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Post-Digital Strategies of Appropriation

DE GRUYTER

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Post-Digital Strategies of Appropriation

Michael Kargl | Franz Thalmair (Eds.)

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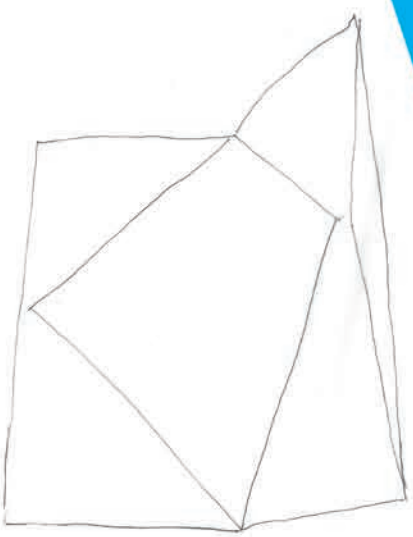

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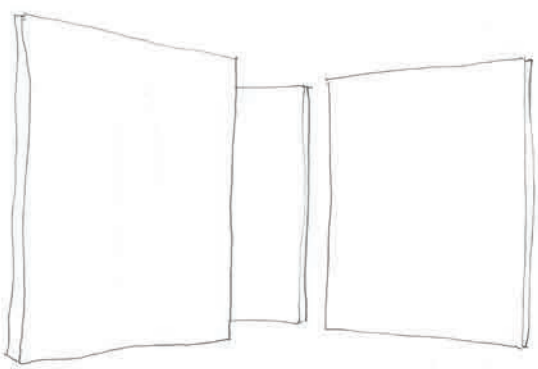

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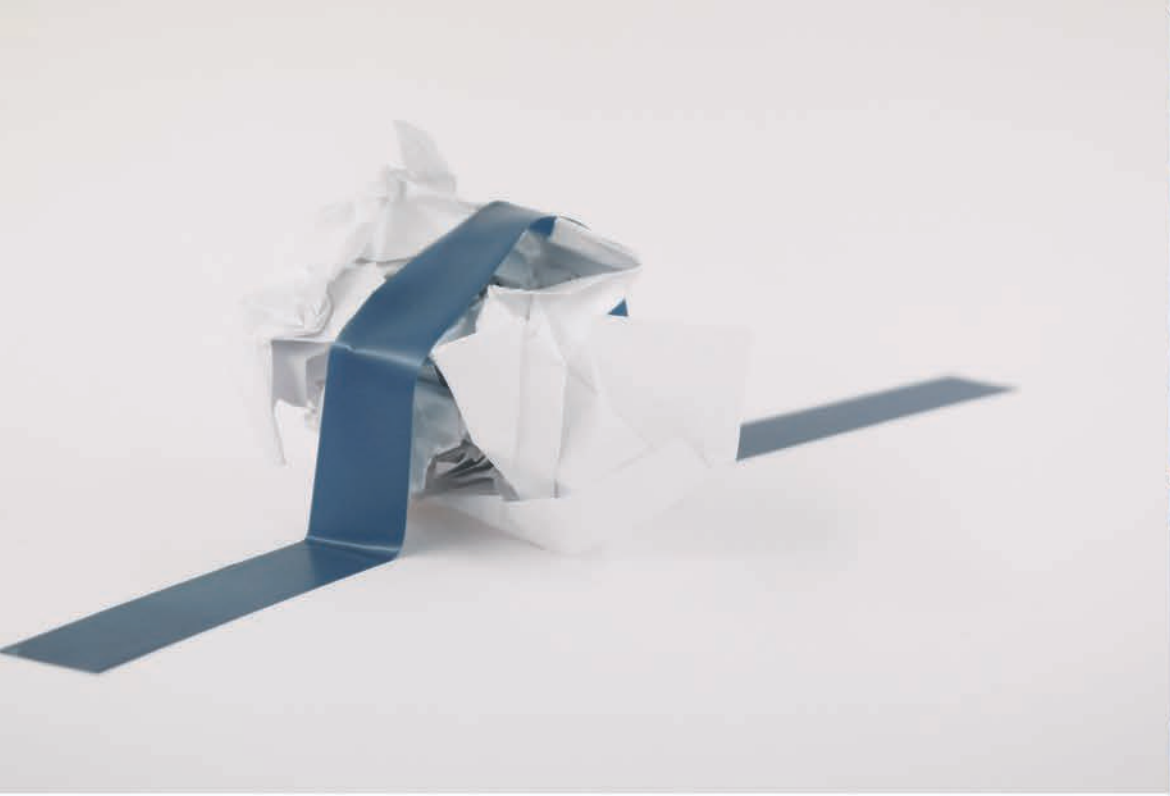

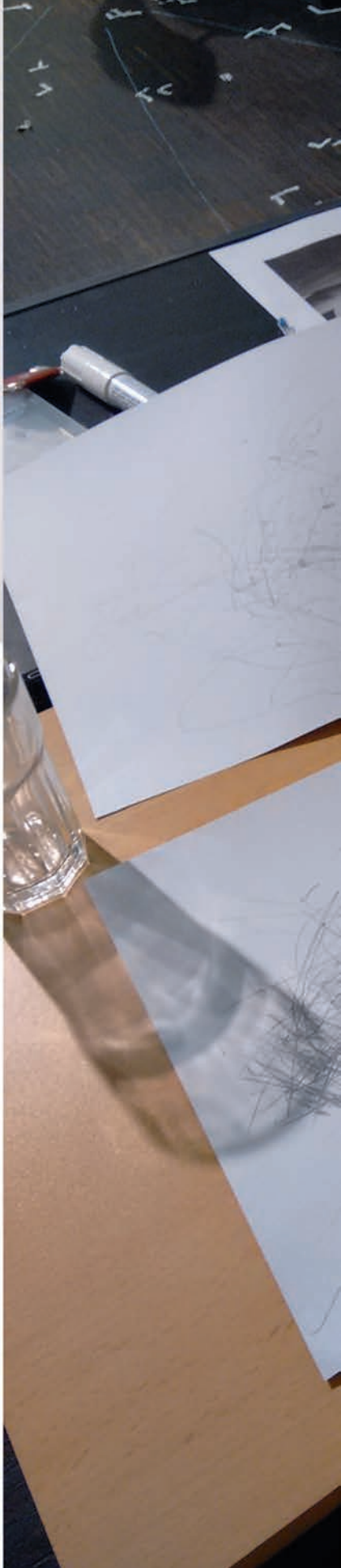

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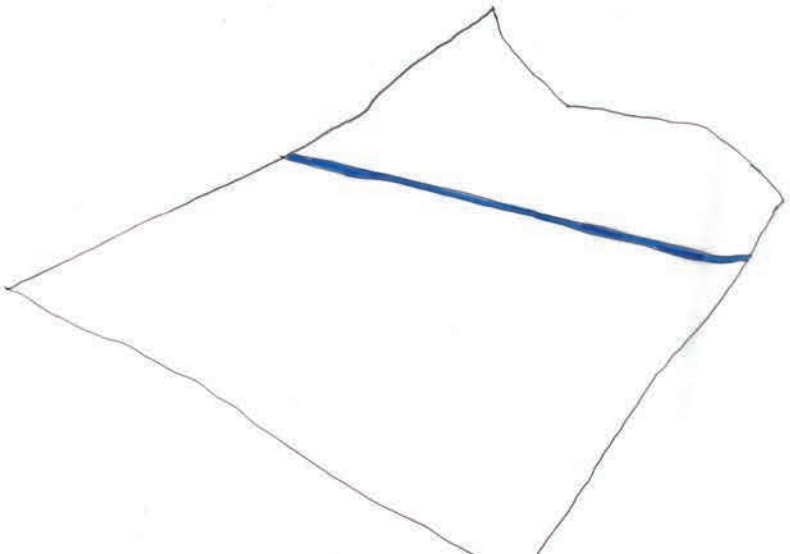

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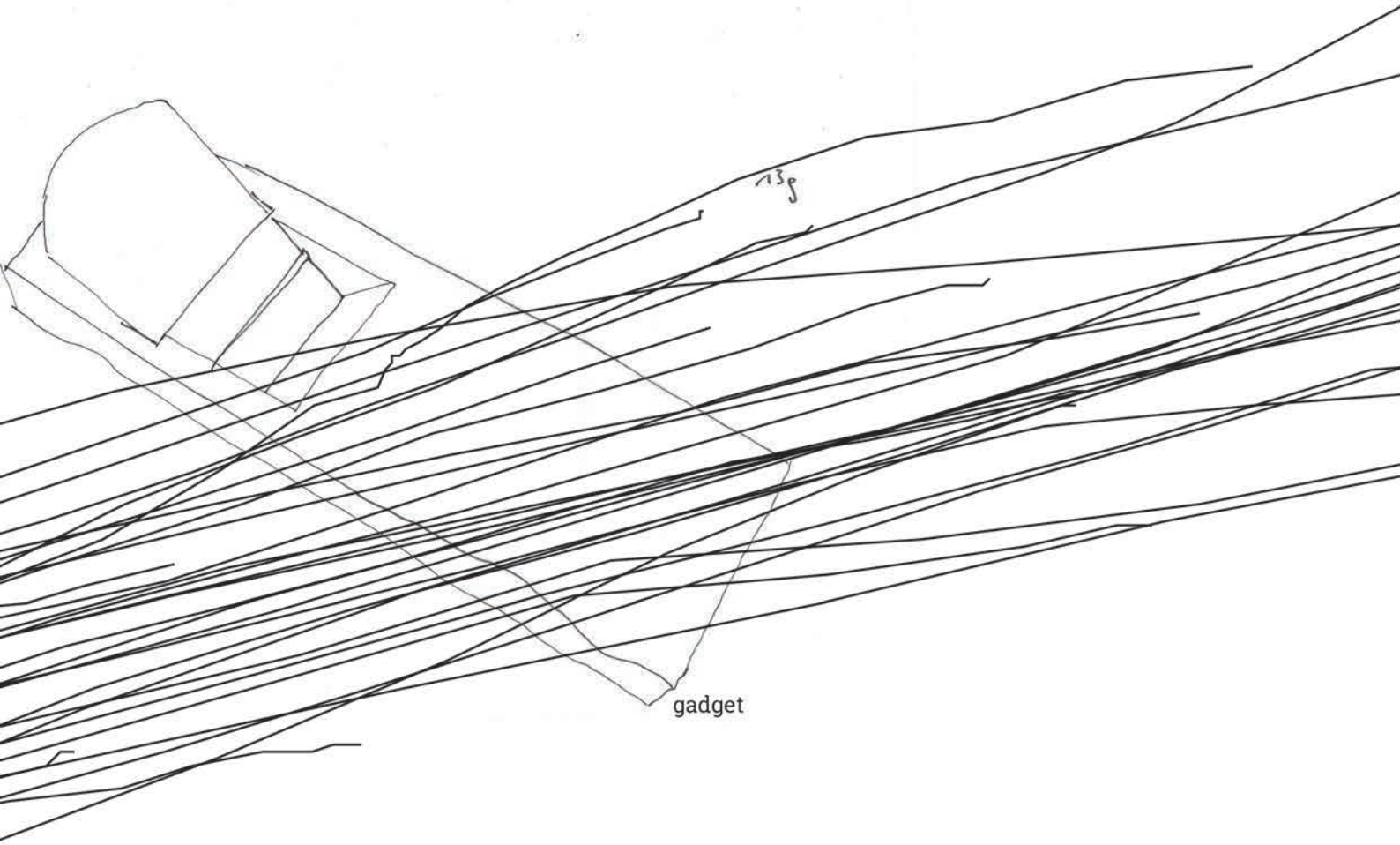
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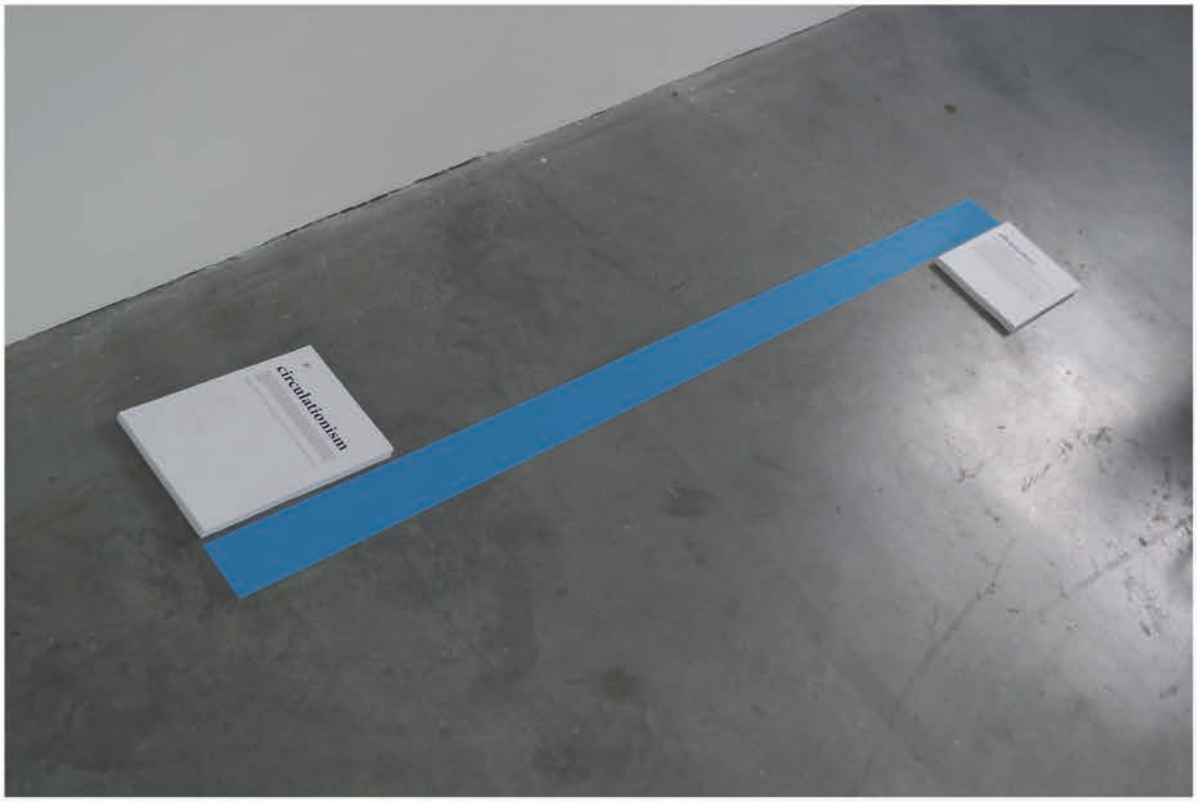
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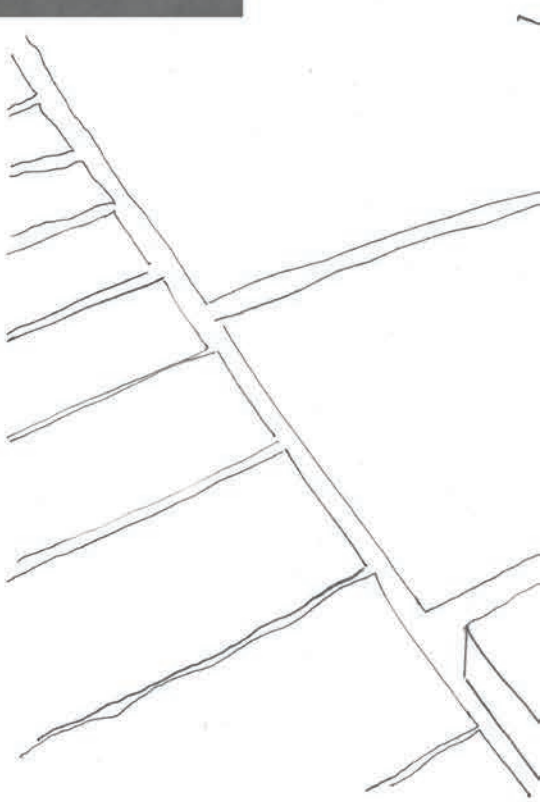

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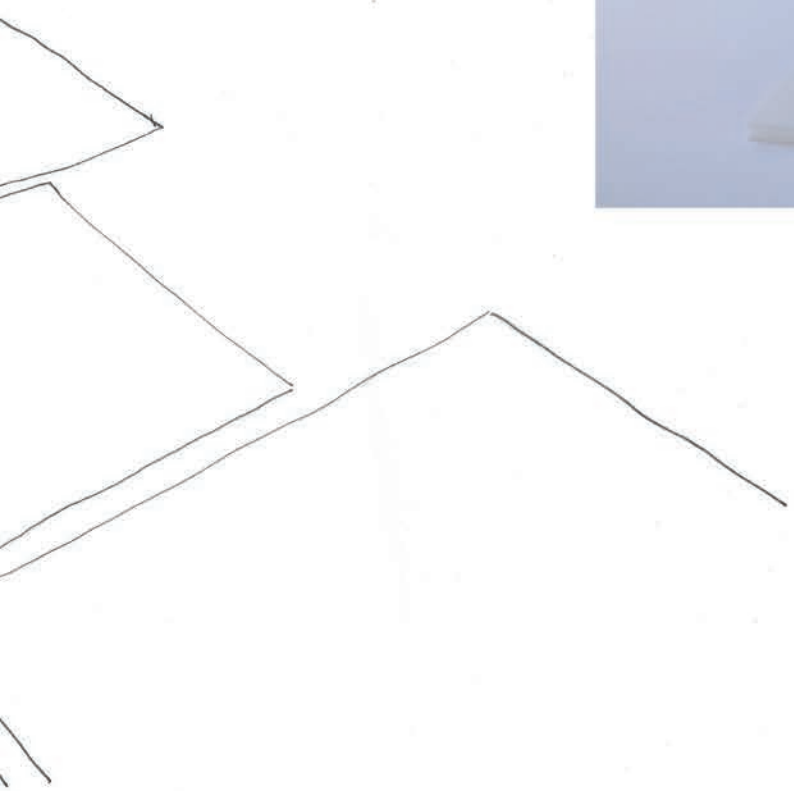


THINKING IN THE EXHIBITION FORMAT

POSTPRODUCTION NOTES ON *ORIGINALCOPY*

FRANZ THALMAIR

One thing you should consider before posting: When you make something publicly available on the Internet, it becomes practically impossible to take down all copies of it.
—Tumblr, Terms of Service

The triple jump—also referred to as "hop, step, and jump"—is a track and field athletics discipline that consists of a series of movement sequences: The competitor sprints down the track and makes a "hop" at the marked line. The athlete then lands on the same foot that the series began with. With the "step", the next jump, one lands on the other foot, which, subsequently, is used to perform the last part of the series, the "jump", which is completed with both feet in the sand pit where the result of the athletic performance is measured.[1] So the triple jump is a sequence of different yet invariably linked and interrelated body movements. Only the combination of the three jumps in their technical variations constitutes the discipline.

The exhibitions of the research project *originalcopy* developed into a serial arrangement, too, connected in content yet different in form: "hop" for *Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device)* as the first jump at BRUX | Freies Theater, Innsbruck, "step"

for the in-between basis *A ditto, ditto device.* at the Angewandte Innovation Laboratory, Vienna, and "jump" for the concluding *", ", ", — Footnotes* at WIELS | Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels. While *Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device)* focused on setting up a collaborative studio situation and developing a stage-like scenario, the second exhibition concentrated on the transfer from the theatre to the exhibition space. The rehearsal stage designed in the theatre context of *Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device)* became an exhibited element in *A ditto, ditto device.* in an interplay with artworks, texts, books, and displays. The third and last part of the exhibition series was conceived as a temporary presentation of a series of possible manifestation forms: With three exhibition variants that opened on three consecutive evenings, *", ", ", — Footnotes* developed into a performative space for a public and, in itself, serial reflection upon methodologies.

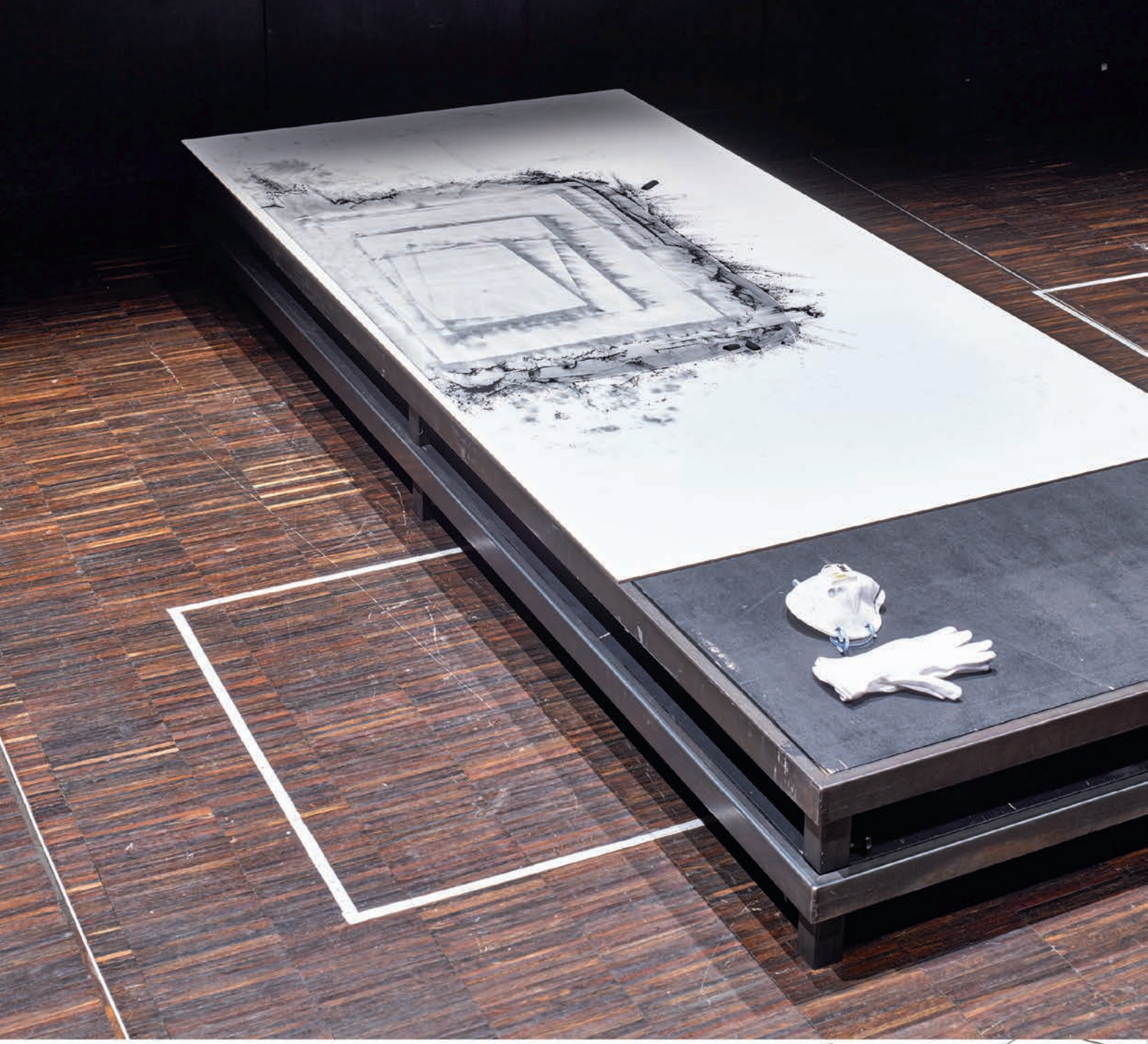
The main questions raised in the exhibitions in Innsbruck, Vienna, and Brussels addressed how post-digital[2] copying methods can be made productive in the artistic realm, while investigating the very same methods with artistic means. Is it possible to develop a methodology of contemporary copying practices by initiating a copying process that always remains aware of itself? And how can such a loop of thought in the copying process reveal knowledge about the simultaneous omnipresence and invisibility of the phenomenon of the copy, with its deep historical, cultural, and technological roots in society? In the context of digital technologies the practice of copying—one of the departure points for *originalcopy*—has attained a new diversity. As its mechanisms frequently remain hidden and increasingly immaterialize, the challenge of the projects was to place the focus on the functionalities and logics of the copy.

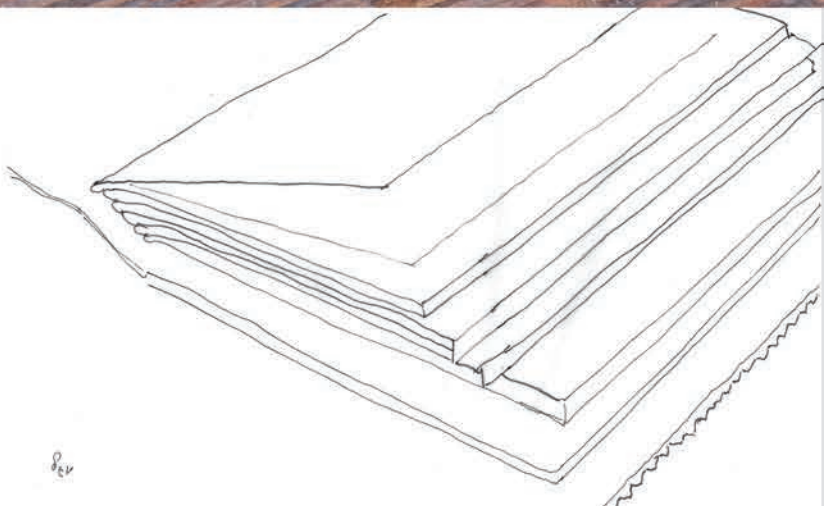
The title *A ditto, ditto device.*, used in different modulations in all three exhibitions, cites Marshall McLuhan's *The Medium is the Massage*, an artist's book designed by the philosopher in collaboration with the graphic designer Quentin Fiore. The combination of words and images, the overlap of drawing, photography, text, and typography, collage and montage as techniques, and self-reflection as a stylistic device—this permanent oscillation between illustrated media theory and theoretically-founded visualization is characteristic of the book. On copyright issues Marshall McLuhan writes: "Xerography—every man's brain-picker—heralds the times of instant publishing. Anybody can now become both author and publisher. Take any books on a subject and custom-make your own book by simple xeroxing a chapter from this one, a chapter from that one—instant steal!"[3] The philosopher concludes his media theory explorations on book printing with the eponymous formula:

A ditto, ditto device.
" " " "

A ditto, ditto device.
" " " "

A ditto, ditto device.
" " " "





In the context of *originalcopy* McLuhan's *The Medium is the Massage* is not only interpreted as his visual and linguistic "inventory of effects". Moreover, the book is programmatic for the types of artistic production methods discussed in the three exhibitions in Innsbruck, Vienna, and Brussels, and which—as we will see later in detail—have their departure point in the act of copying.

The Run-Up—Fast Steps

But first, a few steps back—back into the World Wide Web, at a point on the track where the triple jumpers begin their combinations of "hop", "step", and "jump". There, several meters before the first jump and several months before the first exhibition, *originalcopy* took its run-up: with an image collection that was made available online. The website ocopy.net, its elements a research corpus for the art project—as a body brought to motion—contains hundreds of interlinked depictions of artworks, scans of theoretical and artistic texts, and other set pieces from the Internet, which bear a connection to *originalcopy*. These data materials are not originals, they are copies: not the image, object, or installation but photographic reproductions, which are copied, manipulated, and disseminated once again in the World Wide Web; not the book, essay, or piece of literature in its original form rather scanned versions, for the most part, which are available online for download.

That these images and texts are not just random materials, that they are "not just data",[4] rather that the selection and combination as well as the possibility to recombine the materials through linking create the collection's profile in the process of collecting—this can be explained on the basis of John Austin's speech act theory.[5] According to this linguistic model, we do not just describe the world through speaking, we also perform actions that create the world. Hanne Seitz links the performative dimension of speech with thoughts on artistic and "performative research": "The data not only represent reality, they literally create it. Accordingly, the words not only *mean* something, they *do* something with the reality they describe. Hence, the speaking *about* must also be understood as an (efficacious and situation-based) action. In terms of the performative effects, it has less to do with describing a past action or representing a prior situation, rather the statement and reality, content and form, subject and object merge—a process that also has a binding effect."[6]

The corpus of *originalcopy* mainly consists of documentation of artworks that deal with the copy, documentations which as copies themselves are anchored in repetitions. How the conditions have changed, how the documentation of art today assumes a similar status as the artwork itself, and how copy and original are no longer conceived as temporally or hierarchically consecutive but as parallel and equal, Boris Groys explains as follows: "The word 'documentation' is crucial here. In the wake of recent decades, the documentation of art has increasingly been integrated into art exhibitions and art museums—alongside traditional artworks. However, art documentation is not art: it merely refers to an art event, or exhibition, or installation, or project that we assume to have really taken place. On

the internet, art documentation finds its legitimate place: it refers to art as its 'real,' external referent taking place in 'reality itself.' One can say that avant-garde and post-avant-garde art has finally achieved its goal—to become a part of 'reality.' But this reality is not one with which we are confronted, or in the middle of which we live. Rather, it is a reality of which we are informed. In the contemporary world we are de facto confronted not with art but with information about art."[7]

The art historian Wolfgang Ullrich goes a step further and attributes a certain weakness to the original in comparison to its copies. On the expectations that go unfulfilled when one first sees the depiction of an artwork and only then the original, he writes: "The original lacks reality, although, one would think, it must be much more than any depiction: more multifaceted than a mere reproduction, in the numerous factors and sensory impressions that just cannot be replicated. When, however, the depiction of a work looks better or has more impact than the original, it suggests ontological saturnalia: The otherwise just secondary, disdained time and again since Plato, imitation is perceived as the primary."[8] The fact that the initial experience of art, in addition to the visit to the museum and exhibition, also takes place in the Internet today, and that such a shift is widely accepted, is illustrated by websites such as *Contemporary Art Daily*, which have developed into a "primary point of access for information about exhibitions",[9] and whose tools are exhibition views—photographic reproductions of artworks.

An essential organizational principle for the image and text material on the *originalcopy* website is keywords: They ensure that the individual components do not go lost in the collection but remain readable and retrievable. Links also facilitate different ways of navigating through the material. As the collection was freely available to the public and its character was constantly changing with the continual addition of new materials, *originalcopy* and the exhibitions in Innsbruck, Vienna, and Brussels can be described as "formats" in the sense of David Joselit: "Formats are dynamic mechanisms for aggregating content. […] formats are nodal connections and differential fields; they channel an unpredictable array of ephemeral currents and charges. They are configurations of force rather than discrete objects. In short, formats establish a pattern of links and connections. I use the term *link* and *connection* advisedly because it is through such modes of association, native to the World Wide Web, that composition occurs under conditions of image population explosion. As I have argued, what now matters most is not the production of new content but its *retrieval* in intelligible pattern through acts of *reframing*, *capturing*, *reiterating*, and *documenting*."[10]

originalcopy employs the accumulation of image and text material from avant-garde and neo-avant-garde methods of collage and object art, in which found materials are rearranged to generate new meaning variants. Additionally, methods of knowledge organization are relevant to the project, such as the pictorial atlas *Mnemosyne* developed by Aby Warburg[11] at the beginning of the twentieth

plywood

century or later index card systems such as those of Niklas Luhmann.[12] With his collection of reproduced photos from books and visual material of the everyday, Warburg tried to correlate philosophical and visual-cultural facts in order to illustrate historical developments. Luhmann's card library served the sociologist as a toolkit of literature notes, text passages, and quotes.

Drawing upon Warburg and Luhmann's strategies of continuously rearranging pictures and adapting index cards to the changing parameters of different types of texts, the materials in the *originalcopy* corpus were also reconfigured in accordance with the respective artistic form of expression—in this case the three completely different exhibitions in three different cities. The individual elements of the corpus, the reproduced images, the scanned texts, the copied materials, were placed in various relationships with one another over the course of the project process and linked into fluctuating chains of ideas and thought clusters—both online and in real space.

Take-Off—Foot on the Line

The research project *originalcopy* applies a method called "performative research".[13] It examines artistic positions that simultaneously reflect upon subject and medium. Beyond the aesthetic experience, it enables one to reflect upon "the conditions of one's own position in the medium of artistic practice" while "investigating something in the artistic knowledge production process with the specific means of art".[14] This circular notion of artistic research allows a thematic field to be examined from an apparent outsider position, while the artistic production is active, at the same time, within the very field that is the subject of analysis—the practice becomes performative.

A departure point for *originalcopy* is the commonly used yet contradictory term "original copy": On the one hand, "original" denotes the unique source of a thought or an object; on the other hand, "copy" inscribes its own carbon likeness upon this source, thereby immediately dissolving the idea of uniqueness once again. The nearly same-named project appropriates this contradiction, albeit the words "original" and "copy" are no longer read separately rather merge into one. This amalgamation of the terms, the revision and transformation of language by erasing the space between them, stands programmatically for the idea that *originalcopy* is based upon. For the objective of *originalcopy is* to create a space of resonance, where the bipolarities of original and copy are *not* the focus, rather where a connection between the two units is understood.

In the case of *originalcopy*, performative research refers to an experiment based on the act of copying. The extent to which experimentation is intrinsic to any art production and the extent to which artistic research must go further in order to not be arbitrary, Hannes Rickli portrays as a double-reflection of the medium of expression and subject of expression, a momentum that can be formulated as the common ground of artistic research: "There is the understanding that the fine arts always experiment in the endeavor to find form for its objects. To this end, it reflects and revises materials and media. This

very general and thus not very productive perspective should be limited by shifting the view to practices that deal with experimentation itself as a process."[15] Furthermore, in *originalcopy* not only the terms "original" and "copy" merge into one, but also artistic and scientific work, in keeping with a humanities and social sciences standpoint. Hanne Seitz expands on performative research: "Its aim is not to graphically capture or linguistically describe reality, nor to verify previous hypotheses or follow preceding questions, and also not to document processes." According to the author, its intention is "to be identical with the practice, to activate implicit knowledge and generate new insights through the processing, handling, and treatment of practice".[16]

Artistic research should in no case be understood as a genre but rather as a form of action that—like every reasonably reflected artistic creation—doesn't lose sight of one's own means in the working process. Even though a researching art practice distinguishes itself from other forms of artistic work through its intensified view upon its own methods, strategies, and processes, it has access to all the other forms of expression that are used and/or invented by art. Despite the diversity of the methodological possibilities, *originalcopy* is organized, in principle, as an art project with curatorial traits because it is rooted in the selected and recombined image corpus of the project website. Hence, the exhibition format, as an elementary form of curatorial expression, plays a central role within the project and is conceived as a constituent of the performative research as a generative discursive practice. The exhibitions and the featured forms of artistic expression are not assigned an exclusively explanatory aspect, rather, above all, the implicit "articulation" of artistic content. Alice Creischer emphasizes the political significance of such a distinction: "It is not about conveying information, it is about comprehending and dealing with reality."[17]

It is undisputed that curatorial fields of activity and the corresponding exhibitions have developed into "epistemic practices in their own right",[18] as Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson formulated in *Curating Research*: "Integral to the expanded conception of the curatorial, there has been renewed recognition of the exhibition itself as a potential mode of research action, which exceeds the familiar (but nonetheless noteworthy) idea of research activities being conducted in order to generate exhibitions."[19] Accordingly, with the three exhibitions in Innsbruck, Vienna, and Brussels, formats were established in *originalcopy* that were not only intended as presentation forms for research, but as sites of reflection on the material, form, and content of the exhibitions themselves.

Curator Simon Sheikh understands self-reflective presentation forms as settings in which observers are confronted with reality and a "politics of truth": "Research is not only that which comes before realisation but also that which is realised throughout actualisation. That which would otherwise be thought of as formal means of transmitting knowledge—such as design structures, display models and perceptual experiments—is here an integral part of the curatorial mode of address, its content

production, its proposition."[20] The reality-forming nature of Sheikh's "enacted research" can be brought into connection with the performative research of *originalcopy* insofar as the curatorial structure of the project is organized, as mentioned previously, to address "the conditions of one's own position",[21] not just in the medium of artistic practice but, above all, in the format of the exhibition as well. A perfect example of this conceptual twist is the figure of the triple jump introduced at the start, which begins in a theatre space, passes through a university laboratory for experiments, and ultimately ends in a center for contemporary art production. Even though the three exhibitions build upon one another and create a certain narrative structure as a series, they follow at the same time a contrary, anti-narrative, a strategy inherent to the copy—as serial works can always also be understood as "the suspension of the moment in its repetition".[22]

But now to the "hop", "step", and "jump".

Hop—*Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device)*

Once the take-off has succeeded, nothing stands in the way of the triple jump: In the "hop" an in-between step of sorts is made in the air in order to land once again on the ground with the take-off leg and perform the next jump. The moment of repetition inscribed in this body movement was equally as constituent for the exhibition *Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device)* at BRUX | Freies Theater, Innsbruck.

In two theatre halls—the "Black Room" and the "White Room"—on five consecutive days, a collaborative working situation was created, which was simultaneously a stage set and an open workshop that the public could visit on two of the days. The invitation to participate in this process was issued to six artists whose practice is characterized by appropriation strategies. During the collective work days in Innsbruck—in view of the following exhibition in Vienna and thus the in-between step in the triple jump—new works were made, or first ideas for them were generated.

In order to create a situation that functioned both as a work space as well as an installation, the White Room was transformed into an exhibition situation with mobile stage elements like floors, walls, and tables, whose features were re-employed and further developed in the context of the two following exhibitions as displays. After completing the collective working and thinking process, certain remaining artifacts from the production process in the White Room were transferred to the Black Room, where they were mounted into a stage set. This stage set was not intended for the public; it was only documented photographically. In the end the installation setting in the Black Room—as a depiction of itself—was incorporated into precisely that image body from which it originated: the photographic documentation was fed into the flow of images on the *originalcopy* website.

The installation in the Black Room formed the blueprint for all future spatial activities, both in the exhibition *A ditto, ditto device.* in Vienna and in *",* *",* *",* — *Footnotes* in Brussels. It was the design of a system of spatial-visual representation, a thought

process given form, which served as a departure point for the coming processes.

Step—*A ditto, ditto device.*
The second jump, the same take-off leg: In the "step" the trajectory, the body conduct, and the landing follow the same principles as in the first movement. However, the power and speed do not accumulate from the athlete's step frequency during the run-up but from the "hop". As with the exhibition *A ditto, ditto device*, the source is no longer outside but within the own system.

The selection of works in the show at the Angewandte Innovation Laboratory, Vienna, a space for experiments in artistic research at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, was informed by the artists who had already worked together at BRUX | Freies Theater, Innsbruck. Besides the works developed there, in Vienna there were supplemental works by the participants along with works by other artists from the online image collection. Each artist was represented with two artworks in *A ditto, ditto device*. The intention was to not attach too much importance to the individual works, rather to direct the visitors' attention to the overarching artistic practice, its methods and strategies. This also accounted for the *originalcopy* website, as the exhibition objects in the spaces of the Angewandte Innovation Laboratory, Vienna, were associatively arranged, similar to the data collection on the Internet.

Over the course of the exhibition the stream of images, objects, and installations was sporadically interrupted by so-called nodes—reading stations as condensation points of the topics addressed in *originalcopy*. Artist Karen Elliot was invited to elaborate the theoretical part of the research—a collection of essays, keywords, quotes, and text sources—for the exhibition. She chose to equip the nodes with a selection of books, newspapers, and other printed matter.

For the reading stations, which should both mediate and expand upon the exhibition artistically, Michael Kargl devised a display whose design parameters were derived from a work in the image corpus: Pedro Cabrita Reis' *A view over the garden #1* (2015). Kargl adapted the appearance of the reading stations, their color and materiality, to the stage sets in the Black and White Room of the Innsbruck exhibition *Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device)*. Conversely, one of the room views from Innsbruck was mixed among the exhibits in Vienna, thus bridging the two spaces with a direct visual link.

Jump—", ", ", — *Footnotes*
At the conclusion of the triple jump comes the strongest variant: In the "jump" the take-off leg switches, the trajectory angle is lower than in the other jumps, and the assemblage of "hop", "step", and "jump" disperses in a fulminant landing in the sandpit. This momentum of dispersion was also characteristic of ", ", ", — *Footnotes*, the last part of the exhibition series at WIELS | Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels. However, in this jump the idea of a footnote goes beyond just a simple citation at the bottom of the page. In the context of *originalcopy* it is conceived as an integral element, which, in

the sequence of the three exhibitions in Innsbruck, Vienna, and Brussels, does not conclude the research process, rather it opens it in all imaginable directions.

A main idea behind ", ", ", — *Footnotes* was for the artworks, in part already shown in Vienna, to be repositioned in the space three times on three consecutive days, thus changing the connecting threads between them as well. This triple jump within the triple jump implied that each day was a vernissage of a new exhibition. The documentation changed, too—from each perspective that the photographer chose to portray the show, three variants exist, which illustrate the temporal and spatial development. The intention of this double triple jump was, on the one hand, to dissolve the fixation of the respective exhibition format, and on the other, to explore the idea of repetition and the copy within the format of the exhibition.

What David Joselit calls a "format"—namely an artistic position not oriented upon creating new contents but rather the reinterpretation of existing contents by invoking a variety of patterns—becomes evident in ", ", ", — *Footnotes*. It is a shift from an object-based to a network-based aesthetics, in which images only conjure meaning in their relation to other images: "One way of giving form to spatial, centrifugal narratives—of producing, like Le Corbusier, a kind of 'image promenade'—is thus to show how images may change their valence on account of their changes in position or that of their spectator."[23] ", ", ", — *Footnotes* was about shifting the view of the observers away from the images and to the relationship between the images.

The Landing, Open-Ended

Once the triple jump has been completed, the sand pit is examined and the print of the body on the surface is used as the endpoint for measuring the jump distance. The result is definite; the athletic performance can now be evaluated.

Unlike sports, there are no measurable results in the field of art or arts-based research projects like *originalcopy*. The making of art as the possibility to discuss certain topics and questions on the basis of materials, forms, images, objects, or concepts, and to continuously assess and compare them anew, is a critical and open practice oriented upon collective action, which permanently recreates reality in the reflection of reality. In the context of *originalcopy*, a project operating with not just artistic but also curatorial strategies, the principle research focuses are "*dialogue* ('a curatorial praxis that develops together with artistic practices and reacts to former curatorial strategies'), *transparency* ('curatorial and artistic production strategies […] made transparent to the public') and *process* ('processual artistic and curatorial strategies can draft exhibition practices which simultaneously promote, authorise and reflect')".[24]

Beginning with *Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device)* at BRUX | Freies Theater, Innsbruck, the subsequent exhibitions at the Angewandte Innovation Laboratory, Vienna, and at WIELS | Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels, also had an inherent rehearsal-like character. The rehearsal as a means to an end and as a figure of thought for the performative research of *originalcopy* "distinguishes itself from the real performance through its laboratory setting. Ideally,

the seclusion of the rehearsal space should offer the possibility to investigate different approaches, which are assessed by a test audience—director, dramaturgist, and other actors. What is shown there has the status of a rehearsal action, which is continuously reflected upon without already being conclusively evaluated."[25] Nevertheless, in the exhibitions in Vienna and Brussels, this provisional nature of the actions in the rehearsal space was accessible and open to the public.

In the framework of the arts-based research project *originalcopy* the rehearsal stage manifests, last but not least, as a space of possibility where self-reflection and production take place in equal measure and at the same time, and likewise an observation position is provided both from within and from the outside. The fact that *originalcopy* began in a theatre context, at a site where the rehearsal is inscribed like no other, might be owed to coincidence, or to the openness that is characteristic of performative research—and, of course, things might just as well have turned out in a completely different way.

1 Cf. "Triple jump," *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triple_jump (accessed on Nov. 14, 2018).

2 The term "postdigital" does not refer to a condition after the digital rather the interface between digital and analog living and working conditions, which was explained, parallel to the *originalcopy* research project, in: Franz Thalmair (ed.), *Postdigital I. Allgegenwart und Unsichtbarkeit eines Phänomens, Kunstforum International* 242 (2016) and Franz Thalmair (ed.), *Postdigital II. Erscheinungsformen und Ausbreitung eines Phänomens, Kunstforum International*, 243 (2016).

3 Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage* (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), 123.

4 Hanne Seitz, "Performative Research," *Kulturelle Bildung Online*, https://www.kubi-online.de/artikel/performative-research (accessed on Nov. 14, 2018). Translated for this publication.

5 Cf. John L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955,* ed. James O. Urmson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

6 Seitz, "Performative Research."

7 Boris Groys, "Towards the New Realism," *e-flux* 77 (2016), http://www.e-flux.com/journal/77/77109/towards-the-new-realism (accessed on Nov. 14, 2018).

8 Wolfgang Ullrich, *Raffinierte Kunst. Übung vor Reproduktionen* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 2009), 7. Translated for this publication.

9 Michael Sanchez, "Contemporary Art, Daily," in *Art and Subjecthood: The Return of the Human Figure in Semiocapitalism,* eds. Daniel Birnbaum et al. (Berlin: Sternberg, 2011), 52–61, here: 53.

10 David Joselit, *After Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 55f.

11 Cf. Ernst H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg. Eine intellektuelle Biographie* (Hamburg: Philo Fine Arts, 2012).

12 Cf. Peter Gendolla and Jörgen Schäfer, "Zettelkastens Traum," in *Wissensprozesse in der Netzwerkgesellschaft*, ed. Peter Gendolla and Jörgen Schäfer (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2005), 7–27.

13 The connections between performative research as a working model for *originalcopy* and the copy are explained in this publication: Franz Thalmair, "Copying as Performative Research—Toward an Artistic Working Model," 348–353.

14 Anke Haarmann, "Gibt es eine Methodologie künstlerischer Forschung?" in *Wieviel Wissenschaft bekommt der Kunst?* Symposium of the Science and Art working group of the Austrian Research Association. Vienna, Academy of Fine Arts, November 4–5, 2011, http://www.oefg.at/legacy/text/arge_wissenschaftkunst/wissenschaft_kunst/Beitrag_Haarmann.pdf (accessed on Nov. 14, 2018). Translated for this publication.

15 Hannes Rickli, "Experimentieren," in *Künstlerische Forschung. Ein Handbuch*, eds. Jens Badura et al. (Zurich/Berlin: Diaphanes, 2015), 135–138, here: 136. Translated for this publication.

16 Seitz, "Performative Research."

17 Alice Creischer, "Ausstellen (selbstorganisiertes Wissen und Artistic Research)," in *Künstlerische Forschung. Ein Handbuch*, eds. Jens Badura et al. (Zurich/Berlin: Diaphanes, 2015), 119–122, here: 121. Translated for this publication.

18 Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, "An Opening to Curatorial Enquiry: Introduction to Curating and Research," in *Curating and Research*, eds. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London/Amsterdam: Open Editions / de Appel, 2015), 11–23, here: 16f.

19 Ibid., 17.

20 Simon Sheikh, "Towards the Exhibition as Research," in *Curating and Research*, eds. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London/Amsterdam: Open Editions / de Appel, 2015), 32–46, here: 40.

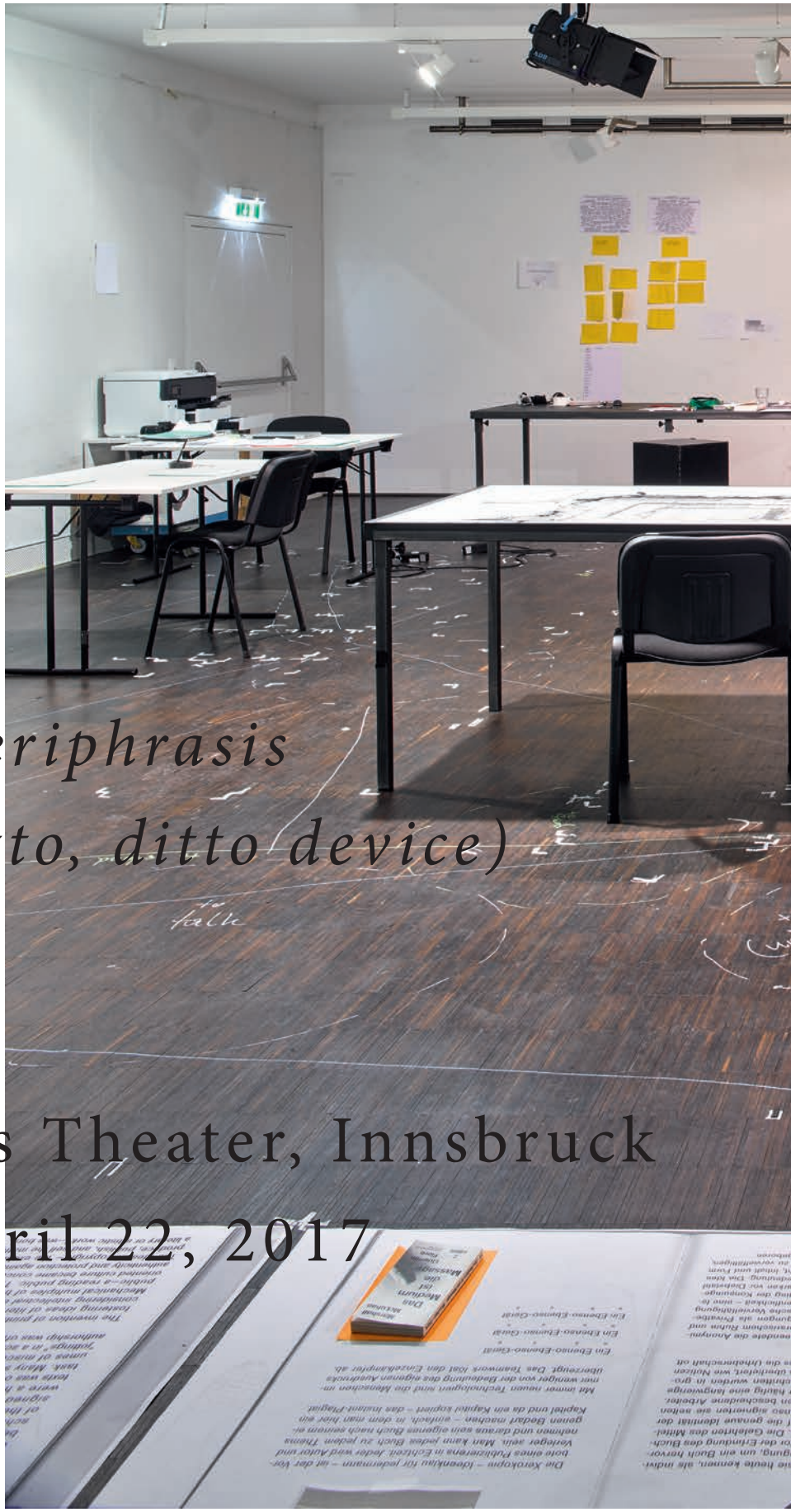
21 Haarmann, "Gibt es eine Methodologie künstlerischer Forschung?"

22 Peter Ablinger, "Serielles Arbeiten," in *Künstlerische Forschung. Ein Handbuch*, eds. Jens Badura et al. (Zurich/Berlin: Diaphanes, 2015), 205–209, here: 206. Translated for this publication.

23 David Joselit, *After Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 50.

24 Transit.hu, "Curatorial Dictionary: Unpacking the Oxymoron," in *Curating and Research*, eds. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London/Amsterdam: Open Editions / de Appel, 2015), 230–251, here: 250.

25 Annemarie Matzke, "Proben," in *Künstlerische Forschung. Ein Handbuch*, eds. Jens Badura et al. (Zurich/Berlin: Diaphanes, 2015), 189–192, here: 190. Translated for this publication.



Periphrasis
(for a ditto, ditto device)

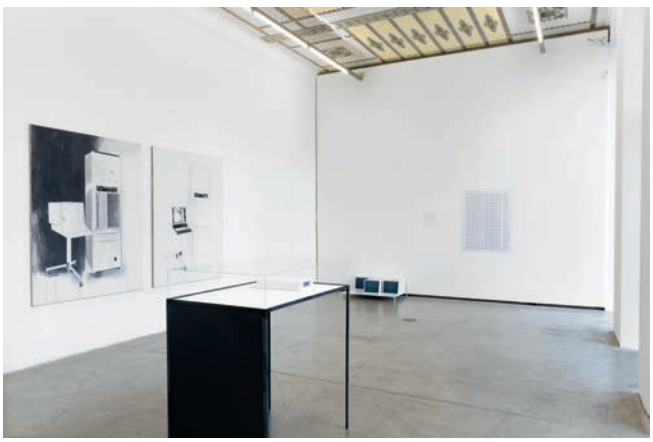
BRUX | Freies Theater, Innsbruck

April 18 – April 22, 2017

to talk
to log in
to stand

A ditto, ditto device.

Angewandte Innovation Laboratory, V
December 8, 2017 – January 17, 2018



Vienna

aemulatio
analogy
appropriation
buzz
circulationism
convenientia
counterfeit
default
dispersion
distribution
duplicate
ekphrasis
imitation
karaoke
karen eliot
meme
mimicry
mockup
plagiarism
postproduction

provenance

realism

shanzhai

supercopy

sympathy

tautology

translation

twin

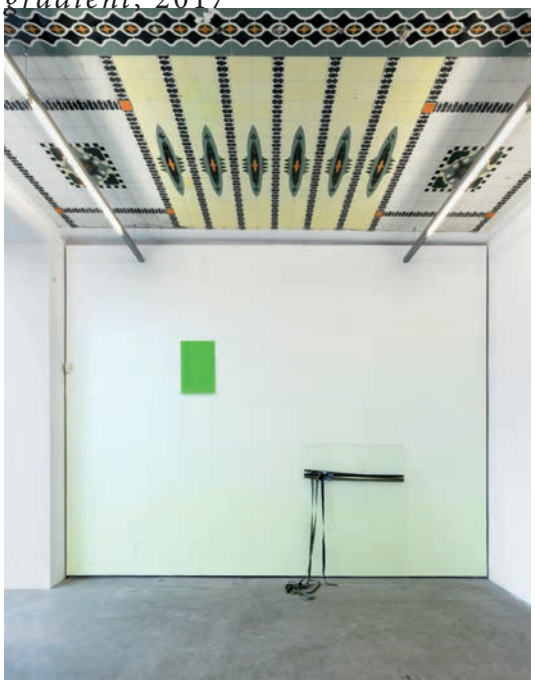
version

xerox

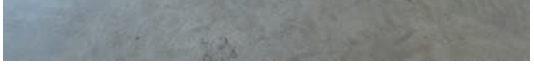
Daniel Gustav Cramer, *01–72*, 2014

Agnes Fuchs, *EXPÉRIENCE STÉRÉO_1, STATION MEUDON, STATION NANÇAY*, 2013 | *EXPÉRIENCE STÉRÉO_2, STATION MEUDON, STATION NANÇAY*, 2013

Michael Kargl, *glass, tension belts*, 2017 | *wall, colour gradient*, 2017



Yuki Higashino, *Free Enterprise Painting 2*, 2016

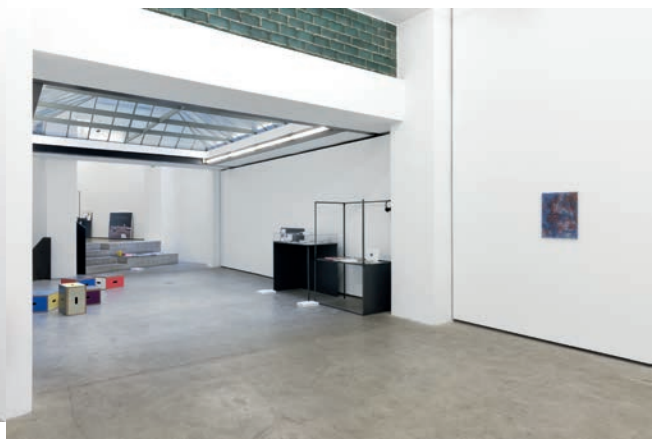


Ane Mette Hol, *Untitled (Icon), no. 2*, 2016

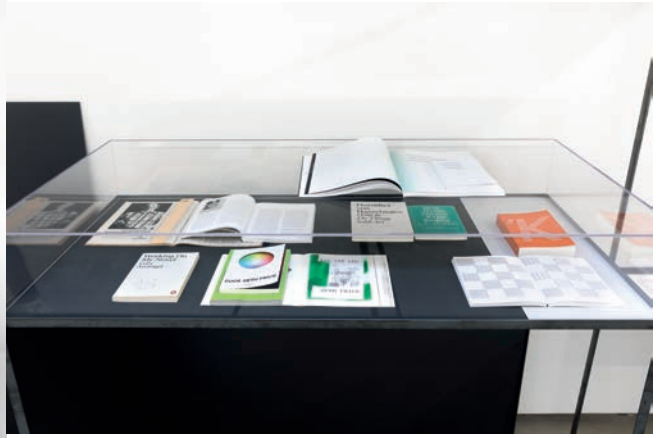
Ulrich Nausner, *Rainbow colors (interactive) #1*, 2017

Yuki Higashino, *Free Enterprise Painting 3*, 2016

Joséphine Kaeppelin, *Opinion Poll*, 2017

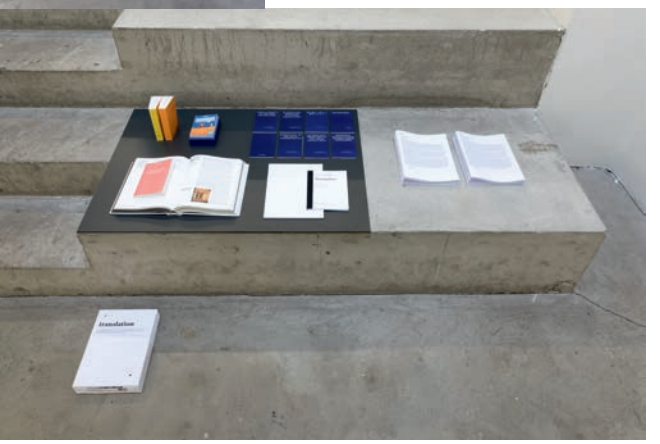


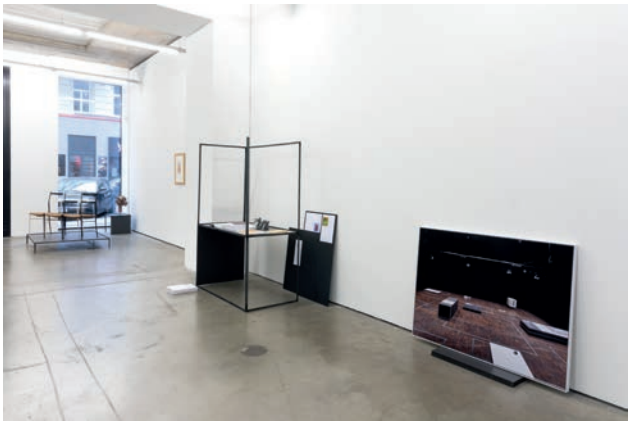

FONT
BOOK
Fiona
Banner



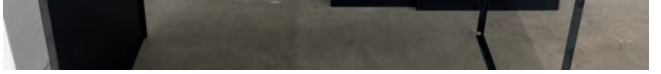

A WORLD OF
FRAGILE PARTS

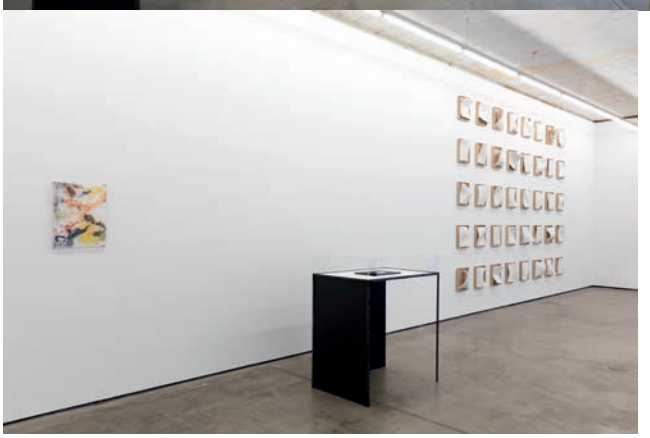
Ovidiu Anton, *Tabourets Cabanon LC14 01 Series: Exhibition Leftovers Secession*, 2015

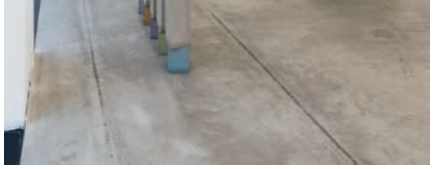

translation




END
TELL







Kathi Hofer, *Flowers*, 2009 | *666 Superleggera*, 2012 | *Design for a Salt Cellar*, 1545–1571 / 2012

Yuki Higashino, *Free Enterprise Painting 5*, 2017

Sebastian Gärtner, *Ikonotopographie (Our Lady of Tchwin)*, 2017

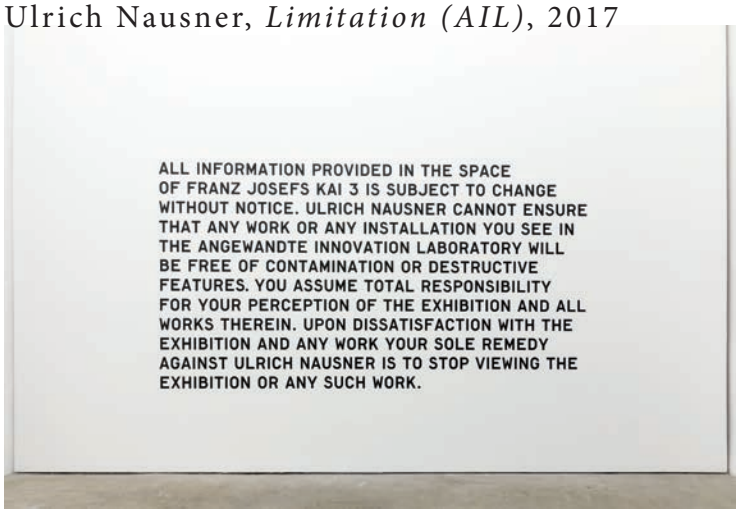
Ane Mette Hol, *Untitled (Drawing for 26 Objects)*, 2017

Nika Kupyrova, *Cat's cradle*, 2015

Ovidiu Anton, *Tabourets Cabanon LC14 01 Series: Exhibition Leftovers Secession*, 2015

Ulrich Nausner, *Rainbow colors (interactive) #2*, 2017

Ulrich Nausner, *Limitation (AIL)*, 2017

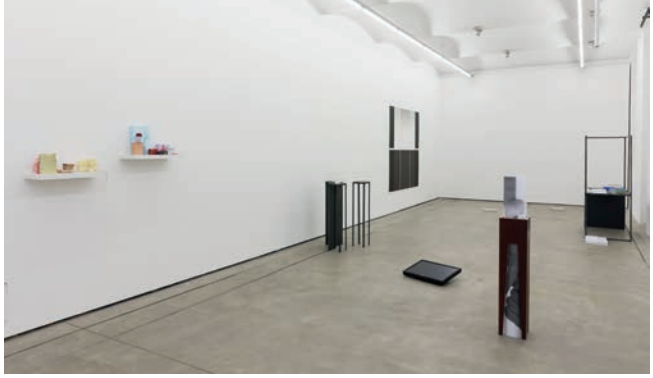


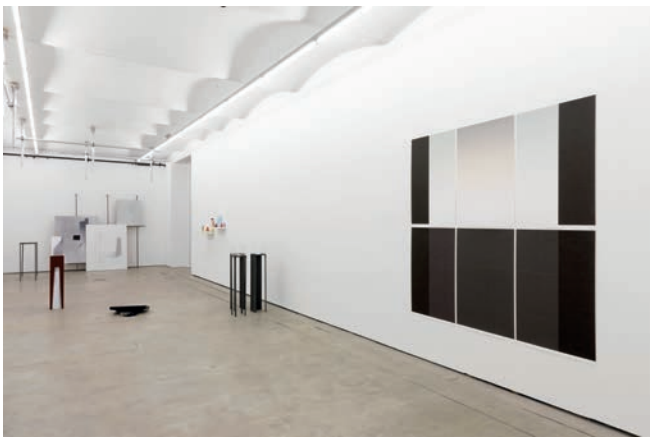
Stefan Riebel, *Untitled (Langzeitbelichtungen) – #05 / Revueflex 1000s*, 2017

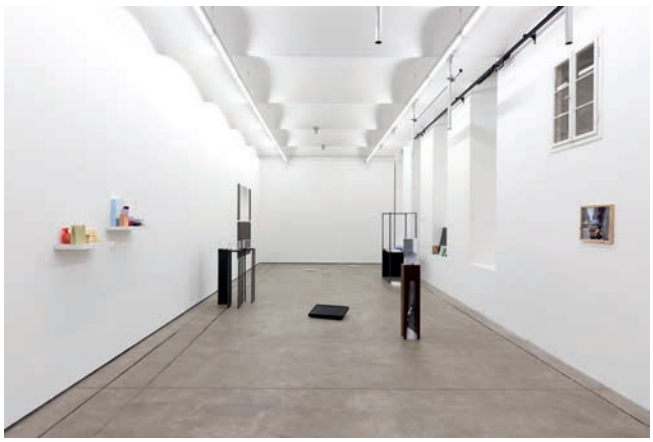
Sebastian Gärtner, *Paperprops*, 2014

Agnes Fuchs, *To Configure. / Dec 2017*, 2017

Agnes Fuchs, *reproduction p. 15–16, Codes & Legends*, 2016–2017







Kathi Hofer, *Gifts*, 2013–ongoing

Michael Kargl, *objects of desire*, 2005–2008/2017

Yuki Higashino, *Tailings*, 2014–ongoing

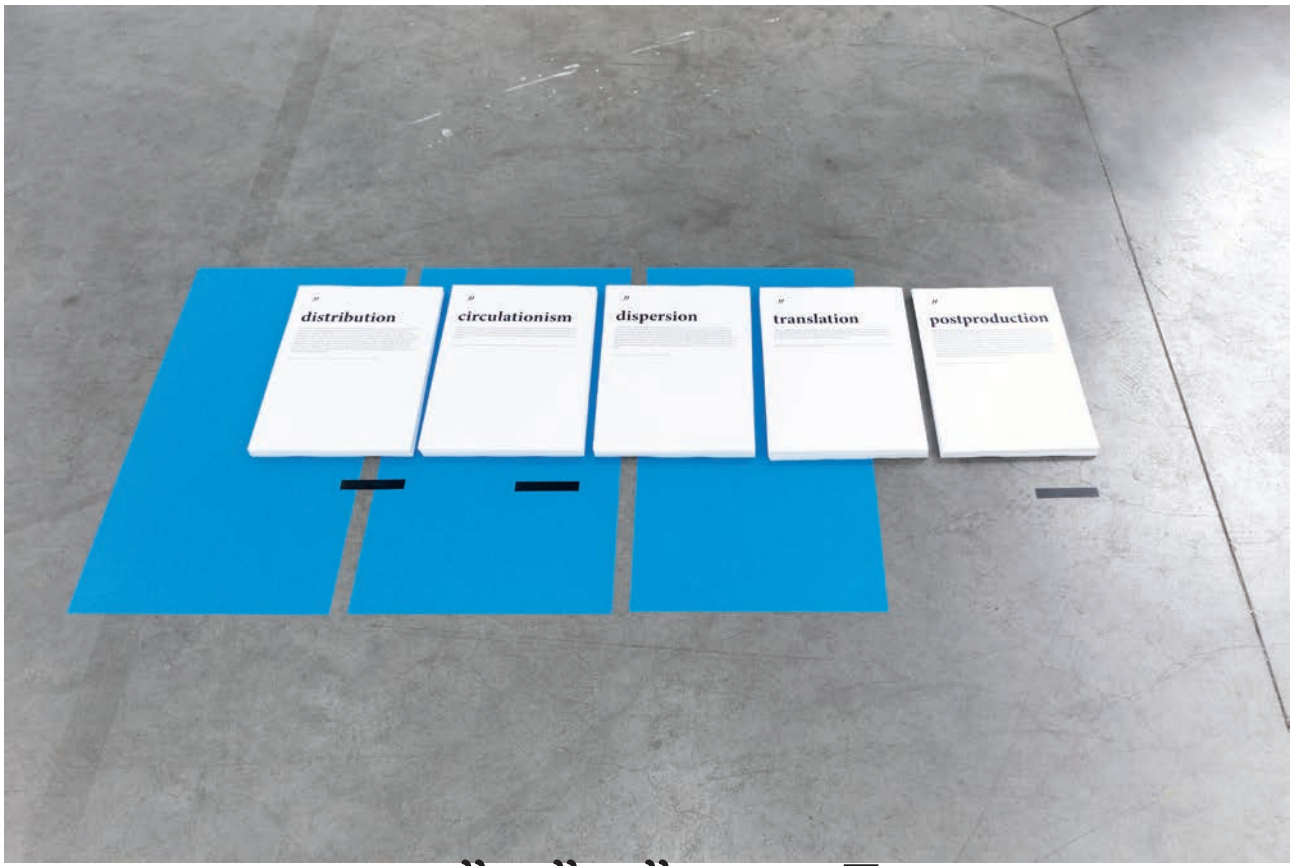
Joséphine Kaeppelin, *Untitled*, 2012

Daniel Gustav Cramer, *Cap Formentor, Mallorca, July 1986*, 2017

Ovidiu Anton, *Framework Conditions from Istanbul to Vienna*, 2013

Nika Kupyrova, *Wicked, old wild sea songs*, 2017

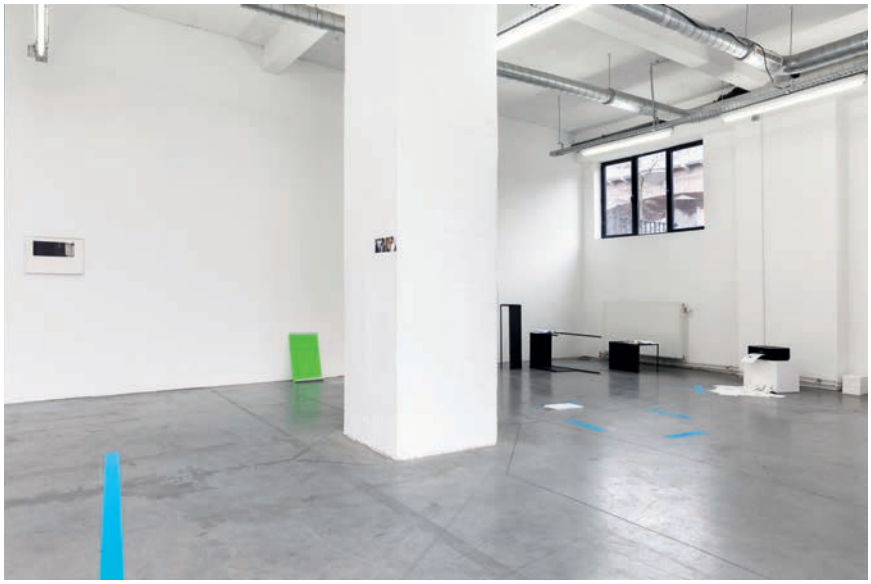
Stefan Riebel, *What I Am*, 2017

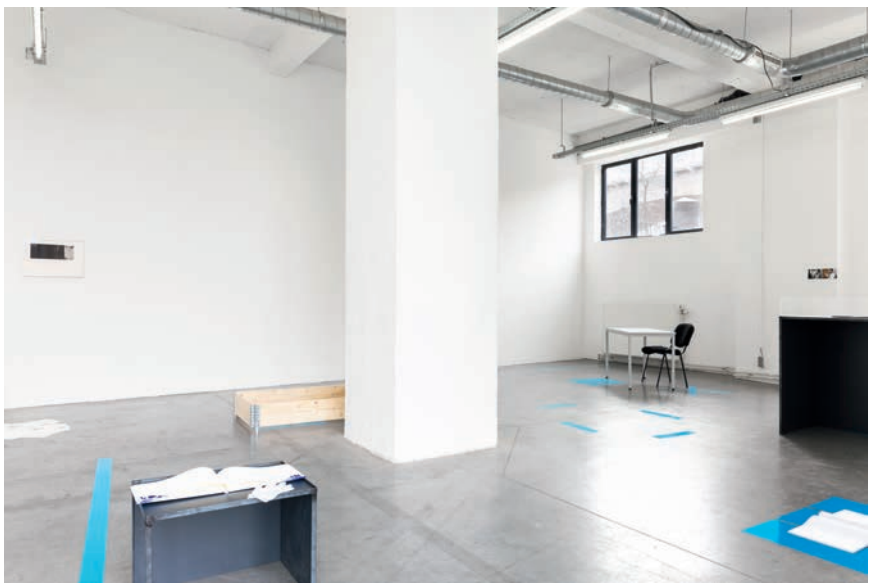


”, ”, ”, — *Footnotes*

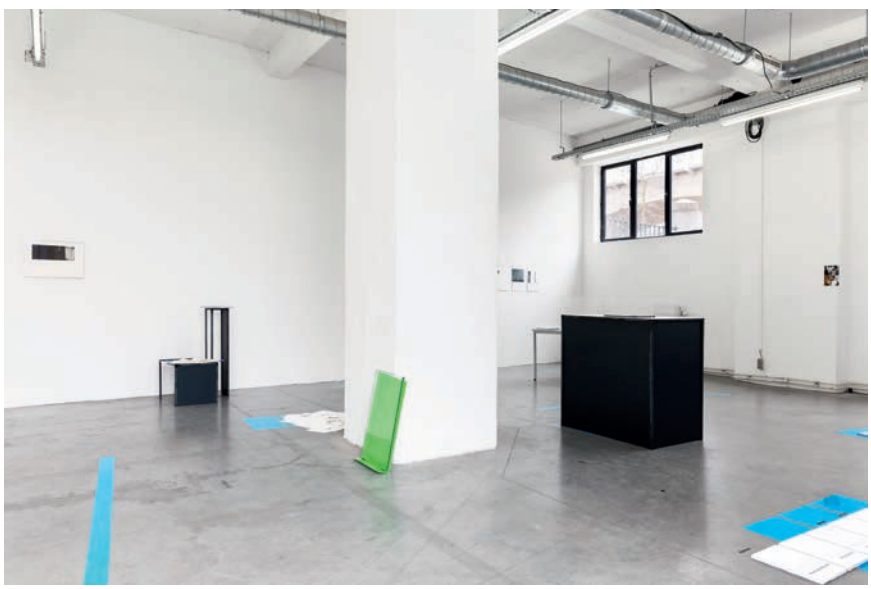
WIELS | Contemporary Art Centre, Br

March 10 – March 25, 2018





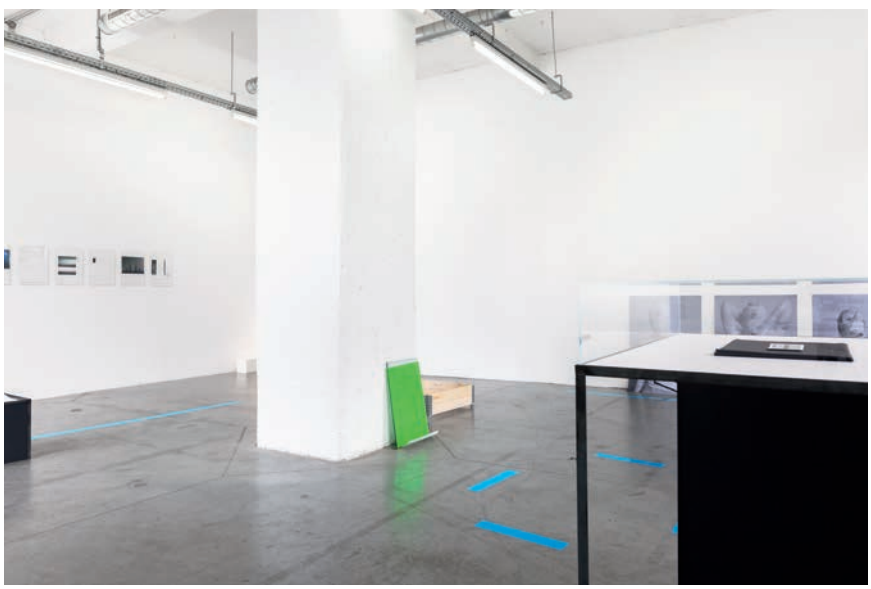
russels



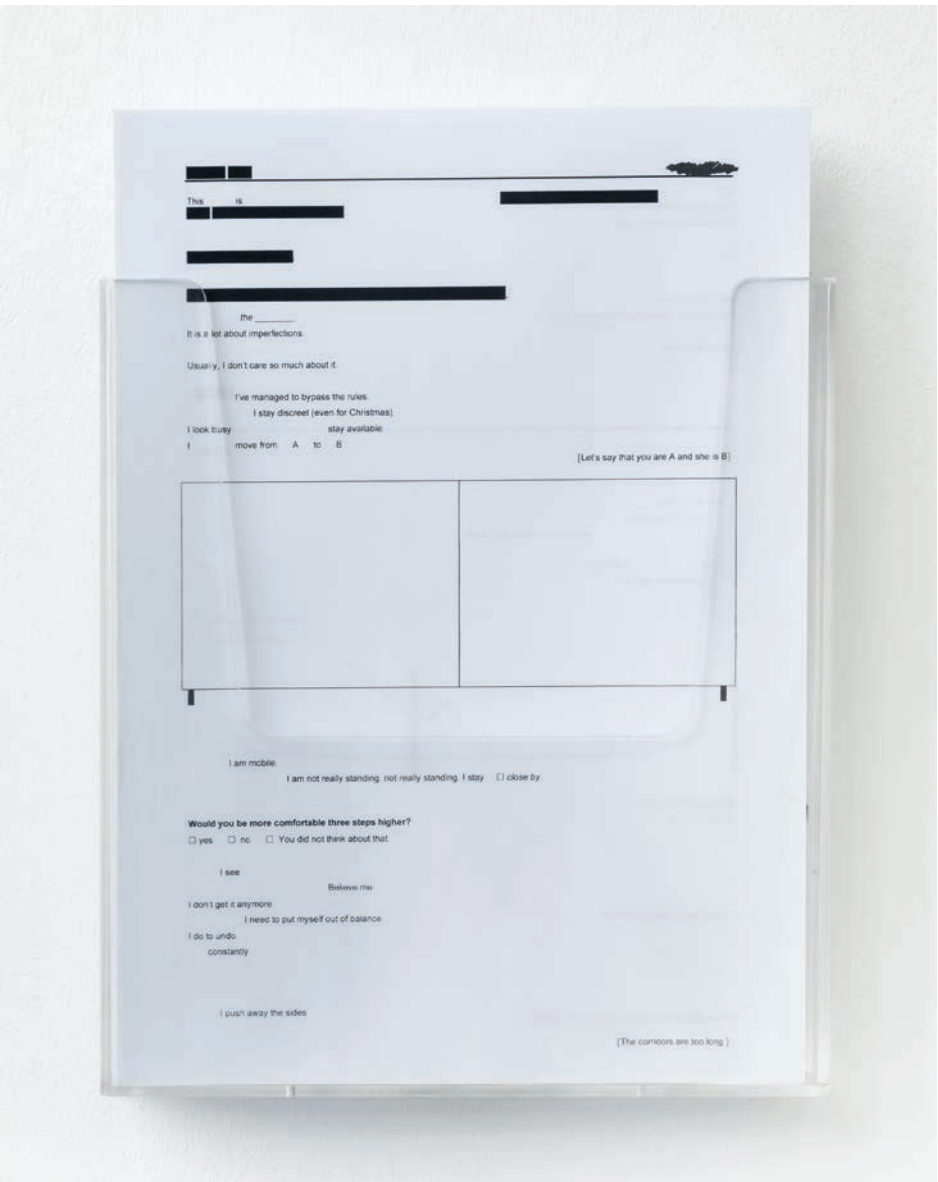
Ane Mette Hol, *Grey Literature #3*, 2018

Ane Mette Hol, *Untitled (Drawing for 26 Objects)*, 2017

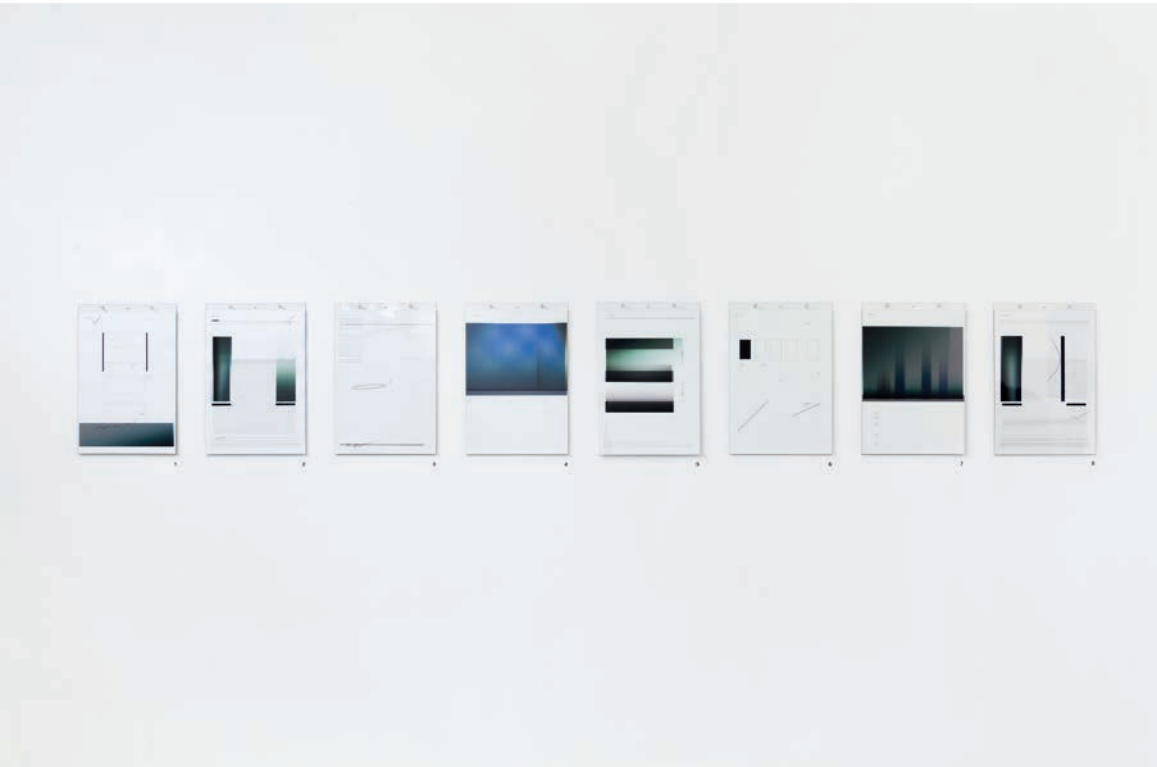

distribution

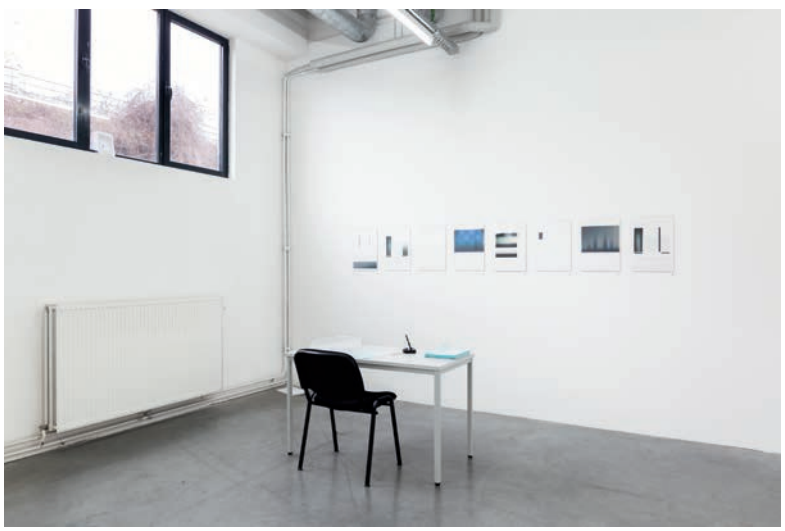


Joséphine Kaeppelin, [redacted], 2018



Joséphine Kaeppelin, *Opinion Poll*, 2017



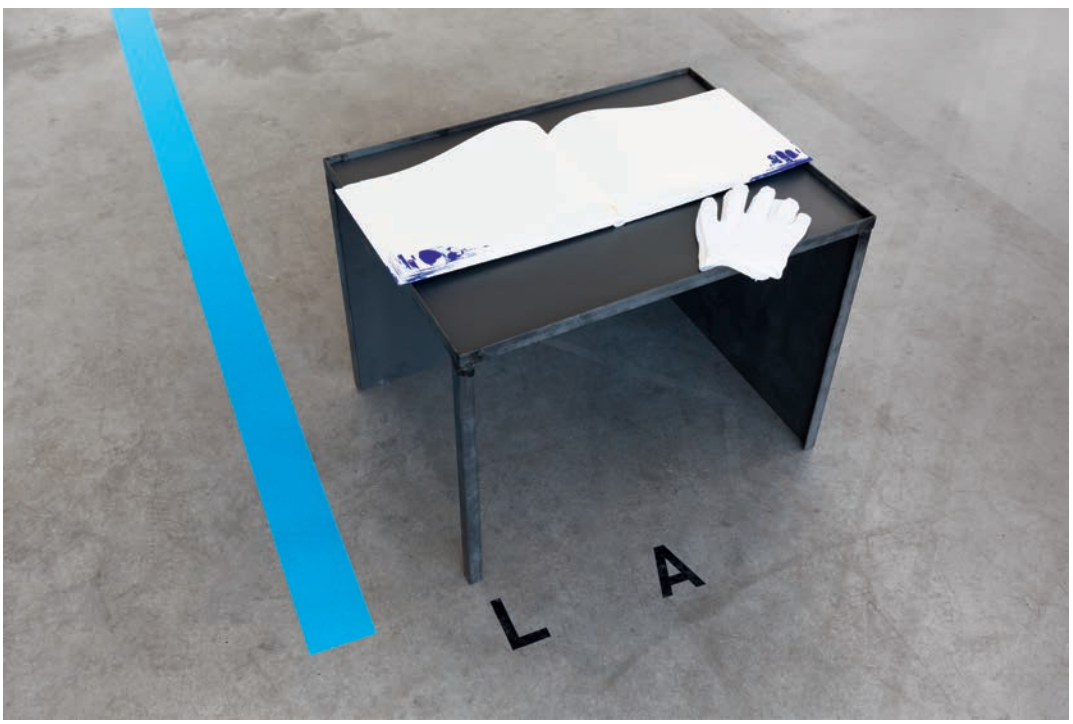



postproduction
PN

Michael Kargl, *paper, glass*, 2018 | *flourescent tube, wood*, 2018

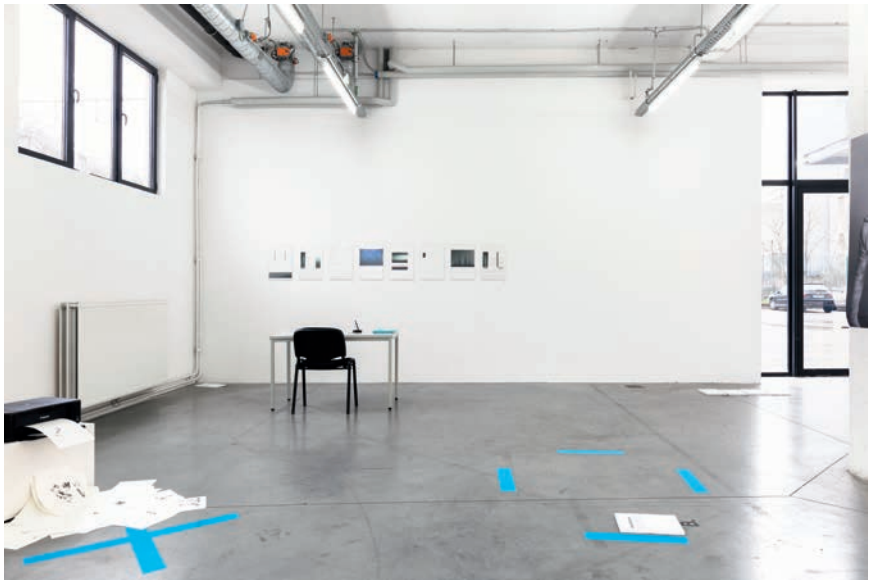
Michael Kargl, *glass, lines*, 2018

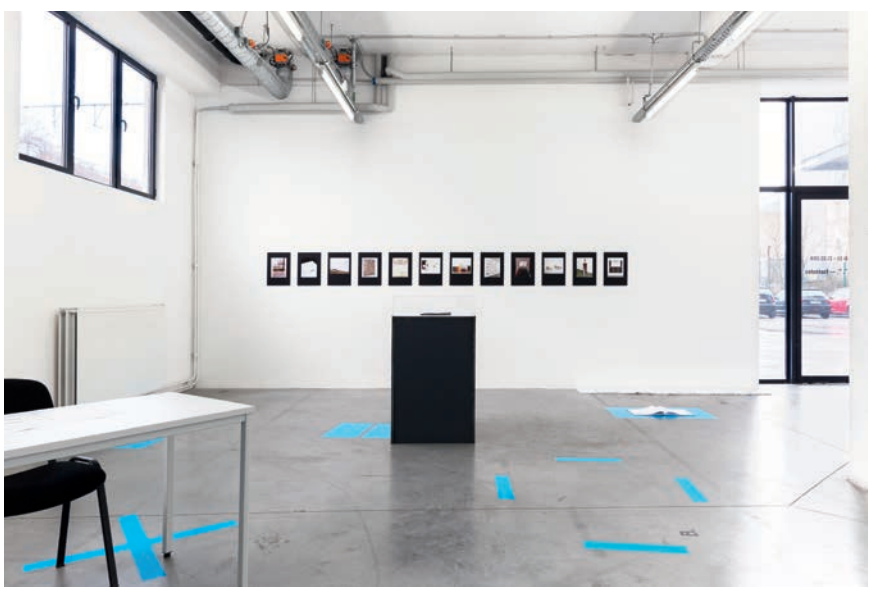
Nika Kupyrova, *In an old book all the pages are the same*, 2016

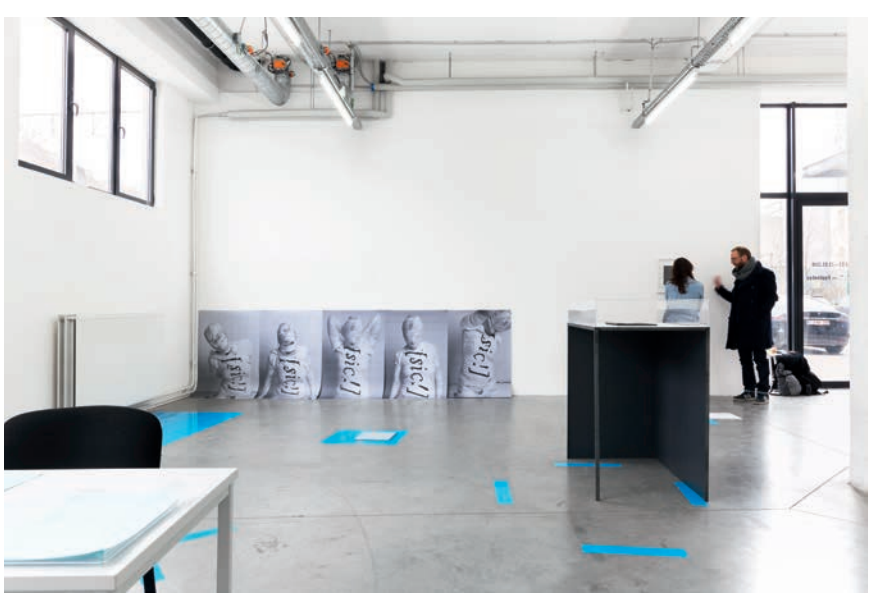


Nika Kupyrova, *Books I have read I*, 2017


circulationism
provenance
plagiarism
rescension
M
F
TZ



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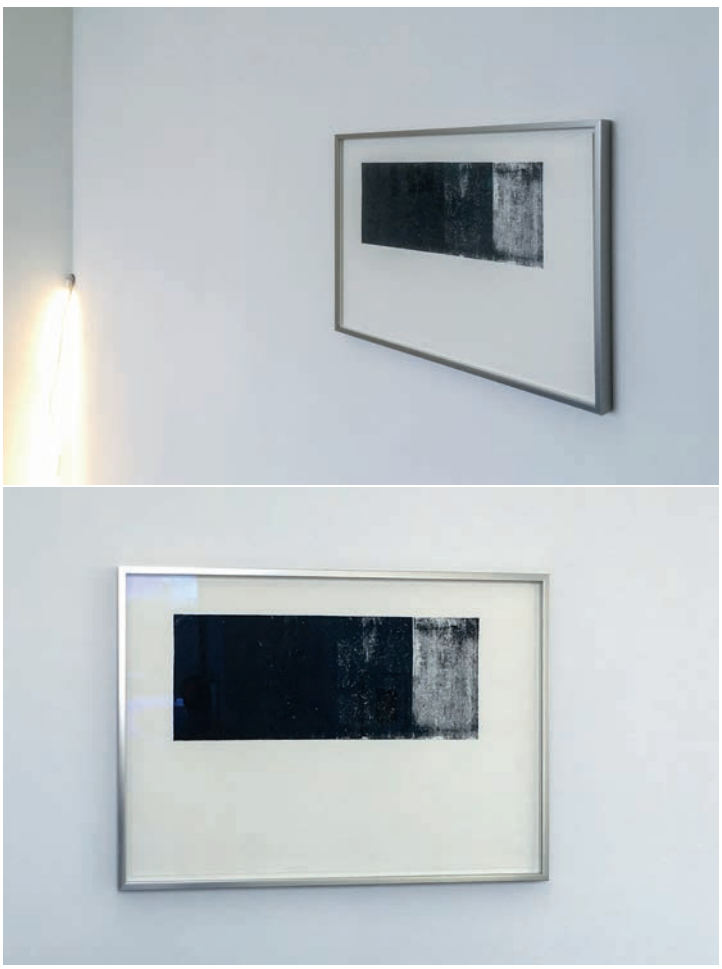
[sic]

Sebastian Gärtner, *[sic!] (tribute to Rudolf Schwarzkogler)*, 2015

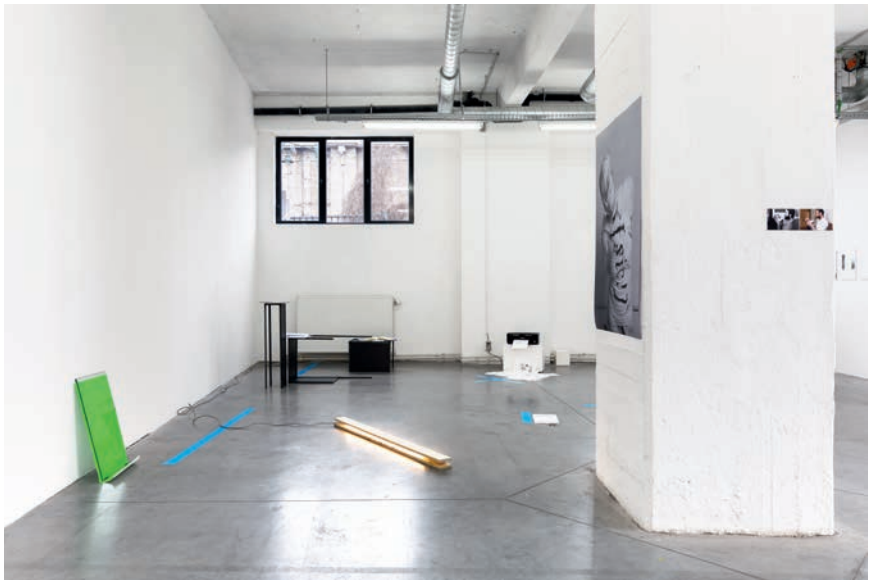
Wouter Huis, *Summary (Towards A Philosophy of Photography)*, 2015

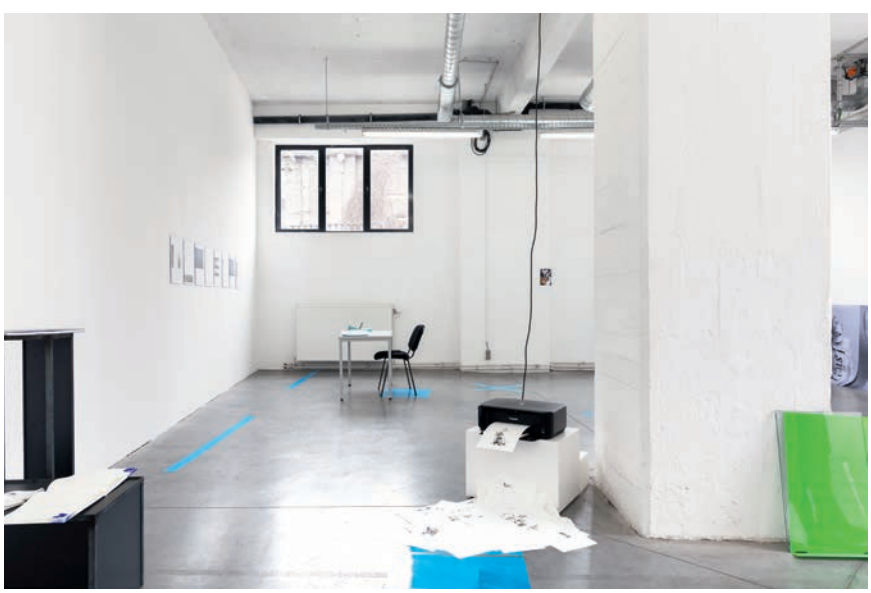
Wouter Huis, *Possible drawing (autonomous production unit)*, 2017



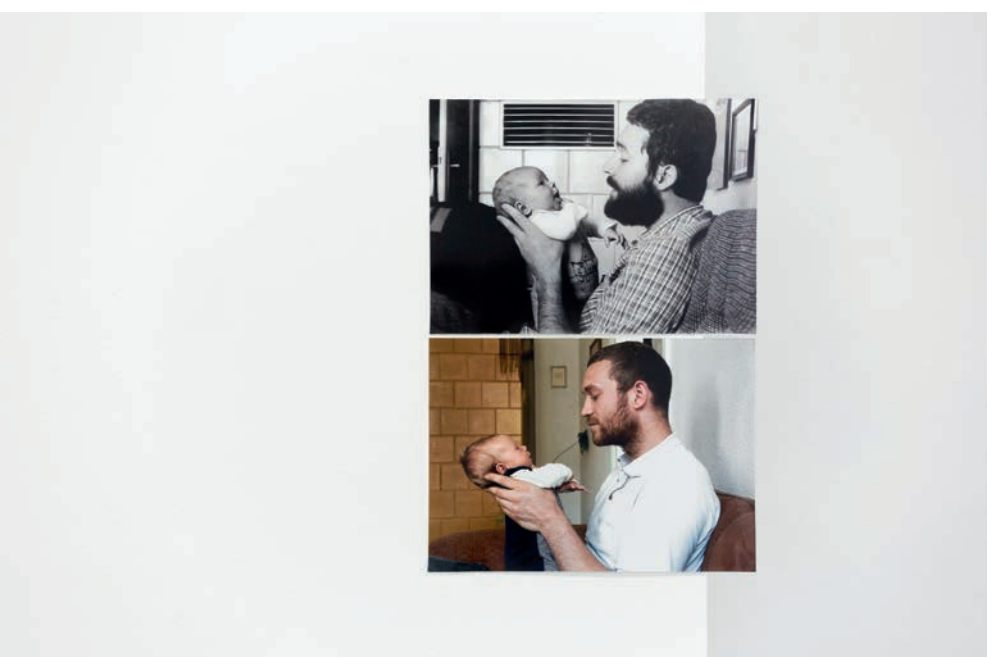
Willem Oorebeek, *Re, as in Again*, 2018

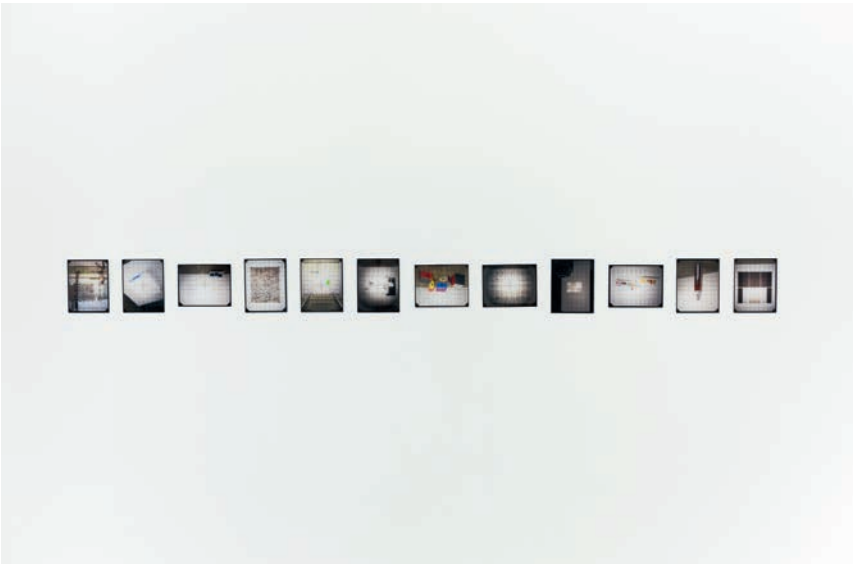

translation
dispersion
—A
O



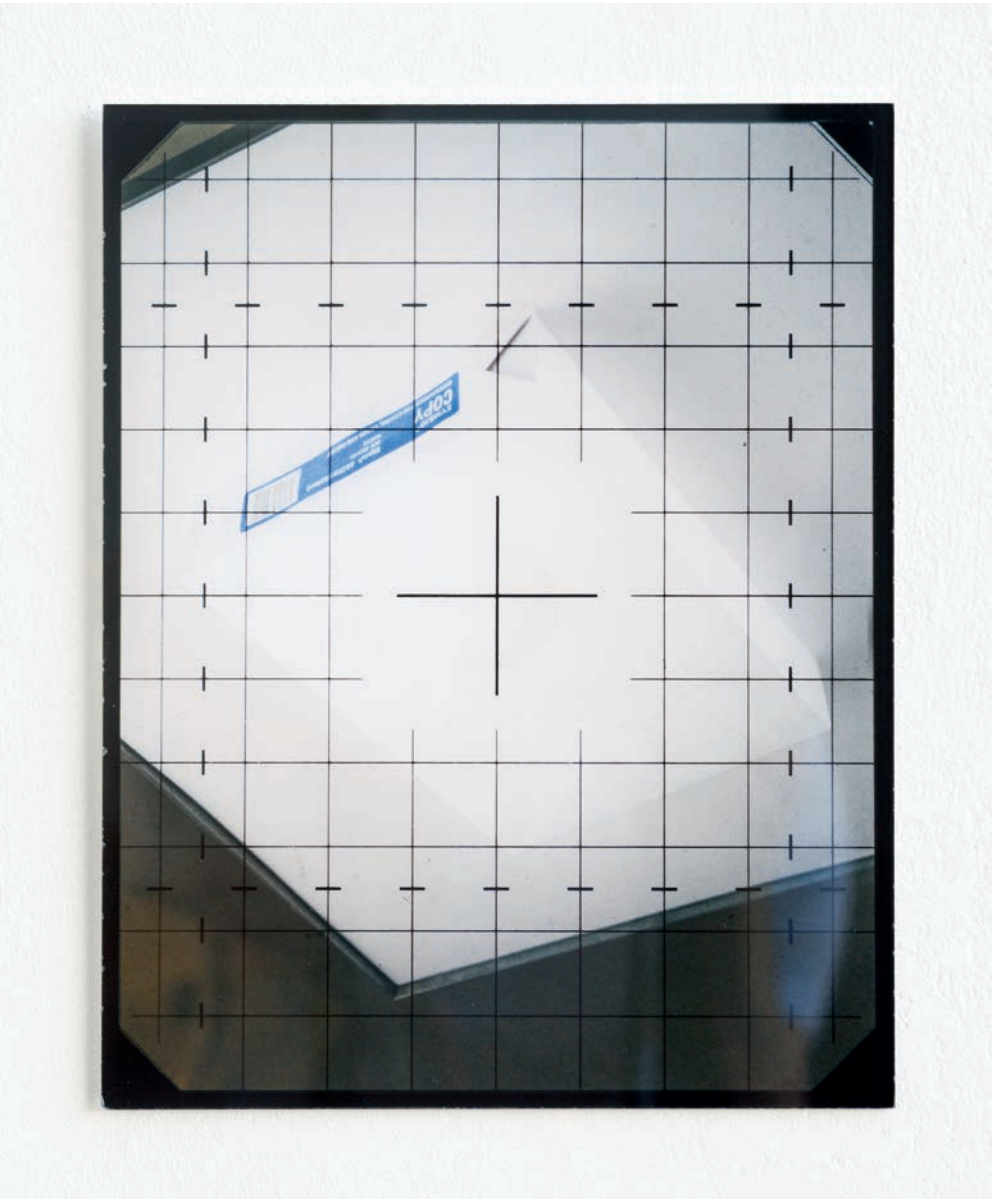


Stefan Riebel, *having and being, 2007*–ongoing

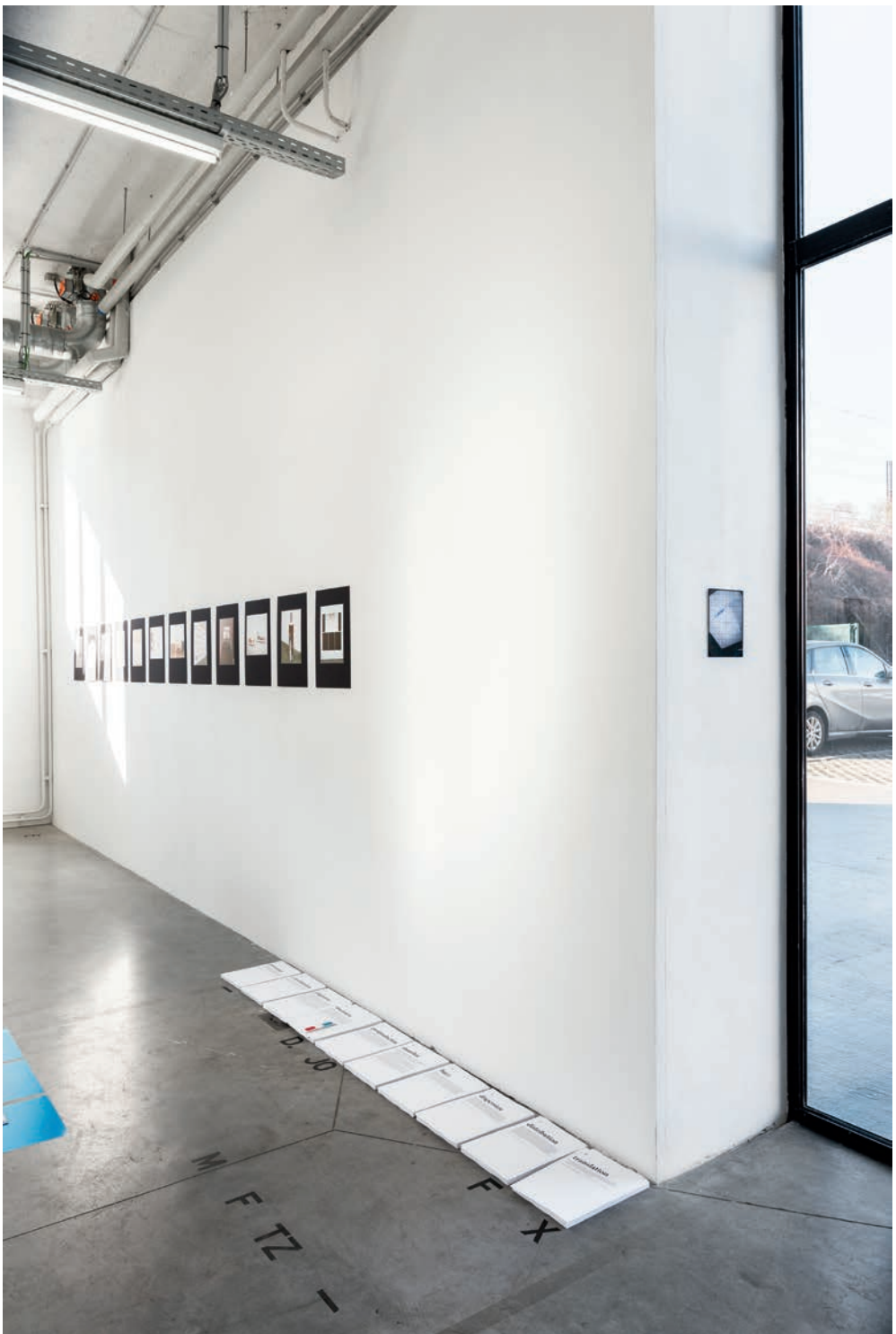




Lisa Rastl, *From the series Reproductions*, 2018



Lisa Rastl, *From the series Reproductions (Ane Mette Hol, Untitled (Icon), no. 2, 2016)*, 2018


M
F
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X

Ovidiu Anton
Almost Doubles, 2018


MARIA DREIECHEN
MAGASIN DU
MODERNE
Articles Religieux
Bijoux Or et Argent
21, Avenue
Bernadette Soubirous
65100 Lourdes (France)
Wir sind da. Für unser Burgenland.
ÖVP Burgenland
HEILIGSTES
HERZ JESU, ICH
ÜBERGEBE DIR
MEIN LEBEN


CAPITAL
LOMBARD


Crezul
MASA
REZERVATA


3
OCTOMBRIE
0 EXTRAGERE
7
NOIEMBRIE
0 EXTRAGERE
MS-270 TURBO
62,0 cc Цепная Бензопила


STILH
русские моторы
.325"
сделано в россии

Daniel Gustav Cramer
A Collection of Postcards of Arnold Böcklin's Island of Death, 2018

Wyspa Umarlych

A. BÖCKLIN

Die Insel der Toten

3290

Arnold Böcklin

Die Insel der Toten

In the summer of 1997 we visited the Kunstmuseum Basel. I bought a postcard. And lost it. A few weeks later I found a similar one in a bookstore in Genova.


LILE DES MORTS

A. Böcklin — Die Insel der Toten

A. Böcklin

Die Insel der Toten

3290

A. BÖCKLIN, L'Île des Morts.

1 Wyspa Umarlych, карточная почта, Pocztówka, S.P.W No.373, 1940
2 Die Insel der Toten, Arnold Böcklin, F.A.Ackermann Kunstverlag, München, 1958
3 Die Insel der Toten, Arnold Böcklin, Verlag Hermann A. Wiechmann, München, 1922
4 L'Ile des Morts, Böcklin, Union Postale Universelle, 1913
5 Die Insel der Toten, A. Böcklin, Verlag Hermann A. Wiechmann, München, 1913
6 Toteninsel, Böcklin, Kunstverlag Scherl, Berlin, 1883
7 Die Insel der Toten, Böcklin, Walter Classen, Kunstverlag, Zürich, ca. 1920
8 L'Ile des Morts, A. Böcklin, Verlag Lenz & Rudolff, Riga, 1882
9 (unknown), Russia, 1910

Agnes Fuchs
Pour comprendre, 2018


La Quinzaine
littéraire
Numéro 69
Du 16 au 31 mars 1969
3 F
Pour
comprendre
McLuhan


La beauté émane de l'âme comme d'une source
intarissable

SPECIFICATION

of the Digital Data Recorder

NUMBER OF CHANNELS	5
SAMPLING RATE	2
RANGES AND INPUT IMPEDANCE	0 – 0 – 0 – 0 – 0 –
INPUT CONDITION	Iso
ACCURACY	0.1
RESOLUTION	0.0
COMMON MODE REJECTION	120

La Quinzaine littéraire

3 F

Numéro 69

Du 16 au 31 mars 1969

Nr. 841i

Zahlungskonditionen:
Erfühlungsort und Ge
Es gelten die Lieferbe
bis zur vollständigen E

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							vom

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Gegenstand

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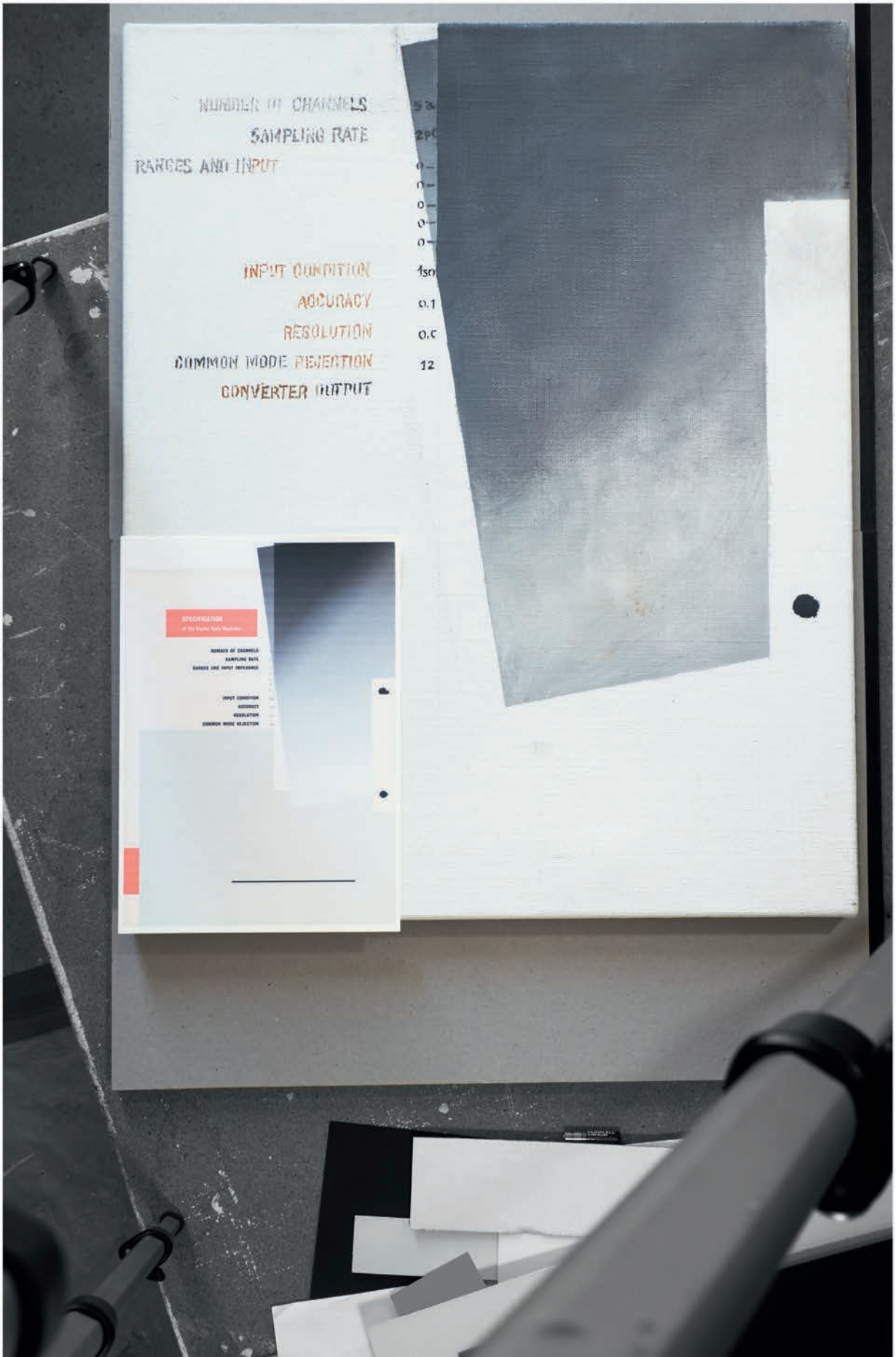
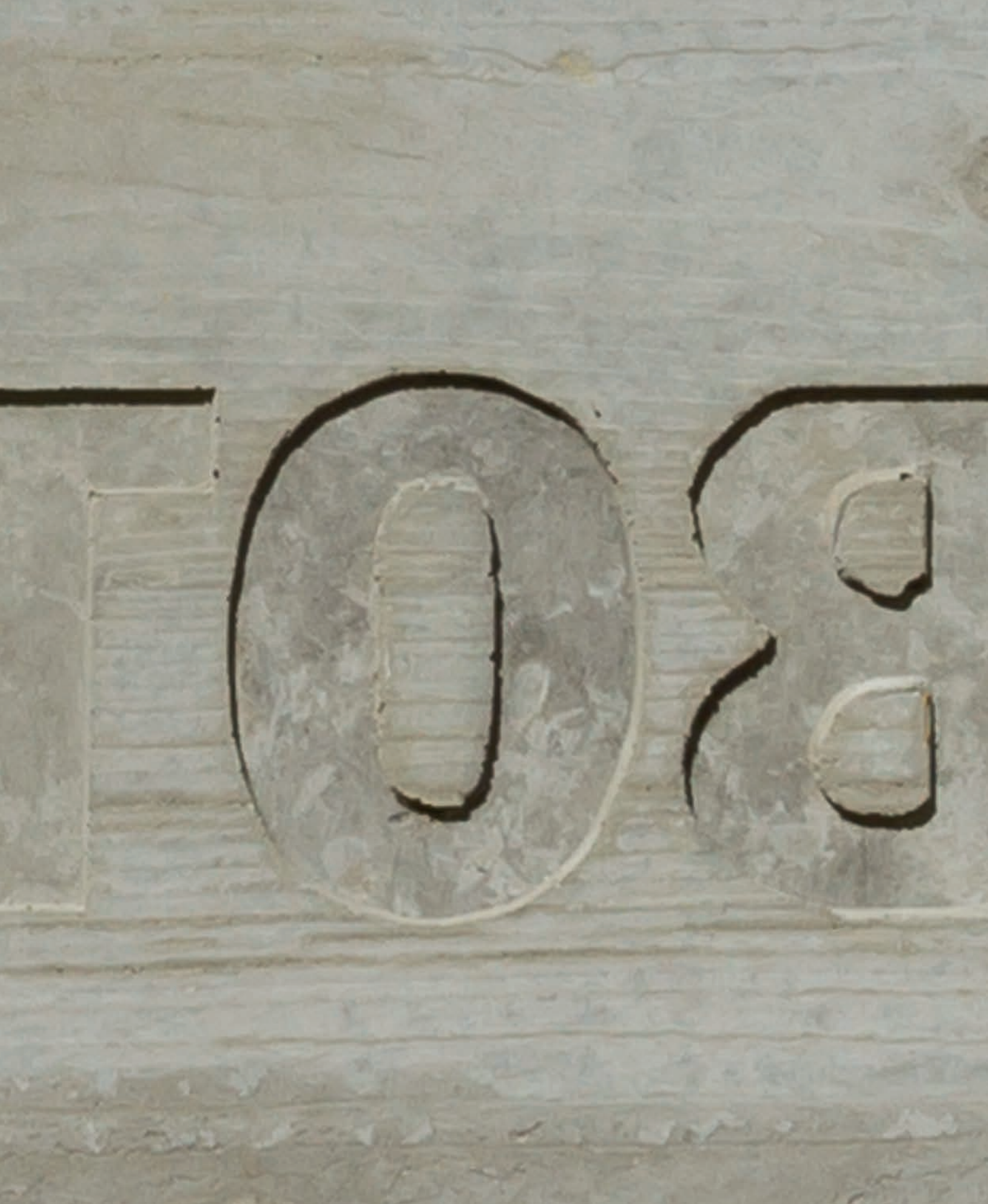
nd Wien · Wir bitten Beanstandungen innerhalb von 10 Tagen geltend zu machen.
en für die Elektro- und Schwachstrom - Industrie. Insbesondere bleibt die Ware
g unser Eigentum!

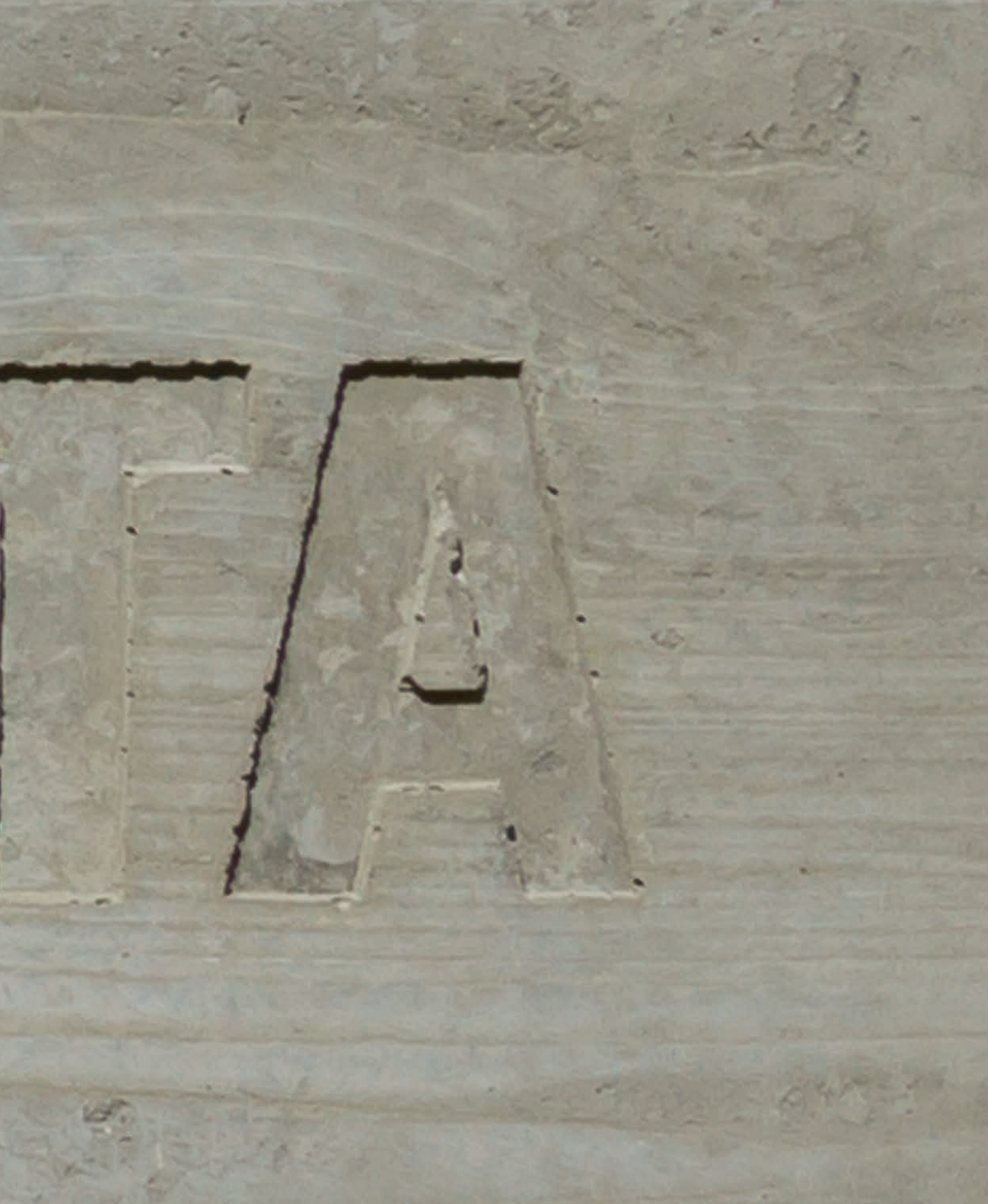

NUMBER OF CHANNELS
SAMPLING RATE
RANGES AND INPUT
INPUT CONDITION
ACCURACY
RESOLUTION
COMMON MODE REJECTION
CONVERTER OUTPUT
SPECIFICATION

Sebastian Gärtner
What Would Rachel Whiteread Do? (at the bottom of a mould), 2018

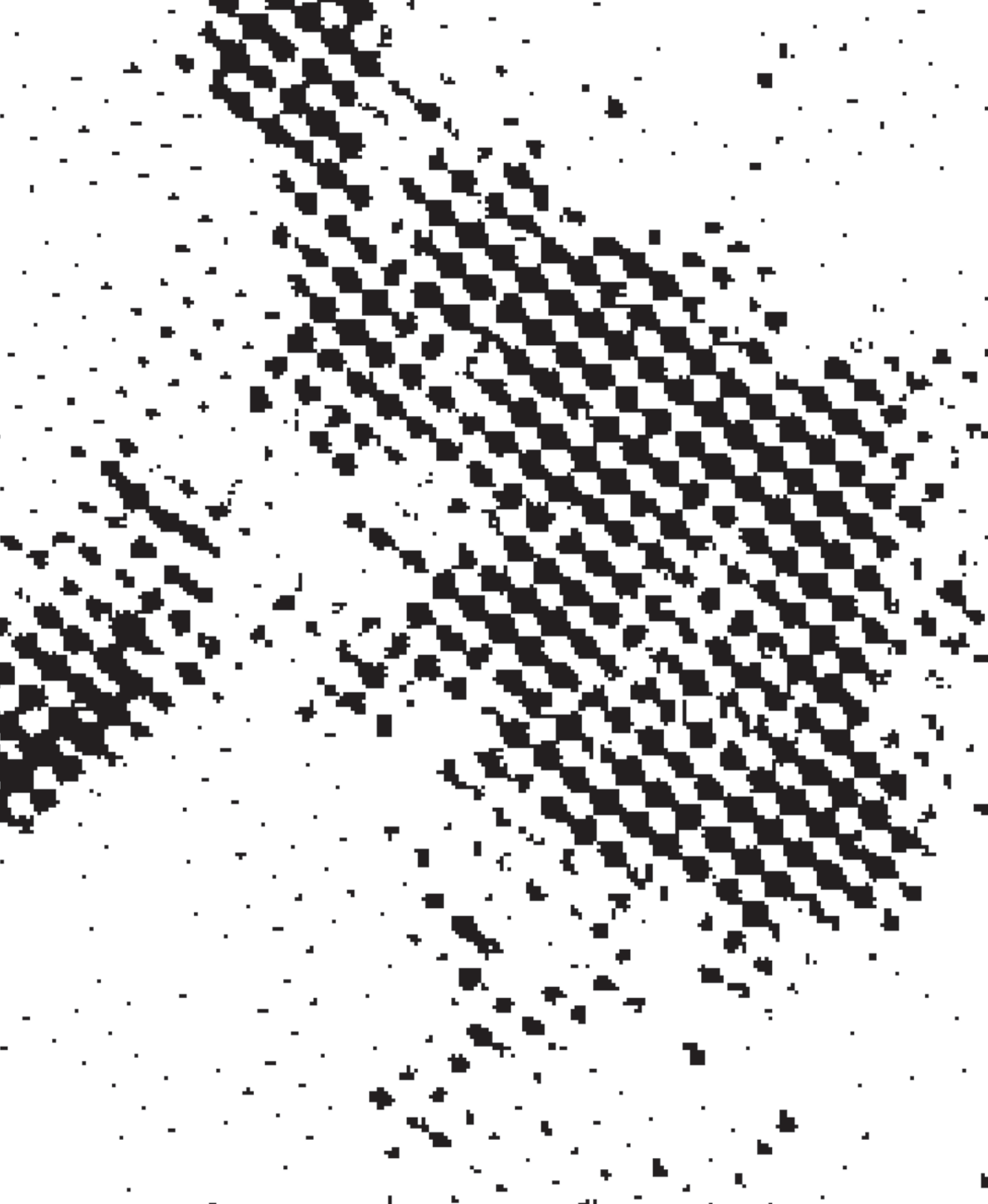
UO

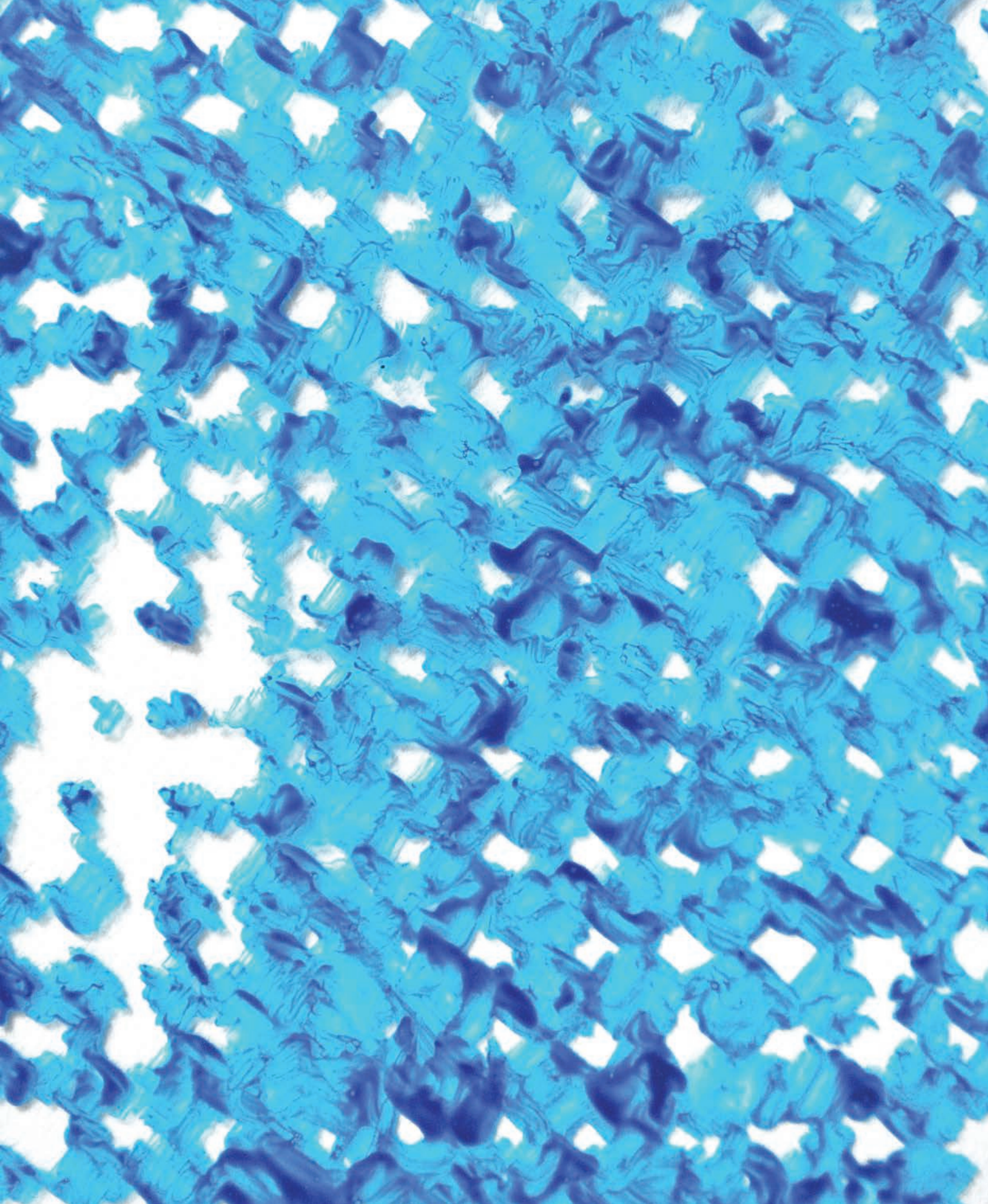
OTT

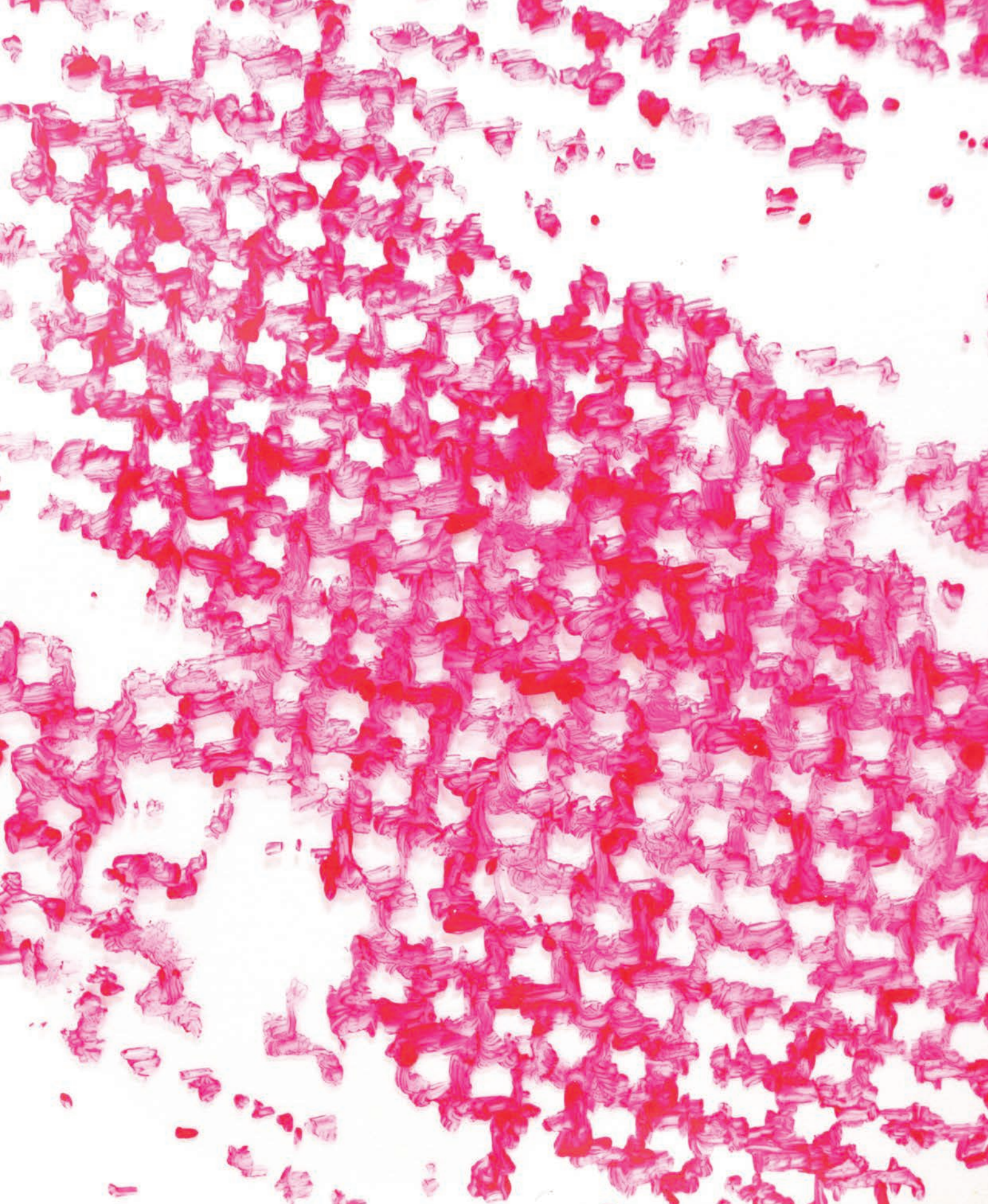




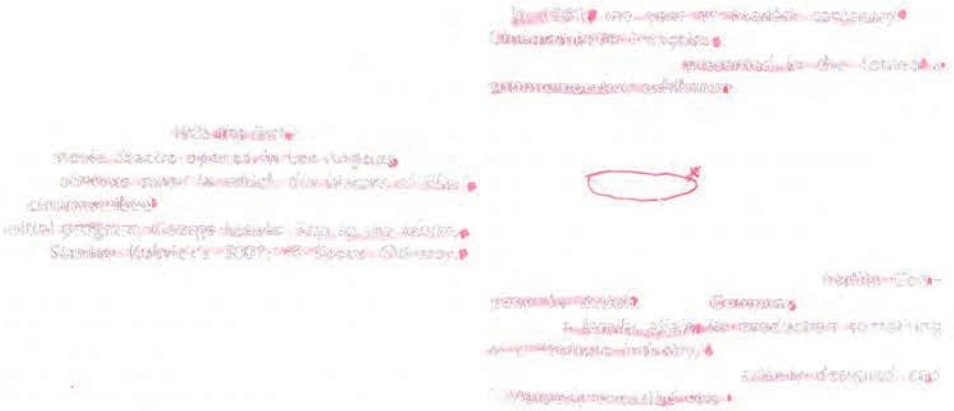
Yuki Higashino
Free Enterprise Painting 5, 2017 (Detail),
2018







Kathi Hofer
Notes in Space, 2001–2018



× apparition: plötzl. Erscheinung, Geist

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Kubrick

is an pearance has, in fact, generated the same sort of apprehension or "cultural shock" which Arthur C. Clarke describes, in his novelistic rendering of the screenplay, as the reaction to the invention of the highly advanced HAL 900 Computer, the "brain and nervous system" of the narrative's "vehicle," the space-ship Discovery.

black monolith

vorwärtstreiben

propels the evolution of consciousness through the three panels of the movie's narrative triptych. Kubrick's film has assumed

ästh. Erscheinung

the disquieting function of [illegible]; it functions as a disturbing structure, emitting in its intensity of presence and perfection of surface, sets of signals. That intensity and perfection are contingent upon a conspicuous invisibility of facture commanded by the power of a rigorously conceptual imagination.

abhängig von

besagen

We know that song and dance; they are the old, familiar projection of a crisis in criticism.

We are dealing, then, with a work which is revelatory, a "breakthrough," one whose substance and function fuse in the synthetic radicalization of its metaphors. e

Metapher

form and surface command the most immediate and complex intensity of physical response that they release a wild energy of speculation.

oscillating movement between confirmation and transformation, the film as a whole performs the function of a Primary Structure, forcing the spectator back, in a reflexive gesture, upon the analytic rehearsal of his experience, impeding to conviction that here is a film

a paradigm, unique. If one were concerned with an "ontology" of cinema, this film would be a place in which to look for it.

visionary realization which transforms a bone into a weapon

Knochen – Raumschiff : Ellipse

[illegible]

Kurzschließung von Prozessen

Kubrick's transformation of bone into spacecraft through the movement of redescent through that single cut which concludes the Prologue and initiates the Odyssey, inscribes within the most spectacular ellipsis in cinematic history nothing less than the entire trajectory of human history, the birth and evolution of Intelligence.

→ Wilde Herunter-kommen

Sci-fi

he has projected intellectual adventure as spectacle.

Kubrick's masterwork is designed, in fact, as an instrument of exploration and discovery. A Space Odyssey, a [illegible] of metaphors

The object in motion moves neither in the space in which it is nor in that in which it is not.

The present hath no space where then is the time which we may call long

Metapher, Text, Physikalität

das innere = Sanierte an d. Film: drei Physikalität

scheinbar statisch + inhaltlos

Verwicklung

es geht um Bewegung

X Handelnde Kraft, Ursache

Kapitel Umfang, Tempo

X Synkretismus: Vermischung versch. Religionen, Konfessionen od. philosoph. Lehren meist ohne innere Einheit

Kunst ≠ mehr Mimesis:

d. Normativität wird wichtig
die Physikalität

[illegible]

sanft

[illegible]

unbedeutung

expressionism

streit

... one rediscovers, through the shock of recognition, one's own body [illegible] in its space. One feels suspended, the mind not quite able to touch ground. One surveys the familiar ground of experience ... as the astronauts have indicated, remarking that a prime reason for space flight lay in the rediscovery and organization of ... earth's resources. [illegible] ... possible ... the same ... never be the same in ... the same way.

Wiedererkennen

... proposes, as in Bergson's ... the outline of a movement.

... architecture of movement ... dynamics ... movement itself ... a radical, triple interest and urgency, a privileged status in the art that is ours.

Kunst erzeugt Realität

Auflösung von:
Thema / Mimesis

[illegible]

... imagination moves to replace that of a transcendence animating the esthetic of transcription or expression.

[illegible]

... toward ... of total autonomy, self-referring, self-sustaining and self-justifying, required the invention of a mediating strategy, a transition. The subject could be eliminated only through a process of dissolution initiated by its re-definition. ... Flaubert ... ince ... poetry is purely subjective, there is no such thing as a fine subject. ... One can write equally well about anything at all. It is the artist who elevates things through his manner of writing.

... dissolution of the subject, a process crystallized and extended through Mallarmé and Cézanne into the art of our own day.

[illegible]

... Mallarmé ... poetry only proposes ... the orphic° explanation of the earth.

... The dissolution of the subject ... of Realism itself, is grounded in the problematic consciousness of a reality no longer assumed as pre-defined or pre-existent to the work or the imagination, ... now takes the nature of reality, the nature of consciousness in and through perception.

... converges with philosophy and science upon the problem of reality as known and knowable.

... towards the spiritual in art ... defines with clear precision the nature and force of the shift, ... spells out the problems involved in the relocation, through abstraction, of sources of authority, interest and aspiration, which had been dislodged by the crisis in the Western metaphysical tradition.

Fleck, Makel

... that movement towards abstraction ... the problem of what Ortega ... as the incompatibility of the perception of lived reality with the perception of artistic form.

Abstraktion

Normativität bedeutet auch Physikalität abgeschwächt vgl. [illegible] i. gewissen Grad i. d. Kultur impliziert wird sogar durch diese organisiert.

das Thema eines Kunstwerkes auflösen. Es zu ein. selbstreferentiellen
selbsttragenden
selbstlegitimierenden machen.

° orphisch: geheimnisvoll

das Kino: hat Illusionismus wieder eingeführt.

Film verändert durch Bewusstsein.

Publikum

Modernismus vs. Film

Zeit

Anpassung

the "special effect"

space odyssey

outer space

inner space

dream-like

Bachelard

from magician to entrepreneur

also: ich bin quasi d. archimed. Punkt, von dem aus bewegt

KÖRPER IM RAUM

his Odyssey traces, then is not merely a record of metaphors, the movement of a journey in space,

an exploration of the unknown,

the unknown discovered.

The Voyage as narrative form acts in its deformation or suspension of the familiar framework of existence, as in the logic of Alice, the geometry of Slot Brendan, the reality of Don Quixote, the sociology of Gulliver, to protect us

toward the surface of a distant planet, by the inductive force contriving, we can

[illegible] the imagination to deceive us in

leaping from the surface into the rainbow, the known, the real.

Bewusstheit über d. eigenen Körper

which we owe this navigation of a vessel, a movement or exploration of the human organism as adventure, dissolves the opposition of body and mind.

Raum-Zeit

Erinnerung

Wissenschaft

the difference between the two qualities and intensities of response is the difference between things seen and things felt, between situations visually observed and those sensed tactically, between a narrative emblem and a radically formal embodiment of spatial form.

vgl. a "Spiral World"

A wakefulness world is one in which the dissociation [illegible] and verticality are suspended.

frame

world of non-sense by a narrational reality, a universe, the consciousness challenge presented to the spectator

suspension and frustration of expectations, [illegible] entertainment

consciousness of our own physical necessity is regenerated. We return to attention in a new, intimate sense of our earth-bound state

[illegible] these constitute the "sub-[illegible]" of the Odyssey, setting its action in its extraordinary repetitive sequence of the [illegible] romantic romance in [illegible] Lady Wisdom

[illegible] erases the possibility of destination or completion of action, merely freezing a wo[illegible] in a perpetual motion of ascent so that its sequence of the allegoresses navigation

[illegible] consistently questioning that "objective spatiality," [illegible] manifestes the grand theme and subject of learning as self-recognition or growth, is the constant disruption and re-establishment of equilibrium in progress towards knowledge.

suspends us in its frustration and invalidation of our expectations, implying the [illegible] of a reflexive or compensatory movement of reversal, allowing for us something of the essential nature of motion itself.

by disforming or suspending the form of action, movement's completion in time, the operation of the coordinates, each sequence [illegible] thereby stimulating awareness of the

lack of substance, instead, in relation to our activity — of the nature of [illegible] movement in our spaces.

[illegible] awareness of something fundamental to observe. The system of presuppositions, suspension of [illegible] the coordinates of [illegible] [illegible] suspension and [illegible]

our own can be observed and known

Fremdheit d. Bewegung ohne Gravitation gibt uns Bewusstsein über unsere Bewegungen unsere Körperlichkeit, unser Räumlichkeitsempfinden wird sensibilisiert.

Personen als s. bewegende Körper

[illegible] motion, both semantics and the [illegible] which Barson tells us is the response to the transformation or reduction of the human into the mechanical which underlies it comedy.

[illegible] session of surprises

[illegible]

in a film whose terrain or scene or action is as we have seen, the spectator, the spectator becomes the hero or butt of comedy. The laugh is on us.

[illegible] any incident is come by [illegible] our attention to the [illegible] person.

face. Odysseus [illegible] travels through variation and inversion, [illegible] range of comic situations, [illegible] comic level of course [illegible] the comic character reveals the comic embarrassment of the soul in the body, in fame, a mere body en [illegible] by succession of a soul. A blow which gives the impression of being a person rather than as in silent comedy. It's paroxysmic flies [illegible] person giving the impression of being a [illegible] acts as though he has [illegible] a one-sentence remark

* Solicit: s. um etw. bemühen, werben; bitten

die gleichzeitigen Ausdehnung beibehaltend

The number and kinds of space simultaneously proposed by isometric readings and interior projection — as in the approach toward the space station or in the landing of the Moon — are fused by the spectator who discovers with a sudden thrill of delight that *he* is the meeting place of a multiplicity of spaces, depths and scales, his eye their agent of reconciliation, his body the focal point of a multi-dimensional, poly-spatial cosmos.

we zoom over a geography photographed in negative to a scene which reveals itself to be that of the eye itself. Experience as vision ends in the exploration of seeing. The film's reflexive strategy,

phenomenological esthetic (Merleau-Ponty) art develops from the concern with "things seen" to that of seeing itself."

that sequence

here every quality or particularity, every limiting, defining aspect of environment is emphasized. Sudden contraction into these limits propels us from galactic polymorphism into an extreme formality, insulating, through the illusion of its occult, the idea of History into timelessness. It shocks. Everything about the place is defined, clearly, drawn

Alphaville

Man's last Motel stop on the journey towards disembodiment and renascence. Its very sounds are sharper

evoking through an excruciation of high-fidelity acoustics, something of the nature of Substance. It is this strange Platonic intensification-through-reduction of the physical which sustains the stepping-up of time through the astronaut's life and death.

das Medium Film & unser sensomotorisches Bewusstsein

reflective process of abstraction which draws its sustenance not from objects, but from actions

a "gravity" which is that of total absorption in operational movement (task performance)

of what's difficult.

the fascination, the simplest operations

Hebrews,

"to know" does not simply mean to be aware of the existence or nature of a particular object. Knowledge implies also the awareness of the specific relationship in which the individual stands with that object, or of the significance the object has for him.

A Space Odyssey illustrates through its exercise in genetic epistemology the manner of our acting. Demonstration that ability to function in space is neither given nor predetermined but acquired and developed.

a weightless medium body loss of those coordinates through which it normally functions

reinvention of those coordinates for operational efficiency,

creates a form of motion of total concentration,

of dance movement.

reinvention of necessity does indeed have a special affinity with that contemporary dance.

The defining and rehabilitation of the limits of habitual operational movement as an esthetic or ludic mode

In that questioning, initiated by Cunningham, radicalized through the work of Rainer, Whitman, Paxton, dance is re-thought in terms of another economy. Through the systematic negation of the rhetoric and hierarchies imposed by classical ballette conventions and language, the rhetoric reversed, destroyed in what has been called the "dance of ordinary language" and of "task performance."

motion of space is due to the co-ordination of movements, and this development is closely linked to those of sensory-motor awareness and of intelligence itself.

equilibrium, defined as a process rather than a state, and it is the succession of these stages which defines the evolution of intelligence, each process of equilibration ending in the creation of a new state of disequilibrium. This is the manner of the development of the child's intelligence.

The development of the coordinates of horizontality and verticality a are constructed through physical experience, acquired through the ability to read one's experience and interpret it. reading and interpretation always suppose a deductive system capable assuring the intellectual assimilation of the experience. The construction of the system of coordinates of horizontality and verticality is extremely complex.

Kubrick has proposed, in the *Space Odyssey*, a re-enactment of the very process of sensory-motor habit formation, soliciting, through the disturbance and re-establishment of equilibrium, the recapitulation of that fundamental educative process which effects "our incorporation of the world."

This slowness and the majesty with which the space-craft itself moves

Seeing this, in general, one gains an intuition of the link between the development of sensory-motor knowledge to that of intelligence itself.

Piage acquisition of the basic coordinates of our spatial sense is a very gradual process, extending roughly over the first twelve years of our lives. There is to difference in kind between the development of verbal logic and the logic inherent in coordination of action.

The logic of actions is, however, the deepest and most primitive.

And here, of course, lies the explanation of the *Space Odyssey*'s effect upon its audiences, the manner in which it exposes a "generation gap." This film has "separated the men from the boys" with implications by no means flattering for the "men."

"Human action consists in the continual mechanism of readjustment and equilibration. successive mental structures engendered by development.

On each successive level the mind fulfills the same function, which is to incorporate the universe.

The elaboration of the

formal transcription of the fundamental learning process which negates in and through its form, the notion of equilibrium as a state of definition, of rest in finality.

To be "mature" in our culture is to be "well-balanced," "centered," not easily "thrown off balance." Acceptance of imbalance is however, the condition of receptivity to this film. Our "maturity" pre-supposes the "establishment" of experience as acquisition, the primacy of wisdom as knowledge over that of intellectual exploration, of achievement over aspiration. "Adventure," as Simmel observes in an essay of remarkable beauty, is, in its specific nature and charm, a form of experiencing. Not the content but the experiential tension determines the adventure. In youth the accent falls on the process of life, on its rhythms and antinomies; in old age, it falls on life's substance, compared to which experience

Life in its immediacy

counts (for youth) . . . The fascination is not so much in the substance, but rather the adventurous form of experiencing it, the intensity and excitement with which it lets us feel life. W

the material of life in its substantive significance is not as important to youth as is the process which carries it, life itself."

clear projection of aging minds and bodies. Its hostile (dismissal) constitutes, rather like its timid defense, an expression of fatigue. This film of adventure and of action, of action as adventure

occasion for self-recognition.

Positing a space which, overflowing screen and field of vision, converts the theatre into a vessel and its viewers into passengers, it impels us

to rediscover the space and dimensions of the body as theatre of consciousness. Youth, to us,

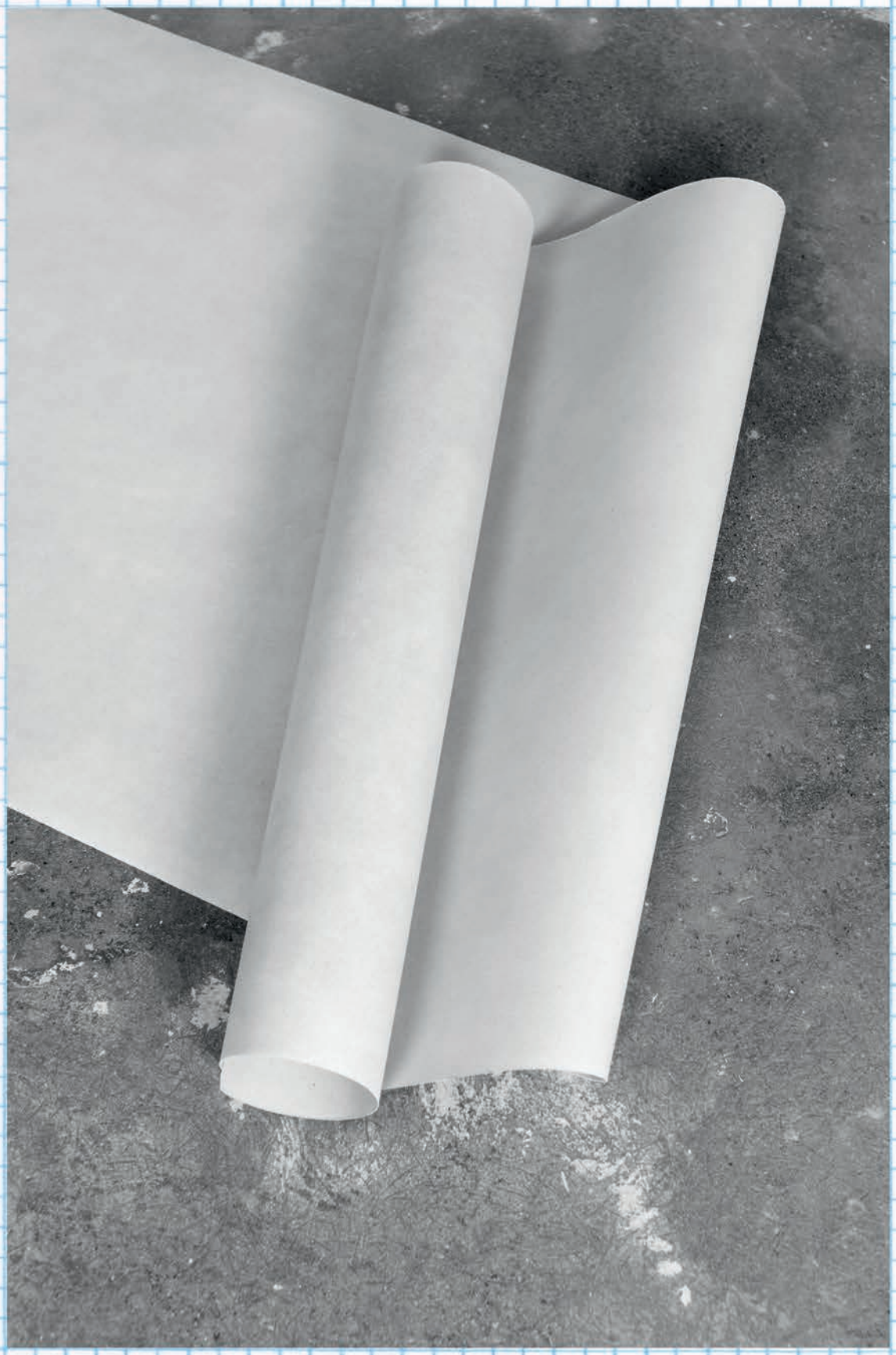
reveling in a knowledge which is carnal.

Ane Mette Hol
Untitled (Template for a Publication), 2018

Grey Literature
2018
Dry pastel, colored pencil, and pencil on paper
100 x 70 cm

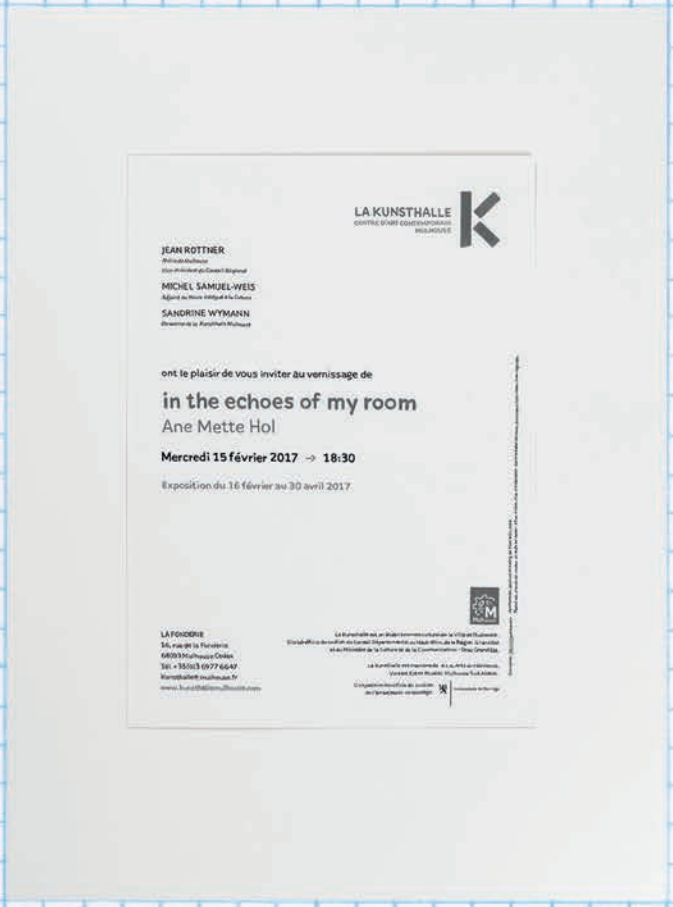
Untitled (Reversed Drawing #7)
2018
Wax, dry pastel, colored pencil, glue, acrylic lacquer, and metal leaf on paper
157 x 6.5 cm (20 m)
OSL contemporary, Oslo 2018


SCHUTZMARKE
SCHOELLERSHAMMER
Superfeines
zähes Zeichenpapier
HOELLERS
AMMER
TRANSPARENT
GLA-MA
20
90/95
FEUCHTIGKEIT SCHÜTZEN!



Untitled (Silver Drawing)
2018
Silverpoint, dry pastel, and colored pencil on paper
5 m x 70 cm
OSL contemporary, Oslo 2018

Grey Literature #2
2018
Dry pastel, colored pencil, pencil, and pen on paper
21 x 14.8 cm



LA KUNSTHALLE
CENTRE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN
MULHOUSE

JEAN ROTTNER
Président du Conseil Régional

MICHEL SAMUEL-WEIS
Adjoint au Maire délégué à la Culture

SANDRINE WYMANN
Directrice de la Kunsthalle Mulhouse

ont le plaisir de vous inviter au vernissage de

in the echoes of my room
Ane Mette Hol

Mercredi 15 février 2017 → 18:30

Exposition du 16 février au 30 avril 2017

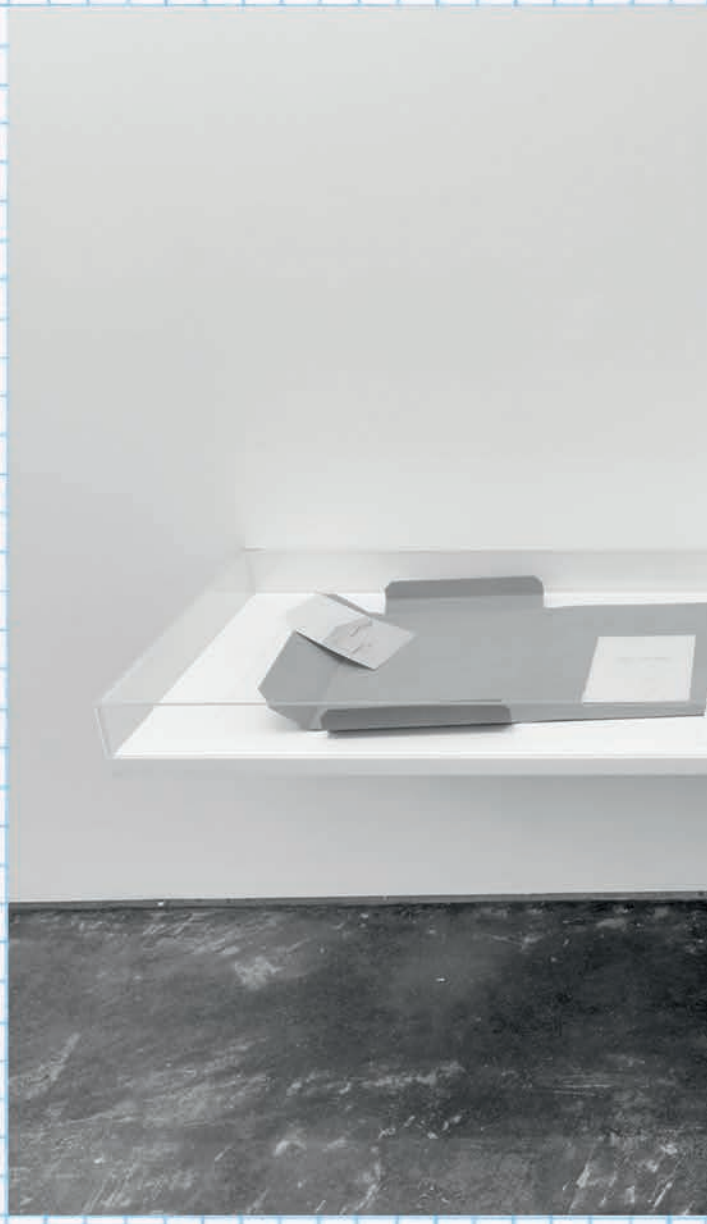
LA FONDERIE
14, rue de la Fonderie
68093 Mulhouse Cedex
Tél. +33(0)3 0977 6647
Kunsthalle@mulhouse.fr
www.kunsthallemulhouse.com

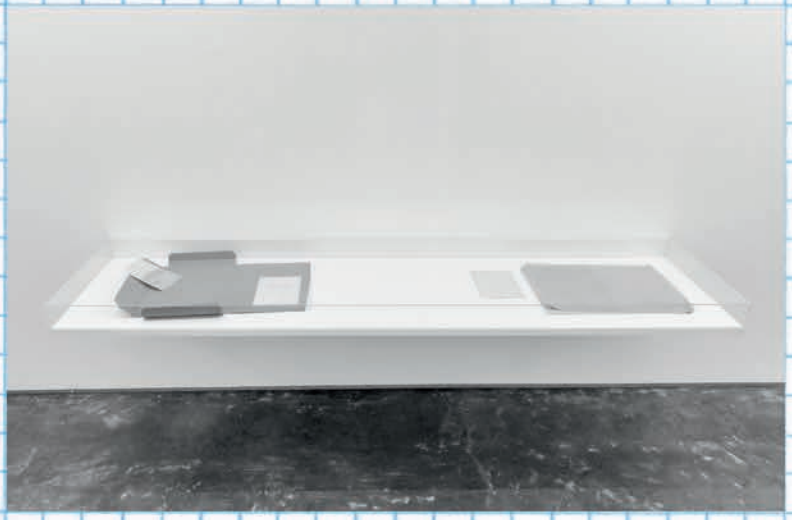
La Kunsthalle est un établissement culturel de la Ville de Mulhouse.
Elle bénéficie du soutien du Conseil Départemental du Haut-Rhin, de la Région Grand Est et du Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication – Drac Grand Est.

La Kunsthalle est membre de : a.c.m, réf.d'artistes, Vivant Cent Projets Mulhouse Sud Alsace.

Conception et mise en ligne du système de l'annuaire : ecomusée

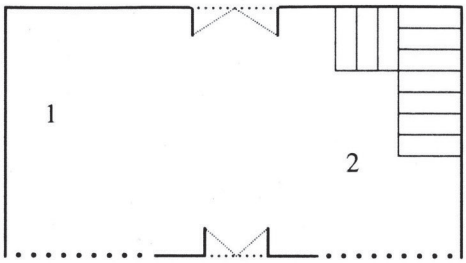
Grey Literature #2 (verso view)
2018
Dry pastel, colored pencil, pencil, and pen on paper
21 x 14.8 cm





OSL contemporary, Oslo 2018
Photos: Jon Benjamin Tallerås

Wouter Huis
Untitled (a possible selection out of the collection of floor plans), 2018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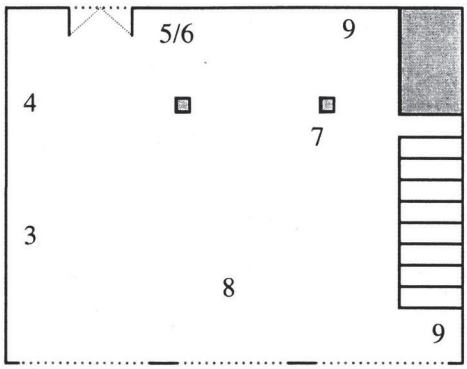
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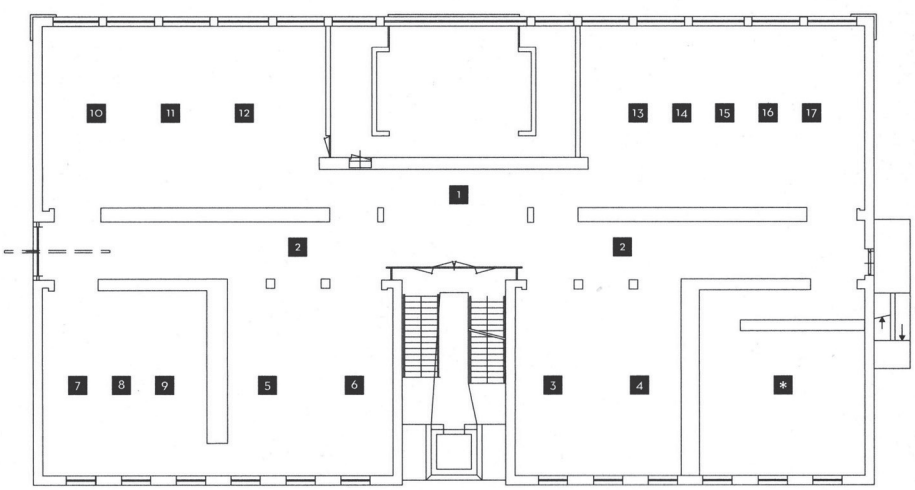
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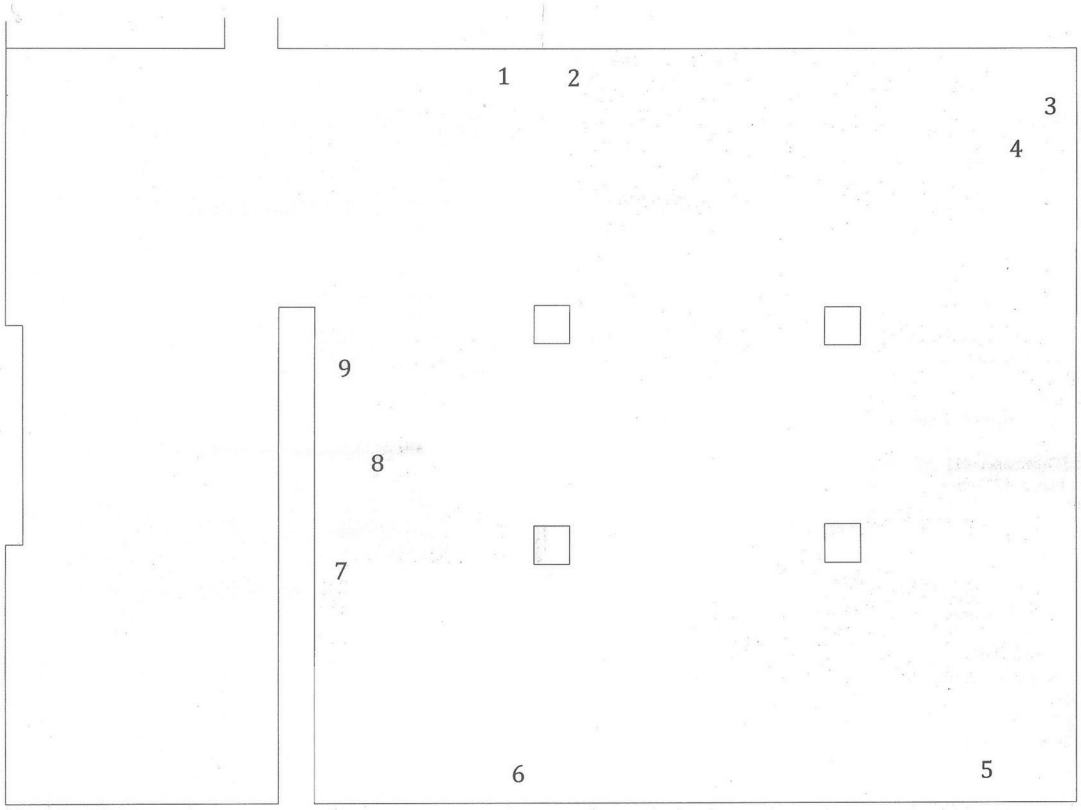
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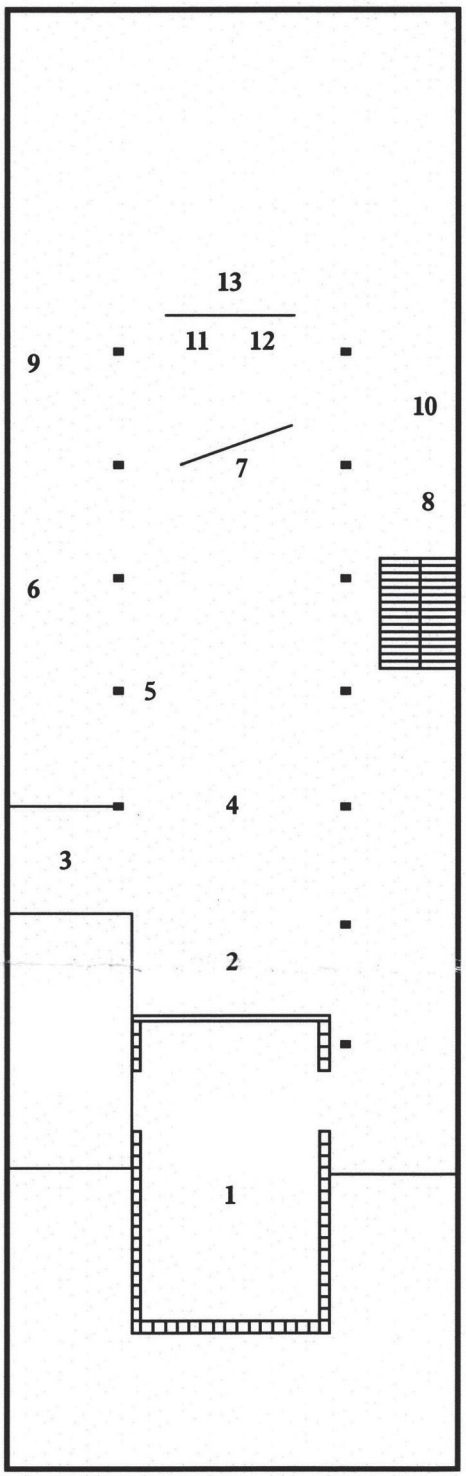
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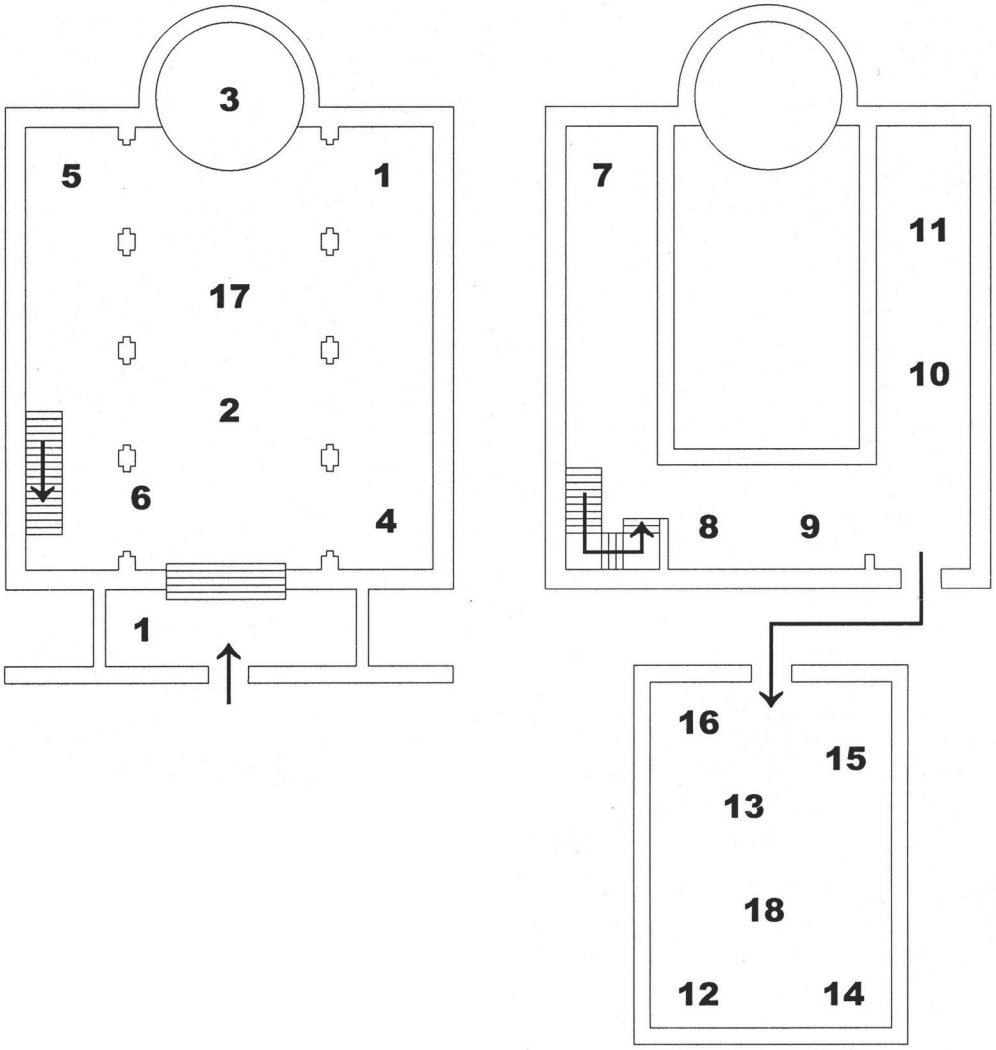
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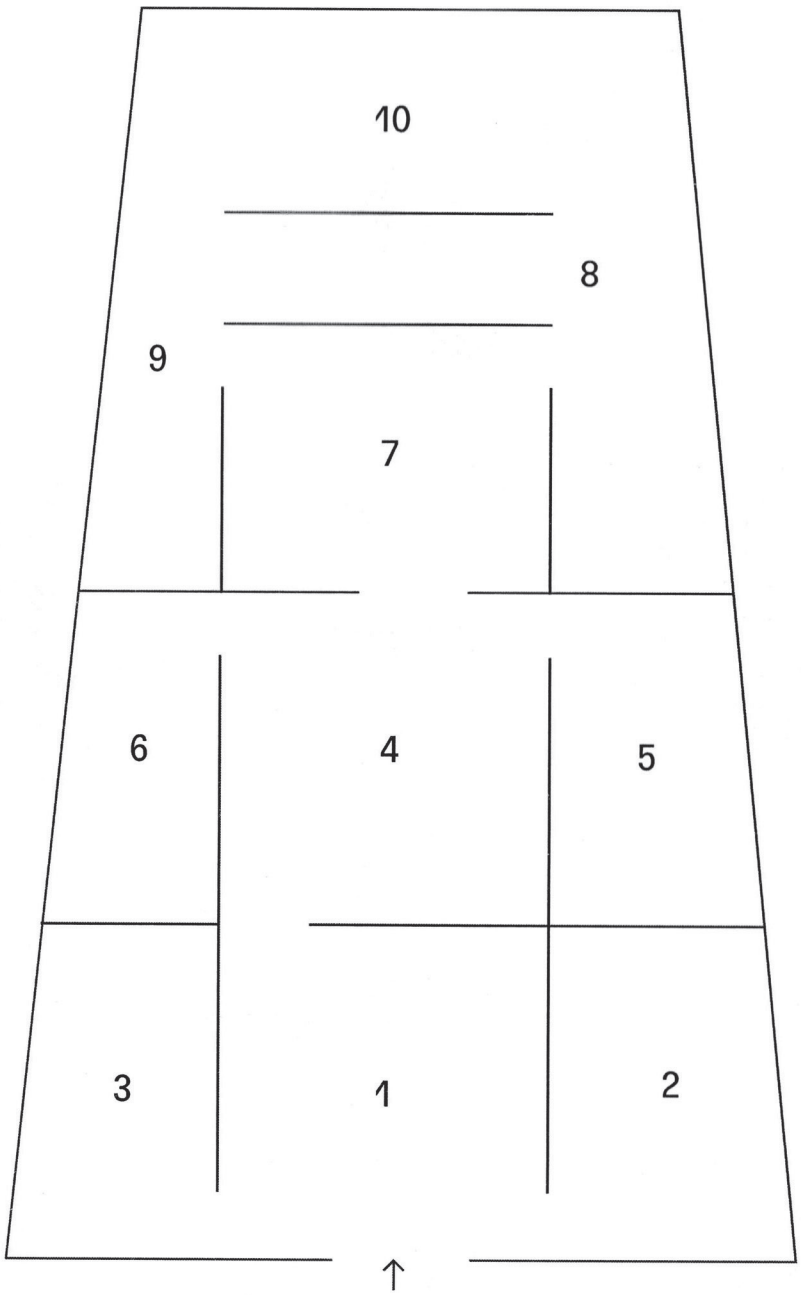
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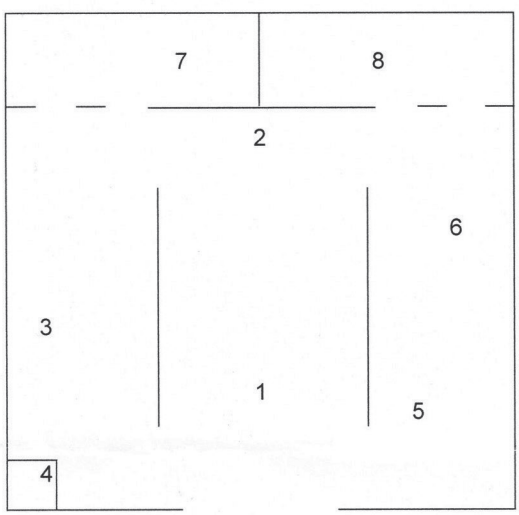
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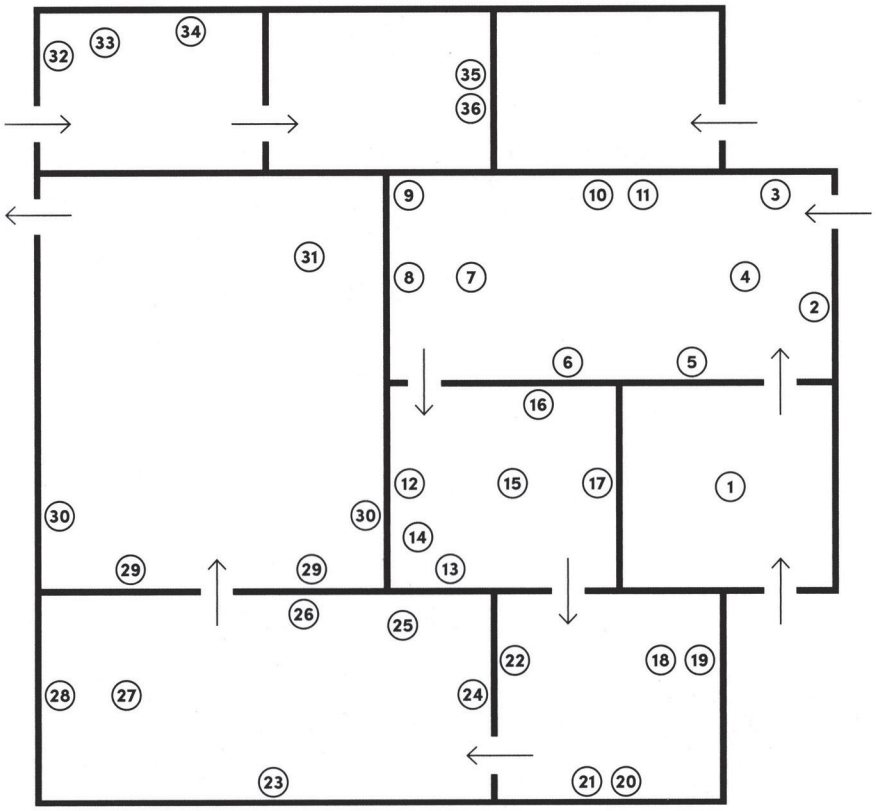
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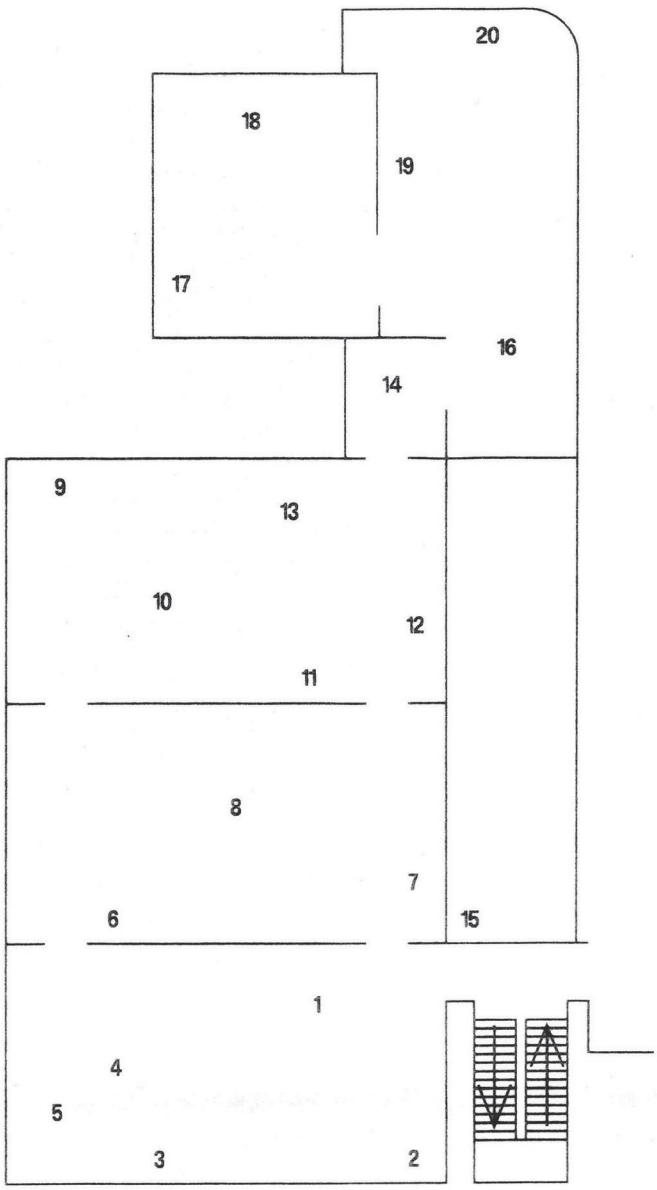
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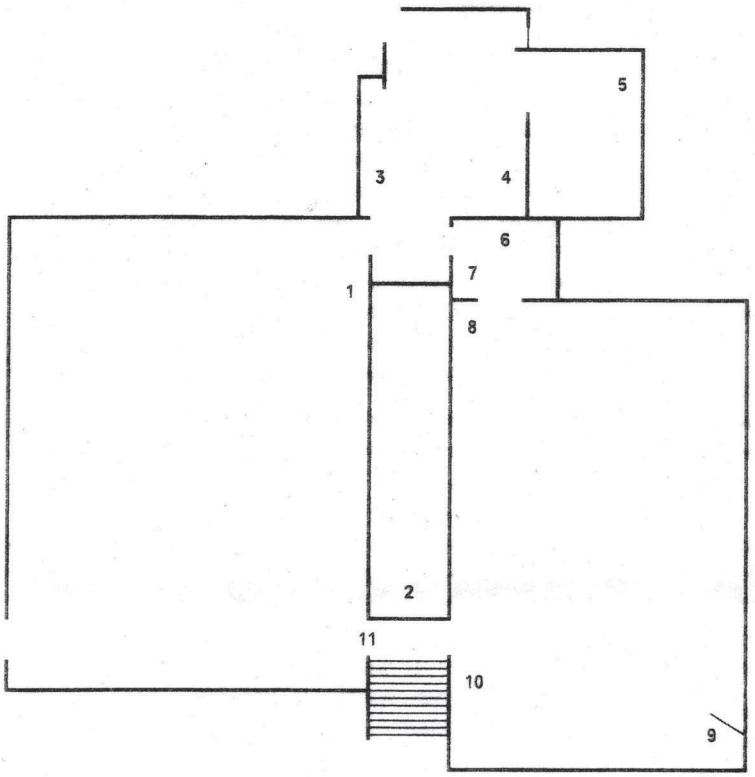
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Joséphine Kaeppelin *Detailed Opinion Poll Results*, 2018

joséphine kaeppelin prestataire de services intellectuels et graphiques intellectual and graphic service provider

ici et là here and there josephinekaeppelin@yahoo.fr +33 6 75 66 68 95

Detailed Opinion Poll Results

joséphine kaeppelin prestataire de services intellectuels et graphiques intellectual and graphic service provider

ici et là here and there josephinekaeppelin@yahoo.fr +33 6 75 66 68 95

To whom it may concern

Periods: - December 8, 2017 - January 17, 2018 (1)
- March 10, 2018 - March 25, 2018 (2)

Locations: - Angewandte Innovation Laboratory, Vienna, AT (1)
- Project Room, Wiels Contemporary Art Center, Brussels, BE (2)

Forms: F001_2017_EN
B&W print, blue 80-gram office paper, 4 pages, 8 images displayed on a wall

Before reading the report you might need to know that:

- Instructions of the survey are in **Arial bold**.
- Answers of the people are in *Cambria italic*.
- Comments of the service provider are in Arial regular.
- ~~Strikethrough~~ means that less than 10 people crossed out the sentence.
- ~~Double strikethrough~~ means that more than 10 people crossed out the sentence.

Introduction

The survey was conducted on paper in the Angewandte Innovation Laboratory in Vienna, in 2017 and in the project room of the Wiels in Brussels, in 2018.
It examines attitudes toward *the system*. It is an emotional and subjective survey.
People were asked to try to approach it through their feelings. We wanted to gain their thoughts and opinions.
Their responses were anonymous.
We would like to thank them for agreeing to take part in the survey!

~~Please click 'next' to begin~~.

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People were asked to cross the statements that do not match their experience of *the system*.

~~I understand *the system*.~~
~~It is a lot about imperfections.~~
~~I don't know what to say about it.~~
~~Usually, I don't care so much about it.~~
~~I keep myself safe and reassured in an office.~~
~~Personally, I've managed to bypass the rules.~~
~~I don't show off; I stay discreet (even for Christmas).~~
~~I look busy while in the meantime I stay available.~~
~~I frequently move from A to B and vice versa. I am mobile.~~
~~My legs are not straight. I am not really standing. I stay close by. It's all bout balance.~~
~~I don't see *the system*.~~
~~There are often absurd tasks to do. Believe me.~~
~~I don't get it anymore, but that's a good thing.~~
~~To go further, I need to put myself out of balance.~~
~~I do to undo. It's a method.~~
~~I am constantly interrupted by *the system*.~~
~~It prevents me from developing what I'd like to do.~~
~~I noticed that it is all jammed.~~
~~In order to fix it, I plaster the holes.~~
~~I think that the corridors are too long.~~
~~I push away the sides as if I was pushing on a wall.~~
~~I never put all my energy in the same department.~~
~~I am *the system*. I am processing something.~~
~~I am like a ping-pong table. I allow feedbacks.~~
~~All the time I check the discrepancies.~~
~~I wish I would have a uniform.~~
~~It is a lot about repetition.~~
~~It would be more difficult for me to be on the other side of *the system*.~~
~~I need *the system*.~~
~~We always say the same thing and we don't understand each other.~~
~~The computer screen blocks our gaze.~~
~~When I make a mistake, I don't stop: I develop it.~~
~~I do not hesitate to say "no".~~
~~I've dreamt about changing *the system*.~~

Please hold the line wait a few seconds.

Breathe

Now you can turn the page.

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Most people don't understand *the system*. They don't keep themselves safe and reassured in their offices. They don't show off, they stay discreet even for Christmas. They don't pretend to be busy while they stay available. Most of them see *the system*, even if we observed previously that they don't understand it. They don't do to undo. Apparently they are not interrupted that much by *the system*. In order to fix *the system*, they don't plaster the holes. We can presume they have another method. Don't propose to the people to have a uniform, for the most part they don't want that. They actually don't need *the system,* most of them. It appears that a majority agreed on being like a ping-pong table to allow feedbacks. They are busy with checking discrepancies, and when they make a mistake they don't stop. They develop it. It is interesting to notice that a majority agree on saying that we always say the same thing, but we don't understand each other.

Then people answered the following questions:

In your opinion, who is *the system*?

We are / society / a system to control / community governments politics / me (& others) / information / you 3 / this survey / my boss / ? / the / the system / the people / us / everyone / spectator / the people / human egoism / I don't think the system is a person /

What's your role?

Being up side down / I am / servant / artist / haven't been assigned one yet / informing the information / look / I fill it in / ??? / depends on the system / everything nothing / feeding the system / intermediator / nothing / I don't know yet / artist student / being a rat in a cage / I am a support of the system

What do you do?

GO - WORK - EAT - I - SLEEP - SLEEP - THINK - LOOK - FILL - SIT - READ - ALL & BEING - THEATRE - SLEEPING - THINKING - ORPHAN

SEE - SLEEP - PLAY - MAKE - SYSTEMS - EAT - WAIT - WRITE - WRITE - EXCEL - EVERYTHING & EXISTING - CARING - POOPING - SCIENCE - THINK - ART STUDENT - STUDY - REACT - BEING

FEEL - RAVE - HARD - AESTHETICS - MOVIES - THINK - SEAT - CRY - ACT - IN BETWEEN & LEAVING - NOTHING - EATING - TALK - DRINK

The two most popular activities are thinking and sleeping, after comes eating.

Would you rather push the line or cross the line?

A majority of people push the line.
One would have liked to leave the line.

Since yesterday how much have you felt obliged?

Average of people feeling obliged: 3.35 (scale is a number between 1 and 5)
So to say, most of the people felt quite obliged.

Since yesterday how much have you felt free?

Average of people feeling free: 2.54 (scale is a number between 1 and 5)
So to say, most of the people did not feel that free.

Would you be more comfortable 3 steps higher?

A majority of people would be more comfortable 3 steps higher.

Do you think it is important to salute the place where you are going to work?

Even if a lot of the people don't see the point to salute the place where they are going to work, a majority think "why not".

Look straight ahead and choose an image that matches your state of mind.

Blue is popular.
A majority of people have chosen the blue print to match their state of mind.

Do you leave sometimes without having understood?

Almost everybody leaves sometimes without having understood.

Before going further, find a way – quietly – to go to the floor with your face.

Describe the action pattern above:

He wants it to go but he couldn't / bounce back / nerdy / bumping into a wall but still moving forward / flowing bouncing escaping (or getting lost) / action pattern / an arrow touching a wall bouncing on / going to a direction you want to go. Hit your head against the wall and realize you have another direction to go (or maybe it is about being drunk) / stupid get to the point / walking home after a good night out with a lot of drinks / turn (around) / falling and running snow /the ying and the yang of my tits / Brownian motion of a particle in a closed space / zwei parallele Linien, zwischen denen ein Pfeil den Ausgang sucht / running against a wall / telling only one side of the story but trying to move further / a change due to restriction / can be read as a metaphor as well / a tangent

Express your (dis)agreement.

We can observe that not many people express their (dis)agreement.

Conclusion

From a stack of approximately 500 copies of the survey, 26 copies were filled in.
That is not much.
This can mean that:

- only a very small numbers of the visitors played the game
- people are too shy to express themselves
- people are fed up with answering administrative forms, customer feedback forms or market research surveys
- there are not a lot of visitors in contemporary art exhibitions.

The truth is in between (or elsewhere).

As we can observe these results don't say so much as not so many people participated.
Presently, we are not able to draw conclusions about *the system*.
We would advise reactivating Opinion Poll F001-2017-EN in other contexts to reach a larger audience.

However, we want to draw the attention to the fact that the survey is mainly intended as an attempt to interrupt, to break our routine, so to say.
No matter what has been said or written.
The results remain positive as some people were stopped and had to step back and think.

To be continued.

* * *

Nika Kupyrova
Paradisio Noir, 2018

PARADISIO
NOIR

Coquillage
Blanc

VIENNOIS LAIT

EDEN KIRSH

AMANDINE

Ulrich Nausner
Untitled (originalcopy), 2018

originalcopy

keywords

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3d 3d print 1670 1923 1939 1962 1964 1967 1968 1971 1972 1973 1977 1978 1981 1987 1989 1991 1994- 1994–1998 1995 1996 1997 1999 2000 2000–2004 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2006–2007 2006–2013 2007 2007–2008 2008 2008–2009 2009 2009–2011 2009–2012 2010 2010–2012 2011 2012 2012–14 2012–2015 2013 2013–2014 2013–2015 2014 2014–2016 2015 2015–2016 2016 2017 2017/2018 2018 abercrombie & fitch abstraction accumulation adam/eve adam lowe addie wagenknecht a ditto ditto device advertising aemulatio africa agnes fuchs alan belcher albrecht dürer alessandro ludovico algorithm alicja kwade alina maria birkner alison rossiter alois kronschlaeger aluminium amalia ulman amorphous analogital analogy andreas broeckmann andre hamer andrzej kostolowski andy denzler andy warhol ane mette hol animation anita witek anna han anna nimus anna sophia rußmann anonymity anouk kruithof antonia baxter apparatus appropriation architecture archive arnold schöberg arrangement art history artie vierkant artifact art making 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download draft drawing dream drywall dust dvd dye economics eduardo navas effect ei arakawa ekphrasis elaine sturtevant electic electronic mimesis elisabeth grübl enactment ensamble studio ephemeral eraser erika hock error escalator essay esther kläs ettore spalletti evanescence evan roberts eva rothschild event everyday evita vasiljeva exhibition exhibition view exhibition expired exposure extension extract fabian boergy fabric face recognition facsimile failure fake fashion felicity hammond felix gonzalez-torres feminism fernand deligny fiction fidelity figuration filament film film still flag flatness floor florian pugnaire fluctuation foil folded folding folk culture footnotes form formalism format formless found image found text frame framework francis alÿs francis bacon franz erhard walter franz thalmair freedom fritz panzer function furniture game gardar eide einarsson gary kuehn gasper kunsic gayan prageeth gaylen gerber gadi sibony gender gene mchugh generator geometry gerold miller gesture ghost gianna virginia prein gianni caravaggio gif gift giorgio agamben giovanni anselmo glass glitch globalization glossy gmail golden google gps gradient graffiti graffitti green box grey grey scale grid growth gutenberg galaxy hack hand-crafted handmade hans-peter feldmann harry roseman hat head heike karin foell heinrich dunst henrik plenge jakobsen hidden hierarchy hillel schwartz history hito steyerl holes how-to hugh davies hui yuk hybrid hyperreality hypertext ian kiaer idol ignacio uriarte ignacio uriarte igor eskinja illusionism image image object images imitatio imitation immateriality in/visibility inclined infinity ink in situ inspiration instagram installation installation view institution instruction instruction manual intellectual property intelligence interdisciplinarity internationalism internet interpretation intervention invocation iron isabelle cornaro isa genzken iterability iteration iteration variation jacques derrida jakob fenger jakob senneby 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corbusier led lee ufan length letter lexicon library lift light likeness line lioba kasper lionel esteve lisa rastl list literature little warsaw living location lois bartel longterm lonneke van der palen loop lotte lyon louis vuitton loup sarion luciano fabro lucie stahl lucy lippard lybia magdalena kreinecker magic mahony mail making mandala manfred pernice manor grunewald mantra manuel fernandez map marcin dudek marcius galan marco roso marcus boon maria panina marie reichel marisa olson marit wolters market mark leckey mark manders markus schinwald marshall mcluhan martin schlögl martin wecke mask mass media mass production masterpiece mateo lopez materiality matias faldbakken mckenzie wark meaning measuring medium medium-specificity melissa gordon meme memory metal meteorite methodology michael a noll michael kargl michael sanchez michael weissköppel michalis pichler michel foucault michel francois microsoft microwave oven migration mimesis mimi cabell miniature minimal mira klug 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about

Copying has become ubiquitous yet invisible, both in the digital realm and in the analog world. In the arts-based research project originalcopy we develop a working model that subjects the dichotomy of original and copy to a re-evaluation from a post-digital perspective and sheds light on this contradictory phenomenon. Our research focuses on the tensions between the supposed immateriality of digital technologies and their material manifestations by appropriating contemporary methods of copying and exposing them to artistic processes of transformation and translation. In originalcopy we are less interested in the results of a recycling derived from the double act of copying copying strategies, rather the processes that lead to them. Our main question is how copying practices can be rendered productive for the investigation of the same.

framework

methodology

process

events

essays

collaborators

frequently asked questions

originalcopy is funded by the Program for Arts-Based Research (PEEK) of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF: AR348-G24). The research project is hosted by the Department of Media Theory at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. originalcopy is run by Michael Kargl and Franz Thalmair from July 2016 through December 2018.

framework

"One thing you should consider before posting:

When you make something publicly available on the

Internet, it becomes practically impossible to

take down all copies of it."[1]

In the context of digital technologies, which facilitate identical and loss-free reproductions of any data, the process of copying has become omnipresent yet invisible. Particularly with the popularization of the internet over the past two decades, copying has developed into a multifaceted but controversial cultural practice, which nowadays predominantly manifests in public discourses about copyright, plagiarism, and unauthorized fakes. At the root of this debate is a negative understanding of the copy always in opposition to the positively connoted original. In the arts-based research project originalcopy, however, we develop a working model that contrasts these discussions, which are normally conducted from a commercial standpoint and have their origin in the establishment of ownership privileges[2] in the nineteenth century bourgeois understanding of hierarchies.

In point of fact, originalcopy places the potentials of the copy, its generative force, and its mimetic productivity at the center of the research. By no longer regarding the original as the basis for the evaluation of the copy we question traditional value systems. The ubiquity of copies nowadays confirms that the processes underlying the act of copying have become established as artistic and cultural practices. But precisely because the mechanisms of copying frequently remain hidden and that this invisibility and loss of control arouse anxieties, which in turn manifest in the strengthening of the dichotomy between original and copy, our aim is to investigate how the act of copying functions in our post-digital[3] condition. Rather than merely focusing on the copy's invisibility, we go one step further and ground originalcopy on the actual indifference toward the act of copying—on its banality, self-evidence, and implicitness.

By adopting prevalent copying strategies and re-using them in the context of originalcopy—or in simple terms, by copying copying methods—we follow a recursive research path and strive for a meta-methodology of copying methods. Our inclination is that the distinction between the original and the copy is no longer explicit within current methods of art production and that former bipolarities have lost their basis. As the project title originalcopy suggests, we no longer conceive the previous opposites as temporally or hierarchically sequential, but as parallel, simultaneous, and equal—original and copy have merged into a new entity which has become a decisive engine for art production, be it in the digital or in the analog realm.

The term "original copy"—written separately in standard English language—is central to the research project. Here "original" denotes the unique source of a thought or an object while "copy" inscribes its own carbon likeness on this source, thereby immediately dissolving the idea of uniqueness once again. In this sense "original copy" is not the inceptive and primordial; it is but one of many in a series of versions: a chronologically previous basis, a present model, and a pioneering future prototype at the same time. In the tantamount research originalcopy the words "original" and "copy" are no longer read separately but merge into a single form and concept. The amalgamation of the terms—transformed by erasing the space between them—stands programmatically for both the idea and the arts-based methodology of performative research upon which originalcopy is based.

In originalcopy we understand the copy not only as a true-to-scale image with the greatest possible resemblance to the original but as a practice that transcends this definition. We negotiate the act of copying as an act of appropriating contemporary practices, methods, and techniques, and as an act of translation intervening in and thus interpreting existing concepts, forms, or materials anew in order to critically reflect or analyze them. Drawing upon Walter Benjamin's conception of translation as a "tangent [which] touches a circle lightly and only at the infinitely small point of the sense, thereupon pursuing its own course,"[4] allows us to embrace the processes of copying in two respects: On the one hand, we explore how the simultaneous ubiquity and invisibility of the copy affects the general conditions of art creation, and on the other hand, we employ the act of copying in a self-reflective manner—as an artistic means underlining its own pivotal iteration-based

character.

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[2] Cf. Sabine Nuss, Copyright & Copyriot. Aneignungskonflikte um geistiges Eigentum im informationellen Kapitalismus (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2006).

[3] Cf. Kim Cascone, "The Aesthetics of Failure. Post-Digital Tendencies in Contemporary Computer Music," Computer Music Journal, 24, no. 4 (2000): 12–18.

[4] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's 'Tableaux Parisien'," in The Translation Studies Reader, ed. Lawrence Venuti, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004[1923]), 80.

methodology

For the arts-based research project originalcopy we have developed a methodology termed performative research. Its conceptual starting point is a category of linguistic expression called "performative utterances",[1] which according to John Langshaw Austin refer to the reality-forming dimension of language as opposed to expressions that simply describe the world. As an example of performative utterances Austin provides statements such as the word "yes" in marriages and links the success of these speech acts to their incorporation in conventionalized and repeatable forms, such as the wedding ceremony.

In originalcopy we extend the reality-forming character of performative utterances in linguistics to the field of fine art and the practice of copying. The element of repetition is key in this extension into visual arts. Following Austin, the repetitive aspect of performativity was further developed by Jacques Derrida with the term "iterability"[2] and later actualized in a sociopolitical context by Judith Butler,[3] who anchors the possibilities for the re-interpretation of our reality in the iterative change of speech acts. The concept of iterability is not only decisive for the success of speech acts and for their reality-forming power, it fundamentally underlies the nature of the copy with its repetitive, recursive, and reproductive characteristics.

Transferred to originalcopy and the method of performative research, we use iteration as a means to investigate the effects of the copy on current artistic practices. Through an oscillating movement—an echo chamber—between the act of copying and the discussion of its methodology we aim to inscribe the performative research in the thematic framework of originalcopy. Similarly, we develop the entire methodology from and within the artistic practices investigated with originalcopy. Following Anke Haarmann, originalcopy is thus obliged to a field of arts-based research that not only offers an aesthetic experience but also reflects "the conditions of one's own position in the medium of artistic practice" and thereby investigates "something with the specific means of art".[4]

By copying copying methods and subjecting them to a simultaneous investigative and artistic process, the approach of originalcopy is thus both self-referential as well as performative. On the one hand, originalcopy draws its research mode from Niklas Luhmann, who sees "pure self-reference"[5] as impossible. Similar to Luhmann, who understands the self-reference of semiotic signs as "escorting" and therefore embedded in other referential moments, self-analysis is inherent to originalcopy. On the other hand, the project follows Derrida and Butler, who both see iteration as "forming a close union with the concept of change".[6] In this sense, only through the combination of the repetition of copying acts and the built-in analysis of their general repeatability is it possible to uncouple the research from its own means and thereby re-interpret the relation of original and copy anew. By maintaining a balance between these processes, the performative research can

feed back into the research field and at the same time constitute it.

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[1] Cf. John L. Austin, How To Do Things With Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955, ed. James O. Urmson (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

[2] Cf. Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," in Limited Inc (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988[1972]), 1–25.

[3] Cf. Judith Butler, 'Excitable Speech' A Politic of the Performative (New York: Routledge, 1997).

[4] Anke Haarmann, "Gibt es eine Methodologie künstlerischer Forschung?" in Wieviel Wissenschaft bekommt der Kunst? Symposium of the Science and Art working group of the Austrian Research Association. Vienna, Academy of Fine Arts, November 4–5, 2011. Accessed August 22, 2016, http://www.oefg.at/legacy/text/arge_wissenschaftkunst/wissenschaft_kunst/Beitrag_Haarmann.pdf.

[5] Winfried Nöth et al., Mediale Selbstreferenz. Grundlagen und Fallstudien zu Werbung, Computerspiel und den Comics (Cologne: Herbert von Halem, 2008), 12.

[6] Sybille Krämer, "Was haben 'Performativität' und 'Medialität' miteinander zu tun? Plädoyer für eine in der 'Aisthetisierung' gründenden Konzeption des Performativen," in Performativität und Medialität, ed. Sybille Krämer (Munich: Fink, 2004), 17.

process

In analogy to generic research processes consisting of the collection, processing, and reorganization of data, we distinguish the three following forms of action in performative research:

1. accumulating
2. processing
3. synthesizing

The starting point for this particular process is methods of knowledge organization[1] developed in the early twentieth century by practitioners and theoreticians such as Aby Warburg, Niklas Luhmann, or Walter Benjamin. With more than 2,000 images in his pictorial atlas "Mnemosyne", the art historian Aby Warburg attempted to combine a collection of reproduced visual materials with philosophy and thereby illustrate historical developments. Niklas Luhmann's library of roughly 120,000 index cards served the sociologist as an archive of notes, text passages, and snippets, which he could draw upon and refer to at any time. In his "Arcades Project" the philosopher Walter Benjamin used descriptive categories to arrange a montage of quotations from hundreds of published sources. All three developed an archival approach to knowledge, based on either visual or textual contingency.

In this historical dimension but also in the post-digital context of originalcopy we understand the archive as not just "a passive store, but an active generator. Seen in this way the 'data', whether they are texts or images, are not just what is 'given', but something that is made, produced—they are 'facts'."[2] These notions serve as a guiding thread through the accumulative research processes, in which we collect photographic copies of artworks, artworks themselves, theoretical texts and terminologies as well as everyday cultural props from the internet. Each element added to the collection is interconnected with others via browsable keywords, ensuring that all elements remain viewable/readable and replicable. Through linking the keywords the hyper-structurally organized material can be navigated in ever-new ways, meaning that "the discursivity of multimedia and how it can be associated with a dialectical aesthetic is characterized by the ways in which

montage-like spatial juxtaposition—achieved through hyperlink structures and searchability—is drawn upon for narrative effect."[3] The functionality of links and databases transcends conventional tabular, classificatory forms, such as the collection archive, catalog, and methods of spatial arrangement in galleries.

Similar to the way in which Warburg's illustrations and Luhmann's index cards were adapted to the changing formats and needs of exhibitions, lectures, or different text types, we constantly reconfigure the collected visual and textual material of originalcopy. This act of processing draws upon the concept of translation borrowed from Walter Benjamin. As early as the 1920s the philosopher had objected to the binary nature of traditional translation methods and promoted the idea of transparency between an original and its translation: "It [the translation] does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully."[4] Analogously, in originalcopy we regard contemporary copying practices as transformative, interpretative, and thus translative to the original.

While the acts of accumulation and processing affect the inner structure of the research, synthesizing as a third party accompanies the other two with methodological analysis. Keeping in mind the main research question of how post-digital copying techniques can be rendered artistically productive for the investigation of the same, with synthesizing we develop a meta-methodology of today's copying practices. The aim is to shed light on the in/visibility of the copy and to visualize its status as a historically, culturally, and technically embedded phenomenon by classifying actual copying strategies and by being responsive to them in a reciprocal and therefore performative manner.

In contrast to familiar research methods, there is not a temporal sequence of individual processes that stipulates the development of the research, rather the focus is on the permanent flow and return between its individual constituents. To become effective within the framework of the project originalcopy and its underlying methodology of performative research it is decisive that accumulation, processing, and synthesizing are not performed separately from one another; they must constantly remain present in the respective other. Only through maintaining the balance between these processes can the performative research feed back into the research field and at the same time constitute it.

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[1] Cf. Peter Gendolla and Jörgen Schäfer, "Zettelkastens Traum," in Wissensprozesse in der Netzwerkgesellschaft, ed. Peter Gendolla and Jörgen Schäfer (Bielefeld: Transcipt, 2005), 7–27.

[2] Rudolf Frieling, "Mapping and Text (Editorial)," Medien Kunst Netz (2004), accessed August 22, 2016, http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/mapping_and_text/editorial/1/.

[3] Vince Dziekan, "Beyond the Museum Walls: Situating Art in Virtual Space (Polemic Overlay and Three Movements)," FibreCulture Journal, Distributed Aesthetics issue, 7 (2007), accessed August 22, 2016, http://journal.fibreculture.org/issue7/issue7_var2_Beyond%20the%20Museum%20Walls.pdf.

[4] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's Tableaux Parisiens," in The Translation Studies Reader, ed. Lawrence Venuti, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Routledge, 2004), 81.

events

Pageworks (Wandzeitung)

Exhibition and publishing experiment

April 28 – June 14, 2018

Pageworks (Wandzeitung) is the next manifestation of the same-titled project, which began as a performance in the semi-public space of a copy shop. Whereas the infrastructure of a digital printer was appropriated in the first edition, employing the self-service mode to produce a limited series artists' publication, the second edition…

more

springerin — Hefte für Gegenwartskunst

Magazine release and presentation

April 23, 2018

springerin — Hefte für Gegenwartskunst is a magazine dedicated to the theory and critique of contemporary art and culture. springerin addresses a public that perceives cultural phenomena as socially and politically determined. The magazine informs about current events and tendencies in the cultural field and describes their conditions and meanings…

more

", ", ", — Footnotes

Exhibition and performance

March 10, 2018 – March 25, 2018

", ", ", — Footnotes is the third in a series of experimentally designed exhibition formats. The show traces the act of copying as an omnipresent yet often invisible artistic practice at the intersection of the digital realm and analog world. Despite its culminating character as the third in a row of three events…

more

A ditto, ditto device.

Exhibition and performance

December 6, 2017 – January 17, 2018

A ditto, ditto device. is the second in a series of experimentally designed exhibition formats. This temporary setting traces the act of copying as an omnipresent yet often invisible artistic practice at the intersection of the digital realm and analog world. As part of the arts-based research project originalcopy…

more

Pageworks

Publishing performance and presentation

May 9, 2017

Pageworks is both a collection of artists' publications as well as a collaborative performance. A temporary workshop in the semi-public space of a copy shop in Vienna serves not only as a production site and place for the multiplication of the loose elements of the publications but also as a showroom for…

more

Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device)

Workshop and collaborative exhibition process

April 19 – 20, 2017

Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device) is an experimentally designed scenario in the draft stage, a think-tank and rehearsal for a future exhibition—but it is also an exhibition in itself. Starting from the idea of the copy as a nowadays omnipresent yet more and more invisible artistic practice and form, seven Austrian and international participants discuss…

more

Performative Research

Performance, book presentation, and public talk

October 11, 2016

The first in a series of events in the context of originalcopy combines two different research projects under the umbrella of the same arts-based methodology. We will present three books that stem from the large-scale investigation into the act of writing Possible Content for 18 Pages. The book presentation takes place in form of a re-staged performative…

more

Pageworks (Wandzeitung)

Exhibition and publishing experiment

April 28 – June 14, 2018

Pageworks (Wandzeitung) is the next manifestation of the same-titled project, which began as a performance in the semi-public space of a copy shop. Whereas the infrastructure of a digital printer was appropriated in the first edition, employing the self-service mode to produce a limited series artists' publication, the second edition of Pageworks operates not in the production but in the design mode of publishing. The serial and paired display windows of a former business premises in Vienna are staged by the participating artists as a page spread, as a thought model and architecture to publicly design a fictional artists' publication and exhibit the act of publishing. Thematically, Pageworks is based on the assumption that original and copy are no longer conceived as temporally or hierarchically sequential in the post-digital age, rather as parallel, simultaneous, and equal – original and copy have merged into a new entity, and their interplay has become a decisive engine in contemporary art production.

Opening reception:

April 27, 2018 | 7 pm

Participants:

István Antal, Aral Cimcim, Oscar Cueto, Twan Geissberger, Kyungrim Jang, Teuta Jonuzi, Ada Karlbauer, Mona Redziabari, Masha Sizikova, Anne-Clara Stahl, Bartholomaeus Waechter

Location:

Studio Steinbrener/Dempf & Huber

Glockengasse 6/1

1020 Vienna

springerin — Hefte für Gegenwartskunst

Magazine release and presentation

April 23, 2018

springerin — Hefte für Gegenwartskunst is a magazine dedicated to the theory and critique of contemporary art and culture. springerin addresses a public that perceives cultural phenomena as socially and politically determined. The magazine informs about current events and tendencies in the cultural field and describes their conditions and meanings. The main section of issue XXV/2/2018 is dedicated to positions, motives, conflicts and debates around the phenomenon of the copy in contemporary culture.

Magazine presentation:

April 23, 2018 | 7 pm

Participants:

Karen Eliot, Bettina Funcke, Annette Gilbert, Christian Hiller, Gabriele Jutz, Michael Kargl, Lisa Rastl, Franz Thalmair

Location:

AIL | Angewandte Innovation Laboratory

Franz Josefs Kai 3

1010 Vienna

", ", ", — Footnotes

Exhibition and performances

March 10, 2018 – March 25, 2018

", ", ", — Footnotes is the third in a series of experimentally designed exhibition formats. The show traces the act of copying as an omnipresent yet often invisible artistic practice at the intersection of the digital realm and analog world. As part of the arts-based research project originalcopy—Post-Digital Strategies of Appropriation, the exhibition serves as a test setting and working model for a re-evaluation of the dichotomy of original and copy from a post-digital perspective. Despite its culminating character as the third in a row of three events ", ", ", — Footnotes is only conceived as a temporary manifestation, one in a series of possible manifestation forms. With three openings on three consecutive evenings, resulting in three modulated and reformulated exhibitions, the aim of this public reflection upon methodology is to define a realm of thought where current practices of copying are collected and presented and where their modalities can be analyzed by subjecting the copy itself to the act of copying.

Participants:

Sebastian Gärtner, Ane Mette Hol, Wouter Huis, Joséphine Kaeppelin, Michael Kargl, Nika Kupyrova, Willem Oorebeek, Lisa Rastl,

Stefan Riebel

Opening I:

March 7, 2018 | 6:00 pm

Opening II:

March 8, 2018 | 4:00 pm

Opening III:

March 9, 2018 | 2:00 pm

Location:

WIELS | Contemporary Art Centre

Av. Van Volxemlaan 354

1190 Brussels

Belgium

view images

A ditto, ditto device.

Exhibition and performances

December 6, 2017 – January 17, 2018

A ditto, ditto device. is the second in a three-part series of experimentally designed exhibition formats. The show at the Angewandte Innovation Laboratory traces the act of copying as an omnipresent yet often invisible artistic practice at the intersection of the digital realm and analog world. As part of the arts-based research project originalcopy—Post-Digital Strategies of Appropriation, the exhibition A ditto, ditto device. serves as a test setting and working model for a re-evaluation of the dichotomy of original and copy from a post-digital perspective. The research focuses on the tensions between the immateriality of digital technologies and their material manifestations in physical space. A main question is how post-digital copying techniques can be made productive in the artistic realm while investigating the very same techniques in a self-reflexive loop with the means of fine art. Is it possible to develop a methodology of contemporary copying practices with a copying process that always remains aware of itself? And how can such a loop of thought reveal knowledge about the simultaneous omnipresence and invisibility of the phenomenon of the copy, which has deep historical, cultural, and technological roots in society?

Participants:

Ovidiu Anton, Daniel Gustav Cramer, Agnes Fuchs, Sebastian Gärtner, Yuki Higashino, Kathi Hofer, Ane Mette Hol, Joséphine Kaeppelin, Michael Kargl, Nika Kupyrova, Ulrich Nausner, Stefan Riebel

December 7, 2017 | 7:00 pm

Opening reception

Video program:

Cana Bilir-Meier, Dara Birnbaum, Holger Lang, Jesse McLean, David OReilly, Christiana Perschon, Rachel Rose, Michaela Schwentner, Miha Vipotnik — Curated by Claudia Slanar

January 10, 2018 | 7:00 pm

Subjects in Time

One time screening of Ein Raum mit Bildern von Provinzen (Cana Bilir-Meier), See a Dog, Hear a Dog (Jesse McLean), Palisades in Palisades (Rachel Rose), Personne (Michaela Schwentner) – Moderated by Claudia Slanar

Publishing program:

Fiona Banner, Walter Benjamin, Marcel Broodthaers, Bernadette Corporation, Claire Fontaine, Maria Fusco, Kenneth Goldsmith, Karl Holmqvist, Wu Ming, Seth Price, and others — Curated by Karen Eliot

January 17, 2018 | 7:00 pm

Publishing as Artistic Practice

Public talk (in German) with Eva Maria Stadler, Vanessa Joan Müller, Sarah Bogner and Josef Zekoff (Harpune Verlag), Luc Gross (TRAUMAWIEN) – Moderated by Franz Thalmair

Location:

Angewandte Innovation Laboratory (AIL)

Franz Josefs Kai 3

1010 Vienna

Austria

view images

Pageworks

Publishing performance and presentation

May 9, 2017 | from 8:00 pm

Pageworks is both a collection of artists' publications as well as a collaborative performance. A temporary workshop in the semi-public space of a copy shop in Vienna serves not only as a production site and place for the multiplication of the loose elements of the publications but also as a showroom for the whole experiment. During the nocturnal opening hours of the digital printer in self-service mode the participating artists reproduce their individual contributions from master copies which circulate in the digital space and bind them into an analog limited edition. The starting point for Pageworks is the assumption that in the post-digital age original and copy are no longer conceived as temporally or hierarchically sequential rather as parallel, simultaneous, and equal—original and copy have merged into a new entity which has become a decisive engine for art production, be it in the digital or in the analog realm.

Participants:

Mirela Baciak, Ziva Drvaric, Cornelia Frischauf, Lioba Kasper, Mira Klug, Magdalena Kreinecker, Gasper Kunsic, Rick Lins, Barbara Macek, Maria Panina, Gianna Virginia Prein, Marie Reichel, David Reiner, Anna Sophia Rußmann, Martin Schlögl, Franz Thalmair, Marit Wolters

Location:

die Kopie 01 – Wien City

Franz-Josefs-Kai 33 (at the corner of Salztorgasse)

1010 Vienna

Austria

view images

Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device)

Workshop and collaborative exhibition process

April 19 – 20, 2017

Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device) is an experimentally designed scenario in the draft stage, a think-tank and rehearsal for a future exhibition—but Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device) is also an exhibition in itself. Starting from the idea of the copy as a nowadays omnipresent yet more and more invisible artistic practice and form, seven Austrian and international participants discuss different strategies of appropriation. At the center of this public reflection on methodologies is the potential of the act of copying, its generative force and mimetic productivity. The purpose of this test setting is to collect current copying methods and to analyze their modes. By subjecting the copy to the act of copying again, new copying techniques will derive from this process, creating a research loop that is self-reflective and auto-generative at the same time.

April 19, 2017, 11:00 am – 4:00 pm

Periphrasis—part 1

Collaborative exhibition process

April 20, 2017, 11:00 am – 4:00 pm

Periphrasis—part 2

Collaborative exhibition process

Participants:

Sebastian Gärtner, Ane Mette Hol, Joséphine Kaeppelin, Michael Kargl, Nika Kupyrova, Stefan Riebel, and Franz Thalmair

Location:

Freies Theater Innsbruck

Vorbrenner

Wilhelm-Greil-Straße 23

6020 Innsbruck

Austria

view images

Performative Research

Performance, book presentation, public talk

October 11, 2016

The first in a series of events in the context of originalcopy combines two different research projects under the umbrella of the same arts-based methodology. On the one hand, we will present three books that stem from the large-scale investigation into the act of writing Possible Content for 18 Pages. The book presentation takes place in form of a re-staged performative reading. This re-enactment will mark the conclusion of the first project, but it is also the starting point and the launch of the second research titled originalcopy—Post-Digital Strategies of Appropriation. The two projects share the practice of performative research, a methodological framework that offers both an aesthetic experience and the simultaneous reflection of the same.

7:00 pm

Lorem Ipsum Dolor Sit Amet (Reading Space)

Performance by Lois Bartel

7:30 pm

Performative Research

Book presentation and public talk with Michael Kargl, Claudia Slanar, and Franz Thalmair

Location:

University of Applied Arts Vienna

Site-Specific Art

Pauluspiatz 5

1030 Vienna

Austria

view image

essays

#10

Be with the Trouble

Cultural Appropriation in America

By Bettina Funcke

"Now art is all about being constructed out of relationships between parts." (Laura Owens) If we take what Laura Owens intended to be a comment on the formal, material process of art-making today and read it as a social, cultural, and political description, we find a key to the American debate over cultural appropriation…

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#09

"Retrograde Remediation"

Cross-Media Translations in Contemporary Film-Related Art

By Gabriele Jutz

In his prose poem "Ixion" Belgrade Surrealist Monny de Boully draws a detailed diagram of a fantastic machine, namely an air-carriage, powered by "sexually starved eagles". The heroine of the book describes in detail how this contraption functions: It is flown by eagles, who are at first kept inside their cages. In the big front cage, are a male and a female…

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#08

One to One-and-a-Half

On the Spectrum of Contemporary Artistic Copying Practices

By Christian Höller

The fake snuff movie effect alone is remarkable. In Kanye West's notorious music clip "Famous", as the camera eye slowly fades down through the clouds, the pixelly image resolution already suggests something nasty. When the first hints of faces appear, as if they were filmed with a cheap pre-digital video camera, you are already…

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#07

Giving and Taking

Renegotiating Literary Citation Culture

By Annette Gilbert

There is a growing number of cases in which authors are actually being cited to appear in court for their citations, for quoting from a foreign source, and being admonished in public—and not just in the strictly regulated scientific or journalistic fields but also in the literary realm, where freer rules apply to the practice of citation…

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#06

Copying as Performative Research

Toward an Artistic Working Model

By Franz Thalmair

Why original and copy yet again? Why still? Copying has attained a new diversity. In the context of digital technologies, which facilitate identical reproductions of any data, the practice of copying is omnipresent yet often invisible. It has evolved into a multifarious but…

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#05

How Electrons Remember

By Laura U. Marks

In this essay I will argue that electronic images are the index, if not of an original object, then at least of a physical process. Without sounding too anthropomorphic, I want to suggest that electrons remember. There are two problems to be addressed. First, what is the material basis of electronic imaging? Second, is this material basis…

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#04

Digital Provenance and the Artwork as Derivative

By McKenzie Wark

Unlike Hito Steyerl, I don't think art is a currency. I think it's a derivative, which is not quite the same thing as a currency. A currency can store value or act as a means of exchange. A derivative does something different. It manages and hedges risk. What we need, then, is a theory of art as a derivative…

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#03

Copy

By Jussi Parikka

The process of copying is a key cultural technique of modernity. The mechanization of imitatio awed even the hailed Renaissance artist Leon Battista Alberti at the dawn of the Gutenberg era: "Dato and I were strolling in the Supreme Pontiff's gardens at the Vatican and we got talking about literature as we so often do…

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#02

Easy is the New Difficult

By Kenneth Goldsmith

Easy is the new difficult. It is difficult to be difficult, but it is even more difficult to be easy. Easy is not easy. Easy takes effort, just as difficulty takes effort. I want an easy art, an art of pure pleasure, an art that is completely understandable by anyone viewing it, an art that doesn't leave you puzzled, an art that ties up every loose end, dots every…

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#01

Living with Ghosts

From Appropriation to Invocation in Contemporary Art

By Jan Verwoert

Appropriation is a common technique in contemporary culture. People appropriate when they make things their own and integrate them into their way of life, by buying or stealing commodities, acquiring knowledge, squatting and so on. Artists appropriate when they adopt imagery, concepts and ways of making art other artists have used at other times to...

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essay #10

Be with the Trouble

Cultural Appropriation in America

By Bettina Funcke

"New art is all about being constructed out of relationships between parts."

— Laura Owens1

If we take what Laura Owens intended to be a comment on the formal, material process of art-making today and read it as a social, cultural, and political description, we find a key to the American debate over cultural appropriation. Controversies such as those over Kelley Walker at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, Dana Schutz at the Whitney Museum, or Sam Durant at the Walker Art Center signal the arrival of a new era. Recent outrage over cultural appropriation has traumatized people on all sides: Museum officials have resigned, artists have received death threats, viewers have been moved to petition for the destruction of artworks. The relationships between parts are troubled. How did we get here?

During the late 1970s and 80s artists introduced formal, material appropriation as a critical, transformative tool; this moment also happened to be the dawn of neoliberalism and identity politics. Today all three are in extremis: Digitally-enhanced neoliberalism is reaching its cruel limits, a new and reactionary kind of identity politics has taken shape, and appropriation in art now primarily implies cultural appropriation. I want to consider some of the ways these three historical figures are intertwined.

In the art context the term appropriation has traditionally referred to an empowering critical tool involving the guerrilla displacement of images. In the late 1970s and early 80s artists established this now ubiquitous gesture of copying with an aim to fragment and dislocate. Appropriation interfered with dominant representations and challenged the power structures implicit in images from art and art history, as well as from the commercial and popular material of what the Frankfurt School called "culture industry". Appropriation was a theft from power.

Decades later the implication of artistic appropriation has been turned on its head, and the presumed theft from power has turned into a presumed theft from the oppressed. According to "Merriam Webster", appropriation means unlawfully taking from a rightful owner "under the guise of authority", a phrase which may be taken as a pointed euphemism for the injustices of colonialism, racism, and patriarchy. In this sense, appropriation is a red thread going through the entire history of dispossession, oppression, and marginalization. Current outrage is aimed at the naiveté with which (white) artists are taking images from other cultures or peoples.

The tactic of artistic appropriation was to shift emphasis from original to copy, thus privileging context; this may be considered the primal scene for today's conundrum because the tactic was so successful that it became part of the toolbox for advertising and branding, while appropriation art itself moved from the margins into the museum. Appropriation is still a kind of theft, but its own context has changed. Take, for example, Sam Durant's caustic anti-monument "Scaffold" (2012), which comprises seven historical gallows used in hangings sanctioned by the U.S. government between 1859 and 2006. When exhibited at the Walker Art Center, people of the local Dakota tribe maintained that the work violated their dignity with its implicit reference to the Mankato massacre of 38 Dakota men, and the sculpture was dismantled. The controversy doesn't reveal the failure of one artist or museum so much as expose a systemic failure of representation, or what Durant called the "incredible disconnect between the art world and the rest of the world".2

I want to point out that it is the museum that is the interface between those two worlds. Notably, the controversial artworks by Durant, Durham, Schutz, and Walker had all been previously exhibited, without controversy, before being brought to American museums. Homi Bhabha has suggested that "we can never quite control these acts [of cultural appropriation] and their signification. They exceed intention."3 Everyone grasps that a museum exists to unite different parts within a master narrative, a narrative synonymous with cultural power. Perhaps it is partly this hegemonic cut and paste—an apparent appropriation—that foregrounds that which exceeds the artists' intentions.

Both appropriation art and much post-colonial thinking emerged from the momentum of post-structuralism with its anti-essentialism and pursuit of coded hierarchies and fixed meanings. In this light, there is a shared history. Gregg Bordowitz remembers that "in the early 1980s, appropriation was understood as a tactic of counterculture—in art, but also in a larger counter-culture encompassing left-wing liberation struggles over race, gender, sexuality."4 Coco Fusco recalls an "evolving debate that actually began in the late 1970s in relation to the establishment of minority cultural spaces and ethnic studies, then moved into discussions of black feminism and black masculinity, before merging with a multiplicity of debates in the 1990s—relating to institutional critique, postmodernism, feminism etc."5 For Fusco, the "crisis of identity" was a symptom of a decentering of conceptual and ideological frameworks that had given people a sense of rootedness in their world. Identity "was addressed as a term to be analyzed from many angles,"6 not simply two opposing sides, as is common practice with today's us versus them. However, if initially identity politics was about forming a community to achieve visibility in demanding civil rights, today its essentializing claims often seem to shore up existing structures of capital and power. Rather than breaking down borders, discrimination, fear of others, and other forces of separation, in order to demand equality, it shuts down dialogue and rewards self-singularization. As Fred Moten observed, "individuation is the incarceration of difference."7

Sarah Schulman has lamented the repression of conflict and difference in a neoliberal culture which enforces "this idea you're supposed to be open and available, liking things, minimizing conflict."8 In her influential book "Conflict Is Not Abuse" Schulman writes: "The force that takes conflict and misrepresents it as abuse is called escalation. Escalation is a kind of smokescreen to cover up the agent's own influence on events, their own contributions to the conflict. […] Escalation under these circumstances is a resistance to self-knowledge."9 This resistance to self-knowledge—be it out of cowardice, fear, anger, or resignation—haunts the cultural appropriation debates. Calls for the destruction of artworks, death threats, and refusals to engage in dialogue are all forms of escalation which seek to avoid being with the trouble and the pursuit of a deeper self-knowledge. Culture's most interesting creative achievements occur in the liminal space of overlap and difference; culture is relational, and not solely a history of domination.10 As Edouard Glissant urged, "Consent not to be a single being!"11

Friends tell me: Don't write about cultural appropriation, you'll get in trouble. But why is it that we cannot now be with the trouble? Part of it may be traced to some of the issues highlighted by both early artistic appropriation and nascent identity politics: our age's anxiety around copy and original, and the corresponding importance of context. In the intervening years these issues have only sharpened. Neoliberalist policies and digital technologies have brought us to a state of digital liquidity where everything is endlessly duplicated, shared, disseminated, and decontextualized. Copying is the state of Western culture now, its dominant feature, reaching all areas of life, grounded in the contemporary omnipresence of networks. In social media we are all copied and reproduced. You could even say there is no longer such a thing as a copy, as Seth Price proposed in "Was ist Los?" (2003). But when there is no copy, what is an original? Thus the new digital anxiety: How to grasp and retain control over what is deeply you or yours and what, nevertheless, you possess only fleetingly—your culture, your image, your style, your habits and mannerisms, your history, and your sorrows.

Culture has always been about belonging, through shared rituals and ways of remembering, often in relation to objects or communal gatherings. While this used to take place in person, technological development has largely pushed culture and belonging into the digital arena. Hito Steyerl argues that "the thing formerly called real life has already become deeply imaged."12 For Steyerl, the artist's task now lies in finding different forms of circulation. In art, value has shifted unstoppably toward the many ways to recall, annotate, personalize, edit, authenticate, display, mark, transfer, and engage a work. We need to move information, manage it, parse it, organize it, and distribute it. As Laura Owens put it, referring to the incorporation of methods and images with prior uses, art is now constructed out of relationships between parts. Parts may be taken to refer to images; their reproduction methods; that which they communicate; their cultural reference points; the ways they signify differently to different people. Art points to a relationship between the stages that images, copies, and representations go through. Art engages the question of what images are made of, what state they are in. Today art necessarily traces, houses, or performs the disquieting shifts and instabilities within images that haunt our daily life. In this sense, it's not realistic not to appropriate: An artist must tackle appropriation if she wishes to deal with culture and how it works. Of course, cultural appropriation itself is in some ways simply a recirculation of images. So what kind of storytelling can adapt to the technological novelty and vastness of the database as archive, while remaining in touch with specific, localized sensibilities and the histories of particular images?

Art is a traffic in symbols and images, and it has never been politically or historically neutral. We should face the abyss brought out by art's traffic in symbols. We cannot, in Schulman's words, hide behind the smoke screen of escalation, as confusing and painful—or ostensibly distracting—as the chasm may be. In conclusion I would quote Zadie Smith: "I do not find discussions on appropriation and representation to be in any way trivial. […] The solution remains as it has always been: Get out (of the gallery) or go deeper in (to the argument)."13

Initial publication in German: Funcke, Bettina. "Das Unbehagen aushalten. Kulturelle Aneignung in Amerika" springerin — Hefte für Gegenwartskunst XXIV/2/2018: 32–35.

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2 Devon Van Houten Maldonado, "Sam Durant Speaks About the Aftermath of His Controversial Minneapolis Sculpture," Hyperallergic (July 14, 2017), https://hyperallergic.com/390552/sam-durant-speaks-about-the-aftermath-of-his-controversial-minneapolis-sculpture (accessed on Jan. 10, 2018).

3 Homi Bhabha (roundtable participant), "Cultural Appropriation: A Roundtable," Artforum (summer 2017): 270.

4 Gregg Bordowitz (roundtable participant), "Cultural Appropriation: A Roundtable," Artforum (summer 2017): 269.

5 Coco Fusco, "Decades of Identity Politics," Texte zur Kunst (Sept. 2017): 114.

6 Fusco, 118.

7 Fred Moten, "Black and Blur: Fred Moten in Conversation with Arthur Jafa," (discussion) The Graduate Center, The City University of New York, Dec. 11, 2017.

8 Sarah Schulman in conversation with Caroline Busta and Anke Dyes, "True and False Victims," Texte zur Kunst (Sept. 2017): 50.

9 Sarah Schulman, Conflict Is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility, and the Duty of Repair (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016), 139.

10 Cf. Homi Bhabha, Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994).

11 Quoted by Fred Moten as the title of his forthcoming trilogy, the first of which is Black and Blur (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

12 Hito Steyerl and Laura Poitras in Conversation, "Techniques of the Observer," Artforum (May 2015): 336–341.

13 Zadie Smith, "Getting In and Out: Who Owns Black Pain?" Harper's Magazine (July 2017), https://harpers.org/archive/2017/07/getting-in-and-out (accessed on Jan. 10, 2018).

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essay #09

"Retrograde Remediation"

Cross-Media Translations in Contemporary Film-Related Art

By Gabriele Jutz

In his prose poem "Ixion" (1926) Belgrade Surrealist Monny de Boully draws a detailed diagram of a fantastic machine, namely an air-carriage, powered by "sexually starved eagles". The heroine of the book describes in detail how this contraption functions:

It is flown by eagles, who are at first kept inside their cages. In the big front cage, are a male and a female eagle. In the middle cage, above the cabin, is a female. In the last cage, there is a male again. If I decide to fly, I step inside the cabin, open the cages, and here's what happens: the male and the female in the front cage are sexually satisfied, but they are hungry; they both fly toward the platform to which some fresh meat is attached. However, they cannot reach the meat because they are chained to the cabin. Wanting to free themselves by force, they lift the entire apparatus off ground with the power of their wings. Something similar happens with the other pair of eagles. They are well fed, yet they crave sex. When I open their cages, the female rushes out fleeing the male […]. The male cannot catch up with the female for his chain is too short. This is how the four eagles lift the carriage into the clouds.1

Boully's fantasy, materialized in a diagram/drawing of a chariot driven by desire serves Pavle Levi as one example to illustrate his concept of "cinema by other means".2 This term focuses on ways in which aspects of a more recent medium, in this case film, are assimilated by an "older" and non-cinematic medium, such as still photography, drawing, writing, sculpture, or performance. As Levi explains, he is not interested in artworks made under the influence of, or referring to, the cinema but "in a fairly exact set of structural relations inspired by the workings of the film apparatus itself".3 Expanding on Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's oft-quoted concept of "remediation",4 referring to the formal logic by which older media (such as film) are integrated into newer ones (such as television), Levi aptly calls this rematerialization of cinema into materials other than cinema's original constituents "retrograde remediation".5 Boully's diagram from "Ixion" is perfectly suited indeed to fit this particular version of remediation. Instead of looking for the old in the new (as Bolter and Grusin do), Boully seeks the new in the old. As Levi points out, Boully's hand-drawn sketch does not just refer to cinema in a general manner. It is related to it in structural terms. Just like the film apparatus itself, it claims to be a techno-libidinal machine, set in motion by desire, and thus subsumes the idea of cinema.

The "new" in the "old"

Unlike Levi's "Cinema by Other Means", which uses examples from both the historical and the post-war avant-garde, my article will pose the question of what the translation of cinema into "older", non-cinematic media means in our contemporary media constellation where cross-media processes have become standard fare. Retrograde remediation has gained new relevance in the digital age and covers a wide range of artistic practices and techniques. A particularly striking example is "Slide Movie" (2007) by the Austrian artist Gebhard Sengmüller. "Slide Movie" is an installation in which a film projector is replaced by a slide projector. Sengmüller declares the piece to be in the spirit of "fictive media archeology", and its aim is "to invent things that might have existed earlier but didn't, because they hadn't been invented then".6 For "Slide Movie" the artist cut a 35 mm filmstrip into its single frames and fixed them into slide frames. Then he aligned 24 slide projectors, each of them capable of holding eighty slides, pointed them at the screen, and ran them at a rate of 24 frames per second. In comparison to conventional standards, the quality of the film projection achieved by such an elaborate and time-consuming procedure is quite poor. From a utilitarian perspective, this hybrid machine is totally impractical. However, from an artistic standpoint, Sengmüller's "invention", which invests the slide projector with the power to project moving images, is far from being inconvenient. By integrating the functions of a "newer" mechanical apparatus—the film projector—into those of an older one, reminiscent of nineteenth-century magic lantern slideshows, "Slide Movie" is unambiguously cinematic—though it is not cinema. But it does—unambiguously—demonstrate that medium specificity must be located elsewhere than in the material base of the cinematic apparatus.

As Levi's examples of retrograde remediation make clear, the notion of the "film apparatus" goes far beyond the mechanical parts of the machine and includes its flexible and changeable components, in particular the filmstrip, as well as "a number of filmic techniques and devices".7 While Sengmüller's "Slide Movie" challenges the standard apparatus by tinkering with the hardware, the following two examples, British artist Fiona Banner's "Apocalypse Now" (1997) and Russian artist Vadim Zakharov's "Ghosts Before Breakfast (1927) in One Drawing (Version 2)" (2016), executed in writing and drawing respectively, take their point of departure from a specific film and its viewing experience.

Banner's "Apocalypse Now", a cross-media translation of Francis Ford Coppola's eponymous 1979 Vietnam epic, consists of a hand-scribbled single block of text documenting what the artist witnessed while watching the movie. Its colossal visual expanse of 274 × 650 cm [21.8 × 8.25 ft] achieves a level of monumentality that stands in contrast to the small size of Banner's handwriting. The minuscule pencil strokes, wavering between different hues of graphite gray, and the closeness of the lines result in a dense texture of words, difficult to decipher. Banner tells the story of "Apocalypse Now" in the present, constantly trying to keep up with the quickly changing moving images, while an insistent "then" marks the action's inevitable progress: "Mike leaves off with one arm and turns round to wave at the chopper. It's coming down, closer and closer, so black. Then you see the three of them on the bridge, from inside the cockpit they look tiny. Then you see the chopper from the side, not black anymore, but matte green." Due to the very fact of the handwriting, Banner's retelling of the movie becomes highly intimate and personal. At the same time, her use of observational and descriptive language lacking any sort of emotional empathy runs contrary to the conventional role of handwriting in contemporary art:8 What she wants to achieve is not self-expression, let alone inwardness, but a detached and thorough documentation of the film's narrative.

Banner's "Apocalypse Now" is related to Coppola's film on various structural levels. Her choice of a large-scale format, for example, echoes the monumental scale of the American filmmaker's visual epic. Moreover, the proportional relationship between width and height in Banner's canvas is 2.37:1, which comes fairly close to the film's aspect ratio of 2.39:1 in its 35 mm CinemaScope version. Furthermore, Banner's transcription of the fleeting images in the present tense refers back to the "now" in the film's title, thus rendering the word's semantic dimension via a specific verbal tense, while maintaining it throughout the entire text as well. Finally, linear translation—row after row of text—parallels the straightforward succession of scenes in Coppola's "absurdly linear narrative of 'go up the river, find Kurtz'".9 Banner's retrograde remediation not only finds means to translate the scale, format, semantics, and temporal structure of a specific movie into the medium of writing, it also deals with a more general aspect shared by all films, namely their reproducibility. Erika Balsom distinguishes between two forms of reproducibility, a referential one and a circulatory one: The former concerns film's capacity to transcribe physical reality, the profilmic event; the latter has to do "with the way the image may be copied and copied and copied, transforming [it] into something multiple that is primed for circulation".10 Finally, in opposition to digital transcoding, which is able to provide potentially innumerable copies, Banner's handwritten translation foregrounds the limits of circulatory reproducibility.

Film as a technology deeply engaged in storage and, conversely, its loss comes to the fore in Vadim Zakharov's "Ghosts Before Breakfast (1927) in One Drawing (Version 2)". Zakharov is not only an artist and editor but also an archivist, collector, and documenter of Moscow conceptual art. The urge to preserve and perpetuate also inspired his series "Film in One Drawing" (2014–2016), which resulted in handwritten "transcripts" of 70 movies from the silent era, among them Hans Richter's Dadaist "Ghosts Before Breakfast". While the film is being projected from behind him, Zakharov stands before a sheet of black paper, which also serves as the screen. With pastels he tries to capture the outlines of the passing images directly from the projection surface / surface of inscription. At the end the paper is covered with a dense tangle of superimposed lines bearing no visual similarity whatsoever with Richter's film. As Annette Gilbert has remarked in an unpublished paper,11 due to the speed of the film's projection and the relative slowness of the human hand, this form of live recording is particularly inappropriate for film notation. Gilbert quotes Zakharov who himself freely admits that almost nothing of what makes a movie, be it action, mise-en-scène, or camerawork, survives his transcriptional endeavors.

Zakharov's archival fervor is not satisfied by just transcribing a film and exhibiting the results. He also turns the act of drawing itself, which occasionally takes place in public, into an autonomous performance recorded on video and distributed on DVD under the title "Action Film Drawing". The DVD, which includes "Ghosts Before Breakfast (1927) in One Drawing (Version 2)" consists of three parts: a non-stop action drawing of Richter's six-minute film, executed in 13:07 minutes (presumably by looping the film); a drawing of the film's title (2:45 minutes); and a drawing of the number "four", which figures in the title sequence (40 seconds). As Gilbert observes, when dealing with letters or numbers, Zakharov seeks to maintain the respective font style of his source material. In order to give an idea of the hasty pace under which his transcriptions are produced, the artist presents the video recording of his drawing performances in fast motion. In addition to the drawings on paper, the live-performances, and the DVD, Zakharov also makes the drawings available in printed form.

In terms of its fidelity to its source, Zakharov's unremitting attempts to translate Richter's film are doomed to fail, reminding us that in each translator lies a dormant traitor. But it is exactly this aspect of Zakharov's work that provides us with useful insights into the condition of cinema's being, including its inherent reproducibility. As mentioned, reproduction plays a double role in the ontology of the moving image. While referential reproducibility refers to the medium's ability to represent reality, circulatory reproducibility is founded on an economy of the multiple.12 Zakharov's gesture of tracing shadows follows the logic of the work of the cinematic apparatus, in particular its capturing of reality (referential reproducibility). But Zakharov's work—as well as those of Banner and Sengmüller—also touches upon the larger and more topical question of film's circulatory reproducibility, in particular its continuous transition from one format to another.

Why retrograde remediation now?

As film scholar and archivist Giovanna Fossati declares, "transition is the most appropriate and productive term to define the process that film is undergoing at the moment".13 Although it is true that media transition is ubiquitous in our contemporary "convergence culture",14 one has to keep in mind that it seems to know one temporal direction only, that is, from "older" media into "newer" ones. Digital media's potential to transcode all traditional media to data-based binary code makes one easily overlook the fact that digitization is only one way of conceiving of cross-media translation. Hence, retrograde remediation, the presence of the "new" in the "old", provides a useful critique of such technological determinism. By calling into question the temporal connections between media, retrograde remediation challenges the supposed unilinear direction of translational processes.

Moreover, conceiving the relationship between cinema and contemporary art under the sign of retrograde remediation provides reasonable grounds to reassess the notion of medium specificity. As the examples offered demonstrate, the concept of cinema can be separated from its material realization (cinema as we know it). Indebted to the workings of the film apparatus but evoked through other and older means such as slide projection, writing, or drawing, medium specificity is no longer located in the material substrate of the apparatus but is instead derived from a set of structural analogies. Even more importantly, these works deliberately attest to a pronounced technical inadequacy between cinema and the means put in place by these other arts. Sengmüller's "Slide Movie" results in a deplorably poor image; Banner's "Apocalypse Now" fails to tell the "whole" story of Coppola's film; and Zakharov's "Ghosts Before Breakfast (1927) in One Drawing (Version 2)" is far from a properly legible transcript of Richter's film. Nevertheless, it is precisely because these artworks miss their object and "fail" (however productively) that they are able to quicken our awareness of cinema, what it has been, what it is, and what it might be. Far from being a limited case, or even an exception, retrograde remediation is indeed the rule in that it sheds light on contemporary media transition at large by drastically exposing the discrepancies inherent to all media processes of translation, namely, their inadequacy to fully incorporate all of the many qualities and aspects of another medium. Thus, Sengmüller, Banner, and Zakharov's radical cross-media translations are tremendously precious at the contemporary moment as they function as a corrective to our present media culture as it converges under the sign of the digital.

Initial publication in German: Jutz, Gabriele. "'Retrograde Remediation'. Medienübergreifende Übersetzungen in der zeitgenössischen filmbezogenen Kunst." springerin — Hefte für Gegenwartskunst XXIV/2/2018: 38–42.

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2 Levi, Cinema by Other Means.

3 Pavle Levi, "Cinema by Other Means," October 131 (Winter 2010): 51–68, here 56.

4 Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, Remediation: Understanding New Media (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 1999.

5 Levi, Cinema by Other Means, (2012), 42.

6 Dominik Landwehr, "Fictive Media Archeology. Interview with Gebhard Sengmüller," in Artists as Inventors – Inventors as Artists, eds. Dieter Daniels and Barbara U. Schmidt (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2008), 130–141, here 132.

7 Levi, "Cinema by Other Means," (2010), 64.

8 Susanne Titz, "Outside and Inside," in Banner (Dundee, Frankfurt/Main, Aachen: Dundee Contemporary Arts, Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, and Revolver – Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, 2002), 115–117, here 117.

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10 Erika Balsom, After Uniqueness. A History of Film and Video Art in Circulation (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 5.

11 Annette Gilbert, "Quickpieces. Zu den Filmmitschriften des Künstler-Archivars Vadim Zakharov," in Schreiben als Ereignis. Künste und Kulturen der Schrift, eds. Jutta Müller-Tamm et al (Paderborn: Fink, in press).

12 Balsom, After Uniqueness, 5 and 20.

13 Giovanna Fossati, From Grain to Pixel. The Archival Life of Film in Transition (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 20.

14 Henry Jenkins, Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

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essay #08

One to One-and-a-Half

On the Spectrum of Contemporary Artistic Copying Practices

By Christian Höller

The fake snuff movie effect alone is remarkable. In Kanye West's notorious music clip "Famous" (2016), as the camera eye slowly fades down through the clouds, the pixelly image resolution already suggests something nasty. When the first hints of faces appear, as if they were filmed with a cheap pre-digital video camera, you are already caught in the middle of a reality/celebrity porno which unfolds with relish. Twelve US-American stars—among them the current and a former president, pop icons like Rihanna and Taylor Swift, along with West himself and his consort Kim Kardashian—were modeled as wax dolls for the ten-minute film. Slowly it becomes clear, first with then without the music, what the clip is actually about; the figures are draped on a seemingly endless bed, like a row of sleeping apostles. Draped in the truest sense of the word—in the beginning you only see naked or half covered body parts or details like tattoos. The complete "line-up" is only revealed later on in the clip: a supper-like tableau not around a long table but in a wide bed; and not really "vivant" (the figures only move twice, more ghostly than really alive) rather "mort"—real people, frozen or mortified as copies of themselves. And in racy poses, not to mention, which seem more like poor imitations seen (or imagined) a hundred times over than "authentic" nudity.1

"Famous" can indeed be read as a self-reflexive and at once tongue-in-cheek act in the world of fame and celebrity life, where there is no return after a certain point. At the same time the film—like so many other practices in today's digital culture—embeds itself in the proliferating setting of an almost omnipresent "copy art". And this doesn't mean the mere unilinear process from A (the essentially untouchable original) to B (the "secondary", alienated, allegorizing, or otherwise contextualizing replica) anymore. Nor does this "copy culture" correspond with the intentions of earlier appropriation processes in art, which primarily took artifacts from the midst of society, the cultural mainstream, to be used for the purposes (and disposition) of a marginal, against-the-grain practice. In comparison, copy culture in the broadest sense, spanning from concept art references to replicated internet memes to diverse do-it-yourself web practices, is much more universal—and momentous. Copies from real life, as "Famous" illustrates so drastically, have long since become autonomous entities equipped with their own lives (even if, a telling dialectic incidentally, they appear dead or temporarily inanimate). And what's more: The idea of subjecting high-profile cultural heritage to a critical litmus test by alienating or recontextualizing it has been exhausted to such an extent—as the middle and marginal, high and low are long since intertwined—that a critical orientation along these coordinates hardly seems possible.

So if "real copies" are already being worked with in the heart of celebrity culture in a quite ambiguous way—and can't fame be understood as the infinite replicability of itself in a sense?—what is the situation with artistic approaches which also (out of necessity) build upon this copying principle? The tenability of authorship and property rights as an irrefutable criterion can be argued for art, and for the pop world as well to an even greater extent. But the practice, as it seems, is already far more advanced than the discourse (or conceptual reference point) in this context. And thus, critical practices, in particular, which employ the principle of copying—be it documentary-reconstructive, active-constructivist, or as a general guideline for contemporary network thinking—have been surfacing for some time now.

When a Monument Pays a Visit

Reproducing the persona of an entertainment celebrity or politician circulating in the public or media sphere, whether with digital or sculptural means, has enjoyed great popularity since longer—not least in the circles of post-internet art. In her film "Hyperlinks or It Didn't Happen" (2014) Cécile B. Evans, for instance, conjured a digital copy of the actor Philip Seymour Hoffman—shortly after his death—floating amid jellyfish and other colorful items. "I'm just a bad copy of myself, made too perfectly, too soon," says the voice of the avatar. Here the copying process clearly aims to undo a real event (the premature death of Hoffman) with artistic means or similarly to suspend the irreversibility of a real process in the medium itself.2 The politician copies in Josh Kline's video "Crying Games" (2015) also behave rather counterfactually when they ruefully beg for forgiveness. Likewise, something is suspended here in an artificially created context, albeit not what anyway or inevitably already happened rather something that cracks the door open to the literally unimaginable (or an extremely rare situation).3 The "one-and-a-half times" copy, so to say, goes so far as to correct the bad original—without countering it with a real alternative (which would then result in "two").

Politicians and real decision-makers can, however, be confronted in other ways with the implications and consequences of their actions. A form of agitational copying can come into play, for example, as practiced by the activist group Center for Political Beauty (CPB). This copying might include the actual theft and temporary re-erection of a public monument, which was the case in the project "First Fall of the European Wall/White Crosses" (2014). Some of the white crosses erected in memorial to those who died at the Berlin Wall were brought to the EU outer border in Melilla to remind us of today's victims of rigorous border regimes.4 The copying process can also take on even more constructivist and simulationist traits. When the Thuringian right-wing AfD politician Björn Höcke proclaimed in a speech that Germans are "the only people in the world who have planted a monument of shame in the heart of their capital", activists saw it as an opportunity to send a replica of the monument on tour—specifically, to Bornhagen in the immediate vicinity of Höcke's house.5 Following elaborate preparations, the CPB rented an adjacent property, built concrete reproductions of the stelae from Peter Eisenman's Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, and unveiled it to the disgust of the politician and the like-minded community on site.

The reactions to the project "Deine Stele" (Your Stelae) ranged from actual physical confrontations to an attempt to stigmatize the artists group as a "terrorist association" and even legal actions against the authors of this "terror". The latter has been unsuccessful to date as the responsible court prohibited the owner of the property from removing the stelae. Consequently, this monument copy will continue its visitation in this inhospitable habitat on the longer term—it came to stay, one could say with reference to Simone de Beauvoir's feminist classic novel. The approach to copying employed in projects like this has more than just a provocative or confrontational value (to bring deniers of certain facts in contact with "original" proof of these facts). This accounts for its actual quantifiable effect, but the greater consequences for a contemporary artistic-activist practice reside in the fact that one must no longer address the "original" or "authentic" in order to achieve this effect. An amateur representation, a self-made copy is more than enough, when not better than "the real thing". "Deine Stele" had at least one-and-a-half times the impact as prompting Höcke to visit the "real" Holocaust Memorial would have.

The Avatar of the Liaison

Achieving at least one-and-a-half times the effect of findings which have yet to receive the attention they deserve is what Forensic Architecture's practice strives for. Whereas a project like "Deine Stele" is designed to generate a desired effect by crafting a (however sophisticated) copy of a real monument, this process runs in reverse, so to speak, with Forensic Architecture. The departure point is a factual event that already took place, which cannot be easily accessed given the time that has passed—but also because of obvious cover-ups and secrecy. A precise act of reconstruction is performed, to the extent the available evidence and employed reconstruction media permit, in an attempt to approximate the "original" event as accurately as possible. The meticulous simulation process ultimately aims to uncover a (most plausible and consistent) version of a real incident—something that has been kept under lock and key due to political or intelligence intrigues.

"77sqm_9:26min", the title of one of these projects, takes the space-time coordinates of the crime scene as the starting point for a rigorous simulation of an obscured sequence of events. The murder of the young operator of an internet café, Halit Yozgat, in Kassel on April 6, 2006 went down in the annals as the ninth of ten homicides by the so-called National Socialist Underground (NSU). To this day what happened on that afternoon in the internet shop has not been adequately explained—also because of the vague testimony by intelligence officer Andreas Temme, who was present either in the café or in the immediate vicinity at the time of the murder. There is even a video in which Temme re-enacts his whereabouts6—a document among many others in connection with the murder which were "leaked" in 2015 and gave rise to much speculation. When this transpired the activist alliance "Unraveling the NSU Complex" had already been founded. In the meanwhile it has attempted to shed light on the still unclarified course of events through a number of actions and initiatives and, above all, expose the ensnarement between the NSU and the German State Office for the Protection of the Constitution.7 One of these initiatives was to entrust the interdisciplinary group Forensic Architecture with an original as possible simulation of the crime in 2016, ten years after the actual events.

Preliminary work for "77sqm_9:26min" was presented in Berlin at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in 2017 and then the film at the Neuen Neuen Galerie at documenta 14 as part of a comprehensive installation (under the overarching project name "The Society of Friends of Halit").8 The square meters refer to the surface area of the internet café, the time to the duration of the events—the latter was reconstructed from the leaked documents, such as statements by persons on site and diverse log-in data. In the style of a digitally animated educational film—including a computer simulation model to concisely reproduce the distribution of sound and smell—"77sqm_9:26min" analyzes three possible scenarios: After assessing and comparing all available evidence, it concludes that the liaison Temme, contrary to his own testimony, must have been at the crime scene at the time of the murder. Even though a parliamentary investigation committee of the State of Hesse rebutted these claims upon presentation of the report by Forensic Architecture in August 2017, this scenario remains legit—also because of new evidence that came into play—and more probable than everything included thus far in the officially recognized findings.9

The applied method uses a reconstruction to access an "original", whose authentic substance is no longer retrievable one-to-one, via sophisticated simulation processes. Over the course of this procedure, the copy and its ever-growing, one could say asymptotic refinements successively shift into the place of the original event—or, in other words, it becomes that which remains accessible with documentary or artistic means. The supplement, even though it is not (yet) seen as such by law, has one-and-a-half times the (explosive) power of the clumsily camouflaged "original". Which, to reiterate it once again, no longer exists in a genuine, openly accessible form.

Seamless Transitions

In a sense, such lost "originals" always represent original fictions, which nevertheless have a real, sometimes disputable—or to be disputed—core. Especially in a "retroactive" actualization, as with Forensic Architecture, visualizing this core relies highly on "constructivist" copying methods. These methods are also central to an array of works that create, often with digital means, versions of matters inaccessible to the public (or only with great difficulty), of bygone events, or of places that exist but are invisible to the naked eye. To speak of copies here might overstretch the term—particularly as the corresponding "originals" are often subject to a regime of invisibility or making invisible. The key point is that the applied processes blur the apparently immutable, underlying poles: real–fictional, analog–digital, original–copied. Or more fundamental: While the copy created out of a tactical (or political) need assumes the place of the original, this outdated binary distinction itself becomes obsolete.

For example, James Bridle "visualizes" British deportation centers in his work "Seamless Transitions" (2015).10 Animated architectural models depict places and classified institutional areas which are usually hidden from the public eye. The seamlessness in the title refers to the smooth sequence of events characteristic of the (usually invisible) processes of detention and deportation from the authorities' perspective as well as the transition between the inaccessible original and the animated, artificially created copy enabled by the artwork. Whereby the replica "activates" the respective site in the first place and, if one likes, "enacts" it for a critical awareness.

The works of Jon Rafman are exemplary demonstrations that this enactment, in the context of an ever-seamless digital culture, is more than just a transition from A to B, from original to copy or vice versa. "Sticky Drama" (2015), for instance, presents a (real) cosplay event—a re-enacted version of a computer game in elaborate costumes—in all its details and drasticness (including super slow motion shots).11 Or "Erysichthon" (2015), which, like many of Rafman's other films, collages found items from the deep web into short didactic pieces about the nature of the visual in the age of a now impossible (and placeless) differentiation between original and copy.12 "If you look at these images enough, you begin feeling like you composed them," a voice says at one point, and the recurring motive is the act of devouring oneself—the image principle that irreversibly subverts exactly those binary orders we are talking about here. A shiny metallic cube is absorbed by a black viscous blob, a snake begins to eat its own tail, a mobile phone displays animated figures feasting on other figures. The combination of all of these "items" fished out of the web, which were placed online by active users at some point for whatever reason or mood, does not simply result in a vexatious game of void and hyper-presence ("the void also attracts you," says a beguiling voice off screen). Rather, the unfathomable "originals" and the appropriated yet by no means just secondary "copies" become engaged in a sort of skewing process, oscillating back and forth without a firm anchor, once again highlighting the network character of today's digital images.

But in no case does this insight make contemporary political interests (such as those legitimately pursued by the CPB or Forensic Architecture) superfluous. On the contrary: It just hoists the ordering scheme, which is still used today to better grasp the primary and secondary, the authentic and derivative, to a fundamentally different plateau. A plateau where copying sometimes unfurls one-and-a-half times the effect than originals.

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1 Kanye West, "Famous," YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7FCgw_GlWc (accessed on April 12, 2018).

2 Cf. Daniel Rourke, "'Please don't call me uncanny': Cécile B. Evans at Seventeen Gallery," Rhizome (Dec. 4, 2014), http://rhizome.org/editorial/2014/dec/4/please-dont-call-me-uncanny-hyperlinks-seventeen-g/ (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018).

3 Cf. my text on countercontrafactual parallel worlds: Christian Höller, "Kontrafaktische Parallelwelt," springerin 1 (2017): 6–7.

4 Cf. Center for Political Beauty, "First Fall of the European Wall," http://www.politicalbeauty.com/wall.html (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018).

5 Cf. Center for Political Beauty, "Holocaust-Mahnmal Bornhagen," https://politicalbeauty.de/mahnmal.html (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018).

6 "Tatortbegehung Andreas Temme zum 'NSU Mord' in Kassel," YouTube,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJMd3olste0 (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018).

7 See "Unraveling the NSU Complex," http://www.nsu-tribunal.de/en/ (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018).

8 Forensic Architecture, "77sqm_9:26min," http://www.forensic-architecture.org/case/77sqm_926min/ (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018).

9 Cf. Robert Mackey & Robert Trafford, "A German Intelligence Agent Was at the Scene of a Neo-Nazi Murder. He Can't Explain Why," The Intercept (Oct. 18, 2017), https://theintercept.com/2017/10/18/germany-neo-nazi-murder-trial-forensic-architecture/ (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018).

10 See James Bridle, "Seamless Transitions," http://jamesbridle.com/works/seamless-transitions (accessed Apr. 12, 2018); cf. Franz Thalmair, "Offensichtlich – hinter den Kulissen. Zur (nicht nur künstlerischen) Praxis von James Bridle," springerin 4 (2015): 8–9.

11 Jon Rafman and Daniel Lopatin, "Sticky Drama – Music Video," vimeo, https://vimeo.com/144165513 (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018).

12 Jon Rafman, "Erysichthon," vimeo, https://vimeo.com/164574362 (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018); cf. Vera Tollmann about Jon Rafman in: Lars Henrik Gass, Christian Höller, and Jessica Manstetten (eds.), after youtube. Gespräche, Portraits, Texte zum Musikvideo nach dem Internet (Cologne: Strzelecki Books, 2018).

essay #07

Giving and Taking

Renegotiating Literary Citation Culture

By Annette Gilbert

According to the Oxford Dictionary, a “citation” has three different meanings: “1. A quotation from or reference to a book, paper, or author, especially in a scholarly work. 2. A mention of a praiseworthy act in an official report […]. 3. A summons to appear in court.”[1] The latter definition has taken on a surprising significance: There is a growing number of cases in which authors are actually being cited to appear in court for their citations, for quoting from a foreign source, and being admonished in public—and not just in the strictly regulated scientific or journalistic fields but also in the literary realm, where freer rules apply to the practice of citation. To date, literature had neither a codification nor a systematic burden of proof for quotes.

But things are changing. The citation, the unreferenced citation, in particular—a customary and widespread aesthetic strategy up to a few decades ago, especially in postmodern narratives—has almost become the epitome of ill repute in the meanwhile. Public disputes evidence that we find ourselves in the midst of a process of renegotiating giving and taking in literature and the formation of a new citation ethos. The trigger in all of the three “court cases” from the year 2010, which will be introduced here, was not the act of citing itself but the lack of disclosure: The criticized citations were neither identified as such nor were their sources documented. Is there now an obligation to provide sources in literature as well? When someone quotes a citation must the source also be quoted along with it?

Artistic Freedom

In 2010 David Shields published his manifesto “Reality Hunger”, which was conceived as an “ars poetica for a burgeoning group of interrelated (but unconnected) artists in a multitude of forms and media […] who are breaking larger and larger chunks of ‘reality’ into their work.”[2] The motto by Picasso that prefixes the book already makes clear: “Art is theft.” Accordingly, Shields’ manifesto consists of 618 apercus that make no secret of the fact they are largely taken from the works of others and thereby propagate plagiarism and appropriation as a contemporary aesthetic strategy.

Random House found it too daring and urged Shields to include an appendix listing all of his sources. Shields fulfilled this demand, however he preceded the appendix with a statement condemning it as an illegitimate intervention into his artistic freedom which contradicts the intention: He consciously omitted the references “to regain a freedom that writers from Montaigne to Burroughs took for granted and that we have lost.” (p. 207) Unsettling the reader by not knowing “whose words you’ve just read is not a bug but a feature.” (ibid.) In interviews Shields was even clearer, voicing that the burden of proof for the use of intellectual property, as known in the sciences, has no place in literature: “The citation of sources belongs to the realms of journalism and scholarship, not art. Citation domesticates the work, flattens it, denudes it, robs it of its excitement, risk, danger.”[3] To salvage his artistic approach, he subverted the usual standards of citation by leaving the extent of the quote open, not identifying modifications, and providing imprecise bibliographical information, explaining that there were a number of sources he “couldn’t find or forgot along the way.” (p. 207) Furthermore, he asked the readers to ignore the appendix when not totally remove it from the book. He even added helpful cutting lines with a scissors symbol.

Moral Obligations

Whereas the publishing house demanded the references from Shields, in the case of Michel Houellebecq’s novel “The Map and the Territory” it was the public who denounced the author’s citing practice. Once again, it is about unreferenced citations. In the author’s defense, the publisher contended that the incriminating passages from Wikipedia were extremely short and edited quotations. Apart from that, Wikipedia itself also would not provide any authors’ names for the texts. This argument revealed a misunderstanding: With its innovative production method and its principle of collective authorship, Wikipedia abandons established copyright law, but through its usage of the Creative Commons License (CC BY-SA) it attempts to institutionalize more contemporary copyright provisions. Hence, Wikipedia texts are nowhere near a common good. They, too, are subject to terms of use, albeit not legally codified rather ethically justified and developed in democratic decision-making processes: Free usage is only permitted with proper identification of the quote and naming the source including URL and the version date.

After numerous turbulences—while Houellebecq’s novel was placed on the internet for free by disgruntled activists—and drawn-out negotiations with Wikipedia, the publishing house and the author settled on a note of acknowledgment, which can be found on the last page of the book since the paperback edition, ending with the line:

I also thank Wikipedia (http://fr.wikipedia.org) and its contributors, whose entries I have occasionally used as a source of inspiration, notably those concerning the housefly, the town of Beauvais, and Frédéric Nihous.[4]

The confession of a guilty sinner sounds different, not to mention the fact that the citations in the text are still not marked and the exact URLs still missing. Nevertheless, the president of Wikipedia France, Adrienne Alix, was satisfied, for the acknowledgment was halfway an admission that “Wikipedia authors are not ‘nothing’ and that their work and their contributions must be recognized”.[5]

Here, an argument surfaces in the discussion that seriously counters artistic freedom: It is also about recognizing the efforts of those who made a contribution to one’s own work to a certain extent. Insofar, the acknowledgment that Houellebecq chose as an apology also proves to be an adequate place as it reveals precisely the moral obligation that characterizes the giving and taking in literature and from which a real obligation to pay dues can be derived. The transparency attained with the acknowledgment implies a recognition of this obligation and reveals “the limits to the sovereignty available to the author for his/her work (as property)”,[6] so that Wikipedia can generously overlook that the half-hearted formulation Houellebecq eventually chose raises doubts about the sincerity of his gratefulness.

Double Standards

In the case of Helene Hegemann’s debut novel “Axolotl Roadkill” (2010) it is also the paratexts which document the process of renegotiating literary citation practice. Celebrated as an authentic voice of the noughties generation, Hegemann was literally cited in front of the court when it was discovered that she let the texts of others flow into her novel. Like Shields, she also finds her approach “totally legitimate”[7] as it “follows the aesthetic principle of intertextuality”.[8]

Attentive readers didn’t need quotation marks as a warning: The novel is full of references to the predefined nature of language—for instance, when a “or whatever you call it” or a “I think that’s what they call it” is squeezed in and breaks the illusion of authentic speech. Also the foreign aspect of one’s own thinking and speaking is frequently stated: “because there are so many thoughts that you can’t distinguish your own from other people’s” and “[t]hey’ve imbued me with a language that is not my own.” The novel celebrates the reproducing, citational character and uncertain origin of one’s own language, which Hegemann also mentions in her press statement with a touch of defiance: “Absolutely nothing comes from me, even I am not from me (this line is stolen from Sophie Rois, by the way)”.[9]

The recourse to foreign text material per se is not reprehensible. The ideologeme of intertextual theory that we only speak in citations and that there is no private ownership in language and literature is largely accepted; the foreign in the own is deemed an ineluctable conditio moderna.[10] What discredited Hegemann in the eyes of the public was the missing reference to the sources, which was interpreted as misleading her readers, a lack of respect toward the cited authors, and a breach of fairness. One part in her novel caused particular outrage and clearly articulates this nonchalant treatment of sources: When the main character Mifti asks her brother whether he made up the saying “Berlin is here to mix everything with everything”, he replies: “I steal from anywhere that resonates with inspiration or fuels my imagination […] it’s not where I take things from – it’s where I take them to.” The fact that this attitude is one and the same as the author’s is illustrated in Hegemann’s nearly word-for-word repetition in her defense in front of the press, where she put the same words in her mouth when she argued:

I come from a field where writing a novel is more like being a director, taking things wherever one finds inspiration. […] And it totally doesn’t matter to me at all where people take the elements for all their experiments from, the main thing is where they take them to.[11]

The irreverence toward the sources is not only aptly described with the words “totally doesn’t matter” but also practiced as this passage also consists of unmarked quotes from Jim Jarmusch and Jean-Luc Godard. In this light, it is not exactly convincing when Hegemann praises the blogger Airen—from whom she “downright copied an entire page without making many changes”—as a “great writer” whom she “tries to communicate with a bit through the book”.[12] This invitation to communicate is anyhow poisoned when the dialogue between Mifti and her brother continues: When Mifti asks again, “So you didn’t make it up?” he answers “No, it’s from some blogger.” The namelessness which the cited blogger is now damned to robs him of every chance of recognition and attaining symbolic capital, and once again reflects the lack of fairness. One is tempted to transfer the novel character’s disregard for the unknown blogger to Hegemann’s relationship with the blogger Airen, for he remained nameless in the first edition as well. His name only appears in the “Thanks to:” of later German editions.

Between the lines, this acknowledgment says as much as that by Houellebecq. It reveals that it does “matter” to Hegemann where the texts she used originate—a “particular thanks” indeed goes to Kathy Acker, the Queen of Punk and grandmaster of collage and plagiarism, which likely serves less as a source reference but as a token of her own gain in authority. And that’s not all. While “some blogger” like Airen vanishes into anonymity and Acker should enhance the novel’s reputation with her symbolic capital, David Foster Wallace’s contribution is explicitly honored, not only by listing his name under the corresponding quote in the first German edition but also by providing the source prominently in the imprint in the prelims of the book. The copyright symbol tells us that the publishers of the German original, the Ullstein Verlag, acquired the rights to print and potentially paid for them. David Foster Wallace is thus awarded a form of recognition that transcends mere acknowledgment. The copyright symbol illustrates that moral obligations can also be legally codified and economically founded in the realm of the fine arts.

The differentiation applied to the use of foreign texts in “Axolotl Roadkill” undermines Hegemann’s defense strategy. At the same time, it reflects power structures. Because, as in the case of Houellebecq, one gets the impression that the standards for dealing with the intellectual property of others—especially those of weaker author positions, such as the Wikipedia authors collective and bloggers—can be annulled with the greatest of ease. It can be presumed here that the sharing culture of the Generation Internet is being misunderstood. It fights for the free use of resources but is still rooted in rules of respect and recognition, which inherently include the imperatives of fairness and reciprocity when dealing with sources.

As a result of the public debates around these novels, it becomes apparent, according to the general sense of rights and morality, that the use of foreign text sources should also be transparent in literary works and at least be compensated with clear crediting and reference to their origins. While Hegemann initially called her method “totally legitimate”, she later acknowledged that “the people’s entitlement to be named in the book is legitimate”, that indicating the source of the citations “is right for ethical reasons”,[13] even though she still finds this a problem aesthetically. A year later in 2011, the German paperback edition was accompanied with an appendix including an almost exemplary list of references.

It is followed by a slightly modified “thanks to:” and a note about the “aesthetic principle of intertextuality” which the novel is built upon. With this conclusion the publishers aim to protect themselves against any subsequent discoveries of unreferenced citations and address the realm of the unconscious in literature. In the end, not all citations are conscious or intentional decisions. Moreover, the publishers use this approach to respond to the new detectability of smaller and smaller traces of elements of a text in another text. As quick as it is to copy and paste something in the digital age, a citation can be traced back equally so effortlessly, whereby such research of sources, when taken to the extreme, can lead to dubious results, as documented by Stéphanie Vilayphiou in “La Carte ou le Territoire” (2013) and John Cayley and Daniel C. Howe in “How It Is in Common Tongues” (2012).

Excesses of Detectability

The projects trace all of the words used in the eponymous novels by Michel Houellebecq and Samuel Beckett back to pre-existing texts. To this end, they systematically trawled through the inventory of Google Books and other internet sources for sentence fragments from the novels and presented them as a patchwork of thousands of quotes.[14] Vilayphiou connects snippets of the findings together and marks the (purportedly) cited fragments in them. If you follow the yellow threads, you read Houellebecq’s novel; click on the snippet and you arrive at the “source text” that Houellebecq supposedly took his words from. Cayley and Howe, on the other hand, permeate the novel text with footnotes, each citing a URL to the location of the corresponding text. In brackets there is a note about how often the passage can be found on the internet. With passages like “say it as I hear it” it can quickly number in the millions (2,620,000 results).

The arbitrariness of this form of evidence, which has less to do with proof and the interpretation of a literary mesh of relationships than the trivial display of a superficial coincidence of certain word sequences, is quite obvious. It produces equally as absurd results as amateur philologist and anti-Semite Paul Albrecht’s twelve-volume, self-financed and published curious indictment “Leszing’s Plagiate” (Lessing’s Plagiarism) from 1888 in which he tries to prove, in the framework of a “post-mortem criminal trial” on nearly 2500 pages, that “all of [Gotthold Ephraim] Lessing’s work was stolen from A to Z” and that “own thoughts don’t even come up in Lessing, everything we like about him is a product of foreign minds.”[15]

Nevertheless, the citation of all of these sources in potentialis practiced here does have a persuasive power, for the wording is veritably the same. It is questionable, however, what is actually achieved with this purely positivist “source research”. First off, it only corroborates the principal iterability of language and literature. In their artistic projects both Vilayphiou as well as Cayley and Howe demonstrate the easy detectability of sources as the flip-side to the pervasive copy-and-paste practice, whose undesired side effects are just now starting to be discussed. However, there might reside an opportunity precisely within this omnipresent availability and the increasingly observed excessiveness of this form of “detection”, as it ultimately fosters a more conscious, transparent, and fair approach to dealing with sources.

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[1] Oxford University Press, Oxford Dictionaries, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/citation (accessed on Feb. 23, 2018).

[2] David Shields, Reality Hunger. A Manifesto (New York: Penguin Random House, 2011), No. 1, 9 [all following page numbers refer to this edition.].

[3] Sonya Chung, “The Millions Interview: David Shields,” The Millions (Feb. 11, 2010), http://www.themillions.com/2010/02/the-millions-interview-david-shields-part-two.html (accessed on Feb. 23, 2018).

[4] Michel Houellebecq, The Map and The Territory, trans. Gavin Bowd (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 717.

[5] Original press text no longer available online. Translated for this publication.

[6] Natalie Binczek et al., “Eine delikate Materie. Einleitende Bemerkungen,” in Dank sagen. Politik, Semantik und Poetik der Verbindlichkeit, eds. Natalie Binczek et al. (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2013), 7–17, here 11.

[7] Press statement by Helene Hegemann: “‘Axolotl Roadkill’: Helene Hegemann und Ullstein Verlegerin Dr. Siv Bublitz antworten auf Plagiatsvorwurf,” BuchMarkt (Feb. 7, 2010), http://www.buchmarkt.de/archiv/axolotl-roadkill-helene-hegemann-und-ullstein-verlegerin-dr-siv-bublitz-antworten-auf-plagiatsvorwurf (accessed on Feb. 23, 2018). Translated for this publication.

[8] Helene Hegemann, Axolotl Roadkill, trans. Katy Derbyshire (London: Corsair, 2012), e-book [all following quotations from the novel refer to this edition].

[9] Press statement.

[10] Cf. Philipp Theisohn, Plagiat. Eine unoriginelle Literaturgeschichte (Stuttgart: Kröner, 2009), 469.

[11] Press statement.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Both quotes from: Cosima Lutz, “Ich beraube schonungslos meine Freunde und mich selbst.” (Interview with Helene Hegemann), Die Welt (Feb. 9, 2010), https://www.welt.de/welt_print/kultur/article6312145/Ich-beraube-schonungslos-meine-Freunde-und-mich-selbst.html (accessed on Feb. 23, 2018). Translated for this publication.

[14] Cf. “Blind Carbon Copy: La Carte Ou Le Territoire,” http://bcc.stdin.fr/LaCarteOuLeTerritoire and “How It Is in Common Tongues,” http://thereadersproject.org/docspdfs/hiiict.pdf (accessed on Feb. 23, 2018).

[15] All quotes from: Paul Albrecht, Leszing’s Plagiate, vol. 1 (Hamburg: self-published, 1888), 4, 73, and 3. Translated for this publication.

essay #06

Copying as Performative Research

Toward an Artistic Working Model

By Franz Thalmair

Why original and copy yet again? Why still?

Copying has attained a new diversity. In the context of digital technologies, which facilitate identical reproductions of any data, the practice of copying is omnipresent yet often invisible. It has evolved into a multifarious but controversial cultural technique, which surfaces in public discourses about copyright and plagiarism or unauthorized fakes of patented products. At the root of these debates is the prevailing negative understanding of the copy in opposition to the positively connoted original. From the perspective of contemporary artistic production and in contrast to discussions often conducted from a commercial standpoint, the original no longer serves as the moral basis for the evaluation of the copy, rather the focus has shifted to the interplay between the original and the copy—a potential that was already recognized in art history. With a view to the generative and mimetic processes that constitute this relationship, not only are value systems derived from the establishment of bourgeois ownership privileges in the nineteenth century being questioned anew today; there is also debate about the (digital) control mechanisms that lead to the increasing disappearance of the practice of copying from the realm of the visible.

Various artistic movements explored original and copy throughout the twentieth century. In particular, the pre-war avant-garde and later neo-avant-gardist movements employed artistic processes such as collage and readymades to create new artifacts from found materials. With such forms of appropriation artists explicitly challenged and nuanced traditional categories like originality, authorship, or intellectual property. The computer’s capability to duplicate data without loss, however, antiquates these historical methods of dealing with original and copy for current practices. The ubiquity of various copying techniques confirms that this phenomenon has now established itself both as an artistic and everyday process. But as its mechanisms—largely supported by readymade digital technologies—frequently remain hidden and increasingly immaterialize, especially the functionalities and logics of copying are up for discussion. Artistic practices that utilize the same copying methods they research can be particularly effective for such an investigation into the interplay between original and copy.

The previously merited distinction between original and copy is no longer of importance in the twenty-first century. The former opposites have combined into a new entity. They are not conceived as temporally or hierarchically consecutive but as parallel and equal. In order to examine this circumstance with methods from the humanities, Gisela Fehrmann and other authors proposed viewing the relationship between original and copy as a “process of transcription”, which reveals the relationality of these categories: “The ‘characteristic relational logic’ of processes of transcription consists in the fact that […] the reference object precedes the transcription as a ‘pre-text’, but its ‘status as a script’ is only conferred by this process.”[1] Such a thought loop can also be applied to the act of citation: This special form of textual copy refers to a precedent, another text, yet the source only attains the status as original through the selection and reference process.

Looking at “practices of the secondary”, as the author team around Fehrmann poignantly phrased, facilitates, on the one hand, an investigation of the effects these phenomena of appropriation have on the content, formal, and material conditions of current artistic production. On the other, it allows one to simultaneously practice this act of copying based on repetition and to investigate it within this practice itself.

The aim of artistic explorations of original and copy is widely to construct a space of resonance which is not characterized by bipolarity rather where the permanent oscillation between the poles constitutes a self-reflexive practice.[2] For only a space where the continuous flux and reflux between original and copy intrinsically represents the unity of the two elements bears the potential to generate new forms of knowledge and artistic practice.

Repetition and Repeatability

The basis for these forms of self-reflection are ideas about the reality-forming dimension of language that philosopher John L. Austin formulated in the early 1960s in his book “How to Do Things With Words”.[3] In contrast to most words which simply describe the world, linguistic expressions that Austin called “performative utterances” create reality. They perform an action. Austin provides the word “yes” in marriages as an example and links the success of such a speech act with its repeatability. That means a “yes” articulated by the couple performs the act of marriage when the word is incorporated in a ritualized and generally agreed upon form, such as the wedding ceremony. Only then does “yes” create reality.

That speech acts do not describe but create reality can be applied to the inextricable relationship between original and copy. A key factor is the repeatability of linguistic expressions, the main aspect of performativity, which—in keeping with Austin—was further developed by Jacques Derrida with the term “iterability”[4] and later elaborated by Judith Butler[5] in the sense of a political act. Repeatability is not only decisive for the success of speech acts—moreover, its iterative and repetitive character forms the causal basis of the phenomenon of copying. In order to have a reality-forming effect, linguistic expressions need to happen within specific conventions. Analogously, art, too, must act within a framework based on conventions in order to be perceived as such. Drawing upon these traditional and repetition-based principles, Dorothea von Hantelmann establishes “how every artwork, not in spite of but by virtue of its integration in certain conventions, ‘acts’” and “how these conventions are co-produced by any artwork—independent of its respective content”.[6] Hence, the rules established in the art field in the past continue to have an effect in the present of the respective current artistic work and elicit effects both in the here and now of the artistic activity itself as well as in the conditions of the art field which led to this activity. An analogy to the aforementioned “processes of transcription”, where the original is only constituted as such when the copy refers to it, becomes quite evident.

Building on Anke Haarmann’s thoughts about the methodology of artistic research, it may be concluded that these forms of performative research facilitate two things above and beyond the aesthetic experience: first, the opportunity to reflect upon “the conditions of one’s own position in the medium of artistic practice”; and second, “to investigate”—and, not least, express—“something with the specific means of art in the process of artistic knowledge production”.[7] Consequently, certain themes and matters are not viewed exclusively from a supposed outsider position, rather the performative art practice is, at the same time, active within the respective field that is the subject of analysis. Such an artistic working method not only pushes dichotomous dualities like original and copy to their limits—it is a methodological approach whose self-reflexive and performative character allows it to delve into social discourse because it was derived directly from it.

Post-Media Condition, Post-Digital Tendencies

In contrast to pre-digital artistic tendencies, like the readymade, pop, conceptual, or appropriation art, which tried to dissolve the boundaries between original and copy, the copy has become constitutive to contemporary art production. In the “post-digital”[8] age the interplay between original and copy has evolved into an overarching phenomenon. Also outside of digital contexts it has become inscribed into artistic production, reception, and distribution processes and—whether forced consciously or unconsciously by the artists—participates in their shaping.

An example of a performative research in which the interplay between original and copy under the described conditions is not only reflected upon but also generated from this in-between is provided by the Brit Mark Leckey with “The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things” (2013): Conceived by Leckey as a touring exhibition of the Hayward Gallery in London, works by colleagues such as Martin Creed, Jonathan Monk, Louise Bourgeois, or Ed Atkins are juxtaposed with numerous pieces of art history, everyday culture, and artifacts of other sorts. In specially designed displays the artist-curator presented objects like a mummified cat, a singing gargoyle, a giant phallus from the film “A Clockwork Orange”, and a cyberman helmet. All of these objects originated from a collection of images that Leckey had compiled over the years while randomly browsing the internet and saved to his hard drive. He activated this incidental collection for “The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things” and triggered a performative cycle by presenting the depicted objects in the exhibition. The digital data materialized in the show and aggregated[9] into clusters, similar to how the files were stored in folders on Leckey’s computer. The three-dimensional things took a detour as two-dimensional images in virtual space before reappearing in a three-dimensional form once again as items in an exhibition. The objects, which he collected as digital depictions of real objects, exist today as exhibition views and are likely again circulating in the social networks where the artist once found them.

Leckey went a step further when he transformed “The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things” into an installation called “UniAddDumThs” (2015) for a subsequent exhibition series. At Kunsthalle Basel, among other places, he presented select things from the already selected collections of things as 3D prints, photographic or otherwise reproductions. Elena Filipovic, director of the exhibition house, wrote about the project: “Having thrown open the floodgates of his hard drive and watched as digital bits and bytes summoned forth actual atoms and matter, materializing in a slew of undeniably real things, Leckey welcomed, organized, and installed them again and again during the exhibition tour of ‘The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things’. Yet I can’t help suspecting that he was most fulfilled when the show was still yet to be made, when he was busy collecting all those jpegs and mpegs that constituted the potential contents of the show.”[10] Here Filipovic addresses precisely this in-between in which self-reflection couples with performativity into a form of research which is only active while doing it.

The processes researched and practiced by Leckey in “The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things” and “UniAddDumThs” are informed by the digital, yet they do not have to manifest in a digital form necessarily. The point of this performative research—which Filipovic referred to as an “artwork-as-ersatz-exhibition”—is to remain in this fluctuation between the apparent immateriality of digital technologies and their material manifestations. Leckey links this poignantly with the reciprocity between original and copy.

While Walter Benjamin stated in the early twentieth century, “To an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility”,[11] twenty-first-century explorations of original and copy propel this thesis. The act of copying is no longer viewed from the perspective of the original, as it was in Benjamin’s time. And the copy is not conceived as a nemesis of the original either. Here the focus is on artworks fundamentally oriented upon re-installability, re-performability, serializability, versionability, and photographability—or even “jpeg-ability”.[12]

The transition from technical to electronic and digital media and the corresponding changes in our experience have regularly been the subject of media science debates in the past years. However, they were frequently addressed from a one-sided technological viewpoint, thereby breaking the connection with the fine arts. This is owed not least to so-called media art itself, which has distanced itself from traditional fine art formats since the 1980s with its special institutions, festivals, and exhibitions. Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook see the period “when the term new in new media art was most widely accepted and used” in the years between 2000 and 2006: “After the hype of those years, from 2006 until today, understandings of new media art in relation to contemporary art have significantly changed, and the use of the term new has become outmoded.”[13]

In the 2005 exhibition “The Post-Media Condition” at the Neue Galerie Graz, Peter Weibel, with reference to Rosalind Krauss,[14] still dealt with the question “whether the new media’s influence and the effect on the old media […] weren’t presently more important and successful than the pieces of the new media themselves”.[15] Today, the answer is clear. Artistic practices like Mark Leckey’s not only convey copying methods, more generally, they also help retrace the tracks left in contemporary fine arts by artistic forms of expressions previously distinguished with the attribute “new”. As opposed to Lev Manovich’s juxtaposition of “Duchamp-land” and “Turing-land”,[16] two terms that embody the dichotomy between traditional fine arts and media art, the oscillation between analog and digital, between image and object, between internet and exhibition space dissolves precisely this distinction. Employing the multifaceted processes that reside between original and copy, in “The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things” and “UniAddDumThs” Leckey not only investigates the changes in appropriation strategies in a post-digital context, but also the effects that this phenomenon has on the fine arts. Ultimately, the focus becomes how the structural requirements, the manifestations, and the perceptions of “Duchamp-land” are transformed by a “Turing-land” that is increasingly in a state of dissolution—how our medial realities are changing.

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[1] Cf. Gisela Fehrmann et al., “Original Copy—Secondary Practices,” in Media, Culture, and Mediality: New Insights into the Current State of Research, eds. Ludwig Jäger, Erika Linz, and Irmela Schneider (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2010), 77–85, here 79.

[2] Such an approach is employed, e.g., in the artistic-scientific research project “originalcopy—Post-Digital Strategies of Appropriation” (University of Applied Arts Vienna). See: http://www.ocopy.net

[3] Cf. John L. Austin, How To Do Things With Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955, ed. James O. Urmson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

[4] Cf. Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” in Limited Inc (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988[1972]), 1–25.

[5] Cf. Judith Butler, ‘Excitable Speech’ A Politic of the Performative (New York: Routledge, 1997).

[6] Dorothea von Hantelmann, How to Do Things with Art. The Meaning of Art’s Performativity, trans. Jeremy Gaines and Michael Turnbull (Dijon: les presses du réel, 2010).

[7] Anke Haarmann, “Gibt es eine Methodologie künstlerischer Forschung?” in Wieviel Wissenschaft bekommt der Kunst? Symposium of the Science and Art working group of the Austrian Research Association, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, November 4–5, 2011.

[8] Cf. Kim Cascone, “The Aesthetics of Failure: ‘Post-Digital’ Tendencies in Contemporary Computer Music,” Computer Music Journal 24, 4 (2000): 12–18.

[9] Cf. David Joselit, “Über Aggregatoren,” in Kunstgeschichtlichkeit. Historizität und Anachronie in der Gegenwartskunst, ed. Eva Kernbauer (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015), 115–129.

[10] Elena Filipovic, “Mark Leckey. UniAddDumThs,” in The Artist As Curator. An Anthology (London: Koenig Books / Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2017), 384.

[11] Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969[1935]), 6.

[12] Hanno Rauterberg, “Heiß auf Matisse,” Die Zeit 17 (Apr. 20, 2006), 20. Translated for this publication.

[13] Beryl Graham et al, Rethinking Curating. Art after New Media (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010), 21.

[14] Cf. Rosalind E. Krauss, A Voyage on the North Sea. Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999).

[15] Peter Weibel et al., “The post-medial condition,” Artecontexto 6 (2005): 12.

[16] Lev Manovich, “The Death of Computer Art,” Rhizome (Oct. 22, 1996), http://rhizome.org/community/41703 (accessed on Apr. 1, 2018).

essay #05

How Electrons Remember

By Laura U. Marks

In this essay I will argue that electronic images are the index, if not of an original object, then at least of a physical process. Without sounding too anthropomorphic, I want to suggest that electrons remember. There are two problems to be addressed. First, what is the material basis of electronic imaging? Second, is this material basis significantly different for analog and digital electronic imaging? I invite the reader to assume a subatomic empathy as we look at the life of the electrons in electronic imaging.

Electrons exemplify what Manuel De Landa calls nonorganic life. De Landa argues that supposedly inert matter, from crystals to the rocks and sand in a river bed, exhibits self-organizing behavior and even acquires experience, which entitle it to be considered nonorganic life.[1] In effect, De Landa is arguing not that rocks are like humans so much as that humans are like rocks. Yet the reverse is implicit: he effectively rearticulates life as something that is not the sole property of organic creatures. The same nonorganic life exists at the level of subatomic particles. The memory that I attribute to electrons does not have to do with will or self-consciousness, but with an emergent self-organizing principle. Like De Landa, physicist David Bohm argued that the distinction between organic life and nonorganic matter is arbitrary. He gives the example of a tree: it grows from a seed, whose DNA molecule organizes matter into a tree; but Bohm says it doesn’t make sense to say, for example, a CO2 molecule is inorganic until it becomes part of the tree, then it’s organic.[2] Bohm’s example underscores an argument that all elements are part of a (nonorganically) living whole. For the electron, the living whole in which it partakes is the wave forms that unify all matter.

It is common for critics of digital media to note that in digital media the indexical link between image and represented object is irrevocably severed. In photography, film, and analog video it is possible to trace a physical path from the object represented, to the light that reflects off it, to the photographic emulsion or cathode ray tube that the light hits, to the resulting image. In digital imaging this path is not retraceable, for an additional or alternative step is added; namely, converting the image into data that can then be manipulated, and thereby breaking the link between image and physical referent. In the digital image, it is not possible to track where and when particular interventions in the image were made. After an image is digitized, any iteration of the image may be altered, and there is no “generational” difference to alert us to the stage at which the change was made. For many this qualitative change occasions fear for the status of the image as real. Practically, as a result of the potential digital alteration of any electronic image, video and photography can no longer serve as indexical evidence, for example in the courtroom. Theoretically, the semiotic foundation of photographic images in the real is thought to be destroyed in digital media.

These concerns are accurate, though it is exaggerating to see the advent of digital media as a watershed between truthful and constructed imagemaking, as historians show that these media have been tinkered with since their inceptions. What I question in the current rhetoric about the loss of indexicality in the digital image is that it assumes a concurrent loss of materiality of the image. As a result it is assumed that digital images are fundamentally immaterial, and that for example to enter cyberspace or to use VR is to enter a realm of pure ideas and leave the “meat” of the material body behind. Digital and other electronic images are constituted by material processes no less than photography, film, and analog video are.

When we look at the physical process whereby electronic images are constituted and transmitted, we find that it is possible to retrace the path traversed by the image. Electronic imaging is indexical in the broadest sense, in that the medium bears the physical mark of the object whose image it transmits. This can be argued if I can convince the reader not only that electrons exist (i.e. are not reducible to waves or to probabilities), but that because of particle-wave relationship, all matter is fundamentally interconnected. Basically, I will argue that the analog or indexical relationship is maintained insofar as the activity of electrons can be traced to a wave function. When the wave function is broken, the indexical bond is lost as well. Yet we can still trace the basis of digital information in interconnected matter.

Certainly the electronic image, both analog and digital, would seem to be a physical object insofar as it is constituted by a barrage of electrons. Gene Youngblood pointed this out back in the analog days: “On the most fundamental level electronic visualization refers to the video signal itself as a plastic medium, as the ‘material’ of electronic presence. … This isn’t visual art or picture-making; it is the thing itself, the visible process of the electronic substance.”[3] Yet in my plunge into the world of physics, I have found that physics is still fraught with questions concerning the entity of the electron. Roughly put, is it a particle or is it a wave, is it a thing or merely a symptom, and does matter as such exist or can it only be approximated by equations?

Do they exist, and can we know where they are?

To trace the various electronic pathways through cathode ray tubes, silicon chips, copper cables, optical fibers and their other media, it is first necessary to look at the behavior of individual electrons. This means entering the world of particle physics. The excursion into theoretical physics that follows cleaves to the minority “realist” interpretation associated with Einstein, Schrödinger to a degree, David Bohm, and James Bell, as opposed to the dominant “positivist” argument associated with Werner Heisenberg and Niels Bohr. This argument in physics is remarkably similar to semiotic arguments about the relationship of the sign to reality, and hence the question of whether reality is knowable in itself or only through signs. In a comparison between physics and semiotics, realists like Bohm are more like Charles Sanders Pierce, while positivists like Heisenberg are more like Ferdinand de Saussure. The former argue for a material connection between reality and the description of reality, while the latter argue that the connection between the two is entirely symbolic. A materialist myself, I choose to learn from Bohm’s theories for the same reason that my semiotic loyalties lie with Pierce. I beg the indulgence of readers who have studied theoretical physics or electronic engineering, for whom the following will be annoyingly simplified.

It may surprise other readers, as it surprised me, that quantum physics is now considered not a radical theory but an orthodoxy among physicists, to the degree that an acronym, QUODS, has been coined for members of the quantum-orthodoxy-doubting subculture.[4] Since we humanities scholars are supposed to mistrust orthodoxies of all sorts, this news may invite us to look more sympathetically upon the continuing debates among this century’s physicists.

Most physicists, following Schrödinger (as interpreted by Bohr), Heisenberg, Max Born, and others, believe that at a quantum level we cannot know matter as such.[5] Most quantum physics is non-objective, i.e., does not assume that its mathematical models have a physical counterpart in the world. They argue that at a quantum level the rules of classical physics, which do describe the behavior of matter, do not apply. In contrast, the pocket of “realists” represented most strongly by Einstein and Bohm posited an ontological theory of quantum mechanics: namely, that quantum mechanics does not simply provide a mathematical model for the world but describes how things are. For the realists, there is continuity between classical and quantum physics. Bohm’s ontological theory, still in the minority in physics, posits that electrons do exist and that their relation to waves is one of “implication.” In the following I expand on this debate.

Quantum orthodoxy was established with the widespread acceptance of Schrödinger’s wave equation. This equation (as interpreted by Born) gives the probability of where an electron will be at a given moment, if an observation of its position forces it to become localized. In 1905 Einstein demonstrated that light interacts like particles with energy $E = h\lambda$, where h is Planck’s constant and λ is the frequency of light. His special theory of relativity argued that space and time must be treated similarly. From these two discoveries Louis de Broglie, in 1926, suggested that electrons must have wave properties, and that the wavelength can be given by $p = h/\lambda$, where λ is the electron’s wavelength.

That same year Schrödinger suggested an answer to the question; if an electron was a wave, how could that wave change with time so that it satisfies these two equations and still move as a particle (which according to Newton’s laws, accelerates under an external force)? His answer, a differential equation for the wave of the electron that also works for systems of particles, is still the cornerstone of modern physics. To predict where an electron is likely to be, look at where Schrödinger’s wave function has a large amplitude. Where the amplitude is small, electrons will be scarce. The equation was revolutionary because it combined particle and wave functions, making it possible to interpret the behaviour of matter as both wavelike and particlelike. What takes the equation out of the realm of materialism (describing physical matter) and into positivism (describing only what can be observed) is that the electron’s position remains unknown, and the wave equation can only predict the probability of its whereabouts. (Similarly, matrix quantum mechanics explains quantum behavior in mathematical terms that cannot be expressed physically.)

In 1927 Werner Heisenberg took this development further in the direction of positivism with his uncertainty principle. When an electron that has been struck by a gamma ray emits a photon, whose momentum is designated p and position is designated q,

$\delta p \times \delta q$ is less than or equal to h

—the product of the change in momentum and position never exceeds Planck’s constant (h). Using this equation we can calculate the photon’s momentum with great precision if we give up knowing anything about its position, and vice versa. Further, the equation implies that we can’t know either of these quantities independently, just their statistical spread δ. (The same equation describes the relationship of time and energy.)

According to the Heisenberg uncertainty principle, the measurer of subatomic particles is part of the experimental situation and influences its outcome, for electrons behave differently when they are being “watched.” It would seem that the wave only collapses into a single electron when it is being measured. If it’s measured with a wave detector, waves are detected; if with a particle detector, particles are detected.[6] This finding by Heisenberg and Bohr suppporting the emerging belief that said the electron is epistemologically unknowable.[7]

Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle has filtered into popular culture in a slew of metaphors, for example the argument that people behave differently when they are observed by a camera than they would if the camera were not there. But physicists continue to debate how to interpret it, and whether to bother. Mathematician David Wick points out that quantum mechanics is unique in that its equations are known but not its principles.[8] In other words, quantum mechanics is a epistemological system, not an ontological one. Yet for most physicists, the fact that quantum mechanics works “for all practical purposes” deterred them from investigating further. The quotable Einstein once compared the “‘Bohr-Heisenberg tranquilizing philosophy’ to a soft pillow on which to rest one’s head”[9]: it cannot explain matter, but it successfully describes it. For the most part, quantum mechanics has gone on to other things, with this unknowability tucked away in its fundamental equations.

One of the fundamental paradoxes of quantum physics is nonlocality. This principle, first demonstrated in a thought experiment devised by Einstein, Boris Podolsky, and Nathan Rosen. Two charged particles (atoms or photons) are seperated and sent to two devices that detect the particle’s “spin”.

After many runs,

detector 1 reads UUDUDDDU…

detector 2 reads DDUDUUUD…

—in other words, the particles continue to behave as though they are related. The experiment suggests that each particle “knows” what the other is doing. The direction of either particle cannot be known until it is measured, that is, until the wave function is collapsed. In effect one particle must “wait” until the other particle is measured, and then take the opposite value accordingly. A classical explanation would require some local hidden variable to “tell” each particle what state to assume when it was measured and then to communicate it to the other, which would assume the opposite state. This is impossible because the particles would have to communicate at faster than the speed of light. The realist Einstein worried about this “spooky action at a distance”[10] that cannot be explained classically. Later thought experiments by John Bell determined quantum theory could explain nonlocality.

Nonlocality has been demonstrated experimentally. Most strikingly, in a recent experiment in Switzerland, photons separated by an EPR device have traveled over 10 km.[11] It works, whether the explanation is accepted or not!

Meanwhile, however, realist physicists were not satisfied with the mere practicality of quantum equations. They wanted to explain the nature of matter, and thus had to return to the wave-particle relationship. David Bohm argued, following the “pilot wave” theory proposed by Louis de Broglie in 1927,[12] that a single electron is a member of a whole of many electrons, joined in a common wave. This hypothesis follows from Schrödinger’s equation, which although it is used to calculate the probability that the electron is doing certain things, also describes a relationship between electron and wave. According to Bohm, each electron on a given wavelength has the wave function encoded into it. It “remembers” where it came from, and thus remains linked to other electrons sharing the wave even when they are physically far distant. This means that the photons of sunlight that warm our faces are physically connected to the star that emitted them, arriving on a common wave.

Electrons also “remember” their more proximate relationship to their neighbors. Each electron in a single atom has its own distinct set of quantum numbers (the size of its orbit; the shape of its orbit; the direction in which the orbit is pointing; and the “spin” of the electron). Knowing its own address, it also knows not to enter other electrons’ territory, for if it did the atom would implode.[13]

Bohm argues that electrons are connected by invisible forces. Electrons are like corks bobbing on waves in the sea. If one electron moves, the paths of the other electrons that are entangled with it on a shared wave will be modified. And we know from lakes and bathtubs that when waves cross each other they create interference. Matter, then, is composed of waves that are thoroughly and intimately interrelated. And electrons ride on them.

The above foray into quantum physics is all to argue that individual electrons, for example in a cathode ray tube, act as a whole in their connection with other electrons. Quantum theory’s principle of nonlocality means that even distant objects affect each other as part of a single system. The whole cannot be reduced to an analysis in terms of its constituent parts. Not only electrons in proximity to each other—for example, those coursing to their demise on the video screen—but electrons as far apart as those in my hands typing in Ottawa and your eyes reading in Seoul, share a common wave.

Of course, this sounds “spooky” according to the classical way we think about space. Keep in mind that the categories Schrödinger, Heisenberg, and Bohr were using—position, momentum, time—are categories of Cartesian space. Schrödinger’s probability and Heisenberg’s uncertainty describe relationships in Cartesian space, with unsatisfactory results.[14] Quantum theory argues that we must accept these paradoxes because matter behaves differently at a quantum level than at a macro level. But could there be another order in which these relationships could be described with more certainty?

Bohm proposes that they can, in his theory of the implicate order, which explains nonlocal connections in terms of implicit patterns. He uses the terms explicate, or unfolded, for that which is apparent in a given system, and implicate, or enfolded, for that which is latent in the same system.[15] Bohm’s elegant illustration is a model of two glass cylinders, one inside the other, with a layer of viscous fluid, like glycerin, between them, but otherwise airtight. When a drop of ink is put in the liquid and the inside cylinder revolves, the ink drop is drawn out into a thread or unfolded; when it is revolved in the other direction, the thread of ink is enfolded back to a dot.[16] The line is implicate in the dot. A more controversial example of implicate order is the idea that when I stick pins in a figure representing my enemy, my enemy, wherever he or she may be, suffers as a result. Voodoo might be explained in terms of nonlocal connections between the two of us. (Not to say that Bohm would have believed in voodoo.) What Bohm’s principle of the implicate order means for physics is that we need not distinguish between particle and wave, saying we can measure only one or the other. According to the implicate order, the electron is enfolded in the wave that carries it, and unfolds or expresses itself when necessary—for example, when a light wave hits the surface of a cathode ray tube.

Bohm’s ideas were ridiculed or dismissed by most physicists.[17] A few have developed them, notably John Bell. Einstein himself remained a realist to his death in 1955. It appears to this non-physicist that the field is beginning to entertain the idea of non-locality again, for example on the Quantum Mind newsgroup.[18]

Electronic pathways

If all matter is intimately interconnected by wave-surfing electrons, then all electronic images have an indexical or analog connection to—matter. But to what degree do they keep an indexical or analog connection to the object of which they are images? In this section, taking a tip from Youngblood’s materialist enthusiasm, I trace the electronic pathway for an analog video image and then for its digital counterpart.

Say we have a camera, any camera. The light that reflects off an object and is focused on the camera lens is composed of waves. Light waves are only reflected if they are the same wavelength as that of the “object” that reflects them; so of all the light waves that bombard a blue flower, only those of the same blue wavelength will be reflected. So we might say (not yet distinguishing between particles and waves) that “blue” electrons, electrons with wavelength blue, will hit the camera lens at the appropriate point. But of course millions of electrons of all wavelengths will converge upon the lens, producing an image that is the analog of the object. Note that a wavelength is an index, in this case of the color of light.

Inside the vidicon tube of an analog video camera, the image is focused not on a lens but on a photoconducting layer (made of a semiconductor like selenium).[19] Incident light “excites” electrons in the photoconductor, dislodging them at wavelengths that continue to correspond to the colors of the object being recorded. Then the electron beam from the vidicon’s cathode scans the surface of the photoconductor (at the rate of 525 lines per second in NTSC format). To “recognize” the wavelength of blue, the beam takes on the charge of the electrons/waves ejected by the photoconductor, restoring the photoconductor to its previous charge.[20] The electron beam sends an electronic signal of the same wavelength to the monitor. This means that individual electrons travel all the way from the cathode to the screen, where they crash and die a brilliant death in the release of thousands of photons, forming the light patterns on the phosphor-coated surface of a video monitor. At 250 pixels per scanline times the same number of lines (in a consumer video camera), this means that each video frame is composed of 625,000 electronic pulses. That’s 625,000 electrons crashing on the screen, 60 times a second. So in a conventional analog video image we know that 37,500,000 electrons are giving up their existence every second in order to bring us an image. In broadcast, the same set of waves disperses into the ether, perhaps to be received by a satellite transponder. The point of this analog map is to show that a calculable number of electrons move along a set of common wavelengths all the way from the object to the image. When an image is broadcast, its indexical likeness undulates to the ends of the universe on the waveforms that compose it.

Images may also be transferred along wires or optical cables. When energy is applied to a wire, a wave populated by hordes of electrons conducts electricity by equilibrating the changing pressure of electrons pushed to one end of the wire. Here their motion is governed by the wave function, as foot traffic in Grand Central Station is governed by the arrival and departure of trains. In transmission along an optic fiber, electrons surge along on the wavelength of light. In all these forms of transmission, the images retains an indexical relationship to the object they represent, thanks to the particle-wave relationship.

Now let us imagine an alternative electronic path, this time for an image produced by a digital video camera, stored on a hard disk, and digitally projected. We will see that this activity continues in large part to be wave-driven, that is, constituted by streams of electrons and thus as indexical in the analog situation.But there are two important differences, based on the fact that most computers, being digital, rely on approximations.

What happens when an image is digitized? First, we must keep in mind that digitization is only one way of encoding information. Since currently we use digital computers more than any other encoding system for complex information, “digitization” has come to mean encoding. Say we have a still, color image. To digitize the image, a program divides the image surface into small areas (also called pixels) and calculates for each a set of numerical values. These correspond to the intensity, or number of photons per second, for the frequencies of red, green and blue. The resulting values are translated in turn to a string of 0s and 1s. In this process there are two ways that the richness of the analog information is diluted. One is in the number of pixels assigned to the image. The other is the amount of memory devoted to calculating the intensity per pixel. When you set your monitor to calculate “256 colors” or “thousands of colors,” you are assigning how long those memory strings are allowed to be.

Loss of indexicality 1

This simple step is the first crucial challenge to both the indexicality of the image and the individuality of the electrons. It is here that the image loses its indexical or existential connection to its referent. Light waves whose frequency and intensity physically represent the color of the object are translated into symbols when the image is encoded in strings of numbers. At this point loss of indexicality is not a question of image quality—a digital image may have higher resolution than an analog image—but of the physical relationship of image to object. Digitization breaks the analogical relationship between object and image, henceforth rendered as information. We shall see that there is another point, perhaps more crucial, where the indexical relationship is broken.

However, within digital circuits, electrons continue to exert themselves in analog ways. To demonstrate this, let me trace the electron’s path in the most workaday medium of digital calculations, the silicon chip. Silicon, which is cheap and can be highly refined, is the most popular medium for digital calculations in applications from coffeemakers to smart weapons. Like other elements in the fourth column of the periodic table, silicon is indifferently promiscuous: the four electrons in its outer valence allow silicon atoms to form an extensive network of electromagnetic bonds (compare the “noble gases” such as neon, which have the full complement of eight electrons, allowing these atoms to remain imperiously alone). Silicon’s four-electron bonding produces a crystal structure that is both stable and ductile. While the metals are conductors, meaning that metal atoms catch and pass electrons with the energy of a high-speed unidirectional soccer game, silicon, which moves electrons more sluggishly, is termed a semiconductor (as is its heavier fourth-column cousin germanium, as well as oxides such as copper oxide).[21] Molecular chemists learned to control the purification process whereby silicon is “doped” with a few atoms per billion of boron or phosphorus (among other elements) to produce a slight under- or overpopulation of electrons, respectively.[22] These impurities cause electrons to flow in only one direction through the material. Where negative, there are more free-floating electrons than can be held by the silicon atoms in the crystal lattice, which rush to distance themselves from a charge; where positive, there are a few “holes” to which electrons eagerly migrate when a charge is applied. Fusing micron-thin layers of positive- and negative-charged silicon produces transistors (chips) which sophisticatedly control the flow of electrons.

Here Schrödinger’s equation returns to explain why semiconductors are so susceptible to even the smallest charge yet, unlike metals, do not produce much heat. Quantum statistics dictates that in a given assembly, be it a single atom or a large crystal, only one electron can possess a given wave function.[23] Put otherwise, an electron can occupy only a given band in the “orbit” of an atom. When voltage is applied to silicon doped with phosphorus, the extra electrons are only too eager to make the quantum jump to a higher state of excitation—chemistry’s anthropomorphic term for electrons with no place to go but up.[24] The energy thus produced can be measured in terms of electrons per unit per second, where the unit is a gate in a silicon chip or a pixel. Such a calculation would establish the individual contributions of our hard-working electrons.

Within the silicon chip, then, electrons continue to ride waves in a micro-indexical way. In any transistor-reliant device, hordes of excited electrons are speeding through gates and causing other hordes of electrons to get excited and seek a wavelength of their own, in a ceaseless, frantic relay race. Digital computers by definition work with the binary difference of on and off signals or positive and negative signals. Its OR, AND, NOT and NAND circuits are operated by combinations of these signals. These circuits are themselves electron pathways. For example, the OR circuit has two or more inputs and one output, and it emits a pulse if any of the inputs receives a pulse.[25] In other words, the OR circuit is designed so that if a herd of excited electrons surges (through a wire of gold, copper or aluminum) into any of its inputs, it will release a herd of excited electrons in turn. It would seem from this description that the behavior of electrons in silicon chips continues to index their associated wave.

Loss of indexicality 2

The crucial characteristic of digital computers that breaks the indexical relationship is the same characteristic that makes computers accurate. Digital computers cannot tolerate intermediate states between 0 and 1. Every circuit contains a “flip-flop” circuit that eliminates intermediate states by ignoring weak signals. Only a strong signal, the cumulative behavior of masses of electrons, registers a change in the circuit. It is at this point that the wave-particle relationship is overriden. The flip-flop circuit pays attention only to huge hordes of electrons and quashes the efforts of the few. In this herd behavior, any change in the state of an individual electron is obviated by changes in the whole. Thus in digital computers, quantum non-locality, or the shared properties of electrons on a common wave, is not observable. Our friend the electron gets lost in the herd.

Just for fun, let’s say that the final image is digitally projected using one of the new projectors designed by Texas Instruments and Hughes-JVC. This requires a rectangular array of 1.3 million mirrors, each .016 mm wide. Each mirror has a corresponding microchip cell that emits pulses of 1 or 0 which cause the mirror to tilt 10° in one direction or the other.[26] The electron path here is 1.3 million herds of electrons, each of which conducts a pixel of information to the screen. In digital projection, as in initial digitization and memory storage, both analog and digital processes are at work.

In each pathway I have described, analog and digital, the transmission of electronic data can be traced to the actions of electrons, or, depending on your point of view, to the wave pattern that organizes them. These road maps show that an electronic image, whether it is analog or digital, is implicate, or enfolded, in the interconnected mass of electrons that transmit it along common waves. In digital imaging, however, two steps intervene to break the indexical bond: one that approximates analog information to a symbolic number, and one (repeated in every circuit) that obviates the wave-particle relationship.

The enfolded image

In the analog electron pathway, if we believe Bohm’s principle of nonlocality, the image remains enfolded in the waves that carry it from source to transmission. In the digital pathway, information is enfolded in the pulses that travel through the computer, but the initial indexical relationship is lost. Yet, one does not have to agree with Bohm’s principle of nonlocality to argue that a digital image is enfolded in its code. In digital computers the image is doubly enfolded: once when it is encoded as strings of 0s and 1s, and again when this information is enfolded in the charge of particles or the length of waves. Analog electronic imaging involves only the second process of enfolding.

To explore the difference between encoding in a language (such as a computer code) and enfolding in a wave, let me digress briefly to describe an artwork for computer by Thibaud Beghin, a Muslim artist who lives in Lille, France. His work Virtual Prayers represents Islamic prayers in the abstract and decorative Arabic script typical of traditional Islamic (iconoclastic) visual art. But this is only the visible aspect of the work, as manifest on a computer screen or printout. Here, the image in the explicate form of an implicate order, the computer code. Beghin also transmits these prayers in encoded form over the Internet or in digital files. In this version the prayers are “enfolded” in ASCII code and thus inscrutable. A religious person would say that the digital code is itself the explicate manifestation of an implicate order, that of prayer.

This encodement seems an appropriate means of transmission for a religious message that is subject to censorship and tends to spread clandestinely. One can imagine these prayers being received by a Muslim in a secular state or one where Muslims are persecuted. As an image their status is very tentative—they are virtual prayers, potential prayers, prayers that the code retains even when they are not manifest in an image legible to humans. Beghin does produce them as ink-jet prints, where each dot represents a translation of the electronic memories. But these are merely manifestations of the prayer, they are not the prayer itself. Encodement or enfoldment is this work’s most typical state. I would suggest many digital works exist typically in a state of latency, and when they are visible to us this is a rare case of unfoldment.

Quantum indexicality, or, subatomic mimesis

The example of Beghin’s work emphasizes the distinction between the role of the electron and the role of the code in electronic imaging. The former is physical, but the latter has an aspect that is purely virtual, because it approximates physical reality into symbolic information.

Note, however, that not all computers are digital in the usual sense. Quantum computers, which are now being developed theoretically, would use a minimum number of electrons, instead of the millions herded into formations of 1 and 0 by digital computers. Quantum computers would work with the superposition of the discrete states, such as orbit or polarization, of single particles. Thus, they could make calculations based on the controlled excitation of ions in an ion trap. They could also use nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) to detect the nuclear spin of atoms in small organic molecules.[27] In quantum computers the role of particular particles matters very much. If digital computers are like herders of sheep, quantum computers are like flea circuses: they rally a very few, very tiny actors whose individual behavior, though somewhat limited,[28] makes a perceptible difference in the whole.

It is my indexical fantasy to witness an image produced by a quantum computer, perhaps an animated image produced from the varying combinations of two or four electrons in varying states of excitement. Such an image would not be a simulacrum or a mathematical model, but the index of a physical referent, the tiny dance of subatomic particles. Of course, quantum physics tells me that such an image cannot be produced, because observing or measuring a quantum system renders the objects mere statistics, destroying the indexical relationship. But nanotechnology is already producing quantum objects, such as the “quantum corral” produced at IBM’s Almaden Research Center. A scanning tunneling microscope induces 48 iron atoms to share their outer-valence electrons in a standing wave, producing a sunflower-shaped mandala 14 nanometers across.[29]

Finally let me suggest that, since subatomic particles are connected by mutual physical bonds, it is possible to speak of electronic mimesis. Mimesis, according to Frankfurt School theorists Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, is a form of representation that is mediated physically rather than symbolically.[30] The mimetic faculty is usually superseded by symbolic means of representation in modern society (we are more likely to represent an airplane with a word or a drawing than by zooming around with our arms outstretched). Nevertheless, mimetic representation still at least partially underlies abstract representational systems, such as language. Similarly, the physical interrelationships between subatomic particles underlie the symbolic transmission of digital information.

I have argued that in the analog electronic image, because of the enfolded wave-particle relationship, a strongly indexical or mimetic relationship is maintained between object and image through all stages of recording, transmission, and reception. Moreover, even the digital image remains a physical object. Although it no longer bears an analog relationship to its initial object, the digital image relies for its existence on the fundamental interconnectedness of subatomic particles. Electronic images, like all of us, owe their material being to electrons and their associated wave forms. We are physically implicated in the virtual realms we inhabit, and far from divorcing ourselves from the world when we enter electronic spaces, we may be more connected than we imagine.

Postscript: Analog leaks from digital streams

I do not wish to end this materialist essay on such an idealistic note, given that the technologies in which I have traced the marvelous interconnected life of electrons have been largely developed for military and commercial applications that enslave as well as liberate. At a time when all of space and all objects of vision are claimed as corporate property, we must note that certain encodings are occurring at practically the subatomic level. Nanotechnology is being developed as an applied science by military and biotech companies, and some of their first experiments have been to sculpt atoms into corporate logos.[31] The first applications of quantum computing will likely be bank security and espionage.[32] We look to the subatomic level for evidence of a new uncharted territory or a new sublime only at the risk of ignoring how all that is perceivable may be or has already been encoded as a proprietary interest. The electrons can play all they want, but we aggregates may find ourselves seduced by the apparent immateriality of electronic media.

In this cautionary tone I adopt Sean Cubitt’s notion of digital aesthetics,[33] which emphasizes the materiality and vulnerability of the medium. A digital aesthetics remembers that any technology is social, and looks for the social and utopian potential of technologies. To pursue the radical materialism of my argument above, I want to suggest that the interconnected universe of electrons offers more than just a metaphor for social interconnection.

The materiality of electronic media is most often evident to us not when everything is running smoothly but durin the breakdowns and failures, the anomalies of low and obsolete technologies, and the ways electronic media are actually used as opposed to how they are imagined in the software manuals. A well-running platform, for those who can afford such a thing, has a false transparency that makes it quite easily to believe we are operating in a virtual realm.

When, due to low bandwidth or small hard drives or lack of fancy plug-ins or lost phone links, our digital media “fail” us, they are closest to reminding us of the physicality of the electronic medium. When a digital operation fails at the machine (as opposed to programming) level, it is usually because its switches, rather than falling nicely into the on/off positions, register a “maybe.” That “maybe” is the product of electrons that abandon their regimented paths, attracted to impurities in the silicon like workers to a bar. This produces dire results for networked computers and guided missiles, of course. But the noise of a failed internet connection, for example, is a declaration of electronic independence. It grabs us back from virtual space and reminds us of the physicality of our machines. They remind us not only of the wave-hugging electrons that interconnect all matter, organic and nonorganic, but also of our connections with other humans and our shared less-than-perfect, less-than-virtual circumstances.

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[1] Manuel de Landa, “Nonorganic Life,” in Zone 6: Incorporations, ed. Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter (New York: Urzone, 1992), 128–167, see also A Thousand Years of Non-Linear History.

[2] Strictly speaking, chemical nomenclature says that an inorganic chemical such as CO2 becomes organic when it is part of an organic chemical.

[3] Gene Youngblood, Expanded Cinema (New York: Dutton: 1970).

[4] In David Wick, The Infamous Boundary: Seven Decades of Controversy in Quantum Physics (Boston, Basel, and Berlin: Birkhäuser, 1995). Compared to humanities scholarship, the sciences are less subject to fashionable breezes. In science, as in other disciplines, theories are accepted if they explain phenomena. However, science’s orthodoxy often means that graduate students and post-docs only work on areas that they think have a good chance of being published and getting them jobs, established scientists do the kinds of work that are assured to receive grants, and in other ways the discipline renews the status quo. In science it’s hard to get by on chutzpah. Passion and faith, however, are important ingredients in remaining a scientist, especially if one’s work is not recognized in one’s lifetime.

[5] Schrödinger, who was not a positivist, “hated” Born’s interpretation of his equation as merely a probabilistic one (Wick, 31), but the interpretation stuck.

[6] J.P. McEvoy and Oscar Zarate, Quantum Theory for Beginners (Cambridge, England: Icon, 1996).

[7] John Bell joked about the famous measurement problem, “Was the wavefunction of the world waiting to jump for thousands of millions of years until a single-celled living creature appeared? Or did it have to wait a little longer, for some better-qualified system …with a Ph.D.?” (quoted in Wick, p. 165).

[8] Wick, p. 169.

[9] Einstein’s letter to Schrödinger, May 1928, quoted in Wick, p. 139.

[10] “Spukhafte Fernwirkungen”; this was Einstein’s phrase for Max Born’s interpretation of quantum mechanics. Born proposed that if one photon approaches a piece of photographic film, it must collapse from a wave to a particle when it is absorbed by a silver atom, in an impossibly great and instantaneous shift of magnitude. Letter from Einstein to Born, March 1947, quoted in Wick.

[11] Nature 386 (30 November 1995), p. 449.

[12] At the history-making Solvay conference in Brussels of 1927, de Broglie, supported by Einstein, proposed the pilot wave theory. However, at the same conference, Heisenberg and Max Born introduced their theory of quantum mechanics, a theory of particles that explains discrete or “quantal” properties observed on the quantal scale. Their theory was embraced, though Einstein complained that it did not fully explain the physical world, and became the hegemonic position in theoretical physics.

[13] McEvoy Zarate, 93–99.

[14] Bohm and Hiley 1993, p. 350.

[15] This may remind you of Leibniz’s theory of the fold: see Gilles Deleuze, The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1993).

[16] Bohm and Hiley, pp. 358–60.

[17] Bohm’s intellectual exile was partly due to political events. In 1949, while Bohm was developing his theory of “action at a distance,” he was called before the House Un-American Activities committee. Because he refused to testify, he was kicked out of Princeton. With a recommendation letter from Einstein, he got a job in São Paulo. Thus Bohm was distanced from his intellectual community, but his intellectual death sentence was delivered when the U.S. State Department revoked his passport. Rendered stateless, Bohm was unable to participate in the discussions around quantum physics. He died, not exactly in obscurity (he was an Emeritus Professor at Birkbeck College, University of London), but having seen his life’s work ignored by most physicists, in 1992 (Wick, 73). His books include The Undivided Universe (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), published posthumously with Basil J. Hiley.

[18] Quantum Mind listserve, http://www.consciousness. arizona.edu/quantum-mind.html. Thanks to Jim Ruton for pointing this out.

[19] James P. Crutchfield, “Appendix A: Video Physics,” in Eigenwelt der Apparatewelt: Pioneers of Video Art, ed. David Dunn (catalogue for a show curated by Steina and Woody Vasulka). Vienna: Ars Electronica, 1992.

[20] We can speak of charge interchangeably with wavelength, since E = hf, or energy equals frequency times Planck’s constant.

[21] These properties of silicon, as well as the scarcer and more heat-volatile germanium, were discovered in World War Two radar research; see Electronic Genie: The Tangled History of Silicon by Frederick Seitz and Norman G. Einspruch (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 1998). Military support was, of course, crucial to transistor research: from 1953 to 1955, half the money for transistor development at Bell Labs was military. During the Korean War, Bell’s brilliant William Shockley had the bright idea that a mortar shell driven by a microwatt junction transistor could be detonated just above the ground, raining shrapnel upon the heads of the Communist enemy. The first fully transistorized digital computer was developed for the Air Force in 1954 by Bell’s Whippany lab, to command guided missiles (Michael Riordan and Lillian Hoddeson, Crystal Fire: The Birth of the Information Age [New York: Norton, 1997], pp. 187–88, 203–04).

[22] Developments in molecular physics at such research centers as Bell Labs, Texas Instruments, and Dupont in the 1950s appear mostly to have been due to mastering combinations of doped silicon. See Riordan and Hoddeson, chapters 6 and 7 (which amount to an oral history of Bell Labs) and 10, and the more sober Electronic Genie: The Tangled History of Silicon by Frederick Seitz and Norman G. Einspruch (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 1998), chapters 11, 13 and 14.

[23] Seitz and Einspruch, p. 55.

[24] Similarly, vacuum tubes, the precursor to the transistor, provided vacuums or no-electron’s-lands which the electron could only jump when at a state of higher excitation.

[25] Seitz and Einspruch, p. 198.

[26] “Curtains for celluloid,” The Economist, March 27, 1999, pp. 81–82.

[27] See Gilles Brassard, Isaac Schuang, Seth Lloyd, and Christopher Monroe, “Quantum Computing,” Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 95:19 (15 September 1998): 11,032–11,033. http://www.pnas.org/cgi/content/full/95/19/11032

[28] As artist and flea-circus director Maria Fernanda Cardoso has told me, fleas do not learn per se, but they become more lively when stimulated with oxygen, as when she blows on them; electrons exhibit four quantum states of excitation and “spin.”

[29] B.C. Crandall, “Molecular Engineering,” in Nanotechnology: Molecular Speculations on Global Abundance, ed. B.C. Crandall (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1996), 31.

[30] Walter Benjamin, “On the Mimetic Faculty,” trans. Edmund Jephcott, in Reflections (New York: Harcourt, 1978), 333–336. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, “The Concept of Enlightenment,” in Dialectic of Enlightenment, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder, 1972), 3–42.

[31] See, for example, Richard Hall’s “Cosmetic Nanosurgery” and the fantasy of a seamless nanotech environment in J. Storrs Hall’s “Utility Fog: The Stuff That Dreams Are Made Of,” both in Nanotechnology: Molecular Speculations on Global Abundance, ed. B.C. Crandall (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1996), 61–80 and 161–184.

[32] See Brassard.

[33] Sean Cubitt, Digital Aesthetics (London: British Film Institute, 1998).

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essay #04

Digital Provenance and the Artwork as Derivative

By McKenzie Wark

Unlike Hito Steyerl, I don’t think art is a currency.[1] I think it’s a derivative, which is not quite the same thing as a currency. A currency can store value or act as a means of exchange. A derivative does something different. It manages and hedges risk. What we need, then, is a theory of art as a derivative.

Let’s start with this paradox. Art is about rarity, about things that are unique and special and cannot be duplicated. And yet the technologies of our time are all about duplication, copies, about information that is not really special at all. At first, it might appear that the traditional form of art is obsolete. If it has value, it is as something from a past way of life, before information technology took over. But actually, what appears to be happening is stranger than that. Let’s look at some of the special ways in which art as rarity interacts now in novel ways with information as plenty, producing some rather striking opportunities to create value.

By way of illustration, I want to talk about some art from twenty years ago. Some time in the mid-Nineties, the artist Mel Chin was watching television. He saw the actress Heather Locklear on the screen, but what the artist saw was not the actress, he saw the space in which she appeared: the television screen itself. What he saw there was the biggest art gallery in the world. So he contacted the set decorator for the show, whose name was Deborah Siegel. He proposed that the set should include work by artists. The artists would not be paid. They took this idea to the producers, who approved. Probably because of the not getting paid part.

So Chin formed a group called the GALA Committee. GALA stood for Georgia and Los Angeles, and would involve artists and art students from both locations. The work was all made collaboratively. For two years, GALA worked with the scriptwriters and made art that appeared on the show, usually in the background, but sometimes thematically related to stories going on in the show and sometimes relating to things from real life. GALA made about two hundred objects, the majority of which ended up on the show. The show was Melrose Place, one of the most iconic soap operas of its era. The GALA art was on it for two seasons, four and five.

The writers eventually wrote the art into the show. One character was an artist. The Heather Locklear character, who ran an advertising agency, signed the real Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art to her made-up ad agency, and there were scenes in the show filmed at the real MOCA, showing a real exhibition of the GALA art from the show itself. The GALA art was then auctioned at Sotheby’s Beverley Hills, where a real consortium of collectors from Germany bought the art. The proceeds were donated by GALA to charities.

Now: here is the detail I want to point out about all this. In the Sotheby’s auction catalog, there is a list in the back that details the episodes of the show in which each work appeared. What is this list about? One word for it is provenance. What makes each piece authentic is that it appeared on a set for a television show, was videotaped on that set, and those images ended up in a show that was broadcast to millions of people. It is actually still being broadcast, as Melrose Place is still in syndication somewhere on the planet even to this day. The provenance of the work is a really strange kind of product placement.

There is a retrospective of the GALA Committee work on right now in New York, which is what made me think of it as an example to talk about.[2] I think it’s a nice anticipation of where we ended up in the relationship of art and information. For those who have read their Walter Benjamin, it is an interesting wrinkle in the relation that is supposed to hold between the work of art and reproducibility.[3] In Benjamin, reproducibility is supposed to undermine the aura of the work, its ritual seclusion, its provenance, and its standing as a unique piece of private property. But with the GALA work, what we have, dare I say, is a rather more dialectical relation between art and information.

It is the reproduction of the work, electronically rather than mechanically, that perversely enough makes it rare. The image of the GALA work in the TV show is what Hito Steyerl calls a poor image, a wretched image, compressed and degraded and available on the internet for anyone.[4] But the GALA work itself is not. And its provenance comes, not from the singular place of its creation and persistence, but from the ubiquity of the image of it. It’s a kind of network or distributed provenance, perhaps.

Far from making the work of art obsolete, the reproducible image gives it a new kind of value. It is not quite the case that the original and the copy become indistinguishable. But it is the case that their relationship can be reversible. The copy can precede the original. You see a reproduction of something and that makes you want to go see the thing of which it is the copy. That’s a common enough occurrence, something Jean Baudrillard drew our attention to.[5] But the thing to pay attention to is that the copy creates the provenance of the original, not the other way around. The copy not only precedes but authenticates the original.

The copy can create value for the work, or in some cases for the artist rather than the work. This would be the Banksy story. The thing about Banksy that matters the most is the copies of the pieces that circulate on the internet. That is what establishes their provenance. These appear to be works made illegally in public, but that in itself is not all that interesting or important. There’s lots of street art. It is just that this street art is authenticated by the circulation of its images. Those poor images are what create value, in this case for a visibly invisible artist.

A visibly invisible artist is something of a provenance anomaly, the scene of a crime. While there has been speculation for some years now that Banksy is “actually” a man named Robin Gunningham, the Daily Mail brought forensic methods from criminal investigation to bear on the question, trying to correlate known Banksy works in London with places Gunningham is known to frequent.[6] It is an example maybe of counter-provenance, of layering a potentially criminal authentication over an art world one.

Sometimes the preceding image that authenticates the work is not of the work but still precedes it. As an example, I’d like to look at The Island (Ken) by the group that calls itself DIS. This was at the New Museum. I did a little talk-performance with this piece, and in the process of writing it I did a studio visit and talked to the artists.[7] They told me that the process that resulted in this work started with an idea about high-end kitchens and bathrooms. Googling that generated a series of advertisements based on the search terms, for companies offering such high-end appliances. So DIS simply chose the most high-end-seeming companies and approached them about making the pieces. So in this case, the provenance of the work comes from a Google search.

This is what the Google algorithm, customizing itself for this particular computer used by DIS, thinks is the real thing when it comes to fancy appliances. Yet, when I searched for “high-end shower” I got slightly different results, tailored algorithmically to me, or rather to my computer. The signature is in this case the algorithmically generated search, and can be expected to differ in some way in each instance. Here we have a difference from the GALA work, which depends on the uniformity of the broadcast model of simulation.

The artwork is now a derivative of its simulation. Of course there are many different kinds of simulations. It could be the JPEG of a particular work sent by a dealer to a collector, attached to a text message. The collector reads the text, looks at the JPEG, makes a decision about the artwork. But actually, the artwork is a derivative. It was the JPEG that mattered, as it is the JPEG on which the transaction depends. The collector might decide to buy or not buy the work, to reserve it, to see it later in person, and so on. As in other fields, the main thing traded here is the derivatives. The simulations are not worth much at all, or are such poor images that they might as well be free gifts.

Not just individual artworks, but art itself is now a derivative of its simulation. A key to this development is the rise of art fairs and biennials. The art fairs are more directly about selling artwork derivatives of their simulated images. They are mostly about the commercial dealers who trade in the derivative contracts that are artworks themselves. But the other side of this is the biennial, whose function is to simulate contemporary art itself.

The artwork is a derivative of its simulation, or rather of its simulations, plural. This is the way the actual, particular artwork can still work as a sort of hedge. An artwork is a risky proposition. It might in the long run turn out to be worth no more than any random bit of painted canvas. But if the artwork can be a portfolio of different kinds of simulation of itself, it is possible to manage the risk.

An artwork can be a derivative of the simulation of itself, where its image precedes it and authenticates it through its circulation and exposure. Here GALA is the example. An artwork can be a derivative of the simulation of its artist. Here Banksy is a slightly aberrant example, where its the simulation of the artist’s absence that creates provenance. An artwork can also claim provenance from celebrity. This is one of the things going on in the commerce between the art world, fashion, and pop music. Those mass simulation forms think they gain something from the provenance of the artwork as a rare and singular commodity, and maybe they do. But I think really the secret is that it is the artwork that acquires its provenance from proximity to Jay Z or Kanye or Björk. The artwork becomes a derivative of contact with the body behind the simulation of the pop star or fashion star.

An artwork can also be a derivative of intellectual provenance. It helps if the intellectual is dead. Hence Thomas Hirschhorn’s Gramsci Monument, which derives its provenance from a famous dead Communist thinker. If one must use living intellectuals, famous critical thinkers are the best. The derivative work acquires commercial value from these intellectuals’ lack of commercial interest in value. So get Antonio Negri if you can. The DIS people had to settle for me as I come a lot cheaper.

An artwork can of course be a derivative of previous artworks, but a certain boredom is settling on this well-worn method, which in the end delights nobody but art historians, who become consultants to provenance as evaluators of quotation. The historians quote precedents so the gallerist may quote prices.

In any case, it tends also to mask the way in which the artwork has changed. Artworks in our time are derivatives because that is how our economy works. In a previous era, one which prized manufacturing, artworks were distinguished by their manufacturing techniques. So, for example, works by Impressionists, Surrealists, or so-called Action Painters could be treated as special, non-alienating commodities made by some other manufacturing process besides the workshop or the assembly line.

This started to change in the Sixties. Through Edie Sedgwick, Warhol discovered both how simulation could create provenance and how the artwork could be the derivative that would be a portfolio of simulation values. But it was perhaps minimalism’s “dematerialization of the artwork” that really put an end to the industrial model of art and paved the way for the birth of the financial model of art, of the artwork as a derivative that functions as a portfolio of simulation values. The artwork, like any other financial instrument, needs nothing to exist beyond its documentation.

The dematerialization of the artwork was not the dematerialization of the art worker. But one might speculate as to whether that might be the next step. Could the labor of art be automated? There was already a lovely image of this in William Gibson’s novel Neuromancer, in which an artificial intelligence makes Joseph Cornell boxes that are if anything better than actual ones.

So in short, I think what is most interesting about the relation between art and information is the reciprocal relation between art as rarity and information as ubiquity. It turns out that ubiquity can be a kind of distributed provenance, of which the artwork itself is the derivative. The artwork is then ideally a portfolio of different kinds of simulated value, the mixture of which can be a long-term hedge against the risks of various kinds of simulated value failing—such as the revealing of the name of a hidden artist, or the decline of the intellectual discourse on which the work depended, or the artist falling into banality and overproduction.

Since art became a special kind of financial instrument rather than a special kind of manufactured article, it no longer needs to have a special means for its making, or even perhaps special makers. Indeed, curators now rival artists for influence the way DJs rival musicians. Both are a kind of portfolio manager of the qualitative. The next step after the dematerialization of the artwork may be the dematerialization of the art worker, whose place could be taken by new kinds of algorithmic functions. These would still have to produce the range of simulations that might anchor the artwork as a derivative of their various kinds of sign value.

Initial publication: Wark, McKenzie. “Digital Provenance and the Artwork as Derivative.” e-flux journal 77 (2016), accessed April 30, 2017, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/77/77374/digital-provenance-and-the-artwork-as-derivative. [Originally presented at K-Art Conversations, Korea International Art Fair 2016.]

[1] Hito Steyerl, “If You Don’t Have Bread, Eat Art!: Contemporary Art and Derivative Fascisms,” e-flux journal 76 (2016), accessed April 30, 2017, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/76/69732/if-you-don-t-have-bread-eat-art-contemporary-art-and-derivative-fascisms.

[2] See: http://redbullartsnewyork.com/artists/gala-committee.

[3] Walter Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[4] Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image," e-flux journal 10 (2009), accessed April 30, 2017, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/10/61362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image.

[5] Jean Baudrillard, Simulations (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2016).

[6] Eli Rosenburg, "Banksy Identified by Scientists. Maybe," New York Times, March 7, 2016; accessed April 30, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/08/arts/design/banksy-identified-by-scientists-maybe.html?_r=0

[7] See: https://vimeo.com/135392103.

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essay #03

Copy

By Jussi Parikka

The process of copying is a key cultural technique of modernity. The mechanization of imitatio awed even the hailed Renaissance artist Leon Battista Alberti at the dawn of the Gutenberg era: "Dato and I were strolling in the Supreme Pontiff's gardens at the Vatican and we got talking about literature as we so often do, and we found ourselves greatly admiring the German inventor who tod [illegible]

From the printing press that replaced the meticulous work of monks copying texts to the technique of mass production of photographs and other technical media objects, "copy" has become a central command routine of modernity. Modern media can be understood as products of a culture of the copy as Walter Benjamin has analyzed in relation to film. Paraphrasing Benjamin, mechanic [illegible]

Nineteenth-century enthusiasm for the copy was tied to the possibility of producing low-cost photographs and films, and the commercial prospects of such a process. Similarly the mass production and distribution of printed material was inherently connected to material principles of production, notably the rotation press, and other factors such as the cheapening of paper. Even the Gut [illegible]

[illegible]

The very familiar point-click copy-paste routine originates from those systems, and is now integrated into everyday consumer culture. This, as Lev Manovich suggests, is perhaps how Fredric Jameson's ideas of postmodernization should be understood: Copy production as the dominant mode of cultural production culminated in the digital production [illegible] paste programming). Since the 1960s, copying has been elevated into an art practice but it is more likely to be articulated in monotonous office work context or as pirate activity.20

In general, "CTRL + C" functions as one of the key algorithmic order-words piloting the practices of digital culture. This returns focus on the key economic-political point: who owns and controls the archives from which content is quoted and remediated? The question does not only concern the software producers who are in a key position to define the [illegible] producers (Warners Bros, Sony Pictures), Digital Rights Management (Macrovision, Secure Media), telecommunications (Viacom, Echostar Communications) and the computer industry (Intel, IBM, Microsoft) are represented.21 The issue under consideration is not only about content that is archived in private corporate collections but about how copyi [illegible]

"Postmodernization" should be understood as a media technological condition. Aesthetic and consumer principles have been intimately intermingled with the engineering and programming routines of modern operating systems that are part of the genealogy of modern technical media. For Friedrich Kittler, the Turing machine as the foundation of digi [illegible] mode of discrete-state processing. Digital copying is much more facile (if not totally error-free) than mechanical copying, and copies are more easily produced as mass-distribution global consumer products. In digital products the tracking and control of the objects of copying is easier, and there is the added capability to tag the copies as copyright of [illegible]

In addition, copying is intimately entwined with communication as a central mode of action of network culture. Such sociotechnological innovations as nineteenth-century magnetic recording, the modem (1958), the c-cassette (1962), the CD-disc (1965), the Ethernet local network (1973), and Napster (1999) and subsequent file-sharing networks can [illegible] culturing. Similar to how Benjamin saw mechanical reproduction and distribution as inherent to the media technology of cinema, copy routines and distribution channels are intimate parts of the digital network paradigm: connecting people, but also copying machines.

Initial publication: Parikka, Jussi. "Copy." In Software Studies. A Lexicon, edited by Matthew Fuller, 70–78. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008.

[1] Quoted in David Kahn, The Codebreakers: The Story of Secret Writing, 125.

[2] Walter Benjamin, Illuminations: Essays and Reflections, 244 fn. 7.

[3] See the online Early Office Museum pages for copying machines, available at http:// www.officemuseum.com/copy_machines.htm.

[4] See the Waalsdorp museum online page at http://www.museumwaalsdorp.nl/computer/en/punchcards.html. Thanks also to Jaakko Suominen for his notes.

[5] As Hillel Schwartz notes in his thought-provoking The Culture of the Copy, two modes, or philosophies, of copying were early rivals: copying discretely bit by bit, or analogically copying an entirety, as with chemical copying. Hence the cultural origins of computerized scanning and the calculation of, for example, images, and the copying of these images in the form of bits spans further in time than actual digital machines. See Hillel Schwartz, The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles, 223.

[6] Robert Slade, "History of Computer Viruses," 1992, available at http://www.cknow .com/articles/6/1/Robert-Slade%2339%3Bs-Computer-Virus-History.

[7] Ken Thompson, "Reflections of Trusting Trust," Communications of the ACM, vol. 27, issue 8 (August 1984), 761.

[8] Bill Kennedy, "Two Old Viruses," The Risks Digest, Vol. 6, issue 53 (March 1988), available at http://catless.ncl.ac.uk/risks. Another similar observation is dated to 1973, which shows that several programmers thought about the same ideas. See "Old Viruses," The Risks Digest, vol. 6, issue 54 (April 1988), available at http://catless.ncl .ac.uk/risks. Another example are the "bacteria" programs that have been listed as one of the oldest forms of programmed threats. A bacterium is another name used for rabbit programs. It does not explicitly damage any files, its only purpose is to reproduce exponentially, but can thus take up all the processor capacity, memory, or disk space. See Thomas R. Peltier, "The Virus Threat," Computer Fraud & Security Bulletin, June 1993, p. 15.

[9] Thank you to Professor Timo Järvi for pointing this out to me.

[10] See B. I. Blum, "Free-Text Inputs to Utility Routines," Communications of the ACM, vol. 9, issue 7 (July 1966), 525–526.

[11] See Janet Abbate, Inventing the Internet, 96–106.

[12] Matthew Fuller, Media Ecologies: Materialist Energies in Art and Technoculture, 111.

[13] Susan Blackmore, The Meme Machine, 214.

[14] See the "Facsimile & SSTV History," available at http://www.hffax.de/html/ hauptteil_faxhistory.htm.

[15] Friedrich Kittler, "Universities: Wet, Hard, Soft, and Harder," Critical Inquiry, vol. 31, issue 1 (Autumn 2004), 245.

[16] Michael Hiltzik, Dealers of Lightning: Xerox PARC and the Dawn of the Computer Age, 209–210.

[17] Butler W. Lampson, "Hints for Computer System Design," Proceedings of the Ninth ACM Symposium on Operating Systems Principles (1983), 39.

[18] See Jeff Johnson and Teresa L. Roberts, "The Xerox Star: A Retrospective," IEEE Computer (September 1989), 11–29.

[19] Lev Manovich, The Language of New Media, 131.

[20] Schwartz, The Culture of the Copy, 238–239.

[21] See Volker Grassmuck, "Das Ende der Universalmaschine," in Zukunfte des Computers, ed. Claus Pias, 251.

[22] Kittler, "Universities," 252.

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essay #02

Easy is the New Difficult

By Kennth Goldsmith

Easy is the new difficult. It is difficult to be difficult, but it is even more difficult to be easy. Easy is not easy. Easy takes effort, just as difficulty takes effort. I want an easy art, an art of pure pleasure, an art that is completely understandable by anyone viewing it, an art that doesn't leave you puzzled, an art that ties up every loose end, dots every i and crosses every t, an art that leaves not [illegible]

Sisyphus's uphill struggles are consumed with brute physicality, but downhill, there is time for contemplation. Sisyphus's travails, then, are bifurcated between easy and difficult, between body and mind. Camus proposed that the downhill interval was the apotheosis and salvation of Sisyphus's torment, a recurrent moment in which he was able to philosophically to reconcile his eternal c [illegible]

Sisyphus's difficulty, legendarily remarked upon, is quantifiable; his interval, less so. Ease is vanquished because it's too internalized; few sweat when they think. The depiction of thought is difficult. The depiction of difficulty is easy, making for compelling images: images of muscle, sweat, exhaustion, struggle, and damnation are easily rendered. I'm thinking of the sculpture of Atlas bea [illegible] couched in narrative; there's a reason why he's burdened and there's a potential escape from it. We know, for instance, that Atlas tried to trick Heracles into bearing his burden for a moment while he went to pick some apples. Heracles obliged for a moment, then quickly caught on, throwing the ball back to Atlas who, to this day, continues to bear the burdens. But the story is not over: he's [illegible]

The Thinker, on the other hand, has no narrative or mythological basis to which we may relate. As a result, he is static, expressing a state rather than a story. This is the condition of easy. In comparison to Atlas, his is a metaphysical stasis. Whereas difficulty is related, ease is singular, detached, self-absorbed, and onanistic. The isolated gesture is still relatable—who among us has not be [illegible]

Although compared to difficulty, easy is less visible (often invisible), there are cases in which difficulty is rendered equally indiscernible, as in the case of virtuosity, where one is so good at what they do that they make difficulty look easy. In virtuosity, any trace of difficulty is eliminated, entirely eclipsed by easy. Think of the seemingly ease with which George Harrison played guitar: wh [illegible]

[illegible]

Sagmeister gives us a glimpse of what art would look like if it adopted the métier of the comedic, an art not for the ages, but for the interval, an evaporatory art with the lifespan of inbetweeness, more trade fair than biennial, free of ambiguity, friction, or division. The Happy Show. Sagmeister was actuating what countless artists pay lip-service to: while many claim to be easy, few actual [illegible] decades after his death—unraveling the knotty depths of his sprawling oeuvre. Likewise, Jeff Koons spouts easy, yet there are subtle perversities in his work that deny him this. Occluded by double-entendre and laced with theory-based irony, no Koons is innocent. When Koons appears on morning talk shows spouting about how lovable his Flower Puppy is and how he wants his art to ma [illegible]

Another category—and I think this begins to touch on what I'm getting at—are the highly 'commercial' artists who straddle the line between graphic design and fine art like Norman Rockwell, LeRoy Neiman, Andrew Wyeth, and Peter Max. Even though Peter Max was born of the counterculture, there was nothing insurgent or abrasive about Yellow Submarine. Rockwell is closer to Sagmeis [illegible]

Of all these, LeRoy Neiman came closest to easy because easy was his subject. While he often painted sports heroes performing spectacular feats of difficulty, they were wrapped in the guise of easy, both in terms of style and the market in which they circulated: his sports prints hang in country club locker rooms and snack bars. There's a harmony of form, content, and reception that gets [illegible] without some kind of rationale that they were art." In the end, it was Hefner who was more the artist than Neiman. But if asked, neither Neiman nor Hefner wouldn't have disavowed easy like Cage did. They'd have embraced it. That's avant-garde.

In popular culture, the only way to legitimize easy is through magic. A decade ago, Staples ran a series of ads that featured a big red Easy button which one could push as a magical solution when things got too hard. One ad features a guy who runs out of printer ink. A woman asks him, "Out of ink?" to which he sarcastically replies, "Yeah, the ink fairy will come tonight and leave us three do [illegible] demand for a 'real' Easy button that the company began actually manufacturing them. Now, when you find yourself in difficulty, you push the button and a voice says, "That was easy!"

The easy utopia is the forthcoming internet. Not the one we have now, but one that actually works. It's so close we can taste it: Amazon's one-click shopping. That was easy. The LP downloaded to your computer through walls on the wireless network it runs on. That was easy. But it could be easier. The imagined and anticipated frictionless of the digital makes for a new difficulty equation. [illegible]

Initial publication (German version(: Goldsmith, Kenneth. "Easy is the New Difficult. Anstatt eines Gesprächs mit dem Künstler" in Postdigital II. Allgegenwart und Unsichtbarkeit eines Phänomens, Kunstforum International, vol. 243, edited by Franz Thalmair, translated by Christine Schöffler and Peter Blakeney 68–75. Cologne: Kunstforum International, 2016.

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essay #01

Living with Ghosts

From Appropriation to Invocation in Contemporary Art

By Jan Verwoert

Appropriation is a common technique in contemporary culture. People appropriate when they make things their own and integrate them into their way of life, by buying or stealing commodities, acquiring knowledge, squatting and so on. Artists appropriate when they adopt imagery, concepts and ways of making art other artists have used at other times to adapt these artistic means to the [illegible] members. At the same time, appropriation can be understood as one of the most basic procedures of modern art production and education. To cite, copy and modify exemplary works from art history is the model for developing art practice (neo-)classicist tendencies have always championed. During the last two centuries this model was repeatedly challenged by advocates of the belief th [illegible]

Such a general account of appropriation as a common social strategy and basic artistic operation may help to outline some of the overall implications of the concept. What it cannot capture, however, is the specific momentum that gives the debates about appropriation their particular focus and urgency in different historical situations. It might appear futile to reconstruct the exact spirit [illegible] better understanding of what, by contrast, is at stake now. Let me attempt a first sketchy juxtaposition: The cultural experience the discourse of appropriation conveys under the sign of postmodernity is that of a radical temporal incision. It is the experience of the sudden death of modernism and the momentary suspension of historical continuity. The stalemate situation of the cold war [illegible] locked in a spatial mise-en-scène with the timeline gone missing. These works convey an intense sense of an interruption of temporal continuity, a black out of historical time that mortifies culture and turns its tropes into inanimate figures, into pre-objectified, commodified visual material, ready to pick up and use.

Now, imagine the reels of the projectors to suddenly start spinning again. As the freeze frame dissolves into motion and the figures Longo suspended in mid-air crash to the ground as the pain of the blow they received from their invisible opponent registers and propels them forward. Sherman's heroines unwind, begin to speak and confess their story to the camera. You could say that this [illegible] space as it fixed the historical situation after World War II for over four decades in the form of a territorial order of rigid geopolitical frontiers. It is from this map that a manifold of asynchronous temporalities now begin to emerge along the faultlines drawn by the geopolitical regimes of modernity. Wars erupt over territories that were shaped on the drawing room tables around which the [illegible] buried under the profanities of capitalism and atheist doctrines of socialism, has resurfaced as a thing of the past that shapes the present.

[illegible]

There is ample evidence that this is precisely what public address experts do these days anyway. Every orchestrated retro-trend or revisionist resurrection of nationalist histories sees hordes of ghosts pressed into the service of the market and other ideological programmes. So, to resist the urge to master the ghosts by programming the effects of appropriation seems like a better alternative. This is always assuming that it were actually possible at all to master ghosts, while the uncanny quality of an encounter with them after all lies precisely in the fact that in the relationship with a spectre and the one who invokes it who controls whom will always remain dangerously ambiguous and the subject of practical struggle. This brings us back to the questionable status of property in the act of appropriation discussed before. If through appropriation one seeks to (re-)possess an object, what then if that object had a history and thus a life of its own? Would the desire for possession then not inevitably be confronted by a force within that object which resists that very desire? In his book Spectres of Marx (1994) Derrida describes this moment of ambiguity and struggle as follows:

> One must have the ghost's hide and to do that, one must have it. To have it, one must see it, situate it, identify it. One must possess it without letting oneself be possessed by it, without being possessed of it (…). But does not a spectre consist, to the extent that it consists, in forbidding or blurring this distinction? In consisting in this very undiscernability? Is not to possess a spectre to be possessed by it, possessed period? To capture it, is that not to be captivated by it?[10]

On the grounds of this observation, that the relation between the ghost and the one who invokes it will remain in a precarious state of limbo, Derrida then develops an ethics, that is, he formulates the task to find ways to practically approach and do things with ghosts that would do justice to the complex nature of their presence and relation to us. The task is to 'learn to live with ghosts'[11] and this means to learn 'how to let them speak or how to give them back speech'[12] by approaching them in a determined way that still remains undetermined enough to allow them to present themselves:

> To exorcise not in order to chase away the ghosts, but this time to grant them the right, if it means making them come back alive, as revenants who could no longer be revenants, but as other arrivants to whom a hospitable memory or promise must offer welcome—without certainty, ever, that they present themselves as such. Not in order to grant them the right in this sense but out of a concern for justice.[13]

It seems that this ethical maxim could equally serve as a practical guide to appropriation today. If we assume that horizon of our historical experience today is defined by the ambiguous influences and latent presence of the unresolved histories, the ghosts, of modernity, then an act of appropriation that seeks to show what it means for something to mean something today must expose these unresolved moments of latent presence as they are, and that means first of all, not to suggest their resolution in the moment of their exhibition. Appropriation then is about performing the unresolved by staging object, images or allegories that invoke the ghosts of unclosed histories in a way that allows them to appear as ghosts and reveal the nature of the ambiguous presence. And to do that is first of all a question of finding appropriate ways of going through the practicalities of the performance of evocation, that is: a question of practice.

Initial publication: Verwoert, Jan. "Living with Ghosts: From Appropriation to Invocation in Contemporary Art," Art & Research, vol. 1, no. 2 (2007), accessed September 26, 2016, http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/verwoert.html.

[1] Douglas Crimp, "Pictures," in Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: The Museum of Contemporary Art New York, in association with David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc., Boston 1984), 77. Reprinted from October, no.8 (1979): 75–88.

[2] Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in Postmodern Culture, ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1985), 118.

[3] Ibid., 115.

[4] Ibid., 114.

[5] Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," in Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: The Museum of Contemporary Art New York, in association with David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc., Boston 1984), 35. Reprinted from October, no.12 (1980): 67–86 and no.13 (1980): 59–80.

[6] Ibid., 212.

[7] Op. cit., 183.

[8] Op. cit., 120.

[9] Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), in The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales, ed. Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 85–101; here: 98.

[10] Jacques Derrida, Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning, & The New International, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994), 132.

[11] Ibid., xviii.

[12] Ibid., 176.

[13] Ibid., 175.

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frequently asked questions

What is the main purpose of originalcopy?

In the arts-based research project originalcopy we collect copying strategies at the intersection of the digital and the analog. Our assumption is that copying is omnipresent yet invisible in the post-digital condition we are living in today. This means that copying in its most variable forms—from a Xeroxed sheet of paper to the conceptual mechanisms of appropriation—has become a standard in art production. Outside the specific field of the visual arts, when you think of our computer-saturated and thoroughly programmed life and work contexts, copying has become such a banality that we are not even aware of it anymore.

There are two main purposes of originalcopy which cannot be separated from each other: On the one hand, we aim to analyze copying techniques by collecting different forms, modes, and aspects of them—we copy the act of copying—and, on the other hand, we develop new copying methods derived from this research process. We create a loop that is self-reflective and auto-generative at the same time.

Why do you talk about the "post-digital" while working with digital technologies such as the internet? Digital technologies are not over, are they?

No, digital technologies are not over at all. Quite the contrary, digital technologies are totally embedded in our everyday lives—they are ubiquitous. With the term "post-digital" we do not refer to a status after the digital rather to the omnipresence of all these technologies which have become so normal and intrinsic that we do not realize them anymore. Even if the digital is everywhere, it has become invisible. That's the starting point for originalcopy. Precisely because of this very invisibility of digital technologies, their disappearance from the surface and the accompanying anxieties this fact provokes, we believe that they should be researched and made visible again.

Also, by shifting the focus from digital media and technologies to their usage and possibilities in art production without emphasizing their technicality and presence, we hope to foster a deeper understanding of how the digital has become an agent of art production itself. We understand "the digital" more as a subordinate phenomenon and as a figure and structure of thought than as a concrete set of technologies.

Most of the pictures on your page are not copies—they are original artworks…

Yes and no. For the purpose of our research we try to expand the idea of what a copy actually is and can be. Besides the familiar instance of a copy as something that looks exactly or essentially the same as an original, we also include works that copy processes, ideas and concepts, modes of production, parts of other things, even feelings, etc.

To be correct, most of the images on our website are not original artworks but photographic reproductions of original artworks and exhibition or installation contexts. Are these photos artworks too? Can the perception of these photos be described as a primary experience of art or is this type of viewing of a secondary nature? These are well-known questions in the field of performance art, for example, where the documentation of an ephemeral event is often treated equally with the event as such. Where are the boundaries between the artwork and its reproduction? These are some of the questions we investigate with originalcopy.

You speak of "performative research"—are you performance artists?

No, we are not performance artists, we are researchers, but we also do not exclude the possibility of working with performance as an art form in the context of originalcopy. With "performative research" we have developed a methodology that allows us to produce an aesthetic experience by creating artistic contexts while reflecting this process of creation simultaneously. As mentioned before, in originalcopy we conduct a sort of circular movement that is both self-reflective and auto-generative at the same time. The "performative" in "performative research" is not about happenings, theatre pieces, or similar public events—we are referring to the linguistic concept of "performative utterances" (John L. Austin) that distinguishes between expressions that describe the world and those responsible for its construction.

Why don't you discuss copyright issues with originalcopy?

In this research project we are dealing with copying as an artistic working method. This sometimes touches on the important issues of copyright, intellectual property, and related discourses. Nevertheless, our focus is the artistic, visual, formal-aesthetic, material practices and less about the legal discussions that sometimes follow after such methods of producing art are developed and applied.

Even if the project does not deal with this topic explicitly, copyright issues are always implicit in originalcopy. As we work with found materials such as images, texts, sounds, or videos and compile them into a type of online repository, which is freely accessible in the form of a link database, we follow open source principles with our activities. If you wish, this is the most evident political aspect of our practice as artistic researchers.

Are there other sociopolitical aspects in this project, too?

As the act of copying—understood as a very broad cultural practice—touches us all in nearly all domains of our lives, originalcopy can't be a-political or purely formal. Of course, our research does not explicitly focus on short-term political matter read in the newspapers, and we do not understand it as an activist practice intervening in actual societal occurrences or circumstances. However, in originalcopy we also negotiate topics such as globalized communication, the circulation of commodified artworks, the immaterialization and transparency of power structures, the potentials of networks, and the inherently political character of the image in the aforementioned contexts. With such issues on our agenda, it is undeniable that we contribute to relevant sociopolitical discourses.

contact

originalcopy — Post-Digital Strategies of Appropriation

FWF project number: AR 348–G24

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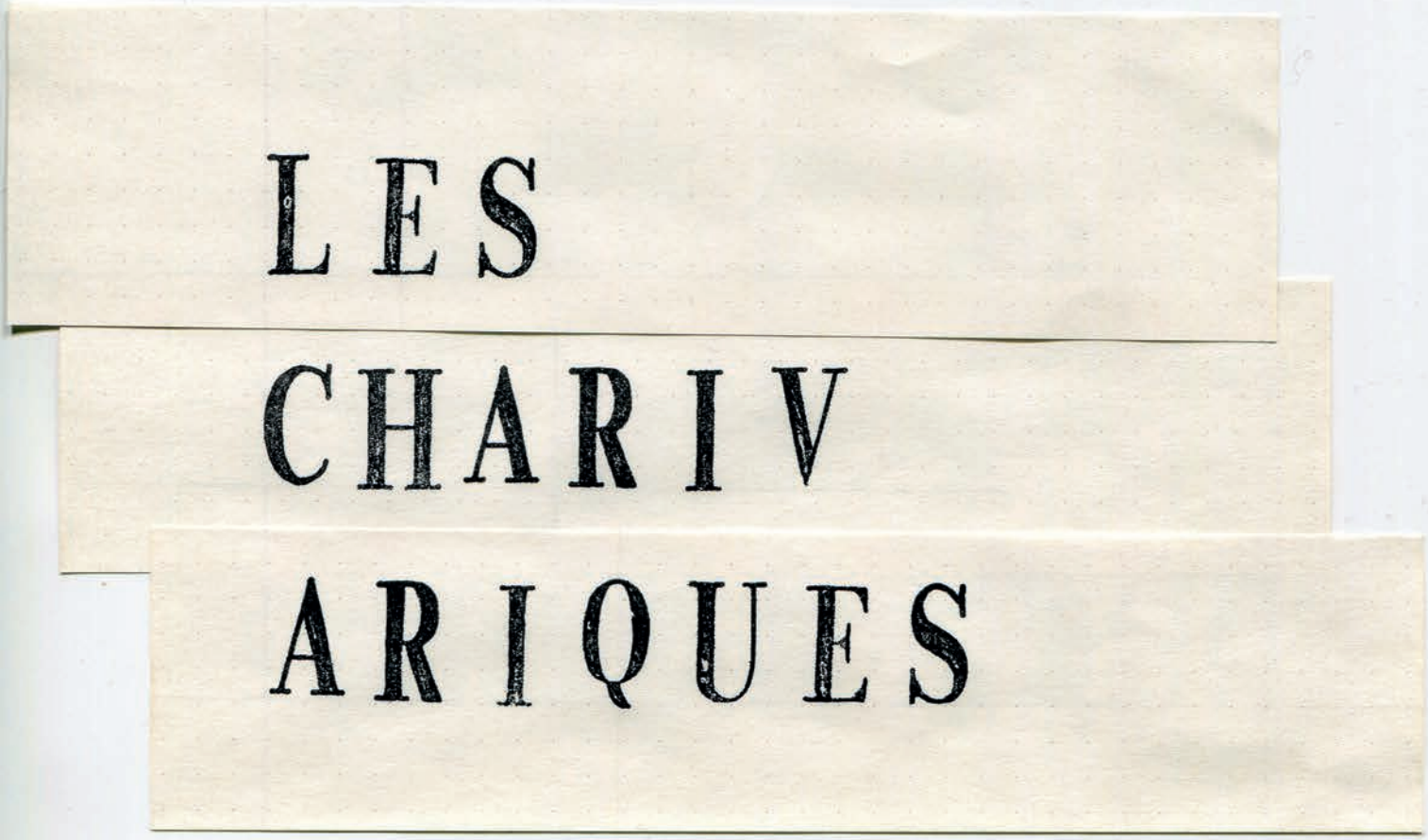
Willem Oorebeek
CHARIVARIQUES, 2018



Chez Aubert Pl de la Bourse 29.

Abonnés recevant

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– Comme vous arrivez tard à la Bour
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Lisa Rastl
multi titled #1, 2018

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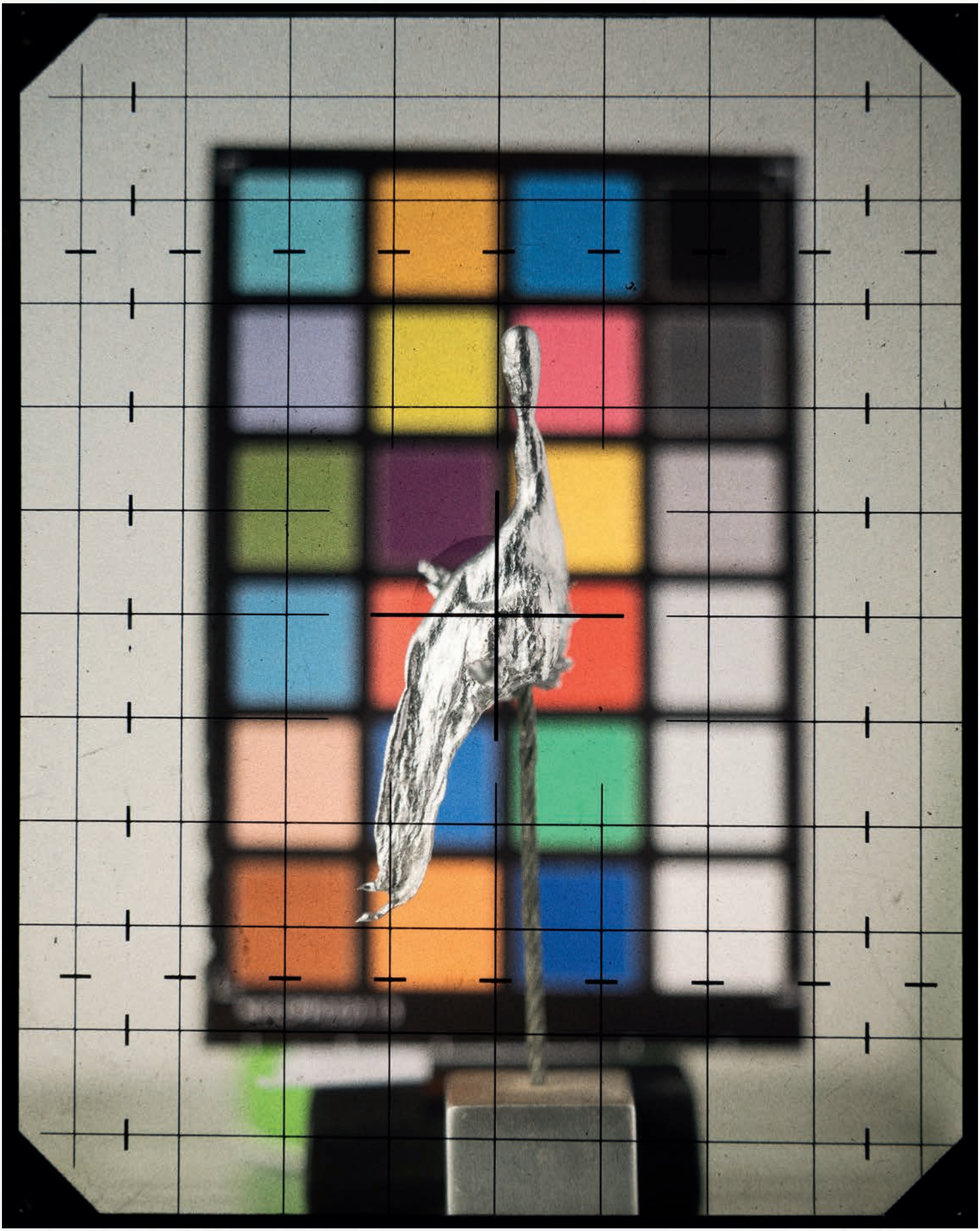

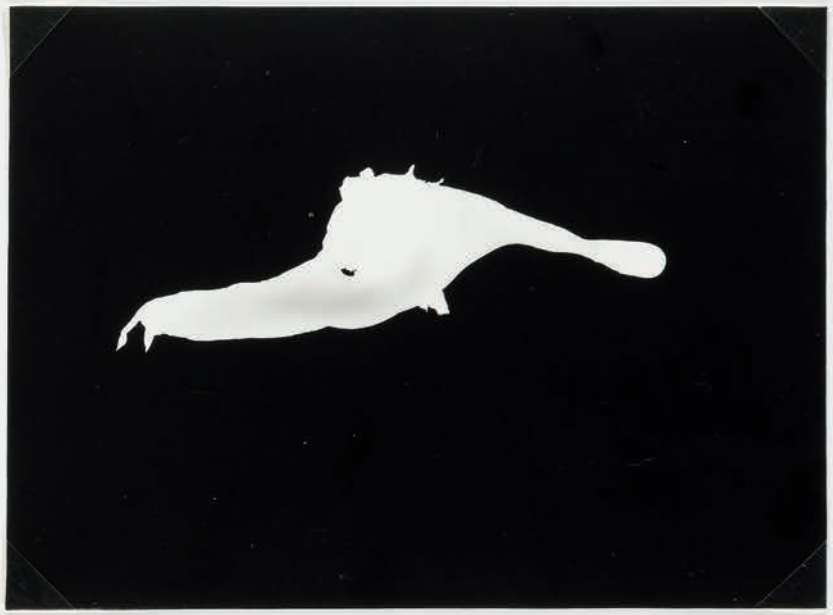

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A6

DEPROPRIATION

MARCUS BOON

For many philosophers appropriation is constitutive of human being. In order to survive we eat, we build territories, we take and we give. Marx, in his early manuscripts, spoke of man's entire relation to world as one of sensory appropriation. More broadly, all political-economic systems that are based on exchange and equivalence may be said to involve appropriation. Capitalism and colonialism can therefore be thought of as particular regimes of appropriation, as are feudalism and "primitive accumulation", while communism as presented in the *Communist Manifesto* involves a reappropriation of that which has been appropriated by the bourgeoisie. A final appropriation if you like. Marx distinguished in the *Grundrisse* between property per se and private property but insisted on the necessity of the former: "an appropriation which does not make something into property is a contradictio in subjecto."[1]

Globalization and digitization both amplify possibilities for appropriation to occur—an appropriation that is associated with "piracy", on the one hand, as the illegitimate possession and exchange of privately owned things, and on the other, as the legally sanctioned mechanisms by which things are taken from the global commons and made part of the market economy. Contemporary discourses concerning "cultural appropriation" stand in uneasy relation to the globalized neoliberal framing of appropriation in relation to private property. On the one hand, they mobilize appropriation as part of the critique of the ways in which marginalized peoples' culture and production have been transformed into capital by/for those who assume hegemonic positions within the global economy.[2] On the other hand, they often assume that culture itself is fundamentally a private property of a particular ethnic or identity group—and that all unsanctioned movement of cultural objects constitutes a kind of theft, whether or not such theft is recognized by existing intellectual property regimes or legal structures. As such, the righting of historical and continuing injustices labeled as "cultural appropriation" often feeds into a neoliberal logic of ubiquitous privatization

and property rights—and becomes part of a much broader assault on the idea of the common or commons today, and the possibility of a shared world.

A question remains, however, about how fundamental appropriation is, and whether all entities can finally be defined as property, whether private or common. I will argue in this essay that there is another position with respect to being, and that one name for it is depropriation. By depropriation I mean to suggest various practices that render things unownable, that refuse the logic of property, and that make such things necessarily part of a public domain or commons. But I also mean depropriation as a fundamental condition of being free of ownership. I will explore a variety of examples of depropriation, including Occupy Wall Street, WikiLeaks, and the recent musical compilation *Music from Saharan Cellphones*. I argue that it's hard to understand what is at stake in these events or phenomena without being clear about depropriation.

The argument is not a nostalgic one, nor exactly utopian. I recognize, following the work of anthropologist Marilyn Strathern, that there is no such thing as a free culture to be found beyond modern, colonial, or capitalist society: that all human societies hitherto have been committed to varying degrees to different kinds of property regimes with different laws, rules, values.[3] Having said that, the intensity of recent moves to mark everything in the world as a particular kind of property and/or private property force us to look more carefully at what is meant by property—and to recognize the importance of certain limits to that concept.

I argue that many of the most interesting social and cultural movements today are developing a conscious practice by which things are rendered unownable and thus made part of a different kind of commons from that discussed by IP scholars like James Boyle and Lawrence Lessig.[4] The idea is a significant one because it suggests that the goal of progressive political and aesthetic movements should not be to make judgments or claims as to a final and authoritative state of belonging or property, however historically disenfranchised those in question are, but to create practices whereby humans and nonhumans can live sustainably without needing to claim ownership. This immediately raises a problem, one pointed out by Marx, who claimed that it was impossible to imagine any basis for life on Earth other than appropriation: We breathe in oxygen, eat plants and animals, learn languages from our parents, and so on. The only way around this would seem to be a radical practice of ascesis, literally starving oneself. This is hardly the case though. As the Buddhist teacher Lama Yeshe observes, the problem for the alcoholic is not the glass of wine itself but his craving for it, his desire to appropriate it.[5] One might even say that the problem isn't whether to drink or not to drink, but the desire to appropriate, own the drinking of it—or the not drinking of it. The problem, an almost unimaginably vast one, is how to recognize this socially and politically, on a global scale.

So: What is depropriation? Obviously it's one of a number of contemporary words in which the prefix "de" indicates a kind of unraveling of something: deconstruction; decolonization; Simone Weil's decreation; Deleuze and Guattari's deterritorialization.[6] The word has several lineages, no doubt interlinked. One passes through French feminist writers, notably Hélène Cixous, who uses the word to describe a state of open embodiment of which the mother's care for a child is exemplary.[7] Another passes through Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's work on mimesis, in which he proposes a mimetic force that undoes ideas of original and copy since it constitutes that plastic, mutable nonthing, which makes both original and copy possible.[8] A further lineage passes through the work of Giorgio Agamben and his notion of a "whatever being" that cannot be understood in terms of property—an idea then taken up by Roberto Esposito in *Communitas*, in which he argues that "depropriazione", a fundamental lack of property, i.e. an impropriety, is the basis of the commonality of mankind, or even of all Being.[9] In other words, that what we share is a lack of property, an unfinishedness, an openness, or vulnerability. Esposito rigorously demonstrates this as a formal and philosophical possibility, drawing on an analysis of the proper and improper in Heidegger, which are often (mis?)translated as authentic and inauthentic.[10] Yet for me, I am continually drawn back to the striking example with which Agamben concludes *The Coming Community:* the crowd of demonstrators in Tiannamen Square, who stand forth in a militarized public space, without demands, asserting their Being. Whether Agamben is completely correct in this analysis, the scenes have been repeated in recent years, in the various locations and uprisings of the Arab Spring. And more recently in the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations, where, for example, one protestor carried a sign "we're here; we're unclear; get used to it".

There is a double structure to depropriation, and perhaps to piracy in a general sense. In the examples I look at,

depropriation functions at both ontological and legal levels: In other words, it is not just a matter of breaking the law of a particular property regime but also of revealing or developing qualities of subject or object that trouble more fundamental definitions of what *is*. Consider my first example: drugs. Colonial empires were built on sugar, tea, coffee, opium, coca, and of course the postcolonial world today can also be described by the "rogue" or "pirate" production of psychoactive substances, whether cocaine production in Colombia, marijuana production in Mexico, or heroin production in Afghanistan.[11] This drug trade is increasingly globalized, from Russian or Israeli distribution of ecstasy, to South East Asian amphetamines, to Mexican pharmacies selling prescription drugs with fake rxes over the Internet. At the micropolitical level drugs are about depropriation because of the way they sometimes transform a normalized subjectivity; they are ecstatic because they can dissolve the "proper self".

One useful way of distinguishing the value of drugs might be to contrast those in which psychic depropriation is followed by a powerful reappropriation in the form of addiction, and those where that doesn't happen. I'm indebted to Michael Taussig's work on ayahuasca shamanism in the Putumayo in Colombia, in which he tries to understand the phenomena of shamanism as a historically specific and diverse form of engagement within a particular colonial and postcolonial situation, so that the healing work of the shaman involves unraveling the terror of colonial appropriation and its various structures.[12] In other words, it involves psychic depropriation through ingestion of the drug, through exposure to the sonic powers of the shaman, and to the collective turbulence of the healing session. Such depropriation itself can be reappropriated through postcolonial ayahuasca tourism, which packages a particular model of "authentic" use of the drug. But even prior to that Taussig notes that there are radical differences between particular shamans' approaches. Some shamans undergo a laborious process of apprenticeship to other shamans, in which the ability to heal is transferred as a kind of private property, reliant on a discourse of authenticity, while others (with whom he is more sympathetic) simply go into the forest and start using the drug, "stealing" it, to use the language of those who consider knowledge of the drug proprietary. Taussig is fascinated by a kind of chaos that occurs in a yage session, a chaos that is chaos precisely because it's not clear what belongs to whom. People vomit. They shit. They imagine snakes shooting in and out of their mouths. They cry and laugh. Trauma, personal, social, historical, and political, opens up, often violently, yet the opening up of trauma is not itself violent if it is voluntarily assented to. Healing proceeds from opening up trauma, from facing a historical or inexistent but present violence. It opens up through sonic counter-practices, through bodily microtransformation through psychoactive substances.

This leads me to my second example: music. Obviously musical piracy is a big issue with a long history. Many of the myths of great performers or new styles involve Promethean acts of theft, by which the secret of a style is revealed and shared. A Sufi myth says that the human soul was called to Earth and embodiment because it required ears to hear music, and this was tempting enough for the soul to sign off on an otherwise questionable proposition.[13] There is something about music that is always already profoundly depropriated. This perhaps accounts for the various ways in which musical forms have been kept secret, and for the capturing and commodification of sound using recording technologies, notation, etc., which seek to turn music into private property. And again, conversely, it's not surprising that the first file sharing scandals were also associated with music. You might say the musical pirate's dilemma is whether to try to own sound.

Music from Saharan Cellphones is a series of compilations made by Oregon-based musician Christopher Kirkley of contemporary Saharan pop music styles, which people who live in various parts of the Saharan diaspora listen to on their cellphones, using Bluetooth to exchange files with each other. The compilations were issued in 2011/2012. Kirkley acquired the recordings from people's cellphones while traveling, by trading selections from his own music collection. He initially put them out on a cassette. The cassette was uploaded as MP3 files onto the net. Now, due to interest, he's putting out a vinyl version of the cassette and trying to track down some of the artists on the Bluetooth files. Meanwhile, a group of remixers and musicians around the world have already contributed a series of remixes and cover versions of the "originals" to another compilation *Music for Saharan Cellphones*, which, among other formats, is being issued in "a limited release 30 limited hand numbered microSD memory cards, to be mailed back to Kidal, Mali with the intention of getting the music back on cellphones."[14] This last gesture reminds me of a Sun City Girls release from the mid-

1990s, *Libyan Dream*, which was "originally released as 50 cassette copies dropped in cassette vendors racks in various cities throughout South East Asia in 1993."[15] Instead of Gayatri Spivak's affirmation of the value of the subaltern's "insertion into the hegemonic", here we might speak of a counter-practice of "insertion in the diasporic".

To what degree can my comments on Taussig's model of depropriation as part of a subaltern postcolonial healing practice be thought through in the case of *Music from Saharan Cellphones*? It is well known that traditional North African rhythmic musics often have a specific healing function. Moroccan Gnawa music, for example. To what degree do such models survive the secularization of music, as for example with the emergence of Touareg "desert blues" in the Libyan settlement camps in the 1990s? For that matter, to what degree are recording, electrification, and use of digital instruments such as drum machines still compatible with an idea of music as a healing practice? One reason for not rejecting such an idea out of hand would be Afrodiasporic traditions, including roots reggae and African American gospel, where cutting-edge sonic technologies are compatible with an explicitly religious and salvatory practice.[16] But in thinking through the music on *Music From Saharan Cellphones* as a piratical endeavor involved in a practice of depropriation, I want to find a way of thinking about "piracy", even in an mp3 market, as a potentially ecstatic practice. I remain convinced that there's a missing aspect to contemporary theorizations of musical subcultures. You can see it in Steve Goodman's recent book *Sonic Warfare*, which is great on the appropriation of military technologies and counter-ecologies of fear within Afrofuturist subcultures, but is almost silent on the ontology of collective joy, which for me is the reason why subcultures gather together anyway.[17] Perhaps this joy is always already post-secular in that it is concerned with an opening that is healing. In which, as Hakim Bey suggests in his book *Immediatism*, it is chaos, exposure to chaos, that heals.[18] One of the challenges here is to understand the aspect of vibrational ontology that Goodman calls "audio virology" as ecstatic. And more than that, that the acts of exchange which happen using Bluetooth, cassettes, mp3 file sharing, etc. are also concerned with ecstatic contagion, as much as the sounds themselves, with their incredible abilities to pass back and forth across the globe.

This brings me to my next example of depropriation: WikiLeaks, the website and group which has made available a number of national and corporate archives for download by anyone on the Internet—including vast caches of US embassy documents and military records. The conventional interpretation of what WikiLeaks is would be that it is concerned with appropriation. In a recent issue of *Radical Philosophy* Finn Brunton points out that in his writings Assange emphasizes that the goal with WikiLeaks isn't breaking into archives but making it easier for someone in a closed community that keeps secrets (he calls this a conspiracy) to leak something.[19] The goal then is to undermine the stability of the group that keeps secrets and in a formal, almost mathematical way, shift the balance from groups that keep secrets to a public or commons where there are no secrets. And to shift from injustice to justice based on the notion that the secrets of unjust groups are more likely to be revealed than those that are based on a just and public practice of engagement.

In Assange's formulation the question of community comes down to making "robust routing decisions". Like everyone else, I was astounded at the emergence of WikiLeaks and the possibility of a radically new form of public knowledge that it implies. However, I find myself unimpressed with the specifics of most of the revelations generated by WikiLeaks so far. The endless exposure of the Big Other does not in itself constitute the basis of a just society, and it's hard to see how the calls for total transparency are not themselves a strange distributed version of a panopticon—the echo of corporate and national cyberwars and data theft, with their emphasis on covert appropriation or scrambling of data, along with strategic public exposure of data in order to damage enemies. I argue that despite the clear practice of depropriation that WikiLeaks involves, transmitting private or state owned archives into a public space that is not owned by anyone, there are significant gaps in Assange's reasoning concerning what will happen to the documents when they're released, and these gaps concern community.

According to Assange's theories, the published documents on WikiLeaks website will generate an ecosystem of readers and interpreters who will collectively assess and expand on the truth contained in the documents. Yet this has not happened in any significant way. In a recent interview Assange blamed this on people's conformity as writers to a group mentality.[20] But there's something instrumental to his view of freedom, as though it would be the outcome, in which particular kinds of

human response are the logical income of being fed certain pieces of information? Yet, the genesis of recent protest movements actually appears not to be related to some particular nugget of information but to a particular gesture or act, as in Tunisia, or even with Wall Street. Assange believes in a reversal of the logic of appropriation and property that governs the nation-state today, but that reversal is not in itself to produce a truly open commons or community.

I will pass quickly to my final example, that of the Occupy movements that sprang up in North America and elsewhere in 2011/2012. One striking analogy between the politics of file sharing and that of the Occupy movements is that the legal prohibitions on direct sharing of copies have resulted in a fragmentation of the object into the distributed forms available on peer-to-peer networks, including WikiLeaks documents.

With the predictable evacuation of the Zuccotti Park occupation in New York on November 15, 2011, along with related movements that spread across the world around that time, the search for the way in which a depropriated community can manifest itself in the public space of the highly capitalized twenty-first century metropolis began anew, but Occupy Wall Street's strength is already that it is a distributed network of many microprotests. Cities today are zones of visibility, spectacles, in the sense that Guy Debord defines them, and public assembly of anything other than consumers or dutiful workers will apparently not be tolerated. No doubt new ways to contest that structure will have to be devised—and they will all involve a logic of postcolonial piracy, since they will be judged illegal in advance, as the various laws regarding public assembly in the UK of recent decades will suggest. One of the current dilemmas facing the Occupy movements is whether to insist on the tent model of occupation of public space as a permanent form of protest or to think of it as what Hakim Bey called a temporary autonomous zone.[21] There is a danger in insisting too much on a permanent appropriation of physical space. In Egypt the occupation of the square led to change; in Tiannamen it didn't. On the other hand, the mobilization of large groups of people at specific demonstrations or moments in time is more a form of depropriation. The problem with this form, familiar to us today in the form of flash mobs, is that it basically leaves existing structures intact outside of the moment of the appearance of the public.

But Occupy Wall Street represents a significant development in terms of the politics of depropriation. To occupy means precisely to inhabit without owning, and the refusal of movement participants to package themselves in terms of a particular set of demands points to occupation as the manifestation of a depropriated community in much the sense that Esposito talks about it: heterogeneous, with "nothing in common", yet claiming commonality precisely in that.[22] The problem, as I see it, is that we do not yet have a practice or, to use a phrase of Badiou, a "popular discipline" that is capable of sustaining such a community.[23]

What does it mean to depropriate in a postcolonial situation? Surely not just to make oneself into a globally disseminated image, or, following Peter Hallward's critique of postcolonial literature, to become an absolute, dissociated singularity, devoid of connection.[24] This, of course, is one of the great fears regarding depropriation: that to let go of a claim of belonging is to lose everything, all the more traumatic since this would repeat the violent appropriation of colonization. Depropriation does not mean "to become nothing" because being in fact is not coextensive with belonging or the ownership of a territory, nor does it mean a lack of manifestation or presence. Depropriation means to allow a movement to happen, to allow a different relation between beings to open up, because that is how the world is changed, i.e. through transformative mimesis.

Finally, what's striking about *Music from and for Saharan Cellphones* is the intense desire to participate in piracy that it reveals. The collection exists because Kirkley participated in exchange in Mali and other places and because there were a network of nodes in North America such as Mississippi Records that also found it interesting to do so. The music on the cellphones is also there because musicians in the Saharan diaspora wanted to participate in particular sonic forms that are not traditional but… precisely: depropriated. Reggae, psych rock, hip-hop, etc.

With WikiLeaks what's powerful about the practice is the invitation to those who participate in rituals of privacy or secrecy to contribute to an ambiguously defined public. The weakness of WikiLeaks resides in the assumption that participation by a community of readers of leaks is automatic and appropriate. WikiLeaks is in fact much more top down and instrumental than it would appear, and its failures relate to a misunderstanding of appropriation and depropriation in which these things are still basically practiced on others.

Occupy Wall Street, despite the appropriative rhetoric of occupying the

structures owned by the 1% on behalf of the 99%, is more clearly involved in a practice of depropriation. It is participatory. Occupation only happens because of those individuals who decide to occupy—and occupation is not the same as ownership. For the most part the demands are non-specific because the goal, whether articulated in this way or not, is to depropriate structures and open up a space of freedom. That space is to resonate with other similarly depropriated spaces. Not just the other Occupy nodes but also other global movements such as the Arab Spring groups. The situations are different, but the stance in relation to those situations is the same.

The issue of stance brings up the problem of practice, in other words, what does a depropriated community do? I argue that all of the situations that I've described today, in both their legal and ontological interest, are manifestations of a broad crisis in our relation to practice. Piracy, ultimately, is a matter of practice, but what kind of practice is it? Piracy blurs lines between work and play, ownership and the commons. Anarchist historians such as Hakim Bey have made the argument that piracy evolved under colonial regimes precisely as an escape from colonial indentured labor.[25] It wouldn't be hard to show that a lot of contemporary phenomena labeled piracy involve the avoidance of work. Others are reliant on the same sweatshop labor that drives much of the official economy. My hypothesis: Practice gravitates toward those places or occasions where it lives in accordance with the deepest truth, which is: the truth of depropriation—even when it lacks the words, legal and political structures to sustain itself.

Thus, for example, downloading cultures, or more broadly subcultures which exchange things like music that are matters of passion, are driven toward something like BitTorrent or peer-to-peer networks not just as a way of evading the strictures of a legal system, but because they have available to them resources in the creation of objects that are real precisely because they ignore prevailing definitions of what an object (or a subject) is in favor of something more profound and more pragmatic.

Hence, it turns out that it is not all necessary for a copy to consist of a laborious produced one to one replica of an entity: thousands of copies of that entity can be montaged together mathematically to assemble a particular object. In fact, that's what all copying, digital or not, is anyway, and we ourselves are largely copies in this sense.

Bricolage is indeed, as Levi-Strauss said, the science of the concrete. Yet the question of what comes to hand for the bricoleur can take radical form. It could take the form of a musical style that belongs everywhere and nowhere, as with *Music from Saharan Cellphones*, or a state or corporate archive, as with WikiLeaks, or the space of the political itself, whether physical as in Zuccotti Park, or the dataspaces in which global finance moves, as with the Occupy movements.

The Pirate's Dilemma then, to repeat, is how to resist appropriating all of this in the name of some property form or other, and instead how to unravel that logic of property and the forms that it takes today in order to affirm a shared space. That shared space is, in fact, the space that we already habit, but the question remains: How do we collectively learn to recognize it?

CODA: AUGUST 2018

Much of the above was written in 2013—at a point when it was still possible to entertain an affirmative sense of depropriation. Much has shifted in the time that has passed, although the fundamental need to resist the marketization of all human activity and to affirm the reality of a shared world and the practices by which it might be attained has not. Accusations of "cultural appropriation" have become part of the core of contemporary liberal/progressive discourse, particularly as it is marked by ideas of intersectionality. Conversely, they have also become a part of ethnonationalist discourses coming from the right. At the heart of this paradox are the mechanisms of neoliberalism itself in the sense that they were defined by Ludwig von Mises in his book *Human Action* in 1949.[26] Where assertions of equality find their form as the equality of individual actors or particular cultural groups competing and making decisions in a market economy, "appropriation" must appear as the threat of the contamination of the rights of property holders, which now are falsely equated with "human rights" in general. That such contamination must be warded off can be understood from a variety of perspectives. In Latourian actor-network theory it is our entanglement in the network which produces reactive attempts to define pure spheres of identity and action. In Girard's analysis the ubiquitousness of processes of mimetic contagion trigger reactive violence as the attempt to assert ownership of properties or qualities that are ultimately unownable and shared.[27]

However, the processes of depropriation that gesture toward a shared

world have themselves become weaponized in complex and paradoxical ways in recent years. WikiLeaks, for example, has become a place where a variety of state sponsored actors can pursue acts of appropriation as a form of extra-legal warfare. One could say something similar about the so-called dark web, or the figure of the hacker more generally, who acts on behalf of private interests and for whom the technosocial commons of the Internet is merely a strategic zone to be taken advantage of. The notion that "the tragedy is the commons" advanced by philosophers such as Nick Land brings us back to Hobbes and the state of nature as a war of all against all.[28] Private property protects us from this war, and depropriation according to this mode of reasoning means only a return to that state of warfare. If this mode of reasoning is accepted, then there can be no depropriation in the sense that I have defined it above, as rendering something unownable and part of the commons—for the commons would be only a space of unregulated appropriation, which can either be celebrated as such, or pointed to as a "tragedy" which justifies the rule of law in its modern bourgeois form as guarantor of the rights of private property owners.

In terms of sharing economies, the depropriated space of file sharing on the Internet is gradually being absorbed by the paradigm of streaming—as found with Spotify, Netflix, or Amazon's Kindle service for books. The model is interesting because it retains some core features of depropriative political economy—access without ownership, principally—while absorbing these features into a conventional business model in which intellectual property rights are leased by the streaming services, which then charge monthly fees for access to the database of recordings. The result is a kind of commons for private subscribers. Indeed, this is echoed in the discourse of the commons that is found in parts of the global art world, and in NGOs where a limited or pseudo-commons appears only as a result of extensive public or private funding. But in many parts of the world, for example Indonesia, where intellectual property protections are weak or non-existent, Bluetooth-based sharing of data still prevails. For certain categories of object, and for those who can afford the monthly fees, streaming appears as a solution to the problem of depropriation—but of course, what remains is the depropriation of wealth itself—taking us back to Marx, or as Kojin Karatani has suggested in his recent book *The Structure of World History*, back to the problem of the gift and the "gift economy".[29] And perhaps, for those of us who have paid such attention to the politics of the copy, imitation, and iteration, it is a reminder of a kind of limit to arguments about the ubiquity of copying. The gift, if—as Derrida and others have noted—it exists, is that which cannot be economized, made equivalent, or given a likeness.[30] It may well be the fate of the gift to be absorbed into an economy, to the point where, as "event of depropriation" (*Ereignis*, Heidegger), it is imperceptible, inexistent. But precisely there, where ideology polices the border of the possible and impossible, the perceptible and the imperceptible, is where depropriation will be found.

1 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (London: Penguin, 1993), 87–88.
2 See, for example: James O. Young and Conrad G. Brunk (eds.), *The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).
3 Marilyn Strathern, "Imagined Collectivities and Multiple Ownership," in *Code: Collaborative Ownership and the Digital Economy*, ed. Rishab Aiyer Ghosh (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 13–28.
4 Cf. Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004); James Boyle, *The Public Domain: Enclosing the Commons of the Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).
5 Lama Yeshe, "The Three Principle Aspects of the Path, Part 1," 1982 lecture, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYmnIYF7uC8 (accessed on Oct. 23, 2018).
6 Simone Weil, "Decreation," in *Simone Weil Reader* (Mt. Kisco, NY: Moyer Bell, 1977), 350–356; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "Treatise on Nomadology," in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 351–423.
7 Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* 1, 4 (summer 1976): 875–893.
8 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*, trans. Christopher Fynsk (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).
9 Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1993); Roberto Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).
10 Esposito, *Communitas*, 95–97.
11 David T. Courtwright, *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).
12 Michael T. Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1986).
13 Hazrat Inayat Khan, *The Mysticism of Music, Sound and Word* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988), 79.
14 "memory cards for africa," https://sahelsounds.com/2011/10/memory-cards-for-africa/ (accessed on Oct. 23, 2018).
15 "Sun City Girls – Libyan Dream," http://www.suncitygirls.com/discography/LibyanDream.php (accessed on Oct. 23, 2018).
16 Jayna Brown, "Buzz and Rumble: Global Pop Music and Utopian Impulse," *Social Text* 28, 1 (2010): 125–146.
17 Steve Goodman, *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).
18 Hakim Bey, *Immediatism* (San Francisco: AK Press, 1994).
19 Finn Brunton, "Keyspace: WikiLeaks and the Assange Papers," *Radical Philosophy* 166 (2011): 8–19.
20 Hans-Ulrich Obrist, "In Conversation with Julian Assange," Part 1, *e-flux* 25 (2011): 16.
21 Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 1991).
22 Esposito, *Communitas*.
23 Alain Badiou, "We Need a Popular Discipline," *Critical Inquiry* 34 (summer 2008): 645–659.
24 Peter Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing between the Singular and the Specific* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2001).
25 Peter Lamborn Wilson, *Pirate Utopias: Moorish Corsairs & European Renegadoes* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2003).
26 Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949).
27 See: Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1991); René Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978).
28 Nick Land on Twitter, @ Outsideness, July 16, 2018, https://twitter.com/Outsideness/status/1018904675838562304 (accessed on Oct. 23, 2018).
29 Kojin Karatani, *The Structure of World History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).
30 Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

BE WITH THE TROUBLE— CULTURAL APPROPRIATION IN AMERICA

BETTINA FUNCKE

"Now art is all about being constructed out of relationships between parts."
— **Laura Owens**[1]

If we take what Laura Owens intended to be a comment on the formal, material process of art-making today and read it as a social, cultural, and political description, we find a key to the American debate over cultural appropriation. Controversies such as those over Kelley Walker at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, Dana Schutz at the Whitney Museum, or Sam Durant at the Walker Art Center signal the arrival of a new era. Recent outrage over cultural appropriation has traumatized people on all sides: Museum officials have resigned, artists have received death threats, viewers have been moved to petition for the destruction of artworks. The relationships between parts are troubled. How did we get here?

Laura Owens, *Untitled*, 2015, installation view, Secession, Vienna, 2015, photo: Jorit Aust

Laura Owens, installation view, Secession, Vienna, 2015, photo: Jorit Aust

During the late 1970s and 80s artists introduced formal, material appropriation as a critical, transformative tool; this moment also happened to be the dawn of neoliberalism and identity politics. Today all three are *in extremis:* Digitally-enhanced neoliberalism is reaching its cruel limits, a new and reactionary kind of identity politics has taken shape, and appropriation in art now primarily implies cultural appropriation. I want to consider some of the ways these three historical figures are intertwined.

In the art context the term appropriation has traditionally referred to an empowering critical tool involving the guerrilla displacement of images. In the late 1970s and early 80s artists established this now ubiquitous gesture of copying with an aim to fragment and dislocate. Appropriation interfered with dominant representations and challenged the power structures implicit in images from art and art history, as well as from the commercial and popular material of what the Frankfurt School called "culture industry". Appropriation was a theft from power.

Decades later the implication of artistic appropriation has been turned on its head, and the presumed theft from power has turned into a presumed theft from the oppressed. According to *Merriam-Webster*, appropriation means unlawfully taking from a rightful owner "under the guise of authority", a phrase which may be taken as a pointed euphemism for the injustices of colonialism, racism, and patriarchy. In this sense, appropriation is a red thread going through the entire history of dispossession, oppression, and marginalization. Current outrage is aimed at the naiveté with which (white) artists are taking images from other cultures or peoples.

The tactic of artistic appropriation was to shift emphasis from original to copy, thus privileging context; this may be considered the primal scene for today's conundrum because the tactic was so successful that it became part of the toolbox for advertising and branding, while appropriation art itself moved from the margins into the museum. Appropriation is still a kind of theft, but its own context has changed. Take, for example, Sam Durant's caustic anti-monument *Scaffold* (2012), which comprises seven historical gallows used in hangings sanctioned by the U.S. government between 1859 and 2006. When exhibited at the Walker Art Center, people of the local Dakota tribe maintained that the work violated their dignity with its implicit reference to the Mankato massacre of 38 Dakota men, and the sculpture was dismantled. The controversy doesn't reveal the failure of one artist or museum so much as expose a systemic failure of representation, or what Durant called the "incredible disconnect between the art world and the rest of the world".[2]

I want to point out that it is the museum that is the interface between those two worlds. Notably, the controversial artworks by Durant, Durham, Schutz, and Walker had all been previously exhibited, without controversy, before being brought to American museums. Homi Bhabha has suggested that "we can never quite control these acts [of cultural appropriation] and their signification. They exceed intention."[3] Everyone grasps that a museum exists to unite different parts within a master narrative, a narrative synonymous with cultural power. Perhaps it is partly this hegemonic cut and paste—an apparent appropriation—that foregrounds that which exceeds the artists' intentions.

Both appropriation art and much post-colonial thinking emerged from the momentum of post-structuralism with its anti-essentialism and pursuit of coded hierarchies and fixed meanings. In this light, there is a shared history. Gregg Bordowitz remembers that "in the early 1980s, appropriation was understood as a tactic of counterculture—in art, but also in a larger counter-culture encompassing left-wing liberation struggles over race, gender, sexuality."[4] Coco Fusco recalls an "evolving debate that actually began in the late 1970s in relation to the establishment of minority cultural spaces and ethnic studies, then moved into discussions of black feminism and black masculinity, before merging with a multiplicity of debates in the 1980s—relating to institutional critique, postmodernism, feminism etc."[5] For Fusco, the "crisis of identity" was a symptom of a decentering of conceptual and ideological frameworks that had given people a sense of rootedness in their world. Identity "was addressed as a term to be analyzed from many angles",[6] not simply two opposing sides, as is common practice with today's us versus them. However, if initially identity politics was about forming a community to achieve visibility in demanding civil rights, today its essentializing claims often seem to shore up existing structures of capital and power. Rather than breaking down borders, discrimination, fear of others, and other forces of separation in order to demand equality, it shuts down dialogue and rewards self-singularization. As Fred Moten observed, "individuation is the incarceration of difference".[7]

Sarah Schulman has lamented the repression of conflict and difference in a neoliberal culture, which enforces "this idea you're supposed to be open

and available, liking things, minimizing conflict".[8] In her influential book *Conflict Is Not Abuse* Schulman writes: "The force that takes conflict and misrepresents it as abuse is called escalation. Escalation is a kind of smokescreen to cover up the agent's own influence on events, their own contributions to the conflict. […] Escalation under these circumstances is a resistance to self-knowledge."[9] This resistance to self-knowledge—be it out of cowardice, fear, anger, or resignation—haunts the cultural appropriation debates. Calls for the destruction of artworks, death threats, and refusals to engage in dialogue are all forms of escalation which seek to avoid being with the trouble and the pursuit of a deeper self-knowledge. Culture's most interesting creative achievements occur in the liminal space of overlap and difference; culture is relational, and not solely a history of domination.[10] As Edouard Glissant urged: "Consent not to be a single being!"[11]

Friends tell me: Don't write about cultural appropriation, you'll get in trouble. But why is it that we cannot now be with the trouble? Part of it may be traced to some of the issues highlighted by both early artistic appropriation and nascent identity politics: our age's anxiety around copy and original, and the corresponding importance of context. In the intervening years these issues have only sharpened. Neoliberalist policies and digital technologies have brought us to a state of digital liquidity where everything is endlessly duplicated, shared, disseminated, and decontextualized. Copying is the state of Western culture now, its dominant feature, reaching all areas of life, grounded in the contemporary omnipresence of networks. In social media we are all copied and reproduced. You could even say there is no longer such a thing as a copy, as Seth Price proposed in *Was ist Los?* (2003). But when there is no copy, what is an original? Thus the new digital anxiety: How to grasp and retain control over what is deeply you or yours and what, nevertheless, you possess only fleetingly—your culture, your image, your style, your habits and mannerisms, your history, and your sorrows.

Culture has always been about belonging, through shared rituals and ways of remembering, often in relation to objects or communal gatherings. While this used to take place in person, technological development has largely pushed culture and belonging into the digital arena. Hito Steyerl argues that "the thing formerly called real life has already become deeply imaged".[12] For Steyerl, the artist's task now lies in finding different forms of circulation. In art, value has shifted unstoppably toward the *many* ways to recall, annotate, personalize, edit, authenticate, display, mark, transfer, and engage a work. We need to move information, manage it, parse it, organize it, and distribute it. As Laura Owens put it, referring to the incorporation of methods and images with prior uses, art is now constructed out of relationships between parts. Parts may be taken to refer to images; their reproduction methods; that which they communicate; their cultural reference points; the ways they signify differently to different people. Art points to a relationship between the stages that images, copies, and representations go through. Art engages the question of what images are made of, what state they are in. Today art necessarily traces, houses, or performs the disquieting shifts and instabilities within images that haunt our daily life. In this sense, it's not realistic not to appropriate: An artist must tackle appropriation if she wishes to deal with culture and how it works. Of course, cultural appropriation itself is in some ways simply a recirculation of images. So what kind of storytelling can adapt to the technological novelty and vastness of the database as archive, while remaining in touch with specific, localized sensibilities and the histories of particular images?

Art is a traffic in symbols and images, and it has never been politically or historically neutral. We should face the abyss brought out by art's traffic in symbols. We cannot, in Schulman's words, hide behind the smoke screen of escalation, as confusing and painful—or ostensibly distracting—as the chasm may be. In conclusion I would quote Zadie Smith: "I do not find discussions on appropriation and representation to be in any way trivial. […] The solution remains as it has always been: Get out (of the gallery) or go deeper in (to the argument)."[13]

1 Laura Owens (quoted by Peter Schjeldahl), "The Radical Paintings by Laura Owens," *The New Yorker*, Oct. 30, 2017.

2 Devon Van Houten Maldonado, "Sam Durant Speaks About the Aftermath of His Controversial Minneapolis Sculpture," *Hyperallergic* (July 14, 2017), https://hyperallergic.com/390552/sam-durant-speaks-about-the-aftermath-of-his-controversial-minneapolis-sculpture (accessed on Jan. 10, 2018).

3 Homi Bhabha (roundtable participant), "Cultural Appropriation: A Roundtable," *Artforum* (summer 2017): 270.

4 Gregg Bordowitz (roundtable participant), "Cultural Appropriation: A Roundtable," *Artforum* (summer 2017): 269.

5 Coco Fusco, "Decades of Identity Politics," *Texte zur Kunst* (Sept. 2017): 114.

6 Fusco, 118.

7 Fred Moten, "Black and Blur: Fred Moten in Conversation with Arthur Jafa," (discussion) The Graduate Center, The City University of New York, Dec. 11, 2017.

8 Sarah Schulman in conversation with Caroline Busta and Anke Dyes, "True and False Victims," *Texte zur Kunst* (Sept. 2017): 50.

9 Sarah Schulman, *Conflict Is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility, and the Duty of Repair* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016), 139.

10 Cf. Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

11 Quoted by Fred Moten as the title of his forthcoming trilogy, the first of which is *Black and Blur* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

12 Hito Steyerl and Laura Poitras in Conversation, "Techniques of the Observer," *Artforum* (May 2015): 338–341.

13 Zadie Smith, "Getting In and Out: Who Owns Black Pain?" *Harper's Magazine* (July 2017), https://harpers.org/archive/2017/07/getting-in-and-out (accessed on Jan. 10, 2018).

GIVING AND TAKING—RENEGOTIATING LITERARY CITATION CULTURE

ANNETTE GILBERT

According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, a "citation" has three different meanings: "1. A quotation from or reference to a book, paper, or author, especially in a scholarly work. 2. A mention of a praiseworthy act in an official report […]. 3. A summons to appear in court."[1] The latter definition has taken on a surprising significance: There is a growing number of cases in which authors are actually being cited to appear in court for their citations, for quoting from a foreign source, and being admonished in public—and not just in the strictly regulated scientific or journalistic fields but also in the literary realm, where freer rules apply to the practice of citation. To date, literature had neither a codification nor a systematic burden of proof for quotes.

But things are changing. The citation, the unreferenced citation, in particular—a customary and widespread aesthetic strategy up to a few decades ago, especially in postmodern narratives—has almost become the epitome of ill repute in the meanwhile. Public disputes evidence that we find ourselves in the midst of a process of renegotiating giving and taking in literature and the formation of a new citation ethos. The trigger in all of the three "court cases" from the year 2010, which will be introduced here, was not the act of citing itself but the lack of disclosure: The criticized citations were neither identified as such nor were their sources documented. Is there now an obligation to provide sources in literature as well? When someone quotes a citation must the source also be quoted along with it?

ARTISTIC FREEDOM

In 2010 David Shields published his manifesto *Reality Hunger*, which was conceived as an "*ars poetica* for a burgeoning group of interrelated (but unconnected) artists in a multitude of forms and media […] who are breaking larger and larger chunks of 'reality' into their work."[2] The motto by Picasso that prefixes the book already makes clear: "Art is theft." Accordingly, Shields' manifesto consists of 618 aperçus that make no secret of the fact they are largely taken from the works of others and thereby propagate plagiarism

and appropriation as a contemporary aesthetic strategy.

Random House found it too daring and urged Shields to include an appendix listing all of his sources. Shields fulfilled this demand, however he preceded the appendix with a statement condemning it as an illegitimate intervention into his artistic freedom which contradicts the intention: He consciously omitted the references "to regain a freedom that writers from Montaigne to Burroughs took for granted and that we have lost." (p. 207) Unsettling the reader by not knowing "whose words you've just read is not a bug but a feature." (ibid.) In interviews Shields was even clearer, voicing that the burden of proof for the use of intellectual property, as known in the sciences, has no place in literature: "The citation of sources belongs to the realms of journalism and scholarship, not art. Citation domesticates the work, flattens it, denudes it, robs it of its excitement, risk, danger."[3] To salvage his artistic approach, he subverted the usual standards of citation by leaving the extent of the quote open, not identifying modifications, and providing imprecise bibliographical information, explaining that there were a number of sources he "couldn't find or forgot along the way." (p. 207) Furthermore, he asked the readers to ignore the appendix when not totally remove it from the book. He even added helpful cutting lines with a scissors symbol.

MORAL OBLIGATIONS

Whereas the publishing house demanded the references from Shields, in the case of Michel Houellebecq's novel *The Map and the Territory* it was the public who denounced the author's citing practice. Once again, it is about unreferenced citations. In the author's defense, the publisher contended that the incriminating passages from Wikipedia were extremely short and edited quotations. Apart from that, Wikipedia itself also would not provide any authors' names for the texts. This argument revealed a misunderstanding: With its innovative production method and its principle of collective authorship, Wikipedia abandons established copyright law, but through its usage of the Creative Commons License (CC BY-SA) it attempts to institutionalize more contemporary copyright provisions. Hence, Wikipedia texts are nowhere near a common good. They, too, are subject to terms of use, albeit not legally codified rather ethically justified and developed in democratic decision-making processes: Free usage is only permitted with proper identification of the quote and naming the source including URL and the version date.

After numerous turbulences—while Houellebecq's novel was placed on the Internet for free by disgruntled activists—and drawn-out negotiations with Wikipedia, the publishing house and the author settled on a note of acknowledgment, which can be found on the last page of the book since the paperback edition, ending with the line: "I also thank Wikipedia (http://fr.wikipedia.org) and its contributors, whose entries I have occasionally used as a source of inspiration, notably those concerning the housefly, the town of Beauvais, and Frédéric Nihous".[4]

The confession of a guilty sinner sounds different, not to mention the fact that the citations in the text are still not marked and the exact URLs still missing. Nevertheless, the president of Wikipedia France, Adrienne Alix, was satisfied, for the acknowledgment was halfway an admission that "Wikipedia authors are not 'nothing' and that their work and their contributions must be recognized".[5]

Here an argument surfaces in the discussion that seriously counters artistic freedom: It is also about recognizing the efforts of those who made a contribution to one's own work to a certain extent. Insofar, the acknowledgment that Houellebecq chose as an apology also proves to be an adequate place as it reveals precisely the moral obligation that characterizes the giving and taking in literature and from which a real obligation to pay dues can be derived. The transparency attained with the acknowledgment implies a recognition of this obligation and reveals "the limits to the sovereignty available to the author for his/her work (as property)",[6] so that Wikipedia can generously overlook that the half-hearted formulation Houellebecq eventually chose raises doubts about the sincerity of his gratefulness.

DOUBLE STANDARDS

In the case of Helene Hegemann's debut novel *Axolotl Roadkill* (2010) it is also the paratexts which document the process of renegotiating literary citation practice. Celebrated as an authentic voice of the noughties generation, Hegemann was literally cited in front of the court when it was discovered that she let the texts of others flow into her novel. Like Shields, she also finds her approach "totally legitimate"[7] as it "follows the aesthetic principle of intertextuality".[8]

Attentive readers didn't need quotation marks as a warning: The novel is full of references to the predefined nature of language—for instance, when a "or

whatever you call it" or a "I think that's what they call it" is squeezed in and breaks the illusion of authentic speech. Also the foreign aspect of one's own thinking and speaking is frequently stated: "because there are so many thoughts that you can't distinguish your own from other people's" and "they've imbued me with a language that is not my own." The novel celebrates the reproducing, citational character and uncertain origin of one's own language, which Hegemann also mentions in her press statement with a touch of defiance: "Absolutely nothing comes from me, even I am not from me (this line is stolen from Sophie Rois, by the way)".[9]

The recourse to foreign text material per se is not reprehensible. The ideologeme of intertextual theory that we only speak in citations and there is no private ownership in language and literature is largely accepted; the foreign in the own is deemed an ineluctable *conditio moderna*.[10] What discredited Hegemann in the eyes of the public was the missing reference to the sources, which was interpreted as misleading her readers, a lack of respect toward the cited authors, and a breach of fairness. One part in her novel caused particular outrage and clearly articulates this nonchalant treatment of sources: When the main character Mifti asks her brother whether he made up the saying "Berlin is here to mix everything with everything", he replies: "I steal from anywhere that resonates with inspiration or fuels my imagination […] It's not where I take things from – it's where I take them to." The fact that this attitude is one and the same as the author's is illustrated in Hegemann's nearly word-for-word repetition in her defense in front of the press, where she put the same words in her mouth when she argued: "I come from a field where writing a novel is more like being a director, taking things wherever one finds inspiration. […] And it totally doesn't matter to me at all where people take the elements for all their experiments from, the main thing is where they take them to."[11]

The irreverence toward the sources is not only aptly described with the words "totally doesn't matter" but also practiced as this passage also consists of unmarked quotes from Jim Jarmusch and Jean-Luc Godard. In this light, it is not exactly convincing when Hegemann praises the blogger Airen—from whom she "downright copied an entire page without making many changes"—as a "great writer" whom she "tries to communicate with a bit through the book".[12] This invitation to communicate is anyhow poisoned when the dialogue between Mifti and her brother continues: When Mifti asks again, "So you didn't make it up?" he answers "No, it's from some blogger." The namelessness which the cited blogger is now damned to robs him of every chance of recognition and attaining symbolic capital, and once again reflects the lack of fairness. One is tempted to transfer the novel character's disregard for the unknown blogger to Hegemann's relationship with the blogger Airen, for he remained nameless in the first edition as well. His name only appears in the "thanks to:" of later German editions.

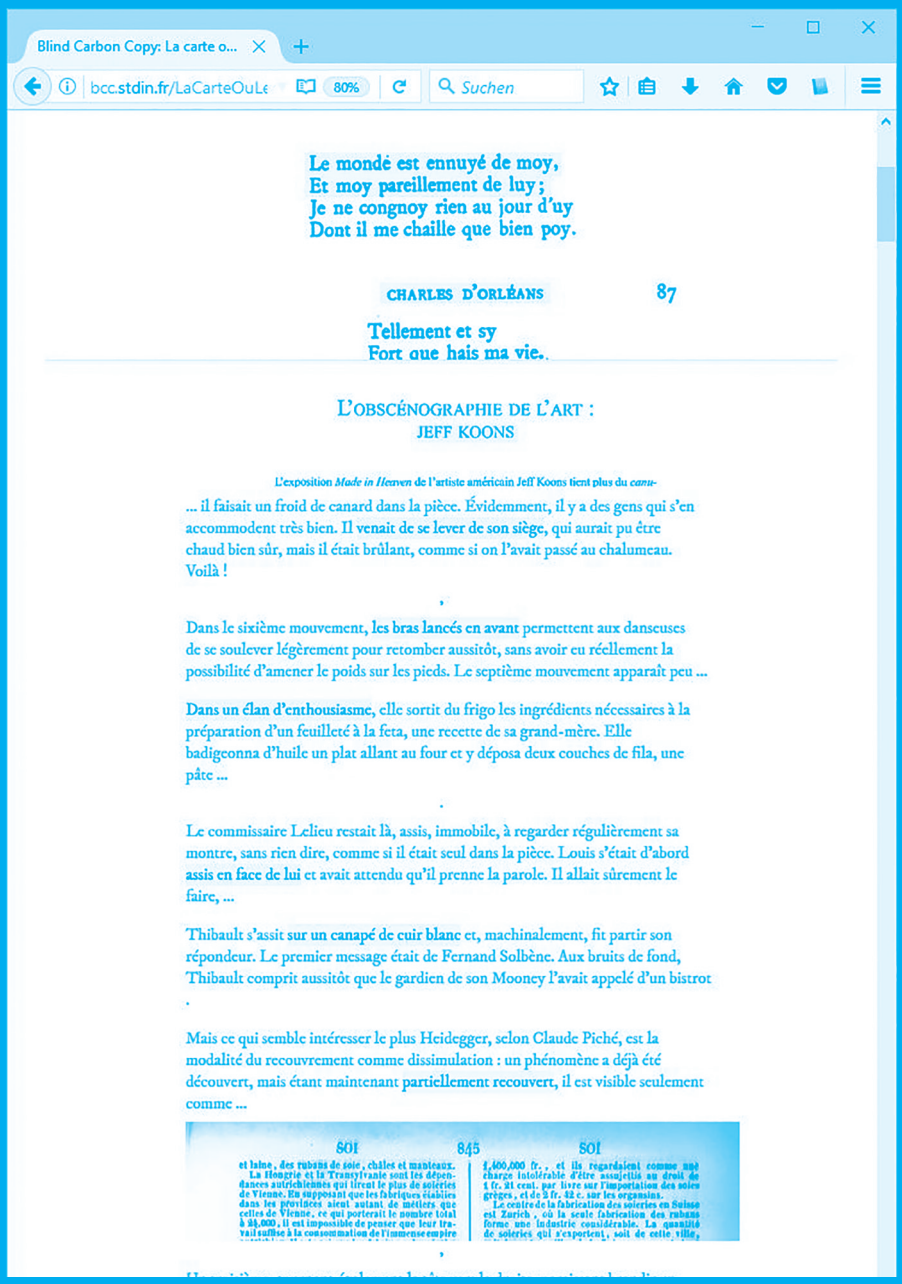
Between the lines, this acknowledgment says as much as that by Houellebecq. It reveals that it does "matter" to Hegemann where the texts she used originate—a "particular thanks" indeed goes to Kathy Acker, the Queen of Punk and grandmaster of collage and plagiarism, which likely serves less as a source reference but as a token of her own gain in authority. And that's not all. While "some blogger" like Airen vanishes into anonymity and Acker should enhance the novel's reputation with her symbolic capital, David Foster Wallace's contribution is explicitly honored, not only by listing his name under the corresponding quote in the first German edition but also by providing the source prominently in the imprint in the prelims of the book. The copyright symbol tells us that the publishers of the German original, the Ullstein Verlag, acquired the rights to print and potentially paid for them. David Foster Wallace is thus awarded a form of recognition that transcends mere acknowledgment. The copyright symbol illustrates that moral obligations can also be legally codified and economically founded in the realm of the fine arts.

The differentiation applied to the use of foreign texts in *Axolotl Roadkill* undermines Hegemann's defense strategy. At the same time, it reflects power structures. Because, as in the case of Houellebecq, one gets the impression that the standards for dealing with the intellectual property of others—especially those of weaker author positions, such as the Wikipedia authors collective and bloggers—can be annulled with the greatest of ease. It can be presumed here that the sharing culture of the Generation Internet is being misunderstood. It fights for the free use of resources but is still rooted in rules of respect and recognition, which inherently include the imperatives of fairness and reciprocity when dealing with sources.

As a result of the public debates around these novels, it becomes apparent, according to the general sense of rights and morality, that the use of foreign text sources should also be transparent in literary works and at least be compensated

with clear crediting and reference to their origins. While Hegemann initially called her method "totally legitimate", she later acknowledged that "the people's entitlement to be named in the book is legitimate", that indicating the source of the citations "is right for ethical reasons",[13] even though she still finds this a problem aesthetically. A year later in 2011 the German paperback edition was accompanied with an appendix including an almost exemplary list of references.

It is followed by a slightly modified "thanks to:" and a note about the "aesthetic principle of intertextuality" which the novel is built upon. With this conclusion the publishers aim to protect themselves against any subsequent discoveries of unreferenced citations and address the realm of the unconscious in literature. In the end, not all citations are conscious or intentional decisions. Moreover, the publishers use this approach to respond to the new detectability of smaller and smaller traces of elements of a text in another text. As quick as it is to copy and paste something in the digital age, a citation can be traced back equally so effortlessly, whereby such research of sources, when taken to the extreme, can lead to dubious results, as documented by Stéphanie Vilayphiou in *La Carte ou le Territoire* (2013) and John Cayley and Daniel C. Howe in *How It Is in Common Tongues* (2012).



Stéphanie Vilayphiou, *La Carte ou le Territoire*, 2013, http://bcc.stdin.fr/LaCarteOuLeTerritoire, screenshot.

EXCESSES OF DETECTABILITY

The projects trace all of the words used in the eponymous novels by Michel Houellebecq and Samuel Beckett back to pre-existing texts. To this end, they systematically trawled through the inventory of Google Books and other

Internet sources for sentence fragments from the novels and presented them as a patchwork of thousands of quotes.[14] Vilayphiou connects snippets of the findings together and marks the (purportedly) cited fragments in them. If you follow the yellow threads, you read Houellebecq's novel; click on the snippet and you arrive at the "source text" that Houellebecq supposedly took his words from. Cayley and Howe, on the other hand, permeate the novel text with footnotes, each citing a URL to the location of the corresponding text. In brackets there is a note about how often the passage can be found on the Internet. With passages like "say it as I hear it" it can quickly number in the millions (2,620,000 results).

The arbitrariness of this form of evidence, which has less to do with proof and the interpretation of a literary mesh of relationships than the trivial display of a superficial coincidence of certain word sequences, is quite obvious. It produces equally as absurd results as amateur philologist and anti-Semite Paul Albrecht's twelve-volume, self-financed and published curious indictment *Leszing's Plagiate* (Lessing's Plagiarism) from 1888 in which he tries to prove, in the framework of a "post-mortem criminal trial" on nearly 2500 pages, that "all of [Gotthold Ephraim] Lessing's work was stolen from A to Z" and that "own thoughts don't even come up in Lessing, everything we like about him is a product of foreign minds."[15]

Nevertheless, the citation of all of these sources *in potentialis* practiced here does have a persuasive power, for the wording is veritably the same. It is questionable, however, what is actually achieved with this purely positivist "source research". First off, it only corroborates the principal iterability of language and

how it was I quote[1] before Pim with[2] Pim after Pim[3] how it is three parts I[4] say it as I hear it[5]

voice once without[6] quaqua on all sides[7] then in me when[8] the panting stops[9] tell me again finish telling me[a] invocation

past[b] moments old dreams[c] back again or fresh like those[d] that pass or[e] things things always and[f] memories I say them as I[10] hear them murmur[11] them in the mud

in[12] me that were without[13] when the panting stops[14] scraps of an ancient voice in[15] me not mine

my[16] life last state last version[17] ill-said ill-heard ill-recaptured[18] ill-murmured in the[19] mud brief[1a] movements of the lower face losses[1b] everywhere

recorded[1c] none the less it's[1d] preferable somehow[1e] somewhere

[1]www.nytimes.com/books/first/w/wiesel-sea.html (Aug 14, 2012. 1)
[2]www.cameracellularphone.org/tag/device (id. 1)
[3]www.kwarmmeud.com/darknesslakorns/?p=1501 (id. 4)
[4]www.youtube.lu/watch?v=MAsddbn_2LM (id. 2) [5]cucurbite.wordpress.com/ (id. 2620000)
[6]gorwathawarband.guildlaunch.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=8563276 (id. 2)
[7]pplsorce.com/people/Jim_Quaqua/ (id. 3) [8]celebrityzap.com/AJ_Langer.html (id. 5)
[9]www.parrothouse.com/hlthcare.html (id. 4290)
[a]kindle.amazon.com/work/sample?asin=B002HHLW4M&pr=1&publisher=A3SWXVW6XL4CG8 (id. 1) [b]sonicliving.com/artist/182670/past (id. 3200) [c]www.blurb.ca/tags/design (id. 25) [d]www.iraised.it/s/web/index.php?page=7&q=come-back-quotes (id. 3)
[e]www.sqlsaturday.com/158/privacypolicy.aspx (id. 7070)
[f]www.ilovephilosophy.com/viewtopic.php?f=5&t=142604&start=75 (id. 1)
[10]pulsitemeter.com/military/Past-of-Hear.html (id. 2) [11]www.bartleby.com/84/31.html (id. 29900) [12]www.facebook.com/dcctowing (id. 7860) [13]lfpoa.com/headlines/resignation.htm (id. 68300) [14]www.cioran63.com/archief76.html (id. 9)
[15]circle.ubc.ca/bitstream/handle/2429/22333/UBC_1980_A1 M37.pdf?sequence=1 (id. 1)
[16]twicsy.com/i/XVig9 (id. 8) [17]garagepunk.ning.com/profile/deuceloosely (id. 1)
[18]avevilonaso.comyr.com/life-in-forsyth-finnegans-wake.php (id. 1) [19]krex.k-state.edu/dspace/bitstream/2097/9824/1/LD2668R41985B72.pdf (id. 1)
[1a]www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-63262234.html (id. 4430)
[1b]www.goodreads.com/trivia/submitted/1057191-jason (id. 1)
[1c]www.ustream.tv/recorded/24228375 (id. 843) [1d]www.xula.edu/cpsc/cs/megang/ (id. 19600)
[1e]socrates.berkeley.edu/~plab/Palmer_Chap-08.pdf (id. 5710)

[7]

John Cayley and Daniel C. Howe, *How It Is in Common Tongues, Cited from the Commons of digitally inscribed writing*, (Providence: NLLF Press, 2012), 7.

2010 LESZING's Plagiate.

971. **Misz Sara Sampson.**

Erster Aufzug, Siebenter Auftritt.

Sara. . . . . . Dessen Herz musz ruhiger oder musz ruchloser seyn, als meines, welcher nur einen Augenblick zwischen sich und dem Verderben mit Gleichgültigkeit nichts, als ein schwankendes Brett, sehen kann.*) In jeder Welle, die an unser Schiff schlüge, würde mir der Tod entgegenrauschen; jeder Wind würde mir von den väterlichen Küsten Verwünschungen nachbrausen, und der kleinste Sturm würde mich ein Blutgericht über mein Haupt zu seyn, dünken. —**)

LESZING, Misz Sara Sampson, Erster Aufzug, Siebenter Auftritt. L. u. M., Bd. II, p. 278.

*) 971β: — „He must be insensible indeed, who is not „affected . . . . ."

**) Plagio-Peplagiomenon: — In die 971α genannten HORATIUS'schen Verse bricht Lovelace nach seiner Überfahrt von Dover nach Frankreich aus. Sara's vorstehende Worte sind eine Variante derselben! —

972. **Misz Sara Sampson.**

Erster Aufzug, Siebenter Auftritt.

Sara. . . . . . Es musz dieses der Tag seyn, an dem Sie mich die Martern aller hier verweinten Tage vergessen lehren. Es musz dieses der heilige Tag seyn — Ach! welcher wird es denn endlich seyn?*)

LESZING, Misz Sara Sampson, Erster Aufzug, Siebenter Auftritt. L. u. M., Bd. II, p. 278.

*) Plagio-Peplagiomenon: — Ein Diebschiasma! Links soll der *Egli*, Mellefont, rechts sollen die *Elle*, Clarissa und Harriet, den Tag der Tage nennen! —

LESZING's Plagiate. 2011

971. 971α]

sed timor et minæ
scandunt eodem quo dominus: neque
decedit ærata triremi . . .
. . . . . atra cura.

Quintus HORATIUS Flaccus aus Venusia, carmina, III, I, 37—40, l. c., tomus I, p. 134, und Samuel RICHARDSON, Clarissa: Or, The History of a Young Lady; Comprehending The most Important Concerns of Private Life, And particularly shewing The Distresses that may attend the Misconduct Both of Parents and Children, In Relation to Marriage, Letter VIII, 50, Mr. Lovelace, To John Belford, Esq; l. II c., vol. VIII, p. 223.

971β]

The London Merchant: Or, The History of George Barnwell.

Act I, Scene, A Room in Thorowgood's House, Enter Thorowgood and Trueman.

Trueman. He must be insensible indeed, who is not affected . . . . .

George LILLO, The London Merchant, Or, The History of George Barnwell, Act I, Scene, A Room in Thorowgood's House, Enter Thorowgood and Trueman. l. I c., p. 9.

972. 972α]

He*) hoped, he said, that on his return I**) would name his happy day;

Samuel RICHARDSON, Clarissa: Or, The History of a Young Lady; Comprehending The most Important Concerns of Private Life, And particularly shewing The Distresses that may attend the Misconduct Both of Parents and Children, In Relation to Marriage, Letter III, 61, Miss Clarissa Harlowe, To Miss Howe. l. II c., vol. III, p. 305.

*) i. e. Lovelace.

**) i. e. Clarissa.

Paul Albrecht, *Leszing's Plagiate*, vol. V (Hamburg: 1891), 2010–2011.

literature. In their artistic projects both Vilayphiou as well as Cayley and Howe demonstrate the easy detectability of sources as the flip-side to the pervasive copy-and-paste practice, whose undesired side effects are just now starting to be discussed. However, an opportunity might reside precisely within this omnipresent availability and the increasingly observed excessiveness of this form of "detection", as it ultimately fosters a more conscious, transparent, and fair approach to dealing with sources.

1 Oxford University Press, *Oxford Dictionaries*, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/citation (accessed on Feb. 23, 2018).

2 David Shields, *Reality Hunger. A Manifesto* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2011), No. 1, 9 [all following page numbers refer to this edition.].

3 Sonya Chung, "The Millions Interview: David Shields," *The Millions* (Feb. 11, 2010), http://www.themillions.com/2010/02/the-millions-interview-david-shields-part-two.html (accessed on Feb. 23, 2018).

4 Michel Houellebecq, *The Map and The Territory*, trans. Gavin Bowd (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 717.

5 Original press text no longer available online. Translated for this publication.

6 Natalie Binczek et al., "Eine delikate Materie. Einleitende Bemerkungen," in *Dank sagen. Politik, Semantik und Poetik der Verbindlichkeit*, eds. Natalie Binczek et al. (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2013), 7–17, here 11.

7 Press statement by Helene Hegemann: "'Axolotl Roadkill': Helene Hegemann und Ullstein Verlegerin Dr. Siv Bublitz antworten auf Plagiatsvorwurf," *BuchMarkt* (Feb. 7, 2010), http://www.buchmarkt.de/archiv/axolotl-roadkill-helene-hegemann-und-ullstein-verlegerin-dr-siv-bublitz-antworten-auf-plagiatsvorwurf (accessed on Feb. 23, 2018). Translated for this publication.

8 Helene Hegemann, *Axolotl Roadkill*, trans. Katy Derbyshire (London: Cosair, 2012), e-book [all following quotations from the novel refer to this edition].

9 Press statement.

10 Cf. Philipp Theisohn, *Plagiat. Eine unoriginelle Literaturgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 2009), 469.

11 Press statement.

12 Ibid.

13 Both quotes from: Cosima Lutz, "Ich beraube schonungslos meine Freunde und mich selbst." (Interview with Helene Hegemann), *Die Welt* (Feb. 9, 2010), https://www.welt.de/welt_print/kultur/article6312145/Ich-beraube-schonungslos-meine-Freunde-und-mich-selbst.html (accessed on Feb. 23, 2018). Translated for this publication.

14 Cf. "Blind Carbon Copy: La Carte Ou Le Territoire," http://bcc.stdin.fr/LaCarteOuLeTerritoire/ and "How It Is in Common Tongues," http://thereadersproject.org/docspdfs/hiiict.pdf (accessed on Feb. 23, 2018).

15 All quotes from: Paul Albrecht, *Leszing's Plagiate*, vol. 1 (Hamburg: self-published, 1888), 4, 73, and 3. Translated for this publication.

EASY IS THE NEW DIFFICULT

KENNETH GOLDSMITH

Easy is the new difficult. It is difficult to be difficult, but it is even more difficult to be easy. Easy is not easy. Easy takes effort, just as difficulty takes effort.

I want an easy art, an art of pure pleasure, an art that is completely understandable by anyone viewing it, an art that doesn't leave you puzzled, an art that ties up every loose end, dots every *i* and crosses every *t*, an art that leaves nothing to chance, ensuring that the experience of engaging in this art will be the one that is desired by the artist. I want an art that leaves no nagging questions, is insanely simple in its goals, and meets everyone of them unequivocally. I want an art where the philosophical questions posed in the work are answered in the experience of the work itself. I want an art that my mother can understand.

Sisyphus's uphill struggles are consumed with brute physicality, but downhill, there is time for contemplation. Sisyphus's travails, then, are bifurcated between easy and difficult, between body and mind. Camus proposed that the downhill interval was the apotheosis and salvation of Sisyphus's torment, a recurrent moment in which he was able to philosophically to reconcile his eternal damnation before proceeding uphill once more. With reconciliation comes peace; after that, difficulty is less difficult—ease and difficulty collapse into one. "Happiness and the absurd are two sons of the same earth. They are inseparable," wrote Camus, for which we might substitute the words easy and difficult.

Sisyphus's difficulty, legendarily remarked upon, is quantifiable; his interval, less so. Ease is vanquished because it's too internalized; few sweat when they think. The depiction of thought is difficult. The depiction of difficulty is easy, making for compelling images: images of muscle, sweat, exhaustion, struggle, and damnation are easily rendered. I'm thinking of the sculpture of Atlas bearing his globe in Rockefeller Center, as opposed to Rodin's *The Thinker*, one of the few sculptures dedicated specifically to depiction of cognition. Atlas is an empathetic figure: Looking at him, we are reminded of how light by comparison our own burdens are.

Like Sisyphus, Atlas carries a warning about crime and punishment; we might be well advised to behave in a certain way so as to avoid ending up in such a situation. In both narrative and depiction Atlas reaches out to us, and in this way his struggles set the stage for an empathetic, relational, and social art. Atlas's condition is couched in narrative; there's a reason why he's burdened, and there's a potential escape from it. We know, for instance, that Atlas tried to trick Heracles into bearing his burden for a moment while he went to pick some apples. Heracles obliged for a moment, then quickly caught on, throwing the ball back to Atlas who, to this day, continues to bear the burden. But the story is not over: He's still on the lookout for someone else to take over. Difficulty is ever-evolving; there's always another chapter to be written.

The Thinker, on the other hand, has no narrative or mythological basis to which we may relate. As a result, he is static, expressing a state rather than a story. This is the condition of easy. In comparison to Atlas, his is a metaphysical stasis. Whereas difficulty is related, ease is singular, detached, self-absorbed, and onanistic. The isolated gesture is still relatable—who among us has not been lost in deep thought?—but it's non-specific; we haven't a clue what he's thinking about.

The Thinker is reflective; the sculpture reproduces a similar contemplative state in the viewer. But thinking exists for one, making his—and our—gesture isolated. Nor will there be any resolution because, unlike difficulty, the problem is not articulated. Easy is mute, vague, and ambiguous, lacking in emotional temperature. Is *The Thinker*'s situation easier than Atlas's? Absolutely. But does *The Thinker* have it easy? We don't know.

Although compared to difficulty, easy is less visible (often invisible), there are cases in which difficulty is rendered equally indiscernible, as in the case of virtuosity, where one is so good at what they do that they make difficulty look easy. In virtuosity any trace of difficulty is eliminated, entirely eclipsed by easy. Think of the seemingly ease with which George Harrison played guitar: What didn't show was the difficulty, the proverbial ten thousand hours and the resultant bloodied fingers. Professionalism eradicates difficulty, rendering skill as anti-skill, a machine that seamlessly transforms difficult into easy. Hollywood as dream machine, industrial magic and light. The professional athlete's playing field or the rock band's stage are frictionless venues. The only place that such frictionlessness allegedly exists is in Heaven. In this way, easy is a window, a glimpse on to the divine.

Difficult and easy as two sides of a coin. Sometimes you get to easy by going through difficult. Difficult is the foundation upon which easy is built, reminding us that easy is or was, in fact, difficult to attain. But easy can also just as easily be difficult to maintain. The state of easy is fragile: With one small wisp, the bottom drops out, throwing easy back into difficult. In this way, easy is a portal to difficult, which then is, in turn, a portal back to easy. The endless cycles of difficult and easy are, in fact, truly Sisyphean.

If easy makes things difficult, and difficulty makes things easy, where is value located: in ease or difficulty? If one is codependent upon the other, the moment we try to name one as such we must also name the other. Therefore, sayings like "that was easy" or "taking the easy way out" are another way of valuating difficulty. Operating in each other's negative space, easy and difficult are like optical illusions flickering back and forth on an eternally rotating Sisyphean Ferris wheel. When the wheel stops spinning, pausing long enough to load new passengers, only then can we evaluate it as being either easy or difficult, a snapshot of a moment. Difficulty, as a narrative, is time-based. Easy, as a state, is atemporal.

Traditional valuation claims that difficulty is more valuable than ease. Deskilling skews value because it collapses difference, articulating a singular state that we had presumed to be divided: skilled or unskilled. That was easy. No it wasn't. I am skilled but I refuse to put these skills into play. I will confound value. The denial of value is perverse and unthinkable. However, that is my strategy. In that, I side with magic, a practice with similar unaccountability, one that confounds value by emphasizing easy over difficult. *Voilà!* Magic and easy are both viewed with a skeptical eye (there's little magic in difficulty except in its escape). Both are dismissed as sleight of hand, as shams, as tricks, as jokes. Easy is muttered in the same breath as stock market bubbles and real estate scams, so easy that they're "like printing money". Somewhere somebody is getting rich off of easy, and it's not me: "He's on Easy Street."

Our twenty-first century villains make their fortunes on easy. The odor of easy reeks of imperiousness, power, and authority. The white collar criminal wraps himself in the mantle of easy but, under the surface, is anything but easy. Like most easy, he got here through difficult and can re-enable difficult at will. Easy can turn difficult very quickly—and show the teeth to enforce it. Speaking loudly and punishingly, in the infamous words of one reality television star: "This one's easy for

me. You're fired!" With a snap of the fingers easy can demolish difficult, hard-won achievements. We admired the London cabbie for his mastery of *The Knowledge*, often cited as the most difficult test in the world. But easy—Uber and GPS—deskilled the cabbie, rendering *The Knowledge* into a quaint relic, an artifact from the age of difficult. But it's not all easy. Someone still has to drive that Uber, a truly difficult job, done without *The Knowledge*, which at least had the benefit of positioning the cabbie as an intellectual. This is easy playing its sleight of hand, both sides of Camus's coin—pay no attention to the man behind the curtain. Capital's frictionless movements appear to be easy, sliding across the globe in microseconds, yet labor—mostly invisible manual labor, traditionally difficult labor, in some cases monstrously torturous labor—gives capital its appearance of easy.

But easy is also resistant, jamming engines, disturbing logic, and challenging the order of things. In a world hungry for the new and an insatiable thirst for expansion, easy stalls. Easy is unambitious. The bum, the idler, the scavenger, the observer, the intellectual, the welfare mother, the unemployed, the dropout, the drifter, the observer, the poet, the underutilized, the decommissioned, and the dreamer are all reviled for taking easy handouts, leeching off of difficult. While those around him toiled furiously, Bartelby chose easy: "I would prefer not to." Easy is both the aspiration and antithesis of capitalism. In its refusal to reconcile contradictions, easy is perverse—purposely contradictory and illogical—in ways that difficult is not. Difficult is mono-dimensional, single-minded, productive, ambitious, and motion-filled; it's singular goal is to overcome its condition by whatever means are at its disposal. In this way, difficult is productive and ambitious, except for when it stalls—wrapping itself like fog, blinding its victim to ever seeing a way out—difficult is in motion, presumably barreling toward easy, or at least trying to find a way out of difficult. You can die of difficulty, but you might also be able to extract yourself from it. In this light, difficulty is admired as much as easy is reviled. While difficult is heroic, easy is anti-heroic.

Most try to imagine an easy life for themselves, but then what role does difficult play? When we overcome difficulty and eradicate it from our lives, do we also give up the fight, so to speak? Is easy too easy? Does difficulty gives our lives meaning? Difficulty's investment in narrative lends a semblance of progress to one's life story. But when lives stall, becoming easy, difficulty is imbued with nostalgia. War veterans, who fought in the most horrific of situations, often look fondly back on those days as being the most meaningful of their lives. Incredibly, we hear this from kidnapping victims and prisoners of war. Retirees, slathered in languor, long for difficulty. When we finally reach a state of easy that we've so long desired, does easy become impotent, inevitably rejoined by ennui?

Like most people, artists aspire to easy: a successful career, admired by an adoring public. But artists, the most tenacious of creatures, are willing to sacrifice everything for their art. Sadly, most aren't successful, so they seek reconciliation, the same sort that Sisyphus found in his downhill interval, recasting their punishing exertions as heroic performances. Tehching Hsieh's imprisonment of himself in a cage for a year, William Pope.L's crawling across city sidewalks on his belly, or Chris Burden's cramming himself into a tiny gym locker for five days are examples that come to mind. Surely these tasks are the easiest things in the world—it takes no skill to squeeze oneself into a gym locker—and at the same time the most difficult: Why would someone want to squeeze themselves into a gym locker? That was easy. No it wasn't. Both Sisyphus's and Burden's conditions flicker between the physical and the conceptual, between the punishing and the ecstatically absurd.

Much contemporary art is often dismissed as easy, eliciting the stereotypical remarks of the mother standing in front of a Pollock: "My child could do that." The easiest musical composition ever written—Cage's *4'33"*, four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence—took the composer years to reconcile. He claimed it was the most difficult piece he ever wrote because of the courage he needed to summon in order to present it to the world. This, Cage claimed, took years. In his case the courage and thought was Sisyphus's uphill journey. But what if Cage didn't wrap easy in difficult? What if he simply said, yes, it was easy? Value attaches itself to difficulty in ways that it eschews easy. Value makes for a better story. I think Cage knew that.

While I want an art that's easy, it's hard to find an artist who actually embraced easy. But I can think of one museum show that did this exact thing—albeit accidentally—and it was one of the most challenging exhibitions I'd ever seen. It was by the graphic designer Stefan Sagmeister called *The Happy Show*. Its goal was to elicit nothing but happiness in the viewer. All impediments were removed in the service of easy. As an expert graphic designer, Sagmeister treated the space as if it were a brochure. Never have I witnessed a floor-

to-ceiling vision of an architectural space so seamlessly integrated into its content as Sagmeister covered every inch of the institution in compelling, engaging, and understandable graphics. Like New Yorker cartoons, each sexy chart and graphic had a punch line. Gliding from one display to another felt more like amusement park enticements than a museum, encountering graphical renderings that equated the relationship between happiness and one's time off from their job, happiness and the number of sexual partners one has, happiness and education, and so forth. No detail in the institution was spared—even the elevator buttons were relabeled: UP with Adderall, Ritalin, and cocaine; DOWN with Xanax, Valium, and Percocet. There's no way you couldn't understand this. The show was, not surprisingly, enormously popular. Finally, people could actually understand what they were seeing in a contemporary art space, a place notoriously known for being difficult.

Sagmeister's denial of difficult transmuted into clever. Clever makes connections, is warm and accordant; clever is good business. Like easy, clever doesn't have to do much work; its outcome is predictable and pre-ordained. Clever is a strategy of reification, one that unites minds already in agreement. Clever has little conversion, reverberation, or afterlife. It resonates for a moment, then quickly vanishes. Like easy, clever has little narrative or past; it lives almost wholly in the present. More ephemeral than easy, clever doesn't even plateau—it evaporates instantaneously. Comedy's *métier* is clever. If you get the joke, you are already primed to get the joke. Jokes don't linger: One is quickly replaced by another. Resonance—a durational attribute—is antithetical to nowness. Fraught with discord and friction, difficult has little truck in clever. Difficulty is ripe with resonance.

Sagmeister gives us a glimpse of what art would look like if it adopted the *métier* of the comedic, an art not for the ages but for the interval, an evaporatory art with the lifespan of inbetweenness, more trade fair than biennial, free of ambiguity, friction, or division. *The Happy Show*. Sagmeister was actuating what countless artists pay lip service to: While many claim to be easy, few actually are. From Duchamp ("saying yes is always easier than saying no") to Fluxus ("the fusion of Spike Jones, Vaudeville, gag, children's games, and Duchamp"), such claims have been made, but there's nothing particularly easy or even fun, as most people would define it, about either Duchamp or Fluxus. Andy Warhol often said that he liked things that were easy and that he wanted his art to be easy. But we all know that while Warhol may appear to be eye candy, under the effortless surface lay a tangle of contradictions and enigmas, so much so that armies of critics are still—nearly three decades after his death—unraveling the knotty depths of his sprawling oeuvre. Likewise, Jeff Koons spouts easy, yet there are subtle perversities in his work that deny him this. Occluded by double entendre and laced with theory-based irony, no Koons is innocent. When Koons appears on morning talk shows raving about how lovable his *Flower Puppy* is and how he wants his art to make the world a happier place, it's really a deconstruction of media on the site of media itself, making it a terribly complicated and self-reflexive gesture. In doing so he breaks the fourth wall of television. What's easy about that? Keith Haring emanated easy in the form of loveable cartoon figures, but when it came right down to it, the subtexts of gayness, graffiti, hip hop, street culture, and AIDS made Haring a populist of underground subcultures, ones that only later—after these things ceased to be difficult—became mainstream and easy.

Another category—and I think this begins to touch on what I'm getting at—is the highly "commercial" artists who straddle the line between graphic design and fine art like Norman Rockwell, LeRoy Neiman, Andrew Wyeth, and Peter Max. Even though Peter Max was born of the counterculture, there was nothing insurgent or abrasive about *Yellow Submarine*. Rockwell is closer to Sagmeister: an illustrator who never claimed to be a fine artist. And Wyeth, maintaining that he was a painter, made works that functioned as unambiguously as any illustration.

Of all these, LeRoy Neiman came closest to easy because easy was his subject. While he often painted sports heroes performing spectacular feats of difficulty, they were wrapped in the guise of easy, both in terms of style and the market in which they circulated: His sports prints hang in country club locker rooms and snack bars. There's a harmony of form, content, and reception that gets pretty close to Sagmeister. Neiman began doing easy from the start, when he hooked up with Playboy founder Hugh Hefner in 1958. For the next decade-and-a-half he churned out depictions of easy in his *Man at his Leisure* series published monthly in the magazine, not to mention his *Femlins*, illustrated depictions of "easy" women. Yet, as little resistance as there was in Neiman's work—and no apparent desire on his part for it—Hefner had to claim difficulty by swathing the erotic in the mantle of art in order to

legally legitimize his publication: "You couldn't run nude pictures without some kind of rationale that they were art." In the end it was Hefner who was more the artist than Neiman. But if asked, neither Neiman nor Hefner wouldn't have disavowed easy like Cage did. They'd have embraced it. That's avant-garde.

In popular culture the only way to legitimize easy is through magic. A decade ago Staples ran a series of ads that featured a big red Easy button, which one could push as a magical solution when things got too hard. One ad features a guy who runs out of printer ink. A woman asks him, "Out of ink?" to which he sarcastically replies, "Yeah, the ink fairy will come tonight and leave us three dollars." The woman rejoins, "Or you could just use the Easy button," and points to a big red button emblazoned with the word Easy on a nearby desk. The guy chuckles and says, "Yeah, like that's real." What is real and what is not? The ink fairy is a jet-black tooth fairy: When you put your expired ink cartridge under your pillow at night, the fairy leaves you three dollars, referring to the very unmagical mail-in rebate you exchange for your empty cartridge. The ads—proposing imaginary solutions to imaginary problems—wished a 'pataphysical object into being. There was so much demand for a "real" Easy button that the company began actually manufacturing them. Now, when you find yourself in difficulty, you push the button and a voice says, "That was easy!"

The easy utopia is the forthcoming Internet. Not the one we have now, but one that actually works. It's so close we can taste it: Amazon's one-click shopping. That was easy. The LP downloaded to your computer through walls on the wireless network it runs on. That was easy. But it could be easier. The imagined and anticipated frictionless of the digital makes for a new difficulty equation. Once easy has plateaued into a consistent and constant condition—an ever-present pulse like Wi-Fi—then difficulty is not as difficult as we had once imagined it. Now it's difficult to get from easy to easier to easiest. The final state of easiest is spirit. Imagine how easy it would be to live in spirit only, relieved of the burden of a body. After all, much of our difficultly resides in lugging around this cumbersome, endlessly needy hunk of flesh—Sisyphus's stone and body. When physicality is a thing of the past, we can enact the ultimate state of easy: pure spirit. Heaven is frictionless.

POST-INTERNET CURATING

BORIS GROYS

The word *present* can be understood in at least two different ways. Thus, we can speak about the presence of the present—about the ways in which the world presents itself to us. It is a traditional topic of philosophy. From Plato through Heidegger and until our own time one mostly thematized the experience of here and now, the immediate openness of the world to our senses. But speaking about our relationship to the world, we can also ask a different question: How do we present ourselves to the world? In other words, we can reverse the usual subject/object relationship: Instead of asking how do we see the world, we would ask how does the world see us? Obviously, it is a more difficult, dangerous, and even fateful question because the way in which the world sees us determines our place in the world—in some cases it is a question of life and death. Here the present takes a form of contemporaneity. Contemporaneity is the synchronization of my personal time and the world time—and it is not always reflected on and consciously practiced. Often enough I overlook the world—being immersed in my own private problems. And the world seems not to be interested in me, not to like me, and not to target me. But there are also moments in which I take a conscious effort of synchronization between myself and the world in a twofold way: I look at the world and let the world look at me.

In our own present the primary medium of such an operation of conscious synchronization is the Internet. Indeed, when we ask ourselves what is happening in the world right now we mostly turn to the Internet. And when we want to let the world know who we are and what we are thinking or doing we post some information about our own life on the social media. The genealogy of the Internet started with the press—with newspapers and magazines. Today, however, the Internet has made the technology of media coverage potentially accessible to every individual. Everyone can use photo or video cameras to produce images, write commentaries to them, and distribute the results on a global scale—avoiding any censorship or selection process. In this respect, the Internet functions not so much as a medium of

information but, rather, as an artistic medium. Indeed, in our culture art is the privileged medium of self-presentation: through art the subject practices self-objectivation and, thus, offers itself to approval or rejection by the world society. So, one could believe that in the age of the Internet the traditional art institutions—with all their rituals of selection and presentation—became obsolete.

However, in our time one can see the growth of the museums of contemporary art all over the world, and one registers the fact that the public of the big exhibitions of contemporary art, such as Venice Biennale or documenta in Kassel, is also permanently growing. Why is it so? If one asks people who are not professionally involved into art why they are going to these big, global exhibitions, they usually answer: We want to see what happens in the contemporary world. So let me now discuss and compare these two very different mediums: the Internet and the global art exhibition.

Let us begin with the Internet. At first glance, the Internet seems to be global, universal. And it is how many people still see it. But after some years of the Internet's functioning it is becoming increasingly evident that the space of the Internet is not unified and universal but, rather, extremely fragmented. Of course, under its current regime all Internet data is globally accessible. But in practice the Internet leads not to the emergence of the universal public space but to the tribalization of the public. The reason for that is very simple. The Internet reacts to the user's questions—to the user's clicks. In other words, the user only finds what he or she wants to find on the Internet. The Internet is, actually, an extremely narcissistic medium—it is a mirror of our specific interests and desires. It does not show us what we do not want to see. In the context of social media we also communicate mostly with people who share our interests and attitude—be it political or aesthetic attitudes. Thus, the non-selective character of the Internet is an illusion. The factual functioning of the Internet is based on the non-explicit rules of selection according to which the users select only what they already know or are familiar with. Of course, some search programs are able to go through the whole Internet. But these programs also always have particular goals and are controlled by big corporations and not the individual users. In this respect, the Internet is the opposite of, let say, an urban space where we constantly have to see what we do not necessarily want to see. In many cases we try to ignore these unwanted images and impressions, in many cases they provoke our interest, but in any case we expand our field of experience in this way.

Now let me suggest that the curatorial choices may also let us see what we would not choose to see, what even was unknown to us. Indeed, these choices are interesting and productive when they are transgressive, when they cross the usual boundaries of websites and chat groups. One hears time and again that contemporary art is elitist because it is selective—and that it should be put under control of a democratic public. Yes, indeed, there is a certain gap between the contemporary art exhibition practice and the tastes and expectations of the audience. The reason for that is simple: The audience of every particular exhibition is local—but the exhibited art is often international. That means: Contemporary art does not have a narrow, elitist but, on the contrary, a broader, universalist perspective, which can irritate the local audiences. It is the same kind of irritation that nowadays migration provokes in European countries. Many people also say that the acceptance of migration is "elitist". Here we are confronted with the same phenomenon: The broader, internationalist attitude is experienced by the local audiences as elitist—even if the migrants themselves are far from belonging to any kind of elite.

We are living within a system of nation states. The societies of these states are, in their turn, divided along the lines of different cultural identities and their particular interests—and these divisions are also reflected in the fragmentation of the Internet. But inside every national culture there are institutions that embody the universalist, transnational projects. Among them are universities and art museums. Indeed, the European museums were from their beginnings the universalist institutions—they wanted to present the universal art history and not only the national art history. Of course, one can argue that this universalist project reflected the imperial policies of the European states in the nineteenth century. And to some extent it is true—but only to some extent. The European museum system has its origin in the French Revolution. It was the French Revolution that turned things earlier used by the Church and aristocracy into the artworks, i.e. into the objects that were exhibited in the museum, originally in the Louvre, only to be looked at. The secularism of the French Revolution abolished the contemplation of God as the highest goal in life and substituted it with the contemplation of "beautiful" material objects. One could say, art itself was produced by revolutionary violence and was from its beginnings a modern

form of iconoclasm. European museums began to aesthetically suspend their own cultural traditions before they aestheticized and suspended non-European cultural traditions.

It is this revolutionary transformation of the Louvre that Kant has in mind when he writes in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: "If someone asks me whether I find the palace that I see before me beautiful, I may well say that I do not like that sort of thing […]; in true Rousseauesque style I might even vilify the vanity of the great who waste the sweat of the people on such superfluous things […] All of this might be conceded to me and approved; but that is not what is at issue here […] One must not be in the least biased in favor of the existence of the thing, but must be entirely indifferent in this respect in order to play the judge in the matter of taste."[1]

Actually, the protection of art objects can be compared to the social-political protection of the human body. I mean the protection through the human rights—also introduced by the French Revolution. There is a close relationship between art and humanism. According to the principles of humanism, the human being can be only contemplated—but not actively used: killed, violated, enslaved, etc. The humanist program was summarized by Kant through the famous formulation: In the enlightened, secular society man is supposed to be never treated as a means but only as a goal. That is why we see slavery as barbaric. But to use an artwork in the same way as we use other things and commodities also means to act in a barbaric way. And what is most important here: Humans are defined by the secular gaze only as objects having a certain, namely, human form. The human gaze does not see the human soul—that was the privilege of God. The human gaze sees only the human body. Thus, our rights are related to the image that we offer to the gaze of others. That is why we are so much interested in this image. And that is also why we are interested in the protection of art and being protected by art.

Now our current museums of modern and contemporary art are not only heirs of the nineteenth-century museums but also of the strategies of the avant-garde. The artists of the avant-garde rejected their national cultural identities. They wanted their art to become universalist, to develop a visual language that would be accessible to everyone beyond the traditional cultural borders. Modern and contemporary art museums are heirs of this project. The museum is selective. But museum's selection should be, so to say, anti-selection, transgressive selection. In this sense, this curatorial selection re-instates the universalist project of the modern and contemporary museum. Here the selection does not create fragmentation rather, on the contrary, works against it by creating a unified space of representation in which the different fragments of offline culture and of the Internet become equally represented.

However, the universalist project does not have political, institutional support today because the universal, global state does not exist. So one can say that the contemporary art system plays a role in the symbolic substitution of such a universal state by organizing biennials, documentas, and other exhibitions that have a claim to present universal, global art and culture—that means art and culture of the non-existent, utopian global state. Our time is characterized by a lack of balance between political and economic powers, between public institutions and commercial practices. Our economy operates on the global level, whereas our politics operates on the local level. Here the museums and big international exhibitions play a crucial political role by at least partially compensating the lack of the global public space and global politics. But the question remains: How can art circulating on the Internet be presented inside the museum or, more general, art exhibition space?

In the context of the Internet the artists function as content providers. It is quite a shift in the fate of art. In traditional art the content providers were Jesus Christ, the Holy Virgin, and the Christian Saints as well as gods of the ancient Greek pantheon and important historical figures. The goal of the artist was to give to these contents a shape, a form. The artist was a form-giver—not a content provider. Of course, the shift happened much earlier than the emergence of the Internet. But on the Internet the artwork is represented by need as a combination between images and texts. These combinations always take the character of documentary realism. When the artists use these combinations they function as freelance journalists. That means that they use the same means of production and distribution as mass media—but do so in a personalized, subjective way. So indeed, artists are not primarily form-givers here. They use forms that were created by other people and made accessible through the technology of the Internet, with all its formatting and protocols of use. Instead, these artists are content providers in a double sense: They document certain "objective" contents, but they do it in a somewhat "subjective" way—thus turning their own personality

into a particular content. This content can be produced by the artists themselves—as actions, performances, and processes initiated by the artists and then documented by them.

The development of art during the last hundred years can indeed be described as a movement from the art object to the art event. This movement already started with Futurism and Dada. Accordingly, we can watch—also in our museums of contemporary art—the increasing presence of art documentation, instead of the traditional artworks. The cumulative effect of these strategies has parallels with nineteenth-century realism as the artists combined the conventional means of documentation and representation with a certain personal touch.

Art becomes identical with journalism, and both become individualized, personalized in their content even though both remain standardized in their form. The theoreticians of twentieth-century formalism—for example, Roman Jacobson—believed that the artistic use of the means of communication entails the suspension or even annulment of the information, of the content; in the art context the content becomes totally absorbed by the form. But in the context of the Internet the form remains identical for all the messages, and thus the content becomes immunized from its absorption by the form. On the technological level the Internet re-establishes the conventions of content presentation that dominated in the nineteenth century.

Avant-garde artists protested against these conventions because they believed them to be purely arbitrary and merely culturally determined. But such a revolt against these conventions makes no sense with the Internet because they are inscribed into the Internet technology itself.

Obviously, this documentary art does not operate with traditional realist pictures but with combinations of pictures, photos, videos, sound sequences, and texts. All these components build a kind of meta-sentence, meta-narrative on the Internet. In the museum context they are presented as an installation. Conceptual artists already organized the installation space as a sentence that conveyed a certain meaning—analogous to the use of sentences in language. With conceptual art the artistic practice became meaningful and communicative again, following a certain period of the dominance of a formalist understanding of art. Art began to make theoretical statements, to communicate empirical experiences and theoretical knowledge, to formulate ethical and political attitudes, and to tell stories. We all know the substantial role that the famous "linguistic turn" played in the emergence and development of conceptual art. The influence of Wittgenstein and French Structuralism on conceptual art practice was decisive—to mention only some relevant names among many others.

But this new orientation toward meaning and communication does not mean that art became somehow immaterial, that its materiality lost its relevance, or that its medium dissolved into message. The contrary is the case. Every art is material—and can be only material. The possibility of using concepts, projects, ideas, and political messages in art was opened by the philosophers of the "linguistic turn" precisely because they asserted the material character of thinking itself. For these philosophers, thinking was understood as a use of language. And language was understood as being material through and through—as a combination of sounds and visual signs. Thus, the equivalence, or at least a parallelism, was demonstrated between word and image, between the order of words and the order of things, the grammar of language and the grammar of visual space.

This also explains the main difference between artistic or curatorial installations and traditional exhibitions. The traditional exhibition treats its space as an anonymous, neutral one. Only the exhibited artworks are important, not the space in which they are exhibited. On the other hand, the installation—be it an artistic or curatorial installation—inscribes the exhibited artworks into the contingent material space with a certain specific configuration. And here the real problem emerges of translating Internet art—all kinds of digital images, videos, texts, and their combinations—into the museum space. If the presentation of art on the Internet has become standardized, the presentation of art in the museum has become de-standardized. Today, the standard white cube is a thing of the past. And that means that the curator has to find a specific form, a specific installation, a specific configuration of the exhibition space for the presentation of the digital, informational material. Here the question of form becomes central once again. However, the form-giving shifts from the individual artworks to the organization of the space in which these artworks are presented. In other words, the responsibility for the form-giving becomes transferred from the artists to the curators who use the individual artworks as contents—this time as contents inside the space that the curators created. Of course, the artists can reclaim their

traditional form-giving function, but only if they begin to act as curators of their own work. Indeed, when we visit an exhibition of contemporary art the only thing that truly remains in our memory is the organization of the spaces of this exhibition, especially if the organization is original, unusual.

So form-giving remains the main occupation for art in the museum. However, if the individual artworks can be reproduced, and the installation can be only documented, and when such documentation is put on the Internet, it becomes a content—and, thus, becomes open again for a form-giving operation inside the museum. So the exchange between museum and the Internet takes on a character of exchange between content and form: What was a form in the museum becomes a content on the Internet—and vice versa.

I would like to make a final remark concerning the role of the museum as an archive. Meanwhile we have acquired a habit to look to the Internet if we want to find some information, including historical information. Hence, the impression emerges that the Internet is a truly global archive. However, as I have already said, the Internet cannot be stabilized in time because it is privately driven. All data on the Internet perpetually emerge, disappear, or get modified. There is no fragment of the Internet that could be publicly owned—and therewith publicly protected as well. That means that the traditional archives, including the museums, still function as normative archives—also in our time. In the meantime these institutions increasingly have a presence in the Internet through the digitization of their archived materials. But it only confirms the fact that the capability of the Internet to become an archive depends on the offline institutions, including museums. Ultimately, that means the emergence of the Internet affected the functioning of museums less than is often assumed. The Internet gives museums additional possibilities to present their collections and activities, but in no way does it undermine the role that the museums have traditionally played in our culture.

1 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001[1790]), 90.

ONE TO ONE-AND-A-HALF—ON THE SPECTRUM OF CONTEMPORARY ARTISTIC COPYING PRACTICES

CHRISTIAN HÖLLER

The fake snuff movie effect alone is remarkable. In Kanye West's notorious music clip *Famous* (2016), as the camera eye slowly fades down through the clouds, the pixelly image resolution already suggests something nasty. When the first hints of faces appear, as if they were filmed with a cheap predigital video camera, you are already caught in the middle of a reality/celebrity porno which unfolds with relish. Twelve US-American stars—among them the current and a former president, pop icons like Rihanna and Taylor Swift, along with West himself and his consort Kim Kardashian—were modeled as wax dolls for the ten-minute film. Slowly it becomes clear, first with then without the music, what the clip is actually about; the figures are draped on a seemingly endless bed, like a row of sleeping apostles. Draped in the truest sense of the word—in the beginning you only see naked or half covered body parts or details like tattoos. The complete "line-up" is only revealed later on in the clip: a supper-like tableau not around a long table but in a wide bed; and not really "vivant" (the figures only move twice, more ghostly than really alive) rather "mort"—real people, frozen or mortified as copies of themselves. And in racy poses, not to mention, which seem more like poor imitations seen (or imagined) a hundred times over than "authentic" nudity.[1]

Famous can indeed be read as a self-reflexive and at once tongue-in-cheek act in the world of fame and celebrity life, where there is no return after a certain point. At the same time the film—like so many other practices in today's digital culture—embeds itself in the proliferating setting of an almost omnipresent "copy art". And this doesn't mean the mere unilinear process from A (the essentially untouchable original) to B (the "secondary", alienated, allegorizing, or otherwise contextualizing replica) anymore. Nor does this "copy culture" correspond with the intentions of earlier appropriation processes in art, which primarily took artifacts from the midst of society, the cultural mainstream, to be used for the purposes (and disposition) of a marginal, against-the-grain practice. In comparison, copy culture in the broadest sense, spanning from concept art references

to replicated Internet memes to diverse do-it-yourself web practices, is much more universal—and momentous. Copies from real life, as *Famous* illustrates so drastically, have long since become autonomous entities equipped with their own lives (even if, a telling dialectic incidentally, they appear dead or temporarily inanimate). And what's more: The idea of subjecting high-profile cultural heritage to a critical litmus test by alienating or recontextualizing it has been exhausted to such an extent—as the middle and marginal, high and low are long since intertwined—that a critical orientation along these coordinates hardly seems possible.

So if "real copies" are already being worked with in the heart of celebrity culture in a quite ambiguous way—and can't fame be understood as the infinite replicability of itself in a sense?—what is the situation with artistic approaches which also (out of necessity) build upon this copying principle? The taxability of authorship and property rights as an irrefutable criterion can be argued for art, and for the pop world as well to an even greater extent. But the practice, as it seems, is already far more advanced than the discourse (or conceptual reference point) in this context. And thus, critical practices, in particular, which employ the principle of copying—be it documentary-reconstructive, active-constructivist, or as a general guideline for contemporary network thinking—have been surfacing for some time now.

WHEN A MONUMENT PAYS A VISIT

Reproducing the persona of an entertainment celebrity or politician circulating in the public or media sphere, whether with digital or sculptural means, has enjoyed great popularity since longer—not least in the circles of post-Internet art. In her film *Hyperlinks or It Didn't Happen* (2014) Cécile B. Evans, for instance, conjured a digital copy of the actor Philip Seymour Hoffman—shortly after his death—floating amid jellyfish and other colorful items. "I'm just a bad copy made too perfectly, too soon," says the voice of the avatar. Here the copying process clearly aims to undo a real event (the premature death of Hoffman) with artistic means or similarly to suspend the irreversibility of a real process in the medium itself.[2] The politician copies in Josh Kline's video *Crying Games* (2015) also behave rather counterfactually when they ruefully beg for forgiveness. Likewise, something is suspended here in an artificially created context, albeit not what anyway or inevitably already happened rather something that cracks the door open to the literally unimaginable (or an extremely rare situation).[3] The "one-and-a-half times" copy, so to say, goes so far as to correct the bad original—without countering it with a real alternative (which would then result in "two").

Politicians and real decision-makers can, however, be confronted in other ways with the implications and consequences of their actions. A form of agitational copying can come into play, for example, as practiced by the activist group Center for Political Beauty (CPB). This copying might include the actual theft and temporary re-erection of a public monument, which was the case in the project *First Fall of the European Wall* (2014). Some of the white crosses erected in memorial to those who died at the Berlin Wall were brought to the EU outer border in Melilla to remind us of today's victims of rigorous border regimes.[4] The copying process can also take on even more constructivist and simulationist traits. When the Thuringian right-wing AfD politician Björn Höcke proclaimed in a speech that Germans are "the only people in the world who have planted a monument of shame in the heart of their capital", activists saw it as an opportunity to send a replica of the monument on tour—specifically, to Bornhagen in the immediate vicinity of Höcke's house.[5] Following elaborate preparations, the CPB rented an adjacent property, built concrete reproductions of the stelae from Peter Eisenman's Holocaust

Center for Political Beauty, *Deine Stele*, 2007, Holocaust memorial in Bornhagen, photo: Patryk Witt

Memorial in Berlin, and unveiled it to the disgust of the politician and the like-minded community on site.

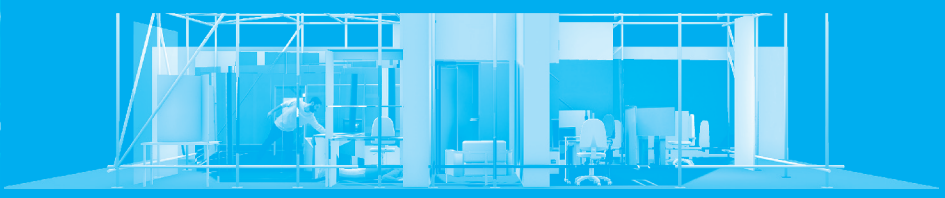
The reactions to the project *Deine Stele* (Your Stelae) ranged from actual physical confrontations to an attempt to stigmatize the artists group as a "terrorist association" and even legal actions against the authors of this "terror". The latter has been unsuccessful to date as the responsible court prohibited the owner of the property from removing the stelae. Consequently, this monument copy will continue its visitation in this inhospitable habitat on the longer term—it came to stay, one could say with reference to Simone de Beauvoir's feminist classic novel. The approach to copying employed in projects like this has more than just a provocative or confrontational value (to bring deniers of certain facts in contact with "original" proof of these facts). This accounts for its actual quantifiable effect, but the greater consequences for a contemporary artistic-activist practice reside in the fact that one must no longer address the "original" or "authentic" in order to achieve this effect. An amateur representation, a self-made copy is more than enough, when not better than "the real thing". *Deine Stele* had at least one-and-a-half times the impact as prompting Höcke to visit the "real" Holocaust Memorial would have.

THE AVATAR OF THE LIAISON

Achieving at least one-and-a-half times the effect of findings which have yet to receive the attention they deserve is what Forensic Architecture's practice strives for. Whereas a project like *Deine Stele* is designed to generate a desired effect by crafting a (however sophisticated) copy of a real monument, this process runs in reverse, so to speak, with Forensic Architecture. The departure point is a factual event that already took place, which cannot be easily accessed given the time that has passed—but also because of obvious cover-ups and secrecy. A precise act of reconstruction is performed, to the extent the available evidence and employed reconstruction media permit, in an attempt to approximate the "original" event as accurately as possible. The meticulous simulation process ultimately aims to uncover a (most plausible and consistent) version of a real incident—something that has been kept under lock and key due to political or intelligence intrigues.

77sqm_9:26min, the title of one of these projects, takes the space-time coordinates of the crime scene as the

Forensic Architecture, *Back Room 2*, 2017, real-scale reconstruction of Halit Yozgat's Internet café at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, photo: Forensic Architecture



Forensic Architecture, *77sqm_9:26min*, 2016–ongoing, composite of Forensic Architecture's physical and virtual reconstructions of the Internet café in which the murder of Halit Yozgat on April 6, 2006 occurred, image: Forensic Architecture

starting point for a rigorous simulation of an obscured sequence of events. The murder of Halit Yozgat, the young operator of an Internet café, in Kassel on April 6, 2006 went down in the annals as the ninth of ten homicides by the so-called National Socialist Underground (NSU). To this day what happened on that afternoon in the Internet café has not been adequately explained—also because of the vague testimony by intelligence officer Andreas Temme, who was present either in the café or in the immediate vicinity at the time of the murder. There is even a video in which Temme re-enacts his whereabouts[6]—a document among many others in connection with the murder which were "leaked" in 2015 and gave rise to much speculation. When this transpired the activist alliance "Unraveling the NSU Complex" had already been founded. In the meanwhile it has attempted to shed light on the still unclarified course of events through a number of actions and initiatives and, above all, expose the ensnarement between the NSU and the German State Office for the Protection of the Constitution.[7] One of these initiatives was to entrust the interdisciplinary group Forensic Architecture with an original as possible simulation of the crime in 2016, ten years after the actual events.

Preliminary work for *77sqm_9:26min* was presented in Berlin at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in 2017 and then the film at the Neuen Neuen Galerie at documenta 14 as part of a comprehensive installation (under the overarching project name *The Society of Friends of Halit*).[8] The square meters refer to the surface area of the Internet café, the time to the duration of the events—the latter was reconstructed from the leaked documents, such as statements by persons on site and diverse log-in data. In the style of a digitally animated educational film—including a computer simulation model to concisely reproduce the distribution of sound and smell—*77sqm_9:26min* analyzes three possible scenarios: After assessing and comparing all available evidence, it concludes that the liaison Temme, contrary to his own testimony, must have been at the crime scene at the time of the murder. Even though a parliamentary investigation committee of the State of Hesse rebutted these claims upon presentation of the report by Forensic Architecture in August 2017, this scenario remains legit—also because of new evidence that came into play—and more probable than everything included thus far in the officially recognized findings.[9]

The applied method uses a reconstruction to access an "original", whose authentic substance is no longer retrievable one-to-one, via sophisticated simulation processes. Over the course of this procedure the copy and its ever-growing, one could say asymptotic refinements successively shift into the place of the original event—or, in other words, it becomes that which remains accessible with documentary or artistic means. The supplement, even though it is not (yet) seen as such by law, has one-and-a-half times the (explosive) power of the clumsily camouflaged "original", which, to reiterate it once again, no longer exists in a genuine, openly accessible form.

SEAMLESS TRANSITIONS

In a sense, such lost "originals" always represent original fictions, which nevertheless have a real, sometimes disputable—or *to be disputed*—core. Especially in a "retroactive" actualization, as with Forensic Architecture, visualizing this core relies highly on "constructivist" copying methods. These methods are also central to an array of works that create, often with digital means, versions of matters inaccessible to the public (or only with great difficulty), of bygone events, or of places that exist but are invisible to the naked eye. To speak of copies here might overstretch the term—particularly as the corresponding "originals" are often subject to a regime of invisibility or *making* invisible. The key point is that the applied processes blur the apparently immutable, underlying poles: real–fictional, analog–digital, original–copied. Or more fundamental: While the copy created out of a tactical (or political) need assumes the place of the original, this outdated binary distinction itself becomes obsolete.

For example, James Bridle "visualizes" British deportation centers in his work *Seamless Transitions* (2015).[10] Animated architectural models depict places and classified institutional areas which are usually hidden from the public eye. The seamlessness in the title refers to the smooth sequence of events characteristic of the (usually invisible) processes of detention and deportation from the authorities' perspective as well as the transition between the inaccessible original and the animated, artificially created copy enabled by the artwork. Whereby the replica "activates" the respective site in the first place and, if one likes, "enacts" it for a critical awareness.

The works of Jon Rafman are exemplary demonstrations that this enactment, in the context of an ever-seamless digital culture, is more than just a transition from A to B, from original to

Jon Rafman, *Erysichthon*, 2015, stills, courtesy: Jon Rafman and Sprüth Magers Gallery

copy or vice versa. *Sticky Drama* (2015), for instance, presents a (real) cosplay event—a re-enacted version of a computer game in elaborate costumes—in all its details and drasticness (including super slow motion shots).[11] Or *Erysichthon* (2015), which, like many of Rafman's other films, collages found items from the deep web into short didactic pieces about the nature of the visual in the age of a now impossible (and placeless) differentiation between original and copy.[12] "If you look at these images enough, you begin feeling like you composed them," a voice says at one point, and the recurring motive is the act of devouring oneself—the image principle that irreversibly subverts exactly those binary orders we are talking about here. A shiny metallic cube is absorbed by a black viscous blob, a snake begins to eat its own tail, a mobile phone displays animated figures feasting on other figures. The combination of all of these "items" fished out of the web, which were placed online by active users at some point for whatever reason or mood, does not simply result in a vexatious game of void and hyper-presence ("the void also attracts you," says a beguiling voice off screen). Rather, the unfathomable "originals" and the appropriated yet by no means just secondary "copies" become engaged in a sort of skewing process, oscillating back and forth without a firm anchor, once again highlighting the network character of today's digital images.

But in no case does this insight make contemporary political interests (such as those legitimately pursued by the CPB or Forensic Architecture) superfluous. On the contrary: It just hoists the ordering scheme, which is still used today to better grasp the primary and secondary, the authentic and derivative, to a fundamentally different plateau. A plateau where copying sometimes unfurls one-and-a-half times the effect than originals.

1 Kanye West, "Famous," *YouTube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7FCgw_GlWc (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018).

2 Cf. Daniel Rourke, "'Please don't call me uncanny': Cécile B. Evans at Seventeen Gallery," *Rhizome* (Dec. 4, 2014), http://rhizome.org/editorial/2014/dec/4/please-dont-call-me-uncanny-hyperlinks-seventeen-g/ (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018).

3 Cf. my text on counterfactual parallel worlds: Christian Höller, "Kontrafaktische Parallelwelt," *springerin* 1 (2017): 6–7.

4 Cf. Center for Political Beauty, "First Fall of the European Wall," http://www.politicalbeauty.com/wall.html (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018).

5 Cf. Center for Political Beauty, "Holocaust-Mahnmal Bornhagen," https://politicalbeauty.de/mahnmal.html (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018).

6 "Tatortbegehung Andreas Temme zum 'NSU Mord' in Kassel," *YouTube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJMd3olote0 (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018).

7 See "Unraveling the NSU Complex," http://www.nsu-tribunal.de/en/ (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018).

8 Forensic Architecture, "77sqm_9:26min," http://www.forensic-architecture.org/case/77sqm_926min/ (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018).

9 Cf. Robert Mackey & Robert Trafford, "A German Intelligence Agent Was at the Scene of a Neo-Nazi Murder. He Can't Explain Why," *The Intercept* (Oct. 18, 2017), https://theintercept.com/2017/10/18/germany-neo-nazi-murder-trial-forensic-architecture/ (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018).

10 See James Bridle, "Seamless Transitions," http://jamesbridle.com/works/seamless-transitions (accessed Apr. 12, 2018); cf. Franz Thalmair, "Offensichtlich – hinter den Kulissen. Zur (nicht nur künstlerischen) Praxis von James Bridle," *springerin* 4 (2015): 8–9.

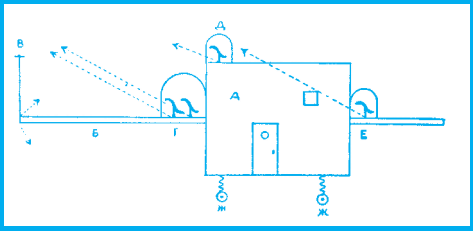
11 Jon Rafman and Danial Lopatin, "Sticky Drama – Music Video," *vimeo*, https://vimeo.com/144165513 (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018).

12 Jon Rafman, "Erysichthon," *vimeo*, https://vimeo.com/184674362 (accessed on Apr. 12, 2018); cf. Vera Tollmann about Jon Rafman in: Lars Henrik Gass, Christian Höller, and Jessica Manstetten (eds.), *after youtube. Gespräche, Portraits, Texte zum Musikvideo nach dem Internet* (Cologne: Strzelecki Books, 2018).

"RETROGRADE REMEDIATION"—CROSS-MEDIA TRANSLATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY FILM-RELATED ART

GABRIELE JUTZ

In his prose poem "Ixion" (1926) Belgrade Surrealist Monny de Boully draws a detailed diagram of a fantastic machine, namely an air-carriage, powered by "sexually starved eagles". The heroine of the book describes in detail how this contraption functions: "It is flown by eagles, who are at first kept inside their cages. In the big front cage, are a male and a female eagle. In the middle cage, above the cabin, is a female. In the last cage, there is a male again. If I decide to fly, I step inside the cabin, open the cages, and here's what happens: the male and the female in the front cage are sexually satisfied, but they are hungry; they both fly toward the platform to which some fresh meat is attached. However, they cannot reach the meat because they are chained to the cabin.



Monny de Boully, "Ixion" (1926), in *Zlatne bube* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1968).

Wanting to free themselves by force, they lift the entire apparatus off ground with the power of their wings. Something similar happens with the other pair of eagles. They are well fed, yet they crave sex. When I open their cages, the female rushes out fleeing the male […]. The male cannot catch up with the female for his chain is too short. This is how the four eagles lift the carriage into the clouds".[1]

Boully's fantasy, materialized in a diagram of a chariot driven by desire, serves Pavle Levi as one example to illustrate his concept of "cinema by other means".[2] This

term focuses on ways in which aspects of a more recent medium, in this case film, are assimilated by an "older" and *non-cinematic* medium, such as still photography, drawing, writing, sculpture, or performance. As Levi explains, he is not interested in artworks made under the influence of, or referring to, the cinema but "in a fairly exact set of structural relations inspired by the workings of the film apparatus itself".[3] Expanding on Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's oft-quoted concept of "remediation",[4] referring to the formal logic by which older media (such as film) are integrated into newer ones (such as television), Levi aptly calls this rematerialization of cinema into materials other than cinema's original constituents "retrograde remediation".[5] Boully's diagram from "Ixion" is perfectly suited indeed to fit this particular version of remediation. Instead of looking for the old in the new (as Bolter and Grusin do), Boully seeks the new in the old. As Levi points out, Boully's hand-drawn sketch does not just refer to cinema in a general manner, it is related to it in *structural terms*. Just like the film apparatus itself, it claims to be a techno-libidinal machine, set in motion by desire, and thus subsumes the idea of cinema.

THE "NEW" IN THE "OLD"

Unlike Levi's "Cinema by Other Means", which uses examples from both the historical and the post-war avant-garde, my article will pose the question of what the translation of cinema into "older", non-cinematic media means in our contemporary media constellation where cross-media processes have become standard fare. Retrograde remediation has gained new relevance in the digital age and covers a wide range of artistic practices and techniques. A particularly striking example is *Slide Movie* (2007) by the Austrian artist Gebhard Sengmüller.

Gebhard Sengmüller, *Slide Movie*, 2007, © Gebhard Sengmüller

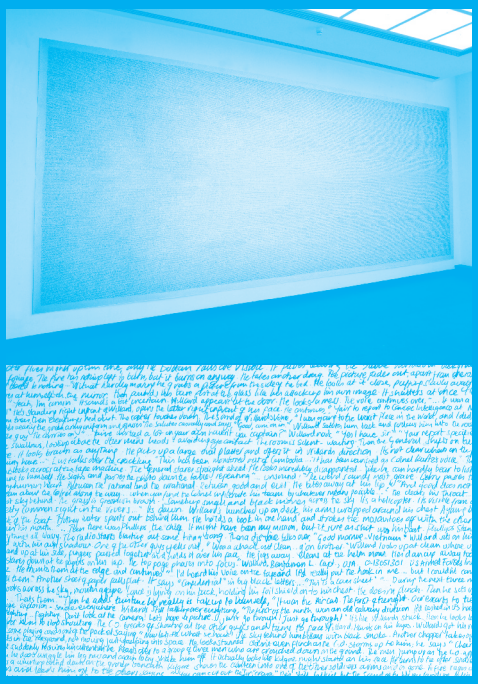
Slide Movie is an installation in which a film projector is replaced by a slide projector. Sengmüller declares the piece to be in the spirit of "fictive media archeology", and its aim is "to invent things that might have existed earlier but didn't, because they hadn't been invented then".[6] For *Slide Movie* the artist cut a 35 mm filmstrip into its single frames and fixed them into slide frames. Then he aligned 24 slide projectors, each of them capable of holding 80 slides, pointed them at the screen, and ran them at a rate of 24 frames per second. In comparison to conventional standards, the quality of the film projection achieved by such an elaborate and time-consuming procedure is quite poor. From a utilitarian perspective, this hybrid machine is totally impractical. However, from an artistic standpoint, Sengmüller's "invention", which invests the slide projector with the power to project moving images, is far from being inconvenient.

By integrating the functions of a "newer" mechanical apparatus—the film projector—into those of an older one, reminiscent of nineteenth-century magic lantern slideshows, *Slide Movie* is unambiguously cinematic—though it is not cinema. But it does—unambiguously—demonstrate that medium specificity must

be located elsewhere than in the material base of the cinematic apparatus.

As Levi's examples of retrograde remediation make clear, the notion of the "film apparatus" goes far beyond the mechanical parts of the machine and includes its flexible and changeable components, in particular the filmstrip, as well as "a number of filmic techniques and devices".[7] While Sengmüller's *Slide Movie* challenges the standard apparatus by tinkering with the hardware, the following two examples, British artist Fiona Banner's *Apocalypse Now* (1997) and Russian artist Vadim Zakharov's *Ghosts Before Breakfast (1927) in One Drawing (Version 2)* (2016), executed in writing and drawing respectively, take their point of departure from a specific film and its viewing experience.

Banner's *Apocalypse Now*, a cross-media translation of Francis Ford Coppola's eponymous 1979 Vietnam epic, consists of a hand-scribbled single block of text documenting what the artist witnessed while watching the movie. Its colossal visual expanse of 274 × 650 cm [21.8 × 8.25 ft] achieves a level of monumentality that stands in contrast to the small size of Banner's handwriting. The minuscule pencil strokes, wavering between different hues of graphite gray, and the closeness of the lines result in a dense texture of words, difficult to decipher. Banner tells the story of *Apocalypse Now* in the present, constantly trying to keep up with the quickly changing moving images, while an insistent "then" marks the action's inevitable progress: "Mike leaves off with one arm and turns round to wave at the chopper. It's coming down, closer and closer, so black. Then you see the three of them on the bridge, from inside the cockpit they look tiny. Then you see the chopper from the side, not black anymore, but matte green." Due to the very fact of the handwriting, Banner's retelling of the movie becomes highly intimate and personal. At the same time, her use of observational and descriptive language lacking any sort of emotional empathy runs contrary to the conventional role of handwriting in contemporary art:[8] What she wants to achieve is not self-expression, let alone inwardness, rather a detached and thorough documentation of the film's narrative.



Fiona Banner, *Apocalypse Now*, 1997, pencil on paper, 274 × 650 cm, © Fiona Banner

Banner's *Apocalypse Now* is related to Coppola's film on various structural levels. Her choice of a large-scale format, for example, echoes the monumental scale of the American filmmaker's visual epic. Moreover, the proportional relationship between width and height in Banner's canvas is 2.37:1, which comes fairly close to the film's aspect ratio of 2.39:1 in its 35 mm CinemaScope version. Furthermore, Banner's transcription of the fleeting images in the present tense refers back to the "now" in the film's title, thus rendering the word's semantic dimension via a specific verbal tense, while maintaining it throughout the entire text as well. Finally, linear translation—row after row of text—parallels the straightforward succession of scenes in Coppola's "absurdly linear narrative of 'go up the river, find Kurtz'".[9] Banner's retrograde remediation not

only finds means to translate the scale, format, semantics, and temporal structure of a specific movie into the medium of writing, it also deals with a more general aspect shared by all films, namely their *reproducibility*. Erika Balsom distinguishes between two forms of reproducibility, a *referential* one and a *circulatory* one: The former concerns film's capacity to transcribe physical reality, the profilmic event; the latter has to do "with the way the image may be copied and copied and copied, transforming [it] into something multiple that is primed for circulation".[10] Finally, in opposition to digital transcoding, which is able to provide potentially innumerable copies, Banner's handwritten translation foregrounds the limits of circulatory reproducibility.

Film as a technology deeply engaged in storage and, conversely, its loss comes to the fore in Vadim Zakharov's *Ghosts Before Breakfast (1927) in One Drawing (Version 2)*. Zakharov is not only an artist and editor but also an archivist, collector, and documenter of Moscow conceptual art. The urge to preserve and perpetuate also inspired his series *Film in One Drawing* (2014–2016), which resulted in handwritten "transcripts" of 70 movies from the silent era, among them Hans Richter's Dadaist *Ghosts Before Breakfast*. While the film is being projected from behind him, Zakharov stands before a sheet of black paper, which also serves as the screen. With pastels he tries to capture the outlines of the passing images *directly* from the projection surface / surface of inscription. At the end the paper is covered with a dense tangle of superimposed lines bearing no visual similarity whatsoever with Richter's film. As Annette Gilbert has remarked in a recent paper,[11] due to the speed of the film's projection and the relative slowness of the human hand, this form of live recording is particularly inappropriate for film notation. Gilbert quotes Zakharov who himself freely admits that almost nothing of what makes a movie, be it action, mise-en-scène, or camerawork, survives his transcriptional endeavors.

Zakharov's archival fervor is not satisfied by just transcribing a film and exhibiting the results. He also turns the act of drawing itself, which occasionally takes place in public, into an autonomous performance recorded on video and distributed on DVD under the title *Action Film Drawing*. The DVD, which includes *Ghosts Before Breakfast (1927) in One Drawing (Version 2)*, consists of three parts: a non-stop action drawing of Richter's six-minute film, executed in 13:07 minutes (presumably by looping the film); a drawing of the film's title (2:45 minutes); and a drawing of the number "four", which figures in the title sequence (40 seconds). As Gilbert observes, when dealing with letters or numbers Zakharov seeks to maintain the respective font style of his source material. In order to give an idea of the hasty pace under which his transcriptions are produced, the artist presents the video recording of his drawing performances in fast motion. In addition to the drawings on paper, the live performances, and the DVD, Zakharov also makes the drawings available in printed form.

Vadim Zakharov, *Ghosts Before Breakfast (1927) in One Drawing (Version 2)* [1. Non-Stop Action, Drawing of the Film – 13:07 min; 2. Drawing of the Film Title (select part of the text) – 2:45 min; 3. Drawing of the Number Four – 40 sec], 2016, pastel on black paper, 50 × 70 cm, private collection

In terms of its fidelity to its source, Zakharov's unremitting attempts to translate Richter's film are doomed to fail, reminding us that in each translator lies a dormant traitor. But it is exactly

this aspect of Zakharov's work that provides us with useful insights into the condition of cinema's being, including its inherent reproducibility. As mentioned, reproduction plays a double role in the ontology of the moving image. While referential reproducibility refers to the medium's ability to represent reality, circulatory reproducibility is founded on an economy of the multiple.[12] Zakharov's gesture of tracing shadows follows the logic of the work of the cinematic apparatus, in particular its capturing of reality (referential reproducibility). But Zakharov's work—as well as those of Banner and Sengmüller—also touches upon the larger and more topical question of film's circulatory reproducibility, in particular its continuous transition from one format to another.

WHY RETROGRADE REMEDIATION NOW?

As film scholar and archivist Giovanna Fossati declares, "transition is the most appropriate and productive term to define the process that film is undergoing at the moment".[13] Although it is true that media transition is ubiquitous in our contemporary "convergence culture",[14] one has to keep in mind that it seems to know one temporal direction only, that is, from "older" media into "newer" ones. Digital media's potential to transcode all traditional media to data-based binary code makes one easily overlook the fact that digitization is only *one* way of conceiving of cross-media translation. Hence, retrograde remediation, the presence of the "new" in the "old", provides a useful critique of such technological determinism. By calling into question the temporal connections between media, retrograde remediation challenges the supposed unilinear direction of translational processes.

Moreover, conceiving the relationship between cinema and contemporary art under the sign of retrograde remediation provides reasonable grounds to reassess the notion of medium specificity. As the examples offered demonstrate, the *concept* of cinema can be separated from its material realization (cinema as we know it). Indebted to the workings of the film apparatus but evoked through other and older means such as slide projection, writing, or drawing, medium specificity is no longer located in the material substrate of the apparatus but is instead derived from a set of structural analogies. Even more importantly, these works deliberately attest to a pronounced technical inadequacy between cinema and the means put in place by these other arts. Sengmüller's *Slide Movie* results in a deplorably poor image; Banner's *Apocalypse Now* fails to tell the "whole" story of Coppola's film; and Zakharov's *Ghosts Before Breakfast (1927) in One Drawing (Version 2)* is far from a properly legible transcript of Richter's film. Nevertheless, it is precisely because these artworks miss their object and "fail" (however productively) that they are able to quicken our awareness of cinema, what it has been, what it is, and what it might be. Far from being a limited case, or even an exception, retrograde remediation is indeed the rule in that it sheds light on contemporary media transition at large by drastically exposing the discrepancies inherent to all media processes of translation, namely, their inadequacy to fully incorporate all of the many qualities and aspects of another medium. Thus, Sengmüller, Banner, and Zakharov's radical cross-media translations are tremendously precious at the contemporary moment as they serve as a corrective to our present media culture as it converges under the sign of the digital.

1 Monny de Boully quoted by Pavle Levi, *Cinema by Other Means* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 10.

2 Levi, *Cinema by Other Means*.

3 Pavle Levi, "Cinema by Other Means," *October* 131 (winter 2010): 51–68, here 56.

4 Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 1999.

5 Levi, *Cinema by Other Means*, (2012), 42.

6 Dominik Landwehr, "Fictive Media Archeology. Interview with Gebhard Sengmüller," in *Artists as Inventors – Inventors as Artists*, eds. Dieter Daniels and Barbara U. Schmidt (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2008), 130–141, here 132.

7 Levi, "Cinema by Other Means," (2010), 64.

8 Susanne Titz, "Outside and Inside," in *Banner* (Dundee, Frankfurt/Main, Aachen: Dundee Contemporary Arts, Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, und Revolver – Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, 2002), 115–117, here 117.

9 David Barrett, "Close Up. Fiona Banner profiled by David Barrett," *Art Monthly* 194 (1996), http://www.artmonthly.co.uk/magazine/site/article/fiona-banner-profiled-by-david-barrett-1996 (accessed on Jan. 20, 2018).

10 Erika Balsom, *After Uniqueness. A History of Film and Video Art in Circulation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 5.

11 Annette Gilbert, "Quickpieces. Zu den Filmmitschriften des Künstler-Archivars Vadim Zakharov," in *Schreiben als Ereignis. Künste und Kulturen der Schrift*, eds. Jutta Müller-Tamm et al (Paderborn: Fink, 2018), 59–78.

12 Balsom, *After Uniqueness*, 5 and 20.

13 Giovanna Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel. The Archival Life of Film in Transition* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 20.

14 Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture. Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

COPY

JUSSI PARIKKA

The process of copying is a key cultural technique of modernity. The mechanization of *imitatio* awed even the hailed Renaissance artist Leon Battista Alberti at the dawn of the Gutenberg era: "Dato and I were strolling in the Supreme Pontiff's gardens at the Vatican and we got talking about literature as we so often do, and we found ourselves greatly admiring the German inventor who today can take up to three original works of an author and, by means of movable type characters, can within 100 days turn out more than 200 copies. In a single contact of his press he can reproduce a copy of an entire page of a large manuscript."[1] In Alberti's time the spiritual concept of *imitatio* (Latin) or *mimesis* (remediated from the philosophy of Ancient Greece) became the cornerstone of art theory, which lasted for hundreds of years but also turned at the same time into a material process of copying: especially the texts of the ancients.

From the printing press that replaced the meticulous work of monks copying texts to the technique of mass production of photographs and other technical media objects, "copy" has become a central command routine of modernity. Modern media can be understood as products of a culture of the copy as Walter Benjamin has analyzed in relation to film. Paraphrasing Benjamin, mechanical reproduction is an internal condition for mass distribution. In contrast to literature and painting, film production is about mechanical reproduction, which Benjamin claims "virtually causes mass distribution".[2] This coupling of copying and mass distribution is not, however, restricted to the media technology of cinema, it also characterizes networked and programmable media such as computers. I will return to this point at the end of the text.

Nineteenth-century enthusiasm for the copy was tied to the possibility of producing low-cost photographs and films and the commercial prospects of such a process. Similarly, the mass production and distribution of printed material was inherently connected to material principles of production, notably the rotation press, and other factors such as the cheapening of paper. Even the Gutenberg printing

machine is fundamentally a copy machine, ingenious in its use of standardized modular parts for individualized signs. During the nineteenth century the first copy machines entered offices due to the rising need for archiving and distributing documents. Such machines slowly replaced the work done by scribes or copy clerks, such as Bob Cratchit in Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* from 1843 or the dysfunctional copy-man in Herman Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener* from 1853 (who would "rather not" do his work).[3]

To guarantee obedience and efficiency the copy routine was technologically automated and also integrated as part of computing systems fairly early on. The early punch card machines used standardized copy processes in the form of special reproducing punch-machines (for example, the IBM 514) to copy the cards used as templates for further data processing purposes. Some reproduction machines apparently also incorporated special control programs. The data fields of the specific cards to be copied were fed to a control panel and were then duplicated onto blank cards.[4] In other words, the instructions for making copies were in themselves part of the mass production of copies: Recursive algorithms are at the heart of modernity. With digital computers the mechanical process is substituted for the informationalization of modular entities and creation of abstract mathematical patterns, which are the focus of copying and reproduction.[5] This in itself has eased the copying of cultural products and consequently led to new techniques of copy protection and consumer surveillance.

In digital software culture "copy" is used in two different ways: (1) in the context of file management and as a new phase of cultural reproduction, and (2) as part of copy/paste—a cultural technique and aesthetic principle. The two lineages constantly overlap in the modern history of media technologies, where copying, the verb, designates a shift in the cultural techniques of reproduction from humans to machines, and copy, as a noun, presents itself as the key mode of becoming-object of digital culture—as easily reproducible and distributed packages of cultural memory.

With the early computers that used core memory, copy routines were a source of maintenance as well as amusement. The cleaning programs used copying routines to move themselves from one memory location to the next one. This was to fill the memory space with a known value, allowing it to be programmed with a new application.[6] As Ken Thompson recollects, the FORTRAN language was employed for the competitive fun of a "three-legged race of the programming community": to write the shortest program that "when compiled and executed, will produce as output an exact copy of its source".[7] Several kinds of "rabbit" and "bacteria" programs were used to clog up systems with multiple copies of the original program code. The general idea was to make the program spread to as many user accounts as possible on the IBM 360 system. This "constipated" the system. The rabbit program could input itself back into the jobstream over and over again.[8] Such self-referential procedures connect with recursive algorithms, which are part of every major programming language. Recursion can be understood as a subroutine that calls (or invokes) itself. The very basic memory functions of a computer involve copying in the sense of data being continuously copied between memory registers (from cache memory to core storage, for example.) Such operations can be termed "copying" but can equally justifiably be given names such as "read" and "write" or "load" and "store register" operations.[9]

With the move from the mechanical programming of computers to informational patterns, the copy command became integrated as an organic part of file management and programming languages in the 1960s.[10] The UNIX system, developed at Bell Labs, was one of the pioneers with its "CP" command. The CP command was a very basic file management tool, similar to, for instance, the use of the "copy" command in the later DOS environment.

The emerging trends and demands of network computing underlined the centrality of the copy command. Instead of mere solitary number crunchers, computers became networked and communicatory devices, where resource sharing was one of the key visions driving the design of, among other things, the ARPANET.[11] During the same time as the early computer operating systems for wider popular use were being developed, meme theory, originally conceived by Richard Dawkins in the mid-1970s, depicted the whole of culture as based on the copy routine. Memes as replicators are by definition abstract copy machines "whose activity can be recognized across a range of material instantiations".[12] Informatics is coupled with meme copying; media technological evolution can be seen as moving toward more precise copy procedures, as Susan Blackmore suggested. Copying the product (mechanical reproduction technologies of modernity) evolves into copying the instructions for manufacturing (computer programs as such recipes of production).[13] In other words, not only copying copies,

but more fundamentally copying copying itself. What makes meme theory interesting is not whether or not it is ultimately an accurate description of the basic processes of the world but that it expresses well this "cult of the copy" of the digital era, while it abstracts "copying" from its material contexts into a universal principle.

During the 1990s copy routines gained ground with the Internet being the key platform for copying and distributing audiovisual cultural products. Of course, such techniques were already present in early fax machines. Since the latter half of the nineteenth century these routines allowed for the transmission of one's "own handwriting" over distances. Soon images also followed. (Technically, mid-nineteenth-century phototelegraphy already allowed the encoding of data into patterns and the transmission of this copy via telegraph lines.) Hence, facsimile, factum simile, should be seen as "a copy of anything made, either so as to be deceptive or so to give every part and detail of the original; an exact copy likeness".[14] Naturally, no copy is an exact reproduction of the original but an approximation that satisfies, for example, the expectations of the consumer. To guarantee such consumer satisfaction, especially since the 1970s, with the help of engineers at Philips and Sony, digital optical archiving techniques have presented us with a material memetic technology of cultural reproduction that happens via a simple command routine: copy.

The material processes of copy routines have often been neglected in cultural analysis, but the juridical issue of copyright has had its fair share of attention. Yet the issues are intimately tied, both being part of the same key thematics of modernization that spring from the fact that automated machines can reproduce culture (a major change of the mode of cultural reproduction when compared to, for example, the nineteenth-century emphasis on civilization). Copy routines that originated with medieval monks are integrated in special copy/ripper programs with easy point-click routines and CSS interpretation possibilities. Hermeneutic questions of meaning are put aside, and attention is paid to the minuscule routines of reproduction: "Thus, it was only after the fall of the Roman Empire that writing fell as an obligation on monks, nuns, and finally male students. Of all forms of manual labor, mechanical copying, just as in present day computers, most closely corresponded to Saint Benedict's dictum: *ora et labora*. Even if the writer, simply because his tongue knew only some vernacular dialect, had no understanding of the Latin or even Greek words he was supposed to preserve, his handicap augmented the monastery library."[15]

The difference between such earlier forms of preserving and reproducing cultural memory and contemporary digital archiving techniques has to be emphasized. Contemporary forms of copy are intimately tied to the consumer market and the commercial milieu of the digital culture (especially the Internet), whereas the work done by monks was part of the theological networks where God, in theory, played the key mediator (and the final guarantor of mimesis) instead of, for example, Sony BMG, or Microsoft. Theological issues defined the importance of what was copied and preserved, whereas nowadays the right to copy and to reproduce culture is to a large extent owned by global media companies. This illustrates how copying is an issue of politics in the sense that by control of copying (especially with technical and juridical power) cultural production is also hierarchized and controlled.

The high fidelities of consumer production connect to the other key area of copy within computer programming: the copy/paste routine that is part and parcel of graphic user interfaces (GUI). Aptly, the Xerox Company—now a kind of cultural symbol of the modern culture of copy, and especially its Palo Alto research center (PARC)—are responsible for the original ideas of graphic user interfaces and point-click user control using the mouse. The Gypsy graphical interface system from 1974/1975 was probably the first to incorporate the cut and paste command as part of its repertoire (although Douglas Engelbart and the "Augmentation Research Center" had introduced the idea in 1968). The command was designed as a remediation of the paper-and-scissors era, keeping nonprofessionals especially in mind. The interface was designed for efficient office work, where adjustments could be done on screen while always having a clean copy in store for backup. The idea at PARC was to create an office workstation that would seem as invisible to the lay user as possible. This was effected by providing a set of generic commands.[16]

The Xerox Star (1981) was hailed as the software system of the future, designed as a personal workspace for networks. The Star office system incorporated key commands (Move, Copy, Open, Delete, Show Properties, and Same [Copy Properties]) as routines applicable "to nearly all the objects on the system: text, graphics, file folders and file drawers, records files, printers, in and out baskets, etc."[17] Being generic, such commands were not tied to specific objects. In addition, the

commands were accessible using special function keys on Star's keyboard. Star's design transferred, then, responsibilities from the user to the machine. The user no longer had to remember commands but could find them either in special function keys or in menus.[18] The desktop became for the first time the individualized Gutenberg machine, or the hard-working and pious medieval monk who followed the simple commands universalized as generic.

The very familiar point-click copy-paste routine originates from those systems and is now integrated into everyday consumer culture. This, as Lev Manovich suggests, is perhaps how Fredric Jameson's ideas of postmodernization should be understood: Copy production as the dominant mode of cultural production culminated in the digital production techniques of GUI operating systems that originated in 1980s. Manovich notes that "Endless recycling and quoting of past media content, artistic styles and forms became the new 'international style' and the new cultural logic of modern society. Rather than assembling more media recordings of reality, culture is now busy reworking, recombining, and analyzing already accumulated media material."[19] In addition, recycling is also incorporated as part of the actual work routines of programming in the sense of reusing already existing bits and pieces of code and pasting them into novel collages (so-called copy and paste programming). Since the 1960s copying has been elevated into an art practice, but it is more likely to be articulated in monotonous office work context or as pirate activity.[20]

In general, "CTRL + C" functions as one of the key algorithmic order-words piloting the practices of digital culture. This returns focus on the key economic-political point: who owns and controls the archives from which content is quoted and remediated? The question does not only concern the software producers who are in a key position to define the computer environment but also the large media conglomerates, which have increasingly purchased rights to the audiovisual archives of cultural memory. Purchasing such rights means also purchasing the right to copying (as a source of production) and the right to the copy as an object of commercial distribution. The archive functions as the key node in the cultural politics of digital culture. One alarming trend is how such key nodes are being defined in commercial interests, such as in the 1996 Copy Protection Technical Working Group, in which technical manufacturers (Panasonic, Thomson, Philips), content producers (Warners Bros, Sony Pictures), Digital Rights Management (Macrovision, Secure Media), telecommunications (Viacom, Echostar Communications), and the computer industry (Intel, IBM, Microsoft) are represented.[21] The issue under consideration is not only about content that is archived in private corporate collections but about how copying is subject to technical, commercial, and political restrictions.

"Postmodernization" should be understood as a media technological condition. Aesthetic and consumer principles have been intimately intermingled with the engineering and programming routines of modern operating systems that are part of the genealogy of modern technical media. For Friedrich Kittler, the Turing machine as the foundation of digital culture acts as a digital version of the medieval student, "a copying machine at almost no cost, but a perfect one." Similarly for Kittler: "The internet is a point-to-point transmission system copying almost infallibly not from men to men, but, quite to the contrary, from machine to machine."[22] Hence, we move from the error-prone techniques of monks to the celluloid-based cut and paste of film, and on to the copy machines of contemporary culture, in which digitally archived routines replace and remediate the analog equivalents of prior discourse networks. With computers copying becomes an algorithm and a mode of discrete-state processing. Digital copying is much more facile (if not totally error-free) than mechanical copying, and copies are more easily produced as mass-distribution global consumer products. With digital products the tracking and control of the objects of copying is easier, and there is the added capability to tag the copies as copyright of the producer or the distributor. The novelty of the digital copy system is in the capability to create such copy management systems or digital rights management (DRM) techniques, which act as microcontrollers of user behavior: Data is endowed with an inherent control system, which tracks the paths of software (for example, restricting the amount of media players a digitally packed audiovision product can be played on).

In addition, copying is intimately entwined with communication as a central mode of action of network culture. Such sociotechnological innovations as nineteenth-century magnetic recording, the modem (1958), the C-cassette (1962), the CD disc (1965), the Ethernet local network (1973), and Napster (1999), and subsequent file-sharing networks can be read from the viewpoint of the social order words "copy" and "distribution". The act of copying includes in a virtual sphere the idea

of the copy being shared and distributed. What happens in copying is first the identification or framing of the object to be copied, followed by the reproduction of a similar object whose mode of existence is predicated upon its being distributed. There is no point in making copies without distributing them. Copying is not merely reproducing the same as discrete objects but coding cultural products into discrete data and communicating such coded copies across networks: seeding and culturing. Similar to how Benjamin saw mechanical reproduction and distribution as inherent to the media technology of cinema, copy routines and distribution channels are intimate parts of the digital network paradigm: connecting people, but also copying machines.

1 Quoted in David Kahn, *The Codebreakers: The Story of Secret Writing* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 125.

2 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969[1935]), 244 fn. 7.

3 See the online Early Office Museum pages for copying machines: "Antique Copying Machines," http://www.officemuseum.com/copy_machines.htm (accessed on Oct. 21, 2018).

4 See the Waalsdorp museum online page: "Everything about punch cards," http://www.museumwaalsdorp.nl/computer/en/punchcards.html (accessed on Oct. 21, 2018). Thanks also to Jaakko Suominen for his notes.

5 As Hillel Schwartz notes in his thought-provoking *The Culture of the Copy*, two modes, or philosophies, of copying were early rivals: copying discretely bit by bit or analogically copying an entirety, as with chemical copying. Hence, the cultural origins of computerized scanning and the calculation of, for example, images, and the copying of these images in the form of bits spans further in time than actual digital machines. See Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles* (New York: Zone Books, 1996), 223.

6 Robert Slade, "Computer Virus History," (1992) Computer Knowledge, https://www.cknow.com/cms/vtutor/robert-slade-computer-virus-history.html (accessed on Oct. 21, 2018).

7 Ken Thompson, "Reflections of Trusting Trust," *Communications of the ACM* 27, 8 (Aug. 1984): 761.

8 Bill Kennedy, "Two Old Viruses," *The Risks Digest* 6, 53 (Mar. 1988), http://catless.ncl.ac.uk/risks (accessed on Oct. 21, 2018). Another similar observation is dated to 1973, which shows that several programmers thought about the same ideas. See "Old Viruses," *The Risks Digest* 6, 54 (Apr. 1988), http://catless.ncl .ac.uk/risks (accessed on Oct. 21, 2018). Another example is the "bacteria" programs that have been listed as one of the oldest forms of programmed threats. A bacterium is another name used for rabbit programs. It does not explicitly damage any files; its only purpose is to reproduce exponentially but can thus take up all the processor capacity, memory, or disk space. See Thomas R. Peltier, "The Virus Threat," *Computer Fraud & Security Bulletin* (June 1993): 15.

9 Thank you to Professor Timo Järvi for pointing this out to me.

10 See B. I. Blum, "Free-Text Inputs to Utility Routines," *Communications of the ACM* 9, 7 (July 1966): 525–526.

11 See Janet Abbate, *Inventing the Internet* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 96–106.

12 Matthew Fuller, *Media Ecologies: Materialist Energies in Art and Technoculture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 111.

13 Susan Blackmore, *The Meme Machine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 214.

14 See the "Facsimile & SSTV History," *HF-Fax*, http://www.hffax.de/html/hauptteil_faxhistory.htm (accessed on Oct. 21, 2018).

15 Friedrich Kittler, "Universities: Wet, Hard, Soft, and Harder," *Critical Inquiry* 31, 1 (autumn 2004): 245.

16 Michael Hiltzik, *Dealers of Lightning: Xerox PARC and the Dawn of the Computer Age* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 209–210.

17 Butler W. Lampson, "Hints for Computer System Design," *Proceedings of the Ninth ACM Symposium on Operating Systems Principles* (1983): 39.

18 See Jeff Johnson and Teresa L. Roberts, "The Xerox Star: A Retrospective," *IEEE Computer* (Sept. 1989): 11–29.

19 Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 131.

20 Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy*, 238–239.

21 See Volker Grassmuck, "Das Ende der Universalmaschine," in *Zukünfte des Computers*, ed. Claus Pias (Zurich: diphanes, 2005), 251.

22 Kittler, "Universities," 252.

"TASWIRA" IN THE ARCHIVE —ON THE AFTERLIFE OF TELEVISION IMAGES IN THE POSTCOLONY

ANDREI SICLODI

The structure and dynamics of the world we live in are informed by a economically driven mindset to an unprecedented degree.[1] After its steady rise since nineteenth-century industrialization and the demise of the communist project at the end of the 1980s, capitalist expansion has practically conquered the entire world with its ideological stamp. This expansion is inextricably linked with technological progress, which not only serves as the foundation of the capitalist project but also manifests as the irresistible promise for the future. In parallel, colonialism ensured that African countries—dominated by European states until the 1960s—experienced a technological transfer, which has formed the basis of their present economic and cultural development and the network between former colonies ever since. This basis was anchored in the local and social structures under colonial or protectorate rule and has been continuously renewed in the form of development aid to this day.[2] A new form of colonialism evolved that no longer depended on violent rule and exploitation but rather on the economic influence on the respective ruling class in the countries. In order to sustain such influence the capitalist mindset provides the ruling class with media technologies, first and foremost television and the Internet, with the aim to spread its own ideology and thereby reproduce itself—an expansive model of governance, which, despite all crises, appears to be successful for the time being. Under the guise of inevitable modernization, the guiding doctrine of an economically connoted rationalism pervades all spheres of life by unconditionally forcing its inherent rationalist thinking. As a consequence, the fields of influence of existing local knowledge economies are strongly repressed, often to the point of their extinction.[3] In more favorable cases local knowledge is combined with "new" knowledge, and a "creolization process"[4] takes place. This process manifests both on the level of everyday actions, language, and the individual identity formation as well as on the organizational level of state institutions, which have to adhere to the mandate of establishing and maintaining

a governance in keeping with a Western European nation state model. Such a form of "creolization" is intrinsically connected to the technological conditions of capitalist power that promote it. It is neither balanced nor neutral, for it has a functional purpose imposed from the outside, which, however, must not become recognizable as such. And it should produce rational subjects and organizational forms that can be easily integrated into a global market. But, like any logic, the capitalist logic of rationalism can also become inconsistent and contradictory where it is forced upon existing thought patterns, which originated from a different, non-economistic type of social awareness. The newly introduced rules and structures can then prove dysfunctional and their rationality a trap. A television archive in a postcolonial African country, whose contents and condition exemplify political, economic, and linguistic questions of "creolized" image production and archiving, illustrates how such breaks and contradictions materialize.

In the 2012 short film *A Third Version of the Imaginary*[5] by Benjamin Tiven we watch a man searching for a specific item in a film archive. With a slip of paper in his hand, the archivist, a "person of color", walks the narrow hallways between metal shelves packed with light and dark gray boxes. He stops here and there, carefully inspecting spots where he perhaps could find what he is looking for. But what he hoped to find does not seem to be there. An archive is, by definition, the paragon of systematization and order, but the one here somehow does not easily disclose its structure or logic. Time and again the archivist searches for a potential hint, grabs a box from the shelf, reads the information on it, opens it, briefly examines the content, then closes it and puts it back. After several attempts he keeps two boxes in his hands, quickly sifts through the shelves for another, and finally gives up the search and goes into a locked room in the archive. There he unpacks a 16 mm film projector and, more or less in vain, tries to play a film roll that he had found in this room.

What was the archivist looking for exactly? It cannot be the analog film he tried to play: The boxes on the archive shelves were too small to contain a film roll. The audio track of the film provides the needed hint. While the archivist searches the narrator unfolds a story, in Swahili, about the fate of lost images. They were part of the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) archive, the Republic of Kenya's (now partially privatized) public broadcasting station.[6] Initially the TV broadcaster captured its image material on analog film, which was eventually deemed too expensive, and then video replaced 16 mm film as the information carrier. Video, however, is a medium that is not only easy to reproduce but also easy to overwrite. And so it happened that many images, likely for cost reasons, were overwritten after their broadcast in order to make place for the images of the coming weeks and months. "Video is an amnesiac medium. […] Video made the image cheap, but time expensive," tells the narrator. "For an image to survive it had to be remarkable, it had to show us our world in a magic, unrepeatable way." But who decided if an image fulfilled these requirements? And according to which criteria? This is, as the short film seems to suggest, not so easy to determine. It was likely the same protagonists, who—as we learn later in the course of the film—also strictly forbade the artist to show excerpts from the archived films in his own film. This restriction, this ban on reproducing images, ultimately proves irrelevant as the archivist, despite numerous attempts, fails to play the 16 mm film. The projector strikes, the film shakes and rattles, and its images remain hard to decipher to the very end.

In simple, calm images *A Third Version of the Imaginary* tells a multilayered story about the political fate of electronically reproducible images under "creolized" conditions. The short film illustrates what it means to subject a national moving images archive to the austerity paradigm of capitalist ideology. In the film we do not learn anything in particular about the historical development of the archive itself, for example, when the change from celluloid to magnetic tape occurred, or how long the transition from the old to the new medium lasted. But it becomes all the more clear that this archive has forfeited its contemporary political relevance—because in 2012, when the short film was made, its digitization and corresponding improved cataloging were not an issue yet.[7] Hence, we are dealing with an archive that has become "historical", whose future development, whose growth has apparently come to a standstill with the rise of digital television technologies. The historical value of its stored video films is founded on two levels: First, in their genuine function as visual testimonies of certain events in the country's history, which are considered meaningful, worth being preserved. Second, as testimonies of a selection process, whose rules and logic can be ascribed to the only plausible explanation, namely the politically prescribed austerity by the ruling regime. The resulting shortage of information carriers likely forced the

responsible persons at the broadcasting station to recycle existing cassettes and, thus, also make inevitable decisions about the contents: Which are worth preserving? Which events must remain archived, which not? But such decisions would actually oppose the underlying idea of an archive to collect and preserve preferably *all* cultural testimonies of a predefined territory or the production of an institution. As soon as an artifact has found its way into the archive it must stay there, its unscathed continued existence ensured. At this breakpoint between a cultural preservation impulse and economic regulation the paradox of archiving in a "creolized" context comes to light: The archive provides images that—through their very presence, by the fact that they have escaped being overwritten—testify the contingent nature of society's collective memory. The contingency begins to unfold at the end of the transition from the "old" medium celluloid to the "new" medium video, when the archive can no longer physically grow due to economic constraints. Its growth can only be simulated, the prerequisite being the now technically feasible, discrete overwriting of the information carrier. The administration of the archive now has no choice but to take into account, above all, the representation of the ruling class as its direct superior. The entire rest of the archive material is potentially up for elimination. Hence, "technological progress" not only facilitates a more cost efficient production of images but also their swift, irretrievable extinction. Easy reproducibility, once viewed as an advantageous quality of electronic media, now takes on a dialectic power that can quickly shift in a negative direction.

Wolfgang Ernst rightly pointed out that archives should not only be read in terms of their historiographical function. Even though they can be regarded as part of cultural memory, they should not only be associated with the policy they originate from, rather they should also be understood alone as a manifestation of a political practice, which defines its own regularities and rules and exhibits a certain independence.[8] Accordingly, the selection of images in the KBC archive would be the consequence of an archive policy of self-regulation, which can—but does not necessarily have to—comply with the original political mandate.

But what was the original political mandate of the KBC archive? As an integral part of the KBC its fate has always been linked with that of the broadcasting station. The history of the Kenyan television station correlates with those of other former colonies in Africa. At about the same time as the Republic of Kenya's declaration of independence from the British protectorate in 1963, the BBC subsidiary KBC, which had already existed since the end of the 1920s, was nationalized and continued as a television station under the name "Voice of Kenya". In the transition from the colonial to an independent government one of the highest directives was to sustain structural continuity: The continuation of a broadcasting institution, once established under the flag of colonialism, went, along with the introduction of television technology, hand-in-hand with an economic-political securing of the hegemony via a consortium of US-American, British, and Canadian companies and investors.[9] At the end of the 1980s Voice of Kenya was named KBC once again; the mandate as a public service broadcaster remained. As Kenya does not have a national archive for audio-visual media to this day,[10] the administration of the now 90-year-old KBC archive is still conducted by the institution. A 2009 study already assessed that the KBC archive was struggling with a number of problems, such as the obsolescence of the archived media, outdated inventories, limited space, or the lack of personnel trained in restoration and preservation of archival materials.[11] These structural deficits could be resolved with appropriate financial provisions—but they do not seem to be within reach.

Hence, the policy of the KBC archive can only manifest under massive restrictions. It unfolds within the coordinates of an economy of time, which is closely connected to the material conditions of the recording media. In comparison to celluloid film development, the more "progressive" video recording technique, with its close historical ties to television, might have simplified the running production of images for the respective broadcasts, but at the same time it radically shortened their lifetime. The Occidental logic of historical valorization through documenting, collecting, and preserving, which the archive was based on, thereby becomes obsolete. Although the KBC archive still fulfills its genuine function, it also reveals gaps in a systemic sense. "The gaps *are* the archive,"[12] writes Wolfgang Ernst, pointing out the inherent dialectics of the archive, the necessity of a concrete absence, which facilitates the formulation of a historical a priori of the archive on the level of discourse in the first place. No archive in the world can be considered "complete". The "contained absence" can manifest in different ways: It can, for example, be interpreted as a "passive absence" that emerged at a certain point in time because no one was aware of

the potential significance of an artifact. But it can also be understood as an "absenting that is an act of violence".[13] In our case the two manifestations mutually constitute and produce one another, whereby they decisively inform the reality conditions for potential statements of the archive.[14]

So the gaps in the KBC archive tell an own story of consuming and discarding, a history of obliteration, a history of violence. They remind us that their fate corresponds with the historical conditions under which their medium once emerged from: the conditions of war—because before television became a affair for the masses it was an instrument of warfare. "But the high-tech medium of television is the only one among all of these optical media that functions according to its own principle as a weapon. For this reason, it would not have risen to world power without World War II,"[15] Friedrich Kittler states, referring to the development of optical feedback loop mechanisms by the Deutsche Wehrmacht and the British Army. In the 1930s, before the war broke out, television had already made first rudimentary steps in civil use; especially in authoritarian and dictatorial governed European states, it had already served as a propaganda medium. But not until the war was the technology modified into a weapon, a high-resolution remote-control system for radar or rockets, and finally as a means to realize self-guided missiles.[16] The medium television grew largely out of warfare; its latent connection to violence remains intrinsic to this day—within and outside of its native territory. Even when its name might sound technical-descriptive and thereby harmless in a European cultural context, in other cultural spheres its interpretation is always connected with associations rooted in the local linguistic milieu. Thus, also in Benjamin Tiven's short film the question arises, which term might best describe television in Swahili. It turns out that this question must be asked against the backdrop of a much more profound problem, as there is not even an equivalent for the word "image":

> In Swahili, a drawing is "kuchora", a photograph is "picha", cinema is "sinema" and video is "video". But there is no naturally occurring word for just *image*. The *image* is an imported concept, a foreigner's concept. In Swahili, an image can not exist without its medium. Perhaps we come closest to *image* in the word *taswira*, which can mean the sense of vision itself, or a glimmering mirage that one sees but doesn't believe. *Taswira* can mean a visual lie of thought shared by a group. […] *Taswira* is also the shared impulse toward violence that unites a crowd just as it irrupts into a riot. Here too, it is a thing seen or felt by anyone at the same time, upon which they all agree without discussion. *Taswira* is an image whose technological medium is the mind.[17]

Hence, the word "taswira" stands, in general, for imaginary conceptions that only arise in an individual's mind but at the same time are of a collective nature and primarily associated with negativity and violence. In this light, the word is an appropriate description for television, for the ephemeral nature of its images, which only solidify in the memory of the viewers. As an electronic medium, television has the technological capacity to conjure an immaterial visual presence, which, on an external level, exists only for the very moment the medium produces, transports, and displays the image, but thereafter it can persist in the memory of the recipients for an indefinite period of time. This quality makes the medium particularly well-suited as an instrument of ideologization. Just as colonial violence was replaced by economic colonialiality, the violence of the medium transformed into a dominance through ideological agency. In connection with the postcolonial project of modernization in the now independent African states, the respective television networks assumed the role of legitimization machines via image production, images which should present the government's achievements to the masses.[18] This type of image production, however, proved to be largely redundant, as it mainly showed how the ruling elite, first and foremost the presidents and leaders of the single political party KANU (Kenya African National Union), advanced the modernization of the country. Infrastructural projects such as bridges, plants, or factories were initiated non-stop with the symbolic gesture of a groundbreaking or cornerstone ceremony, finished building projects with a festive opening.[19] A distinct television reportage aesthetic emerged; its main feature was the precisely clocked, nearly endless repetition of the activities of the people in power. These images exhibit a peculiar ambivalence: On the one hand, they tried to achieve a high documentary standard by capturing the country's relentless modernization progress. On the other, they depicted ceremonies or ceremonial dramatizations of procedures that all followed the same pattern, which

also influenced the image and narrative structure of the reportages. The repetition, the interchangeability in form makes this footage not just testimonies of the presented events, rather, with their blunting effect, they become testimonies of processes of political ideologization. Because their daily transmission had both an informative and a sedative function: The masses should be kept psychologically in a never-ending time loop of progress. This time loop is now frozen in the archive, as the KBC archive is filled with such recordings that escaped being overwritten.[20] While this visual monotony of the exercise of power was preserved, other, perhaps more aesthetically appealing images were destroyed. We will very probably never learn what they once represented. Their absence, however, bespeaks the precarious state of the remaining images, the risk that, under adverse circumstances, they might share the same fate. In the postcolony the electronic archive seems to be a particularly fragile entity.

1 Colin Crouch, *The Knowledge Corrupters. Hidden Consequences of the Financial Takeover of Public Life* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

2 Cf. Pablo Quintero, "Entwicklung und Kolonialität," in *Kolonialität der Macht. De/Koloniale Konflikte: Zwischen Theorie und Praxis*, eds. Pablo Quintero and Sebastian Garbe (Münster: Unrast, 2013), 93–114.

3 Cf. Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 73–93.

4 On the "creolization" term used here, see: Ulf Hannerz, *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*, (New York: Routledge, 1996).

5 Benjamin Tiven, *A Third Version of the Imaginary*, 2012, digital video, 12:00 min.

6 See: "Everyday Static Transmissions," a discussion between Benjamin Tiven, Brian Larkin, and Tavia Nyong'o, May 13, 2014, https://www.canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/everyday_static_transmissions/#title-page (accessed on Nov. 1, 2018).

7 Benjamin Tiven states: "One reason I initially tried to get access to the KBC archive was that I'd been told it was being digitized. In fact, it is not. But if it were, and all materials were catalogued, the archive could generate a lot of revenue, as it has a lock on visual records of the first four decades of the country. Digitization could also expand KBC beyond the realm of television and keep the network relevant." Ibid.

8 Cf. Wolfgang Ernst, *Stirrings in the Archives: Order from Disorder*, trans. Adam Siegel (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 1.

9 Nyongesa D. Wafula, "Kenya Broadcasting Corporation in a Liberalized Market Economy: The Need for a New Model for Public Service Broadcasting," October 2005, http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/bitstream/handle/11295/95936/Wafula_Kenya%20Broadcasting%20Corporation%20In%20A%20Liberalized%20Market%20Economy%20The%20Need%20For%20A%20New%20Model%20For%20Public%20Service%20Broadcasting.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (accessed on Nov. 1, 2018).

10 See: "Towards a (National) Kenya Audio Visual Archive," outcome document for proceedings, compiled by Joseph Basil Okong'o for The Archival Study Group, under the auspices of The African Woman and Child Feature Service (AWC), 2009, http://www.awcfs.org/dmdocuments/Conference%20Outcome%20Document.pdf (accessed on Nov. 1, 2018).

11 Ibid., 12

12 Wolfgang Ernst, *Stirrings in the Archives*, 13 [emphasis added].

13 Ibid., 14.

14 Cf. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (London: Routledge, 2002), 70–74.

15 Friedrich Kittler, *Optical Media: Berlin Lectures 1999*, trans. Anthony Enns (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 215–216.

16 Ibid., 217–218.

17 The quote is transcribed from the subtitles in Benjamin Tiven's short film.

18 See Brian Larkin's statement in "Everyday Static Transmissions" with reference to the situation in Nigeria, which can be compared to that in Kenya.

19 Ibid.

20 Benjamin Tiven in "Everyday Static Transmissions".

THE SURPLUS OF COPYING—HOW SHADOW LIBRARIES AND PIRATE ARCHIVES CONTRIBUTE TO THE CREATION OF CULTURAL MEMORY AND THE COMMONS

CORNELIA SOLLFRANK

Digital artworks tend to have a problematic relationship with the white cube—in particular, when they are intended and optimized for online distribution. While curators and exhibition-makers usually try to avoid showing such works altogether, or at least aim at enhancing their sculptural qualities to make them more presentable, the exhibition *Top Tens* featured an abundance of web quality digital artworks, thus placing emphasis on the very media condition of such digital artifacts. The exhibition took place at the Onassis Cultural Center in Athens in March 2018 and was part of the larger festival *Shadow Libraries: UbuWeb in Athens*,[1] an event to introduce the online archive UbuWeb[2] to the Greek audience and discuss related cultural, ethical, technical, and legal issues. This text takes the event—and the exhibition in particular—as a starting point for a closer look at UbuWeb and the role an artistic approach can play in building cultural memory within the neoliberal knowledge economy.

UBUWEB—THE CULTURAL MEMORY OF THE AVANT-GARDE

Since Kenneth Goldsmith started Ubu in 1997 the site has become a major point of reference for anyone interested in exploring twentieth-century avant-garde art. The online archive provides free and unrestricted access to a remarkable collection of thousands of artworks—among them almost 700 films and videos, over 1000 sound art pieces, dozens of filmed dance productions, an overwhelming amount of visual poetry and conceptual writing, critical documents, but also musical scores, patents, electronic music resources, plus an edition of vital new literature, the /ubu editions. Ubu contextualizes the archived objects within curated sections and also provides framing academic essays. Although it is a project run by Goldsmith without a budget, it has built a reputation for making all the things available one would not find elsewhere. The focus on "avant-garde" may seem a bit pretentious at first, but when you look closer at the project, its operator

and the philosophy behind it, it becomes obvious how much sense this designation makes. Understanding the history of the twentieth-century avant-garde as "a history of subversive takes on creativity, originality, and authorship,"[3] such spirit is not only reflected in terms of the archive's contents but also in terms of the project as a whole. Theoretical statements by Goldsmith in which he questions concepts such as authorship, originality, and creativity support this thesis[4]—and with that a conflictual relationship with the notion of intellectual property is preprogrammed. Therefore it comes as no surprise that the increasing popularity of the project goes hand-in-hand with a growing discussion about its ethical justification.

At the heart of Ubu, there is the copy! Every item in the archive is a digital copy, either of another digital item or, in fact, it is the digitized version of an analog object.[5] That is to say, the creation of a digital collection is inevitably based on copying the desired archive records and storing them on dedicated media. However, making a copy is in itself a copyright-relevant act, if the respective item is an original creation and as such protected under copyright law.[6] Hence, "any reproduction of a copyrighted work infringes the copyright of the author or the corresponding rights of use of the copyright holder".[7] Whether the existence of an artwork within the Ubu collection is a case of copyright infringement varies with each individual case and depends on the legal status of the respective work, but also on the way the rights holders decide to act. As with all civil law, there is no judge without a plaintiff, which means even if there is no express consent by the rights holders, the work can remain in the archive as long as there is no request for removal.[8] Its status, however, is precarious. We find ourselves in the notorious gray zone of copyright law where nothing is clear and many things are possible—until somebody decides to challenge this status. Exploring the borders of this experimental playground involves risk-taking, but, at the same time, it is the only way to preserve existing freedoms and make a case for changing cultural needs, which have not been considered in current legal settings. And as the 20 years of Ubu's existence demonstrate, the practice may be experimental and precarious, but with growing cultural relevance and reputation it is also gaining in stability.

FAIR USE AND PUBLIC INTEREST

At all public appearances and public presentations Goldsmith and his supporters emphasize the educational character of the project and its non-commercial orientation.[9] Such a characterization is clearly intended to take the wind out of the sails of its critics from the start and to shift the attention away from the notion of piracy and toward questions of public interest and the common good.

From a cultural point of view, the project unquestionably is of inestimable value; a legal defense, however, would be a difficult undertaking. Copyright law, in fact, has a built-in opening, the so-called copyright exceptions or fair use regulations. They vary according to national law and cultural traditions and allow for the use of copyrighted works under certain, defined provisions without permission of the owner. The exceptions basically apply to the areas of research and private study (both non-commercial), education, review, and criticism and are described through general guidelines. "These defences exist in order to restore the balance between the rights of the owner of copyright and the rights of society at large."[10]

A very powerful provision in most legislations is the permission to make "private copies", digital and analog ones, in small numbers, but they are limited to non-commercial and non-public use, and passing on to a third party is also excluded.[11] As Ubu is an online archive that makes all of its records publicly accessible and, not least, also provides templates for further copying, it exceeds the notion of a "private copy" by far. Regarding further fair use provisions, the four factors that are considered in a decision-making process in US copyright provisions, for instance, refer to: 1) the purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for non-profit educational purposes; 2) the nature of the copyrighted work; 3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole; and 4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for the value of the copyrighted work (US Copyright Act, 1976, 17 USC. §107, online, n.pag.). Applying these fair use provisions to Ubu, one might consider that the main purposes of the archive relate to education and research, that it is by its very nature non-commercial, and it largely does not collide with any third party business interests as most of the material is not commercially available. However, proving this in detail would be quite an endeavor. And what complicates matters even more is that the archival material largely consists of original works of art, which are subject to strict copyright law protection, that all the works have been copied without any

transformative or commenting intention, and last but not least, that the aspect of the appropriateness of the amount of used material becomes absurd with reference to an archive whose quality largely depends on comprehensiveness: the more the merrier. As Simon Stokes points out, legally binding decisions can only be made on a case-by-case basis, which is why it is difficult to make a general evaluation of Ubu's legal situation.[12] The ethical defense tends to induce the cultural value of the archive as a whole and its invaluable contribution to cultural memory, while the legal situation does not consider the value of the project as a whole and necessitates breaking it down into all the individual items within the collection.

This very brief, when not abridged discussion of the possibilities of fair use already demonstrates how complex it would be to apply them to Ubu. How pointless it would be to attempt a serious legal discussion for such a privately run archive becomes even clearer when looking at the problems public libraries and archives have to face. While in theory such official institutions may even have a public mission to collect, preserve, and archive digital material, in practice, copyright law largely prevents the execution of this task, as Steinhauer explains.[13] The legal expert introduces the example of the German National Library, which was assigned the task since 2006 to make back-up copies of all websites published within the .de sublevel domain, but it turned out to be illegal.[14] Identifying a deficiently legal situation when it comes to collecting, archiving, and providing access to digital cultural goods, Steinhauer even speaks of a "legal obligation to amnesia".[15] And it is particularly striking that, from a legal perspective, the collecting of digitalia is more strictly regulated than the collecting of books, for example, where the property status of the material object comes into play. Given the imbalance between cultural requirements, copyright law, and the technical possibilities, it is not surprising that private initiatives are being founded with the aim to collect and preserve cultural memory. These initiatives make use of the affordability and availability of digital technology and its infrastructures, and they take responsibility for the preservation of cultural goods by simply ignoring copyright induced restrictions, i.e. opposing the insatiable hunger of the IP regime for control.

SHADOW LIBRARIES

Ubu was presented and discussed in Athens at an event titled *Shadow Libraries: UbuWeb in Athens*, thereby making clear reference to the ecosystem of shadow libraries. A library, in general, is an institution that collects, orders, and makes published information available while taking into account archival, economic, and synoptic aspects. A shadow library does exactly the same thing, but its mission is not an official one. Usually, the infrastructure of shadow libraries is conceived, built, and run by a private initiative, an individual, or a small group of people, who often prefer to remain anonymous for obvious reasons. In terms of the media content provided, most shadow libraries are peer-produced in the sense that they are based on the contributions of a community of supporters, sometimes referred to as "amateur librarians". The two key attributes of any proper library, according to Amsterdam-based media scholar Bodó Balázs, are the catalog and the community: "The catalogue does not just organize the knowledge stored in the collection; it is not just a tool of searching and browsing. It is a critical component in the organisation of the community of librarians who preserve and nourish the collection."[16] What is specific about shadow libraries, however, is the fact that they make available anything their contributors consider to be relevant—regardless of its legal status. That is to say, shadow libraries also provide unauthorized access to copyrighted publications, and they make the material available for download without charge and without any other restrictions. And because there is a whole network of shadow libraries whose mission is "to remove all barriers in the way of science,"[17] experts speak of an ecosystem fostering free and universal access to knowledge.

The notion of the shadow library enjoyed popularity in the early 2000s when the wide availability of digital networked media contributed to the emergence of large-scale repositories of scientific materials, the most famous one having been Gigapedia, which later transformed into library.nu. This project was famous for hosting approximately 400,000 (scientific) books and journal articles but had to be shut down in 2012 as a consequence of a series of injunctions from powerful publishing houses. The now leading shadow library in the field, Library Genesis (LibGen), can be considered as its even more influential successor. As of November 2016 the database contained 25 million documents (42 terabytes), of which 2.1 million were books, with digital copies of scientific articles published in 27,134 journals by 1342 publishers.[18] The large majority of the digital material is of scientific and educational nature

(95%), while only 5% serves recreational purposes.[19] The repository is based on various ways of crowd-sourcing, i.e. social and technical forms of accessing and sharing academic publications. Despite a number of legal cases and court orders, the site is still available under various and changing domain names.[20]

The related project Sci-Hub is an online service that processes requests for pay-walled articles by providing systematic, automized, but unauthorized backdoor access to proprietary scholarly journal databases. Users requesting papers not present in LibGen are advised to download them through Sci-Hub; the respective PDF files are served to users and automatically added to LibGen (if not already present). According to *Nature* magazine, Sci-Hub hosts around 60 million academic papers and was able to serve 75 million downloads in 2016. On a daily basis 70,000 users access approximately 200,000 articles.

The founder of the meta library Sci-Hub is Kazakh programmer Alexandra Elbakyan, who has been sued by large publishing houses and was convicted twice to pay almost 20 million US$ in compensation for the losses her activities allegedly have caused, which is why she had to go underground in Russia. For illegally leaking millions of documents the *New York Times* compared her to Edward Snowden in 2016: "While she didn't reveal state secrets, she took a stand for the public's right to know by providing free online access to just about every scientific paper ever published, ranging from acoustics to zymology."[21] In the same year the prestigious *Nature* magazine elected her as one of the ten most influential people in science.[22] Unlike other persecuted people, she went on the offensive and started to explain her actions and motives in court documents and blog posts. Sci-Hub encourages new ways of distributing knowledge, beyond any commercial interests. It provides a radically open infrastructure thus creating an inviting atmosphere. "It is a knowledge infrastructure that can be freely accessed, used and built upon by anyone."[23]

As both projects LibGen and Sci-Hub are based in post-Soviet countries, Balázs reconstructed the history and spirit of Russian reading culture and brings them into connection.[24] Interestingly, the author also establishes a connection to the Kolhoz (Russian: колхóз), an early Soviet collective farm model that was self-governing, community-owned, and a collaborative enterprise, which he considers to be a major inspiration for the digital librarians. He also identifies parallels between this Kolhoz model and the notion of the "commons"—a concept that will be discussed in more detail with regards to shadow libraries further below.

According to Balázs, these sorts of libraries and collections are part of the Guerilla Open Access movement (GOA) and thus practical manifestations of Aaron Swartz's "Guerilla Open Access Manifesto".[25] In this manifesto the American hacker and activist pointed out the flaws of open access politics and aimed at recruiting supporters for the idea of "radical" open access. Radical in this context means to completely ignore copyright and simply make as much information available as possible. "Information is power" is how the manifesto begins. Basically, it addresses the—what he calls—"privileged", in the sense that they do have access to information as academic staff or librarians, and he calls on their support for building a system of freely available information by using their privilege, downloading and making information available. Swartz and Elbakyan both have become the "iconic leaders"[26] of a global movement that fights for scientific knowledge to be(come) freely accessible and whose protagonists usually prefer to operate unrecognized. While their particular projects may be of a more or less temporary nature, the discursive value of the work of the "amateur librarians" and their projects will have a lasting impact on the development of access politics.

CULTURAL AND KNOWLEDGE COMMONS

The above discussion illustrates that the phenomenon of shadow libraries cannot be reduced to its copyright infringing aspects. It needs to be contextualized within a larger sociopolitical debate that situates the demand for free and unrestricted access to knowledge within the struggle against the all-co-opting logic of capital, which currently aims to economize all aspects of life.

In his analysis of the Russian shadow libraries Balázs has drawn a parallel to the commons as an alternative mode of ownership and a collective way of dealing with resources. The growing interest in the discourses around the commons demonstrates the urgency and timeliness of this concept. The structural definition of the commons conceived by political economist Massimo de Angelis allows for its application in diverse fields: "Commons are social systems in which resources are pooled by a community of people who also govern these resources to guarantee the latter's sustainability (if they are natural resources) and the reproduction of the community. These people engage

in 'commoning,' that is a form of social labour that bears a direct relation to the needs of the people, or the commoners".[27] While the model originates in historical ways of sharing natural resources, it has gained new momentum in relation to very different resources, thus constituting a third paradigm of production—beyond state and private—however, with all commoning activities today still being embedded in the surrounding economic system.

As a reason for the newly aroused interest in the commons, de Angelis provides the crisis of global capital, which has maneuvered itself into a systemic impasse. While constantly expanding through its inherent logic of growth and accumulation, it is the very same logic that destroys the two systems capital relies on: non-market-shaped social reproduction and the ecological system. Within this scenario de Angelis describes capital as being in need of the commons as a "fix" for the most urgent systemic failures: "It needs a 'commons fix,' especially in order to deal with the devastation of the social fabric as a result of the current crisis of reproduction. Since neoliberalism is not about to give up its management of the world, it will most likely have to ask the commons to help manage the devastation it creates. And this means: if the commons are not there, capital will have to promote them somehow."[28]

This rather surprising entanglement of capital and the commons, however, is not the only perspective. Commons, at the same time, have the potential to create "a social basis for alternative ways of articulating social production, independent from capital and its prerogatives. Indeed, today it is difficult to conceive emancipation from capital—and achieving new solutions to the demands of *buen vivir*, social and ecological justice—without at the same time organizing on the terrain of commons, the non-commodified systems of social production. Commons are not just a 'third way' beyond state and market failures; they are a vehicle for emerging communities of struggle to claim ownership to their own conditions of life and reproduction."[29] It is their purpose to satisfy people's basic needs and empower them by providing access to alternative means of subsistence. In that sense, commons can be understood as an *experimental zone* in which participants can learn to negotiate responsibilities, social relations, and peer-based means of production.

ART AND COMMONS

Projects such as UbuWeb, Monoskop,[30] aaaaarg,[31] Memory of the World,[32] and 0xdb[33] vary in size, they have different forms of organization and foci, but they all care for specific cultural goods and make sure these goods remain widely accessible—be it digital copies of artworks and original documents, books and other text formats, videos, film, or sound and music. Unlike the large shadow libraries introduced above, which aim to provide access to hundreds of thousands, if not millions of mainly academic papers and books, thus trying to fully cover the world of scholarly and academic works, the smaller artist-run projects are of different nature. While UbuWeb's founder, for instance, also promotes a generally unrestricted access to cultural goods, his approach with UbuWeb is to build a curated archive with copies of artworks that he considers to be relevant for his very context.[34] The selection is based on personal assessment and preference and cared for affectionately. Despite its comprehensiveness, it still can be considered a "personal website" on which the artist shares things relevant to him. As such, he is in good company with similar "artist-run shadow libraries", which all provide a technical infrastructure with which they share resources, while the resources are of specific relevance to their providers.

Just like the large pirate libraries, these artistic archiving and library practices challenge the notion of culture as private property and remind us that it is not an unquestionable absolute. As Jonathan Lethem contends, "[culture] rather is a social negotiation, tenuously forged, endlessly revised, and imperfect in its every incarnation."[35] Shadow libraries, in general, are symptomatic of the cultural battles and absurdities around access and copyright within an economic logic that artificially tries to limit the abundance of digital culture, in which sharing does not mean dividing but rather multiplying. They have become a cultural force, one that can be represented in Foucauldian terms, as symptomatic of broader power struggles as well as systemic failures inherent in the cultural formation. As Marczewska puts it, "Goldsmith moves away from thinking about models of cultural production in proprietary terms and toward paradigms of creativity based on a culture of collecting, organizing, curating, and sharing content."[36] And by doing so, he produces major contradictions, or rather he allows the already existing contradictions to come to light. The artistic archives and libraries are precarious in terms of their legal status, while it is exactly due to their disregard of copyright that cultural resources could be built that exceed the relevance of most official archives that are bound to abide the

law. In fact, there are no comparable official resources, which is why the function of these projects is at least twofold: education and preservation.[37]

Maybe UbuWeb and the other, smaller or larger shadow libraries do not qualify as commons in the strict sense of involving not only a non-market exchange of goods but also a community of commoners who negotiate the terms of use among themselves. This would require collective, formalized, and transparent types of organization. Furthermore, most of the digital items they circulate are privately owned and therefore cannot simply be transferred to become commons resources. These projects, in many respects, are in a preliminary stage by pointing to the *ideal of culture as a commons*. By providing access to cultural goods and knowledge that would otherwise not be available at all or inaccessible for large parts of the general public, they might even fulfill the function of a "commons fix", to a certain degree, but at the same time they are the experimental zone needed to unlearn copyright and relearn new ways of cultural production and dissemination beyond the property regime. In any case, they can function as perfect entry points for the discussion and investigation of the transformative force art can have within the current global neoliberal knowledge society.

TOP TENS—SHOWCASING THE COPY AS AN AESTHETIC AND POLITICAL STATEMENT

The exhibition *Top Tens* provided an experimental setting to explore the possibilities of translating the abundance of a digital archive into a "real space", by presenting one hundred artworks from the Ubu archive.[38] Although all works were properly attributed in the exhibition, the artists whose works were shown neither had a say about their participation in the exhibition nor about the display formats. Tolerating the presence of a work in the archive is one thing; tolerating its display in such circumstances is something else, which might even touch upon moral rights and the integrity of the work. However, the exhibition was not so much about the individual works on display but the archiving condition they are subject to. So the discussion here has nothing to do the abiding art theory question of original and copy. Marginally, it is about the question of high-quality versus low-quality copies. In reproducible media the value of an artwork cannot be based on its originality any longer—the core criterion for sales and market value. This is why many artists use the trick of high-resolution and limited edition, a kind of distributed originality status for several authorized objects, which all are not 100 percent original but still a bit more original than an arbitrary unlimited edition. Leaving this whole discussion aside was a clear indication that something else was at stake. The conceptual statement made by the exhibition and its makers foregrounded the nature of the shadow library, which visitors were able to experience when entering the gallery space. Instead of viewing the artworks in the usual way—online—they had the opportunity to physically immerse themselves in the cultural condition of proliferated acts of copying, something that "affords their reconceptualization as a hybrid creative-critical tool and an influential aesthetic category."[39]

Appropriation and copying as longstanding methods of subversive artistic production, where the reuse of existing material serves as a tool for commentary, social critique, and a means of making a political statement, has expanded here to the art of exhibition-making. The individual works serve to illustrate a curatorial concept, thus radically shifting the avant-garde gesture which copying used to be in the twentieth century, to breathe new life in the "culture of collecting, organizing, curating, and sharing content." Organizing this conceptually concise exhibition was a brave and bold statement by the art institution: The Onassis Cultural Centre, one of Athens' most prestigious cultural institutions, dared to adopt a resolutely political stance for a—at least in juridical terms—questionable project, as Ubu lives from the persistent denial of copyright. Neglecting the concerns of the individual authors and artists for a moment was a necessary precondition in order to make space for rethinking the future of cultural production.

Special thanks to Eric Steinhauer and all the artists and amateur librarians who are taking care of our cultural memory.

1 Festival program online: Onassis Cultural Centre, "Shadow Libraries: UbuWeb in Athens," http://www.sgt.gr/eng/SPG2018/ (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

2 *UbuWeb* is a massive online archive of avant-garde art created over the last two decades by New York-based artist and writer Kenneth Goldsmith. Website of the archive: http://ubu.com (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

3 Kaja Marczewska, *This Is Not a Copy. Writing at the Iterative Turn* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 22.

4 For further reading: Kenneth Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

5 Many works in the archive stem from the pre-digital era, and there is no precise knowledge of the sources where Ubu obtains its material, but it is known that Goldsmith also digitizes a lot of material himself.

6 In German copyright law, for example, §17 and §19a grant the exclusive right to reproduce, distribute, and make available online to the author. See also: https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/urhg/__15.html (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

7 Eric Steinhauer, "Rechtspflicht zur Amnesie: Digitale Inhalte, Archive und Urheberrecht," *iRightsInfo* (2013), https://irights.info/artikel/rechtspflicht-zur-amnesie-digitale-inhalte-archive-und-urheberrecht/18101 (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

8 In particularly severe cases of copyright infringement also state prosecutors can become active, which in practice, however, remains the exception. The circumstances in which criminal law must be applied are described in §109 of German copyright law.

9 See, for example, "Shadow Libraries" for a video interview with Kenneth Goldsmith.

10 Paul Torremans, *Intellectual Property Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 265.

11 See also §53 para. 1–3 of the German Act on Copyright and Related Rights (UrhG), §42 para. 4 in the Austrian UrhG, and Article 19 of Swiss Copyright Law.

12 Simon Stokes, *Art & Copyright* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2003).

13 Steinhauer, "Rechtspflicht zur Amnesie".

14 This discrepancy between a state mandate for cultural preservation and copyright law has only been fixed in 2018 with the introduction of a special law, §16a DNBG.

15 Steinhauer, "Rechtspflicht zur Amnesie".

16 Bodó Balázs, "The Genesis of Library Genesis: The Birth of a Global Scholarly Shadow Library," Nov. 4, 2014, *SSRN*, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2616631, (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

17 Motto of Sci-Hub: "Sci-Hub," *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sci-Hub (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

18 Guillaume Cabanac, "Bibliogifts in LibGen? A study of a text-sharing platform driven by biblioleaks and crowdsourcing," *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 67, 4 (2016): 874–884.

19 Ibid.

20 The current address is http://libgen.io/# (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

21 Kate Murphy, "Should All Research Papers Be Free?" *New York Times Sunday Review*, Mar. 12, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/13/opinion/sunday/should-all-research-papers-be-free.html (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

22 Richard Van Noorden, "Nature's 10," *Nature*, Dec. 19, 2016, https://www.nature.com/news/nature-s-10-1.21157 (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

23 Bodó Balázs, "Pirates in the library – an inquiry into the guerilla open access movement," paper for the 8th Annual Workshop of the International Society for the History and Theory of Intellectual Property, CREATe, University of Glasgow, UK, July 6–8, 2016. Online available

at: https://adrien-chopin.weebly.com/uploads/2/1/7/6/21765614/2016_bodo_-_pirates.pdf (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

24 Balázs, "The Genesis of Library Genesis".

25 Aaron Swartz, "Guerilla Open Access Manifesto," *Internet Archive*, July 2008, https://archive.org/stream/GuerillaOpenAccessManifesto/Goamjuly2008_djvu.txt (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

26 Balászs, "Pirates in the library".

27 Massimo De Angelis, "Economy, Capital and the Commons," in: *Art, Production and the Subject in the 21st Century*, eds. Angela Dimitrakaki and Kirsten Lloyd (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 201.

28 Ibid., 211.

29 Ibid.

30 See: https://monoskop.org (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

31 Accessible with invitation. See: https://aaaaarg.fail/ (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

32 See: https://www.memoryoftheworld.org/ (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

33 See: https://0xdb.org/ (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

34 Kenneth Goldsmith in conversation with Cornelia Sollfrank, *The Poetry of Archiving*, 2013, https://vimeo.com/60377169 (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

35 Jonathan Lethem, *The Ecstasy of Influence: Nonfictions, etc.* (London: Vintage, 2012), 101.

36 Marczewska, *This Is Not a Copy*, 2.

37 The research project *Creating Commons*, based at Zurich University of the Arts, is dedicated to the potential of art projects for the creation of commons: "creating commons," http://creatingcommons.zhdk.ch/ (accessed on Sept. 30, 2018).

38 One of Ubu's features online has been the "top ten", the idea to invite guests to pick their ten favorite works from the archive and thus introduce a mix between chance operation and subjectivity in order to reveal hidden treasures. The curators of the festival in Athens, Ilan Manouach and Kenneth Goldsmith, decided to elevate this principle to the curatorial concept of the exhibition and invited ten guests to select their ten favorite works. The Athens-based curator Elpida Karaba was commissioned to work on an adequate concept for the realization, which turned out to be a huge black box divided into ten small cubicles with monitors and seating areas, supplemented by a large wall projection illuminating the whole space.

39 Marczewska, *This Is Not a Copy*, 7.

COPYING AS PERFORMATIVE RESEARCH—TOWARD AN ARTISTIC WORKING MODEL

FRANZ THALMAIR

WHY ORIGINAL AND COPY YET AGAIN? WHY STILL?

Copying has attained a new diversity. In the context of digital technologies, which facilitate identical reproductions of any data, the practice of copying is omnipresent yet often invisible. It has evolved into a multifarious but controversial cultural technique, which surfaces in public discourses about copyright and plagiarism or unauthorized fakes of patented products. At the root of these debates is the prevailing negative understanding of the copy in opposition to the positively connoted original. From the perspective of contemporary artistic production and in contrast to discussions often conducted from a commercial standpoint, the original no longer serves as the moral basis for the evaluation of the copy, rather the focus has shifted to the interplay between the original and the copy—a potential that was already recognized in art history. With a view to the generative and mimetic processes that constitute this relationship, not only are value systems derived from the establishment of bourgeois ownership privileges in the nineteenth century being questioned anew today; there is also debate about the (digital) control mechanisms that lead to the increasing disappearance of the practice of copying from the realm of the visible.

Various artistic movements explored original and copy throughout the twentieth century. In particular, the pre-war avant-garde and later neo-avant-gardist movements employed artistic processes such as collage and readymades to create new artifacts from found materials. With such forms of appropriation artists explicitly challenged and nuanced traditional categories like originality, authorship, or intellectual property. The computer's capability to duplicate data without loss, however, antiquates these historical methods of dealing with original and copy for current practices. The ubiquity of various copying techniques confirms that this phenomenon has now established itself both as an artistic and everyday process. But as its mechanisms—largely supported by readymade digital

technologies—frequently remain hidden and increasingly immaterialize, especially the functionalities and logics of copying are up for discussion. Artistic practices that utilize the same copying methods they research can be particularly effective for such an investigation into the interplay between original and copy.

The previously merited distinction between original and copy is no longer of importance in the twenty-first century. The former opposites have combined into a new entity. They are not conceived as temporally or hierarchically consecutive but as parallel and equal. In order to examine this circumstance with methods from the humanities, Gisela Fehrmann and other authors proposed viewing the relationship between original and copy as a "process of transcription", which reveals the relationality of these categories: "The 'characteristic relational logic' of processes of transcription consists in the fact that […] the reference object precedes the transcription as a 'pre-text', but its 'status as a script' is only conferred by this process."[1] Such a thought loop can also be applied to the act of citation: This special form of textual copy refers to a precedent, another text, yet the source only attains the status as original through the selection and reference process.

Looking at "practices of the secondary", as the author team around Fehrmann poignantly phrased, facilitates, on the one hand, an investigation into the effects these phenomena of appropriation have on the content, formal, and material conditions of current artistic production. On the other, it allows one to simultaneously practice this act of copying based on repetition and to examine it within this practice itself.

The aim of artistic explorations of original and copy is widely to construct a space of resonance which is not characterized by bipolarity rather where the permanent oscillation between the poles constitutes a self-reflexive practice.[2] For only a space where the continuous flux and reflux between original and copy intrinsically represents the unity of the two elements bears the potential to generate new forms of knowledge and artistic practice.

REPETITION AND REPEATABILITY

The basis for these forms of self-reflection are ideas about the reality-forming dimension of language that philosopher John L. Austin formulated in the early 1960s in his book *How to Do Things With Words*.[3] In contrast to most words which simply describe the world, linguistic expressions that Austin called "performative utterances" create reality. They perform an action. Austin provides the word "yes" in marriages as an example and links the success of such a speech act with its repeatability. That means a "yes" articulated by the couple performs the act of marriage when the word is incorporated in a ritualized and generally agreed upon form, such as the wedding ceremony. Only then does "yes" create reality.

That speech acts do not describe but create reality can be applied to the inextricable relationship between original and copy. A key factor is the repeatability of linguistic expressions, the main aspect of performativity, which—in keeping with Austin—was further developed by Jacques Derrida with the term "iterability"[4] and later elaborated by Judith Butler[5] in the sense of a political act. Repeatability is not only decisive for the success of speech acts—moreover, its iterative and repetitive character forms the causal basis of the phenomenon of copying. In order to have a reality-forming effect, linguistic expressions need to happen within specific conventions. Analogously, art, too, must act within a framework built on conventions in order to be perceived as such. Drawing upon these traditional and repetition-based principles, Dorothea von Hantelmann establishes "how every artwork, not in spite of but by virtue of its integration in certain conventions, 'acts'" and "how these conventions are co-produced by any artwork—independent of its respective content".[6] Hence, the rules established in the art field in the past continue to have an effect in the present of the respective current artistic work and elicit effects both in the here and now of the artistic activity itself as well as in the conditions of the art field which led to this activity. An analogy to the aforementioned "processes of transcription", where the original is only constituted as such when the copy refers to it, becomes quite evident.

Furthering Anke Haarmann's thoughts about the methodology of artistic research, it may be concluded that these forms of performative research facilitate two things above and beyond the aesthetic experience: first, the opportunity to reflect upon "the conditions of one's own position in the medium of artistic practice"; and second, "to investigate"—and, not least, express—"something with the specific means of art in the process of artistic knowledge production".[7] Consequently, certain themes and matters are not viewed exclusively from a supposed outsider position, rather the performative artistic practice is, at the same time, active within

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Various artistic movements explored original and copy throughout the twentieth century. In particular, the pre-war avant-garde and later neo-avant-gardist movements employed artistic processes such as collage and readymades to create new artifacts from found materials. With such forms of appropriation artists explicitly challenged and nuanced traditional categories like originality, authorship, or intellectual property. The computer's capability to duplicate data without loss, however, antiquates these historical methods of dealing with original and copy for current practices. The ubiquity of various copying techniques confirms that this phenomenon has now established itself both as an artistic and everyday process. But as its mechanisms—largely supported by readymade digital

technologies—frequently remain hidden and increasingly immaterialize, especially the functionalities and logics of copying are up for discussion. Artistic practices that utilize the same copying methods they research can be particularly effective for such an investigation into the interplay between original and copy.

The previously merited distinction between original and copy is no longer of importance in the twenty-first century. The former opposites have combined into a new entity. They are not conceived as temporally or hierarchically consecutive but as parallel and equal. In order to examine this circumstance with methods from the humanities, Gisela Fehrmann and other authors proposed viewing the relationship between original and copy as a "process of transcription", which reveals the relationality of these categories: "The 'characteristic relational logic' of processes of transcription consists in the fact that […] the reference object precedes the transcription as a 'pre-text', but its 'status as a script' is only conferred by this process."[1] Such a thought loop can also be applied to the act of citation: This special form of textual copy refers to a precedent, another text, yet the source only attains the status as original through the selection and reference process.

Looking at "practices of the secondary", as the author team around Fehrmann poignantly phrased, facilitates, on the one hand, an investigation into the effects these phenomena of appropriation have on the content, formal, and material conditions of current artistic production. On the other, it allows one to simultaneously practice this act of copying based on repetition and to examine it within this practice itself.

The aim of artistic explorations of original and copy is widely to construct a space of resonance which is not characterized by bipolarity rather where the permanent oscillation between the poles constitutes a self-reflexive practice.[2] For only a space where the continuous flux and reflux between original and copy intrinsically represents the unity of the two elements bears the potential to generate new forms of knowledge and artistic practice.

REPETITION AND REPEATABILITY

The basis for these forms of self-reflection are ideas about the reality-forming dimension of language that philosopher John L. Austin formulated in the early 1960s in his book *How to Do Things With Words*.[3] In contrast to most words which simply describe the world, linguistic expressions that Austin called "performative utterances" create reality. They perform an action. Austin provides the word "yes" in marriages as an example and links the success of such a speech act with its repeatability. That means a "yes" articulated by the couple performs the act of marriage when the word is incorporated in a ritualized and generally agreed upon form, such as the wedding ceremony. Only then does "yes" create reality.

That speech acts do not describe but create reality can be applied to the inextricable relationship between original and copy. A key factor is the repeatability of linguistic expressions, the main aspect of performativity, which—in keeping with Austin—was further developed by Jacques Derrida with the term "iterability"[4] and later elaborated by Judith Butler[5] in the sense of a political act. Repeatability is not only decisive for the success of speech acts—moreover, its iterative and repetitive character forms the causal basis of the phenomenon of copying. In order to have a reality-forming effect, linguistic expressions need to happen within specific conventions. Analogously, art, too, must act within a framework built on conventions in order to be perceived as such. Drawing upon these traditional and repetition-based principles, Dorothea von Hantelmann establishes "how every artwork, not in spite of but by virtue of its integration in certain conventions, 'acts'" and "how these conventions are co-produced by any artwork—independent of its respective content".[6] Hence, the rules established in the art field in the past continue to have an effect in the present of the respective current artistic work and elicit effects both in the here and now of the artistic activity itself as well as in the conditions of the art field which led to this activity. An analogy to the aforementioned "processes of transcription", where the original is only constituted as such when the copy refers to it, becomes quite evident.

Furthering Anke Haarmann's thoughts about the methodology of artistic research, it may be concluded that these forms of performative research facilitate two things above and beyond the aesthetic experience: first, the opportunity to reflect upon "the conditions of one's own position in the medium of artistic practice"; and second, "to investigate"—and, not least, express—"something with the specific means of art in the process of artistic knowledge production".[7] Consequently, certain themes and matters are not viewed exclusively from a supposed outsider position, rather the performative artistic practice is, at the same time, active within

the respective field that is the subject of analysis. Such an artistic working method not only pushes dichotomous dualities like original and copy to their limits—it is a methodological approach whose self-reflexive and performative character allows it to delve into social discourse because it was derived directly from it.

POST-MEDIA CONDITION, POST-DIGITAL TENDENCIES

In contrast to pre-digital artistic tendencies, like the readymade, pop, conceptual, or appropriation art, which tried to dissolve the boundaries between original and copy, the copy has become constitutive to contemporary art production. In the "post-digital"[8] age the interplay between original and copy has evolved into an overarching phenomenon. Also outside of digital contexts it has become inscribed into artistic production, reception, and distribution processes and—whether forced consciously or unconsciously by the artists—participates in their shaping.

An example of a performative research in which the interplay between original and copy under the described conditions is not only reflected upon but also generated from this in-between is provided by the Brit Mark Leckey with *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* (2013): Conceived by Leckey as a touring exhibition of the Hayward Gallery in London, works by colleagues such as Martin Creed, Jonathan Monk, Louise Bourgeois, or Ed Atkins are juxtaposed with numerous pieces of art history, everyday culture, and artifacts of other sorts. In specially designed displays the artist-curator presented objects like a mummified cat, a singing gargoyle, a giant phallus from the film *A Clockwork Orange*, and a cyberman helmet. All of these objects originated from a collection of images that Leckey had compiled over the years while randomly browsing the Internet and saved to his hard drive. He activated this incidental collection for *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* and triggered a performative cycle by presenting the depicted objects in the exhibition. The digital data materialized in the show and aggregated[9] into clusters, similar to how the files were stored in folders on Leckey's

From Mark Leckey's collection of digital images: "Singing Gargoyle," England, ca. 1200, courtesy Sam Fogg, London, and "Cyberman Helmet," 1985, courtesy Chris Balcombe, photo: Chris Balcombe

Mark Leckey, *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things*, 2013, installation view, Hayward Touring Exhibition, Southbank Centre London, photo: Jon Barraclough

computer. The three-dimensional things took a detour as two-dimensional images in virtual space before reappearing in a three-dimensional form once again as items in an exhibition. The objects, which he collected as digital depictions of real objects, exist today as exhibition views and are likely again circulating in the social networks where the artist once found them.

Leckey went a step further when he transformed *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* into an installation called *UniAddDumThs* (2015) for a subsequent exhibition series. At Kunsthalle Basel, among other places, he presented select things from the already selected collections of things as 3D prints, photographic or otherwise reproductions. Elena Filipovic, director of the exhibition house, wrote about the project: "Having thrown open the floodgates of his hard drive and watched as digital bits and bytes summoned forth actual atoms and matter, materializing in a slew of undeniably real things, Leckey welcomed, organized, and installed them again and again during the exhibition tour of *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things*. Yet I can't help suspecting that he was most fulfilled when the show was still yet to be made, when he was busy collecting all those jpegs and mpegs that constituted the potential contents of the show."[10] Here Filipovic addresses precisely this in-between in which self-reflection couples with performativity into a form of research which is only active while doing it.

Mark Leckey, *UniAddDumThs*, 2015, installation view, Kunsthalle Basel, 2015, photo: Philipp Hänger

The processes researched and practiced by Leckey in *The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things* and *UniAddDumThs* are informed by the digital, yet they do not have to manifest in a digital form necessarily. The point of this performative research—which Filipovic referred to as an "artwork-as-ersatz-exhibition"—is to remain in this fluctuation between the apparent immateriality of digital technologies and their material manifestations. Leckey links this poignantly with the reciprocity between original and copy.

While Walter Benjamin stated in the early twentieth century, "To an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility",[11] twenty-first-century explorations of original and copy propel this thesis. The act of copying is no longer viewed from the perspective of the original, as it was in Benjamin's time. And the copy is not conceived as a nemesis of the original either. Here the focus is on artworks fundamentally oriented upon re-installability, re-performability, serializability, versionability, and photographability—or even "jpeg-ability".[12]

The transition from technical to electronic and digital media and the corresponding changes in our experience have regularly been the subject of media science debates in the past years. However, they were frequently addressed from a one-sided technological viewpoint, thereby breaking the connection with the fine arts. This is owed not least to so-called media art itself, which has distanced itself from traditional fine art formats since the 1980s with its special institutions, festivals, and exhibitions. Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook see the years between 2000 and 2006 as the period "when the term *new* in *new media art* was most widely accepted and used": "After the hype of those years, from 2006 until today, understandings of new media art in relation to contemporary art have significantly changed, and the use of the term *new* has become outmoded."[13]

In the 2005 exhibition *The Post-Media Condition* at the Neue Galerie Graz, Peter Weibel, with reference to Rosalind Krauss,[14] still dealt with the question "whether the new media's influence and the effect on the old media […] weren't presently more important and successful than the pieces of the new media themselves".[15] Today, the answer is clear. Artistic practices like Mark Leckey's not only convey copying methods, more

generally, they also help retrace the tracks left in contemporary fine arts by artistic forms of expressions previously distinguished with the attribute *new*. As opposed to Lev Manovich's juxtaposition of "Duchamp-land" and "Turing-land",[16] two terms that embody the dichotomy between traditional fine arts and media art, the oscillation between analog and digital, between image and object, between Internet and exhibition space dissolves precisely *this* distinction. Employing the multifaceted processes that reside between original and copy, Leckey's works investigate not only the changes in appropriation strategies in a post-digital context but also the effects that this phenomenon has on the fine arts. Ultimately, the focus becomes how the structural requirements, the manifestations, and the perceptions of "Duchamp-land" are transformed by a "Turing-land" that is increasingly in a state of dissolution—how our medial realities are changing.

1 Cf. Gisela Fehrmann et al., "Original Copy—Secondary Practices," in *Media, Culture, and Mediality: New Insights into the Current State of Research*, eds. Ludwig Jäger, Erika Linz, and Irmela Schneider (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2010), 77–85, here 79.

2 Such an approach is employed, e.g., in the artistic-scientific research project "originalcopy—Post-Digital Strategies of Appropriation" (University of Applied Arts Vienna). See: http://www.ocopy.net (accessed on Apr. 1, 2018).

3 Cf. John L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, ed. James O. Urmson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

4 Cf. Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," in *Limited Inc* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988[1972]), 1–25.

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

6 Dorothea von Hantelmann, *How to Do Things with Art. The Meaning of Art's Performativity*, trans. Jeremy Gaines and Michael Turnbull (Dijon: les presses du réel, 2010).

7 Anke Haarmann, "Gibt es eine Methodologie künstlerischer Forschung?" in *Wieviel Wissenschaft bekommt der Kunst?* Symposium of the Science and Art working group of the Austrian Research Association, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, November 4–5, 2011.

8 Cf. Kim Cascone, "The Aesthetics of Failure: 'Post-Digital' Tendencies in Contemporary Computer Music," *Computer Music Journal* 24, 4 (2000): 12–18.

9 Cf. David Joseslit, "Über Aggregatoren," in *Kunstgeschichtlichkeit. Historizität und Anachronie in der Gegenwartskunst*, ed. Eva Kernbauer (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015), 115–129.

10 Elena Filipovic, "Mark Leckey. UniAddDumThs," in *The Artist As Curator. An Anthology* (London: Koenig Books / Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2017), 384.

11 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969[1935]), 6.

12 Hanno Rauterberg, "Heiß auf Matisse," *Die Zeit* 17 (Apr. 20, 2006), 20. Translated for this publication.

13 Beryl Graham et al, *Rethinking Curating. Art after New Media* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010), 21.

14 Cf. Rosalind E. Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea. Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999).

15 Peter Weibel et al., "The post-medial condition," *Artecontexto* 6 (2005): 12.

16 Lev Manovich, "The Death of Computer Art," *Rhizome* (Oct. 22, 1996), http://rhizome.org/community/41703 (accessed on Apr. 1, 2018).

LIVING WITH GHOSTS—FROM APPROPRIATION TO INVOCATION IN CONTEMPORARY ART

JAN VERWOERT

Appropriation is a common technique in contemporary culture. People appropriate when they make things their own and integrate them into their way of life, by buying or stealing commodities, acquiring knowledge, squatting, and so on. Artists appropriate when they adopt imagery, concepts, and ways of making art other artists have used at other times to adapt these artistic means to their own interests, or when they take objects, images, or practices from popular (or foreign) cultures and restage them within the context of their work to either enrich or erode conventional definitions of what an artwork can be. As such, this technique could be described as comparatively timeless, or at least as being practiced as long as modern society exists. For, ever since labor was divided and the abstract organization of social life alienated people from the way in which they would want to live, appropriation has been a practice of getting back from society what it takes from its members. At the same time appropriation can be understood as one of the most basic procedures of modern art production and education. To cite, copy, and modify exemplary works from art history is the model for developing art practice that (neo-)classicist tendencies have always championed. During the last two centuries this model was repeatedly challenged by advocates of the belief that modern individuals should produce radically new art by virtue of their spontaneous creativity. The postmodern critics of this cult of individual genius, in turn, claimed that it is a gross ideological distortion to portray the making of art as a heroic act of original creation. Instead they advanced the paradigm of appropriation as a materialist model that describes art production as the gradual re-shuffling of a basic set of cultural terms through their strategic re-use and eventual transformation.

Such a general account of appropriation as a common social strategy and basic artistic operation may help to outline some of the overall implications of the concept. What it cannot capture, however, is the specific *momentum* that gives the debates about appropriation their particular focus and urgency in

different historical situations. It might appear futile to reconstruct the exact spirit of the moment when, in the late 1970s, the notion of appropriation emerged in critical discourse alongside the concept of postmodernism to become one of the key contested terms in the debates of the 1980s. Still, to try and picture the historic momentum of this discourse seems urgent because there is evidence that the situation today has significantly changed. To practice and discuss appropriation in the present moment means something different than it did before, and to bring out this specific difference it seems necessary to grasp what was at stake in the late 1970s for a better understanding of what, by contrast, is at stake now. Let me attempt a first sketchy juxtaposition: The cultural experience the discourse of appropriation conveys under the sign of postmodernity is that of a radical temporal incision. It is the experience of the sudden death of modernism and the momentary suspension of historical continuity. The stalemate situation of the Cold War seemed to bring modern history to a standstill and freeze the forces of progress in motion. These frozen lumps of dead historical time then became the objects of artistic appropriation. Remember Robert Longo appropriating figures of movie actors cut from freeze frames, with their movements suspended in mid-air and bodies arrested in the momentary poses they happened to assume when the film was stopped. Or Cindy Sherman appropriating the visual language of epic Hollywood cinema to halt and arrest the motion of the moving pictures in isolated still images of female figures locked in a spatial *mise-en-scène* with the timeline gone missing. These works convey an intense sense of an interruption of temporal continuity, a blackout of historical time that mortifies culture and turns its tropes into inanimate figures, into pre-objectified, commodified visual material, ready to pick up and use.

Now, imagine the reels of the projectors suddenly start spinning again. As the freeze frame dissolves into motion and the figures Longo suspended in mid-air crash to the ground as the pain of the blow they received from their invisible opponent registers and propels them forward. Sherman's heroines unwind, begin to speak, and confess their story to the camera. You could say that this is what happened after 1989. When the superpowers could no longer hold their breath and the wall was blown down, history sprang to life again. The rigid bipolar order that had held history in a deadlock dissolved to release a multitude of subjects with visa to travel across formerly closed borders and unheard histories to tell. Their testimonies went straight down on digital videotape. The dead elegance of the cibachrome print was replaced by the grungy live look of real-time video footage as the signature aesthetic of the new decade. The Cold War had frozen time and mapped it on space as it fixed the historical situation after World War II for over four decades in the form of a territorial order of rigid geopolitical frontiers. It is from this map that a manifold of asynchronous temporalities now begin to emerge along the faultlines drawn by the geopolitical regimes of modernity. Wars erupt over territories that were shaped on the drawing room tables around which the emerging world powers gathered to divide the globe among themselves. While some countries anticipate a global future by simulating the arrival of the Information Age, the outsourcing of manual labor from these countries forces other societies back in history to the times and realities of exploitation of early industrialization. In many countries, including possibly the US, social life is organized by two governmental technologies that should exclude but in fact reinforce each other: the modern secular state and pre-modern theocracy. Religion, a force thought to be crushed and buried under the profanities of capitalism and atheist doctrines of socialism, has resurfaced as a thing of the past that shapes the present.

If we accept this sketchy account as a preliminary description of the current historical condition, it becomes clear that a key difference between the situation at the end of the 1970s and today is that the axes of space and time have shifted into a different angle in relation to each other. The standstill of history at the height of the Cold War had, in a sense, collapsed the temporal axis and narrowed the historical horizon to the timeless presence of material culture, a presence that was further heightened by the imminent prospect that the bomb could wipe everything out any day anyway. To appropriate the fetishes of material culture, then, is like looting empty shops on the eve of destruction. It's the final party before doomsday. Today, on the contrary, the temporal axis has sprung up again, that is, not one of them but a whole series of temporal axes that cross the axis of global space at irregular intervals. Historical time is again of the essence, only that this historical time is not the linear and unified timeline of steady progress imagined by modernity but a multitude of competing and overlapping temporalities born from the local conflicts that the unresolved predicaments of the modern regimes of power still produce. The political space of the globe is mapped on a surreal texture of

criss-crossing timelines. (In this sense, the question *"Que horas son a Washington?"* put forward by Mano Chao, is the formula that sums up the current momentum. It does so through the purposeful misconstruction of the question in the plural—that is through a moment of a-grammaticality Deleuze described as crucial to a formula of resistance, such as that pronounced by Bartleby, the scrivener.)

The challenge of the moment is therefore to rethink the meaning of appropriation in relation to a reality constituted by a multiplicity of spatialized temporalities. The point of departure for such considerations—and also the reason why appropriation remains relevant as a critical (art) practice—is the undiminished if not increased power of capitalist commodity culture to determine the shape of our daily reality. The force that underlies the belief in the potential of appropriation is the hope that it should be possible to cut a slice out of the substance of this commodity culture to expose the structures that shape it in all their layers. It is also the hope that this cut might, at least partially, free that slice of material culture from the grip of its dominant logic and put it at the disposal of a different use. The practical question is then where the cut must be applied on the body of commodity culture and how deep it must go to carve out a chunk of material that, like a good sample, shows the different temporalities that overlie each other like strata in the thick skin of the commodity's surface. The object of appropriation in this sense must today be made to speak not only of its place within the structural order of the present material culture but also of the different times it inhabits and the different historical vectors that cross it. So there is a positive hope that the exhibition of the appropriated object could today still create this sudden moment of insight that we know it can produce ever since Duchamp put a bottle dryer on display in a museum, namely that it could show what (in a particular social context at a specific historical moment) it means for something to mean something. So we trust the appropriated object to be able to reveal in and through itself the riddled historical relations and dynamics that today determine what things mean.

The only thing we should maybe be less optimistic about is the possibility of thinking of the object of appropriation and the knowledge it generates *in terms of property*. No doubt, if you solely map the act of appropriation on a structural topography of social space, there is little room for ambiguity concerning issues of property: In the moment of its expropriation the object is taken away (bought, stolen, or sampled) from one place and put to use in another. There may be quarrels over copyright and property rights violations, but those occur precisely because it can generally be traced where the object was taken from and where it is now, whose property it was, and who took it to make it a part of his or her life, art, music, and so on. Property is an issue because the position of the appropriated item can clearly be fixed (We found it in your house, on your record, in your show!). If you, however, try to fix the position of the object of appropriation in *time* and draw the trajectory of its displacement in a coordinate system with multiple temporal axes, it obviously gets more complicated. How would you clarify the status of ownership of something that inhabits different times, that travels through time and repeats itself in unpredictable intervals, like, for instance, a recurring style in fashion, a folkloristic symbol that is revived by a new political movement to articulate its revisionist version of a country's history, or a complex of second-rate modernist architecture occupied by residents who know nothing of its original designs but still have to find a way of living with the ghosts that haunt the building? Who owns a recurring style, a collective symbol, or a haunted house? Even if you appropriate them, they can never be entirely your private property. Dead objects can circulate in space and change owners. Things that live throughout time cannot, in any unambiguous sense, pass into anyone's possession. For this reason, they must be approached in a different way. Tactically speaking, the one who seeks to appropriate such temporally layered objects with critical intent—that is with an attitude that differs significantly from the blunt revisionism of neo- (or "turbo"-) folkloristic exploitations of the past—must be prepared to relinquish the claim to full possession, loosen the grip on the object, and call it forth, invoke it rather than seize it.

So my claim is that the specific difference between the momentum of appropriation in the 1980s and today lies in a decisive shift in the relation to the object of appropriation—from the re-use of a dead commodity fetish to the invocation of something that lives through time—and, underlying this shift, a radical transformation of the experience of the historical situation, from a feeling of a general loss of historicity to a current sense of an excessive presence of history, a shift from not enough to too much history, or rather too many histories. To bring out this difference more clearly allow me to retrace the steps of the argument and start over from its beginning by calling up some of the

theoretical concepts that gave appropriation a specific meaning in the American art-critical discourse of the late 1970s and early 1980s, to then develop some contemporary reformulations of these ideas.

If you compare, for instance, the writings of Douglas Crimp, Fredric Jameson, and Craig Owens on the subject of appropriation, you will find a common motif in these texts. It is the idea that the sudden dissolution of historical continuity charges postmodern material with an intense sense of a presence without historical meaning—and that this intensity can be isolated in the object of appropriation as it manifests the breakdown of signification by exposing the empty loop in which the means to make meaning are spinning in and around themselves. In arguably the most beautiful lines of his essay "Pictures" (1979) Crimp, for instance, evokes the feeling of being spellbound by the silence of appropriated images, by their insistence to remain mute and foreclose historical narratives. He describes the experience of these pictures as marked by "the duration of a fascinated, perplexed gaze, whose desire is that they disclose their secrets; but the result is only to make the pictures all the more picture-like, to fix forever in an elegant object our distance from the history that produced these images. That distance is all that these pictures signify."[1] A similar moment of melancholy, an acknowledgment of the impossibility to grasp history in its images, makes itself felt in the admission Jameson's made in his essay "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" (1982) that "we seem condemned to seek the historical past through our own pop images and stereotypes about the past, which itself remains forever out of reach".[2] All we can do, Jameson concludes, since the historical depth of the signs we have at our hands is irreversibly voided, is "to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum".[3]

This idea of art as a form of "speech in a dead language" (as Jameson defines pastiche)[4] is then further refined by Craig Owens in his essay "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism" (1980)[5] where he frames speaking a dead language, or rather speaking a language that testifies to the death or dying of its historical meaning, as the language of allegory. Owens summarizes Walter Benjamin's account of why allegory became the predominant mode of articulating a sense of culture in decay in the German baroque tragic drama in writing that "from the will to preserve the traces of something that was dead, or about to die, emerged allegory."[6] By analogy Owens then infers that the historical momentum of postmodernity, as the modern baroque, lies in the potential to use allegory as a rhetoric form to capture the experience of the present that the historical language of modernism is dead and in ruins. He understands allegory as a composite sign made up of a cluster of dead symbols, which are collaged together to create a shabby composition, a signifier in ruins that exposes the ruin of signification. By defining allegory as a collage of appropriated imagery, Owens in reverse characterizes contemporary art practices of appropriation as producing allegories of the present ruinous state of the historical language of modern art.

The melancholic exercise of speaking or contemplating a dead language in the moment of its allegorical appropriation, however, also delivers a particular kick. Crimp analyzes the practice of working with appropriated images as driven by the fetishist desire to get a morbid joy out of the devotion to an opaque artifact: "Such an elaborate manipulation of the image does not really transform it; it fetishizes it. The picture is an object of desire, the desire for the signification that is known to be absent."[7] Jameson draws on another form of neurotic pleasure to describe the intensity of experiencing the breakdown of signification in the moment of encountering the isolated object of appropriation: He uses schizophrenia as a model to outline the postmodern condition of historical experience.

According to Jameson, schizophrenia implies a loss of the mental capacity to perceive time as ongoing in a consistent order, which results in the inability to organize experiences in coherent sequences that would allow them to make sense, which, in turn, generated a heightened sense of the visceral and material presence of the isolated fragments of perception. He writes that "as temporal continuities break down, the experience of the present becomes powerfully, overwhelmingly vivid and 'material': the world comes before the schizophrenic with heightened intensity, bearing a mysterious and oppressive charge of affect, glowing with hallucinatory energy."[8] Like Crimp, Jameson frames a symptomatic moment in which the individual experiences the breakdown of historical interpretation in the face of an opaque artifact as an ambivalent sensation of depression and ecstasy. So, what for Jameson is the quintessential postmodern experience is for Crimp the particular kick appropriation art delivers.

All of these thoughts revolve around an experience of death, the certain death of modernity, and the sense of history it implied, an experience of death that is framed and fixed by the object of appropriation through the accumulation of the dead matter of hollowed out signs in the form of allegory, the ruin of language. That these terms sound like the vocabulary of gothic novels is certainly no coincidence since the invocation of a sense of gloom seems to have been a key moment in the discourse of postmodernism. It is, however, a gothic novel written in denial of the implications of the atmosphere it conjures up, namely the suspicion that the dead might actually not be as dead as they are declared to be and that they might actually return as revenants to walk among the living. Through its relentless repetition the evocation of the emptiness of the signifier and the death of historical meaning comes to sound like a mantra, a spell to keep away the specters of modern history that linger on the margins of the postmodern discourse. The re-emergence of a multiplicity of histories in the historic moment of the 1990s, then, resembles the return of these ghosts to the center of the discourse and equals the sudden realization that the signs do speak as multiple echoes of historical meaning begin to reverberate in their hollow body—the insight that what was deemed dead speech has indeed manifest effects on the lives of the living. This shock of the unsuspected return of meaning to the arbitrary sign is pictured in the climatic scene of Edgar Allen Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839). On a stormy night, the narrator recounts, he tried to comfort and calm his host, the lord of the house of Usher, who is plagued by nervous hypersensitivity and an immense sense of anxiety, by reading a fanciful chivalrous romance to him. Instead of distracting the attention from the surrounding reality, however, the words of the story are, in fact, answered by immediate echoes in the real world: "At the termination of this sentence I started, and for a moment paused; for it appeared to me (although I at once concluded that my excited fancy had deceived me)—it appeared to me that, from some very remote portion of the mansion, there came, indistinctly, to my ears, what might have been, in its exact similarity of character, the echo (but a stifled and dull one certainly) of the very cracking and ripping sound which Sir Launcelot had so particularly described."[9]

It turns out that the literary account of a knight breaking into a dragon's horde is step-by-step echoed in the real world by the literal procedure of the undead twin sister of the Count of Usher breaking out of the tomb in which she was buried alive to come and take her brother to the shadows with her. It is this sudden realization that words and images, as arbitrarily construed they may be, produce unsuspected effects and affects in the real world, which could be said to mark the momentum of the 1990s. A key consequence of this momentum is the shift in the critical discourse away from a primary focus on the arbitrary and constructed character of the linguistic sign toward a desire to understand the performativity of language and grasp precisely how things are done with words, that is, how language through its power of interpellation and injunction enforces the meaning of what it spells out and, like a spell placed on a person, binds that person to execute what it commands.

In the light of this understanding the aim of appropriation can no longer be analysis alone, quite simply because the effects of staging an object of appropriation can no longer be contained in a moment of mere contemplation. When you call up a specter it will not content itself with being inspected, it will require active negotiations to accommodate the ghost and direct its actions or at least keep them in check. By the same token, if we understand the evocation of a concept, image, or object in the moment of its appropriation and exhibition to have manifest and potentially unsuspected effects on the real world, to isolate, display, and, as it were, fix this concept, image, or object in the abstract space of pure analysis is no longer enough. To acknowledge the performative dimension of language means to understand the responsibility that comes with speaking to engage in the procedures of speech and face the consequences of what is being said. To utter words for the sake of analysis already means to put these words to work. You cannot test a spell. To utter it is to put it into effect. In this sense, an art of appropriation understood as invocation must concern itself even more with the practicalities and material gestures performed in the ceremony of invocation. This concern for practicalities simultaneously raises the question to what ends the ceremony is performed, that is, with which consequences the object of appropriation is put to its new use. This is a question of practical ethics: With what attitude should appropriation be practiced? Would it be acceptable for a critical art practice to give in to the power of the performative alone and invoke the ghosts of historic visual languages to command them to work for the interests of the living?

There is ample evidence that this is precisely what public address experts

do these days anyway. Every orchestrated retro-trend or revisionist resurrection of nationalist histories sees hordes of ghosts pressed into the service of the market and other ideological programs. So, to resist the urge to master the ghosts by programming the effects of appropriation seems like a better alternative. This is always assuming that it was actually possible at all to master ghosts, while the uncanny quality of an encounter with them, after all, lies precisely in the fact that in the relationship with a specter and the one who invokes it, who controls whom will always remain dangerously ambiguous and the subject of practical struggle. This brings us back to the questionable status of property in the act of appropriation discussed before. If through appropriation one seeks to (re-) possess an object, what then if that object had a history and thus a life of its own? Would the desire for possession then not inevitably be confronted by a force within that object which resists that very desire? In his book *Spectres of Marx* (1994) Derrida describes this moment of ambiguity and struggle as follows: "One must have the ghost's hide and to do that, one must have it. To have it, one must see it, situate it, identify it. One must possess it without letting oneself be possessed by it, without being possessed of it […]. But does not a spectre consist, to the extent that it consists, in forbidding or blurring this distinction? In consisting in this very undiscernability? Is not to possess a spectre to be possessed by it, possessed period? To capture it, is that not to be captivated by it?"[10]

On the grounds of this observation, that the relation between the ghost and the one who invokes it will remain in a precarious state of limbo, Derrida then develops an ethics, that is, he formulates the task to find ways to practically approach and do things with ghosts that would do justice to the complex nature of their presence and relation to us. The task is to "learn to live *with* ghosts" [11] and this means to learn "how to let them speak or how to give them back speech"[12] by approaching them in a determined way that still remains undetermined enough to allow them to present themselves: "To exorcise not in order to chase away the ghosts, but this time to grant them the right, if it means making them come back alive, as *revenants* who could no longer be *revenants*, but as other arrivants to whom a hospitable memory or promise must offer welcome—without certainty, ever, that they present themselves as such. Not in order to grant them the right in this sense but out of a concern for *justice*."[13]

It seems that this ethical maxim could equally serve as a practical guide to appropriation today. If we assume that the horizon of our historical experience today is defined by the ambiguous influences and latent presence of the unresolved histories, the ghosts of modernity, then an act of appropriation that seeks to show what it means for something to mean something today must expose these unresolved moments of latent presence as they are, and that means, first of all, not to suggest their resolution in the moment of their exhibition. Appropriation then is about performing the unresolved by staging object, images, or allegories that invoke the ghosts of unclosed histories in a way that allows them to appear as ghosts and reveal the nature of the ambiguous presence. And to do that is first of all a question of finding appropriate ways of going through the practicalities of the performance of evocation, that is: a question of practice.

1 Douglas Crimp, "Pictures," in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: The Museum of Contemporary Art New York, in association with David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc., Boston, 1984), 77. Reprinted from *October* 8 (1979): 75–88.

2 Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1985), 118.

3 Ibid., 115.

4 Ibid., 114.

5 Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: The Museum of Contemporary Art New York, in association with David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc., Boston, 1984), 35. Reprinted from *October* 12 (1980): 67–86 and *October* 13 (1980): 59–80.

6 Ibid., 212.

7 Crimp, "Pictures," 183.

8 Jameson, "Postmodernism," 120.

9 Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," (1839) in *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*, ed. Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 85–101, here 98.

10 Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning, & The New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994), 132.

11 Ibid., xviii.

12 Ibid., 176.

13 Ibid., 175.

PROJECT CHRONOLOGY

April 2019

originalcopy—Post-Digital Strategies of Appropriation
Book

Publisher
Edition Angewandte, De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston

Contributors
Ovidiu Anton, Marcus Boon, Daniel Gustav Cramer, Agnes Fuchs, Bettina Funcke, Sebastian Gärtner, Annette Gilbert, Kenneth Goldsmith, Yuki Higashino, Christian Höller, Kathi Hofer, Ane Mette Hol, Wouter Huis, Gabriele Jutz, Joséphine Kaeppelin, Michael Kargl (editor), Nika Kupyrova, Ulrich Nausner, Willem Oorebeek, Jussi Parikka, Lisa Rastl, Stefan Riebel, Andrei Siclodi, Cornelia Sollfrank, Franz Thalmair (editor), Jan Verwoert

April 2019

a comprehensive guide to artistic methods
Book by Michael Kargl

Publisher
Self-published and self-distributed

January 2019

VIE 02/01/17—03/31/17 TYO
Book by Franz Thalmair

Publisher
Revolver Publishing, Berlin

January 2019

Marcus Boon, In Praise of Copying (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 1–285.
Book by Franz Thalmair

Publisher
Revolver Publishing, Berlin

September 2018

publish!—Publishing as Artistic Practice
Guest-edited magazine

Publisher
KUNSTFORUM International | vol. 256, Cologne

Contributors
Hannes Bajohr, Sarah Bogner and Josef Zekoff (Harpune Verlag), Mariana Castillo Deball, J. Gordon Faylor, Annette Gilbert, Gloria Glitzer, Luc Gross (TRAUMAWIEN), Hubert Kretschmer, Holly Melgard, Vanessa Joan Müller, Marlene Obermayer, Gudrun Ratzinger, Slavs and Tatars, Paul Soulellis, Eva Maria Stadler, Franz Thalmair (guest editor), Eva Weinmayr and Rosalie Schweiker (AND Publishing)

May 8, 2018

performative materiality
Lecture by Michael Kargl

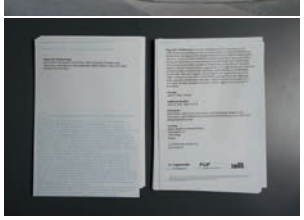
Location
Angewandte Innovation Laboratory, Vienna

April 28 – June 14, 2018

Pageworks (Wandzeitung)
Exhibition

Location
Studio Steinbrener/Dempf & Huber, Vienna

Participants
István Antal, Aral Cimcim, Oscar Cueto, Twan Geissberger, Kyungrim Jang, Teuta Jonuzi, Ada Karlbauer, Mona Radziabari, Masha Sizikova, Anne-Clara Stahl, Franz Thalmair (curator), Bartholomaeus Waechter



April 2018

originalcopy
Guest-edited magazine

Publisher
springerin – Hefte für Gegenwartskunst | vol. XXIV/2, Vienna

Contributors
Karen Eliot, Agnes Fuchs, Bettina Funcke, Annette Gilbert, Christian Höller, Gabriele Jutz, Michael Kargl (guest editor), Lisa Rastl, Franz Thalmair (guest editor)

March 14–15, 2018

on movement
Collaborative session on movement in space and copying processes

Location
Resident Studio Alberto Franceschini, Vienna

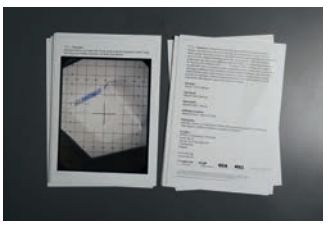
Participants
Alberto Franceschini and Michael Kargl

March 10–25, 2018

”, ”, ”, — *Footnotes* [→ p. 80]
Exhibition and exhibition performance

Location
WIELS | Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels

Participants
Sebastian Gärtner, Ane Mette Hol, Wouter Huis, Joséphine Kaeppelin, Michael Kargl, Nika Kupyrova, Willem Oorebeek, Lisa Rastl, Stefan Riebel, Franz Thalmair (curator)



February 2018

language, materiality, activity, habits
Book

Publisher
Oaza Book, Zagreb

Contributors
J. R. Carpenter, Michael Kargl (editor), Jörg Piringer, Franz Thalmair

January 17, 2018

Publishing as Artistic Practice
Round table talk

Location
Angewandte Innovation Laboratory, Vienna

Participants
Sarah Bogner and Josef Zekoff (Harpune Verlag), Luc Gross (TRAUMAWIEN), Vanessa Joan Müller, Eva Maria Stadler, Franz Thalmair (moderator)

December 8, 2017 – January 17, 2018

A ditto, ditto device. [→ p. 58]
Exhibition

Location
Angewandte Innovation Laboratory, Vienna

Participants
Ovidiu Anton, Daniel Gustav Cramer, Agnes Fuchs, Sebastian Gärtner, Yuki Higashino, Kathi Hofer, Ane Mette Hol, Joséphine Kaeppelin, Michael Kargl, Nika Kupyrova, Ulrich Nausner, Stefan Riebel, Franz Thalmair (curator)

Video program
Cana Bilir-Meier, Dara Birnbaum, Holger Lang, Jesse McLean, David O'Reilly, Christiana Perschon, Rachel Rose, Michaela Schwentner, Claudia Slanar (curator), Miha Vipotnik

Publishing program
Fiona Banner, Walter Benjamin, Marcel Broodthaers, Bernadette Corporation, Karen Eliot (curator), Claire Fontaine, Maria Fusco, Kenneth Goldsmith, Karl Holmqvist, Wu Ming, Seth Price, and many more

November 2017

Corpus
Book

Publisher
Self-published and self-distributed

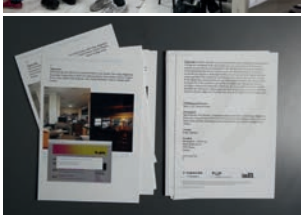
Participants
Michael Kargl and Franz Thalmair (editors) with approximately 500 artists whose artworks were copied from the Internet

May 9, 2017

Pageworks
Publishing performance

Location
die Kopie 01 – Wien City, Vienna

Participants
Mirela Baciak, Živa Drvarič, Cornelia Frischauf, Lioba Kasper, Mira Klug, Magdalena Kreinecker, Gašper Kunšič, Rick Lins, Barbara Macek, Maria Panina, Gianna Virginia Prein, Marie Reichel, David Reiner, Anna Sophia Rußmann, Martin Schlögl, Franz Thalmair (curator), Marit Wolters



April 18–22, 2017
(Open to the public on April 19/20, 2017)

Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device) [→ p. 40]
Workshop and exhibition

Location
BRUX | Freies Theater, Innsbruck

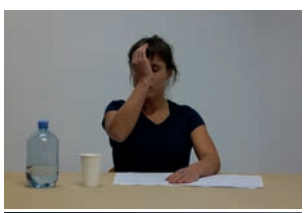
Participants
Sebastian Gärtner, Ane Mette Hol, Joséphine Kaeppelin, Michael Kargl, Nika Kupyrova, Stefan Riebel, Franz Thalmair (curator)

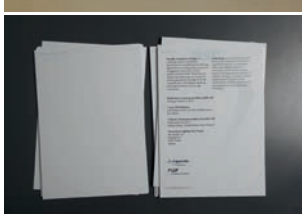
October 11, 2016

Performative Research
Round table talk and performance

Location
Department of Site-Specific Art, University of Applied Arts Vienna

Participants
Lois Bartl (performance), Michael Kargl, Claudia Slanar, Franz Thalmair





September 2016

Postdigital II—Manifestations and Expansions of a Phenomenon
Guest-edited magazine

Publisher
KUNSTFORUM International | vol. 243, Cologne

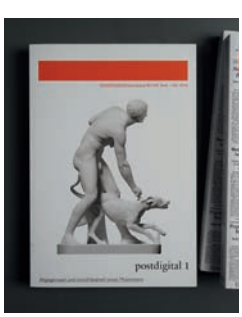
Contributors
Josephine Bosma, Constant, Agnes Fuchs, Kenneth Goldsmith, Christian Höller, Alessandro Ludovico, Jonas Lund, Jesse McLean, Franz Thalmair (guest editor)

July 2016

Postdigital I—Ubiquity and Invisibility of a Phenomenon
Guest-edited magazine

Publisher
KUNSTFORUM International | vol. 242, Cologne

Contributors
Clemens Apprich, Florian Cramer, Heinrich Dunst, Rósza Farkas, Goodiepal, Katja Kwastek, Kolja Reichert, Hito Steyerl, Franz Thalmair (guest editor), Ignacio Uriarte



INDEX OF PRACTICES

Ovidiu Anton
(b. 1982 in Romania) lives and works in Vienna.
www.ovidiuanton.com

Contribution
Framework Conditions from Istanbul to Vienna, 2013
Tabourets Cabanon LC14 01 Series: Exhibition Leftovers Secession, 2015
Almost Doubles, 2018

For *Framework Conditions from Istanbul to Vienna* [→ p. 76] Ovidiu Anton took photographs of wooden fruit boxes that he found on the streets of Istanbul, whose material is sold further by garbage collectors. In a manner of **recycling** he used the wood to frame the photo of these **found items**. | The artist refers to a similar **cycle of goods** in *Tabourets Cabanon LC14 01 Series: Exhibition Leftovers Secession* [→ p. 66, p. 70]: The form of these seating elements is based on the famous same-named furniture by Le Corbusier. Their material originates from recycled architectural props left over from exhibitions at the Vienna Secession. | *Almost Doubles* [→ p. 111] is a photographic work especially developed for this book. At first glance, the image subjects seem to conjure **analogies**, **similarities** which, however, dissolve upon closer inspection.

Marcus Boon
(b. 1963 in Great Britain) lives and works in Toronto.
www.marcusboon.com

Contribution
Depropriation [→ p. 282]

Daniel Gustav Cramer
(b. 1975 in Germany) lives and works in Berlin.
www.danielgustavcramer.com

Contribution
01–72, 2014
Cap Formentor, Mallorca, July 1986, 2017
A Collection of Postcards of Arnold Böcklin's Island of Death, 2018

In his work *01–72* [→ p. 62] Daniel Gustav Cramer installed a chronological sequence of 72 photographs of a water surface in 72 rooms of a Swiss housing complex, which also accommodates an exhibition space in the basement. An exhibited index indicated the **metadata** of the photos—similar to the **decentralized organizational principle** of images in the World Wide Web—such as the time the photo was made or the geographical coordinates of their position in the house. | In *Cap Formentor, Mallorca, July 1986* [→ p. 75] the artist tells a story from two **different perspectives**: Two boys run down to the beach where they fall down in the sand together. According to Cramer, the **doubling** of the texts is similar to two, slightly different drawings in space, which join at a common point. | In *A Collection of Postcards of Arnold Böcklin's Island of Death* [→ p. 123] the artist plays with the **repetition** and **variation** in five paintings by Böcklin with roughly the same image motifs. Especially made for this book, he continues the **serialism** of the original paintings with a collection of printed reproductions of the works.

Agnes Fuchs
(b. 1965 in Austria) lives and works in Vienna and Berlin.
www.agnes-fuchs.com

Contribution
To Configure. / Dec 2017, 2017
reproduction p. 15–16, Codes & Legends, 2016–2017
EXPÉRIENCE STÉRÉO_1, STATION MEUDON, STATION NANÇAY, 2013
EXPÉRIENCE STÉRÉO_2, STATION MEUDON, STATION NANÇAY, 2013
Pour comprendre, 2018*

Agnes Fuch's works feature a strong self-referential character: For *To Configure. / Dec 2017* [→ p. 73] and *reproduction p. 15–16, Codes & Legends* [→ p. 73] the artist draws from a collection of brochures and instruction manuals that accompany technological-scientific instruments, which she employs as an **archive** to **revisit** contents. | In *EXPÉRIENCE STÉRÉO_1, STATION MEUDON, STATION NANÇAY* and *EXPÉRIENCE STÉRÉO_2, STATION MEUDON, STATION NANÇAY* [→ p. 62] she translated the image of a scientific device into the medium of painting, thereby inserting a **reproduction loop** into the artistic production process. Fuchs juxtaposed the technological setting with a pair of images and works with the **variation** of the same subject. | In *Pour comprendre* [→ p. 135] Fuchs combined the **reuse** of documentary photos of her installation *To Configure. / Dec 2017* from the exhibition *A ditto, ditto device*. [→ p. 58] with elements of her artistic research and works especially created for this book.

***Notes on *Pour comprendre* by Agnes Fuchs**
References: pp. 1–2: *Pour comprendre McLuhan*. Cover: *La Quinzaine Littéraire*. Numéro 69, Du 16 au 31 mars 1969; Addo 5 Punch / any 5, 7 or 8 hole code, charcoal on paper, 61 × 43 cm, Agnes Fuchs, 2016 | pp. 3–5: installation view, *To configure*, 2017, installation, multi-part, 2800 × 400 cm, Agnes Fuchs, 2017 in: *A ditto, ditto device*., AIL, Vienna, 2017; *(La beauté emane de l'âme… La forme*, 120 × 150 cm each, *L'erreur*, 90 × 75 cm, each acrylic on canvas, 2016–17 | pp. 5–6: *reproduction p. 15–16, Codes & Legends*, Agnes Fuchs, Thomas Freiler, 2016 in: *Lorem Ipsum Dolor Sit Amet*, Franz Thalmair, Revolver Publishing, Berlin, 2016; Cover: *La Quinzaine Littéraire*. Numéro 69 | pp. 7–8: digital assemblage, *Nyquist Plot*, 90 × 81 cm, *Concorde*, 35 × 27 cm, *Untitled*, 40 × 27 cm, detail, 155 × 120 cm, acrylic on canvas, Agnes Fuchs, 2016–17 each; chart, table, archived material, 21 × 19 cm, ca. 1970 | pp. 9–10: *La forme* (series), 68 × 55, acrylic on canvas, 2017; p. 16: *Codes & Legends*, copy, 2016; order, canvas, different formats, 2018.

Bettina Funcke
(b. 1971 in Germany) lives and works in New York City.
www.bettinafuncke.com

Contribution
Be with the Trouble—Cultural Appropriation in America [→ p. 290] | Initial publication (German version): Bettina Funcke, "Das Unbehagen aushalten. Kulturelle Aneignung in Amerika," *springerin – Hefte für Gegenwartskunst* 2 (2018): 33–35.

Sebastian Gärtner
(b. 1986 in Austria) lives and works in Vienna.
www.sebastiangaertner.com

Contribution
Ikonotopographie (Our Lady of Tchwin), 2017
What Would Rachel Whiteread Do? (at the bottom of a mould), 2018
Paperprops, 2014
[sic!] (tribute to Rudolf Schwarzkogler), 2015

In *Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device)* [→ p. 40] Sebastian Gärtner performed a **translation** of a Russian icon, from its two-dimensionality into three-dimensionality, by making multiple plaster casts of it. As in a **digital 3D print**, albeit with analog means, *Ikonotopographie (Our Lady of Tchwin)* [→ p. 69] exhibits all the details of the work's surface structure, while the color, the constitutive feature of painting, is eliminated. | In the photographic work especially created for this book *What Would Rachel Whiteread Do? (at the bottom of a mould)* [→ p. 147] the artist takes the opposite route—from three dimensions to two dimensions—by making photographs of a self-made concrete cast. At the same time, the title of the work invokes Rachel Whiteread as an **artistic reference** for his own practice. | For *Paperprops* [→ p. 72] the artist applied a mode of **self-organization** by making paper reproductions of industrial ceiling props, which are typically used to prevent a building from collapsing. Despite of the detailed **imitation** of the iron constructions, the paper objects could not fulfill their actual function as a supporting structure. | *[sic!] (tribute to Rudolf Schwarzkogler)* [→ p. 98] not only established a **historical reference** to Viennese Actionism, Gärtner also expanded and corrected it from a contemporary point of view. The photo series depicts a female body wrapped in medical bandages in the style of Rudolf Schwarzkogler's *Aktionen* from the 1960s. Gärtner placed the Latin abbreviation *[sic!]* on the bandaged body, which indicates when misspellings are taken over in **quotes**. The work was used as the cover motif for the *originalcopy* edition of the art magazine *springerin*.

Annette Gilbert
(b. in Germany) lives and works in Berlin and Erlangen.

Contribution
Giving and Taking—Renegotiating Literary Citation Culture [→ p. 294] | Initial publication (German version): Annette Gilbert, "Vom Geben und Nehmen. Literarische Zitationskultur im Wandel," *springerin – Hefte für Gegenwartskunst* 2 (2018): 48–53.

Kenneth Goldsmith
(b. 1961 in the USA) lives and works in New York City.
www.ubuweb.com

Contribution
Easy is the New Difficult [→ p. 302] | Initial publication (German version): Kenneth Goldsmith, "Easy is the New Difficult. Anstatt eines Gesprächs mit dem Künstler," *Kunstforum International* 243 (2016): 68–75.

Boris Groys
(b. 1947 in the former GRD) lives and works in Berlin.

Contribution
Post-Internet Curating [→ p. 308]

Yuki Higashino
(b. 1984 in Japan) lives and works in Vienna.
www.yukihigashino.com

Contribution
Free Enterprise Painting 2, 2016
Free Enterprise Painting 3, 2016
Free Enterprise Painting 5, 2017
Free Enterprise Painting 5, 2017 (Detail), 2018
Tailings (For Constanze), 2014
Tailings (For Thomas), 2014
Tailings (For Tris), 2015

In Yuki Higashino's series *Free Enterprise Paintings* [→ p. 62, p. 63, p. 69, p. 159] photographs of contemporary abstract paintings he found online are separated into four color channels, rasterized, and then manually painted onto Plexiglas in a dot pattern with acrylic paint. The image motifs originate from young painters, whose works are traded on the speculative and deregulated art market. Following this **fragmentation** process Higashino combines the individual images into a new overall composition and returns it back into the **image circulation of the Internet** where they came from. | In *Free Enterprise Painting 5, 2017 (Detail)* [→ p. 159] the artist transforms one of his own paintings, which he generated in such a way, back into seemingly original abstract paintings. The printing technologies applied in this process are designed for **reproduction** and contradict the propagated idea of uniqueness. | The series *Tailings* [→ p. 75] consists of origami figures Higashino folded from paper with his own handwritten drafts of exhibition reviews. The artist admits that his writing activities are not only motivated by artistic concerns—writing helps him generate a **viral momentum** and symbolic capital, a certain **buzz** effect.

Kathi Hofer
(b. 1981 in Austria) lives and works in Berlin.
www.kathihofer.com

Contribution
666 Superleggera, 2012
Design for a Salt Cellar, 1545–1571 / 2012
Flowers, 2009
Gifts, 2013–ongoing
Notes in Space, 2001–2018*

In *666 Superleggera* (2012) [→ p. 69] Kathi Hofer blurs the lines between applied art and free art: The chairs are **unauthorized fakes** of the nearly same-named design classic *699 Superleggera* by Gio Ponti, which the artist bought in an online auction and then restored. | Hofer's version of Benvenuto Cellini's *Design for a Salt Cellar* [→ p. 69] bears two dates of origin: Initially requested as a loan for Hofer's exhibition at the MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied Arts / Contemporary Art, the museum produced a **digital reproduction** as the original drawing was not available due to restoration measures. While the Cellini original remained in the museum collection, the reproduction transformed into a work of Kathi Hofer and thereby subverted prevailing **ownership structures**. | Originally found on the street, *Flowers* [→ p. 69] were given to Kathi Hofer, who, in a simple gesture, declared it a **readymade**. | With *Gifts* [→ p. 74]—a series of handcrafted, yet arbitrary and hard to differentiate gift boxes—the artist takes the pre-Christmas time as a starting point, a seasonal spirit of heightened expectations for the future, linking subjective projections with **collective rituals** of wish production. | *Notes in Space* [→ p. 171] is Kathi Hofer's **re-edit** of a ten-page essay by a film theoretician, which was originally published in the art magazine *Artforum* and is reprinted in this book.

***Notes on *Notes in Space* by Kathi Hofer**
Notes in Space is a close reading and re-edit of the essay "Bodies in Space: Film as 'Carnal Knowledge'" by Annette Michelson. The first time I encountered the text was around 2001. I received a photocopied version of Michelson's seminal essay on Stanley Kubrick's film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) in a film studies course at the University of Vienna, which was first published in *Artforum*'s February 1969 issue. Since then I have re-read the text a number of times, underscoring different parts—always linked to my current sphere of interest. I used markers of various colors. The physical copy traveled with me quite a bit, and it circulated among readers—people I shared it with. Once, after lending it to a friend, I noticed a huge coffee stain on the first two pages. Another time when I passed it on, it returned to me as a PDF file of scans, showing nothing but my annotations—as they were layered in time.

Ane Mette Hol
(b. 1979 in Norway) lives and work in Oslo.
www.anemettehol.com

Contribution
Untitled (Drawing for 26 Objects), 2017
Grey Literature #3, 2018
Untitled (Icon), no. 2, 2016
Untitled (Template for a Publication), 2018

Ane Mette Hol takes **mass-produced** everyday items as a departure point to investigate the relationship between objects, images, and drawn reproductions. The artist used the open studio in the exhibition *Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device)* [→ p. 40] in Innsbruck to embark on a long-term **work process** for *Untitled (Drawing for 26 Objects)* [→ p. 69, p. 83], in which she colored 26 sheets of thin white flower silk with black pastels. She contrasts the banal **mutation** of an off-the-shelf object from white to black with meticulous and tedious **handcraft**. | In *Untitled (Icon), no. 2* [→ p. 63, p. 106] the artist explored an icon of everyday office culture: a stack of white photocopy paper, whose form is subject to industrial **standardization** and **normalization**, turns out to be a block of hand-cut DIN A4 sheets of paper packed in a precisely folded paper envelope with a hand-drawn label. | For *Grey Literature #3* [→ p. 82] Ane Mette Hol reproduced the invitation card for the exhibition *A ditto, ditto device.* [→ p. 58] in Vienna in an elaborate **drawing and photo-realistic process** and presented it at the Brussels exhibition *", ", ", — Footnotes* as a new original. The image motif of this invitation card was *Untitled (Icon), no. 1*, an earlier **version** of the artist's stack of manually reproduced photocopy paper. | In *Untitled (Template for a Publication)* [→ p. 183] Hol uses a drawn **grid** derived from a digital printout of squared paper. The hand-copied and printed **graph paper** exhibits the **imperfections** of both the printer and the pencil.

Christian Höller
(b. 1966 in Austria) lives and works in Vienna.

Contribution
One to One-and-a-Half—On the Spectrum of Contemporary Artistic Copying Practices [→ p. 314] | Initial publication (German version): Christian Höller, "Eins zu eineinhalb. Zum Spektrum gegenwärtiger künstlerischer Kopierverfahren," *springerin – Hefte für Gegenwartskunst* 2 (2018): 26–31.

Wouter Huis
(b. 1974 in the Netherlands) lives and works in Brussels.
www.wouterhuis.com

Contribution
Possible drawing (autonomous production unit), 2017
Summary (Towards A Philosophy of Photography), 2015
Untitled (a possible selection out of the collection of floor plans), 2018

For *Possible drawing (autonomous production unit)* [→ p. 100] Wouter Huis devised a **random algorithm** that incessantly produced new drawings and sent them to a printer in the exhibition space. The programmed script infinitely repeats the process, punctuating subjects like **automation** and **digitalization**, while the room gradually fills up with printed sheets of paper. | In *Summary (Towards A Philosophy of Photography)* [→ p. 99] the artist copied the 39 pages of the same-named essay by Vilém Flusser onto a single sheet of DIN A4 paper. Corresponding with the aesthetics of the Web, the philosophical content manifests as a black cloud of words, a **collage**, which the artist calls "summary". | In *Untitled (a possible selection out of the collection of floor plans)* [→ p. 195] Huis presents a selection of a **collection** of architectural floor plans that one often finds in exhibitions to guide visitors. Removed from their original function and subjected to a **détournement**, the plans in this book take on an autonomous form.

Gabriele Jutz
(b. 1959 in Austria) lives and works in Vienna.

Contribution
"Retrograde Remediation"—Cross-Media Translations in Contemporary Film-Related Art [→ p. 320] | Initial publication (German version): Gabriele Jutz, "'Retrograde Remediation.' Medienübergreifende Übersetzungen in der zeitgenössischen filmbezogenen Kunst," *springerin – Hefte für Gegenwartskunst* 2 (2018): 38–41.

Joséphine Kaeppelin
(b. 1985 in France) lives and works in Brussels.
www.josephinekaeppelin.com

Contribution
Opinion Poll, 2017
[redacted], 2018
Detailed Opinion Poll Results, 2018
Untitled, 2012

Joséphine Kaeppelin's *Opinion Poll* [→ p. 63, p. 88] investigates work life standards by making viewers of her work active participants. In surveys directed at the emotional state of the people interviewed she **imitates** the neoliberal practices of work life and applies them as participative displays to the field of art. Here, the **standardization** that leads to **conformity** and facilitates **reproducibility** is the order of the day. | What the artist began in the exhibition *Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device)* [→ p. 40] in Innsbruck and staged as an interim result in *A ditto, ditto device.* [→ p. 58] in Vienna was further developed for *", ", ", — Footnotes* [→ p. 80] in Brussels: **Another version** with the title [redacted] [→ p. 86] was presented there as a visual poem and evaluation of all previous surveys. Integrated into the structure of the exhibition space, this work assumed the place otherwise reserved for text material to convey exhibition contents. | In *Detailed Opinion Poll Results* [→ p. 207], conceived for this publication, the artist, who also calls herself an "intellectual and graphic service provider", plays with **self-copy** and **self-reference** by presenting the apparent results of her survey on letter paper. | *Untitled* [→ p. 75] originates from a **series** of abstract inkjet prints in which Kaeppelin explored the relationships between humans and machines. Using the faultiness of conventional office software and the **default** settings and moments of coincidental **interruption** to compose her image materials, the artist expands the functions of machines.

Michael Kargl
(b. 1975 in Austria) lives and works in Vienna.
www.michaelkargl.com

Contribution
notations (theater), 2017
material research, 2017
glass, tension belts, 2017
wall, colour gradient, 2017
objects of desire, 2005–2008/2017
pedro's geometry (display), 2017
notations (display), 2018
notations (theater), 2017
different views, 2018
paper, glass, 2018
fluorescent tube, wood, 2018
glass, lines, 2018
human, box, 2018
proposal for a performative research, 2018

Michael Kargl accompanied *Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device)* in Innsbruck with his *notations (theater)* [→ p. 40]. The floor drawing was a **commentary** and public **reflection on the methods** of the collective work process as well as an independent work. Arrows, circles, keywords, and connecting lines generated an additional **layer of information**. | In Michael Kargl's *material research* [→ p. 62, p. 92, p. 93] a digital art generator, which has the potential to develop an infinite number of artworks, is applied to the collection of images, the corpus that forms the basis of *originalcopy*. Following an analysis and **indexing** of the individual works according to parameters like material, form, and content, Kargl created his own **material** constellations, which were adapted to the respective exhibition site. | In *objects of desire* [→ p. 75] the artist investigates the parameters that define digital art: Must one be able to own art in order to define it as such, or is a serial number enough to speak of an original? | Kargl designed parts of the displays for the exhibitions *A ditto, ditto device.* [→ p. 58] in Vienna and *", ", ", — Footnotes* [→ p. 80] in Brussels: *pedro's geometry (display)* [→ p. 14] is a **modular system** of tables, podiums, and vitrines; in *notations (display)* [→ p. 10] Kargl used blue foil to transfer the planned positioning of the works in a digital floor plan directly to the actual floor of the exhibition space. | *proposal for a performative research* [→ p. 8] is a **reflection** and future model at the same time. The work developed for this book discusses the **work process** of the research project *originalcopy* and augments it by formulating an artistic research model with visual means.

Nika Kupyrova
(b. 1985 in Ukraine) lives and works in Vienna and Prague.
www.nikakupyrova.com

Contribution
Re-reading, 2017
Wicked, old wild sea songs, 2017
Books I have read I, 2017
Reflection, 2016
In an old book all the pages are the same, 2016
Cat's cradle, 2015
Paradisio noir, 2018
Wicked, old wild sea songs, 2017

For *Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device)* [→ p. 40] in Innsbruck Nika Kupyrova re-read books she had already once read. Depending on time passed, emotional state, or accumulated knowledge, every encounter with a book is different. The performance *Re-reading*, a **re-enactment**, formed the basis for *Wicked, old wild sea songs* (2017) [→ p. 76], a sculpture exhibited in *A ditto, ditto device.* [→ p. 58] in Vienna, in which she articulates the gesture of reading as physical activity. | In *Books I have read I* [→ p. 95] the artist presented the results of her **research** in the form of a book about all the books she had re-read. In *Reflection* and *In an old book all the pages are the same* (2016) [→ p. 94] Kupyrova showed two more books that deal with **self-reflection**. | The departure point for *Cat's cradle* [→ p. 70] is the eponymous children's game. By **translating** these typical string patterns into bent steel tubes Kupyrova explores the point at which we perceive the transition from one figure to the next, from **predecessor** to **successor**. | *Paradisio noir* [→ p. 219] conveys the impression of a three-dimensional starry sky but is entirely two-dimensional. The work revisited in this book plays with the **residues** of a photocopy process, an unrepeatable combination of misprints and spots.

Ulrich Nausner
(b. 1980 in Austria) lives and works in Vienna.
www.ulrichnausner.com

Contribution
Limitation (AIL), 2017
Rainbow colors (interactive) #1, 2017
Rainbow colors (interactive) #2, 2017
Untitled (originalcopy), 2018

A disclaimer is a legal formulation that regulates certain responsibilities and rights. Ulrich Nausner's *Limitation (AIL)* [→ p. 71] transfers a **collage** of found disclaimers into the exhibition space. Hence, the work references the regulation of **property rights** as well as the **digitization** of contents in the Internet. | In *Rainbow colors (interactive) #1* and *Rainbow colors (interactive) #2* [→ p. 63, p. 70] Nausner refers to a **cliché** in landscape photography. The rainbow—a motif that has degenerated to **kitsch**—is not depicted with its characteristic color gradient but as a semi-transparent hexadecimal code on the windows of the exhibition space. | *Untitled (originalcopy)* [→ p. 231], a work conceived for this book, is based upon the material components of the research project *originalcopy*. Nausner's book pages contain all of the text elements on the project's website in 1 point font size. This 1:1 **return** manifests as a new creation.

Willem Oorebeek
(b. 1953 in the Netherlands) lives and works in Brussels.

Contribution
Re, as in Again, 2018
CHARIVARIQUES, 2018*

Willem Oorebeek's works are often based on materials from commercial media or the art context. He separates individual elements out of the **stream of images circulating in mass media** and subjects them to various print techniques, whereby they attain an **autonomous status**. *Re, as in Again* [→ p. 101] is a lithographic reproduction of a work by the British artist Simon Thompson, who, in turn, plays with the gesture of printing by applying a roll of printing ink to paper. | In *CHARIVARIQUES* [→ p. 243] Oorebeek **cites** a prominent predecessor of contemporary graphic and printing art. The **re-release** of a caricaturist work by Honoré Daumier focuses on the material and medial conditions of the original lithography and the context of its publication, which are generally not attributed any significance.

***Notes on *CHARIVARIQUES* by Willem Oorebeek**
"The work of Honoré Daumier is strongly connected with the distribution of his drawings in print and printed media. For over 40 years he made drawings on lithographic stone, every day, which were printed in editions and a weekly newspaper called *Le Charivari*—a job through which he was recognized as one of the first artists working with a strong connection to print media. Not so long ago my attention was drawn to a shop window of an antiquarian in Paris, where several of Daumier's prints were exhibited. What was special, however, was how low these prints were priced. This was not at all what I had imagined about the value of works by this artist of such reputation. I asked the antiquarian who owned the shop. He told me that the prices were so low because they were printed in reaction to comments on actual issues at the time, and that the printed newspaper on the opposite side had become visible through the paper and was interfering with the drawings. Many lithographs by Daumier were also printed on blank paper and sold for considerably higher prices than the ones contaminated with newspaper print. As an artist practicing the art of printing through lithography myself, I have always valued the development of functional print-making. Therefore it was such a surprise that these newspaper prints were not valued MORE rather much LESS than the clean prints, considering that it was precisely the newspaper function that originated the massive success of an artist like Daumier. A good copy of the newspapers would show the image in its undeniable quality as communication tool in one layer. The entire set of distinct elements—like headlines, letter-press relief, along with the caricaturist intentions of Daumier himself—forms a full schematic of the exciting whirl and dynamic of the era of growing political awareness, the turmoil of a society under influence. It would, in the end, provide a reasonable, if not necessary, ground for the decision to reproduce such copies."

Jussi Parikka
(b. 1976 in Finland) lives and works in Southampton, UK.
www.jussiparikka.net

Contribution
Copy [→ p. 326] | Initial publication: Jussi Parikka, "Copy," in *Software Studies. A Lexicon*, ed. Matthew Fuller (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008), 70–78. [Reprinted courtesy of the MIT Press.]

Lisa Rastl
(b. 1974 in Austria) lives and work in Vienna.
www.lisarastl.com

Contribution
From the series Reproductions, 2018
multi titled #1, 2018

Lisa Rastl was invited to **document** the exhibition *A ditto, ditto device.* [→ p. 58] in Vienna and create a new artwork for the subsequent exhibition *", ", ", — Footnotes* [→ p. 80] in Brussels. In *From the series Reproductions* [→ p. 105, 106] Rastl responded to all of the works exhibited in Vienna by photographing them with a digital camera through the ground glass of an analog medium format camera. In the **transfer** from analog to digital and back again Rastl made the works of her colleagues her own. | *multi titled #1* [→ p. 255] is a **reflection** upon the photography Rastl developed for this publication, in which she dealt with the custom of lead pouring. She documented this act and its coincidental outcomes with various **imaging methods** such as digital photography, 3D print techniques, or photograms.

Stefan Riebel
(b. 1982 in the former GDR) lives and works in Berlin and Leipzig.
www.stefanriebel.de

Contribution
What I Am, 2017
having and being, 2007–ongoing
Untitled (Langzeitbelichtungen)—#05 / Revueflex 1000s, 2017
Untitled (Langzeitbelichtungen)—#05 / Revueflex 1000s, 2018

What I Am [→ p. 77] is a **collection** of hundreds of words that have been used to describe Stefan Riebel throughout his life. In *Periphrasis (for a ditto, ditto device)* [→ p. 40] in Innsbruck the artist began to tattoo some of these **synonyms** onto his lower arm, thereby transforming these ascriptions into **inscriptions**. The performance will continue until there are no terms left. | For *Untitled (Langzeitbelichtungen)—#05 / Revueflex 1000s* [→ p. 71] Stefan Riebel sunk an analog photo camera in Vienna's Danube Canal. He documented the trip to the site of this performance with the same camera. The last picture, set to permanent long exposure before the camera falls into the water, freezes in the **process** of photographic imaging. | *Untitled (Langzeitbelichtungen)—#05 / Revueflex 1000s* [→ p. 267] is an adapted **version** of the same-named installation for this book. | *having and being* [→ p. 104] consists of two photographs that are connected by **visual analogies**: One shows the father of the artist with Riebel as a baby, the other Riebel as a father with his own baby. When the family history continues, the **series** does, too.

Andrei Siclodi
(b. 1972 in Romania) lives and works in Innsbruck.

Contribution
"Taswira" in the Archive—On the Afterlife of Television Images in the Postcolony [→ p. 332]

Cornelia Sollfrank
(b. 1960 in Germany) lives and works in Berlin.
www.artwarez.org

Contribution
The Surplus of Copying—How Shadow Libraries and Pirate Archives Contribute to the Creation of Cultural Memory and the Commons [→ p. 338]

Franz Thalmair
(b. 1976 in Austria) lives and works in Vienna.

Contribution
Copying as Performative Research—Toward an Artistic Working Model [→ p. 348] | Initial publication (German version): Franz Thalmair, "Kopieren als performative Recherche. Annäherung an ein künstlerisches Arbeitsmodell," *springerin – Hefte für Gegenwartskunst* 2 (2018): 16–19.
Thinking in the Exhibition Format—Postproduction Notes on originalcopy [→ p. 24]

Jan Verwoert
(b. 1972 in Germany) lives and works in Berlin.

Contribution
Living with Ghosts—From Appropriation to Invocation in Contemporary Art [→ p. 354] | Initial publication: Jan Verwoert, "Apropos Appropriation: Why stealing images today feels different," *Art & Research* 1, no. 2 (2007), http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/verwoert.html (accessed on October 17, 2018).

originalcopy
Post-Digital Strategies of Appropriation

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The practice of copying has become omnipresent yet invisible, both in the digital realm and in the analog world. The arts-based research project *originalcopy—Post-Digital Strategies of Appropriation* subjects the dichotomy of original and copy to a re-evaluation from a post-digital perspective and sheds light on this contradictory phenomenon. The underlying performative research focuses on the tensions between the supposed immateriality of digital technologies and their material manifestations by appropriating contemporary methods of copying and exposing them to artistic processes of transformation and translation. *originalcopy* is less interested in the results derived from the double act of copying copying strategies, rather the processes and working models that lead to them.

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