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OCAD University and The Journal of Visual & Critical Studies acknowledge the ancestral and traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishnaabe and the Huron-Wendat, who are the original owners and custodians of the land on which we live and create. This land is located on Dish With One Spoon territory, a treaty that describes our agreement to eat from the same dish with one spoon. By living and working on this land, we agree to share the collective responsibility of leaving enough food for others. How we extend this agreement into our land, water, and communities, is our responsibility. We also note that the texts in this journal appear in English. We acknowledge the English language as a tool of colonialism, and hope to find ways to translate, problematize and reimagine the language we use to create.

INTRODUCTION

The Journal of Visual & Critical Studies is a student led publication dedicated to sharing compelling academic writing at OCAD University. Since 2016, we have published annual anthologies of critical essays, exhibition reviews and thesis abstracts that we believe push the discipline of art history and visual culture.

Our editorial committee comprises undergraduate students across all programs at OCAD University. The committee undertakes the editing, publication and fundraising for the Journal. This collaborative process, supported by faculty advisors, allows committee members to hone their knowledge of the publication process and build long-lasting connections at OCAD University and beyond. The mentorship program through which the Journal is produced ensures its continuity as a long-term publication. The Journal of Visual & Critical Studies champions peer collaboration and community building amongst writers, researchers, curators, artists and designers.

We are excited to provide a platform for student voices and unique critical writing, especially in the light of the current global pandemic – a time that demands more emergent thinking and new ways of critical, creative making.

The image chosen for this year's cover is an illustration by Mary Kirkpatrick, an OCAD alumni from the illustration program (2019). The image shows a scene of Cape Breton Island, inspired by the folk art of that region. A mother and children walk with an oil lamp towards a schoolhouse, while children play cat's cradle, dogs wrestle, and the dim evening sky hangs over the town.

Vidhi Gupta and Greta Hamilton on behalf of the Editorial Committee

CONTENT

CRITICAL ESSAYS

REVIEWS

THESIS ABSTRACTS

CRITICAL ESSAYS & REVIEWS

Negotiating Sex Work Through the Works of Andrea Fraser and Annie Sprinkle

By Aggie Frasunkiewicz

In recent years, sex work has become increasingly visible in the mainstream. Nonetheless, anxiety and hatred towards sex work continues to ostracize sex workers. Bills like FOSTA-SESTA in the United States target sex workers and prevent them from accessing safe working conditions through censorship of their services on social media and the now defunct platform Backpage. In Canada, it is legal to exchange sex for money, but nearly every activity associated with prostitution is illegal, pushing sex workers underground to search for clients and opportunities.[1] To repudiate the stereotypes that mass media, religious institutions, and governments disseminate about sex work, individuals inside and outside of the sex worker community need to educate and raise awareness about prostitution.

Andrea Fraser and Annie Sprinkle explore sex work from different sides of the spectrum but arrive at the same end: to level the field of labour. In her work ***Untitled*** (2003) Fraser, who is outside of the sex worker community, leverages the shadow over sex work to stigmatize all work. Fraser's performance uses sex work as a metaphor to represent relations of exchange between artists and the art world/market. ***Untitled*** is a video installation created in collaboration with the Friedrich Petzel Gallery, where Fraser is shown in an hour-long sexual encounter with an anonymous art collector. The initial response to Fraser's ***Untitled*** has been generally critical, with scathing and misogynistic reviews from The New York Times Magazine and the Fox Broadcasting Company's program Scarborough Country.[2] These critics have interpreted ***Untitled*** in the most literal and superficial sense, minimizing the work to a simple transaction between a sex worker and a client. However, a more critical analysis shows that Fraser uses sex work to represent the economic exchange of buying and selling art. Through the enactment of a highly intimate and personal deed, Fraser draws a parallel between a sex worker's sale of sex and an artist's sale of artwork. In addition to the economic/human

exchange, Fraser comments on the resulting alienation of labour associated with the sale of sex and artwork by underlining the capitalist notion of a constant production of labour.

Annie Sprinkle is a sex-worker/pornographic actress/director turned performance artist who uses her agency as a sex worker to destigmatize her profession. Sprinkle's seminal pornographic film ***Deep Inside Annie Sprinkle*** (1981) sets the tone for her long career as a sex educator, director, and performance artist. The 90-minute-long film has four main numbers; the acts instinctively steer Sprinkle's pornography away from conventionally male-gaze oriented scenes, ultimately changing the function of her pornography. Sprinkle challenges anti-porn feminist ideology through the re-signification of the sex worker identity, and the satirical opposition to the role of an objectified victim. Instead of approaching sex work as a metaphor for commodity exchange and alienated labour, Sprinkle uses sex work to reassert its legitimacy as an income generating and as an intimate profession. The resulting dialogue between Fraser and Sprinkle calls into question the social, political and gendered implications of sex work and sex workers.

In 2003, Andrea Fraser asked her dealer Freidrich Petzel to find a collector willing to participate in ***Untitled***, an hour-long sexual encounter that would be filmed, exhibited, and sold. Petzel found a collector who had previously purchased Fraser's work, and conditions were set that ensured the anonymity of the collector. ***Untitled*** begins with Fraser entering a hotel room with drinks in hand, with the collector following closely behind.[3] The two proceed to engage in oral and sexual intercourse, ending with the pair cuddling and relaxed in bed.[4] The camera is mounted in a high position in the room with a fixed position that results in CCTV like footage - the collector's face is never shown, and it is impossible to zoom in to get a clearer picture of Fraser and the collector having sex.[5] Fraser required that only five copies of the performance were made: one would go to the collector, and the remaining four would be sold to other institutions and collectors.[6] The terms of the contract set by Fraser retained her as the sole copyright owner, prevented the institutions/collectors from showing ***Untitled*** without Fraser's consent, and if the work is shown, it must adhere to strict exhibiting specifications.[7]

Taken in a literal sense, Fraser sells sex to the collector indicating the sex itself was the artwork and the resulting video footage is a receipt to authenticate the exchange. ***Untitled*** uses sex work as a metaphor to illustrate the relationship between the artist and the institution/collector. The performance begins to unravel to reveal the position of Fraser concerning the economically driven art market. In an interview with ***The Brooklyn Rail***, Fraser explains "***Untitled*** is about the art world, it's about the relations between artists and collectors, it's about what it means to be an artist and sell your work – sell what may be, what should be, a very intimate part of yourself, your desire, your fantasies, and to allow others to use you as a screen for their fantasies."[8] Fraser implicates the art world, as well as artists, in the reification of the intimacy that is poured into artworks by artists. Instead of valuing the emotional and physical labour that artists put into their works, the art market turns them into objects of commodity fetishism, which in turn alienates the artist from their works. Fraser draws a parallel between a sex worker's sale of sex and an artist's sale of artwork. Fraser's use of sex work in ***Untitled*** as a metaphor for the relationship between artist and the art world is further emphasized through Fraser's meticulous attention to copyright ownership and how the work is circulated. Where a sex worker or artist may be disenfranchised and denied agency, Fraser takes complete control over the methods used to shoot the work and how it's exhibited. This engagement with her artwork beyond its conception prevents alienation from the intimate work and the labour that was associated with ***Untitled***. In this instance, Fraser removes as much power away from the client (the collector) and the pimp (the institution).

Another facet of ***Untitled*** is the relationship Fraser presents between labour and work. Fraser compares the exchange of artwork between artist and collector as the same economic exchange portrayed in sex work. Although Fraser creates the parallel that artwork and sex work are simply commodities, and markers of exchange, the tenderness of Fraser with the collector in ***Untitled*** indicates another level of invisible labour being exchanged. In relation to Fraser's ***Untitled***, the binary between work and labour is defined by the type of profits both parties receive. The artist receives a financial profit while losing their emotional/physical/mental profit, and similarly, sex workers engage in the same process of exchange with their clients. The conditions of the art world require that the artist is disembodied from their work

and that they must separate the emotional labour in order to work 'purely', as defined by a capitalist market.

Annie Sprinkle engages with sex work on the opposite side of the spectrum as Fraser. Sprinkle uses her agency as a sex worker to destigmatize the profession. ***Deep Inside Annie Sprinkle*** is a 90-minute-long pornographic film with various acts that include gay sex, lesbian sex, orgies, and masturbation. At the beginning of the film, Sprinkle addresses and talks to the viewer as if they were behind the camera, breaking the fourth wall and establishing an intimate relationship with the viewer.[9] Sprinkle then shows the viewer pictures of her as a child and teenager while telling childhood stories that challenge the spectator to regard Sprinkle as a person, and not an objectified victim.[10] To further oppose the role of an objectified victim, the scenes in ***Deep Inside Annie Sprinkle*** depart from typical forms of pornography, in that they privilege Sprinkle as the receiver and giver of pleasure.[11] In one scene, Sprinkle changes the objective from the male "money shot", and instead focuses on her own ejaculation.[12] ***Deep Inside Annie Sprinkle*** asserts the profession of sex workers to challenge feminist anti-pornography ideologies.

Catharine MacKinnon is a radical feminist who is perhaps one of the best-known opponents of pornography. MacKinnon states that "pornography is an industry that mass-produces sexual intrusion on, access to, possession and use of women by and for men for profit."[13] Based on this perception of pornography, MacKinnon denies women either the enjoyment of pornography and women's autonomy in consenting to participate in porn. MacKinnon further elaborates on her anti-pornography argument by stating that "the violence against women in pornography is an expression of gender hierarchy, the extremity of the hierarchy expressed and created through the extremity of the abuse, producing the extremity of the male sexual response."[14] By explicitly relegating women to reassigned roles in porn, MacKinnon cannot acknowledge alternative scenarios that break gender hierarchies without the use of violence that in no way favour male sexuality.

Sprinkle directly confronts these statements by affirming her control and dominance in the narrative of Deep Inside Annie Sprinkle. The emphasis on male pleasure is virtually non-existent, and the viewer of

the film is ambiguous. Linda Williams points out that Sprinkle turns the tables and objectifies the man in the third scene by fingering his anus, and not letting him play with hers until she is 'finished' with him.[15] This role reversal differs from conventional pornography and is even further stressed when Sprinkle continues to address the viewer in the first person, leaving the gender and sexual orientation of the viewer in question. In relation to MacKinnon's arguments regarding the implicit gender hierarchies in porn, Sprinkle denies the viewer the opportunity to capitalize on the lack of hierarchy by maintaining equal stakes for everyone involved in Deep Inside Annie Sprinkle. No individual in ***Deep Inside Annie Sprinkle*** has a sexual pleasure advantage over the other, invalidating MacKinnon's statements.

Deep Inside Annie Sprinkle also engages with the same dichotomy as Fraser's ***Untitled***, as she also works to uncover the invisible labour present in sex work. Unlike Fraser, however, Sprinkle addresses the disembodiment of sex work by acknowledging her emotional, physical, and mental investment in creating the pornographic film. Unlike most porn, ***Deep Inside Annie Sprinkle*** operates outside of the normative exchange and works within an anti-capitalist framework. The key strategy that Sprinkle employs is to humanize the actors involved in the pornographic video, the spectator and herself. According to MacKinnon, pornography gives men [spectators] what they want: "women bound, women battered, women tortured, women humiliated, women degraded and defiled, women killed."[16] Based on this conception, spectators are vilified and an assumption is made about who is watching the pornography. There is a disconnect between MacKinnon's statement and the more complicated positions of pornographic viewership that include nuanced emotional and physical exchanges. Sprinkle responds to MacKinnon's reductionism and assumption of the viewer by offering personal histories and care in her pornographic work, creating multiple layers of intimacy. By inventing an alternate pornographic narrative that allows for layers of care, personal histories, and viewership to arise, Sprinkle uses her physical body to connect herself to her peers and the audience, resisting anti-pornographic engagements.

The works of Andrea Fraser and Annie Sprinkle redefine the position of sex work amidst ideologies that invalidate the profession. In ***Untitled***, Fraser uses sex work to call attention to the types of exchange

between a sex worker and their client, and how those relations of exchange parallel those of an artist and collector. Through her critique of the emphasis placed on economic exchanges of art, Fraser alludes to the invisible labour of art making associated with the sale of artworks. Sprinkle considers sex work in relation to Catharine MacKinnon's arguments of passive and abused women in the pornography industry and counteracts them by maintaining her agency through her pornographic film. In addition to rejecting anti-porn claims, Sprinkle reinvents the link between work and embodied labour, and harnesses those differences to create a space that works outside of normative capitalist exchanges. Although Fraser and Sprinkle approach sex work from two different angles, both artists succeed in elevating sex work to the same field of labour as embodied labour outside of the rules of capitalism.

Aggie Frasunkiewicz is a 3rd year VCS student with a minor in Social Sciences. Her research interests include feminist studies, queer theory, gender and sexuality studies, and sociology.

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Closeness, Community, Intimacy, Embodied

By Kara Maricinkoski

The start of the 21st century is frequently understood as a time characterized by a lack of connection to the land, each other, and reality. Technology and the transformation from industrial economies to informational economies have further abstracted us from each other, leaving many seeking connections in a multitude of (possibly misguided) ways. This is further elucidated in Jamie Mackay's piece, ***Why We Need to Bring Back the Art of Communal Bathing*** (2016). Mackay begins the work by establishing how larger transformations have led to us feeling alienation. The eclipse of communal bathing is one symptom of a wider global transformation, away from small ritualistic societies to vast urban metropolises populated by loose networks of private individuals. This movement has been accompanied by extraordinary benefits, such as the mass availability and movement of services and commodities, but it has also contributed to rampant loneliness, apathy, and the emergence of new psychological phenomena, from depression to panic and social anxiety disorders. 'Urban alienation', a term used by sociologists at the start of the 20th century, has become a cliché for describing today's world." [1] One can probe the idea of "Urban alienation" by considering the characteristics in contemporary society that lead to these feelings, or how they might affect those seeking friends, partners, connection and communities who exist under these conditions. How do artists, queer or otherwise, explore these ideas through their practices? Artists such as Colin Self, Michele Rizzo, FlucT, and Young Boy Dancing Group (YBDG) have found performative dance as a medium for expressing these failings in our modern world. These characteristics utilize movements of the body as their tool for forming and symbolizing connections as it is missing from our current reality. In this paper, I explore the multitude of ways in which performance artists, who mostly work with dance and movement, can tactfully reflect, critique, and embody the themes of closeness, community and intimacy in the face of growing social isolation.

Colin Self's work can be viewed as a form of community practice that works to process and heal fractures caused by modern alienation from a queer perspective. Starting his performance work in avant-garde drag burlesque and opera, Self moved into producing music, thus also producing stage shows for tour dates. On the side, he also started a queer community choir to explore the particular forms of connection that come out of singing together. Titled "XOIR" Self sees this project as "[r]ooted in somatic research and experimentation, the goal of XOIR is to foster a generative environment for individuals to connect with voice and vocality on an individual and collective level."[2] Self is also deeply invested in continued creation with non-biological families and queer kinship. Self considers this exploration highly political and in direct contrast with modern socio-political ways of living. Self's ***Elation*** performance series is heavy with the continuation of these themes, a six part trans-feminist opera in which he performs his Siblings album with members of his non-biological family. Within this work there are sequenced dance breaks, slow ballads in which Self sings directly to the crowd, high energy electronic synth choruses, spoken word poetry and the aggressive whipping of books attached to strings onto the stage. Here, we can recognize these themes of queer communities, non-biological families and connection at play within the kinship apparent between Self and his four friends (Lexi Welch, Tara-Jo Tashna, Sam Banks, and Lyra Pramuk) during performances and ongoing practice. As they play, sweat, and dance together one can recognize the process and performance spurned forward by Self is ideologically heavy in themes of closeness and community.

HIGHER XTN (2018) by Michele Rizzo was a series of performances in Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum concerned in themes of community and connectedness, but that presented these ideas through slightly different systems of representation in dance performance. With a soundtrack produced by the rave DJ and producer Lorenzo Senni, this work references the realm of rave culture as a site of connection within a community. Beginning with the soundtrack being piped through speakers placed inside the museum, the dancers started shuffle dancing to the stairways, washrooms, and different parts of the gallery. As the soundtrack was built up they slowly moved towards the main presentation area. The peak of this performance is where the euphoric community

really becomes visible. As the bass drops, the dancers reach a fever pitch, hitting all of their steps with emphatic gusto all while being abstracted from one another, not making contact with their crowd or peers. For Rizzo, even the preparation for this performance can be seen as a somatic practice in community, ritual, trust, and intimacy. While learning and practicing the steps for the performance, Rizzo had the dancers do exercises to strengthen the connections between each other, such as free-dancing with a partner for two minutes while holding firm eye contact. With this connection built into the core framework of ***XTN*** (2018), it counteracts the unique experience of modern existence by raving on in a world that is increasingly abstracted, mirroring the rise in raving we see in contemporary culture. Rizzo often speaks of how his work's

> Vision of transcendence doubles as a vision of community. Much like protests, night clubs and festivals are one of the few forms of IRL assembly still tolerated as a pressure valve to daily life under capital. ***Higher.xtn*** not only shows us the ecstasy of social communion, but also its glaringly unredeemed potential.[3]

This performance was hugely popular when presented at the Stedelijk Museum, with each performance, the crowds grew. Clearly, Rizzo was able to epitomize an aspect of modern life that we all can recognize.

Sigrid Lauren and Monica Mirabile of FlucT see the works that they produce as flying directly in the face of the socio-political and techno-economic systems controlling and ultimately abstracting us from each other. As all these conditions work to force us apart, they hope to smash their bodies together as a protest to form questions that need to be asked. Often, Lauren and Mirabile spend much of their performances climbing, holding, throwing, and carrying each other, which was their form of processing emotions and reality. This practice of using their partner as a vector to process is an intimate experience, can only occur due to the closeness that had been forged between the two women and their ongoing partnership. This was an intimate relationship that directly contrasts the highly political themes in their work. They present aspects of contemporary alienating technology within their dance movements by allowing their bodies to "glitch", which they describe as using:

> "[B]odies to mimic the way technology processes an overload of information Mirabile and Lauren aim to turn a glitch into a redemptive moment, and in doing so, wrestle back control from the overwhelming nature of modern communications. Receiving information is a passive act; stepping away from our beloved screens to shake it out—be it through dance, exercise, or something more radical—is a visceral way of reminding yourself who is boss." [4]

In their performance, *UPWARD FACING CONTROL TABLE TOP* with Performa NYC in 2017, they paired their criticism of these systems, especially economic hierarchies against highly intimate and involved closeness.[5] Performed with a group of dancers, it reclaimed the importance of intimacy in the face of economic hierarchies down to a series of scenes. Within this work, community and closeness was evident within the shared exploitation of all participants, using their movements to symbolize shared struggle.

Exploring concepts of closeness, intimacy, and community through the frenzy, we find ourselves immersed in the work of YBDC. This may be offensive as it includes nudity, lasers, and candles lodged within orifices, dancers walking over each other and live peeing. This adds a sheer rawness to their performances as the young boy dancing group explores themes of ultimate trust and intimacy within their troupe. Rising in notoriety after the circulation of photos from one of their early performances in Berlin were posted in a forum. These photos featured all of the dancers in a smoky dark warehouse with green lasers peeking out of the dancer's anuses, creating a scene resembling a laser alarm field in a spy movie. Unfortunately, shock and disgust were the two prevailing emotions held as the pictures circulated, ignoring the themes represented in this act. A troupe continuously growing and changing in its numbers, was founded by Manuel Scheiwiller. Their core focus is "the group" and to "always trust the group" as they explore intimacy and "crazy collective energy" while letting these be their only guiding principles.[6] By keeping other themes fluid and adaptable, they make themselves as contemporarily relevant as possible as they become a type of inductive research practice. This group continues to throw themselves at each other again and again to see what comes out. In their euphoric mess of community and trust, YBDC can be seen as the active embodiment of mindless, queerness, intimacy, community, and trust.

Ultimately, when comparing these artists and performances, we can recognize that they are all work shopping potential solutions to modern existence, which fails to meet our collective needs. Aesthetically, you see similar choices in the way the performers fashion themselves, mismatched yet relevant to contemporary fashion, and the soundtracks that utilize relevant electronic and pop music. These characteristics speak to a greater current cultural community as these artists are connected through their experience of similar inspiration sources in the face of a growing technological isolation/alienation. There are subtle shared characteristics as well, such as the appearance of mirrored movements from the bodies that are participating in the performance, symbolizing connectedness and uniformity, from FlucT, Michele Rizzo, Colin Self and occasionally within YBDG's performances. As these mirrored movements can be viewed as a form of connectedness within a community or awareness of others, we can also see the lack of boundaries between bodies, or heavy intimacy that plays out within YBDG and FlucT's works, as another allusion to intimacy and closeness. If we look at Amelia Jones's Working in the ***Flesh*** (1998) as their bodies are repeatedly pressed up against each other, we can view them as performances utilizing the body as flesh. The dancers continuously testing the boundaries of the self as being, by melding the flesh of one dancer with another dancer's flesh, as if the artists were seeking to test the boundaries of what a self as being is en masse.[7] Another characteristic of community and closeness they share is a messy, boundariless or freeform nature. They all take place in spaces with no distinct audience/performer boundaries. They are removed from the stage and there we see the themes of connectedness extended to the audience, while this freeform quality allows for the dancers to adjust the performance based on the audience's energy. Much of these performances also share trust, a characteristic built around a dance group through ongoing practices or connective experiences. Without these practices and teambuilding, the performances would lack an aura of connectedness. Even in Michele Rizzo's work, which lacks any real touch or visual communication, we see a group consciousness that was purposely established by Rizzo in early practices. Or in the team which forms the YBDG, the consistent practice and performances strengthen the bonds and trust between the dancers, which is exceedingly important due to the dangerous qualities of

the performance, and the aggressively sexual arrangements of their bodies. This type of performance relies on the understanding that, while sexually explicit, the dancers will not take advantage of the earned trust between the members on stage. Especially when the performance reaches an ecstatic climax. Additionally, the sheer physicality of many of these performances can be potentially recognized as being similar to the somatic practice of Parkour. Especially when considering the performance's exploration into Cartesian mind–body dualism, the dancers test the limits of each other's bodies while also trying to remove their mind from the equation.[8] Lastly, another shared characteristic between all of these performers is their critique and evaluation of the concept of closeness. As each work tests the boundaries of closeness and what it means to be close, either through direct contact as seen by FlucT and YBDG or mirrored movements in Colin Self's Siblings and Rizzo's XTN, they reveal the multifaceted nature of closeness between people.

In conclusion, today's performance artists who work within the realm of dance and movement are all spurned forward into their work by similar experiences. They find movement with others as a medium, which allows them to focus on the aspects of community, closeness, and the intimacy they feel is missing in the world. At the same time, these artists have found success because they connect with audiences that agree with their assertions and are open to an alternative reality than the one currently provided. These works crystalize how themes of closeness, community, and intimacy can be represented in a variety of different ways are love letters to the future. Hopefully, as these artists continue their respective practices, we will see their line of research expanded, leading to evolved answers and solutions.

Kara Marcinkoski is a 5th year VCS student with a minor in Media and Technology. Her research interests include digital intimacy, auto theory, and electronic music

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Postmodern Manga : Junji Ito's Tomie

By Kathy Wang

Written and Illustrated by Japanese horror mangaka Junji Ito, Tomie (Japanese Name: 富江) is a horror manga series that centers on the titular character Tomie. As the protagonist, Tomie is a beautiful Japanese girl with a bewitching charm that has the power to seduce men to their deaths. This essay will explore how ***Tomie*** was able to successfully deconstruct the patriarchal notion of women in Japanese society through challenging the idea of what women should be, as well as the idea of beauty through Tomie's monster-like abilities and femme fatale characteristics (rude, selfish, and sexually forward). By analyzing these characteristics to Japan's own portrayal of the femme fatale, the 'modern girl', it demonstrates the lack of strong complex women in Japan's cultural industry and Tomie's success in pushing the boundaries of the perception of women.

Characterized by her lush black hair and a beauty mark below her left eye, Tomie entices men and makes them fall in love with her. Like the femme fatale archetype, a classic American archetype known for sexuality and destructiveness over men, Tomie's psychological and emotional manipulation drives both men and women into insanity. Tomie is killed by her victims again and again, only to regenerate and even replicate herself throughout the series. Her character is a phenomenon as her real grotesque form is hidden through her façade of a beautiful woman. As a fictional character, Tomie demonstrates characteristics that are often rare in Japanese women as they are constrained by Japan's misogynistic perception of women.

Japan has made progress with its modern society, though there is still an underlying notion of sexism embedded within its culture. Ingrained through Confucianism, Japan's patriarchal society creates a power hierarchy perceiving men as authority and women as primary caretakers.[1] Noted by Kazuko Sato, Mitsuyo Suzuki, and

Michi Kawamura in their journal ***The Changing Status of Women in Japan***, gendered expectation is called "Behavior Stereotyping According to Sex" and is deeply rooted among Japan's cultural perception of gender.[2] Perceived as secondary citizens, Japanese women are often subjugated and disenfranchised while expected to fulfill impossible expectations.[3] Women's dichotomous role as the housewife and sexualized being has been ingrained within Japan's political and sociocultural discourse. Traditionally, a woman is dependent on her father, then her husband, and finally, her son as she serves them in their domesticated space.[4] With this in mind, societal norms of femininity and family are difficult to escape as the worth of women is based on the phallocentric economy of desire.[5] Determined by how men see them, either through their unrealistic expectations of beauty or femininity, a woman's individuality is destroyed in the process.[6] This ideology is echoed throughout Japan's cultural industry from their cinema, literature, and cultural products as seen from the lack of representation of independent women.

In Junji Ito's ***Tomie***, the myth of women and beauty is challenged throughout the series as the character Tomie establishes her own individual narrative. Despite being a beautiful woman, Tomie is actually a monstrous being that possesses supernatural qualities. Her true form only appears through photographs, which dispels her idealistic beauty as a myth. Her characteristics – selfish, crude, and self-centered – are contrasted by her beauty. Men enticed by her beauty become uncontrollable as they try to pursue her romantically.

Perpetuated by the myth of beauty, the unrealistic social standard of physical beauty as eternal, women are pressured to conform to intrinsically unattainable standards. As women are only desirable by their worth to men, young beautiful women stand on top of the hierarchy designed by men and reap the rewards of their youth, beauty, and usefulness.[7] This reduces women's entire being in society as their worth is labelled by a temporary component and nothing else. Within Japan's phallocentric economy of desire, the ideal Japanese woman is described to be young, thin, light skinned with a small face, and high-bridged nose. Described as a mysterious beauty, Tomie embodies these characteristics as her presence captivates every man in the manga. However, Ito shatters this

idea of the ideal Japanese women through man-made mechanical reproductions such as photographs in his manga. Revealing an unrecognizable Tomie, the photograph shows a grotesque monster-like figure, which signifies Tomie's true form. By destroying Tomie's facade as a beautiful woman, Ito confronts the male gaze by returning it. As a monster, she cannot be further objectified by the male gaze nor be presented as the 'perfect woman' anymore. In doing so, Tomie dismantles the notion of beauty by deglamorizing the phallocentric fantasies of the ideal Japanese woman.[8]

As a manga character, Tomie also challenges Japan's embodiment of the ***kawaii*** (cute) character. With large breasts, big eyes, a small waist, and long legs, ***kawaii*** culture presented in manga and/or anime's fictional worlds establishes another unrealistic presentation of women. Either expected to look or act kawaii, female innocence is sexualized, while female vulnerability becomes expected in the real adult world.[9] Compared to Japanese women, who are pressured by society to seem meek and docile and dependent on men, Tomie challenges this by not showing vulnerability nor presenting a fantasy of girlishness, instead she expresses her frustrations, anger, and other real emotions. This establishes Tomie's own individuality, a characteristic discouraged in Japanese women due to society's preference for the dependent powerless women.

As society becomes more modernized with more women working and continuing higher education, their role in society is still ultimately defined by their ability to succeed in the patriarchal myth of women – docile, meek, and dependent.[10] For example, a woman must achieve the same level of academic success as her male counterpart, but she is also expected to be attractive, approachable, and friendly, which are qualities not expected of men.[11] The systemic denial of equality with expectations of gender roles has taken away women's individuality and ability to exist in a male-dominated world. In Tomie's case, her character – selfish, evil, and sexual – as well as being inhuman, allows her to escape from the myth of women. Her monster-like form transcends Tomie from expectations of women, which enables her to deny societal norms. As the series follows Tomie and her exploits, Tomie begins to establish herself as an individual. It challenges male ideology by presenting the story through a female perspective, establishing a

counternarrative to the mainstream male dominated discourse. [12] Through Tomie's stories, she does not establish herself as neither innocent nor vulnerable. The myth of women as pure and sweet is established to protect Japanese society's ideals of women.[13] Her sexual nature and flirtatious attitude towards men gives Tomie power that is rarely seen in Japan. Furthermore, her femme fatale persona threatens men throughout the series. However, with Tomie's true form and power, men often die from her psychological and emotional manipulation.

After the modernization of Japanese cinema, the femme fatale introduction to Japan's movie screens failed to triumph over patriarchal ideals but was instead reduced to a 'modern girl'.[14] The idea of the 'modern girl' is presented as a woman dressed in western clothing filled with Japanese sensibility; in a sense, she is a failed portrayal of femme fatale as her eroticism is no longer intense enough to trigger death or destruction. This is due to Japan's sociocultural anxiety towards the femme fatale's sexual threat to male masculinity and intense eroticism sparked by women.[15] The femme fatale controls the men, which contradicts Japan's notion of the docile and meek woman seen through the portrayal of the 'modern girl'. Tomie, in contrast, illustrates the femme fatale archetype perfectly as she succeeds in driving men to their demise by embodying the eroticism, death, and gender conflict seen in the classic femme fatale character.[16] Tomie seeks joy in toying with the people in her life and unlike the 'modern girl', she is not subtle about it. Her confidence and selfishness presents her as her own character as she refuses to be controlled by anyone. This characteristic, looked down upon in Japan, returns the male gaze by deconstructing Japanese notion of women. While there are flaws in the femme fatale character, Japan's inability to seek gender equality presents Tomie's femme fatale characteristics with the ability to push the boundaries of how women are represented in Japanese society.

Despite her fictional existence, Tomie has successfully deconstructed the notion of women through her monster-like beauty, individualism, and femme fatale portrayal, uncommon attributes in the usual portrayal of Japanese women. Tomie exemplifies a character that pushes the boundaries of women, however, she is only able to do so

due to her monster-like abilities and fictional nature. Here it shows an inability to display a real woman as defined by Japan's phallocentric discourse of women.

This portrayal of women in manga is a stepping stone to breaking down Japan's patriarchal idea of women. Seen in the 'modern girl', representation of real women in Japan's social discourse as Yoko Ima-Izumi noted in ***A Land Where Femmes Fatales Fear to Tread: Eroticism and Japanese Cinema***. Films – ***Himiko*** (1974), ***Seven Seas*** (1930 – 31), ***The Maiden and the Bread*** (1931) and so forth – are few of many that has aborted the femme fatale portrayal due to the sociocultural anxiety of a woman's intense eroticism. This inability to present the femme fatale successfully is not only present in cinema but also in other cultural industries like literature, manga, music, and art. Scholar Ayako Kano (1966 – present) demonstrated the patriarchal nature within art history in her journal ***Women? Japan? Art? Chino Kaori and the Feminist Art History Debate*** through the lack of feminist perspective within male dominated discourse of Japanese art history.[17] The lack of women within certain discourses, Kano explains, creates oppressive ideologies that dismisses a woman's presence and abilities.[18]

While still a fictional character, Tomie successfully demonstrates characteristics that are often rare in Japanese society. Her deconstruction of the myth of women through challenging Japan's idea of beauty and female ability is shown throughout the series. She is not what is typically seen in Japan's cultural industry. She embodies everything that the ***kawaii*** character is not as she is not innocent or nice. Instead, her characteristics exemplify the femme fatale that is typically seen in western media. While Japanese cinema reproduced the western femme fatale through the 'modern girl', this was unsuccessful as it did not portray an independent sexual woman. The 'modern girl' character was just a typical Japanese girl that embodies the myth of women while wearing western clothing, proving Japan's hesitancy to feature a female character that displays sexual confidence and independence in their cultural industry. This lack of strong complex women further proves how Tomie was able to push the boundaries of a typical Japanese woman through her characteristics and deceiving beauty.

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Playful Possibilities Within Sculptural Connections

By Sierra Bisgould

Valerie Blass's exhibition ***The Parliament of the Invisible*** (2019) at the AGO, engages the viewer through a performative phenomenon that creates a sense of visual unity, while challenging individuals to broaden their comprehension and to strengthen a subjective pictorial narrative about each work presented. The exhibition takes place in two adjacent rooms separated by a wall. This barrier emphasizes the juxtaposition of the nine showcased sculptures by silently encouraging the audience to explore the nuances found between them. Within the exhibition, vast forms are presented through strikingly diverse shapes and materials including copper, bricks, IKEA shopping bags, plaster, polyester, and recycled fabrics. Among the peculiar sculptures, two forms made entirely out of clothing with hollow interiors stand out due to their composition. These captivating sculptures are casted to host a body, laying in positions that imply a human could be occupying this space. The patterns and materials of the other sculptures stimulate the audience to make connections within the juxtaposition of their surfaces. All of these elements build up what Blass describes as "'in-between' spaces of abstract, human and inanimate forms;" [1] bodily shapes and repeated patterns generating an aesthetic experience that pushes the audience to co-create the narrative within her work.

The significant layout of Blass's exhibition impacts the audience through her intellectual use of developing a visual narrative that sparks a curiosity to explore and find meaning within the structuring of the space. The curation of the show has been purposefully set to carry the viewer through her intended direction. When stepping into Blass's 'playscapes', emotions of intimidation, distress and awe were immediately provoked; being inside a space surrounded by unusual forms with elusive textural layers evokes striking aesthetic emotions. Another overpowering sculpture is an enormous rusted vertical chain that appears to be wearing a painting that resembles the nearby hollow forms. When

standing in front of such an overwhelming structure, the audience is forced to submit to the discomfort generated by the power of its complexity and by its large scale holding over them. Blass here is able to affect her audience's emotions based solely on the use of form, colour, scale, and space.

When entering the next room, viewers can instantly find correlations through shapes and materials in a new refreshing approach. Through exploration, emotions of discomfort, uneasiness, and joyful curiosity are amplified, enhancing an interactive experience. The patterns, colours, and shapes presented in the previous room reappear on the alternate contrasting formations of the sculptures. Blass silently encourages the audience to manoeuvre around them, to peek inside them, and to read their tags in a way that clarifies the exhibition's narrative. The viewer becomes compelled to move back and forth between the joined rooms to find more meanings within their correlations. By shifting the focus away from preconceived notions of art towards a more playful understanding of its possibilities, the audience leaves feeling a deeper connection with the artist, with their surroundings, and with themselves.

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Living with Discomfort: The Role of Transgressive Art in the Museum

By Stefanie Ligeti

It comes as no surprise that Dana Schutz's painting ***Open Casket*** (2016), based on photographs of Emmett Till's mutilated body, stirred controversy at the 2017 Whitney Biennial.[1] Despite the intense backlash received from visitors who criticized the work for its perceived racial insensitivity, the Biennial's curators stood by Schutz in the face of increasing hostility: "this image has tremendous emotional resonance…we believe in providing a museum platform for artists to explore these critical issues."[2] Rather than deploying a Band-Aid approach, the museum provided a safe space for the discussion of a highly charged and current debate. If the Whitney can stand by its exhibitions in the wake of alarming protests, why do other museums fail to do the same? Controversial art should be judged by its effectiveness in engaging new dialogue on interesting and politically charged topics rather than its ethical implications.

Effective censorship is invisible. It is difficult, if not impossible, to quantify the scope of artworks or exhibitions that have been censored from museums simply because such information has never breached closed doors to the public. Despite a lack of publicity, we can assume that artistic censorship has been practiced since the dawn of civilization. In our current post-internet age, rife with unlimited amounts of data and platforms for speech, it seems redundant for the museum to regress to these historical methods of control. Recent events have incited renewed attempts to control controversial displays of artistic production. Adel Abdessemed's exhibition ***Don't Trust Me*** was pulled from the San Francisco Art Institute several days after it opened in 2008. The exhibition included a video depicting various animals being slaughtered with a club. In 2017, the Guggenheim pulled three works from the exhibition ***Art and China After 1989: Theater of the World,*** including Sun Yuan and Peng Yu's video ***Dogs That Cannot Touch Each Other*** (2003), where pit bulls struggle to fight as they are strapped to non-motorized treadmills. Around the same time, the Walker Art Center dismantled Sam Durant's sculpture ***Scaffold*** (2017), which replicated

the setting of 38 Dakota executions in 1862 Minnesota. While I agree with protesters that the works dealt with highly controversial and offensive subject matter, censorship by the public and the museums failure to stand by their chosen artists feels like throwing a Band-Aid on a gushing wound.

What constitutes censorship in the museum? Katherine Seally defines self-censorship as "the act of museums selectively censoring their own collections, exhibits, or other content…omitting an object or narrative from an exhibit... or removing the object or narrative after the exhibit has opened." [3] In a world where scenes of murder now dominate TV screens and violent pornographic material is available at the click of a button, why would a museum bother to censor artwork in the 21st century? According to Jodie Ginsberg, CEO of the London-based non-profit Index on Censorship, "they're frightened of either the mob reaction that could come through social media or reactions such as a funder pulling its support…therefore opting for more 'safe' options." [4] However, the so-called "safe" route that Ginsberg alludes to isn't necessarily the most effective or socially responsible route to take.

In fact, "safe" in this context relates more to the preservation of a museum's public image rather than the preservation of any ethical considerations. According to Reesa Greenberg, "the museum may be at its safest when it exhibits 'dangerous' art precisely because it insists on participating in rather than avoiding current debates occurring outside the museum…[it] can be a forum in which difficult issues are addressed without the expectation that all questions can be resolved or that closure is the desired result."[5] By providing a context for controversial discussion in a safe and compassionate manner, viewers can engage with the world from a more autonomous and enlightened position, while also dismantling their own fear of the oppressive or unknown. The sanitation of controversial art also sanitizes the collective human experience and demeans our ability to feel emancipated in choosing to walk away from something that feels offensive or unrewarding. Maggie Nelson writes, "Walking out reminds you that while submission can at times be a pleasure…you don't have to manufacture consent whenever or wherever it is nominally in demand."[6] Exhibiting works that a museum knows will stir controversy may not be the most image-conscious option, but providing the space for public debate is certainly safer than engaging in no debate at all.

Adel Abdessemed's exhibition ***Don't Trust Me*** was pulled from the San Francisco Art Institute several days after it opened in 2008, following an influx of violent threats towards the artist and museum staff members. The exhibition included a looped video installation depicting various farm animals being slaughtered by a blow to the skull while tethered to a brick wall: a technique legally and regularly practiced in Mexico, where the footage was recorded. Most of the controversy questioned how and why the animals were killed, and the artists intention in showing such images. Protesters, which included over 8,000 people and various animal rights groups, condemned Abdessemed for creating "a snuff film about animals" and emailed individual staff members threats, including, "We're going to gather up your children and bludgeon their heads". Following the decision to cancel the exhibition, Art Institute President Chris Bratton released a statement declaring, "We remain committed to freedom of speech as fundamental to this institution, but we have to take people's safety very seriously."[7]

While animal rights groups typically condone images that expose animal cruelty for the sake of improving such conditions, viewers of ***Don't Trust Me*** had no way of knowing Abdessemed's intentions: the show did not provide any historical, political, or social context. On his website, the artist writes that the images were intended to evoke "the act of killing behind the marketing of meat…[it] embodies a picture of primitive, blind violence that is presented to the unprepared beholder…through the animal's inertia and powerlessness, [they] thereby manage to visually encapsulate the traumatic core of all forms of power."[8] The museum's error was not in its choice to exhibit ***Don't Trust Me***, but rather in its failure to properly warn and inform viewers of the social context of Abdessemed's work, its failure to provide a forum for discussion, and its failure to stand by the exhibition in the wake of alarming protest. If the museum does not take precautionary measures to ensure that its exhibits are presented in a caring and compassionate manner, it cannot openly claim to remain committed to either freedom of speech or individual safety.

In 2017, the Guggenheim pulled three major works from the exhibition ***Art and China After 1989: Theater of the World,*** including Sun Yuan and Peng Yu's video Dogs That Cannot Touch Each Other, after increasing pressure from animal rights protestors. In the video,

pit bulls are struggling to fight while strapped to non-motorized treadmills facing each other, and was intended to symbolically represent power dynamics and the maintenance of hierarchical structures in China.[9] However, visitors vehemently protested against the exploitation of animals to artistically depict human struggles, and almost 750,000 people signed a Change.org petition claiming animal cruelty and calling for removal of the works. Critics argued that the works "give sanction to animal abuse" and that "withdrawing these pieces may help [China] and its artists recognize that animals are not props and that they deserve respect."[10]

The Guggenheim also failed to provide viewers with the proper context with which they could adequately understand and assess the work, despite the fact that the curatorial premise of the exhibition was predicated on the fact that the Western world isn't well-versed in Chinese conceptual art. Ben Davis writes that, "Sun and Peng's video is a historical document of an event that took place years ago…the treatment of animals in it is representative of an actual, pronounced strand of Chinese artistic practice, one that was historically important and needs to be understood."[11] Whether or not you find the work cruel, offensive, or ethically ambiguous, it provokes dialogue on the human/animal bond and showcases variances across cultures in what we consider to be acceptable ways of treating animals. Sadly, the dogs were likely harmed before, during, or after the making of the video, but the harm had already been done – hiding this history from public awareness does not erase it. In a phone interview reflecting on the museum's decision, artist Ai Weiwei spoke, "When an art institution cannot exercise its right for freedom of speech, that is tragic for a modern society…Pressuring museums to pull down artwork shows a narrow understanding about not only animal rights but also human rights."[12] By failing to provide the proper context of the work and subsequently removing it from the exhibition, the Guggenheim is perpetuating the absurd notion that Sun and Peng's video continues to harm animals.

Several months before the Guggenheim censored its exhibition, the Walker Art Center dismantled Sam Durant's sculpture ***Scaffold*** after the Dakota community spoke out about the work being offensive, painful, and traumatizing. The unpainted wood and steel sculpture, which stands more than 50 feet tall, is a representation of seven

historical gallows that were used in US state-sanctioned hangings between 1859 and 2006. Of these seven gallows, the one that stood out as problematic recalls the design of the setting of the 38 Dakota executions that took place in Minnesota since 1862 – the largest mass execution in the United States. The Dakota community was not only angered about the cultural appropriation of murder (as in the case of Dana Schutz's ***Open Casket***), but ***Scaffold*** also echoed the alarmingly high suicide rate of Native American teens – the highest of any population in the United States. The museum subsequently delayed the opening of the refashioned Sculpture Garden, Sam Durant extended apologies to the Dakota community, and ***Scaffold*** was willingly dismantled, recycled, and given over to the Dakota community. The director of the Walker, Olga Viso, declared, "The Dakota community hasn't felt heard, hasn't been reached out to or communicated with on this issue…We're living in a really challenging, difficult moment and art can open the door to conversations."[13]

I agree that the Walker Art Center should have never exhibited ***Scaffold*** outdoors in a public space without first consulting all of the communities historically involved in the executions. It is an ethical nightmare, but perhaps that's also what makes it relevant, important, and empowering. Despite its dark and macabre aura, what is important here is that viewers could have freely chosen to both engage with ***Scaffold*** and walk away from it.

Society may currently be experiencing a period of intense growth and transformation, yet the need to hide, cover, and censor seems more prevalent than ever. As a catalyst for civilization throughout history, it is up to the art world to provide a safe space for the discussion of challenging and important topics. While censorship may temporarily appease society by deflecting difficult conversations, it only delays the inevitable. Therefore, controversial art should be judged by its effectiveness in engaging new dialogue on interesting and politically charged topics rather than its ethical implications. As is the case with many enriching experiences, the positive effects of transgressive art may not be felt for years to come.

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5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours: Challenging the Art Market to Re-Think Institutional Critique

By Katie Villazor

IBy closing Chisenhale Gallery for the duration of her solo exhibition entitled ***5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours***, Maria Eichhorn confronts the institution's capitalist culture and idealization of market success. In April of 2016, Eichhorn hosted a one-day symposium at London's Chisenhale Gallery in the United Kingdom, featuring lectures from political theorists Isabell Lorey and Stewart Martin, before closing the gallery and granting staff paid vacation for the remaining five weeks of her exhibition.[1] With nothing but a locked gate and central sign to disclose her gesture, Eichhorn challenges the institution's political structures from outside the physical walls of the gallery. While she is not the first to critique institutions, which is defined by art historian Donald Preziosi as a "***system of representation...*** that operate upon its users' imaginary conceptions of self and social order so as to render desirable and needed specific forms of social subjectivity and social reality," [2] Eichhorn does so by distancing her work from this privatized apparatus. Lorey, who gave a lecture at the symposium, claims that as the institution spreads into our subjectivity, "every conversation, every smile can mean capital," and that this competitive commodification is radically highlighted in Eichhorn's exhibition, as she directly blocks her audience from engaging with the gallery.[3] Further, art historian Claire Bishop and artist Andrea Fraser argue that the internalization of this politicized system only increases the institutions dominance over artists and their work, creating a common desire for art professionals to be recognized by wealthy galleries.[4] Eichhorn's interruption of capitalistic logic in ***5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours*** brings attention to the existence of institutional critique outside of a profitable setting and beyond the standard practices of institutional critique itself.

In her review of artist Danh Vo's "mothertongue" and "Slip of the Tongue" exhibitions at the 2015 Venice Biennale, art historian Claire Bishop argues that the institution has enforced artistic dependency on previous eras and their attachment to the aura of an artwork rather than the meaning.[5] Bishop's article, "History

Depletes Itself," characterizes Vo's work as unchallengeable and as an "introversion that labors to keep meaning withheld from the viewer." [6] This, according to Bishop, results in a seemingly tasteful exhibition that says nothing. Other contemporary artists like Carol Bove, Mario García Torres, and Jonathan Monk are mentioned in her article to demonstrate the widespread obsession among artists for historical art objects that represent a "nostalgic relationship" or an "ambience that you just kind of ***feel*** rather than understand." [7] Bishop claims that these artists, along with others involved in archival monuments and visual treasure troves, are sheltering themselves in the past without rewriting history. Rather than calling upon previous eras to influence today's works, Bishop states that the integration of institutional critique ***within*** the institution causes contemporary artists to "keep their feet (and eyes) on the ground, digging into the soil to excavate curios." [8] Vo's exhibition for example, narrows the space for conceptual inquiry, as he presents an effortless aura that indicates who is talking but not ***what*** he is saying. Bishop blames this painless ambience on the institution, for its obsession with market success applauds Vo's work and its elementary conversation. While Vo's exhibition fails to be an "object of investigation," [9] Eichhorn's ***5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours*** offers much more to debate, with much less to see. The critical discourse surrounding Eichhorn's exhibition hardly touches on Eichhorn as an artist, but rather her message to capitalist culture. The institution's monopoly with aura and authenticity are removed in Eichhorn's exhibition, as she reveals the institutions ticking capitalist clock without a tasteful ambience and without returning to an archival theme. Bishop's article "History Depletes Itself" illustrates the institution's cornering of contemporary artists into holes of marketable aesthetics and canonical copies, which Eichhorn manages to escape with her literally empty exhibition.

In addition to Bishop's article, her text ***Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*** critiques the non-democratic dialogue in Bourriaud's relational art movement, and recognizes artists who confront political structures through uneasy tension in their work. Bishop begins by analysing relational art, which according to Bourriaud's theory, is "entirely beholden to the contingencies of its environment and audience." [10] Through her study of contemporary artists Rirkrit Tiravanija and Liam Gillick, Bishop's critique emphasizes

the distinction between Eichhorn's removal of an audience and the insistence for public engagement in relational art. Tiravanija and Gillick not only require a live audience in their work, but also seek out ideal commonalities within their crowd that make their dialogue far from democratic. This is what Bourriaud terms a "microtopian": a community whose members "identify with each other, because they have something in common." [11] It is this subjectivity as a collective that prompts "no inherent friction," in the discussion of these works, marking them as "compensatory (and self-congratulatory) entertainment." [12] Bishop then turns to Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn and Spanish artist Santiago Sierra to highlight the value of debate and negotiation in visual culture. Their installations and performances are emphasized with "sensations of unease and discomfort rather than belonging, because the work acknowledges the impossibility of a microtopia and instead sustains a tension among viewers, participants, and context." [13] This, Bishop claims, disturbs the link between social and aesthetic dialogues, increasing political engagement in artistic debate. Like Bishop, Eichhorn detects the cracks in relational art, as she demands for Chisenhale to pause public interaction. The institution itself is "displaced into the public sphere," writes Adrian Searle, who promptly reviewed Eichhorn's exhibition in ***The Guardian***.[14] Matching Hirschhorn and Sierra's sense of discomfort, Eichhorn denies a public audience as well as marketable success in her exhibition, constructing an artistic realm that splits social and political structures into debate and examination.

While Eichhorn's exhibition not only speaks to Bishop's concern of relational aesthetics and the internalization of institutions, it also reflects artist Andrea Fraser's resistance of economic domination in visual culture. In an interview with J.J Charlesworth for ***ArtReview***, Fraser claims that artistic success has become increasingly identified with market success for the "massive influx of wealth into the art field in the past few decades… like increasingly expensive and privatized art education" has redefined the institutions priorities.[15] Fraser, who engages in institutional critique in her book ***Museum Highlights*** (2005) and her performance ***Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk*** (1989), argues that the business interests of board members has undermined the institutions values and mission. Bothered by the current contemporary art discourse,

Fraser suggests that it will require "holders of cultural capital to break out of their dependence on holders of economic capital in the art market," and that art institutions must "develop clear policies on political and business activities of patrons and board members." [16] The increasing rush of money into art institutions is interrupted in Eichhorn's exhibition, as she challenges capitalism to awaken a larger discourse. Chisenhale's closing not only demonstrates a suspension of economic success, but also the subservience of artists and curators to affluent galleries. As a skeptic of the rise in institutional critique, Fraser states that "if critique is to remain critique, critique itself must be subject to continual critique." [17] Like Fraser's work, Eichhorn's unexpected gesture challenges the institutions reliance on capitalism and develops a lasting debate on the politics of artistic production and operation.

While many contemporary artists adopt the concept of institutional critique, Fraser argues that this movement is powerless ***within*** the institution, which Eichhorn acknowledges in her exhibition by launching a critical conversation beyond the gallery itself. Fraser mentions in an interview with Kristie T. La, journalist for ***The Harvard Crimson***, that "anyone really looking at institutional critique and the practice associated with it can see that it was never about escaping institutions." [18] This speaks to the work of Hans Haacke, Michael Asher, Louise Lawler, A.L. Steiner – some of the leading pioneers of institutional critique who integrate their work within a gallery and therefore limit their power to protest against the institution. Andrew Russeth, executive editor of ***ARTnews***, suggests that these artists "entered the canon under the heading of institutional critique and many of their once-radical ideas have been thoroughly embraced by art organizations," weakening their ability to critique anything.[19] Even Fraser states that after forty years from its first appearance, institutional critique has become "institutionalized," adding value to the already dominant art market.[20] Eichhorn spins the common practices of institutional critique around, by presenting a gate before closed doors and nothing to view on the inside of the gallery: contrary to the work of Haacke, Asher, and others, whose projects are displayed in an institution and helplessly swallowed into a profitable context. Russeth argues that these artistic limitations in protest and critique are a consequence of stagnant politics within the institution.

Facing this form of critique in a different manner than Haacke and Asher, Eichhorn prevents her audience from participating in a capitalist pursuit, which according to Fraser and Russeth, lifts her above a powerless critique. By heroically confronting politicized institutions and remaining independent from their persuasive trap, Eichhorn sets the stage for artistic production and discourse to be recognized beyond the walls of institutions and beyond lucrative ideologies.

Katie Villazor is a first year student in Sculpture and Installation, her practice is inspired by dance and performance.

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Studio F Minus: Baby BOOM at Nuit Blanche

By Hailey Kobrin

"Studio F Minus will have you look" - Art Matters Blog

It is both hard to forget, and difficult to watch the spectacle that Michael Jackson caused in Berlin in 2002. In an incident Jackson refers to as a "terrible mistake," he gripped his newborn baby's chest, gently draping a blanket over the baby's face, and for a split second, swung the newborn over the railing of the fourth floor of the Hotel Adlon. Jackson briefly reappeared before the crowd to toss the baby's blanket to the onlookers. The crowd grappled for shreds of the baby's blanket, torn by force of rabid fans. The event spurred worldwide media uproar. Trashy gossip magazines raced to condemn Jackson as the "Worst Parent in the World." With a slew of sexual assault allegations under his belt, Jackson's blanket stint marred his reputation beyond repair. Yet, the participation element of Jackson's stunt is almost always overlooked. Despite witnessing Jackson placing his child in distress, his fans viciously competed for a piece of Michael Jackson's blanket in pursuit of ownership of a celebrity artefact.

The spectacle and fetishization of ownership that Michael Jackson evoked is echoed by Studio F Minus in their piece, ***Everybody Wants a Free Baby!*** which was performed for Nuit Blanche in Toronto on October 5, 2019.

Nuit Blanche drives crowds mostly into the Toronto downtown core to access an entire night's worth of celebration of public art. This year's overarching theme was "continuum," which responds to the contradictions of life in a changing city. Nuit Blanche embodies a paradoxical approach to the art experience, inviting both the art critic and party animal to appreciate the works of festival participants in an unlikely union. Many of the pieces in this year's festival styled themselves as fun and interactive – attracting onslaughts of amateur photographers for their Instagram appeal.

While onlookers could spot slews of drunk teens at Nathan Phillips Square, the Fort York location proved to be more breathable, but equally chaotic.

Everybody Wants a Free Baby! was placed under the curatorial theme "Creation: Destruction," that encompassed the other works at the Bentway and at Fort York. Viewers were led from the Bentway, up a flight of stairs, and onto the grass of the historic Fort York battlefield. Lit by the flash of iPhone cameras, members of Studio F Minus, clad in custom jumpsuits resembling hazmat suits, took turns narrating what they claimed would be the next epochal moment in art history. In tones of voice that I've only ever heard used at a medieval fun fair, Mitchell Chan, Brad Hindson and Michael Simon introduced their work as being an icon of art history, positioning ***Everybody Wants a Free Baby!*** alongside the Lascaux Cave Drawings and Marcel Duchamp's ***Fountain***. To conclude each member's monologue, they worked up the audience into a frenzy to pay tribute to their genius. Amongst the shouts of the crowd, almost unexpectedly, a baby was shot out of the cannon with a puff of smoke and a loud bang.

The baby doll, supported by the parachute, soared and then coasted downwards, into the frenzied crowd. In my first viewing of ***Everybody Wants a Free Baby!***, an older woman was able to fight off a gaggle of teens grabbing for a chance at taking home the free baby. She cradled the baby, seeming ardently protective over the doll, still clipped into its parachute. The women left with the doll, and the crowd died down as quickly as it had been worked up.

In my second viewing of the piece, the same older woman made a break to catch another doll. Yet, the baby was caught by a more aggressive teen, who made a running start to grab the baby midair. Cheering in victory, he tore the doll's arms off, scattering its stuffing everywhere. In the didactic panels, the work's importance is articulated through the relationship of its subjects, the cannon and the baby. Studio F Minus refers to the cannon as being "one of the most recognizable symbols of warfare in Western culture" which is "turned into a generative tool," embodying the theme of creation and destruction. Yet, while the artists stress the transformative element of the cannon as birthing new life, as a

viewer, the most visually striking part of the performance bears on audience participation.

Though staged as a satirical work on the part of the performers, there is genuine brutality on the part of the audience. The viewers rip apart the stuffed baby in a grotesque display, juxtaposing innocence against destruction, eerily fitting themselves into the curatorial theme. Yet, as a viewer, I wondered if the performance realized its own intentions, since so much of the work relied on satire. While viewing the performance, I wondered why audience members became so aggressive trying to catch a free baby doll, seemingly worth next to nothing. The viciousness of the act of catching the baby could not be associated with a natural nurturing instinct to protect the doll, but perhaps the competitive element of the performance.

Watching the dramatics of trying to catch the doll evoked references to Michael Jackson throwing his baby's blanket into the crowd, causing me to wonder whether the memorabilia appeal of "having been there" also had caused the viewers of ***Everybody Wants a Free Baby!*** to act so crazily. Maybe Studio F Minus claims that everybody wants a free baby just to say that they won a free baby, to present evidence of that baby, to prove having been at the event that the artists articulate as akin to the Lascaux Caves and ***The Fountain***. I had chalked the crowd's behaviour up to fanaticism until I took the streetcar back to Union Station, where I saw a maimed baby doll from an earlier performance. The baby, cold and abandoned on the tile floor, was ripped to shreds.

Maybe, the mass appeal of ***Everybody Wants a Free Baby!*** lies in its participatory quality, in competitiveness, and jealousy. In reaction to the work, viewers seem to want to win in order to prevent others from winning.

Studio F Minus utilizes a classic icon of creation in order to generate destruction. They take innocence and transform it into chaos. Most importantly, they create a spectacle that causes the viewer to examine their own behaviour in the face of competition. Without a doubt, Studio F Minus makes us look: at the drama of the spectacle, and how we relate to others as competitors. Yet,

there is self-awareness missing in the heat of competition that will follow viewers home. Though not instantaneously, Studio F Minus makes us look inside ourselves, in order to gain insight on our behaviour. When we think about ***Everybody Wants a Free Baby!*** we will wonder why a fake baby drove us to fanaticism, not dissimilar from Michael Jackson's baby in 2002.

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Constructing Post-Soviet Identity on the Global Catwalk: Nostalgia and the Fashionable Glyph

By Mariya Granich

In the former Soviet Union, there is a growing phenomenon of the commodification of Soviet aesthetics outside of their political contexts. This commodification is loosely defined by the aestheticization of Rodchenko typography, Soviet symbols, popular culture, and material culture. Scholars have long noted the uptake in Soviet nostalgia in ex-communist countries for commercial and touristic gains, such as kitsch restaurants opening in high-traffic Russian and Ukrainian cities, however, we can observe the very local phenomenon of using Soviet aesthetics in post-Soviet fashion which are ultimately becoming a conduit for defining a young, post-Soviet generation. This text explores how Soviet nostalgia operates as a visual and symbolic language in the context of post-Soviet fashion trends, which is assisting the construction of a post-Soviet sentimental identity, focusing largely on designers in Ukraine and Russia. By looking at case studies from the last decade, I am looking to prove how post-Soviet styling and fashion design is the artificial creation of national identities based on historical revisionism and the process of decommunization.

To discuss the goals and effects of Soviet nostalgia in underground fashion, as it relates to Russia and Ukraine's post-Soviet youth, it is first necessary to define "nostalgia" as it operates in the context of an ideologically disconnected post-Soviet generation. Generally, nostalgia is understood as a longing for the past or a place, largely associated with emotional sensitivity to personal tokens and memories that represent the loss or absence of the nostalgic "object." Ekaterina Kalinina outlines the conditions of Soviet nostalgia:

> Nostalgia was a socio-cultural phenomenon caused by a certain chain of events: market changes and the persistent assault of the capitalist economy, accelerated globalization, and the imposition of Western values... The post-Soviet transformation was seen as a traumatic event that resulted in widespread nostalgic longing for the socialist period of stability. Increasing

> uncertainty about the future and harsh social and economic conditions forced many people to change their lifestyles (not always for the best) and ultimately led to greater anxiety among post-communist societies.[1]

When we talk about nostalgia in the context of post-Soviet fashion, we are talking about first, a collective nostalgia that operates on members of the ex-Soviet Union. Researchers Susan Holak, Alexei Matveev and William Havlena outline the categories of nostalgia as follows: "personal nostalgia (direct individual experience), interpersonal nostalgia (indirect individual experience), cultural nostalgia (direct collective experience), virtual nostalgia (indirect collective experience)."[2] This fracturing of nostalgia means that across generations in contemporary ex-Soviet countries, the experience of nostalgia is disconnected. Post-Soviet generations are engaging in a virtual nostalgia, "the nostalgic equivalent of 'virtual reality', with the emotion based upon shared indirect experience," while their parents and grandparents are experiencing a deeply personal nostalgia.[3] If the creative pioneers of a "Post-Soviet style" are engaging with a remembering of Soviet history that is being passed through collective memory, not only does this create a generational disparity in response to young fashion houses, but an entirely new iteration of Soviet/Post-Soviet identity.

One of the pioneers of the post-Soviet trend in fashion and certainly one of the first designers to bring post-Soviet visual language into the global market is Gosha Rubchinskiy. The Rubchinskiy brand launched in 2008 but didn't experience major success until Rubchinskiy partnered with Comme Des Garçons in 2012. His status as the front-runner in post-Soviet aesthetics have landed him major global recognition in London, Paris, and Florence's respective Fashion Weeks, as well as collaborative collections with Western brands like Burberry, Adidas, and FILA. Rubchinskiy's Collections are immediately recognizable by their unapologetic use of Soviet symbols, Rodchenko font, slogans from Soviet propaganda, and the exploitation of Soviet tropes and stereotypes. Much of the post-Soviet visual language of underground fashion is engaging with the aesthetics of the Slavic gangsters from the 1990s, colloquially referred to as 'gopniks', who can be recognized by their Adidas tracksuits, shaved heads, and brooding expressions. Viktor Pelevin similarly refers to what he called Generation P. The borderline

comical appropriation of the Gopnik/Generation P aesthetic points to Rubchinskiy's playful approach to historical revisionism.

The relationship between Soviet material culture and Adidas has been in effect since Adidas sponsored the Moscow Olympic Games in 1980 and created the iconic three-stripe uniforms for Russia's Olympic athletes. The prevalence of Adidas in Soviet culture caused the logo to take on an almost mystical identity. The triple stripe on Olympic uniforms became a symbol of athletic prosperity which is still intrinsically tied to overall achievement and glory in Soviet and post-Soviet culture. As the logo became more integrated into Soviet culture in the 1980s, it spread across class demographics, particularly in the tumultuous 1990s, leading to its status as the unofficial 'gopnik uniform'. Once the Soviet Union collapsed and capitalism and globalization entered Soviet culture, the tie between Slavs and Adidas became one of the few globally marketable elements of Soviet material culture.

Rubchinskiy's Adidas collection invokes the lineage of Adidas' history as a symbol of Russian visual language. By placing the stylized ancient Ruslan typeface reading the word 'RUSSIA' bolder and larger than the Adidas logo, Rubchinskiy is, in essence, synthesizing and stabilizing Adidas as an elemental pictorial glyph and symbol of national identity irrespective of the company's affiliations. And of course, by shaving the Adidas logo on the model's hair, Rubchinskiy is further linking the logo's ability to operate on multiple planes while retaining its national significance; the glyph's intended textile substrate is no longer exclusive, it can be reclaimed in any form as a means of absolving the company's global status and asserting it into post-Soviet identity. By recontextualizing the gopnik style and elevating the suburban squatters and gangsters of the 90s onto the global catwalks, Rubchinskiy is revising the negative associations with the Soviet reform revolution, perestroika, and Soviet criminals, and ensuring the continued circulation of Adidas as integral to post-Soviet material culture. Rubchinskiy's reassertion of Adidas a trove of cultural ideologies, is operating in the context of a globalized, ideologically disparate Russia, unlike the globally disconnected, ideologically unified USSR in the 1980s. Naturally, as the context shifts, the glyph's significance shifts and its form follows suit.

Gosha Rubchinskiy opened the gates for post-Soviet fashion to enter the global fashion industry. In the biannual, seasonal rotation system of the fashion world, the demand for blocky Cyrillics and traditional Soviet aesthetics is beginning to phase out and designers are having to reconsider their approaches to determining "post-Soviet fashion" to appeal to the global market. Suddenly, post-Soviet designers are having to modulate their creative output which has the potential to lead toward the commodification and exoticization of post-Soviet culture by the Western fashion monopolies.

Designers like the Ukrainian designer Anton Belinskiy are shifting their approaches by exploring more subtle ways to integrate Soviet aesthetics into fashion that developed independently of the post-Soviet movement. Belinskiy graduated from the Taras Shevchenko Republic Art School in 2006, completing his education at the Fashion Institute of Design and Technology in 2008. After his global debut in London Fashion Week in 2010, his brand has been growing as a key voice in the discursive re-evaluation of identity in post-Soviet Ukraine. Belinskiy's work, particularly his 2019 FW Collection, references back to collective Soviet memory and hyper-connected nostalgia but directly sources more personal content as inspiration, such as childhood symbols, compared to the political and Russian Constructivist themes that were more popular in the earlier establishment of post-Soviet as an aesthetic trend.

Belinskiy also belongs to what Martin Rintala refers to as a "political generation," defined as "a group of individuals who have undergone the same basic historical experiences during their formative years." [4] As a result of the Maidan Revolution in Kiev in 2014, the on-going war in Ukraine, and the explosion of propaganda promoting extreme Ukrainian nationalism and anti-Russian sentiment in the country, particularly the young post-Soviet generations of Ukrainians have mobilized in the last few years, demanding not only political reform but a more comprehensive definition of their cross-national differences and identities. In this space of political conflict, economic collapse, and profound corruption, young designers are turning away from explicitly Soviet symbols to produce a post-Soviet aesthetic that is uniquely Ukrainian. Thus, the turn to extremely personal, sentimental, nostalgic symbols is

acting, in part, as mobilization to create aesthetic definitions of uniquely Ukrainian post-Soviet identity, as well as appeal to the profound desire to "stand out" in an over-crowded global market.

Belinskiy's attempt to create a post-Soviet aesthetic that is both appealing, globally marketable, and resonant with his divided political generation proves successful. In his FW 2019 Collection, he debuted two models in flashy snake-print leather accent pieces, high-waisted tailoring, and colourful cowboy boots peeking out of wide pant-legs, referencing Soviet 'stilyagi' of the 1940s to 60s, translating roughly to hipsters. Strikingly, both models are wearing handmade Cheburashka masks, a TV character from 1966 who has cult-like, celebrity status as the symbol of childhood innocence in the USSR. The cheburashka in ex-Soviet countries today sits in souvenir shops next to matryoshkas, USSR flags, and fur hats, occupying the same space as commodified, kitschy appropriations of Soviet culture through the lens of foreign tourists.

Still, the commodification of the Cheburashka only increases the visibility and stability of the symbol as a representation that connotes a Soviet childhood that is free from the burdens of political unrest and revolution. In post-Soviet generations, Cheburashka's continued visibility in the cultural sphere sustains the longevity of its nostalgic connotations despite a political generation that did not directly experience Cheburashkas original broadcasts in 1966. Ultimately, it is not necessary to have been present for Cheburashka's origin because the character has become so widely recognized and logographic since its debut. Because Cheburashka is operating on the level of cultural and virtual nostalgia, its use in Belinskiy's designs evokes an immediate, intrinsic recognition of its associations with Soviet childhood and the innocence of youth. Belinskiy's exploration of childhood nostalgia in the context of post-Soviet political generations rejects the complexity of Soviet history in favour of a purely sentimental connection to the era. In this way, the decision to reference purely nostalgic elements of Soviet childhood is a rejection of their political connotation. In the practice of appropriation, this neutralizes the innately political history Cheburashka belongs to and unifies the viewers who are privy to the political generation Belinskiy's designs speak to. This also enables Belinskiy to compound his personal design

practice, meaning the apolitical clothing he produces, under the umbrella of Soviet nostalgia and communicate to the world that if you wear his designs, you are also wearing the language of post-Soviet identity and likening yourself to the post-Soviet aesthetic Belinskiy proposes.

Despite the fact that nostalgia in post-Soviet fashion is performing the necessary function of creating a platform for young, political generations to produce a resonant identity that unifies their formative experiences and creates a visual vocabulary for self-expression, many scholars belonging to the Soviet generation argue that the nostalgic approach to historical revisionism dangerously downplays the past. In her 2012 article "(Re)Creating the Soviet Past in Russian Digital Communities: Between Memory and Mythmaking," Elena Morenkova argued that "youngsters are visibly eager to link their identity to a glorious Soviet past, thus creating a simulacrum of common memory. The fact that 'the USSR' becomes a reference point for many young Russians in their identity quest underlines the absence of positive shared symbols of national identity in contemporary Russian society."[5] The belief that without personal memories, the collective reconstruction of memory and reconstitution of symbols is an invalid source for the unification of cultural generations ignores the fact that this particular phenomenon is currently active and effective.

In Gosha Rubchinskiy's Spring/Summer 2016 Collection, his dramatic, farcical engagement of ironic nostalgia is not a historicist return to the Soviet era, but a parody of it which determines its ideological relevance to the post-Soviet generation. The exaggerated costuming of red Constructivist forms, the enormous hammer and sickle props, and use of Rodchenko typography with the slogan 'Gotov k trudu i oborone', 'Ready for Labour and Defence', the USSR's slogan for the national exercise programme in 1931, is a pastiche of Soviet aesthetics produced in its most blatant form. That is to say, it is not an attempt to accurately reconstruct Soviet history, but instead emphasizes the displacement of this aesthetic in the modern context, and deconstructs its relevance to the conceptualization of post-Soviet identity.

By looking at examples of post-Soviet fashion trends, I have explored the ideologically disparate conditions of the post-

Soviet generation in its historic context, the turn to fashion and the re-appropriation of Soviet symbols as a means of producing meaning and identity. I look at the ways reflective nostalgia acts as a tool of historical revisionism and decommunization through the parody, elevation, and visibility of post-Soviet culture in the global fashion industry. Through analyzing the way that nostalgic fashion is performing the role of identity construction in the former USSR we are engaging with not only with the post-Soviet context, but also how we can use the example of post-Soviet identity to draw deeper connections to the way that visual systems of communication continue to inform how human beings carve out space for themselves in the world.

Mariya Granich is a Publications student currently in her second year. Much of her interests lie in exploring media theory and looking at cultural phenomena, looking for ways to parse through the underlying symptoms and conditions of modern media consumption and our symbolic technologies of communication.

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Berlin Wall Souvenirs and Corporeal Simulacra

By Allen Wang

A hundred choices sit atop the wooden shelves, sorted by size into five-euro intervals, each unique form emblazoned with a bright dash of paint, ripe for the picking. Nearby, a bilingual paper sign reads: "Original brick of the Berlin Wall, unique. From 9,95€" (approximately $15 CAD). The fragments come encased in a heat-bent acrylic stand marked with a verified seal of authority. You can purchase these "authentic" fragments of the wall from any number of places in Berlin, including the gift shop of the Deutsche Demokratische Republik Museum. These Berlin Wall souvenirs are a dissection of a slain body, a massive proliferation of its organs, a tabletop post-mortem disposed of in an economical and symbolic manner by hacking it to pieces and feeding it to a consumer mass. They play upon the signification of collective memory that evokes the corporeal language of life and death, of organic decay and transience. In the face of this time-induced liquefaction, the greater Western consciousness hears the call of taxidermy, the desire to preserve that which continues to haunt us for the sake of spectacle and memory.

Between 1961–1989 at the apex of the Cold War, tensions between the US and USSR were engraved in the Western consciousness by the erection of a 155-kilometre-long perimeter around West Berlin, the Allied-controlled enclave in Soviet-occupied territory. Ostensibly, the Soviets built it overnight to put an end to the defections of East Berliners to the West. In its final form, the wall consisted of 3.6-metre-tall concrete slabs topped with an oversized pipe, which made it difficult to climb. Guards manned the wall and had orders to shoot trespassers on sight. According to the ***New York Times***, more than 140 people died at the wall, most of them trying to escape to the West.[1] Of these victims, the most famous was 18-year-old Peter Fechter, shot by the guards in 1962 as he attempted to scale the wall; he bled to death over the next hour before they removed his body as the cameras rolled.

The spectre of the Berlin Wall represents a well-documented ideological struggle between democratic capitalism and communism, exemplified by two famous speeches by US presidents, both delivered in West Berlin: John F. Kennedy's "Ich bin ein Berliner" ("I am a Berliner") speech in 1963 and Ronald Regan's "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" in 1987. For Kennedy, the very existence of the wall proved the failure of communism. In his words, "Freedom has many difficulties and democracy is not perfect, but we have never had to put a wall up to keep our people in, to prevent them from leaving us."[2] He concluded the speech by invoking John Donne's famous 1623 Meditation XVII, from ***Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions***, with the following ideological declaration:

> Freedom is indivisible, and when one man is enslaved, all are not free. When all are free, then we can look forward to that day when this city will be joined as one and this country, and this great Continent of Europe in a peaceful and hopeful globe. When that day finally comes, as it will, the people of West Berlin can take sober satisfaction in the fact that they were in the front lines for almost two decades. All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin, and, therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words "Ich bin ein Berliner." [3]

The German Reunification that Kennedy predicted did not take place until almost three decades after his speech, in 1990. The wall had fallen just months prior. When the guards left their posts, the world saw a massive outpouring of relief as families became whole again. Immediately, the wall became a target for vandalism as local citizens dismantled the longstanding symbol of geopolitical oppression, piecemeal. Photographic records and eyewitness recollections abound of that initial honeymoon period following the collapse of the wall when people were toppling sections of it, hacking it apart with various implements, and breaking off small chunks as keepsakes.[4]

What little remains of it today in the heart of Berlin has been preserved for posterity. There is evidently value in the coherent artefact of the wall itself to serve as a monumental reminder of this historical phase in the city's history, hence its musealization. The term musealization comes from the German philosopher Hermann Lübbe, writing in the 1980's, and it refers to the practice of detaching objects from their original contexts and repurposing them into museum exhibits. Andreas Huyssen contextualizes this in the

memory discourse of modernity, arguing that, "In this prominence of academic 'mnemohistory,' memory and musealization together are enlisted as bulwarks against obsolescence and disappearance, to counter our deep anxiety about the speed of change and the ever shrinking horizons of time and space." [5] Today, the wall-which-is-no-longer-a-wall maintains its imposing aura of permanence, but where its concrete materiality once served as a barrier to spatial mobility, it now functions as a bulwark against a collective fear of amnesia. Through the musealization of the Berlin Wall, the democratic world demonstrates a vested interest in the spectacle of the corpse, of the head-on-a-stake, paraded about the urban environment in the heart of cities and the museum-gallery, and which worms its way into the collective memory of the citizenry in its organic decay. Ironically, the persistent ruins of the old Soviet monument, built to endure, have come to embody precisely the faults of its vanquished maker, a mantra of the triumph of capitalism over communism.

The demise and ensuing fragmentation of the Berlin Wall alludes to the corpse of a convict undergoing the punishment of being drawn and quartered. What this biopolitical spectacle reveals is the continued persistence of a Medieval paradigm—today relegated merely to non-human entities—that it is not enough for an "offender" to merely die; they must be really, really dead. The consequence of this "wall-corpse" is the establishment of a hegemonic power imbalance between East and West, whereby the Allied nations exert a sense of sovereignty over the disparate ruins of the Soviet Union. It is in this moment that the West achieves its triumph, disseminating relics of heroism throughout households in the form of bite-sized souvenirs.

Within this historical backdrop, the theme of the body emerges clearly, the logical result of which is a corporeal simulacrum, or simulacra which takes on the index of the body as a reference point. A little under a century prior to the wall's downfall, in the opening lines of the 1915 ***The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock***, T.S. Eliot described clouds in the image of the sedated body, sprawled out on an invisible plane between earth and sky with long, thick limbs, struck dumb by the searing immensity of the sunset. "Let us go then, you and I / When the evening is spread out against

the sky / Like a patient etherized upon a table." [6] In literature and common parlance, we impart inanimate objects and non-human beasts with human anatomy and a capacity for rational thought through the device of personification. A table has four legs, a sofa has a back, a pouring-glass has a lip. The lens of a camera is the eye through which it sees, as is the sun, a "cyclops-eye descending above the fen," to quote Silvia Plath's 1956 poem ***Winter Landscape,*** with Rooks.[7] An intellectual produces a body of work, a corpus. Hands lain upon the face of a clock suddenly gain the ability to tell time, as if they could speak.

The salience of a corporeal simulacrum, as we can describe this particular form of anthropomorphization, ultimately reflects the human condition insofar as it reflects the organic forms of our own bodies upon other things. We understand the body as much as we understand ourselves, and by projecting the body onto other things, we may relate to them as we relate to ourselves as well. Corporeal simulacra pervade as far as humanism exists in one formulation or another, because the human body belongs to everyone, and always has. To reject the simulacrum would entail a rejection of the image of the human body itself, but we cannot reject that which we are. Nor can we escape the fate of the body: fragmentation and decomposition.

The genesis of the Berlin Wall souvenirs is embodied within the dismantling and disseminating of the drawn and quartered corpse of the vanquished Eastern bloc. Private museums, peddling the fragmented hunks of the Berlin Wall as a tourism-industry commodity, exemplify the musealized detachment we collectively share about the histories of our world. Decontextualized, such souvenir-artefacts become "touchstones of memory," which in fact signify more about ourselves and our own personal experiences as travelers than the corporeal body from whence they came.[8] In the discipline of tourism studies, scholars pay much attention to the mediation between tourist and destination, discussing ideas of frontstage/backstage performances as well as constructivist [i.e. negotiated] authenticity in tourism studies.[9] The enchantment of the souvenir, whether it proudly adorns a mantle or hides in a box, hinges upon its ability to enchant us, to sensually evoke the bygone past, by virtue of its relic. It succeeds not so much because

of a negotiation of authenticity, a semiological system, or Walter Benjamin's aura. It succeeds because it embodies precisely that which it is: it tastes of victory because it is the flesh of the defeated.

Allen Wang is an Industrial Design student currently completing his fourth-year thesis project on radical non-linearity and the corporeal cartography of non-place and non-time. Recently, he also completed an exchange semester at Designskolen Kolding in Denmark and backpacked around Europe for a bit, and that was fun.

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I Haven't Even Got Any Eyes: Contemporary Art, Neoliberalism, and "Post-Truth" – Pts. II & VI

By Sandy Callander

II.

What is the presence of truth in art – does it have to do with authenticity; integrity? Walter Benjamin suggests that the auratic value of the work of art has been irredeemably tarnished by the advent of mechanical reproduction. The aura of an artwork is the primary mode of its authenticity and the main point of its symbolic value, whereby, "making many reproductions… substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence," [1] and, "leads to a tremendous shattering of tradition which is the obverse of the contemporary crisis and renewal of mankind." [2] Benjamin's idea of aura instantiates the crafted object as art within the values of tradition and modernity, positioning the truth of art within originality. Theodor Adorno comments on this in a letter to Benjamin in 1936: "But the autonomy of the work of art and therefore its material form, is not identical with the magical element in it… it would border on anarchism to revoke the reification of the great work of art in the spirit of immediate use-values." [3] Though Adorno utilizes the term 'magic element', it is evident that this phrase is being employed as identical with Benjamin's aura. What this shows us is that the supposed authenticity of the work of art is the primary form of truth in the art context, insofar as the work comes into itself as ***only*** itself being a unique object. Here, we have the classical formulation of 'autonomy', which denotes a form of existence outside of the context within which the work exists. However, the paradigm soon shifted: where craft and aura were the primary value criteria for the truth content of an artwork, the ideology would take hold that content is always superseded by context.

The facticity of truth in the modern sense relies on a series of inviolable references which make up this context, which were based on agreed-upon historical fact. What has shifted in our post-truth society is the individuation of subjectivity and the valorisation of personal experience, neither of which need to be corroborated. Post-truth is

a perfect common sense for a neoliberal society, which resulted from initiatives undertaken since Friedrich Hayek became associated with the Chicago School following WWII, and particularly with publication of ***The Constitution of Liberty*** in 1960. It is not much of an exaggeration to call it the neoliberal bible, particularly in Thatcher's England, the first truly neoliberal government. At a policy meeting in the late 1970s, Margaret Thatcher cut off a speaker advocating for a centrist alignment for the party by holding up a copy of the book for everyone to see, before slamming it down on the table, saying "***This*** is what we believe." [4] While the specificities of Thatcherite policy are not of particular significance here in and of themselves, Britain in the 1980s does provide a significant historical benchmark for the grip of neoliberal ideology in the post-war period. It lays the seeds for the developed post-truth era, mired in representation and re-representation, one which is cleverly summed up in the title of Chapter 6 of Mark Fisher's ***Capitalist Realism***: "All That is Solid Fades into PR." In this chapter, Fisher elucidates the representative control embedded in neoliberalism through positioning actual and official standards as antagonistic toward each other. This is further emphasised through a brief analysis of education policy in Britain, in which Fisher explains the increased bureaucracy of workers is not in opposition to the neoliberal rhetoric of horizontality or lateral organisation. The practice of performance reviews requires additional layers of administration, since it is difficult or sometimes impossible to quantify. As such, what is being compared is not performance versus output, but the audited representation of performance versus output.[5] As with the accumulative logic of neoliberal capitalism, the focus on the actual shifts toward a focus on the appearance of work rather than the work itself, relying on a symbolic valuation to abdicate the responsibility of producing results. The neoliberal ideology here is scattered, but one of the key facets of this ideology is that it converts contradictory drives into productive tensions – another function of its amoebic qualities. The anything-whatever of neoliberal impulse can be consumed and regurgitated in forms more productive to propagating the network.

What we are left with is a highly corporalised, networked social sphere in which the representation of the self is considered valuable, and where virtue signalling and symbolic gestures amount to the Real. It largely doesn't matter whether one produces anything at all.

As long as they appear to be doing something, it is a tolerated form of contribution to society. Seen in this way, the extreme influences of social media in the 21st century are no longer a surprise. Curating one's external presentation to the world, the re-representation of an idealised existence on an individual platform, allows for this type of semiotic game which fuels the anxieties of the contemporary. It also, as has been written on elsewhere, consists of a breakdown in personal memory similar to that of collective memory in developed capitalism.[6] One can live vicariously through their own experiences as they have been portrayed through online platforms, necessitating a reactionary type of forgetting real events to replace them with quasi-fictitious versions – a similar activity to the sublimation of traumatic memories via substitution. The indexical relation to the Real is abandoned for a rosy retrospection […]

VI.

I'm going to propose a compound term here: ***positivist constructivism***. This term is an attempt to find a productive way to describe the symbiotic relations between two prevailing epistemological systems in 21st century society. The neoliberal worldview functions largely on the schizoid nature of our contemporary communications array, and spontaneous connectivity over a globalised network is central to how we now position ourselves within the world. Positioning within this arena is very specifically rooted in neoliberal "common sense" – that of the individual and the group. The aforementioned lack of communal shared experience operates as a barrier which does not permit forms of collective action on a mass scale. Particulars will never be able to combat globalised universals as they operate on completely different scales. This is one of the characteristics of folk-politics; a symptom of left-wing political movements in the 20th century which sought to combat capitalism on a local level, in opposition to the empty spectacle of party politics.[7] This destabilisation in the social order is an affirmative trait for neoliberalism, as it is correlative with an increase in the entrenchment of neoliberal ideology at the very heart of the social fabric. The phrase, "there is no such thing as society"[8] encompasses this completely, delineating the absence of community relations in favour of hyper-individualised competition. This contributes to the barrage of information within the contemporary communications

array, operating discontinuously in accordance with the spontaneity of our fully networked culture. These processes are partially learned through experience and interaction, and so the notion of a particular 21st century constructivism becomes a paramount concern within the production of the subject. The positivist element lies in the embeddedness of neoliberalism within common cultural sense. "There is no alternative" once more: "it mattered little whether the left or right won; neoliberalism had stacked the deck." [9]

The conjunction of positivism and constructivism develop into a mutualistic binary epistemology, whereby systemically inaugurated attributes of the 'neoliberal self' come fully into view. One of the most insidious of these is the non-critical acceptance of information as relayed by one's connections – a fundamental condition of post-truth. Whether these are personal relationships or attachments to particular news sources, the re-presentation of televised op-eds and the increasing frequency of opinion shows creates an environment in which it is not only acceptable to base one's reality on their opinions, it is more consistently aligned with new normative behaviours. This is then blown even further out of proportion through social media platforms which further accredit individual opinion as valid, let alone valuable… But people often disagree. Any comments section on an online video or twitter thread consistently shows arguments between people, often over inane details or antagonistic bullshit. What is clear is that people now value their own opinions more than ever before. The competitive-individualist mandate exacerbates this to a point of quiet struggle: that which is and that which seems to be are in conflict. Neoliberalism transmutes this conflict into productive tensions, completing the circle of competitiveness via challenges, games, etc. – the self becomes a continuous project, ever more intensive and ongoing through physical, intellectual, and psychological skilling and re-skilling, often predicated on qualifications or designations. Permanent education becomes the status quo and increasingly competitive, allowing for a university-industrial complex to reap the benefits of near-impossible debt accumulated by students trying to get ahead in the neoliberal world. While this may seem tangential, it is a structural reflection of how neoliberalism came to be installed in the first place. It was – and always will be – a grand-scale political project activated and sustained through university education. While it is frequently discussed in terms of commerce and economic

policy, the political dimensions of neoliberalism are often left unsaid. The term is rarely, if ever, used in mainstream media. The naturalised operacy of neoliberalism is presented and re-presented as how to be competitive under global market conditions and how to stimulate growth.[10]

What is particularly difficult here is how neoliberal ordinance is spun into positive points such as freedom of choice and leisure potential. "Life as competition becomes fully ontologized as the natural way of things. There is no struggle, there is only opportunity…" [11] Freedom of choice and the valorisation of opinion outwardly project an aestheticization of everyday life; speculative opportunities cast a vector into the future which can be activated at some point. These are ongoing processes, in the same way that hegemony has been characterised as an ongoing project which never completely fulfils its aims or establishes itself,[12] and the same way that neoliberalism as a noun is an incompetent idea for its operations within the world. This prompts the reapplication of the term in ***neoliberalisation***: the present-tense verb denoting the specific, continuous project which is constantly in cycles of recuperation and renewal.[13] Understanding neoliberalism as a processual and quotidian practice rather than a unified monolithic entity is key to differentiating between effective opposition and useless, co-opted struggle. The absorptive tendencies inherent to neoliberal ideology efface critique as merely attributes yet to be assimilated into its boundless horizons. Aestheticization and incoherence, at least in terms of a unified movement, serve contradictory aims which amount to a false hierarchy of representation and abstraction. We are firmly set in the commerce of the world, insofar as exchange is real even in the abstract – but things are always flickering in and out of focus, and meaning is hardly fixed.

Sandy Callander is an artist and writer based in Toronto. The focus of his current research is the interrelationships between neoliberalism, globalisation, 21st century labour conditions, the already historicized period of "Contemporary Art", and the post-truth epoch. The entirety of this essay can be found in "A Flexible and Dynamic Work Environment," Callander's forthcoming book.

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THESIS ABSTRACTS

Having a sweat with you: Queer Intimacy and Public Bathing

By Greta Hamilton

Through analysis of artist engagement with public bathing, my thesis paper thesis considers the discursive and embodied relationship between public bathing and queerness. I examine the visual culture of public bathing through analysis of contemporary art practices including the work of Ruth Kaplan, Kerri Flannigan and Katarzyna Kozyra. I draw on this analysis to situate the visual culture of public bathing within queer and feminist theories. This thesis poses queerness as a mode of intimacy inherent to public bathing, which artists engage to consider how sexual orientation and gender are constituted in bathing sites. I weave between these theoretical analyses and my own stories of sweat, fluidity, and intimacy to center embodied knowledge in the writing process.

Photography, the mirror, and homoerotic gaze: A Lacanian analysis of the triangulated look in the work of Robert Mapplethorpe and Paul Mpagi Sepuya

By Leon Hsu

My thesis paper examines the work of two photographers, Robert Mapplethorpe and Paul Mpagi Sepuya, to explore the homoerotic gaze in contemporary photography. Both in harmony and in contrast, the two photographers work with the issue of the body and desire that relates to their positionality as openly gay artists. Drawing on the seminal work of Jacques Lacan, I undertake in-depth visual analyses of Mapplethorpe's early polaroid work, ***Untitled (The Dancer)*** (1974), and Sepuya's ***Darkroom Mirror series*** (2017) to analyse how these works use the mirror to produce a triangulated gaze relation between the model, the photographer, and the viewer. In so doing, I propose an alternative reading of the gaze in art history as homoerotic and subjectively liberating, rather than gendered and objectifying.

Temporal Displacement and Belonging: Danh Vo and The Objects of Memory

By Richard Luong

In his artworks, 2.2.1861, Vo Rosasco Rasmussen, and Oma Totem, the Vietnamese-born, Danish artist Danh Vo recreates and repurposes personal objects. These objects include a father's handwritten letters, a marriage certificate between friends, and a grandmother's household appliances. By examining the role of collective memory in the material lives of these objects, in the diasporic context, my thesis paper explores the temporal journey from displacement to belonging.

Recalculating the Fulfilling Potentials in Uploading the Self Online: Making the Network Personal on Our Terms

By Kara Marcinkoski

Contemporary engagement with the internet is largely boring and alienating, in stark contrast to our imagined expectation that it would foster community and interconnectedness. In my thesis paper, I direct attention to the current causes of discontent with the internet, but posit that there are indeed fulfilling, personal and intimate experiences to be had online. I use the theories and practice of musician and academic Holly Herndon as an example of the enduring potentialities of the internet for both creativity and intimacy in opposition to the current causes of discontent on the internet. Lastly, I discuss and explore a diverse milieu of artists and theorists who, like Herndon, also isolate the personal within Hito Steyerl's "awkward" internet.

Have You Ever Seen the Crowd Goin' Apeshit? Mining through representations of the Black body in the art institution

By Daniela Nowotarska

Fred Wilson's ***Mining the Museum*** was a pioneering exhibit that addressed issues of Black representation within museum institutions. His installations revealed the absence of African-American history in Western museums and set the stage for artist-musicians like Beyoncé and JAY-Z to also intervene the museum space. In the music video for their song ***APESHIT***, the artists use their presence in the Louvre Museum to critique the whiteness of the art historical canon. In my thesis paper, I consider the historical context and contemporary significance of the two works to analyse how they confront the underlying colonial history of the museum and affirm Black representation.

Cecilia Vicuña's Disappeared Quipu (2018): Materializing Indigenous Knowledges through Artistic Practice

By Karina Roman Justo

What happens when the quipu, a knot-record Andean system and device –used during the Incan Empire (dates) – is removed from study of anthropology and becomes focus of a contemporary art practice? What does the quipu as an art form have to say about the place of Indigenous histories and knowledge in the contemporary world? My thesis paper responds to these questions by analysing how Chilean artist Cecilia Vicuña in her installation ***Disappeared Quipu*** (2018), displayed at the Brooklyn Museum, utilizes the quipu to forefront Indigenous knowledges by employing its aesthetics, its history and the concepts it encompasses. To do so, I frame Vicuña's practice within past and present understandings of Andean weaving and the quipu, and by thinking through Aymara-Bolivian subaltern scholar Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's proposal of a ch'ixi world, to explore how the material and the conceptual aspects of this artwork imbue the quipu with multiple contemporary meanings and resonances.

Art as a Coping Mechanism: The Artistic Journey's of Adolf Wölfli and Yayoi Kusama

By Kaitie Sachade

My thesis paper looks comparatively at the creative qualities of two artists who suffer from mental illnesses, Adolf Wölfli and Yayoi Kusama, specifically considering how each channeled their mental illnesses into their artistic practices as a way of coping with these disturbances. Included in this discussion of similarities in their works, as well as key differences. An important focus in this analysis is how Wölfli and Kusama's respective practices are approached, looking at the way in which society engages with each artist in seemingly vastly different ways, given the understanding of mental illness and acceptance of it during these two very different time periods. Born only a generation apart, the success of each individual's artistic career is proportionally disparate. I argue that Wölfli and Kusama's mental disturbances manifest within the realm of visual arts, effectively serving as a coping mechanism for each artist, as well as society's differing responses to this mode of practice given the differing time periods having been born an entire generation apart.

Rococo Obscura: Unveiling Occult Representations in Eighteenth-Century French Painting

By Nikole Turrer

As an exceptionally decadent style of art, architecture, and decoration - the Rococo period has been historically dismissed as superficial, insubstantial, and frivolous. Upon closer investigation of overlooked themes, these narratives are predominantly influenced by ancient Greek mythological stories. Investigating overlooked occult interpretations not traditionally extracted from the spritely nature of the Rococo, it can be argued that the Rococo does, in fact, draw upon darker veiled descriptions. In my thesis paper, I invite a reinterpretation of eighteenth-century French Rococo painting that considers how the occult is manifested through the works of Francois Boucher, Jean-Antoine Watteau, Jean-François de Troy, and Louis-Jean-Francois Lagrenée.

An Analysis of Shooting Arrangement and Body Movements in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon and Kingsman: The Secret Service*

By Yimeng Zhu

Battle scenes in movies are often the embodiment of aesthetics of martial arts. With the development of the film industry, this term has also changed from a purely fun pursuit into a film style and film system. My thesis paper focuses on analyzing the fighting scenes in the movie ***Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, and Kingsman: The Secret Service***, and explores the different aesthetic expressions of Eastern and Western movies in shooting arrangement, lens design, and body movement design, then dig deeper into the connotations and implications of the fighting scenes in Eastern and Western movies.

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