reality was constructed on distorted forms of the call by the radical Italian left for an autonomous status of labor.

The point becomes clear: to describe the immaterial laborer, "prosumer," or networker as a *flexible personality* is to describe a new form of alienation, not alienation from the vital energy and roving desire that were exalted in the 1960s, but instead, alienation from political society, which in the democratic sense is not a profitable affair and cannot be endlessly recycled into the production of images and emotions. The configuration of the flexible personality is a new form of social control, in which culture has an important role to play. It is a distorted form of

people need in a flexible economy: "in flexible forms of work, the players make up the rules as they go along... past performance is no guide to present rewards; in each office 'game' you start over from the beginning." Richard Sennet, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* [NEW YORK: NORTON, 1998], p. 110.

38 | **Jürgen Habermas**, *Legitimation Crisis*, op. cit., p. 44.

the artistic revolt against authoritarianism and standardization: a set of practices and techniques for "constituting, defining, organizing and instrumentalizing" the revolutionary energies which emerged in the Western societies in the 1960s, and which for a time seemed capable of transforming social relations.

This notion of the flexible personality, that is, of subjectivity as it is modeled and channeled by contemporary capitalism, can be sharpened and deepened by looking outside of France and beyond the aspirant managerial class, to the destiny of another group of proto-revolutionary social actors, the racialized lumpen proletariat in America, from which arose the powerful emancipatory forces of the Black, Chicano and American Indian movements in the sixties, followed by a host of identity-groups thereafter. Here, at one of the points where a real threat was posed to the capitalist system, the dialectic of integration and exclusion becomes more apparent and more cruel. One the one hand, identity formations are encouraged as stylistic resources for commodified cultural production, with the effect of deflecting the issues away from social antagonism. Thus for example, the mollifying discourses of late cultural studies, with their focus on the entertainment media, could provide an excellent distraction from the kind of serious conflict that began to emerge in American universities in the early 1990s, when a movement arose to make narratives of minority emancipation such as *I, Rigoberta Menchú* a part of the so-called "literary canon." Using the enormous resources concentrated by the major commercial media – television, cinema, pop music – regional cultures and subcultures are sampled, recoded into product form, and fed back to their original creators via the immeasurably wider and more profitable world market.[39]

39 | Can research work in cultural studies, such as **Dick Hebdige**'s classic *Subculture, the Meaning of Style*, now be directly instrumentalized by marketing specialists? As much is suggested in the book *Commodify Your Dissent*, eds. **Thomas Frank** and **Matt Weiland** [NEW YORK: NORTON, 1997], pp. 73-77, where **Frank** and **Dave Mulcahey** present a fictional "buy recommendation" for would-be stock-market investors: "Consolidated Deviance, Inc. ['ConDev'] is unarguably the nation's leader, if not the sole force, in the fabrication, consultancy, licensing and merchandising of deviant subcultural practice. With its string of highly successful 'SubCults™', mass-marketed youth culture campaigns highlighting rapid stylistic turnover and heavy cross-media accessorization, ConDev has brought the allure of the marginalized to the consuming public."

Local differences of reception are seized upon everywhere as proof of the open, universal nature of global products. Corporate and governmental hierarchies are also made open to significant numbers of non-white subjects, whenever they are willing to play the management game. This is an essential requirement for the legitimacy of transnational governance. But wherever an identity formation becomes problematic and seems likely to threaten the urban, regional, or geopolitical balance – I'm thinking particularly of the Arab world, but also of the Balkans – then what **Boris Buden** calls the "cultural touch" operates quite differently and casts ethnic identity not as commercial gold, but as the signifier of a regressive, "tribal" authoritarianism, which can legitimately be repressed.

Here the book *Empire* contains an essential lesson: that not the avoidance, but instead the stimulation and management of local conflicts is the keystone of transnational governance.[40] In fact the United States themselves are already governed that way, in a state of permanent low-intensity civil war. Manageable, arms-consuming ethnic conflicts are perfect grist for the mill of capitalist empire. And the reality of terrorism offers the perfect opportunity to accentuate surveillance functions – with full consent from the majority of the citizenry.

40 | See **Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri**, *Empire* [CAMBRIDGE, MASS.: HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2000], pp. 198-201: "The triple imperative of the Empire is incorporate, differentiate, manage."

With these last considerations we have obviously changed scales, shifting from the psychosocial to the geopolitical. But to make the ideal type work correctly, one should never forget the hardened political and economic frames within which the flexible personality evolves. **Piore** and **Sabel** point out that what they call "flexible specialization" was only one side of the response that emerged to the regulation crisis and recession of the 1970s. The other strategy is global. It *'aims at extending the mass-production model. It does so by linking the production facilities and markets of the advanced countries with the fastest-growing third-world countries. This response amounts to the use of the corporation [now a multinational entity] to stabilize markets in a world where the forms of cooperation among states can no longer do the job'.*[41]

In effect, the transnational corporation, piloted by the financial markets, and backed up by the military power and legal architecture of the **G-7** states, has taken over the economic governance of the world from the former colonial-imperialist structures. It has installed, not the "multinational Keynesianism" that **Piore** and **Sabel** considered possible – an arrangement which would have entailed regulatory mechanisms to ensure consumer demand throughout the world – but instead, a system of predatory investment, calculated for maximum shareholder return, where macro-economic regulation functions only to insure minimal inflation, tariff-free exchange, and low labor costs. The "military-industrial complex," decried as the fountainhead of power in the days of the authoritarian personality, has been superseded by what is now being called the "Wall Street-Treasury complex" – "a power elite a la **C. Wright Mills**, a definite networking of like-minded luminaries among the institutions – Wall Street, the Treasury Department, the State Department, the **IMF**, and the **WORLD BANK** most prominent among them".[42]

41 | **Piore and Sabel**, *The Second Industrial Divide*, op. cit., pp. 16-17; cf. the section on "Multinational Keynesianism, pp. 252-57.

What kind of labor regime is produced by this transnational networking among the power elite? On June 13, 2001, one could read in the newspaper that a sharp drop in computer sales had triggered layoffs of 10% of **Compaq**'s world-wide workforce, and 5% of **Hewlet Packard**'s – 7,000 and 4,700 jobs respectively. In this situation, the highly mobile **Dell** corporation was poised to draw a competitive advantage from its versatile workforce: *'Robots are just not flexible enough, whereas each computer is unique,'* explained the president of **Dell Europe**.[43] With its just-in-time production process, **Dell** can immediately pass along the drop in component prices to consumers, because it has no old product lying around in warehouses; at the same time, it is under no obligation to pay idle hands for regular 8-hour shifts when there is no work. Thus it has already grabbed the number-1 position from **Compaq** and it is hungry for more. *'It's going to be like Bosnia,'* gloated an upper manager. *'Taking such market shares is the chance of a lifetime.'*

This kind of ruthless pleasure, against a background of exploitation and exclusion, has become entirely typical – an example of the opportunism and cynicism that the flexible personality tolerates.[44] But was this what we really expected from the critique of authority in the 1960s?

42 | **Jagdish Bhagwati**, "The Capital Myth," *Foreign Affairs* May/June 1998; text available at <www.asiamedia.ucla.edu/Deadline/bhagwati.htm>.

43 | "Une crise sans precedent ebranle l'informatique mondiale," *Le Monde*, June 13, 2001, p. 18.

44 | The ultimate reason for this tolerance appears to be fear. In *Souffrance en France* [PARIS: SEUIL, 1998], the labor psychologist **Christophe Dejours** studies the "banalization of evil" in contemporary management. Beyond the cases of perverse or paranoid sadism, concentrated at the top, he identifies the imperative to display courage and virility as the primary moral justification for doing the "dirty work" [selection for lay-offs, enforcement of productivity demands, etc.]. "The collective strategy of defense entails

CONCLUSIONS

Posing as a **WTO** representative, a provocateur from the group known as the **Yes Men** recently accepted an invitation to speak at the ***Textiles of the Future*** conference in Tampere, Finland. Taking both an historical and a futuristic view, **Hank Hardy Unruh** explained how an unpleasant event like the U.S. Civil War need never have happened: market laws ensure that cotton-picking slaves in the South would eventually have been freed. Feeding, clothing, housing and policing a slave in a country like Finland would be absurdly expensive today, he argued, compared to wages in a country like Gabon, where the costs of food, clothes and lodging are minimal, and even better, the price of policing is nil, since the workers are free. But he cautioned that the use of a remote workforce had already been tried in countries like India: and the screen of his *PowerPoint* presentation showed footage of rioters protesting British rule. To keep a Ghandi-like situation of workers' revolt, hand-spun cotton and local self-sufficiency from ever developing again in our time, he said, the **WTO** had a textile solution.

It was at this point that an assistant appeared before the crowd and ripped off Mr. **Unruh**'s standard business attire to reveal a glittering, golden, skin-tight body suit, equipped with a yard-long inflatable phallus suddenly springing up from the groin area and seeming to dance about with a life of its own. Animated graphics on the *PowerPoint* screen showed a similarly outfitted

a denial of the suffering occasioned by the 'nasty jobs'.... The ideology of economic rationalism consists... – beyond the exhibition of virility – in making cynicism pass for force of character, for determination and an elevated sense of collective responsibilities... in any case, for a sense of *supra-individual interests*" [pp. 109-111]. Underlying the defense mechanisms, **Dejours** finds both fear of personal responsibility and fear of becoming a victim oneself; cf. pp. 89-118.

man cavorting on a tropical beach: the Management Leisure Suit, **Unruh** explained, was conceived to transmit pleasing information through implanted body-chips when things were going well in the distant factory. But the end of the protuberance housed a television monitor, with a telematic control panel allowing the manager to intervene whenever unpleasant information signaled trouble in the making: '*This is the Employee Visualization Appendage, an instantly deployable hip-mounted device with hands-free operation, which allows the manager to see his employees directly, as well as receive all relevant data about them.*' **Unruh** continued,[45] while the audience clapped and whistled.

With this absurd parody, the **Yes Men**, archetypal figures of our society's capacity for consent, seem to have captured every detail of the modern control and consumption regime. Could one possibly imagine a better image of the style-conscious, tech-savvy, nomadic and hedonistic modern manager, connected directly into flows of information, able and compelled to respond to any fluctuation, but enjoying his life at the same time – profiting lavishly from his stock options, always up in the air between vocation and vacation, with unlimited pleasure and technological control right at his fingertips? True to its ethics of toleration, the corporate audience loved the textiles, the technologies, and the joke as well, at least until the entire conference was ridiculed in the press the next day. Did they even wince as images of the distant workers – fifteen-year-old Asian women on a factory floor, kids squatting at lathes – flashed up rapidly on the *PowerPoint* screen?

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45 | The story of the Yes Men is told by **RtMark**, Corporate Consulting for the 21st Century, at <www.rtmark.com>; or go directly to <www.theyesmen.org/finland>.

GENOA

THE TARGET AND THE TURNING POINT

In London on June 18th, 1999, someone taped up a poster of a target - actually a crossed-out target, protesting the violence of the Kosov@ war - onto the sleek display window of a Mercedes dealership. Crossed-out or not, the target guided one of the blows that shattered the window. Nearby, the glass portals of the huge LIFFE building [THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL FUTURES AND OPTIONS EXCHANGE] were also smashed, in a direct attack on globalized finance capitalism.

From the outset, the movement against corporate globalization has thrived on the ambiguous relations between political-economic critique, non-violent carnival, and urban guerrilla actions involving the destruction of private property. The ability to bring these things together at strategically targeted places and times has lent the movement its startling strength and agency, its power of attraction and its sense of a multivalent threat to the dominant order. But that dynamic suddenly changed directions in Genoa. Through the use of agent-provocateurs and cynically well-timed charges, the police were able to turn the street fighting

GENOA, JULY 2001 | PHOTO: MEYER

The flexible personality represents a contemporary form of governmentality, an internalized and culturalized pattern of "soft" coercion, which nonetheless can be directly correlated to the hard data of labor conditions, bureaucratic and police practices, border regimes and military interventions. Now that the typical characteristics of this mentality – and indeed of this "culture-ideology"[46] – have come fully into view, it is high time that *we* intervene, as intellectuals and citizens. The study of coercive patterns, contributing to the deliberately exaggerated figure of an ideal type, is one way that academic knowledge production can contribute to the rising wave of democratic dissent. In particular, the treatment of "immaterial" or "aesthetic" production stands to gain from this renewal of a radically negative critique.

46 | The notion that contemporary transnational capitalism legitimates itself and renders itself desirable through a "culture-ideology" is developed by **Leslie Sklair**, in *The Transnational Capitalist Class* [London: Blackwell, 2001].

into an excuse to attack the movement as a whole, in a calculated attempt to destroy not only its agency on the ground, but also its credibility in the public eye. In Genoa, *we* became the target - both of violence and of a deliberate defamation campaign.

Of course the police themselves are unfathomably stupid, so they went on to do a totally unjustifiable raid on the *Genoa Social Forum* after the demos were over - a blunder that will cost the **Berlusconi** government dearly. Demonstrations were held in fifty Italian cities on June 24, and the center-left opposition, which actually organized the G8 in Genoa before the arrival of **Berlusconi**, is now calling for the resignation of Interior minister **Scajola**. This political dimension of the clash is no accident in Italy, where a key member of the *Genoa Social Forum* - the political party *Rifondazione Communista* - withdrew its support from the center-left coalition in the recent elections, denouncing the false alternative offered by the pseudo-left. The idea is to break a useless consensus, whereby "socialists" sit in governments but cease to pursue any left politics. The stand taken in Genoa by splinter parties, but also by the religious *Drop The Debt* campaign and middle-class ecological and fair-trade networks like *Reta Lilliput*, has finally placed the new forms of capitalist domination at the heart of a national debate, showing that the price of breaking the ruling consensus is a small-scale civil war.

Genoa is a turning point, marked by the death of **Carlo Giuliani**, an innocent young man caught up in a political firestorm. The value and the extreme danger of mass movements in our alienated cities leaps

Those who admire the Frankfurt School, or, closer to us, the work of **Michel Foucault**, can hardly refuse the challenge of bringing their analyses up to date, at a time when the new system and style of domination has taken on crystal clear outlines.

Yet it is obvious that the mere description of a system of domination, however precise and scientifically accurate, will never suffice to dispel it. And the model of governmentality, with all its nuances, easily lends itself to infinite introspection, which would be better avoided. The timeliness of critical theory has to do with the possibility of refusing a highly articulated and effective ideology, which has integrated and neutralized a certain number of formerly alternative proposals. But it is important to avoid the trap into which the Frankfurt School, in particular, seems to have fallen: the impasse of a critique so totalizing that it leaves no way out, except through an excessively sophisticated, contemplative, and ultimately elitist aesthetics. Critique today must remain a fully public practice, engaged in communicative action and indeed, communicative activism: the re-creation of an oppositional culture, in forms specifically conceived to resist the inevitable attempts at co-optation.[47] The figure of the flexible personality can be publicly ridiculed, satirized, its supporting institutions can be attacked on political and economic

47 | Hence the paradoxical, yet essential refusal to conceive oppositional political practice as the constitution of a party, and indeed of a unified social class, for the seizure of state power. Among the better formulations of this paradox is **Miguel Benasayag** and **Diego Sztulwark**, *Du contre-pouvoir* [PARIS: LA DECOUVERTE, 2000]. It is no coincidence that the book also deals with the possibility of transforming the modes of knowledge production: "The difference lies less in belonging or not to a state structure like the university, than in the articulation with alternative dynamics that coproduce, rework and distribute the forms of knowledge. That must be done in sites of 'minority' [i.e. 'non-hegemonic'] counter-power, which can gradually participate in the creation of a powerful and vibrant bloc of counter-power" [p. 113].

out into daylight, in the country where the strategy of leftist political violence was tried and failed in the seventies. From this point forth everyone must be much more clear about the kinds of coalitions they engage in. I want to be precise here. In Genoa there was a political target for the destruction: banks and corporate headquarters. But dozens of private cars also became burning barricades, and far too many small shops were trashed [by police provocateurs or not, we'll never know]. All that looked bad, and not just on TV. Anyone honest has to admit that the violence originated not only from agent-provocateurs and consciously anticapitalist anarchists, but also from disaffected youth, apolitical gangs, Basques and other nationalists, and even Nazi skins. Relatively small groups are enough to draw whole crowds into the riot. Can the violence be kept on target, when the movement against capitalist globalization rises to the mass scale that it must reach to become politically effective?

"According to authoritative American sources there were five thousand violent demonstrators in the Black Bloc," **Scajola** said in parliament on July 23, dramatically upping the count from the three to four hundred serious window-smashers that most people saw. The hard line from **Bush**, **Blair** and **Berlusconi** is clear: criminalize the movement, paint critique as terror. The only answer is to politicize the movement further, to give it a powerfully dissenting voice within a public debate that has been reduced since 1989 to substantive consensus between left and right. That strategy requires that the violence not be denounced or explained away, but recognized for what it is: the harbinger of a far wider

grounds, its traits can be exposed in cultural and artistic productions, its description and the search for alternatives to its reign can be conceived not as another academic industry – and another potential locus of immaterial productivism – but instead as a chance to help create new forms of intellectual solidarity, a collective project for a better society. When it is carried out in a perspective of social transformation, the exercise of negative critique itself can have a powerful subjectivizing force, it can become a way to shape oneself through the demands of a shared endeavor.[48]

The flexible personality is not a destiny. And despite the ideologies of resignation, despite the dense realities of governmental structures in our control societies, nothing prevents the sophisticated forms of critical knowledge, elaborated in the peculiar temporality of the university, from connecting directly with the new and also complex, highly sophisticated forms of dissent appearing on the streets. In the process, "artistic critique" can again rejoin the refusal of exploitation. This type of crossover is exactly what we have seen in the wide range of movements opposing the agenda of neoliberal globalization.[49] The development of an oppositional "school" can now extend to a vastly wider field. The communicational infrastructure has been par-

48 | The notion of a new emulation, on an ethical basis, between free and independent subjects seems a far more promising future for the social tie than any restoration of traditional authority. **Richard Sennet** doesn't hide a certain nostalgia for the latter in *The Corrosion of Character*, op. cit., pp. 115-16; but he remarks, far more interestingly, that in "the process view of community... reflected in current political studies of deliberative democracy... the evolving expression of disagreement is taken to bind people more than the sheer declaration of 'correct' principles" [pp. 143-44].

49 | For a glimpse into the way intellectuals, activists, workers, and artists can cooperate in dissenting actions, see **Susan George**, "Fixing or nixing the WTO," in *Le Monde diplomatique*, January 2000, available at < www.en.monde-diplomatique.fr/2000/01/07george>.

conflict to come, if the destructively alienating tendencies of globalization are not reversed. But to make that claim politically also requires backing it up with a more deliberate and legible relation to the violence on the ground. And that means walking a tightrope, between the chaos of urban warfare where we become the target, and the slide back to a gentle consensus that just ignores the deadly contradictions of globalized capitalism.

The more coherent and serious organizations know this, but they can neither control nor do without the mass movement. The civil-society associations are getting scared. The cops and the apolitical gangs will not change their tactics. A lot depends on the people in between: the genuine anarchists, the *Tute Bianche*-style direct actionists, and the average protestor who sees red and picks up a stone. It's time for everyone, not to pull back from the movement - not after the success of the Genoa demonstrations - but to think a lot more about what their targets really are, and how to reach them. The ambition to block the summits is attaining its limits, and the tremendously productive balance between critique, carnival and illegal action has come to a point of extreme fragility. The political debates in Italy, the social movements that are likely to ensue there this fall, and the diffuse, worldwide protest against the unreachable **WTO** meeting in Qatar this November may help set into motion a new language and a new strategy - which we urgently need before the next mass protest on the dangerous European streets.

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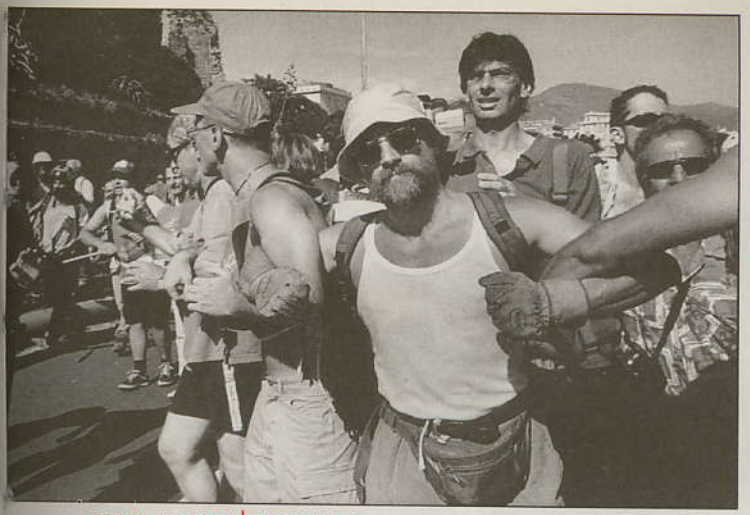
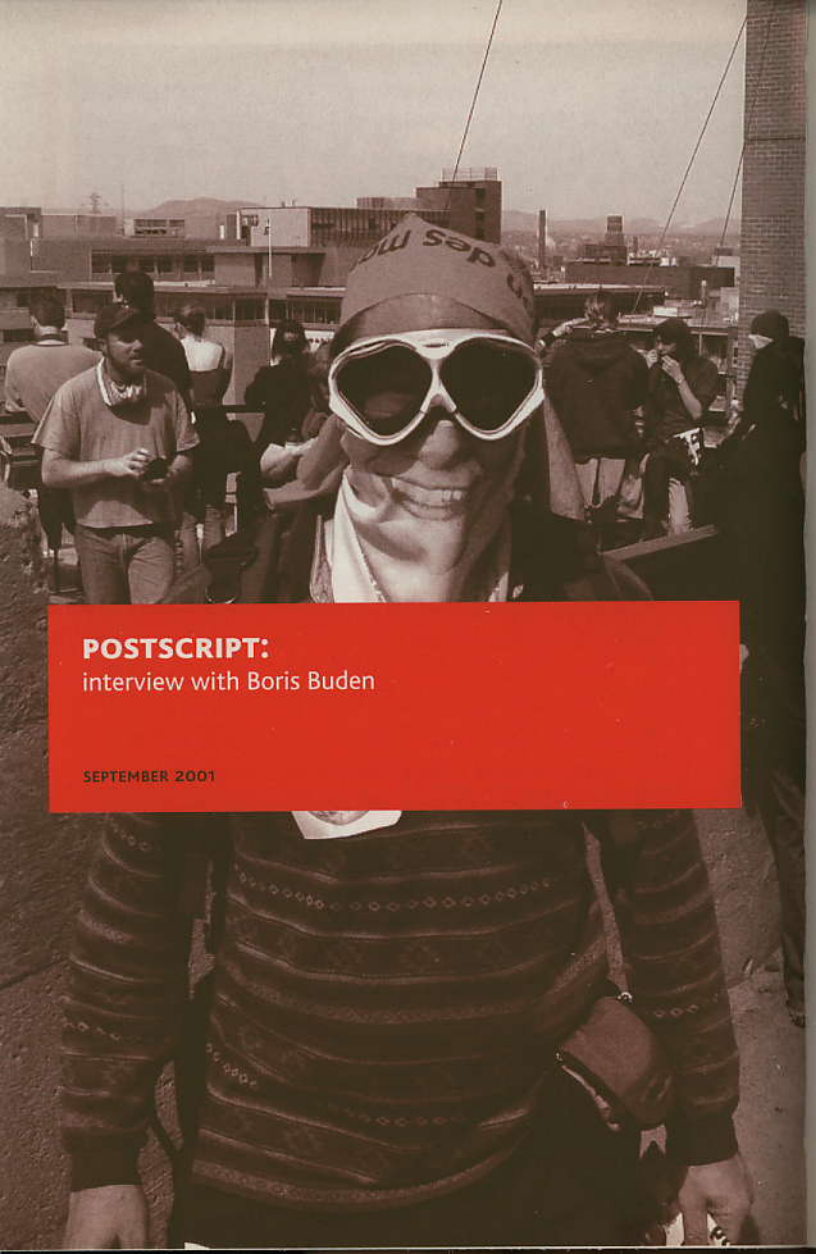


GENOA, JULY 2001 | PHOTO: MEYER

tially externalized into personal computers, and a considerable "knowledge capital" has shifted from the schools and universities of the welfare state into the bodies and minds of immaterial laborers: these assets can be appropriated by all those willing to simply use what is already ours, and to take the risks of political autonomy and democratic dissent. The history of radically democratic movements can be explored and deepened, while the goals and processes of the present movement are made explicit and brought openly into debate.

The program is ambitious. But the alternative, if you prefer, is just to go on playing someone else's game – always in the air, between vocation and vacation, eyes on the latest information, fingers on the controls. Rolling the loaded dice, again and again.

This essay was initially presented at a symposium called "The Cultural Touch," organized in June, 2001, at the KUNSTLERHAUS in Vienna by **Boris Buden**, **Stefan Nowotny** and the SCHOOL FOR THEORETICAL POLITICS.



POSTSCRIPT:
interview with Boris Buden

SEPTEMBER 2001

BRIAN HOLMES

BORIS BUDEN | **The terrorist attack on the World Trade Center seems to have made the events of Genoa irrelevant. Must we accept that? Is Genoa really not an issue anymore?**

BRIAN HOLMES | The demonstrations in Genoa raised the specter of an historical repetition, whereby fascistic elements in the Italian state would once again use manipulated violence to force a major social movement into extremism, just as they did in the 1970s. You could say the Italian microdrama pales into insignificance before the outbreak of this new terrorism on a massive, unprecedented scale. In fact the situation is bizarrely similar, only the stakes have drastically increased. It is obvious, to my eyes, that such an unpardonable act of terror as September 11 – taking the form of a direct attack on globalization's premier military and financial centers – offers the perfect excuse for a crisis-ridden capitalism to install the far-reaching police controls required to maintain all its exclusionary borders, and to strike down every kind of opposition to the inequalities it generates. The failure of this police program could be a new world war. And its success could spell the end of our democratic rights.

BB | **Everyone focuses on the violence. But what is the nature of this violence? What does it mean in Genoa, and in New York?**

BH | In Genoa, we saw the state producing the violence, to a certain extent, then turning a redoubled violence back on all of us, even the most peaceful. To a certain extent – and no one can say exactly how far – the US and the globalized capitalist system produce the violence coming from the Arab world. The US secretly funded **Bin Laden** during the Afghan war against the Soviets; since then his network has profited from the deregulated, criminalized financial markets, while gaining support as an expression of spreading poverty and oppression. How can you expect peace in a borderless world, under conditions of systemic inequality? After Genoa, I wrote that the violent clashes were *"the harbinger of a far wider conflict to come, if the destruc-*

tively alienating tendencies of globalization are not reversed."

BB | **You also wrote that Genoa was a turning point, where the antiglobalization movement begins to walk a kind of tightrope – and not only in relation to violence.**

BH | The real turning point will come when the resistance is massive enough to block specific lines of institutional development and open up new spaces for social experimentation. You can see the new ideas foreshadowed in Brazil with the participatory budget program in the city of Porto Alegre, which is an infranational initiative, or in France with **ATTAC**'s call for the institution of a Tobin tax, which is a supranational initiative. We seem close to definitive blockage of the **IMF**'s austerity programs and the **WTO** trade system, which would make more audacious experiments possible. But at exactly this moment of increasing strength, the internal contradictions of the critical movement can threaten to tear it apart. That's where we start walking a tightrope. And that's the point, in Genoa, where the Italian police stepped in, classically, cynically, to intensify the movement's ambivalent violence and use it as a pretext for naked repression.

BB | **You say "we." But who is the "we" of this movement? Why does it take the form of street protests?**

BH | Given the strength of the right-left consensus in the parliaments – and ultimately of the neoliberal "Washington consensus" – I think the movement as such had to begin with dramatic actions in streets around the world, actions generating their symbolic power from a roving mix of intellectual critique, civil disobedience, carnival, and destruction of corporate property. These protests forced the media to admit the existence of a global resistance to neoliberal policies. At the same time, each action upped the intensity of direct communication between those involved, by "alternative" media ranging from the human voice to Internet. The strength of the movement has come from

the capacity to weave long-term links between distant groups, and deepen them in sudden moments of contact, what somebody called "symposiums in the streets."

But the resistance to globalization is broader and even more ambivalent than the street protests. Behind them, at varying degrees of distance and disagreement, you find alienated youth, progressive social movements, splinter labor unions, all kinds of ecologists, disappointed nationalists, citizens' groups concerned about welfare-state and democratic institutions, left-leaning think tanks, humanitarian **NGO**s, arch-conservatives, religious groups of every confession – and untold numbers of people shocked by the suddenness of global economic integration, unwilling to just abandon their cultural patterns, their traditional forms of solidarity or their aspirations to greater freedom.

BB | **You once described the social substrate of the movement as a "transnational civil society." Do you still think that concept explains the chaotic and sometimes violent resistance to globalization?**

BH | No, I never really did. I was trying to make two basic points in that paper on **TNCS**. First, that the emergence of a transnational civil society, suddenly imaginable because of the Internet, was directly linked to the rise of transnational corporations: **TNC**s, the agents of a global capitalism. Second, that the dominance of this corporate-driven civil society could be countered by an antagonistic political subject, which I called the "networker" – i.e. the global labor-force mobilized by the transnational corporations, via communications technology.

But the term networker is ambivalent: it suggests both the opportunistic manager, or the "flexible personality," and the exploited worker under electronic control. I used it as a provocation, to spark awareness of the subservient position occupied by most people hooked into Internet. This was in 1998, during the dot-com boom, when there was an absurd, self-interested

faith in the imminence of a worldwide electronic democracy. I wanted to deflate this naive vision of civil society that hid the reality of corporate governance; at the same time, I wanted to suggest the shift in mentalities and organizing efforts that would be required for the constitution of a collective political subject on a world scale. Beyond the Marxist figure of a unified industrial proletariat, we have to understand the diverging values and desires that motivate people to engage in some kind of coordinated resistance to neoliberalism. We have to understand them, because the antagonistic political subject has to be collective, on something approaching a world scale. I tried to describe the emerging process of convergence as a "transnational culture sharing" – in opposition to the civil society that supports transnational capitalism. That phrase would have been better with the French word *partage*, highlighting both the sharing and the dividing lines. But anyway, let's be clear: a worldwide movement can only be based on political solidarity, where all those involved have something concrete to win or to lose. That's the only reason to really cross the lines. Effective solidarity has been necessary for everyone in the opposition, to combat the mobility of the transnational corporations. I think the illegal side of the early demonstrations – the direct action, the symbolic destruction of corporate property – was the only way to distinguish the real solidarity movement from the continually unfulfilled promises of transnational civil society.

BB | **Where – in what institutional space – does this struggle against global capitalism take place? The only democratically legitimate political frame still appears to be the nation-state.**

BH | The institutional environment of the struggles lies in the space of tension between national and transnational bodies. The movement has challenged the transnational institutions: the **WTO**, **IMF**, **G8**, **EU**, **NAFTA**, etc. All these emanate in theory from democratically elected national governments; but they regulate

a transnational space for the exclusive benefit of industrial and financial interests, without offering citizens any say. So even by the poor standards of the contemporary democracies, they are illegitimate. Yet although national institutions still offer the only control mechanisms over capital, the movement against corporate and financial globalization is effectively transnational. It faces a transnational antagonist, and must claim the possibility of democratically governing the global space – even if only to set the guidelines of what **Walden Bello** calls "deglobalization," or in political science terms, subsidiarity, whereby collective decisions are taken at the smallest possible scales, to ensure the highest degree of democratic participation.

BB | **What can make us hope that resistance against globalization, without any serious political consequences, can lead anywhere else but to a new chapter of the old *Kulturkampf*?**

BH | Nothing, if you put it that way. Resistance for the sake of self-marginalization is an obvious dead-end that vanguard movements have often taken, for lack of other possibilities. But the most encouraging aspect of the past few years is the way that radicalized networkers have been able to carry out a kind of collective self-education effort within this ambivalent mass resistance, revealing common stakes in an overarching institutional environment. All that goes beyond what you call the *'Kulturkampf,'* without denying the importance of cultural issues – just the way filmmakers had a vital role to play in the far wider campaign against the **MAI** treaty. Now the outbreak of terrorism has proved how serious the problems with globalization really are. Is there any chance that a transnational, transcultural left can convince our societies to address the sources and not just the symptoms of this worldwide conflict? Is there any chance for a new extension of the radical education effort? I'm nobody special, just an ordinary person – but I think that's the question that opens the twenty-first century. ●

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ON INTERACTION IN CONTEMPORARY ART | 1999 | *Parachute* magazine

TNCS – Networkers - Civil Society - Transnational Corporations - Democratic Governance | 1998 | NETTIME book *Read Me!*

CITIES, SPIRALS, EXHIBITIONS — Artworks in an Urban Frame | 1999 | VOTI forum on cultural practice & war

Kosov@: **THE TRANSATLANTIC CARNIVAL** | 2000 | posted on NETTIME

Jordan Crandall: **PARADOX OF THE VEHICLE** | 2000 | *Parachute* magazine

REFLECTING MUSEUMS – Art in the mirror of political economy | 2001 | journal *Mouvements*

HIEROGLYPHS OF THE FUTURE – Jacques Rancière and the Aesthetics of Equality | 2001 | *Springerin* magazine

CARNIVAL AND COUNTERPOWER – Québec FTAA Summit | 2001 | NETTIME

THE FLEXIBLE PERSONALITY – For a New Cultural Critique | 2001

Genoa: **THE TARGET AND THE TURNING POINT** | 2001 | posted on OPENDEMOCRACY

Postscript: **INTERVIEW WITH BORIS BUDEN** | 2001 | journal *Kulturrisse*

Books still bear the name of singular authors. But behind that facade are collective projects, critical exchanges, infinite conversations. I would like to thank all those who will see their personal contributions reflected here - particularly the people at **ARKZIN** and the ones who keep on asking the question: ***What, How and for Whom?***

BRIAN HOLMES

TURN AROUND AND KEEP ON READING ›