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Introduction

The BA Annual publication collects and celebrates some of the best undergraduate academic writing at OCAD University from the Visual and Critical Studies (BA) Honours program. Comprising critical essays, exhibition reviews, artist portfolios, creative non-fiction, and thesis abstracts, this anthology reflects the unique approaches to art history and visual culture that are being undertaken in this program.

The BA Annual values and emphasizes interdisciplinary research methods and modes of thinking to provide diverse perspectives on art history and visual culture. The publication is managed and assembled by an editorial committee of Visual and Critical Studies students in collaboration with faculty advisors, the OCAD U Student Press, and the OCAD U Student Union. The editorial committee is comprised of third and fourth year students who lead the editing process with the support of faculty advisors, as well as first and second year students who lead fundraising and outreach initiatives. This provides opportunities for students to learn valuable community engagement, editing, and publishing skills from each other, and maintains the BA Annual as a sustainable long-term publication.

The BA Annual was created by and features writers, researchers, curators, artists, and designers. All individuals involved with the publication engage in multidisciplinary practices, challenging the boundaries of academic disciplines to produce innovative relationships between art, design, and academia at OCAD University and beyond.

Lex Burgoyne and Maya Wilson-Sanchez,
on behalf of the Editorial Committee

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Char Davies' OSMOSE: A Legacy of Conceptual Practices in Virtual Reality

Lex Burgoyne

OSMOSE, created by Canadian artist Char Davies, is an ecological experiment in embodying virtual space through performance. It is intended to be a full-body virtual experience that is navigated by users, who Davies refers to as 'immersants,' through biofeedback technology. Completed throughout 1994-1995, the environment is a 360-degree virtual space comprised of 3D computer-generated surreal, earthly settings. Scenes of foliage, waterbodies, subterranean visions and jarring grids intersect in strange hues, along with two layers of text: writings on the relationship between nature and technology, and a visualization of the very code that generates the experience. Immersants are also able to 'intersect with' and 'pass through' the settings from their first-person point of view, and their certain location is accompanied by a synthesized audio track. To experience OSMOSE, a head-mounted display (HMD) and a datasuit equipped with motion-capture mechanisms must be worn. The datasuit is a vest that monitors the wearer's balance and respiratory rate, both of which control horizontal and vertical movement within the environment.

OSMOSE was presented as a part of The Banff Center's Art and Virtual Environments Project, along with eight other virtual reality (VR) works between 1992 and 1994.[1] Davies' utilization of the datasuit was a particularly advanced interface featured in the exhibition project.[2] Western media artists have been developing reactive virtual environments since the early seventies; twenty years later, VR works were still largely being navigated by way of depersonalizing interfaces. A typical VR interface of the time was composed of an HMD, which responds only to the movement of the head, sometimes in combination with controls for the hand ranging from the simple joystick to motion-sensor gloves. In her essay "OSMOSE: Notes on Being in Immersive Virtual Space," Davies explains her reasoning in using the datasuit for navigation:

> OSMOSE as an artwork is motivated by the desire to heal the Cartesian split between mind/body, subject/object, which has shaped our cultural values and contributed to the West's dominating stance towards (and estrangement from) life... The methods are intended to reaffirm the role of the living physical body in immersive virtual space as subjective experiential ground.[3]

Davies' concern with the Western Cartesian mind-body split responds to ever-present anxieties over how this split is enforced by digital media, such as the HMD. OSMOSE's navigation via datasuit recuperates efforts to displace the autonomous art object through cybernetic and conceptual performance art practices that developed out of the aftermath of the Second World War, in order to position VR as a digital experience that can unite digital media and nature through embodiment.

The responsive nature of the OSMOSE environment recalls the cybernetic artworks that emerged in the late

1950s. Cybernetics is the study and development of self-regulating systems intended to learn from and react to information in a feedback loop. Technological innovations of the time, such as digital communications systems, were often posited as the tools for building a utopian future that could transcend the physical constraints of bodies and geography; cybernetics could improve the efficiency and efficacy of these systems. The Cold War era, however, was also characterized by anxiety over the use of cybernetics "for military strategy and the increasing computerization of society for the purposes of capital." [4]

The development of the HMD, the integral piece of technology for a VR experience, was notably funded by the USA's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency.[5] Artists responded to these anxieties about modern industrialization and the impacts of technology and digital media in daily life by incorporating it into conceptualist performance practices.[6]

Conceptualist practices emerging in the 1960s were informed by the notion that life and art had been separated, to the detriment of both, due to modernist insistences on the art work as an autonomous object that could belong to the institution of the gallery or museum. The conceptualist movement posited that simply reuniting art and life would be the solution to this reductionist view of art. Performance art was adopted as a technique of reunification, as an art work that is situated in the body and its movement cannot be reduced to a commodified art object. The embodied nature of performance art can also be characterized as a push back against the increasing sense of an immaterial form of life as digital media proliferated.[7] Digital media-performance hybrid works were specifically borrowing from the

conceptual performance projects that were contemporary to work, such as Nam June Paik's 1963 work *Participation TV*, that required audience participation in order to fully enact the work.[8] *Participation TV* encouraged viewers to perform the digital media art work by interacting with a series of modified televisions, the results of these modifications played out on their screens. *Participation TV* was a cybernetic system – each viewer's modification of a television informing the next viewer's decision about its modification – that challenges the assumption of the audience as helplessly passive consumers of media by inviting the subjective nature of humans into the rational, capital-driven realm of modern technological innovation.

Davies' desire for OSMOSE as a responsive and thus cybernetic system to reunite the Western Cartesian 'mind/body, subject/object' split follows the trajectory of conceptual and cybernetic-performance works. These works sought to challenge the increasing immateriality of life through the proliferation of digital media, and the division of art and life. These concerns have continued to be present since, and Davies addresses them in a quintessential medium for the state of digital media in the 1990s: the excitement of the VR boom, and the acutely increased degree of digitized immateriality it threatened. Most 3D virtual conventions of the time were rendered as "hard-edged solid objects in empty space"[9] which had been "inherited from the Western scientific and military paradigm[s]" of spatial representation.[10] The transparency of the OSMOSE environment and sense of buoyancy provided by the datasuit controls combine to create a kinesthetic immersion that Davies hopes will radicalize virtual reality as an art-technology "to re-in-

tegrate, re-sensitize, and re-affirm life itself."[11] In terms of the work's immateriality, like any performance work, the enactment of a VR environment such as OSMOSE necessitates the "crucial role of the body as the ground and medium for the experience."[12] Davies' choice of datasuit creates the illusion of a dematerialized interface as it responds to the user's performance of "involuntary physical processes and habitual muscular movements."[13] This allows the immersant to connect with the virtual environment in such an intensely visceral manner that it was reported by immersants the OSMOSE is "impossible to perceive as an autonomous aesthetic object."[14] To experience the VR environment of OSMOSE is to experience embodiment.

In enacting OSMOSE, embodiment is paradoxically achieved through performing within a digital environment. Concerns over the modernist legacy of art divorced from, and the increasing immateriality of daily life have been continuously amplified by technological advances in digital media, seeming to culminate in VR as the digital 'final frontier'. Char Davies elaborates on the conceptualist strategy of performance to challenge notions of cybernetic digital media as autonomous and imposing. OSMOSE adapts these strategies to address the implications of VR by manipulating the medium in such a way that it folds in on itself and loses its autonomy altogether.

The work's 'completion' through the datasuit relies entirely on the performance of human physicality, rather than the disconnected actions of manipulating only the head or extremities as in most common VR interfaces.

1. Steve Dixon, "A History of Virtual Reality in Performance," *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* 2.1 (2005): 23-54, 27.
2. Dixon 31.
3. Char Davies, "OSMOSE: Notes on Being in Immersive Virtual Space," *Digital Creativity* 9.2 (1998): 65-74, 67-68.
4. Charlie Gere, Digital Culture (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 108.
5. Dixon, 25.
6. Gere, 88.
7. Gere, 88.
8. Peter Osborne, "Survey," in *Conceptual Art: Themes and Movements*, ed. Peter Osborne (London: Phaidon, 2002), 23.
9. Davies, 73.
10. Davies, 73.
11. Davies, 71.
12. Dixon, 31.
13. Oliver Grau, "Immersion and Interaction: From Circular Frescoes to Interactive Image Spaces," *Medienkunst Im Überblick* (2004): 303-04, Medien Kunst Netz.
14. Grau.

My Dog, My Deck, My Death: The Networked Kinship

Victoria Girard

The moment my dog sees me, she wags her tail and barks excitedly. I coo sweet things in her ear and pet her. She's old, diabetic, recovering from cancer – all of which has taken its toll on her. She limps while she walks, her fur is shaggy, and she has white whiskers around her snout and her ears. Regardless, I think she is beautiful. She doesn't think of me at all.

She feels me. We are not connected through theory, but through emotion. She exists in relation to me, as I exist in relation to her. Should my dog die I will be affected, but I will endure. Should I die my dog might suffer an emotional trauma – you hear stories of animals who mourn their owners, howl when they visit their graves. My dog could also eat my body. You hear stories like this as well. People who live alone, who are the sole providers for the animal, provide even in death.

*

In "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin," Donna Haraway writes that it matters how kin generates kin.[1] Not how we make kin, nor how we birth kin, nor how we construct kin. How we generate kin. As though it is power, as though it is the next age of ourselves. There is a specificity to Haraway's words that causes me to pause. We are generating kin; we are the generation of kin.

*

This morning I did a spread of three tarot cards. I flipped over Death, the Seven of Swords, and the Hanged Man. I understand what these cards mean individually, how they exist in relation to each other. I am able to build a narrative out of their relationship and understand what they mean in relation to me. This is a construction, a manifestation of my own expectations and biases through the language of fortune telling. I stare at the cards like looking in a mirror. I am myself refracted.

*

After watching the movie *Her* a few months after it came out, my dad and I discuss it. I am a theorist. I tell him that the way we treat artificial intelligence in our media is a reflection of what we ourselves fear about a communal state – the removal of our individuality and our personal agency. My father is a programmer. He tells me that artificial intelligence is a tool; a vacuum does not long for agency. We do not feel as though we have wronged our combs when we use them. We are as fulfilled by our relationship to our technology as it is to us. We do not exist in separation. There is a network between the technology and ourselves. It is an anthropocentric eccentricity to inflict our own value system onto another creation.

*

Most likely, after my death, my dog would be taken to new owners, ones she would grow to love as much as she loved me. And if my dog died, I would eventually get a new dog. While my dog is an important part of my life just as

I am a part of hers, more important is the relationship itself. We are both variables in a larger equation.

*

The tarot card Death does not mean a literal death. It can mean a change of state, an ending, or experiencing a fate larger than ourselves. The idea of an experience larger than ourselves is where much of horror lies. We separate our self and the other. This is our modern inheritance of division between the mind and body, man and natural, master and slave. Anything that blurs that line is often misrepresented so as to suggest a reversal of the system rather than an upheaval. In movies that play upon the conflict of man versus machine, we see man subjugated. In *The Matrix*, humanity is monitored and deprived of agency to serve their machine overlords. In *Deus Ex Machina*, an AI fights for freedom at the cost of her human masters' lives. We are trapped within the framework of the master and slave. Instead of accepting our role in relation to our creations, we see only their role in relation to us. The machine is not an extension of the self; the self is not an extension of the machine. It exists somewhere between the two.

*

The tarot card Seven of Swords means to shirk responsibility. In relation to the other cards I drew, it means that I ignore the fact that I am responsible for my own changes and for my own connections. Something must give. It is impossible to exist without responsibility. I am responsible for the care of my dog. I have to feed her, walk her, love her and in return she provides me with companionship. We both fulfill our roles for each other and, in doing so, are fulfilled.

*

In the 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*?

Philip K. Dick focuses on the relationship between the human and the Other. While in the 1982 adaptation *Blade Runner* this is specifically manifest in human-android duality, in Dick's novel there is also a parallel emphasis on the relationship between human and animals, where humans are judged and seen as lesser if they cannot support and provide for a real animal. These two relationships, one empathetic and the other intelligent, are presented in contrast. While the main character Deckard cares for his animal, his goat, he 'retires' - kills - androids who have escaped from their masters. It is interesting noting which relationship survives in our pop culture.

*

The Hanged Man is supported by network connections, the ties that bind him, even as he is contorted by them. We cannot exist entirely within ourselves anymore. I rely on too many other things to define me. My network and my self are indistinguishable; it is impossible to say where I end and my connections begin.

"A little more than kin, and less than kind."[2] To twist Hamlet's words, we are no longer humankind. Human-kin has usurped its place, and has shifted the way that we define humanity. There is a kinship gifted to me in the meaning of my very existence. Just as an AI gives meaning to a developer, a master to their dog, the dog to the master, the reader to the cards, me to you.

*

My dog will die. So will I. In my death I will become the network, a cybernetic ghost that will continue to exist long after my body has decayed. This is rot as well, a feeding for the network state just as my body will feed the earth where it is buried. There is cyclical simplicity to this system. The network has nourished me and I will reciprocate.

1. Donna Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin," *Environmental Humanities* 6.1 (2015): 162.
2. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), I.II.3.65.

Rethinking Progress Through the Collage of Hans Arp

Sylvia Evans

In 1917 Hans Arp created a collage entitled Rectangles Arranged According to the Laws of Chance. As David Hopkins describes: "Arp randomly dropped pieces of paper onto mounts and fixed them where they landed. He claimed later that they were produced 'according to the laws of chance'."[1] While the composition that results from this methodology is aesthetically interesting, it is the underlying process itself that warrants further examination. The ethos behind the work was at once a reaction to the specific concerns of the time, specifically the outbreak of the First World War, yet continues to hold particular relevance and elucidation for artists and educators today.

The work of the Zurich Dadaists was a reaction and rejection of the modern Enlightenment modes of thinking that privileged reason and rationale above all. This way of thinking resulted in humans using their intellectual prowess, their perceived role as 'Masters of the Universe,' to invent more efficient ways of destroying each other. This is evidenced in the death and destruction of WWI. In terms of art, this thinking resulted in the transformation of artistic practice into something that was empty of

anything that reflected the chaos and contradiction of the world, which for Arp was intimately tied to the notion of chance.

There was a frustration and disgust felt keenly by many artists that art, in its current incarnation, was incapable of expressing the chaos, contradiction and absurdity that modern life and modern warfare had brought into being. In an attempt to work through these frustrations, Hans Richter describes the genesis of Arp's process in the following manner:

> Some time later [Arp] happened to notice these same scraps of paper as they lay on the floor, and was struck by the pattern they formed. It had all the expressive power that he had tried in vain to achieve. How meaningful! How telling! Chance movements of his hand and of the fluttering scraps of paper had achieved what all his efforts had failed t o achieve, namely *expression*. He accepted this challenge from chance as a decision of fate and carefully pasted the *scraps down in the pattern which chance had detemined.*[2]

What Arp was striving for was a method that would allow him to present a more genuine expression of the realities of everyday life - unpredictable and unplanned- which had not been possible under the rigorous and meticulous methodologies of the previous schools of art. Arp's more organic approach holds with the Dadaist rejection of these previously accepted modes; one of the tenets of the Dada movement was, of course, the utter rejection of art as an institution. In Rectangles Arranged According to the Laws of Chance, Arp expresses a rejection of the rational processes and mindset of the enlightenment age. From using craft paper, hand-ripped with ragged edges, to the rebellious act of releasing his hand and letting the pieces fall where they may, these actions were a complete digression from anything taught by the major schoolsof art up to that point.

Arp's approach is particularly interesting because it expresses a vital realization that human beings, as much as we try to control everything, are not the masters of the universe. Hopkins states that for Arp, Pre-War modern art was characterized by "egotism and a too-high valuation of humanity."[3] The modernist preoccupation with rational thought, as well as the belief that humans can know and control everything, is a core reason of the situation that humanity faces in the early years of the 20th century: war, destruction, mass death. For many critical artists, including Arp, the only response to this senselessness is to give up that control and to accept chance. Arp's collages 'created by chance' make the statement that the human hand is not the only tool capable of creating a work of art. Perhaps it was time for the human hand to take a rest.

In 1917, humanity (especially in the Western world), believed that they had some semblance of control over everything. This proclivity of Western society remains today. Even within the University, where we are taught to critically examine every issue and recognize that we are not infallible, there is still a permeating notion of "Man (Woman) as masters of the Universe." Advancements in technology today are tenfold in comparison to that which lead to the First World War. While some of these advancements can lay claim to bettering the world, we are still devising more fantastically horrendous ways of destroying life. It would seem little has changed in our current day. Where Arp and his Dadaist contemporaries

were faced with the newly invented machine gun and tank, we have nuclear warheads and drone strikes. The difference is that while this level of destruction was a new phenomenon for the Dadaists, war, destruction, and chaos now permeate contemporary life. And yet the question still remains: how do we express and creatively react to such realizations?

In Dada Fragments, Hugo Ball suggested: "Perhaps the art which we are seeking is the key to every former art: a salomonic key that will open up all mysteries."[4] Perhaps this key is what Arp was striving for by letting go of the rational in favour of embracing the irrational, but more natural, process of giving up the artistic hand to that of chance. Many artists have embraced nature as subject, waxing poetic about the sublimity of the natural world. Arp went so far as to embrace the natural law of gravity, not as subject, but as process, allowing nature itself to dictate the composition of his collage. There is a positivity and peacefulness in this idea, a sort of calm that is not present in other Dadaist works. Where Ball and Tristan Tzara saw Dada as means of destroying what art had become (or failed to become), Arp was looking past the destruction to some sort of renewal that could come out of a change in mindset. In this way Arp saw Dada, or his interpretation of Dada Art, as a curative exercise.

Arp's collages arranged by the laws of chance suggest that he saw a potential for art to change the way things were being done and the manner in which practices of art were understood. His behaviour is reflective of how Peter Bürger describes the Surrealists who would come after him, in that he was able to "[renounce] specific goals in favor of a pervasive openness to impressions."[5]

Through chance, Arp recognized another conception of the notion of "progress." If before "progress" meant technological innovations that were materialized in machines of war, quests for gaining of more territory, annihilation of whatever stands in one's way (all in the name of "humanity"), "progress" then needed to be re-thought. For Arp this was only achievable by stepping back, relinquishing our human obsession with control, and letting another force play a role.

In his own words, Arp was looking for an art "to cure the madness of the age … a new order of things that would restore the balance between heaven and hell."[6] The curative element is found in the process, not the finished product. The cure is not the destruction of art in its current form but the opening up of possibilities for how we conceive of progress, as well as questioning the assumption that human control is the only way to achieve such progress. As artists and scholars, we must ask not only what we can learn about this artwork and its history, but what we can learn from it today.

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1. David Hopkins, *Dada and Surrealism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 69.
2. Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2002), 51.
3. Hopkins, 8.
4. Hugo Ball, "Dada Fragments" [1916-1917], trans. Eugene Jolas, in *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology,* ed. Robert Motherwell (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2d ed., 1989) 54.
5. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 65.
6. Hans Arp, quoted in Hopkins, 8.

Excerpt from The Ecology of Jazz: In-between Aesthetic Ecstasy and Apathy

Won Jeon

When we are overcome by something outside of us, we say that we are lost for words. It is not our conscious choice deciding that words seem unnecessary or meaningless. We usually find words to say, to at least harbour in our minds when unspoken. What we know as 'meaning' exists in words. But when words are absent, it is because our bodies are flooded with an entirely different kind of language. This sensorial deluge happens everywhere in our lives: a song putting a floorboard in my chest, a gastronomical adventure with lovely company, or just entering in a place soaked in a liquid energy too agile and ghostly to clutch.

In a paradoxical moment, that aesthetic ecstasy mimics the numbness felt in my core when I shut out the world for this reason or that – a vicious inability to feel anything, withdrawn into my cave-like mind. When we dwell in the wordlessness of feeling, this shadow side of art and aesthetic engagement manifests – diminishing the good, the beauty of art. The language I know as my own, the language to articulate my feelings and reflections upon the thing just experienced, comes later. Words arrive when the hankering voice of the trumpet or the delicate

inflections of the film (that which immediately absorbs and consumes me within such an experience) is calmed within me, and I am fully present and participating in a three-dimensional reality.

Between the phenomenological experience and the wordy meditation on that experience there is a middle space. It is a place of multi-task work, whether I am conscious of it or not. In this middle space I gather remnants of the experience embedded within me, and I arrange and orchestrate my words as well as I can, to honour the thing as it is. This may be a specific art object, or a walk in the woods, or time spent with a loved one.

I believe that syntax in language is a curatorial practice. We tear down and rebuild the walls of our memories, the repository of past experience, until our words begin to compose a rhythm, an orchestration of our own that does not diminish the original feeling. This middle space is not measured by time. The depth and breadth of the middle space is not contingent upon the duration of hours or days or years in between the experience and the articulation. Neither is it dependent on individual, unilateral efforts. Instead, there is performative action, metaphoric meaning and intricate connection, a fusing of my identity with something greater in this space. I splice my history with others, the artists and various beings and entities integral to me. There is an accumulation of experiences, ways of seeing and knowing, stories and lessons, modes of expression and languages co-existent and in constant exchange with one another. The middle space is an ecosystem, a deep green forest. When curating my own thoughts I draw from this middle space like a breath of fresh air.

*

Jazz and love are intertwined in profound tautness. Neither love nor jazz is immortal, but they do not have a fixed destination. They both exist through improvisation and relationship. Love exists in an in-between space, in uncertainty and instability, in constant, incessant flux. Love is a becoming, an improvisational spirit coping with its own fluidity. Love must move to stay alive: to not harden or clamp up into other spirits such as pity, a sense of stability in familiarity and routine, duty and obligation.

Movement is also the spirit of jazz, the deep structure of its sentience. 'Jazz purism' is an oxymoron, for the life force of jazz itself is constantly adapting in accordance with its surroundings, nimble transformation, and its internal circuit between decreation and recreation.

It is the daemon-like nature of metaxy – the home of change, intersectional being, and in-betweenness – that ensures the survival of love. To asphyxiate the movements, exchanges, and dialogues within such a middle space is to kill it. A picture becomes an icon, a song becomes an anthem, and ideas shackled into an ideology.

*

There is a sense that the middle space of nationhood is strengthened through reciprocity between people, and reciprocity between people and place. We must find the right words to enact this contribution: a gift exchange of love with the more-than-human world. To me, the language(s) of art and metaphor is most hopeful.

Art and aesthetic experience in everyday life expand into a large metaphor for the integration of plurality, multilayered imaginations and unfamiliar perspectives into the lives of all people living on the land. The abundance of differences is not without a shadow side. It is easier to distinguish epistemic paradigms as distinct, unrelated,

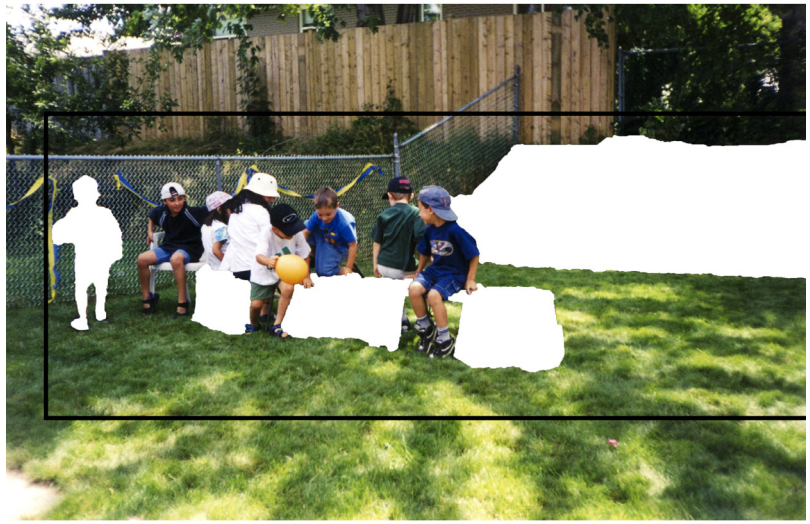
than to fall wordless and defenseless. It is simpler to divide and categorize groups for the sake of "order and organization". Yet isn't that the very dominant logic of "us and them" that exists at the root of a nation born out of a colonial spirit?

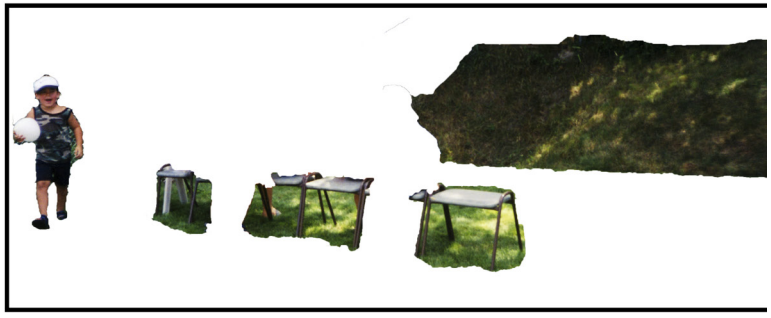
The cultural and ecological work that must be done to bolster societal middle spaces must involve a stretching of awareness and conversation, like the way we stretch out a canvas: to make space for more story, specificity, colour and complexity – in the collaborative picture we call a nation.

Emulsion

Anthony Masucci

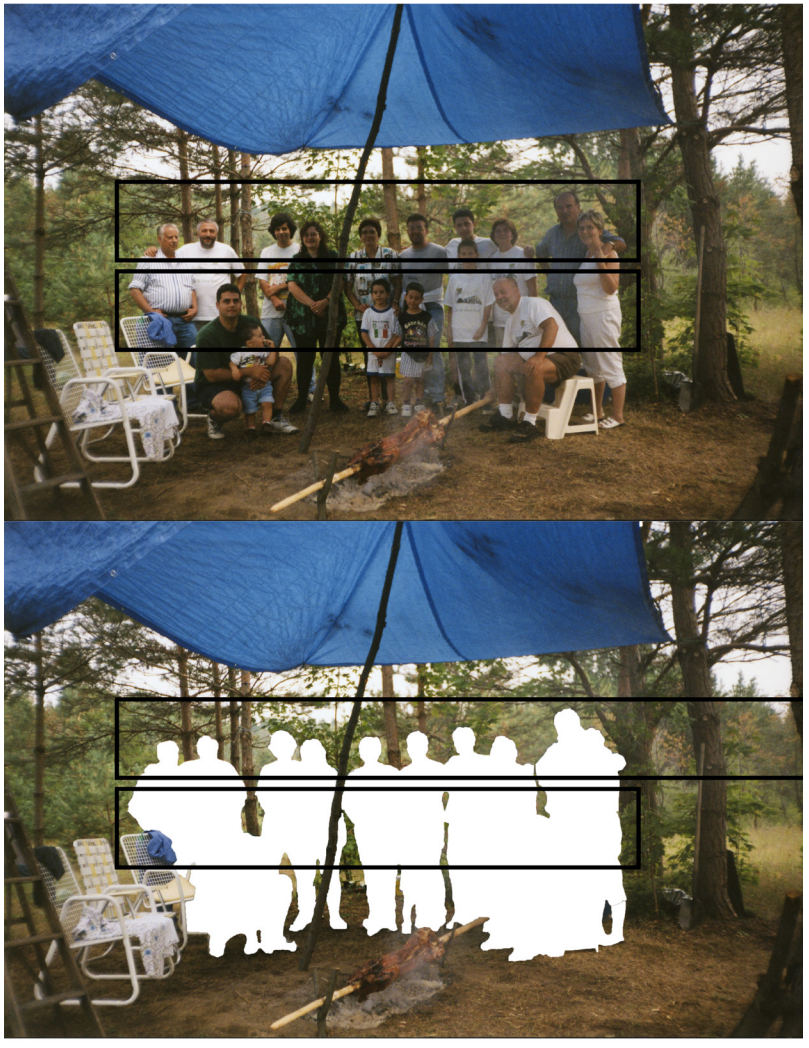
Emulsion (2017) is an investigation of how the manipulation of objects within a photograph allows for new perspectives to be found in the memories portrayed. By deliberately disassembling specific moments of remembrance and forgetting through the displacement of objects, people, and places, the series examines the photograph's significance with regards to the construction of new ways of understanding my own history.



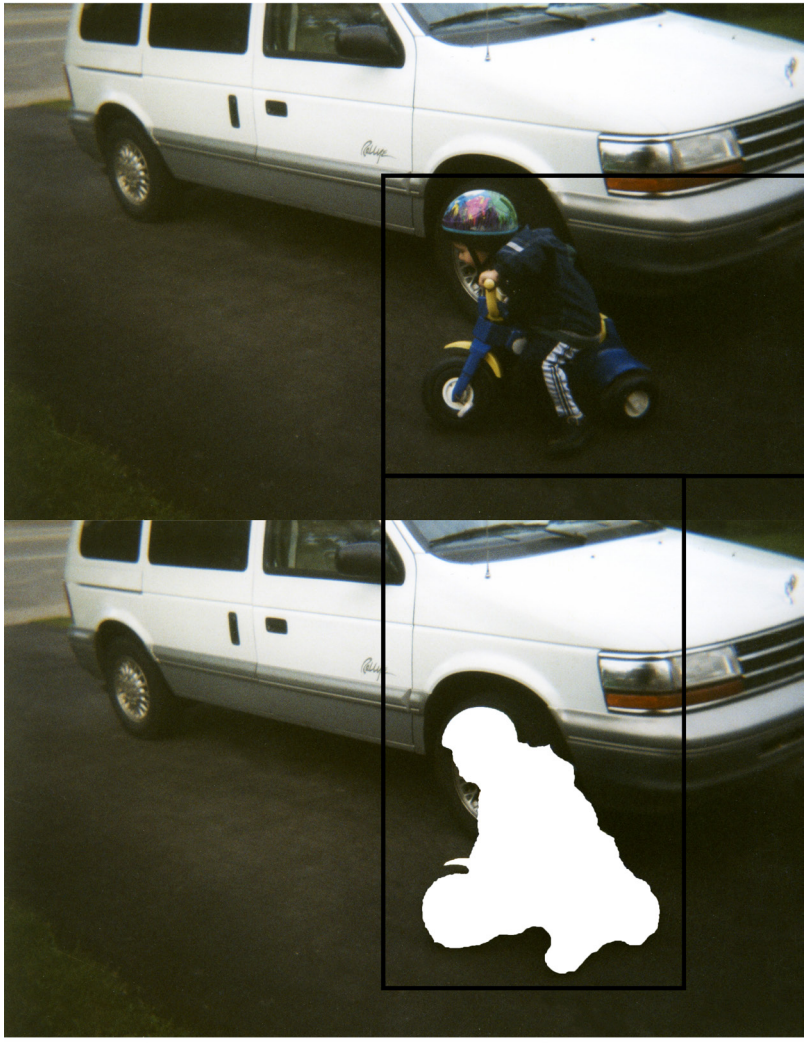


matt's seventh birthday

anthony's sixth birthday

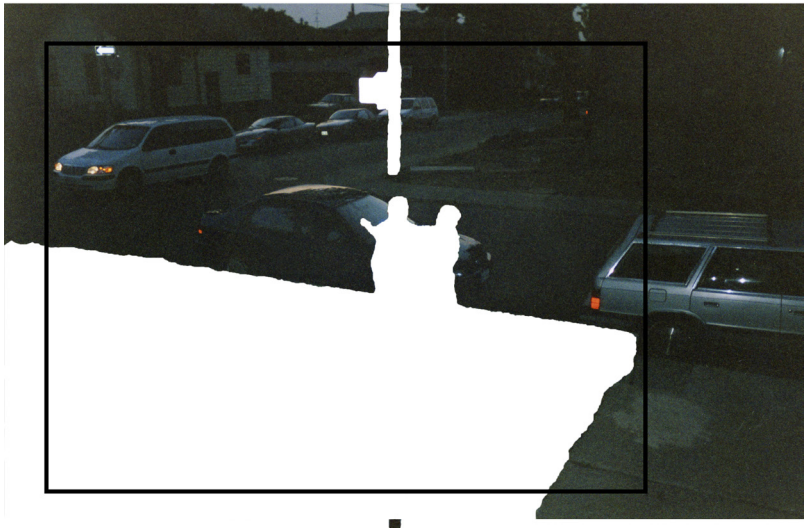


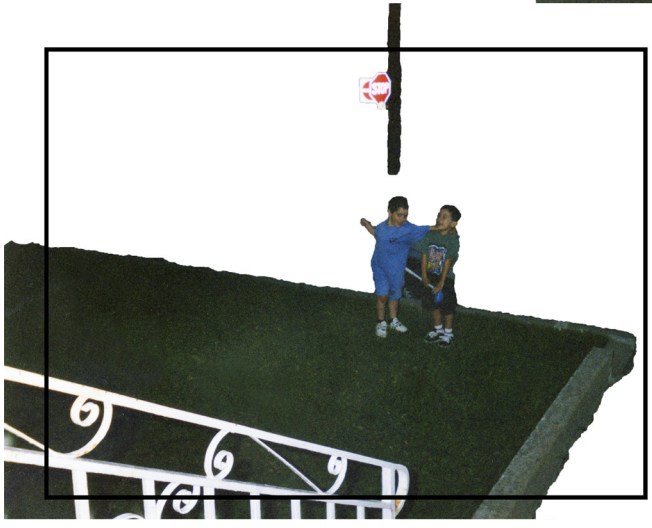
mario's pig roast



anthony's first bike

anthony's fifth birthday





anna's old house

anthony's first birthday

An Analysis of The Louvre as a Place of Ritual and Enlightenment

Daniela Nowotarska

Art museums can be considered places of ritual that educate visitors and provide an opportunity for them to experience "enlightenment". The Enlightenment, a movement that emerged in European societies in the eighteenth century, introduced and emphasized the importance of becoming aware of one's own ignorance, and finding the courage to understand and expand one's knowledge through education – particularly through reasoning. For the purpose of this essay, these values will be collectively referred to as "enlightenment". As many art historians argue, individuals may attain such enlightenment through the art museum. This is due to the fact that the art museum is a space where rituals occur; in her book *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*, author Carol Duncan provides an explanation on the subject. She defines ritual as being "associated with religious practices – with the realm of belief, magic, real or symbolic sacrifices, miraculous transformations, or overpowering changes of consciousness".[1] The Louvre Museum, established in 1793 in Paris, France, is one example of an art museum that provides its spectators with an opportunity to partake in such ritual and potentially experience enlightenment. From its architecture to its gallery design and curation, the Louvre is a place of ritual where individuals are isolated from everyday concerns and are able to experience the world from a different perspective.

From an architectural point of view, art museums, especially monumental ones like the Louvre Museum, are built to resemble religious buildings. Churches, temples, and other places of worship have historically been the source of inspiration for museum building plans. These religious buildings themselves were art museums as they housed some of the most impressive works of art for the religious practices occurring within. However, museums are not necessarily religious places. Duncan states that "our culture classifies religious buildings… as different in kind from secular sites such as museums… [e]ach kind of site is associated with an opposite kind of truth and assigned to one or the other side of religious/secular dichotomy".[2] In terms of attaining enlightenment, this means that the museum and church have to be separated because enlightenment requires removing oneself from the religious values of objects and focusing on what value can be derived from the object through reason. This includes an examination of an object's materiality, its cultural, historical, and political contexts, as well as the lives of those who created the object, in order to determine its significance to human beings. Although people have attempted to isolate the church and the museum, it is difficult to overlook the ritual characteristics accompanying the architecture of the museums. The art museum's space sets the stage for religious performances to be enacted often unknowingly. Through its unspoken rules on behaviour, sequenced rooms, as

well as selection and placement of the works of art, the museum is inevitably a place of ritual.

The Louvre is an iconic museum because it is home to what is perhaps the most famous painting in the art world: the *Mona Lisa*. Painted by Leonardo da Vinci between 1503-1506 CE, it is located in the east wing of the Louvre and is enclosed behind a bulletproof glass. Isolated from other European paintings found in that section, the *Mona Lisa* captures the attention of its spectators. Through its style and technique, specifically that of sfumato, the famous portrait elicits from its audience a type of trance created through her calm expression that contrasts dramatically with her strong, direct stare. As a result of this psychological complexity, spectators may have a transformative experience as their minds escape reality and they are mesmerized by its aesthetic and the mystery behind its high status. This is, after all, what enlightenment is about - trying to find reason, in this case, behind the painting's fame. Additionally, having increased wall space around specific paintings in the Louvre aesthetically emphasizes the importance of the artworks by removing any surrounding distractions. Duncan argues that "the more 'aesthetic' the installations - the fewer the objects and the emptier the surrounding walls - the more sacralized the museum space".[3] This means that the alienated objects themselves are part of the museum ritual because the viewer is now expected to be able to experience the artwork more intimately and develop a deeper connection with its past. As with other places of worship and their religious ceremonies, the visitor of the museum searches for a revelation through ritual. For example, when worshippers pray to and through images of holy figures, they hope to communicate to a supreme being who will deliver salvation or provide them with a purpose in life. The same applies when touring the museum space - museum visitors can expect to find reason through looking at artworks of varying subject matter. In this sense, the Louvre is therefore a place where one can be united with the "immortal spirits of the past"[4] through its art objects and be surrounded by a kind of supernatural presence that is often experienced in religious places.

As mentioned previously, the art museum's ability to mentally free individuals of their current struggles and guide them toward a timeless and limitless perspective is also made possible by ritualistic actions. Art historian and past curator of the Louvre Museum, Germain Bazin, considered the art museum to be a temple where time is irrelevant. As cited in Duncan's text, Bazin wrote that visitors of the museum search for "momentary cultural epiphanies".[5] These epiphanies mean that the art museum is a place where a spectator has a liminal experience that encourages new ways of thinking because one is removed from the boundaries of their reality. Multiple places and times in history are presented together in one space. In relation to enlightenment and the Louvre, the museum therefore attempts to push its audience out of their ignorance through the ritual practices of curating, touring, and looking at this limitlessness. The Louvre Museum's rituals intend to enlighten through this ritualistic, time-defying transformation.

The Louvre Museum does not only open up a liminal space to allow the development of new perspectives, but encourages learning by presenting various historical periods and communities from around the world. The curation of the art museum is intended to guide its

spectators through the history of human life and present its transformation within that time. As art historian Donald Preziosi states, "museums are commonly constru(ct)ed as…"collections" of objects [that] simulate the…evolutionary development of a form, theme, or technique… of a person or people".[6] The wonder provoked through this exceptional depiction of timelessness within the boundaries of the Louvre Museum is potentially the closest experience one may have to attaining enlightenment. By offering collections of art from around the globe such as Egyptian culture or paintings from the Italian Renaissance, the Louvre presents spectators with multiple lenses to view history through, increasing their opportunities for further education and releasing them from the boundaries of their everyday lives. Through its architectural elements, curatorial design, suspension of time, and purpose as an educational resource, the Louvre Museum provides enlightenment for its visitors through its encouraged ritual behaviours.

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1. Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 8.
2. Duncan, 7.
3. Duncan, 17.
4. Duncan, 17
5. Duncan, 11.
6. Donald Preziosi, "Collecting/Museum," *Critical Terms for Art History*, eds. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 408.

Street Art and Fine Art: Kim Dorland's Wall

Isabelle Fellini

What could be more interesting than a 40-year-old, established fine artist creating work based around an antagonized youth community that he has never been a part of? Perhaps anything. Kim Dorland's painting Wall (2015) was displayed at Art Toronto 2016, and demonstrates exactly what has just been described.

The painting depicts a grey wall covered with graffiti-style tags and drawings, layered over each other in a way that is typical of overcrowded Toronto graffiti spots. Right away the bold colours of this piece caught my attention and the incorporation of graffiti into fine art excited me, but there was a great deal about this painting that I didn't notice at first glance which compelled me to question its virtue. Dorland uses impasto, layering bright greens to create textured trees standing in front of the grey wall that occupies most of the canvas. An orange sky is just visible over the top of the wall, contrasting with the greens in the foreground. A sidewalk is visible below the wall and some green paint from the grass drips down onto it, paralleling the drips of paint on the graffiti on the wall. This graffiti ranges from bubble letters and simple tags to more illustrative graffiti that is

often associated with an 'art school' style. There is a strong sense of movement in the impasto of the trees that complements the busy, text-covered bottom half of the canvas. What I found even more striking than the vividness of this piece was how Kim Dorland referenced Toronto graffiti taggers and actually recreated some of their tags in this painting.

Dorland briefly discussed his art with me over email, saying that he was "interested in the way graffiti marks public spaces and also leaves a trace of occupation". While this idea is compelling, Wall is more defined by the fact that Dorland does not actually write graffiti himself, something that he also disclosed to me over email. Instead of interpreting an art form and a community that is often looked down upon and redefining its artistic value through his work, Dorland's distance from that community makes this piece feel exploitative. When taggers and people who are actually involved with the graffiti community make fine art that uses graffiti or graffiti styles, it often reads as an expression of the artistic value and richness of graffiti. However, when someone outside of this community integrates graffiti into their artwork, it loses its contextual meaning and instead reads as capitalist, making no real statement about graffiti or the way that graffiti and its artists have been antagonized. Artists representing antagonized communities and practices that they are not a part of is nothing new. This approach feels worn out and does not translate to anything other than an act of intrusion and self-assertion.

By no means is using or referencing graffiti in fine art always a bad thing. The integration of fine art and street art is nothing new and has a rich history, starring figures such as Basquiat, Haring, and Banksy. However, all of these artists' practices are distinct from Dorland's. Basquiat and Haring both had history in the graffiti scene and validated this scene as "real" art through their artistic practice. Street art is not usually deemed 'real' or valid because it exists outside of art institutions. It cannot be sold and thus is seen as having no value. The fact that Haring's and Basquiat's street art was and is able to exist inside museums and be treated as fine art – as art with worth – is a monumental redefinition of graffiti and its community. Banksy's career does not follow this model; instead, he gained celebrity from his fine arts approach to street art. Banksy executes his work in way that is palatable for the masses and conforms to fine art ideas about what gives something 'artistic worth.' While many graffiti taggers dislike this approach, it is important to recognize the differences between redefining street art from the inside and trying to redefine street art from the outside. What all of these artists' practices do have in common, however, is a desire to legitimize street art. As an illegal practice, graffiti is seen as worthless with no value as "real art". Approaching and judging graffiti by the same standards as fine art is certainly unproductive, the work of these artists that place graffiti into the context of fine art help the practice to be considered more seriously by the general public. Kim Dorland's work is set apart from these artists because his integration of fine art and street art is being orchestrated from outside of the graffiti community.

Dorland also wrote to me about his intention of respecting the taggers who he represents in his work: "I always do my best to get the tag perfect to respect the integrity of the person to whom it belongs to". I would like to call into question how, exactly, is this respecting

their integrity? It would be one thing to be inspired by the aesthetics of a graffiti spot and to create a painting as a product of that inspiration; it's a whole other idea to have the intention of copying someone's work without permission. Regardless, the tags that I recognized in this work did not look like the actual tags I have seen around the city that they were modelled after. I asked Dorland if this piece had received any response from people within the graffiti community and he said that it had not. Dorland has taken the work of individuals he does not know and used their lack of agency in fine art environments to ensure a closed dialogue in which he does all the talk and does not allow for any responses or exchange of ideas. While Dorland claims this piece is more about the area that has been marked by the graffiti, rather than the graffiti itself, it's impossible to shake the feeling of intrusion when considering that there are actual taggers represented.

The argument for street art being a valid type of art in itself is somewhat used up and of the past. Myself and most other graffiti writers that I know are at the very most disgusted and at the very least exhausted by the hype of Banksy-esque graffiti that encourages street art to be judged using the same criteria as fine art in a gallery. It is important to recognize graffiti as a distinct community that produces unique work, and that it is not interlaced with the fine art world. Too often graffiti is judged by the standards of fine art, overlooking the fact that it is already a community with its own set of standards and values in place.

There are few opportunities for graffiti writers to profit from their work, and those who do are often viewed as sellouts by other graffiti writers who value recognition in the community over making money.

Dorland's Wall has been listed with an approximate price point of $20,000 to $30,000.[1] The taggers whose work he has appropriated into this painting, and thus a fine art environment like Art Toronto, are individuals who typically do not monetarily profit off of their work. Dorland is profiting off of the graffiti artists' work, work that these people risk themselves for and will likely never make money from. In addition to this, these taggers might never see this painting. Through appropriating the aesthetic of a community that does not necessarily have the same access to the art world, Dorland is capitalizing on the fact that these people will likely not have the opportunity to speak out against him, even if he is doing this unintentionally. Furthermore, he is taking advantage of the fact that the way these individuals share their work is illegal, and for them to speak out and claim ownership over their work would be incriminating.

Although unfortunate, the issues with this piece fittingly characterizes the current contemporary art climate. I would like to see fewer artists capitalizing on "alternative" communities and using them as a tool to access a seemingly counter-cultural niche in fine arts, achieving an 'edgy' or trendy image. The main attendee demographic of Art Toronto is certainly not the same demographic that is involved with – or even that typically has an understanding of – the graffiti scene in Toronto. This piece illuminates the consumerist disposition of the contemporary art world. What has been made clearest to me is that it is fashionable to be young. This is not to say that there are not graffiti writers in Toronto who are the same age as Dorland himself, but that graffiti has traditionally been a practice dominated by youth, while scorned and criminalized by older generations. Dorland

using this subject makes his art feel more relatable to young viewers, and edgier to older viewers. The criminalization of youth community graffiti and the commodification of this graffiti into fine art indicates a disjunction between it and the politics of that which it represents. Artists need to become more comfortable with questioning the politics of their work and the effects of their own agency.

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1. "Kim Dorland Wall 2015," Artsy - Discover, Research, and Collect the World's Best Art Online. Accessed March 5, 2017. https://www.artsy.net/artwork/kim-dorland-wall-1.

Theaster Gates: How to Build a House Museum
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto
July 21, 2016 to October 30, 2016

Nikole Turrer

All individuals are capable of acquiring the capacity to formulate their own aesthetic judgements by harvesting sentimentality, intellectuality, and affectivity. To connect with these channels on a deeper level, I chose to aesthetically explore the exhibition *Theaster Gates: How to Build a House Museum*, which sheds light on the experiences of marginalized Black lives. The representations in this exhibition – explored in various mediums such as music, sculpture, and installation – are ultimately symbolic of struggle and freedom.[1] When immersed within the exhibition, spectators are able to make their own judgements on the rich, sensory theatrics that surround them. Gates' exhibition allows the audience to connect with morality and spirituality through its imaginative theatrics.

The exhibition presents its message about Black identity not through a heavy handed didacticism, but through the aesthetic of the artworks. I found that looking at the 'exterior' of the installations allowed me to gain a sense of its interior values. Through the exhibition, viewers are able to question societal constructs with regards to how race has been navigated in the past and present. I was

prompted to ask myself larger questions about humanity, especially focusing on discrimination and identity. The exhibition serves to celebrate Black culture and accomplishments throughout history. It communicates motivational imagery toward overcoming barriers such as racial hierarchy, politics, and visibility. This provides reassuring hope that progress is being recognized and happening. By confronting racial discrimination and the devastating barriers that come with it, Gates' endorses the need to acknowledge equal opportunity.

The beauty of the exhibition is delightful not by conventional artistic standards, but rather because of how ideas are composed through different mediums to create "art within the mind". The installations become a conduit between the community the artist identifies with and the contemporary aesthetic the spectator draws from it. The exhibition presents opportunities for viewers to ask questions that are bigger than the individual, which I found to be spiritually engaging. Unconsciously, the viewer is enveloped into an empathetic state of being which allows them to make a connection with morality, spirituality, and identity on a greater level.

Standing within the exhibition, I could not help but feel that my enjoyment of the exhibition should be felt by everyone experiencing it. The sheer aesthetics of lights and motion pictures in conjunction with music creates an orchestra of delights. *Theaster Gates: How to Build a House Museum* provides an enjoyable experience because it prompts the spectator to investigate society further by contemplating the advancement of ethics and morals. The Theaster Gates exhibition is a triumphant parade toward overcoming barriers and celebrating Black culture as it thrives regardless of these barriers.

This further confirmed for me that appreciating the arts of all cultures is fundamental because it continues to support the values and achievements of all human beings.

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1. "Theaster Gates: How to Build a House Museum," *AGO*, 30 Oct. 2016, http://www.ago.net/theaster-gates-how-to-build-a-house-museum.

Descent to Commodification: Structural Change in the Contemporary Art World

Jessica Sharples

The debut of Marcel Duchamp's Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2, at a show amongst his own peers, ended with the work itself never being seen. The request for its withdrawal can easily be seen as the beginning of a stark change in the art world, where camaraderie is replaced with a new ritualistic value centred around the world market, leaving cultural significance in a precarious position. Historically organized around social groups of artists, forming the -isms and styles familiar today, we instead begin to see a marked divide taking shape between art as a commodity, and art as a pseudo-religion. This oil painting embodies the cultural nuances of the time, thrusting Duchamp into an undesired spotlight that laid the foundation for his future readymade institutional critiques. The Nude represents a shift in the esoteric nature of the art-world, where avant-garde roles become convoluted in the face of commodification and the creation of a new art market.

There has always been a community aspect to the world of art, where artists have grouped together to help shape their ideas and discuss cultural issues of their time.[1] Much like the idea of a critique in Western art schools of today, these groups judged aesthetic value through contemporary lenses. Duchamp's relationship with the artists of the Paris avant-garde led him through the discovery of Cubism and the advent of photographic technology, which resulted in his newly formed style. This community-based hive-mind acts as both a blessing and curse, fostering the environment required for encouraging experimentation while simultaneously dictating the approved discourse.[2] The Nude was subjected to both of these pressures, being an exact product of this grouping as well as being rejected by its culture. Only by entering a foreign community did Duchamp's piece garner respect, when it was shown at the Armory show in New York a year later, where it became subjected to an entirely new outlook in an art world still in its infancy.

Just as art in its contemporary moment must always reflect the culture of its time, so too must the institutionalizing factors of the art world. Post-war culture can be seen reflected in the community, beginning to divide artists into either ritualistic or capitalist tendencies.[3] Much of how Duchamp's communities functioned mirrors ritualistic practices. Holding traditional puritan views of art, Duchamp can be seen straying into a kind of theological vision of art, rejecting the idea that his work might hold an inherent value besides the aesthetic. The Nude was sold for a mere $240, even by the time's standards not a remarkably large price tag.[4] But Duchamp, belonging to an intellectualist grouping of the avant-garde did not create the work in order to make a profit from it. As Carol Duncan argues, "...the modern aesthete [was] a devotee who achieve[d] a kind of secular grace through communion with artistic geniuses of the past – spirits that offer a life-redeeming sustenance."[5]

From this moment forward, the art market would become a larger and more ominous presence in the art world, looming over how artists choose to create. Prominent art schools draft their curriculum around the art market, either pandering to it for the financial futures of their students or choosing to impose subversion in their doctrine.[6] The fame of the Nude allowed for Duchamp to have influence within art circles, creating his readymades as institutional critiques, but the capitalist forces behind the art market would lead him to bow out from the art world altogether.[7] The home for avant-gardists became lost within the shifting power structures of the art world, pushing criticality to a mere footnote in the perceived value of work. While communities like those of Duchamp's earlier career still exist, their focus is more toward that of mutual support than embodying the avant-garde to usher new movements into the art world. The new art market made it impossible to create art without feeling the need to be commodified as an artist, as an actual entity to be worshipped in celebrity, thus adding another unavoidable aspect of what it means to actually be an artist.

Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2 embodies an important turning-point in the world of art, showcasing the end of amnesty for the creative world from that of capitalism. Differing from the patronage system escaped decades prior, this new system would strip artists of their freedom from commodity ideals. The cubist style of Duchamp's Nude almost mocks his resistance to this transition, representing a movement so influenced by the same technological advances that would systematically change the structure of the world. Unable to escape the industrialization of the world, Duchamp had no way to keep the art world small or elite, and with mass production the audience exponentially increased in size. The function of the art world has changed over the course of time, with some groups of artists still attempting to remain unaffected by the commodification of the subject at all. The Nude can serve as a stark reminder that those who do not learn to work with the system cannot change it, and have little choice but to leave it.

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1. Sarah Thornton, "The Crit," *Seven Days in the Art World* (New York: WW Norton, 2009), 69.
2. Thornton, 54.
3. Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, "On the Hot Seat: Mike Wallace interviews Marcel Duchamp," *Art History* 23 (2000): 35-55.
4. Sawelson-Gorse, 40.
5. Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 17.

Graduating students in the Visual and Critical Studies BA Honours program at OCAD U have the opportunity to research and produce a major research paper in their final year of study. The projects completed by our graduating cohort reflect the diversity of topics and wide range of perspectives that are possible through a global approach to the study of art history.

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Sylvia Evans
Supervisor: Dot Tuer

On Historical Time and Redemptive Practice: A Philosophical Reading of Walid Raad's *The Atlas Group*

This paper presents a close reading of Lebanese-American artist Walid Raad's *The Atlas Group* (1989 until 2004), an installation and web-based work that addresses the complex task of writing the contemporary history of Lebanon with a particular focus on the civil wars that ravaged the country from 1975 to 1991. *The Atlas Group* has been extensively analysed by contemporary art critics and scholars for its representation of traumatic histories, critique of the archive, and ability to deftly blur the line between fact and fiction. My paper enters this conversation about Raad's work from a different perspective by looking closely at Raad's method of "doing" history through the lens of German thinker Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History*. By analyzing Raad's work in relation to Benjamin's rethinking of historical time and his notion of the redemptive quality of the past, I examine how *The Atlas Group* can be seen to redeem histories that the traumas of civil war, in addition to Western-centric historicism and media, have made difficult to recollect. I argue that through his strategy of blending the historical and the fictional Raad opens up spaces of uncertainty for the viewer that function similarly to Benjamin's moments of danger, juxtaposing images of the past with our present generating new ways of understanding the politics of representation.

Ginette Guidi
Supervisors: Maria Belen Ordonez, Dot Tuer

Crip Theory and Judith Scott: Empowering Difference Through Strategies of Appropriation

This paper examines the work of Judith Scott, an artist who was confined to an institution for the developmentally challenged as a child and who upon her release as an adult began producing sculptures by wrapping everyday objects. Scott was deaf and mute, that is without speech, so it was, and has been, left up to others – her sister, scholars, art critics – to speak for her. As such, her wrapped bundles have often been contextualized as being created from a place of disability and lack. By drawing on Crip theory to challenge conventional assumptions of ability, disability and difference, this paper seeks to respectfully grant Scott the agency that she deserves. Through examining how her sculptures can be seen as both ready-mades and deeply original, in that Scott chooses random objects and, in a meticulous process of binding and layering, transforms them into discursive abstract forms, this paper equally addresses the aesthetic as well as social and political dimensions of Scott's work. The paper argues that by finding a voice through her art, Scott has transgressed and dissolved conventional barriers between disability and ability, the personal and the social. Transcending speech, Scott's profound sculptures have gained worldwide recognition by delivering an inspirational message about visibility and perception. Responsive, reflective, and resistant, Scott's bundled objects complicate conceptions of how meaning is made and remind us to celebrate diversity and find beauty in all things.

Chantelle Hope
Supervisors: Gabby Moser, Kate Schneider, Dot Tuer

Contextualizing Atrocity in the Image: Understanding the Recognized and Unrecognized in Holocaust Propaganda Photography

In this paper I analyze anti-semitic propaganda from the World War II era within the context of photographic atrocity literature to argue that propaganda should be considered within the definition of atrocity image. The theories of Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, Terry Barrett, Barbie Zelizer and Roland Barthes are used to analyze how, in context of the Holocaust, propaganda can be read as atrocity. Propaganda has long been an important tool used by the government to sway public opinion, most notably during wartime to support their actions. Hitler utilized propaganda to provoke anti-semitic sentiments by accusing German Jews of being the source of the country's problems. Analyses of the Holocaust often focus on atrocity images from the concentration camps during liberation, whereas photographs of Nazi propaganda are neglected as they do not blatantly display atrocity. The images that are commonly focused on are recognized as atrocity while propaganda images are typically unrecognized due to the seemingly non-violent subject matter. Unlike recognized atrocity images that portray explicit death or brutality, the unrecognized atrocity image requires a comprehensive examination to interpret it as an atrocity and elucidate the photograph's underlying message of death.

Claire Van Doornik
Supervisors: Lynne Heller, Dot Tuer

Rethinking Craft:
A Study of the Handmade

In a world now reliant on industrially-produced objects, the antiquated methods of production required to create handmade items have been made redundant by machinery capable of mass-producing objects quickly and affordably. This calls into question the value of the handmade item within material culture. Through thinkers such as Clive Dilnot, Agenta Knutas and Pierre Bordieu, this paper examines the cyclical nature of craft to explore how this value has shifted over time to consider the status of the handmade in the contemporary context of post-industrial Internet societies. I begin by analyzing the impact of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement through the revival of Medieval technique and aesthetic. I then examine the resulting changes in how craft exists today through the emergence of the Slow Craft Movement. I conclude by analyzing the emergence of internet communities in which craft objects are produced, sold, and shared. Through these three sites of inquiry, I argue that craft is experiencing a resurgence of value within the handmade object. This is demonstrated through the preservation of previously obsolete methods of making by hand and the ways in which they are transformed to suit contemporary needs.

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The BA Annual publication celebrates the work of current and graduating students in OCAD University's first Bachelor of Arts (BA) Honours program in Visual and Critical Studies. Comprising critical essays, exhibition reviews, artist portfolios, and creative non-fiction, this anthology reflects the innovative and interdisciplinary approaches to art history and visual culture that are at the core of this unique program.

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