

BOOK REVIEWS

THE CURATORIAL: A PHILOSOPHY OF CURATING, JEAN-PAUL MARTINON (ED.)

London: Bloomsbury Academic (2013), 280 pp., Paperback,
ISBN: 978-1-47252-560-4, £65.00

Reviewed by Btihaj Ajana, King's College, London

Over the last decade the meaning and function of curating have been witnessing a significant transformation as a result of a number of factors and dynamics. Increasingly, the activity of curating is becoming the subject of much institutionalization and governance. With this comes a new set of pressures, risks and hierarchies, chief of which are the emergence of new power structures in the cultural field as well as the growing utilitarian imperative of the marketization of arts and culture. Responding to such trends requires the opening of new and different paths of critique that are capable of engaging with the activity of curating beyond the figurations and practices of market and institutions. *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating* is an attempt to do just that. In a move that is reminiscent of Jean-Luc Nancy's and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's differentiation between 'politics' and 'the political' (1997), the entire premise of the book, as articulated by Jean-Paul Martinon and Irit Rogoff, is built upon the distinction between 'curating' and 'the curatorial':

If 'curating' is a gamut of professional practices that had to do with setting up exhibitions and other modes of display, then 'the curatorial' operates at a very different level: it explores all that takes place on the stage set-up, both intentionally and unintentionally, by the curator and views it as an event of knowledge.

(ix)

In this sense, whereas curating represents the formal aspect of practices and modes of cultural production pertaining to art institutions and establishments, the curatorial is more like a disruption of such processes, an invitation to actively challenge and reflect upon the operative functions of curating and critically rethink its relation to the wider social sphere. The curatorial is thus considered as a form of critique by Martinon, 'a political tool outside of politics' (4), that is, outside of the mere empirical practices of organization and governance with their pragmatic projects and strategies. Joshua Simon corroborates that art world agents 'operate within politics, but the political has to be constantly invented, engineered and produced', the same way that the curatorial has to be continuously rethought to push for new ideas and significations: 'The curatorial is part of [the] "elsewhere" of politics' (117). Conceiving the curatorial in this way, the book aims to revitalize it as a question for 'philosophical' enquiry that is then approached from a variety of perspectives throughout the collection of essays that make up this anthology.

The book is divided into six parts, some of which intersect in terms of both content and approach. The first part, 'Send-Offs', is dedicated to questioning precisely the meaning of the curatorial itself and reassessing its role and function. Martinon considers the curatorial as a 'send-off'; a term borrowed from Jacques Derrida, insofar as it constitutes a challenge to institutions and forcibly pushes curating out of its comfort zones (28). The second part, 'Praxeologies', addresses the embodied aspect of the curatorial, shifting the debate from the 'representational' to the 'corporeal' by way of opening up new possibilities and delineating new conditions for new modes of practice. It links back to Rogoff's argument in the preceding section that '[i]f curating can be the site of knowledge to rehearse its crises then it has the potential to make a contribution rather than enact representation' (45). The third part, 'Moves', as its title suggests, is concerned with the shifts, changes and movements that are needed to disrupt hegemonic structures and reconfigure the operation of curating as a 'political' activity. Without being necessarily prescriptive, this section offers some interesting signposts and useful examples as to how the curatorial could be actualized as a form of politics in its own right, acting against, and even betraying, the logic and perceived wisdom of institutions.

Language, knowledge and history are some of the key focal points of the fourth part, 'Heresies'. Here the aim is to playfully, but nonetheless critically, intervene at the level of epistemology itself and its discursive dimension. From the question of education and activism to the notions of conspiracy and fun, this section asserts the interplay between knowledge, language and power, and the necessity to reclaim the political potential of curatorial practices by various means. Rethinking the notion of the modern and contemporariness is also a necessary task for reimagining the curatorial, a task that is taken up in the fifth part, 'Refigurations'. This section also examines issues of relationality and community and considers exhibitions as devices of signification and tools of power. The last part, 'Stages', offers an interpretation of the curatorial as a form of gathering that brings together people, communities, spaces, architectures, objects, ideas, etc. that contribute to the active formation of the *polis*, that is, the political dimension of existence. Here, this dimension of bringing

together is not reducible to the staging of an event, but refers instead to the event of staging and by extension the process of knowledge production itself. In this sense, the authors emphasize the 'behind the scenes' of curatorial events and the participatory aspects of their conceptions.

Overall, this collection of essays represents an ambitious and commendable attempt to rethink the activity of curating in non-conventional ways. It is an apt exercise in how critical theory and continental philosophical approaches could inform the concept and practice of the curatorial so as to open an alternative path through both the hype and the crisis currently surrounding the field of curating. Although not built on empirical detail, the abstract aspect of the book is balanced to some extent by the provision of real work examples and personal narratives, which together illustrate some of the complex arguments and postulations put forward in this collection. However, the book is hard to navigate at times. Given its stylistic choices and the kind of theoretical frameworks it engages with, it runs the risk of limiting its outreach and audiences to only those capable of understanding and appreciating the philosophies underpinning it. Certainly it is not an easy read for either students or curators. It also remains questionable as to what extent this concept of the curatorial, dissociated as it is from the practice of curating, is capable of becoming more than just an act of disruption and tension towards dominant paradigms and institutions. Could the curatorial possibly have a more profound impact on how one perceives and relates to art and culture and the wider world? It is perhaps too early, if at all possible, to be able to provide a definitive answer to such a question, but one thing is sure: curating needs rethinking, undoing and redoing, tasks to which this book contributes notably.

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SCANDALOUS: A READER ON ART AND ETHICS, NINA MÖNTMANN (ED.)

Berlin: Sternberg Press (2013), 178 pp., Paperback,

ISBN: 978-1-93410-587-0, €19.00

Reviewed by Alison Cooley, Independent Critic

Nina Möntmann's introduction to *Scandalous: A Reader on Art and Ethics* begins by setting the stage for ethics in a global capitalist society under neo-liberalism. Against ethical principles co-opted to serve convenient political interests, zombie capitalism, and social practice artworks with participants displaying dubious levels of agency, Möntmann positions the scandal as a flashpoint for evaluating the state of ethics in contemporary art. Much of the book is constituted of two symposia organized by Möntmann at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 2010 and 2012, and is then augmented by reprints and commissioned pieces, each engaging with the state of ethics, and the role of scandal, in contemporary art.

Originating out of the symposia, the anthology might risk an over-emphasis on European participants and case studies. Möntmann makes efforts to balance European perspectives by including Galit Eilat's essay on curatorial privilege and responsibility in Israel, a piece by Creative Time curator Nato Thompson, and a conversation between critic T.J. Demos and Belgian artist Renzo Martens on his recent work in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The snapshots of artistic projects (which demonstrate a commitment to negotiating the ethics of place) are a potent reminder of the spatial particularities of artistic, curatorial and critical ethics. What emerges throughout *Scandalous* is not a set of guidelines or ethical procedures, as in a bureaucratic-style 'code of ethics', but a series of case studies and theoretical interrogations that suggest the ethical dimensions of art in a contemporary moment.

Questions of cynicism and irony run throughout the text, with the initial theoretical essays each underscoring the cynical expressions of contemporary global capitalism. Miguel Á. Hernández-Navarro's interview with Simon Critchley untangles some of the key ideas in the theorist's recent books (particularly 2007's *Infinitely Demanding*) first distinguishing between ethics and morals, and next suggesting that cynicism and disappointment might be important tools in inciting political action. Critchley suggests that in a society governed by security and control of the visible, actions – curatorial and political – create momentary spaces of potential resistance in the interstices of the expected. Peter Osborne's essay goes on to trace the philosophical and historical role of cynicism, identifying three modes: ancient cynicism, characterized by marginalization and teaching by provocation; modern enlightenment cynicism, a self-interested dismissiveness; and the revival of ancient cynicism, manifesting as an anti-capitalist position, as personified in the decentralized (and often mask-wearing) dissent of the Occupy movement. Franco Berardi Bifo's essay further meditates on irony and cynicism: both distinct trajectories are born out of skepticism. He describes the confusion between irony and cynicism as a crisis in contemporary Italy, suggesting that the defeatist position of the cynic has enabled

macho patriarchy, media dictatorship, and government corruption – whereas the ironic position of refusal, of perpetually-suspended disbelief, might be a productive resistance to power.

A skeptical outlook provides the closing frame for the book, too, in Marcus Steinweg's essay on the role of critique. Steinweg suggests that truly critical art must open up space to call into question 'the fragility and the precariousness of reality itself' (174). This criterion is a tall order, but one worth applying to the projects discussed within the rest of the anthology: how do they grapple with critique without maintaining some position outside their own ideological affirmations, or worse, some narcissistic notion of the artist/curator?

The reader's theory-heavy early chapters transition into case studies, artist's projects, and immersive conversation among peers, complete with references and parallels that highlight other texts within the collection. Most effective in questioning the role of the scandal is a chapter by Maria Karlsson and Måns Wrangé, which suggests that in Sweden (and throughout Europe), art scandals act as a convenient device in service of politicians' calculated interests. They conclude that the territory of the public art scandal generates a shift in media rhetoric – a slow pull towards right-wing populism (104–05). Further evincing the need for discussion of the concrete effects of the scandal, artists Petra Bauer and Annette Krauss reflect on the momentum of the scandal around their contribution to the exhibition *Be(com)ing Dutch* (2008) at the Van Abbemuseum – a research project and set of banners for a public protest about racial dimensions of the Dutch mythology of Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet. Though the public action was cancelled in response to a media backlash against the project, the research archive, a film work, and the debate incited by the mere proposition of their never-realized protest reflect a success: the artists effectively politicized any discussion of the myth. Nato Thompson's essay continues a meditation on the power of public projects, reorienting the concept of curatorial responsibility towards art's audience, and asking whom public art should address in order to effect change. Thompson suggests that the decision to create projects for any given public is always also an exclusionary one, and that addressing curious non-art audiences (despite their suspicion of ubiquitous corporate marketing strategies) is an important refusal of instrumentalization, and in itself an ethical necessity.

Additional contributions by Galit Eilat and Renzo Martens address the complexities of responsible artistic production in zones of conflict and poverty. Curator Eilat reflects on her own strategies to address Israeli–Palestinian conflict while working in Israeli state-funded institutions. Eilat suggests several tactics for engaging with the politics of conflict zones: indirect address to the general concept of conflict; strategic ties to other Arab states; supporting Palestinian artists' boycott on exhibiting with Israelis as a manifestation of the reality of conflict; and using public power to circumvent official structures. Belgian artist Renzo Martens, reflecting on his recent work in the Democratic Republic of Congo, further highlights the need to tailor curatorial and artistic strategies to the politics of site. T.J. Demos's interview with Martens provides the opportunity to assess his most recent project, *The Institute for Human Activities* (ongoing since 2011), which is at once an art school, a gentrification program, and a

clever manipulation of western art markets and humanitarian aid projects. Both projects struggle with the dominance of western curatorial practices that arise out of distinct institutional structures but run the risk of being entrenched as precedents (or even ideals) for curating in non-western contexts.

One of the most compelling editorial moves in the book is Möntmann's inclusion of Martens's perspective. Möntmann describes being faced with the dilemma of how to reconcile other contributors' treatment of Martens to his own inclusion in the project (in particular, Thompson's claim that Martens's 2009 work, *Episode III: Enjoy Poverty*, speaks only to the art world). Ultimately, Möntmann's refusal to smooth over dissent within the publication is refreshing – the provocative nature of Martens's work corresponds with Thompson's desire to respond to his practice. This editorial move echoes a progressive curatorial methodology – a way of working around ideas in relation to each other, of putting works in conversation, directly and indirectly, without pre-defining the results.

Contradictions and productive dissent characterize the collection, demonstrating the fraughtness of attempting to sketch out even the roughest of ethical guidelines for contemporary art. A contribution by Ronald Jones effectively questions art's ability to commit real evil (even in the service of good), arguing that free will must be present in any work that claims to grapple with ethics. He suggests that not many artists actively pursue the question of ethics, or the potential of doing real evil (naming Chris Burden's 1973 performance 747, in which he fired a gun at an airplane in flight, as one successful example). Sandwiched in the middle of the collection, Jones's argument teases out a question echoed in the subsequent articles in the book: do the works discussed within it adhere to an ethical decision-making process, or was the potential for real ethical art-making only a chimerical possibility? The decisions that artists and curators make within their practices may never require the same ethical foresight (in their capacity for human suffering) as the work of nuclear physicists, to use Jones's example. But *Scandalous* suggests that the process of arriving at an understanding of the ethical responsibilities within the contemporary global capitalist world requires art's radical testing ground for volatile ideas.

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**INSTITUTIONAL ATTITUDES: INSTITUTING ART IN A FLAT WORLD,
PASCAL GIELEN (ED.)**

Amsterdam: Valiz (2013), Antennae Series No. 8, 288 pp., Paperback,
ISBN: 978-9-07808-868-4, €19.50

Reviewed by Bridget Crone, Goldsmiths, University of London

1. The three directors are Bart De Baere, director of MUKHA, Antwerp; Ann Demeester, then director of de Appel arts centre, Amsterdam; and Nicolaus Schafhausen, director of Kunsthalte Wien.

Pascal Gielen's *Institutional Attitudes: Instituting Art in a Flat World* explores the problems produced by what has been termed horizontalism, horizontalism or *flatness* within the culture of neo-liberalism. In the context of this anthology, horizontalism is understood as a social and economic phenomenon linked both to the culture of neo-liberalism and post-Fordist labour practices, as well as to the flat, open and non-hierarchical organizing networks that arose from the Occupy movement, as Isabell Lorey suggests (79, 82). For Gielen, however, horizontalism is conjoined with a crisis in the public art institution so that the open, networked and accelerated tropes of horizontalism become interwoven with a pan-European disintegration of governmental (fiscal) support, as well as a crisis in the institution's own direction and purpose. The collected chapters in *Institutional Attitudes* therefore unfold around two problems. First is the question of whether horizontalism is a crisis or a solution; that is, to ask whether horizontalism is a tool of neo-liberalist control – thus following Mark Fisher's argument in 'Indirect Action: Some Misgivings About Horizontalism' – or, alternatively, whether it offers an ameliorative to this control by countering it with an open and participatory system. (This latter position is exemplified in the non-hierarchical organizational strategy of the Occupy movement, as Lorey suggests in 'On Democracy and Occupation'). The second problem is the question of how horizontalism is linked to the crisis in the art institution, which also revolves around the twin motifs of opening and closure – of open access and participation on the one hand, and, of necessary protection and refuge on the other. It is the second question that precipitated this anthology, the culmination of a series of meetings and a conference initiated by three museum directors working in the Benelux region and facing the erosion of government support for their contemporary art institutions.¹

Institutional Attitudes contains chapters from practicing artists, curators, philosophers and cultural theorists that take differing positions around the questions of openness and closure in relation to horizontalism and the institution. These include Mark Fisher, author of *Capitalist Realism* (2009) (in which he famously suggests that 'It is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism'), political philosopher Chantal Mouffe, artist Jimmie Durham, museum director Alex Farquharson, and philosopher Gerald Raunig, as well as a number of other writers and theorists including Markus Miessen, Isabell Lorey and Sonja Lavaert. Of these contributions, it is Raunig who most clearly both defines 'horizontalism' (more often termed 'horizontalism' within the context of the Occupy movement) and defines the problem of horizontalism. Raunig's 'Flatness Rules' well articulates flatness through the work of philosophers

such as Paolo Virno, as well as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* (2000), and the earlier foundational work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1972). Words such as 'flatness', 'surface', 'openness', 'network', 'modulation', 'process', 'stream', 'movement', and 'the common' also act to form a territory for horizontality, and are common to the lexicon established across the chapters in *Institutional Attitudes*.

Raunig grapples with the relationship between flatness and the decentering and deterritorializing practices of neo-liberalism in order to consider how these horizontal operations might resolve the problem of horizontalism itself. Raunig asks, 'If we are really dealing with a "communism of capital" today, as Paolo Virno, Christian Marazzi or Antonio Negri emphasize, how can this perverted form of "communism" be turned into a new "commonism"?' (169). This is to ask 'how horizontality can assume an emancipatory form again, against the background of the ways in which Post-Fordist production functions' (169). Unlike others such as Fisher and Mouffe, for example, Raunig argues that the deterritorialization of the commons might be 'reterritorialized' through what he terms 'instituent practice' – the instituting of the common (170). Therefore Raunig suggests that the processes of horizontalism might be recuperated into an emancipatory form. Raunig expresses this project most clearly within the philosophical language of immanent philosophy, particularly drawing upon the work of Deleuze and Guattari. However, he requires a lot of complex maneuvering in order to make a distinction between the neo-liberal art institution's use of horizontalism and its liberatory form. If the neo-liberal museum is characterized by the manner in which it modulates between openness (participation) and closure (checks and measures), then surely Raunig's 'instituent practice' of reinhabiting the museum through the reterritorialization of time and the specificity of context are the same actions rebranded.

This action of 'reinhabitation' or of 'reinstating' is echoed through a number of the chapters taking different forms from Blake Stimpson's articulation of 'tender spots' to Fisher's appeal for a reinstating of organizational structures and Mouffe's claim for the institution as an agonistic site. Both Fisher and Mouffe call for a form of reinhabitation of the institution in terms that are less unequivocally postmodern than Raunig's; however, it is much less certain how all these models might produce a different kind of institution to those that are now known – that is, the (neo-liberal) modulating institution that juggles openness (to participation) and closure (competition, exclusivity, protection of cultural materials and so on). Yet what seems to be missing in all of the chapters is a clear outline of art's role in producing a symbolic imaginary realm as a contrary action to the dissipative movement of horizontalism.

In *Time For Revolution*, Negri (2005) asserts that there must be a separation from the material field in order for reflection to take place. While many of the essays in *Institutional Attitudes* call for a similar action of separation – a movement that is contrary to the expansive terrain of horizontality – they are less explicit regarding the terms of how this separation (or reconstitution) might take place. Negri himself suggests that this would be a form of what he terms 'reverse ascesis' – sticking one's head above the crowd in order to be able to see better (2005: 161). Negri's

'reverse ascensis' suggests a kind of going against the flow of horizontalism through a vertical movement. Yet unlike the verticality that Gielen outlines in the introduction to *Institutional Attitudes*, Negri's 'verticality' is constituted through the material field, like a pull against the tide, rather than being contrary to it.² Therefore while there is a common call for a pull against the force of horizontal movement towards a reconstitution of forms of institution or commonality (or 're-taking the square', as Lorey (179) states, quoting Marta Malo), what seems much less clear is how and where this will take place: inside or outside of horizontalism itself? How might one imagine other worlds if people are constantly bound within the immediate experience of the now (and the hungry demand for more experience, more action)? How might anyone learn from the past and imagine other possible futures if they are confined to a never-ending present of action and actualization? These questions open up the need for an urgent consideration of philosophies of time, and for the reinstitution of a separation that enables a reassertion of the symbolic, imaginary realm – of imagined subjects and their representations rather than their dissipation into the action, movement or modulation of an impossible present. As such, *Institutional Attitudes: Instituting Art in a Flat World* is an important and timely contribution to a much-needed discussion – a discussion that needs to be taken further in order to think how and on what terms a different future might be reimagined.

2. In his introduction, Gielen suggests that flatness is a side-effect of 'today's networked society' (2), yet, as Fisher shows, it is in fact integral to it – a kind of degree zero of cultural and economic (dis)organization, which echoes Negri's schema.

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**ART & TEXTILES: FABRIC AS MATERIAL AND CONCEPT IN MODERN
ART FROM KLIMT TO THE PRESENT, MARCUS BRÜDERLIN (ED.)**

Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag (2013), 392 pp., Hardcover,
ISBN: 978-3-77573-627-5 (English), ISBN: 978-3-77573-626-8
(German), €49.80

Reviewed by Charlene K. Lau, York University

The intersection of 'fine' and applied arts is an area that requires the continual negotiation and redefinition of boundaries. In the case of textiles and textile-based art, the distinction between art and craft is not so clear-cut. *Art & Textiles: Fabric as Material and Concept in Modern Art from Klimt to the Present* addresses such issues in the catalogue for an exhibition of the same name at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg and Staatsgalerie Stuttgart. Both the book and exhibition examine ethnographic artifacts, textiles as a subject matter for art, and the use of textiles as material in art production. The exhibition itself was vast, containing almost 200 objects and over 80 artists and the catalogue reflects this with its sumptuous illustrations and encyclopedic content. *Art & Textiles* is divided into three sections: two essay portions bisected by the catalogue proper. The massive volume well documents the historical context for art and textiles across culture from medieval tapestry to contemporary art (although this historical content is not referenced in the title). Late curator Markus Brüderlin's introduction to the exhibition opens the preliminary essay section, and precedes writings from several contributors on textiles and their cultural and social context. Following this is the catalogue portion, containing a series of chapters based on the exhibition themes, and a related group of essays. Part coffee table book, part academic study, the publication is extensive in its reach both historically and geographically.

In his introductory essay, Brüderlin highlights four areas of interest in the exhibition: textiles (read: canvas) as foundation for painting, textiles as painting, and its inverse; the form and space of textiles; textile abstraction in modernity; and lastly, the timely topic of textiles, the architecture of the 'web' and digital technology. Functioning simultaneously as a broad history of textiles and art throughout modernity, Brüderlin's text addresses both the scholarly – Rosalind Krauss's theorization on the modernist grid – and the vernacular of craft, as seen in urban examples of guerrilla knitting or 'yarn bombing'. In the subsequent commissioned essays, a variety of methodological approaches are taken, from architecture to the cultural anthropology of textiles, all of which deal directly with the exhibition themes of the section that follows.

The first six chapters in the catalogue portion provide a chronological overview of the relationship between textiles and art within the framework of modernism, examining currents such as Bauhaus, Art Informel, Fluxus and Arte Povera. However, the remaining five chapters/sections take a cue from the global turn, and speak to contemporary issues including gender and networks. The seventh chapter, entitled 'Global Art and the Universality of the Textile', singles out Africa, the Americas, Asia,

and the grievously outmoded category of 'the Orient'. A closer look at the exhibition's floor plan reveals that each of these geographical areas were allotted individual spaces in the exhibition, and placed along the side of the building corresponding to an exterior Japanese garden. While it is tempting to theorize the physical marginalization and tokenistic placement of the global in the exhibition space, the categorical separation of a grand versus global narrative mirrors a situation endemic to the current state of art history as a discipline. In a response to *October's* 'Questionnaire on the Contemporary', art historian Miwon Kwon identifies that while western art history is organized chronologically in terms of movements or periods (e.g. Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, Modern), non-western art history is grouped spatially into general sub-fields by countries or sometimes even by whole continents (e.g. Chinese, African, Middle Eastern). Although contemporary art history temporally follows that of the western modern narrative, it has now expanded to encompass a global perspective (Kwon 2009: 13). How, then, does one go about merging two varying modes of classification, the western temporal with the global geographical? In the case of textiles, perhaps this is not so complicated as the history and production of textiles has been a global one for centuries, made possible through trade and industrialization. Furthermore, the chapter themes are already global in their comparisons. As a case in point, the second chapter, 'The Birth of Abstraction from the Spirit of the Textile', groups the modernist works of artists including Anni Albers, Sophie Tauber-Arp and Paul Klee with Coptic fabrics, Congolese raffia cloths and a Chinese temple banner fragment. It is curious how Brüderlin specifically creates a dialogue between the histories of western and non-western objects, only to later dissociate them under a banner of the 'Other'. The global need not be discussed apart from modernism/modernity as it was, willing or otherwise, inherently part of it. Despite addressing and aiming to dismantle the hegemony of modernism in art history and cultural production more widely, Brüderlin in fact re-engages dominant discourse by speaking of the universality of textiles. His syntactical use of 'the textile' as a proper noun without capitals interprets textiles as a singular rather than plural concept. This instance only further highlights the problem of centre and periphery within art history today, and the need to redefine the discipline's epistemological framework. As these contentious issues demonstrate, both catalogue and exhibition could do with some structural redefinition.

While the companion essays provide a thorough and thoughtful look at the ongoing relationship between textiles and art throughout history, their exact engagement with the exhibition was at times redundant or tangential. In the second set of essays, Brüderlin's 'Global Art: How Can Intercultural Dialogue Be Staged in an Exhibition Context?' repeats – at points, word for word – concepts in Chapter 7 and is a digression from the overarching subject of the intersections of art and textiles. While any attempt to trouble the terms of a global art history must be applauded, Brüderlin's text is limited in that it speaks to art and not directly to textiles. Thus, the gap between the 'applied' and 'fine' arts becomes wider, effectively undoing the curatorial premise of uniting textiles with art, including that which is investigated by Marie-Amélie zu Salm-Salm's text, 'Fabrics and Painting: The Interaction between Fine and Applied Art around

1900 – A European Movement’. This inconsistency is an indication of the struggle to maintain a series of binary relationships in the publication: the historical with the contemporary, western and non-western, the applied and ‘pure’ arts. The categories foregrounded by the catalogue, beginning with something as fundamental as its title, collapse under the weight of its content and fail to guide the concept more clearly. It is not that the questions the exhibition catalogue asks are too big, it is that there are in fact too many of them. A more focused argument, such as that proposed by the publication’s subtitle, might have provided a clearer trajectory for the categories addressed in both catalogue and exhibition.

Such theoretical and organizational disorder is in part reflected in the arrangement of the catalogue’s contents. The catalogue proper of *Art & Textiles* presents a documentary view of the exhibition, yet its placement amidst two groups of commissioned essays is perplexing structurally. Essentially interrupting the exhibition’s theoretical framework, the thematic chapters require the reader to recalibrate focus. It may have been more effective to intersperse the interpretive texts amongst the chapters, therefore allowing the reader to more easily draw the lines of connection between the exhibition themes and its accompanying essays. Despite these caveats, the catalogue functions well independently of the exhibition. Its wealth of source material makes it suitable as a reference guide, and provides a comprehensive account of the role textiles play in historical and contemporary cultural production.

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THE GLOBAL CONTEMPORARY AND THE RISE OF NEW ART WORLDS, HANS BELTING, ANDREA BUDDENSIEG AND PETER WEIBEL (EDS)

Cambridge, MA: MIT Press with ZKM/Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe (2013), 464 pp., Paperback, ISBN: 978-0-26251-834-5, US\$50.00

Reviewed by Meredith North, University of Pittsburgh

To live in a ‘global’ present is to recognize not only the importance of space and time, but also to demonstrate a willingness to understand the ways in which those terms have been manipulated. The ‘contemporary’ is not merely a marker of the present time – this designation also gathers its

significance from the times and spaces that have previously been unacknowledged. The synergies, fluidity and nebulous presences of 'global' and 'contemporary' signal a change of mentality in the display, reception and impact of art today. Take, for example, the cover image for *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds*. An unadorned black man leads a single-file procession of people clad in white along a gravel path. The participants wear large head sculptures of brightly coloured, woven fabric that contrast not only with the human body, but also with the unmistakably European surroundings. The photograph captures the moment that Meschac Gaba's performance *Musée de l'Art de la Vie Active* ('Art Museum of Active Life') (2010–11) passed through the gardens of Karlsruhe's Karl Wilhelm palace, the eighteenth-century Versailles of Baden that now houses the Baden State Museum and Federal Constitutional Court. In both its previous staging in Cotonou, Benin and its performance at the opening for *The Global Contemporary: Art Worlds After 1989* (2011–12), the procession represents an unanchored museum of histories as a mobile parade of wigs that enact significant figures from African and western history. Gaba's unstable, participatory, environmental museum upends the modernist conception of a static space of display. Rather, constellations of incongruous temporal and spatial identities are extended publicly, from individual to individual, space to space, time to time. This single cover image encompasses major themes of the anthology: a confluence of sites and times for new strategies of being in, relating to, and collaboration with a globally emergent multiplicity of worlds.

The opening sentence from the preface, written by the German Federal Cultural Foundation's Hortensia Volkens, sets the scene for the ideas contained in *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds*:

With the upheavals coming in the wake of globalization and its attendant movements over the past twenty years, the era that witnessed the prevalence of western canons in art history has come to a close. A global, contemporary art of diverse origins has now taken its place.

(19)

The unmistakable shift in contemporary art is connected, but not fully explained by, the sociological, political and economic ramifications of globalization over the last two decades. Moreover, the prior aesthetic and historical codifications of 'Art', from a western perspective, have failed to engage with these contemporary developments on a global scale, a sign of continual rigidity even in purportedly destabilized theoretical systems. The editors of *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds* recognize the need for fragmentary, relational and necessarily incomplete approaches to outlining these multiform worlds. The collection of essays form an important node in the nebula of thoughts surrounding contemporary art on a global scale by bringing globalization and its effects to the forefront. Art historians, curators, artists and anthropologists alike examine the rhizomatic, global art spheres with/in/among the westernized systems of art history, the museum and the art market. As these essays crucially show, however, tidy chronologies cannot account for the varied

and diverse art appearing, all at once, from all areas of the globe. Even the book itself resists narrativization by functioning both as an anthology and a record (rather than a catalogue) of the exhibition *The Global Contemporary: Art Worlds After 1989*. This begs the question: if global contemporary art is simultaneously a product and a refutation of western modernity, how does one reconfigure these emerging art worlds? It is one thing to herald contemporaneity as the current situation, but what strategies are necessary to visualize, theorize and affirm its presence?

The post-1989 condition is one of global connectivity. It has fostered a radically different artistic landscape, which, with the collapse of western capitalist cohesion and cold war divisions, previously suppressed countries, colonies and cultures of Asia, South America, Africa and Eastern Europe have emerged in an expanding network of artistic hubs. For the editors, the western canon's failure to account for these transformations in art hinges upon its adherence to time and space, and binaries in general, in order to manufacture difference within a system. In Peter Weibel's intricate account of the relationship between globalization and contemporary art, western modernity's system of inclusion/exclusion is undergoing a significant breakdown of its own propagation. Because globalization does not adhere to cultural or national parameters but rather economic standing, it has fostered a situation in which once subaltern cultures have turned against assimilation or integration with the dominant culture. Western modernity is now exposed to the same systems of domination that itself once enforced. Modernist, and even postmodernist, art history and theory follow the same systemic processes of western modernity in general. Weibel underscores a process of 'rewriting' that in fact reconfigures the system itself:

Translations and transfers from one culture to another, in a multi-lateral and multipolar world, no longer create the hegemony of an international art, but the reevaluation of the local and regional [...]. Contemporary art and the contemporary world are part of a global rewriting program [...]. We are witnessing a new cartography of art.

(27)

The process of rewriting or remapping is not only necessarily connected to the effects of globalization. It also changes the rules of the game by advancing alternative and spatial worlds that the system of modernity ignored, without continuing a cycle of inclusion/exclusion. As Hans Belting writes, 'Global art is not only polycentric as a practice, but it also demands a polyphonic discourse' (184).

Belting's chapter, 'From World Art to Global Art', further suggests that art history, as a system of modernism undergoing the same processes of reconfiguration, must shift from a singular history of western aesthetics to intersecting histories of cultural, social and political significance. As he points out, western art history is not only experiencing a moment of introspection, but also valid inquiry from these global nodes, which reject strict linear trajectories in favour of cross-cultural and trans-temporal transmissions. International biennials and changing ideas of the contemporary

museum play a crucial role in remapping a concentric western art world to a matrix of local, regional and international relations. This transformation is appropriately reflected in the book's inclusion of the sections 'Room of Histories' and 'Eight Views from an Exhibition', which presented overlapping and multifocal histories on the history of art history. The relation and the co-presence of/in/among histories is surveyed in depth through the strong essays by Terry Smith, Piotr Piotrowski, Sabine B. Vogel and Jacob Birken. Of equal importance are the ideas put forth by the artists themselves. The Raqs Media Collective's chapter, 'Now and Elsewhere', offers a reimagining of art history's relationship to time and space: 'The question then becomes not one of "periodizing" contemporaneity [...] it becomes one of finding shortcuts, trapdoors, antechambers, and secret passageways between now and elsewhere, or perhaps, elsewhere' (318). The global contemporary is now being generated from these polymorphic networks of former alterities.

In the same way that Meschac Gaba's performance procession reinscribes Karl Wilhelm's palatial grounds with alternative times and space, global contemporary art resurfaces the once flat, groomed landscape of western modernity into a constellation of constantly shifting nodules, points in space, and imagined realities. By rendering culture, identity and even language as fluid and relational, global contemporary art worlds are moving both in and through times and places. New media, the Internet, and participatory actions have brought individuals in close contact with one another, often with wildly different intentions and reactions. *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds* provides a vital site in which these various art worlds intersect and shows how the dynamic constellation of histories, ideas and art currently reshaping the globe can be understood as an unfolding project.

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ART PRODUCTION BEYOND THE ART MARKET?, KAREN VAN DEN BERG AND URSULA PASERO (EDS)

Berlin: Sternberg Press (2013), 286 pp., Paperback,
ISBN: 978-3-94336-594-8, €19.00

Reviewed by Jack Roberts, Manchester Metropolitan University

Before reading *Art Production Beyond the Art Market?* I imagined the reason artists worked outside of the market was due to an inability to become an integrated player within the market. This publication, however, reveals and analyzes a group of artists who exist external to the market, but who exist there by choice. Many recent books, academic texts as well as media attention towards the visual arts have focused on the blue-chip market, the art business, the gallery-collector-auction sphere and the ever-increasing prices paid for works of art. As pointed out by editors Karen van den Berg and Ursula Pasero, this focus has created a bias towards the commercial segment to represent the entire artistic field with the result that 'artworks are primarily [...] valued in terms of their growing commercial success' (ix). This anthology complements the market-focused literature, but offers an alternative view that widens the parameters of discussion surrounding artistic production.

The collection of nine chapters and seven interviews focus on artists whose work is inconsistent with the elite market, that does not sit naturally within the gallery or auction constructs, that cannot be ranked by price, that resists being viewed as a 'capital investment', or that exists as something other than a traditional aesthetic object. The contributors present many angles, including the impact and role that artists' networks have within the wider artistic field; the implications that state subsidies have on artistic practices; the exploration of historic examples of practices that have breached the boundaries of the field; the challenges certain artistic activities present to the conventional definitions of an artwork; and an understanding of how artists view their role and place within the field.

The combination of theoretical and empirical studies (such as those by Stephan Schmidt-Wulffen, Kerstin Stakemeier and John Roberts), interwoven with short but illuminating interviews with artists, filmmakers and critics (such as Hans Haacke, Oliver Ressler and Caroline Jones), give the publication a refreshing edge. The sometimes dense, theoretical chapters provide context, historical framing and a broad overview to the non-commercial segment of production. The interviews bring the questions down to the personal and experiential level, examining the idiosyncratic views of the artists towards their own practice, the ways they fund their activities, and the choices of different contexts for production.

A word of caution, however, for it is unclear how representative the opinions expressed in the interviews are of artists whose production sits outside of the market, and there is little justification as to why these interviewees were selected. Likewise, little discussion is given to the relevance of some of the theoretical contributions (specifically Ulf Wuggenig and

Steffen Rudolph's 'Valuation Beyond the Market'). While these contributions are thought-provoking, I am not sure they match the premise of the publication in that they do not seem to explore artistic production external to the market. In the case of Wuggenig and Rudolph, they consider symbolic and economic value and reanalyze the economic analysis of William D. Grampp (1989). Yet in doing so, their results still end up correlating auction results with artists' reputations and, as explained above, not all artists working outside of the market create works that can be traded within the auction sphere. Perhaps the intention of including such texts is to bridge the gap between the fully inclusive production strategy of the market and the exclusive ones, with the suggestion that it is not a matter of one production strategy versus another, but rather of two ends along a sliding scale.

The idea of how market and non-market production are juxtaposed is a key concept throughout the publication, and is conceptualized through Pierre Bourdieu's (1993) construction of the 'field'. This concept links the chapters by framing and joining the contributions, but for me raises the question of how relevant the notion of the field is today, especially in an unaltered state. It is not challenged, justified, modernized or defended within the text, only chosen as the most suitable theoretical frame over other conceptualizations such as Howard Becker's *Art Worlds* (2008) or Niklas Luhmann's *Art as a Social System* (2000). This blanket acceptance seems to be a common trait in recent publications dealing with Bourdieu's theories and his conceptualization of the field.

In spite of this, the publication provides some excellent, intriguing and notable contributions – notably the chapter 'Fragile Productivity: Artistic Activities Beyond the Exhibition System' by Karen van den Berg, and the interview conducted by van den Berg with Hans Haacke. Van den Berg explores how 'being an artist is inscribed into your identity. It is not just a job but has to be understood as a lifelong obligation or vocation' (73). She argues that the classifications of 'job' and 'work' should not be mapped onto creative producers. These social denotations give the artist the image of having duties and official tasks rather than allowing more serendipitous methods of production: 'art should be regarded as a phenomenon beyond theoretical and rational control' (49). Developing this point, van den Berg considers how these labels currently affect artists who take on different roles within society and how such concepts of job and work affect their production, for example, in the case of the artist researcher, the artist social engineer and the artist activist. The chapter provides an interesting theoretical base for many of the interviews within the publication that also explore the role of the artists who operate externally to the market such as the interviews with Pablo Helguera, Gregory Sholette and Hans Haacke.

Beyond considering the concept of work, in his interview Haacke also makes a compelling point regarding the connection between non-market art production and the market. He considers that practices external to the commercial market bear an equal potential to impact the fields' constitution. He uses the analogy of the art world being a mosaic, with each tesserae representing an artistic event, act or player. Each piece, no matter how small, has the ability to change the colour and composition of the

overall mosaic. The implication is that both market and non-market practices can significantly transform the artistic scene (even if the changes appear only incremental). This aptly resonates with the aims of the publication – bringing non-market production into discussion to readdress the bias towards the market.

Perhaps Haacke's analogy is the most notable contribution of the publication. The arguments presented throughout its chapters, like the colouration of a number of tesserae, have altered the general mosaic of current research into artistic production. However, as indicated by the question mark in the title, the anthology does not aim to be a definitive overview of art beyond the market, but rather to question and bring awareness to this undervalued and undertheorized segment of artistic activity.

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AUDIENCE AS SUBJECT, YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS

San Francisco: Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (2013), 142 pp., Paperback, ISBN: 978-0-98267-895-4, US\$27.00

Reviewed by Daniella E. Sanader, Independent Critic

In November 2012, I attended a lecture/performance by Los Angeles-based artist Susan Silton at McGill University titled *She Had a Laugh Like a Beefsteak*. As the lecture concluded and the audience slowly filed out of the hall, Silton handed each person a slip of paper that read, 'Please laugh with me for one minute, on my cue'. The instructions were to descend to the main foyer of the building, form a large circle, and proceed to enact the final portion of her project. Prior to the proposed laughter, Silton had been entirely silent; she typed her ideas on-screen or had audience members read pre-prepared anecdotes. As everyone gathered to conclude

the lecture with a minute of laughter, it became apparent that although the sound of Silton's voice would finally be heard, it would be lost within the collective sounds of the audience laughing.

The relationship between artists and their audiences was the subject of a recent exhibition series at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA) in San Francisco. Entitled *Audience as Subject*, two exhibitions were staged across two years at the YBCA: *Medium* in October 2010 and *Extra Large* in February 2012. The exhibition catalogue acts as the culmination of the project: documenting both exhibitions and including four critical essays to continue the conversation around audiences, participatory practice, and the relationships between the individual and the collective. As explained in the catalogue essay by YBCA Director of Visual Arts Betti-Sue Hertz, the central conceit of *Audience as Subject* was a thoughtful adjustment to a current art-world trend. The YBCA deliberately eschewed a discussion around work that transforms individual viewers into actors or participants – sidestepping the current excitement around experimental forms of one-on-one social exchange popularized by figures including Tino Sehgal and Marina Abramović – to critically revisit the standard audience format: an accumulative body of individuals directed towards a shared social or spectatorial goal. Namely, foregrounding audience-as-subject over viewer-as-actor was proposed as a strategy to consider how spectatorial presence (whether seated quietly, dancing or walking through a gallery) is *already* an interactive or participatory gesture.

However, the promise of social cohesion offered by an audience is a fragile one at best. I recall my experience laughing in Silton's lecture: my body seemed to oscillate through different levels of attachment to my shared audience. In one moment, my laughter seemed false, my body was awkwardly separate, and the exercise felt like a forced sitcom laugh track. Mere seconds later, I would catch the eye of a friend across the circle, and in that moment of mutual recognition, my laughter would flow easily once again. Existing within an audience involves participating in a shared experience of simultaneous attachment and distance. Indeed, the most striking projects included in *Audience as Subject* are those that complicate the idealized unity of a collective body. While Hertz's introductory essay emphasizes the democratic ideals of the unified audience – its 'commitment to participation in the quest for the social good' (17) – the catalogue is filled with scenarios where the unity of the crowd is exposed as an unrealistic fantasy.

Andrew Stefan Weiner's chapter investigates the political subjectivity of a crowd in protest in relation to Rabih Mroué's installation *The People Are Demanding* (2011). The text of the Lebanese artist's installation included a long list of unspecified, ambiguous and often contradictory demands printed on the glass entranceway to the YBCA: 'to shame, to aim, to switch, to itch, to pitch, to bitch, [...] to feast, to enjoy, to demolish, to possess' (120). Referencing the common assertion that the Occupy Wall Street movement lacked legitimacy due to a refusal to make specific demands, Weiner reflects on how the rhetoric of the 'demand' works to cohere a collective body, and how artistic practices can refuse such coherences by making demands that do not necessitate possible solutions. Elsewhere in *Audience as Subject*, the unity of the crowd is pushed beyond

its affective limits. *Venerations: (Applause 3)* (2009-10), by the collaborative duo caraballo-farman, placed gallery visitors at the supposed centre of an audience's attention, in a room filled with TV monitors featuring continual footage of applause from over 1,500 talk shows, awards ceremonies and game shows. Relying upon applause as a communal signal of acceptance and adoration, *Venerations* accelerated the audience's gesture until it became meaningless noise – not unlike the shared minute of laughter during Silton's *Beefsteak* lecture.

Even when an audience *appears* connected – acting in unison towards a shared social goal – the end results are not always emancipatory. Ștefan Consantinescu's film *Troleibuzul 92* (2009) featured a man arguing with a presumed girlfriend on his cellphone on a public streetcar. As the argument grew increasingly more dramatic and violent, the other passengers remain inactive, averting their eyes. Consantinescu spoke to the failure of the crowd as a democratic ideal when, for instance, there was a collective decision *not* to engage. This film's productive contrast to *Audience as Subject's* thesis deserved further exploration in the catalogue's texts. Its inclusion in the exhibition also exposed the arbitrary nature of audience-as-subject: there is a significant difference between audiences that cohere by *choice* – which Hertz identified as a primary focus for the YBCA exhibition, asking: 'What are the impulses that continue to feed the urge to be together with others to experience arts and culture, entertainment, sports, or political events?' (17) – and those thrust together by chance or circumstance in public spaces. When does spectatorship become witnessing, voyeurism, complicity? Perhaps appropriately, writing about audiences as a coherent category proves just as slippery and elusive as the promise of internal social cohesion they carry.

My position – and approach – to *Audience as Subject* has been deliberately oblique: assessing the catalogue for an exhibition I have not seen is an awkward task, yet not wholly inappropriate given the subject matter. In her chapter, Hertz writes of the layered modes of spectatorship that exist within an age of live-streaming, video chats, and Twitter hashtags, asserting that structures of spectatorial presence remain in a state of flux: 'This new dynamic, where the electronically-equipped audience-reporter and remote viewer create and re-create experience in an instant relay, is reshaping contemporary performance- and event-based culture' (16). However, forms of virtual (as in, remote) participation have been embedded in gallery programming for decades. Flipping through the pages of a catalogue, I am already a remote member of a larger audience-community, relying upon the printed page as a platform to filter my participation with the YBCA's exhibitions. Hertz's 'new dynamics' of digitized participation carry older material heritages, and the *Audience as Subject* catalogue is a testament to them. Perhaps there was a missed opportunity here – a chance to rearticulate the limits of the YBCA's dispersed audience. After considering the themes addressed throughout its pages, I was left with further questions: who is the audience for an exhibition catalogue? How can one visualize the remote ecology of readership and exchange that exists within the distribution of gallery ephemera? For curators, administrators and artists alike, these questions are deeply relevant and underexplored.

YBCA's *Audience as Subject* was ambitious in scope and functioned as a thoughtful inflection upon the current art-world climate of social engagement and participation. The exhibition pushed and pulled at the limits of an audience as an agent for social cohesion – at times accelerating its power, at others exposing its fantasies. While the process of building audiences for exhibitions and catalogues could have been explored as a self-reflexive point of inquiry, the chapters included in the *Audience as Subject* catalogue posed cogent questions around the nature of presence, perception and political subjectivity. Like Sifton's collaborative laughter, *Audience as Subject* was most compelling for an emphasis on the slippages and contradictions inherent in its chosen subject matter.

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VISUAL CULTURES AS SERIOUSNESS, GAVIN BUTT AND IRIT ROGOFF

London and Berlin: Goldsmiths, University of London and Sternberg Press (2013), 88 pp., Paperback, ISBN: 978-3-94336-539-9, £10.00

Reviewed by M.J. Waters, Independent Critic

In today's cultural moment, amidst incessant social media and where Jay-Z raps about Mark Rothko/George Condo and parking twin Bugattis outside Art Basel, the idea of seriousness, in both the contemporary art world and indeed society at large, seems not only redundant but embarrassingly out of touch with the times. Furthermore, the rise of curatorial discourse has continually, sometimes consciously, sometimes not, worked against the modernist tradition forever marking serious figures – the likes of Theodor Adorno and Clement Greenberg – as terminally unfashionable in the process. Added to this milieu is the continued drive behind 'participation' in public programs, which strives to make art both accessible and inclusive for all, not bourgeois and meditative for the elite and deep-thinking few. In short, it feels as though professional and social lives have come to depend upon not being caught acting too seriously.

What better time therefore for Gavin Butt and Irit Rogoff to consider how 'seriousness' might be resurrected, but in new and useful ways that break from mocked stereotypes and begin to challenge the neo-liberal status quo. This slim book forms part of a series that has been developed among colleagues in the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London. Split into three discrete yet thematically interlinked chapters, it follows the series format: one text by each author plus a conversation between the two about the book's topic. Despite holding

university posts and recognizing the ways in which they are enmeshed in seriousness at some inescapable level, both authors share a level of contempt and skepticism towards its common understanding (earnestness, gravitas, heaviness, sincerity and so on). However, it soon becomes clear in their opening exchange that both authors have personal reasons for interrogating seriousness. They often talk about quite different things, and yet this in itself is interesting and one of the great strengths of the series format.

Butt's interests in traditionally transgressive modes such as drag lead him to question how things that are often considered 'light' can address 'serious' subjects such as politics, trauma and violence, and how these registers exchange and interact in 'myriad ways [that] impart value to phenomena that we don't necessarily take seriously' (35). His chapter draws upon the British queer performance artist/comedian David Hoyle, whose varied body of work includes satirical visitor tours of the Tate Modern in 2012 (evoking Andrea Fraser's performance as docent Jane Castleton at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1989). Through the example of Hoyle, Butt encourages reflection upon the various ways in which humour has been employed as a critical tool by those on the Left and in resistance to the tired tradition of what he terms 'morally serious Marxism' (27). A question arises, however, regarding how sharp this tool can be or whether it too has become easily assimilated under capital. One such example is the culture industry's recent embrace of camp comedic now-Hollywood celebrity Russell Brand (2013), who recently guest-edited the *New Statesman* in support of radical and revolutionary ideals, simultaneously stating that 'facetiousness has as much value as seriousness'.

Rogoff's concerns, on the other hand, lie closer to the symbiotic relationship between ivory-tower intellectualism (or 'intensity' as she more favourably puts it on page 12) and art/curatorial practices as they occur in the familiar forms of wall texts, exhibition catalogues, panel discussions and so on – what she terms 'performative seriousness' (20). Rogoff views the latter as a way in which intellectual work can be instrumentalized or 'flattened' by the art world (69). In her chapter, Rogoff recounts a personal story of how she was unsuccessful in applying for the directorship of a London cultural institution because she appeared to be too serious. She then inquires: 'If seriousness was unwelcome in the art world, I was not so much interested in the *why* as in the *by whom*, the *to what ends*, and the *being replaced by what*' (64, emphases in the original). While Butt's arguments often leave him wondering whether there is any point in resuscitating seriousness (31, 35), it is Rogoff who provides the more committed and positive definitions for its revisioning. She suggests that there is potential in seriousness: as a tool to ward off 'all of the caveats around that which you perceive as "the heart of the matter"' (17); as 'risk' and 'heterogeneity' (21–22); as comfortable with contradictions (23); as an 'act against cynicism [and] knowingness' (30); as promoting cultural 'significance' rather than 'importance' (33); as 'shared rupture' that offers opposition to 'triviality' or 'lightheartedness' (66); as 'a stubbornness that refuses to acknowledge the rule of power while fully understanding its dominance' (70); and finally as 'the quality of remaining *unconvinced*' not

through protest or analysis but as a state of being (70, emphasis in the original).

These ambitious claims underscore that this is not simply a book about semantics but rather a jumping-off point for entire positions and approaches to the fields of creative and academic inquiry. Indeed, although Rogoff posits seriousness as only 'a mode of "criticality"' (70), it often becomes difficult to distinguish this new seriousness from her previous and ongoing aspirational work around 'embodied criticality' and the relationship between theory and practice (Rogoff 2006). But despite this, the text as a whole is particularly admirable for its stubborn double resistance of both spectacular culture and traditional high culture. As the authors probe beyond that binary towards the ever-elusive 'third way', this timely and urgent title reminds curators and theoreticians of the importance of discontent and the reimagination in seeking out genuine new alternatives for their fields.

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ARTIST-RUN SPACES: NONPROFIT COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATIONS IN THE 1960S AND 1970S, GABRIELE DETTERER AND MAURIZIO NANNUCCI (EDS)

Zurich, Dijon and Florence: JRP|Ringier in co-edition with Les Presses du reel and Zona (2012), 294 pp., Paperback, ISBN: 978-3-03764-191-0 (English)/978-2-84006-512-0 (French), €20.00

Reviewed by Peter Anderson, Independent Critic and Curator

Towards the end of his recent extended meditation on curatorial practice, *Thinking Contemporary Curating*, Terry Smith makes the suggestion that 'the curatorial has expanded beyond the paracuratorial to become what might be called "the infrastructural"' (2012: 253). Smith's brief discussion of this shift is mapped out at the end of his examination of 'the exhibitionary complex', just before a turn to the question of 'curators as artists/artists as curators'. While the discussion of the exhibitionary

complex begins with a consideration of the rise of the art museum, at its conclusion Smith turns his attention to the field that might be seen to sit at the other end of the spectrum, pointing out the need to examine 'the pivotal role that alternative spaces, artist-run cooperatives, and supportive site-specific organizations [...] have played since the 1970s in the growth and diversification of infrastructure for the visual arts' (2012: 99).

Smith notes a couple of examples of 'the beginnings of such research' into what he terms 'infrastructural activism', such as *Alternative Art New York: 1965–1985* (Ault 2002) and *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam Era* (Bryan-Wilson 2009). Three recent anthologies could be added to the relatively small body of work in this field: *Institutions by Artists* (Khonsary and Podesva 2012), *Self-Organised* (Hebert and Karlsen 2013), and the subject of this review, *Artist-Run Spaces* edited by Gabriele Detterer and Maurizio Nannucci. Importantly, this cluster of new publications opens the field to a wider geographical perspective. It also broadens the dialogue between the historical project that seeks 'to ensure that alternative histories are not written out of the cultural histories of the recent past' (Ault 2002: 1), and the contemporary consideration of how the 'alternative spaces' field itself might be understood as a changing element within the broader context of art-making and curatorial practice. As Anne Szefer Karlsen asks in *Self-Organised*, 'do the self-organized subjects of today situate themselves differently from the past and if so, how?' (Hebert and Karlsen 2013: 12).

A fundamental requirement to answer this question is an adequate account of past practices, both as an 'international' and 'local' phenomenon. While both *Self-Organised* and *Institutions by Artists* oscillate between an historical and a contemporary focus, and draw their material from across the world, the emphasis of *Artist-Run Spaces* is primarily historical, providing an introduction to the origins and activities of nine 'alternative' organizations that were established early in the development of this field: Art Metropole, Toronto; Western Front, Vancouver; Artpool, Budapest; Ecart, Geneva; Zona, Florence; Franklin Furnace, New York; Printed Matter, New York; La Mamelles/Art Com, San Francisco; and MOCA/Museum of Conceptual Art, San Francisco.

One of the most interesting aspects of the examples presented in *Artist-Run Spaces* is that in most cases the organization's emphasis is as much on archiving and distribution as it is on what might be seen as standard 'white box' gallery activity – in fact, more often than not, the organization of exhibitions is not always the primary focus. So much so that it might be necessary to rethink the relationship between the curatorial and the paracuratorial in this context, not to mention exploring what might be thought of as an expanded view of art practice itself. Of particular interest are the chronological listings of activities included within each account, as in most cases they list everything from exhibitions to publications, performances, video screenings, and in the case of San Francisco's MOCA, their regular open bar gathering *Free Beer Every Wednesday*. Printed Matter's listing includes published editions and sales catalogues, although it is clear from the discussion between Julie Ault and Lucy Lippard that there was also a program of window exhibitions, but

few details are provided. *Artist-Run Spaces* is full of tantalizing moments that suggest further avenues for investigation. In this respect, it should be seen as an introduction to both the individual spaces and the field as a whole.

In addition to the chronologies, each space is provided with a brief introduction listing basic information such as operating dates, founding personnel, mission and a summary overview. This is followed by descriptions of the spaces that take a variety of forms, such as first-person memoir, interview, and third-party narrative. As such, the core materials shift between first-person accounts by participants and those built around subsequent archival research – an interesting challenge given that some of these spaces are essentially ‘archival’ in their focus, operating as collection and distribution points within a much broader and more fluid network of practices. Detterer’s well-considered introduction provides a clear outline of the logic behind the selection of the pioneering spaces included in this volume, which could be seen to offer ‘case studies’ for an examination of the field more generally.

Perhaps one of the most productive things that this book demonstrates is that so much of art practice does not result in the neat objects to be found hanging on the walls in art museums (or for that matter, languishing in storage), but in the more ephemeral materials that might just as easily find a home in a library or archive (or a small stack of boxes in a corner of the basement), not to mention those that slip away, consigned only to memory. What is important here is not just the *artwork*, but the work of making art, or perhaps the way the art emerges in the work, with any residue being a trace of the artwork, rather than the work itself. Providing an account of art practice in this context requires doing much more than selecting and presenting ‘artworks’, or seeing the presentation of ‘ephemera’ as somehow supplementary to the ‘real works’ in an exhibition. Perhaps what a book like *Artist-Run Spaces* does is to throw down a challenge, not just to the art historian who might seek to ensure that these important practices are not ‘written out’ of the history, but also to curators who will need to find innovative ways to present this aspect of art practice within exhibitions and displays.

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OUTRAGE: ART, CONTROVERSY AND SOCIETY, RICHARD HOWELLS, ANDREEA DECIU RITIVOI AND JUDITH SCHACHTER (EDS)

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What seems clear about any controversy over art – especially if one is caught in it – is that it *is* a controversy. That is how outrage works. Any person who disagrees with one's own position must be a cynic or a dupe. Relativism be damned. Despite how controversy feels, though, *Outrage: Art, Controversy and Society* argues the opposite: far from inhering in the object, controversy flows from context. Thus, about halfway through its introduction, the book's editors write that 'art objects in themselves cannot be controversial; we need people to make them so'. Following from this, they continue, 'What we see so often played out in the media is therefore not so much an aesthetic as a power play', comprising headline-hungry journalists, prominent, reliably inflammatory interviewees, and competing interests. Culture, as editors Richard Howells, Andreea Deciu Ritivoi and Judith Schachter therefore conclude, 'is not peripheral to an understanding of society but is fundamental to it' (5). Plenty of evidence in this book supports this conclusion. Still, the idea that controversy depends more on context than on the disputed object is hard to grasp, given how completely otherwise it feels in the storm's midst. And this slipperiness makes this book frustrating, limited and valuable in a way that symptomatizes the topic's complexity.

Consider the face-off that occurred in 1999, when Chris Ofili's painting *The Holy Virgin Mary* (1996) appeared at the Brooklyn Museum as part of the *Sensation* (1999) exhibition. Rudy Giuliani, then mayor of New York, found Ofili's use of elephant dung in the image self-evidently sacrilegious, unworthy of taxpayer support. For Arnold Lehman, at that time the Brooklyn Museum's director, Giuliani's attacks indisputably came from a mayor convinced that he operated above the law, specifically, above the US Constitution's First Amendment. Neither party – especially the mayor – likely pondered their passion's roots in their social context. Yet as Howells emphasizes in his chapter of this volume, context clearly had much to do with the explosion around Ofili's painting. When *Sensation* appeared in London two years earlier, Ofili's image attracted little attention. However, an uproar erupted around Marcus Harvey's painting *Mrya* (1995), a likeness of child murderess Myra Hindley, which in turn attracted little notice in the United States.

Nor is this the only case of controversy clearly depending on context. For example, Howells also looks at the explosions in Britain around D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, published in 1928 in France and Italy but unavailable in England until 1959. At that point, Penguin printed 200,000 copies to defy the then newly-passed Obscene Publications Act. The outcome's predictability – clueless prosecutor patronizes jury; acquittal and massive sales ensue – should not obscure Howells's point: 'Not a word of Lawrence's 1928 publication had changed in 30 years (the Penguin edition was proudly unexpurgated), but social attitudes had. [...]. As [Roger] Fry would have said, the controversy was therefore social rather than aesthetic' (22).

Nowhere is this position's difficulty clearer than in examples involving past dictatorships, as Carrie L. Ruiz shows regarding Francoist monuments in today's Spain. Ruiz starts from Spain's transition to democracy following the death of long-time dictator Francisco Franco Bahamonde in 1975. Franco had named Juan Carlos I, Spain's king, as his successor. However, upon his enthronement, Juan Carlos initiated a transition to democracy that, while smooth, came with a price: amnesty for Francoist collaborators. There were, Ruiz says, 'no hearings, no truth commissions, and no formal process of reconciliation'. It also meant, according to Ruiz, 'a 30-some-year repression of the past' resulting in 'a passivity toward all fascist visual representations in public spaces' (101–02).

However, in 2007 the then Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero passed the Historical Memory Law that, among other things, Ruiz writes, calls for 'the removal of all shields, insignias, plaques and commemorative elements of the civil war or dictatorship era from public spaces' (102). Public and political opinion immediately fell into three camps: that Zapatero was right; that Zapatero was wrong because such reminders help to keep citizens vigilant against fascism's return; and that Zapatero was wrong because Franco was good for the country. Despite this range, the name-calling started quickly, as Ruiz shows in her analysis of the controversy around one of the works that prompted the Historical Memory Law, José Capuz's massive bronze of Franco in Madrid. The mayor, Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón, had been under pressure to remove the statue, but when he waffled, the opposition accused him of currying favour with conservative voters.

The accusation's plausibility is beside the point. What matters is that the opposition accused the mayor of bad faith, rather than attacking his argument – because that is how these things go. The more heated the moment, the more compelling the belief that one's opponents are stupid, insincere or both. Yet, as with Ofili and Lawrence, context plays a role here, not only in the statue's presence but also in its absence, since the statue's removal resulted in a court case that carried on for four years. Yet a situation could easily be imagined in which the absence of a fascist monument – most obviously, if it had not been there to begin with – would have raised no comment.

It takes a village, in other words, to make a controversial artwork. In this day and age, no one will be astonished by such an argument, given how freely claims are bandied about how this or that is 'socially constructed' – even if, as Ian Hacking (2000) shows, many times it is not

clear to what the term refers. Much harder is accepting its implication: when the refusal of others to acknowledge that one's stance is right (i.e. that Ofili or Harvey are or are not offensive; that Damien Hirst is or is not a fraud) is infuriating, the fury derives less from rectitude than from the relation to an historical moment. Artistic controversies differ not in whether they are fundamentally social, but in whether their social bases are apparent.

A large part of controversial art's value exists in these moments of truculence, which urge one side or the other to reassess its position. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* showed that British expectations had changed, not only in terms of what literary merit might be, but also of who (aesthetically and legally) could judge that merit. And it would be nice (if unlikely) to think that the argument around Capuz's statue of Franco led the disputants to consider that their opponents might be sincere.

The interesting and sticky part of this book, though, is that it is not quite sure what it wants to be. In many ways, its quasi-sociological bent recalls such classic books from the 1980s as Howard Becker's *Art Worlds* (1982) and Janet Wolff's *The Social Production of Art* (1981). However, making this approach matter is harder than it might sound. The signal example of this difficulty is Peter A. Cramer's chapter on the print media's response to the Ofili controversy. This is an area of expertise for Cramer, who has published a book on *Controversy as News Discourse* (2011) and whose contribution here dissects who participated in the news discourse and how frequently, as well as trying to weigh the impact of their contributions. Ultimately, though, Cramer's discussion seems both self-evident and cyclical: near the end, he says that a good way to get oneself quoted is to be lively, controversial and well known (90), but he already has suggested that 'journalists and editors decide what counts as news and who is authorized to appear on the page' (75).

Yet it is hard to see what Cramer could do differently without following many of his fellow contributors down the road of not so much inspecting controversy as defending it, in the manner of such relatively recent books as John Walker's *Art & Outrage* (1998), Caroline Levine's *Provoking Democracy* (2007) and the special pleading for art's social role in Jean-Paul Martinon's edited volume *The Curatorial* (2013). Controversial art perhaps – even probably – expands people's horizons. But that does not mean public discourse would falter without it, despite what Manu Samriti Chander says in his chapter here on the persistence of controversy. In the bigger picture, the controversies around scientific freedom dwarf those regarding the arts. Robert Mapplethorpe and Richard Serra (who appear in *Outrage*); Damien Hirst and Andres Serrano (who do not) – none of their scandals come close to the firestorms touched off by global warming, genetically modified food or stem cell research (each of which is the subject of some excellent discussion in Giordano et al. 2012). But bringing art and science into contact, seeing how they could be mutually supportive – seeing, for example, their common cause around the right to be useless in a world hell-bent on maximizing instrumentalization – requires a conjunctural analysis that *Outrage* lacks, for all its talk of sociological methods and contextual awareness.

No doubt less unevenness would make *Outrage* more enjoyable, more satisfying. But enjoyment and satisfaction may not be the point. As Chander and Albrecht Funk both suggest in this volume's concluding chapters, displeasure and dissatisfaction do a much better job of encouraging people to hover outside themselves, to stretch toward that impossible Archimedean apex from which one can see one's true relation to the world.

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