

A publication of -empyre- soft-skinned space, Sydney, Australia

January 2007

In collaboration with Documenta 12 magazine project : What is to be done? (Education)

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<https://mail.cofa.unsw.edu.au/pipermail/empyre/2007-January/>

Are we at the margins of a huge flattening and empty-ing out process leaving the shells of modern structures yet producing something of an ethos, a critical space? A 'third space' (Soja) always destabilizing a dialectical or binary debate or opposition – what Bojana Cvejc speaks of as 'affirming positive practices' and 'enabling a heterogenesis'?- *Christina McPhee*

What is to be done? More than ever the question of our relationship to both art and the aesthetic process must be addressed. In a world of shifting boundaries, of profound and fundamental changes, a world where universals such as life, death, consciousness and uniqueness are being challenged by technological reality, the question of art, of our relationship to it, the question of its purpose and of its objectives must be tackled.

What is to be done? What is to be understood by art today should probably be our starting point. For how should we define art in the 21st century when machines, technologies and software provide most of the actual artistic process, when some machines even produce the entire artwork?

If art is now as specific to machine's ontology as it is to humanity's, then the question of what is to be done must be dealt with differently. Art embedded in machines and technologies is art embedded in the profound transformation of our world. It's art within video games, themselves within the culture of war. It's art spreading technological reality. It's art intruding into the physical reality (where special effects become genetic manipulations). It's art initiating the Inhuman Condition.

The question of what is to be done must thus be understood as including the whole concept of art. What is to be done with a process that helped create our perception of the metaphysical, but whose operations, whose forms and sometimes even content are now within the control of machines? When most of what art produces today ignores humanity's need for the

transcendent, when what most of what art produces today responds to machine's perceptions of the world? What is to be done when machines and technologies force us to confront our inhumanity through the process of art? -*Olivier Dyens*

Bernard Stiegler thinks that the European production of technological writing machines in the enlarged sense - the kind of machines with which we cultivate ourselves, along the lines sketched out by Foucault in his text "writing of the self" - should be reoriented so as to save us from a threatening reduction of human singularity, and with it, of any possible ethics. Capitalism, in the advanced economies, is now primarily cultural, focused around the different devices whereby memory and creativity of all kinds is exteriorized into objects and traces; such machines are essential, a basic part of the human experience in time, but care needs to be taken with their production, so that persons can go on becoming individuals ("individuating") in a relation of creative tension with societies which are also constantly individuating. -*Brian Holmes*

As a former activist and among the oldest here, I follow (who could deny the repetitive choice of this sentence?) a radical pamphlet written in 1902 by Lenin (the title being a quotation from a novel by the communist utopist Nikolai Tchernychevsky. A generative text confirming theory as made to bring about both the reorganization of the movement and to redefine objectives; all the leaders of revolutionary Marxism have re-quoted this text, particularly Mao from whom the women hold that they are the half of the sky. Whatever a world finishing by itself does not assure, is that a world is birthed by ourselves: it may be that the time of directly acting the change is over: first, we have learnt from the past that utopia is only paper and view, not social reality because it ignores its relative entropy); second, all our central structures of understanding and acting in the world, in the continental and occidental societies, have turned into net periphery.

I prefer ask several questions; notoriously, in what utopia of the ideal society do we may consensually trust the future to tech communication and tech information systems with regard to the general environmental crisis? What of the environmental lesson and impacts as well history, as well economy, as well ecology, on our own bodies?

What culture you say? You suppose one that values to be generalized in the place of the others, (saying to credit others consists the same as 'in the place of') and specially discounting otherness? Why contribute to the development of the communication if this consists in misinformation about a large part of the material conditions of life? -*Aliette Certhoux*

Buergel will not by chance have chosen "What is to be done?" as a quotation of Lenin's famous book subtitled, "Burning questions to our movement." When Buergel writes: "Artists educate themselves by working through form and subject matter; audiences educate themselves by experiencing things aesthetically." doesn't this optimism regarding the abilities of artistic and aesthetic approaches to 'things', forms and subject matters' echo Lenin's way of freeing the approach to 'things as forms and subject matters' by generalized application of the self-education of the working class? Maybe Lenin's project is meant to be finally fulfilled, with a simple switch from revolution to education.

When Lenin promised the awakening of the worker's class, he already relied on self training, on education by the things themselves: "Or do you think that our movement cannot produce leaders like those of the seventies? If so, why do you think so? Because we lack training? But we are training ourselves, we will go on training ourselves, and we will be trained!"

Only Buerger's contribution on a new dialectical materialism does not credit didacticism (the devil) and commodity fetishism (the deep blue sea') as true constituents (*Bildner*) for his own articulation of education as such, (dialectically speaking and more). Commodity fetishism then returns as personal trademark as the 'great educator', –revealed by a phrase partly omitted in the English translation: "To educate/constitute an audience does [...] mean indeed to provide for a public sphere." Didacticism in the sense of mass media's compatible style perfects an understanding of education as conservation of values, or if preferred, as justice finally done to the particularity of 'things'. Why not posit "Education is empty like a mathematical set" as an alternative to the third documenta leitmotif, freeing it from the empty promise of a possible general knowledge? *-Claudia Reiche*

My dog Neo and I are convinced we definitely should try and save the planet. We both are still very much attached to it, in spite of the fact that there are fewer nice places to go walking these days. The children are all in favor too.

Saving the planet will involve activities that will seem to contradict taking care of ourselves and our children. We should therefore aim our education towards such activities or at least indicate their necessity in order to ensure the proper co-operation of a sufficient number of active persons.

Next our exploration of non-human algorithmic potential should be brought up to speed by further de-humanizing their procedural organization. We really should learn to use the word non-human and reserve the 'inhuman' to the usual atrocities committed by humans. While such de-humanization had been introduced in a limited scale early in the development cycle of our IT-evolution, it is nowadays largely been neglected by the industries responsible for our informational infrastructures, allowing them to build on what is built (wrongly) only at the expense of material resources we are no longer allowed to squander to such selfish aims. We might need a global disaster or two to stop this machinery, but perhaps it can be done without such harsh means. Some research should perhaps be directed at selective deluge-techniques, there are by now, unfortunately, sufficient data to enable simulations. We could call these deluge-simulations Extended Windows to the Futu[mail-file truncated here].

As to art matters, here's a provisional answer from the Board for Speeding Up the Abolition of Art (the BSUAA is a local organization headed by my Aunt Sizzle here in Kessel-lo, Belgium. I can't vouch for these answers, you'll have to deal with them as Aunty answers come): "Art, like any other business, has a rather clear business logic. Part of the business logic is concerned with brand-protection. There, the human origin is still largely considered the best way of tackling the art-identification problem, should it arise. Mostly, however, calling it Art on the Cover should suffice. If machines are nowadays able to produce a Pollock look-alike we can do away with the Pollock look-alike contest. This will free our budgets towards a strengthening of the Art-lack, our Board is currently dealing with a proposal for a nation-wide campaign involving oranges and the Art Needs You (tm)-slogan." *-Dirk Vekemans*

Multiple choice is preferable

I read three lines per screen

I move on in 2 seconds

I am always networked

I like bytes I want more I want it now

The sense and sensibility of the statement "education seems to offer one viable alternative to the devil (didacticism, academia) and the deep blue sea (commodity fetishism)" are both problematic. To attempt to walk a middle ground between these two supposedly opposing cultural forces seems to be particularly fraught...the most probable outcome of alternative educative cultural design, based on concepts accessible only to an elite, is that it will be found to be either boring, incomprehensible, unengaging or irrelevant by a mass audience. *-Melinda Rackham*

A relevant query here is whether or not the construct of an exhibition such as Documenta is effective in adequately providing a context for various art practices to function as modes of transferable knowledge within the "global complex of cultural translation?" Documenta is a capitalistic forum that mirrors global economic systems (artistic, technological, industrial and knowledge-based.) Yet it appears not to allow for another structure (for said purposes of mediation) to be put in place that questions these hegemonic form of exchange and access. Thus, whatever exchange - translations- takes place does so within the reifying reinscription of documenta and these systems themselves. *-Christiane Robbins*

I was talking with a friend about this conversation, posed through Documenta, who was immediately concerned: "Why does this have to be done under Documenta? Why can't there be an autonomous outside that is preserved?" It is important to consider our own practice in terms of spatialized resistance. We need to maintain independent spaces - in order to create a physical independence - an ability to act / participate on our own terms. It is not a question of "What is to be understood by Art" but "How is Art understood? In what context? How can understanding be motivated to happen on a personal level?" The first thing to be done is encourage the further development of independent (critical) space everywhere.

I think of exhibition structure in terms of acoustic space - how multiple objects create a separate (third) resonant space (this the 'conclusion' or the 'question') that exists only through their relationship. At the Art Gallery of Knoxville, we recently created an exhibition with criticalartware, a Chicago based platform constructed to "examine the pre-internet era of early phase "Video Art" and the growth of software art in the channels of contemporary "New Media" theory practices." They use an online application / platform to enable an open, distributed practice that remains specific to the needs of their discussion. criticalartware enables a distributed system (which is shared, open, productive, and inherently educational) for the early video and code-based movements. It is an appropriate form of organization for the data they address - but it also functions as an example for future exhibition. They utilize an ability to create open associations, forming an opportunity for feedback and growth, while still encouraging a platform for particular ideas. *- Chris Molinski*

Since 2003 London's Frieze Art Fair has been running Frieze Education. In 2006 this program of artist-led, practical sessions for families and young people was expanded thanks to Deutsche Bank's community investment program in conjunction with Camden Arts Centre. With four artists employed to work on site at the fair, these free sessions were spectacularly popular and fully booked in 2006. The sessions were carefully planned with the artist team to capture an insightful experience of the fair and encourage creativity and critical thinking.

Artists are hijacking the formats of education and outreach programs for their own artistic means. Bulgarian artist Luchezar Boyadjiev 'specialises' in offering guided tours to audiences at various international art exhibitions, connecting artworks from different shows through his often-humorous analyses. Typically, Boyadjiev's 'artwork' for Singapore Biennale 2006 was an unusual service: a series of live performances or guided tours about other artworks at the biennale. The tours were conducted by the artist himself and volunteers, trained to guide in Boyadjiev-style through the biennale. Boyadjiev's tours are a prime example of how to tackle 'the global complex of cultural translation that seems to be somehow embedded in art and its mediation.'" *Illyana Nedkova*

A network I was part of in 2004, composed of tactical media activists, electronic sound producers, graphic artists, open source programmers, computer recyclers and Indymedia-Brasil activists gathered for a project giving classes in sound production, internet access, recycling of computers and using open source software. Chosen were three regions from São Paulo's peripheries, very poor and lacking basic resources. 300 youngsters from those districts were selected by an NGO that decided to work with us. Those labs of autonomous learning were called Autolabs. What they were teaching was not based on schoolbooks but in their own experience. Autolabs were the very first seed for Cultural Hotspots, promoted by minister Gilberto Gil and his open source approach to Brazilian culture.

A homeless occupation occurred in São Paulo's downtown, the Prestes Maia building, abandoned since the 1950s. Prestes Maia was invaded and commanded by women. Never before had artists or artistic groups merged with those homeless movements; during 2004-2005, numerous events were staged there concerning how the city government wanted them to be out. Most events at Prestes Maia uniting artists and homeless people did not receive mass media attention. One artist discovered a subterranean space in the building where people got books and dumped them. What was the brilliant idea following? Creating a library, with all those humble, abandoned, dirty books, there inside, organizing them, collecting more books, asking for donations, involving institutions, alternative schools, and so that was the first time the "marginalized" Prestes Maia started to appear in national newspapers, magazines and media, calling attention to the problem of homelessness and showing that those people would also like to consume culture. From then on, intellectuals started to visit the building and promote debates and conferences, the society at large accepted the movement with more tolerance and problems with the police diminished. *Ricardo Rosas*

The 'public secret' - the secret the public keeps safe from itself - is interposed between the question of "what is bare life" and the question of "what is to be done." It is difficult to acknowledge the atrocities that we are implicated in - the pervasiveness of bare-life (the refugee, the prisoner, the illegal immigrant, the shanty-town resident), when we cannot see "what is to be done." There are secrets that are kept from the public and then there are "public secrets" - secrets that the public chooses to keep safe from itself. The trick to the public secret is in knowing what not to know.

After a series of news stories and lawsuits documenting egregious mistreatment of prisoners in 1993, the California Department of Corrections imposed a media ban that prohibits journalists from face-to-face interviews, eliminates prisoners' right to confidential correspondence with media, and bars the use of cameras, recording devices, and writing instruments in interviews. Women incarcerated in California are allowed visits only from family members and legal representatives. Inmates are not allowed access to computers, cameras, tape recorders or media equipment of any kind.

For three years I have visited the Central California Women's Facility [CCWF] as a legal advocate. I work with a non-profit, human rights organization, Justice Now. The visits require acceptance of invasive search and surveillance procedures. I am registered for each visit in advance and searched on entry. I am allowed to bring in only a clear plastic baggie with a clear ink pen, my drivers license, a blank legal pad and my mini-disc recorder. The recorder has to be approved weeks in advance (the serial number is registered and checked) and the device is inspected on entry and exit. After our interviews the women are subject to strip search and visual body cavity searches that may be performed by male guards.

For these women our conversations are acts of ethical and political testimony - testimony that challenges distributive justice and the dehumanizing mechanisms of the prison system. I collaborate with them first as witness and then as "context provider." After soliciting their opinions and collecting their stories, it is my responsibility to create a context in which their voices can be heard across social, cultural and economic boundaries.

The project is now online at <http://www.vectorsjournal.org/index.php?page=8%7C2&projectId=57> ] -*Sharon Daniel*

What is to be done?

We renounce Consensus and its entire works and all its ways.

We believe in counter-communities, Founders of a civil society.

We believe in alternative institutions, their only daughters, our hope, who was conceived by forethought,

Born of necessity, Suffered under Alienation; Attempted crucified, left to die and be buried; In order to be descended into oblivion;

The third day they rose again, never dead; Ascended into vividness, and sitteth at the midst of Consensus, displaying the illusion

of Almightyness;

From Thence they shall come, stripping away Power to judge and to exclude the living and the dead.

We believe in forethought never Absolutes, but in counter-action and alteration; and will never commit to Forgiveness of Sins;

We believe in all that is, seen and unseen, and in life.

Let it be done!" -*Øjeblikket*

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