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Excerpts of Press & Critical Writing
Caroline Woolard

WOUND: a study center for group work

Project: Wound: Mending Time and Attention, curated by Stamatina Gregory

Citation: Schwendener, Martha (20 October 2016). "[What to See in New York Galleries This Week](#)." The New York Times. Retrieved 29 October 2016.

"Wound" also shows how the art world's breakneck schedule of exhibitions, fairs and biennials undercuts the ability of socially engaged artists to develop long-term strategies and practices. In this sense, the project works within the time-bound exhibition system while pushing back against it.

Project: Wound: Mending Time and Attention, curated by Stamatina Gregory

Citation: Vogel, Wendy. (October 2016). "[Critic's Picks: WOUND](#)." Artforum. Retrieved 29 October 2016.

The word [wound](#) is one of the English language's most powerful and contradictory homographs. As a noun it means bodily damage, a rending of the flesh or psyche; and as the past participle of wind, to have twisted something up. Artist [Caroline Woolard](#) defines her social-practice project [WOUND](#), started in 2013, as the latter—like what one does to a clock. And yet "Mending Time and Attention," an exhibition and a series of workshops organized by [WOUND](#), seeks to heal the pain inflicted by late capitalism's compartmentalization and commodification of time.

Project: Wound: Mending Time and Attention, curated by Stamatina Gregory

Citation: Lebowitz, Cathy. (October 2016) "Wound: Mending Time and Attention." [Art in America](#). Retrieved 29 October 2016.

"When artists create opportunities for support and mutual aid rather than unquestioningly competing with one another for meager resources, they open a small space of resistance to the divisiveness that comes from an economically precarious existence. The brainchild of Caroline Woolard, a sculptor and social-practice organizer who has initiated various barter-based endeavors in New York, and curated by Stamatina Gregory, this group exhibition with work by seventeen artists and collectives is meant to be the first incarnation of Wound, a membership-based study center whose name suggests the activity of setting a clock. Attention and time, two

things atomized by digital technology, are the focus of the objects displayed on the walls and tables and in the vitrines."

NYC Real Estate Investment Cooperative: democratic finance for community land trusts

Project: NYC Real Estate Investment Cooperative

Citation: Lewis, Caroline. (25 May 2015). "[Hundreds join a new kind of co-op to buy commercial property in high-rent areas.](#)" CRAINS Business Magazine. Retrieved 29 October 2016.

As a small group they may have been financially powerless, but if they were an organized collective of hundreds of small investors, Ms. Woolard thought, they would not be. By forming the NYC Real Estate Investment Cooperative, about 200 New Yorkers from diverse neighborhoods, professions, ethnicities and tax brackets hope to invest jointly in commercial property in areas where rents are rising rapidly, carving out permanently affordable space for community-based small businesses and cultural organizations.

The idea for the co-op came out of a conversation between Ms. Woolard, who built "sharing economy" websites Our Goods and Trade School, and her friend Paula Segal, an attorney and founder of nonprofit 596 Acres, which helps people turn vacant city lots into community gardens. The two were inspired in part by the Northeast Investment Cooperative, a group founded by neighbors in Minneapolis four years ago, which has grown to more than 200 members who have each purchased a share in the co-op for \$1,000.

General Press

Project: none (general press)

Citation: Haskell, John. (Summer 2015) "[Caroline Woolard by John Haskell.](#)" BOMB Magazine. Retrieved 29 October 2016.

With entrepreneurial gusto Woolard calls attention to injustice; and then, moving beyond that, she asks: How can we change a system that perpetuates injustice? For her it's a real question, and to answer it she uses, first of all, collaboration. Her work is about the collaborative process and about empowerment. How can disenfranchised people have access to power? Her provisional answer is: by banding together.

Woolard isn't interested in creating a change that temporarily appears in a gallery or storefront, replaced in time by another change, another salable work of art, another exhibit of the artist's

good intentions. Her ambition is not to represent empowerment, but to actually alter how art is distributed, how we see artistic labor, and to cause a shift in attitude that can maintain itself until change takes root.

Project: none (general)

Citation: Kennedy, Randy (20 March 2013). ["Outside the Citadel, Social Practice Art Is Intended to Nurture"](#). The New York Times. Retrieved 7 March 2015.

[Caroline Woolard](#), a 29-year-old Brooklyn artist whose projects include collaborating on temporary ["trade schools"](#) where classes are paid for through bartering, said she became a social-practice artist not because she objected to the commercial or institutional art sectors but because she felt that the art world was too isolated.

"It was the realization that the types of people who went to cultural institutions — museums or galleries — were such a small section of any possible public for the kind of work I was interested in," she said. She added, though, that she believed the movement would only broaden, and that museums and even the commercial art world would have to find a way to get involved.

"I do think that there will be ways for new kinds of collectors to emerge who will support these kinds of long-term projects as works of art," said Ms. Woolard, who was recently asked by the Museum of Modern Art's education department to take part in a social-practice program, ["Artists as Houseguests: Artists Experiment at MoMA,"](#) over the next few months.

Project: none (general)

Citation: Steinhauer, Jillian (10 November 2013). ["Could local currency be the future of money?"](#). Salon. Retrieved 5 March 2015.

So, the question becomes: can an artist start a revolution? If you posed this question to [Caroline Woolard](#), I suspect she'd answer "no" but qualify it: a single artist couldn't, but a group of them just might succeed. Woolard is an artist, activist, and one of the founders of the aforementioned barter network, OurGoods; she also co-founded [Trade School](#), recently set up an [Exchange Café](#) at the Museum of Modern Art, and is attempting to organize a [Community Land Trust](#) for artists, hackers, and community organizers in New York.

At the heart of all Woolard's projects is a belief in the importance of collectivity and cooperative action. This, of course, runs counter to the dominant strain of American commercialism, which tends toward a capitalist-driven emphasis on individuality and aggressive self-interest, often under the rubric of "the pursuit of happiness." These values filter into the art world not only through the market, but also with the increasing professionalization of art through MFA

programs. As art critic Ben Davis writes in his [“9.5 Theses on Art and Class”](#) (now also the title of a [book](#) of the same name), visual art has “an individualized relation to labor,” which “means that middle-class agents tend to conceive of their ability to achieve their political objectives in individualistic terms, with their social power deriving from individual intellectual capacity, personality or rhetoric.” Hence a lot of the economically, socially, and politically minded art one encounters today, wherein an artist shows up in a community, tries to help with some kind of short-term project, then leaves it behind.

How do you move from paying for an extracurricular activity with an artist-designed local currency to reorganizing your larger economic life? For Woolard, the relationship between art and activism extends to the very conception and labeling of certain projects as art. “Most artists will participate differently in what they think of as an art project than they will in a service organization,” she said. “Obviously artists have big egos and are interested in visibility for their work, but I think the problem of participation by artists in each other’s projects has a different trouble in the past twenty years than it would have before. If we say it’s an art project, a lot of people will say, ‘oh, what a nice idea.’ It becomes a representation.”

Project: none (general)

Citation: Leigh Claire LaBerge, [“Wages Against Artwork: The Social Practice of Decommodification.”](#) South Atlantic Quarterly, special issue, “Entrepreneurship” eds. Imre Szeman and Dan Harvey, 2015.

I want to use Woolard’s practice as a site to investigate the problem of artistic labor and aesthetic value in an entrepreneurial age. Michel Foucault’s original and now oft-cited assertion—that “man has become an entrepreneur of himself”—makes a claim on the epistemological and ontological status of human labor. Unlike the proletarianized worker of yore who sold his labor power under pain of starvation or homelessness, who was organized in Marx’s words by the “double freedom” of capital’s commodification of land and labor, the entrepreneur chooses freely when to buy and sell himself. Andrew Dilts summarizes the discursive transition from worker to entrepreneur: “First, the theory shifts perspective away from commodity production and exchange, instead centering its analysis on labor as an activity chosen from amongst substitutes...[that] leads to a second shift, the subsequent re-categorization of wages as income. Finally, this re-categorization allows for an analysis to focus on income streams as dependent on specific attributes of particular bodies [enabling a] radical shift in the understanding of homo oeconomicus from being a ‘partner of exchange’ to being an ‘entrepreneur of himself.’” From labor-power owner to human-capital investor, from wage earner to capital-gains recipient, from worker to entrepreneur, these are the ideological stakes of Foucault’s description of our age, prescient in its identification of discourses but ambivalent about their effectivities.

Let us call this “aesthetic purposefulness with purpose” and say it is that which, paradoxically, follows from the de commodification of artistic labor under the dictates of entrepreneurship and real subsumption at the moment of their convergence. After all, purposeless art always serves the purpose of the artist. Conversely, what I want to show is that these works are works (indeed, they have been featured at canonical institutions including The Whitney, MoMA, and the Brooklyn Museum as well as less canonical venues such as Creative Time’s Living as Form) and that social practice’s avant garde may be located through Woolard’s oeuvre as the refusal to not work. How this “not not working” will unfold and what form it will take enframes the parameters of a new aesthetic. Woolard’s work provides a de commodified aesthetics that is itself a de commodification of our most important commodities: labor, education, money, and now land. The welfare state de commodifies certain labors (Epsing-Andersen) so that its citizens may socially reproduce themselves free of market constraints. In the neoliberal state, however, this relationship is inverted and enterprising citizens, in a Foucauldian gesture, structure their own de commodification to achieve a certain freedom. We are not yet prepared to qualify this freedom as misplaced or genuine, rather, in keeping with Foucault’s approach, we can only say in this moment it is understood as a freedom to those practicing it.

BFAMFAPhD

Citation: Smith, Roberta. (3 July 2014). [“Many Hands in Creative Frenzy: ‘NYC Makers: The MAD Biennial.’”](#) The New York Times, Art Review. Retrieved 28 October 2016.

The collective BFAMFAPhD is shaping information, sifting through recent census data to reveal the racial (mostly white) breakdown of the many New Yorkers with art degrees. And one member, Lika Volkova, also turns discarded paintings into garments with striking results, going by two jackets here.

Project: BFAMFAPhD, Artists Report Back

Citation: Steinhauer, Jillian (30 June 2014). [“Report Finds NYC’s Art World 200% Whiter Than Its Population \[UPDATED\]”](#). Hyperallergic. Retrieved 7 March 2015.

With the [Whitney Biennial](#), the [withdrawal of the Yams Collective](#), and [questions of race](#) fresh in our minds, the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) opens its new biennial, [NYC Makers](#), tomorrow. Included is a project that offers another stark reminder of the imbalanced demographics of the art world: [Census Report](#), produced by the collective [BFAMFAPhD](#). Consider this, undoubtedly their most striking finding: New York City’s formally educated arts world (in this case defined roughly as working artists and those with arts degrees) appears to be 200% whiter than its general population. ... In the introductory text on their website (written by Woolard, Murphy, and Jahoda), BFAMFAPhD offers a series of statistics that may stun even the

most politically minded art-worlders. Importantly, however, they draw not just on race or ethnicity alone, but on the two combined — a categorization that's termed "mutually exclusive race and ethnicity," Virgin explained to Hyperallergic. To say, in light of this, that the art world has a [diversity problem](#) seems like a comical understatement.

Project: BFAMFAPhD, Artists Report Back

Citation: Schjeldahl, Peter. (20 October 2014). "Local Heroes: The Brooklyn Museum surveys recent art from the borough," The New Yorker. Retrieved 28 October 2016.

The collective BFAMFAPHD (the initials of academic degrees) spreads a homeopathic wet blanket on the show's high spirits with statistical documentation of the hard lots of current graduates—the staggering number of artists, debt burdens, iffy prospects. The bonus bummer of a group discussion among veteran local artists, in the show's catalogue, circles the drain of Topic A in the daily life of art anywhere: real estate.

Project: BFAMFAPhD, Artists Report Back

Citation: Geraghty, Louise. (16 May 2016). "[Capsule Review: Artists Report Back](#)," Createquity. Retrieved 17 May 2016.

The findings on the relatively high debt load for arts graduates combined with the seemingly low probability that those graduates will go on to become working artists presents troubling evidence for those considering higher education in the arts. Further, that seven of the ten most expensive colleges in the country after financial aid are art schools is evidence that arts students are overpaying for their degrees.

Project: BFAMFAPhD, Artists Report Back

Citation: Brown, Ann. (10 November 2014). "[New Study: Most Artists Who Earn a Living from Their Craft Are White](#)," Madam Noire. Retrieved 18 October 2016.

Diversity issues affect almost every field and art is not immune. Artists of color face many more obstacles and are compensated at lower rates than their white counterparts according to a [study](#) compiled by [data trackers BFAMFAPhD](#) which concluded [most artists making a living from their work are white](#). And the percentage is high: 77.6 percent, reports [The Huffington Post](#). For the study, artists included writers, visual artists, actors, photographers, musicians, singers, producers, directors, and performers.

OurGoods.org / TradeSchool.coop

Project: OurGoods.org

Citation: Thompson, Nato. (November 2010). [“Contractions of Time: Social Practice from a Temporal Perspective.”](#) E-flux. Retrieved 20 October 2016.

“The artist Caroline Woolard’s skill-share trade site OurGoods offers a Craigslist approach to swapping services in order to escape the logic of capital. In all of these approaches, we find a civic form of participation whose goals are infrastructural in scope. They propose a means of connecting people over an extended period, and offer a response to the problem of shrinking time. In the long run, these works may find their resistance to consumable capitalism to have worked all too well. The production of cultural meaning that resists the flow of capital will need to ultimately produce forms that contribute to radically altering culture. If the civic is a space of long-term engagement with subjectivity, then perhaps the cultural producer interested in producing meaning must find a way to overcome the economic and temporal logic of the attention-deprived.”

Project: OurGoods.org

Citation: Flanders, Laura. (21 March 2012). [“An Economy We Want to Occupy.”](#) The Nation. Retrieved 28 October 2016.

At a time when so many are so clear that the current system is not working—what might? Is it already happening? There’s more information about OurGoods.org at their website and you don’t have to be officially ordained as an “artist” to join it.

Project: OurGoods.org / TradeSchool.coop

Citation: Rueb, Emily S. (23 February 2010). [“A Trade School Where Ideas Are Currency”](#). New York Times. Retrieved 5 March 2015.

Caroline Woolard, a Jill-of-many-trades who co-founded OurGoods, said the venture was about creating a new model for completing creative projects [with mutual respect instead of cash](#). She said she hoped it would be a model for artists, performers and other “cultural producers” to find others with the resources they need to complete their projects. In return for their services, teachers have received a trombone serenade, a block of cheese, and help with childcare, as payment. So far, more than 800 people have matriculated.

On Sunday evening, 16 people gathered in a cramped Lower East Side storefront for a class on making irrational decisions. One woman was between jobs and apartments and wanted help thinking things through; the artist sitting next to her wanted to shut off the part of her brain that impedes creative thinking. No money changed hands. Instead, the teacher asked everyone to

“pay” for the class by bringing ideas — an example of a good decision made in the last two weeks, and one made in the last five years.

Project: OurGoods.org / TradeSchool.coop

Citation: Adam, Ludwig (9 June 2014). ["Can a Sharing Platform for Artists Point to a More Equitable Society?"](#). Forbes. Retrieved 5 March 2015.

Woolard believes the sharing economy isn't just about shared tools, but “shared wealth, shared decision-making.” She has an idealistic vision of how a sharing economy could evolve in local communities, with “each neighborhood having a tool-lending library, an open-source computer station, and a way ... to enable people who are moving around all the time to connect with people who have been sharing for generations.” But she worries that government and big business may disregard the ideals of the sharing economy, and ignore our collective responsibility for broader social welfare.

Project: TradeSchool.coop

Citation: Bergin, Brigid (7 March 2010). ["Will Teach for Goods: An Experiment in Bartering"](#). WNYC. Retrieved 5 March 2015.

Trade School is an experiment, but, the founder of Trade School, Caroline Woolard, says it is not a new concept. “Artists have done this forever to get their work done. This is just a way to expand the number of people that you could interact with,” Woolard says. “What I am more interested in right now is finding a network of people who are open to sharing their skills and slowing down to have a conversation about how we could work together,” she says. Woolard and a group of four other young artists applied for a grant from an organization called [The Field](#), which helps artists come up with sustainable economic models. Their original plan was to build a Web site that matches people based on what they can offer and what they need. And while they were working on that they had the idea for Trade School.

Project: TradeSchool.coop

Citation: Moore, Christopher (26 April 2010). ["Trade Balance"](#). New York Post. Retrieved 5 March 2015.

Caroline Woolard, a Brooklyn artist and co-founder of the online network OurGoods.org, sees the rise in bartering as part of “a general cultural shift toward resource-sharing,” and cites Zipcar as an example. The idea behind OurGoods — which is currently running in a prototype phase, pending a fall launch — is to provide for the sharing of services to support independent projects throughout the city. “People can invest in each other’s ideas and help each other with their

work,” Woolard explains. This past winter, the site’s founders ran Trade School, a Lower East Side-based bartering bonanza where participants hosted instructional sessions on topics ranging from playwriting to butter making, and students paid in trade. “The idea is to introduce people to the concept of bartering,” says Woolard, who’s among those working to bring the school back next fall for another go-round. She describes bartering as a common-sense response to bad economic times, but also as something more meaningful — a different model of behavior. “It gives space to develop relationships with people,” Woolard says.

Project: TradeSchool.coop

Citation: Jaskey, Jenny (20 January 2010). [“Interview with Caroline Woolard.”](#) Rhizome. Retrieved 10 March 2015.

I first learned of [OurGoods](#) from an advertisement in “Art Work: A National Conversation about Art, Labor, and Politics.” Intrigued by their claim to provide an online infrastructure for artists to obtain goods and services without cash, I wrote to Caroline Woolard, a co-founder of the OurGoods project, to find out more. Woolard says, “In some ways, OurGoods.org is simply a directory of available creative people ready to connect in real space to share skills and head towards a barter negotiation. In-person meetings are incredibly important. This is why we will have a storefront for the next month in the Lower East Side. We are also looking for a long term space.”

Project: TradeSchool.coop / OurGoods.org

Citation: Leigh Claire LaBerge, [“Wages Against Artwork: The Social Practice of Decommodification.”](#) South Atlantic Quarterly, special issue, “Entrepreneurship” eds. Imre Szeman and Dan Harvey, 2015.

OurGoods.org follows the movement that Jackson describes as a transposition from a “discrete notion of the work of art to a process-based notion of the work it takes to make art.” Why do artists barter? Because they have potential artistic labor but no market in which to sell it. Why else do they barter? Because they need others’ potential artistic labor but have no money with which to purchase it. Their labor and consequently their potential to earn a wage have been decommodified and now each will find another in a scene of decommodification in which the dimensions of “made by waged labor and sold on the market” will never be brought to bear. To return to Vishmidt’s claim that “art is the potentiality not to work,” within the intermedial transactions of OurGoods.org, art is the potentiality to work, but to work differently. OurGoods.org offers the chance to work for one’s self not through a conception of self-capitalization, rather through a different form of being “a partner in exchange” in which another is required for mutually enhancing but not profit-generating reciprocity. That, too, is our

first hint of the link between collectivization and decommodification as opposed to collectivized, commodified labor, which has as one of its forms of appearance “technology,” among others.

*And so barter is a kind of metaphor in the literal sense of it being a vehicle for conducting meaning. “Metaphor” literally means “to carry over,” and we assume meaning will be carried from one object to another in speech and writing. Barter structures a specific type of metaphor, perhaps akin to what David Halperin calls a practical allegory, in that it is instantiated through activity. The barter performed through OurGoods.org metaphorize what a new another economy would look like while simultaneously constituting that other economy. If I barter two hours of my editing skills for one hour of soundtrack-laying ability, our exchange represents a mode of economic transformation. It also is that mode. The representation and its efficaciousness are one. As such, when read as a work, the barter performed through OurGoods.org avoid the problem Peggy Phelan alerts us to in her trenchant critique, namely maintaining metaphor in performance-based work, especially that involving the body of the artist. Phelan reads Andrea Fraser’s video-piece *Untitled*, in which she videotaped herself having sex with a collector, as a comment on the relationship between the artist and the art-market. “If I’m going to have to sell it, I might as well sell it,” Fraser explained of her person. This piece, Phelan concludes, disintegrates through an “utter loss of metaphor.” The metaphorical space should have been locatable between the two clauses of Fraser’s statement: *if/then*. But there is no “then” (literally) only an “if” which is followed by an action. Because the piece could not have been otherwise, the space of its symbolic potential is reduced. OurGoods.org barter, by contrast, maintain a an orientation of active possibility both to engage and represent economic otherness.*

Both OurGoods.org and TradeSchool.coop have been legible more as a non-profit members of the corporate so-called “sharing economy” than as an artworks. It has been suggested to Woolard, for example, that she monetize OurGoods.org, sell the data it has accumulated on members’ profiles, and so on. Levi’s offered the collective \$20,000 to franchise TradeSchool.coop as a corporate entity. And indeed, it is interesting to compare these works’ total decommodification to sites such as Lyft or Airbnb which truck in the fantasy of being able to commodify all personal time and space while simultaneously “not working.” It’s not really “work” to drive someone in your car via Lyft (after all, you’re not a taxi driver) or have them sleep in your home via Airbnb (nor are you a hotel proprietor), you’re just doing what you would be doing anyway, though now you’re making money. Woolard’s collective projects provide the precise refusal of this: you’re doing what you’d be doing anyway and you’re still not making money, but now you are in a mutual or collective time/space in which your artistic labor may be recognized and evaluated according to new metrics.

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A politics of cooperation: Caroline Woolard on free culture, fine art, and everyday life

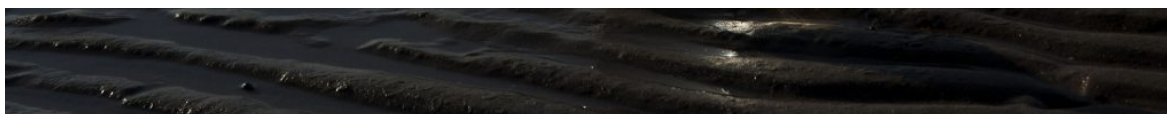


Jennie Rose Halperin
August 23, 2016



Caroline Woolard, *Capitoline Wolves*, rendering of work in progress, 2016. Courtesy of the artist. Rendering, CC-BY-ND 4.0

The interdisciplinary artist [Caroline Woolard](#) engages with political economy and activism through radically innovative collaborative projects. Through “existing commoning projects like gifting, lending, borrowing, and sharing of land, labor, and capital,” Woolard’s work confronts the economic precarity of the present moment through a variety of media.



Caroline Woolard, Lika Volkova, Helen Lee, and Alexander Rosenberg, *Carried on Both Sides*, work in progress, 2016. Photo by Levi Mandel, CC-BY-ND 4.0

As a “cultural producer whose interdisciplinary work facilitates social imagination at the intersection of art, urbanism, and political economy,” Woolard’s work is collaborative, confrontational, and cooperative, drawing on a variety of experiences and voices.

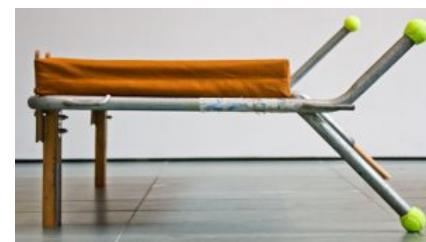
Woolard’s newest work, [“Of Supply Chains,”](#) will be released this month on the project’s website.

How do you understand “the commons”?

I define [“the commons”](#) as shared resources that are managed by and for the people who use those resources. Creative Commons does an excellent job of bringing the Free Culture Movement to [everyday life](#), as image rights are now understood in relationship to the commons. That said, I believe [Silvia Federici](#) when she writes that most things we call “commons” today are in fact “transitional commons” because in a true commons, the collective management of resources would be respected by, and even surpass, state and federal law.

Can you discuss the use of political economies in your work and how it relates to the concept of the commons?

If “the commons” refers to the ways in which people share and manage resources together, then the commons is always a political, and economic, concept. Historically, the commons have been enclosed upon by state governance and by privatization. Today, the commons are enclosed upon by neoliberalism, what cultural theorist Leigh Claire La Berge describes as “the private capture of public wealth”. It is my hope that my art and design work can support existing commoning practices like the gifting, lending, borrowing, and sharing of land, labor, and capital. While artists who represent commoning in paintings or photographs might provide necessary space for reflection about the commons, in my work I employ one of two strategies: 1) co-creating living spaces for commoning, or 2) making objects and artworks for existing commons-based organizations. In other words, I try to support the commons, rather than represent the commons.



Caroline Woolard, *Barricade to Bed*, 2013. Courtesy of the artist. Photo by Ryan Temprow, CC-BY-ND 4.0

Because I aim to communicate across social spheres, I make multi-year, research-based, site-specific projects that circulate in contemporary art institutions as well as in urban development, critical design, and social entrepreneurship settings. Though I am often cited as a socially engaged artist, I consider myself to be a cultural producer whose interdisciplinary work facilitates social imagination at the intersection of art, urbanism, and political economy.



Caroline Woolard, Lika Volkova, Helen Lee, and Alexander Rosenberg, *Carried on Both Sides, work in progress*, 2016. Photo by Levi Mandel, CC-BY-ND 4.0

I create installations and social spaces for encounters with fantasies of cooperation. Police barricades become beds. Money is erased in public. A clock ticks for ninety-nine years. Public seats attach to stop sign posts. Cafe visitors use local currency. Office ceilings hold covert messages. Ten thousand students attend classes by paying teachers with barter items. Statements about arts graduates are read on museum plaques. My work is research-based and site-specific. I alter objects to call forth new norms, roles, and rules. A street corner, a community space, a museum, an office, or a school become sites for collective reimagining.

To make this shift from object to group, I concern myself with duration and political economy. When I source materials, invite joint-work, share or deny decision-making power, and shape future markets for each work, a community of practice emerges. Experience becomes a criterion of knowledge.

To the conventional labels of Title, Author(s), Materials, Dimensions, Date, and Provenance, I add Duration, forms of Property, Labor, Transactions, Enterprise, and Finance. Objects become materializations of collective debate; entry points for encounters with fantasies of cooperation.

available for barter only. My Statements increase in price according to student loan rates. Artists Report Back is made by [BFAMFAPhD](#), a group that accepts community contributions. I understand art as mode of inquiry that expands beyond exhibition and toward life cycle; from display to production, consumption, and surplus allocation. I begin each project with an invitation. I facilitate an experience. A group gathers. I share and develop leadership. The project becomes a group effort, and the objects multiply. The objects are known in the group and shown much later.

You often work collaboratively with other artists. Do you see collaboration as essential to your process? How did you come to that conclusion?



Caroline Woolard / BFAMFAPhD, *Statements*, 2013. Courtesy of BFAMFAPhD / Caroline Woolard, photo CC-BY-ND 4.0



Caroline Woolard, *Work Dress*, 2014. Photo by Martyna Szczesna, CC-BY-ND 4.0

I often work collaboratively because it allows me to refine my ideas in debate and in encounters with difference – difference of experience, of perspective, of values. I believe that a diversity of opinions strengthens projects because collaborators are challenged to confront their individual assumptions and either come to agreement as a group or make space to consent to individual expression or dissensus.

In collaboration, we often take time to speak about our individual and collective approaches to allocating time and money in projects. As collaborators attempt to agree upon which resources to share, collaboration becomes a conversation about political economy. We often ask: Which resources – time, money, space – are most important to us right now? How will we share the resources we accumulate together? Who has more time, space, or money in the group, and which institutions uphold this reality?

By practicing shared work and shared decision making in a collaborative project, an economy of shared time and resources emerges. Practitioners of collaboration also become practitioners of solidarity economies, looking at shared livelihoods as always already part of shared production.

Money and debt is a loaded topic for artists, and yet you face debt and economic precarity head on in projects like “BFAMFAPHD.” How did that project come about? Why did you decide to take on that topic?



In the classroom, arts educators confront the socially idealized occupation of the cultural producer and the frequent disavowal of a relationship between cultural production and the contemporary political economy. It is my aim to articulate existing economies of cultural production as well as plausible futures of cooperation in art. I do this in my teaching, scholarship, and independent work. Most recently, my co-authored articles ([On the Cultural Value Debate](#)) and teaching tools ([Of Supply Chains](#)) speak to these concerns. In *Of Supply Chains*, co-authored with Susan Jahoda and co-designed with Emilio Reynaldo Martinez Poppe, a recent graduate of Cooper Union, we write:

“We aim to articulate the relationship between art making, pedagogy, and political economy. We believe that practices of collaboration and solidarity economies are foundational for contemporary visual arts,

Caroline Woolard, Emilio Martinez Poppe, and Susan Jahoda for BFAMFAPhD. *Of Supply Chains*, 2016. Courtesy of BFAMFAPhD, photo CC-BY-ND 4.0

design, and new media education.” Our text, workbook, and [game are online this month](#). For now, you can see an early version of our game [here](#).

statement?

You have described NYCREIC as “creative commons for land.” Can you elaborate on that



Caroline Woolard, *Exchange Cafe*, 2013. Photo courtesy of MoMA, CC-BY-ND 4.0

Just as Creative Commons provides a legal framework for authors to easily share their intellectual property, I believe that we need an entity to provide legal frameworks for land owners to share their land easily. This is what I would call a “Creative Commonwealth.” [The New York City Real Estate Investment Cooperative](#), and so many initiatives related to community land trusts, could be considered examples of projects that would utilize the Creative Commonwealth framework, if it existed. Janelle Orsi at the Sustainable Economies Law Center, is working on something of this nature with the Agrarian Trust.

How do you see investment in affordable physical space as essential to a commons?

Since co-founding and co-directing [OurGoods.org](#) and [TradeSchool.coop](#) in 2008 to enable resource sharing, I’ve seen how solidarity economy platforms build resilience and mutual aid — often for those of us on the privileged side of the digital divide. I’ve also seen that online platforms are not enough. All people need affordable space, so that they can take innovation can occur. And so I started thinking: How might we as artists utilize the strengths of a networked information era to cooperatively finance, acquire, and manage space? What can artists do to help ensure affordable space and reduce displacement?



Caroline Woolard, *Queer Rocker*, 2013. Photo courtesy of Martyna Szczesna, CC-BY-ND 4.0

You’ve used open licensing in a variety of projects like “Queer Rocker” and “Origin of the World Dress.” Why did you decide to open source your work? Have there been any surprising outcomes?

The Queer Rocker is an example of what I call a Free/Libre/Open Source Systems and Art project. I made the designs, files, and assembly process for the Queer Rocker available for use and modification because I learn by doing, and by uniting research with action. I want to furnish gathering spaces with objects that are as imaginative as the conversations that occur in those spaces. I want to contribute to an economy of social justice, solidarity, sustainability, and cooperation. I hope to add spaces of reflection and healing to social movements, so many of which are, at present, focused on immediate protest and progress. Many students, activists, and grassroots organizations cannot afford to purchase furniture, but they may have time to create things with the materials around them.

My aim with open source projects is that through communal production and alteration, a radical politics will emerge; a politics of cooperation.

CATEGORY: [Arts / culture](#) [Open access](#) [Share your work](#)

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Nato Thompson

Contractions of Time: On Social Practice from a Temporal Perspective

Many can relate to a sense of disembodied franticness that expands across the landscape of our daily lives. We are busy people. We are plugged in to phones and computers, and constantly on the move. An elusive horizon—the purpose of our quicksilver existence—has been erased in favor of a go-to emotional state that is the result of a privatization of time. We are frantic workers even when we work against the very conditions that produce our franticness.

In his incisive book *Capitalist Realism*, Mark Fisher diagnoses various psychological ailments (Attention Deficit Disorder, dyslexia, bipolar disorder) that have emerged from a social environment of deeply privatized and consumable moments:

If, then, something like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is a pathology, it is a pathology of late capitalism—a consequence of being wired into the entertainment-control circuits of hypermediated consumer culture.¹

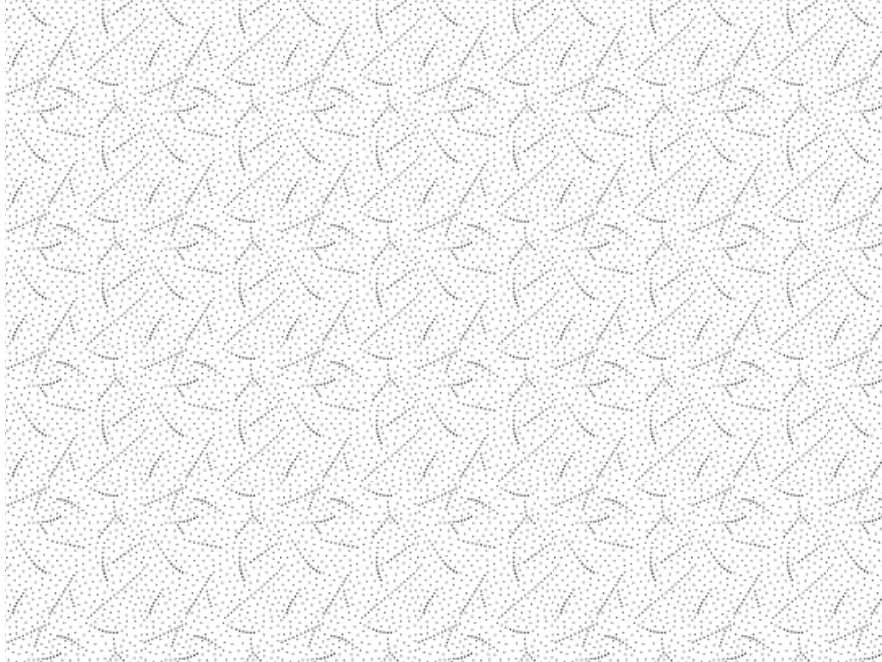
This affective control not only perpetuates a form of consumption but, more basically, a particular temporality. If products demand to be produced and consumed in ever-expanding contexts, they may also be adapted to durations more suitable to electronics than to what our bodies can endure. And without a doubt, the accelerated pace of disembodied consumer desire ultimately alters the basic structure of our bodies. “The consequence of being hooked into the entertainment matrix is a twitchy, agitated interpassivity, an inability to concentrate or focus.”² We are plugged in. We are in the matrix. We are atrophied hunger machines.

Fisher’s lament that life is getting too fast and that people cannot concentrate is hardly new. And in left-leaning art culture, pointing the finger at capitalism is no more novel a diagnosis. Certainly, the dominant social order is responsible for the present social order—the system perpetuates itself and we are its subjects. And the self-help industry would be much more compelling if its balm for depression and spazzed-out children included a radical redistribution of wealth, but that goes without saying. Nonetheless, the picture Fisher paints offers a clue to an evolving condition of behavior that must be accounted for in the production of meaning in culture writ large. Any cultural formation that comes into being now necessarily does so according to the terms of a general cultural shift toward the twitchy, the disinterested, the agitated, the dyslexic, and the bipolar.

When Marina Abramovi sat for hours at a time in the central gallery of MoMA, bright lights beaming down on her as she met visitor after visitor with her steady gaze, what shook the audience was her commitment. The act of willfully placing oneself on a rigorous schedule best suited to an endurance sport, sitting passively and doing nothing but staring, struck the audience as touching upon the two poles of the elegiac and nihilistic. The artful meaning of looking into the artist’s eyes was eclipsed by the pure physicality of it all—how could she possibly sit there every day?

Having emerged in the context of 1960s art, the durational performance finds a new form of reception at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. The return of the body and of prolonged time resists the dematerialized, agitated nature of the current era. Abramovi’s performance brought the world of spectacle into the two forms of experience many considered beyond its purview: the body, and time. If spectacle is meant to be consumed rapidly, and from a distance, then Abramovi’s performance rendered the spectral character of fame human flesh, placing it front and center for the

long term. Imagine Brad Pitt just standing there day after day, not running away from paparazzi and their flashing cameras; just a sustained presence. It runs counter to the collective nature of spectatorship, and for that reason, Abramovi 's performance sparked the imagination of a mass public. The title of both the work and the exhibition, the phrase "The Artist is Present" captures a heightened sense of engagement—as though, for the very first time, the artist is finally here. Elevated to the stature of an icon by marketing materials promoting the exhibition, Abramovi 's performance, in a reverse gesture, pulls the artist down into that space we normally occupy without noticing.



Marina Abramović, view of *The Artist is Present* at the MoMA. Photo: C-Monster.

In witnessing Abramovi 's steady breathing calm, we sense our own fidgety qualities. We sense our own nervous appetites. The arts have long played host to patience and duration. One can usually identify contemporary video art, dance, and performance by its agonizing embrace of all things slow, endless, and tedious. Operating against the grain of contemporary temporality may not only be a hallmark of the arts, but also the delineation of their discursive boundary. How do we know it is art? Because it takes so long to appreciate, it couldn't be aimed at a typical consumer. Because it is so annoyingly long it must be interesting.

Inevitably, the fast pace of consumerism is accompanied by the tantalizing promise of slow time—Allen Ginsberg once complained of a heart attack en route to his weekly meditation.

Just as the arts were reinvented in the age of the camera, so too must they be in the age of accelerated time. If the internet and the touch screen represent the apparatuses of our age, then the material and the prolonged have become a niche for the discursive and formal role of the arts. Much like a spa, the arts play host to a malnourished subject eager to experience something nostalgically other. Slow time and tangible bodies become so rare experientially that their aesthetic value finds a home in the cul-de-sac of scarcity that is art.

Since the advent of mechanical production, the arts have been the space in which the hard-to-find seeks refuge. And while the art market has been much discussed, we now find another form of scarcity in forms of experience. At times in tension, at times in collusion with capitalist scarcity, the scarcity of experience encourages forms of art that are not as easily distributed as—and thus more distinguishable from—the mass produced goods of the broader market. Massive installations, sculptures, performance, civic institutions (the museum), time-based relational aesthetics all find value in their experiential distinction from larger markets. Museums offer special opportunities to experience the body in space. In this spasmodic era, we find the arts recalibrated as a temporal, spatial, and bodily escape.

This kind of shifted aesthetic disposition resists not only the pace of the information economy, but, perhaps more importantly, our very ability to consume our experience. If we are frantic, it is only because we need to be so in order to keep up. Slowness does not only characterize a mode of consumption, but also a mode of behavior. To that end, we now find numerous forms of contemporary art that gain resonance by tweaking behavioral codes with regard to the body and temporality. Some projects comprise bite-sized moments that are quickly consumed, context-specific chunks of experience that enter the mind and dissipate quickly, in harmony with the frantic and the contingent. They are brain candy and they are meant to be delicious. While there is nothing new in describing numerous forms of participatory art as mere products of an information economy that caters to the needs of power, their temporal qualities certainly play a role as pithy and poetic correspondences to capitalist consumption.

2010 could be described as the year that relational aesthetics made its way to the mainstream in the US, where it had remained quietly operational for ten years. Abramovi's retrospective, which could in theory be collapsed into a relational sort of zeitgeist, garnered the most attention, but there were many other associated phenomena. Over at the Guggenheim, Tino Sehgal had a multi-generational armada leading people by the hand in explorations of the idea of progress. At the New Museum, Rivane Neuenschwander granted wishes on bracelets. At Creative Time, Paul Ramirez Jonas's project titled *Key to the City* allowed the general public in Times Square to briefly participate in a ceremony that provided them with a key to the city of New York. This object, to all appearances an ordinary house key, awarded to the public in a brief but intimate moment at the heart of NYC spectacle, is not only symbolic, but also functional, in that it opens a myriad of locks across the five boroughs. These unmediated interpersonal projects take as their starting point a specific experience, a poetic moment, that is registered, digested, appreciated, and completed.

Just upstairs from Abramovi's time-based project at MoMA, we found a carnival of discreet projects in which performance artists were hired to enact Abramovi's earlier works, bringing new life to these works. The most notable of these works was *Imponderabilia* (1977), originally performed by Abramovi and her partner Ulay, in which the couple stood naked in a doorway and visitors were required to squeeze between them in order to gain access to the other side. The 2010 reenactment had a different character altogether; sliding between the two naked performers became an option and not a requirement, as one could simply access the same room through an alternate hallway. This slight transformation reveals something about our present condition, and perhaps also something about the popularity of the exhibition itself. In place of coercion or daring, the passage assumed the character of a carnival ride. People opted to participate, and participate they did. Lines grew as the eager public waited anxiously to brush their bodies against the bodies of the performers. The performers' nakedness became even more tantalizing as people waited in line for this strangely sanctioned experience. Whereas Abramovi's central-gallery project was about duration, the retrospective upstairs was a discreet pleasure zone, a mall of bodily experiences ready for consumption.

But what else can a museum or public art organization do? Without question, certain temporal limits are necessary for artistic projects to be brought to a general audience. Were the discreet embodied moments of Abramovi's retrospective limited simply by the duration of a conventional museum visit? Is there really any value in a critique that calls for a duration so extensive that no public institution can actually host it?

Rather than make normative claims regarding the display or function of these works, my intention is to clarify the emerging cultural landscape across which these aesthetic experiments function. The reenactment of these performance artworks of the past allowed the work to fit neatly into the current aesthetic needs of a public deprived of its own bodies, wherein any renewed interest in performance has to be reframed and displayed in a manner that accounts for the dematerialized and accelerated climate of today. And the aesthetic allure of Abramovi's physical presence captured the temporally agitated imagination of a mass audience.

But this kind of artistic production also provokes skepticism for its compatibility with a predatory capitalist economy. It can be bottled and sold as tiny little moments, all for the taking. Tino Sehgal's *This is Propaganda* (2002) hovered over the

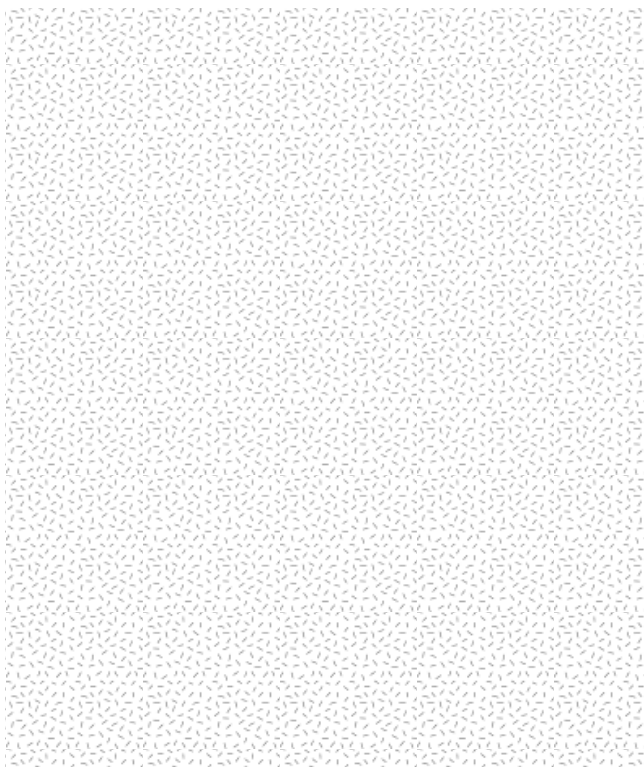
exhibition of the Dakis Joannou collection curated by Jeff Koons at the New Museum, in the voice of a paid performer who sang, “This is propaganda.” The voice expands melodiously throughout the space and then states in a rather officious tone, “Tino Sehgal, This is Propaganda, 2002.” What is propaganda? Perhaps self-conscious, perhaps commenting on the artworks on display, or perhaps commenting on the condition of communication in general, this reflexivity certainly gains another layer when sung in the public exhibition of a collection of a New Museum board member. “This is propaganda,” as the song goes—a song paid for and included in a collection, that whistles its way into the ears of an audience finding their way through a museum. This is propaganda.

Tino Sehgal’s work has enjoyed a tremendous critical reception from the writer Claire Bishop, who has written:

It is worth paying closer attention to Sehgal’s aspiration to a “simultaneity of production and deproduction instead of economics of growth.” It is clear that what is being deproduced in his practice is the materiality of the art object; but what is being produced? Gesture—and here it may be worth recalling Giorgio Agamben’s claim in *Means Without End* (2000) that gesture is the purest form of politics (and also of intellectual activity).³

Despite Sehgal’s reflexivity, or perhaps enhanced by it, the singular embodied practice of a song sung during an exhibition nonetheless constitutes a form that is extremely convenient for a dematerialized economy. It should be noted that Bishop’s assessment came following Sehgal’s work being on display at London’s ICA in 2004. But with the intentionally vague “this” of its “*this* is propaganda,” the work’s meaning shifts radically depending on context. And so the performance at the New Museum, situated in an exhibition of a private collection, had an entirely different character than its ICA counterpart. If the statement at the ICA had some implications, in the context of the New Museum it became a confession of outright complicity.

Can it really be the case that market-friendly forms are simultaneously, and conveniently, the highest form of political content? Now that information has become a commodity and advertising codes have penetrated the very essence of what it means to communicate, we can no longer pretend that art remains magically outside this logic. While it would be wonderful if the gesture could somehow escape this trap of cultural production, the museum and gallery are not safe-zones immune from capital and power. As a result, we must continue to view artistic gestures with the special skepticism reserved for all cultural production. Reflexivity alone won’t save it. An advertisement that tells you it’s an advertisement is no less edifying, just more contemporary.



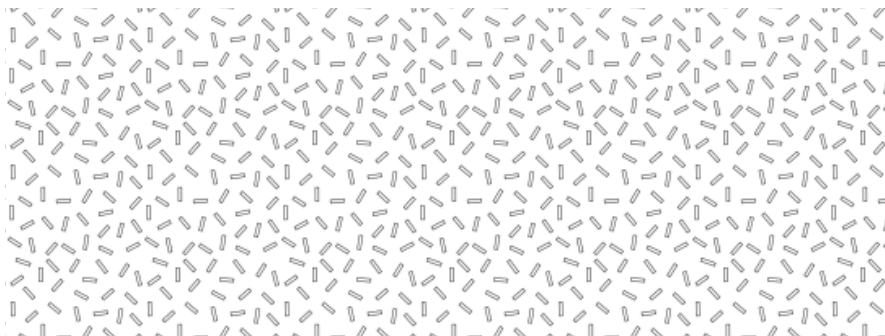


Tino Sehgal casting announcement.

Even if the disembodied and easily consumed are not inherently corrupt, they are assiduously brought into the fold of a transitioning art market. And this quality of economic acquiescence that characterized relational aesthetics in the '90s can now be found in the United States. So while there are certainly merits to discussing the limits of the gesture, the commodification of the present nevertheless plays out across the body and time.

In some cases, a strategic recalibration of the gesture's market-friendly quality has resulted in cultural projects seeking refuge in the long term, in methodologies that expand across a temporal horizon. Slowness has emerged as a strategy for resisting the consumable flow of information and developing a form of social cohesion that withstands the frenetic needs of capital. Artist and de facto urban planner Rick Lowe's seventeen-year involvement in the alternative arts and Project Row Houses certainly demonstrates an exceptional commitment. Unwilling to follow Richard Florida's pro-developer gentrification models, Lowe created a locally based community housing project that combined cultural production, community organizing, and artist residencies in an economically depressed African-American neighborhood in Houston's Third Ward, even integrating art residencies and housing for single mothers.⁴ This peculiar hybrid, multiuse center evolved over the last two decades into a space of trust and, to use that Deleuzian term, becoming. The community of the area gradually became involved in a process of spatial transformation. Rather than operate with a top-down model, Lowe introduced the tools and resources for the neighborhood to rebuild their own subject positions, and his commitments demonstrate that time is indeed a more valuable social relation than money. What makes Lowe's project altogether different is its resistance to not only the demands of consumer culture, but also to its underlying class and race determinations.

There are few corollaries in the arts to Lowe's work, which has more in common with civic infrastructures that tend to be far more vernacular and collectively produced than art projects. Churches, social clubs, fraternal organizations, union halls, faith-based youth organizations, after-school programs, the workplace, and schools are all social spaces that evolve over time. As sites of becoming, they go far beyond the gestural. Unwieldy, loose-knit, and often dealing directly with sites of power, they hold far more sway than the arts in producing collective social imagination. And yet, the prospect of undertaking a seventeen-year project such as Lowe's Project Row Houses is extremely daunting. According to the terms of survival in a flexible contingent economy, committing to such a long-term socially based project seems like economic suicide. Could such a long-term practice be a little *too* successful at resisting the market? How can one gain the social capital (or, for that matter, the capital) necessary to survive while being committed to a project in the long term? The answer is not easy and must be negotiated at the heart of the politics of cultural production today.



Project Row Houses, before, during and after renovation. Photo: Project Row Houses.

The artist Tania Bruguera has said that it is time to put Duchamp's urinal back in the bathroom. That is to say that bringing life into art can no longer be considered an important gesture. Rather, life should be viewed from the epistemological vantage point found in some contemporary art. If one is interested in a more ambitious and meaningful

project, perhaps it isn't enough to depend on the niche market that is art. As accelerated time comes to characterize not only survival in the arts, but also the default condition of the public, we find forms of meaning that resist the tide of capital and gravitate toward not only the long term, but also the profoundly civic.

A certain interest has emerged in civic infrastructural projects that unfold over an extended period of time. While a pedagogic turn has been heralded in the field of contemporary art, it has been accompanied by a temporal logic. As alternative schools appear, so do more sustained commitments to subjects that resist the readily consumable moment. This is not to say that these infrastructural projects are impervious to the needs of the market, but rather that this shifting economic and cultural landscape has produced heightened interest in forms of infrastructure (they will most definitely find their own moments of coercion and vulnerability). Socially based artistic projects in the form of alternative schools, markets, legislation, and food programs appear to be on the rise as a move away from the gestural and convenient.



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CRAIN'S

NEW YORK BUSINESS

Hundreds join a new kind of co-op to buy commercial property in high-rent areas

The goal is to create affordable space for small businesses and arts organizations

[Caroline Lewis](#)



Buck Ennis

Caroline Woolard (left) hopes the investment co-op she founded can help Ana Martinez de Luco's nonprofit.

Published: May 24, 2015 - 12:01 am

Caroline Woolard first got the idea to invest in commercial property when she realized she would soon be priced out of her artist's studio in Brooklyn.

But when she and a handful of her fellow renters — welders, fashion designers, painters, woodworkers — looked into investing in their space, they learned that they didn't qualify for a loan. Banks didn't see co-workers banding together; they saw individual artisans who simply didn't have the cash required of them.

"It's expensive to be poor," said Ms. Woolard, 31. "If you don't have capital, not much is possible."

As a small group they may have been financially powerless, but if they were an organized collective of hundreds of small investors, Ms. Woolard thought, they would not be. By forming the NYC Real Estate Investment Cooperative, about 200 New Yorkers from diverse neighborhoods, professions, ethnicities and tax brackets hope to invest jointly in commercial property in areas where rents are rising rapidly, carving out permanently affordable space for community-based small businesses and cultural organizations.

The idea for the co-op came out of a Facebook conversation between Ms. Woolard, who built "sharing economy" websites Our Goods and Trade School, and her friend Paula Segal, an attorney and founder of nonprofit 596 Acres, which helps people turn vacant city lots into community gardens.

The two were inspired in part by the Northeast Investment Cooperative, a group founded by neighbors in Minneapolis four years ago, which has grown to more than 200 members who have each purchased a share in the co-op for \$1,000. The first organization of its kind in the United States, that co-op has so far acquired three abandoned buildings and leased or sold space to a bike shop, a bakery and a brewery.

First in New York

If Ms. Woolard and Ms. Segal succeed, it would likely be the first of its kind in New York City: a real estate co-op that would invest in commercial property in order to preserve space for small businesses, as well as social-

service and arts organizations. But succeeding won't be easy. Land is expensive and scarce, while incorporating is tricky business.

The co-op has yet to settle on a structure, but it may choose to become a limited-liability corporation, which is a common legal designation in both the real estate market and the world of worker co-ops.

Alternatively, it could incorporate as a cooperative, which is classed as a nonprofit in New York.

Similar efforts by community groups to band together to own real estate have taken decades to bear fruit and have typically grown out of only one neighborhood. The Cooper Square Committee, created in 1959 to survive the wrecking ball of master planner Robert Moses, took decades to achieve its aim. Cooper Square's Mutual Housing Association spent \$20 million in the 1990s refurbishing affordable housing in 22 formerly city-owned buildings.

"With a limited capacity, certainly in the initial phase, the question is going to be, which neighborhoods are going to benefit?" said Tom Angotti, director of the Hunter College Center for Community Planning and Development.

If it were entirely up to Ms. Woolard and Ms. Segal, the co-op's portfolio would buy city-owned properties in need of renovation and ones that house established community institutions. But it's a collective, and decisions are made by all the shareholders.

"Saving spaces that already exist—unfortunately, those are the more expensive buildings," said Ms. Woolard.

She believes the co-op will have more luck buying vacant city-owned buildings. The city used to regularly sell vacant land for as little as \$1 to developers that would renovate the property and keep some of the apartments affordable. And although most of the remaining lots the city auctions are residential, she hopes that once her organization is established she will have some power to ask the city to sell lots to co-ops of the kind Ms. Woolard is trying to create.

To get there, potential members gathered late last month at the Middle Collegiate Church in the East Village.

"We need affordable business space so we don't get overrun with chains and bars," said Renée Holmes, a middle-school teacher from Bedford-Stuyvesant, who learned about the co-op from 596 Acres' [website](#). Before the church opened its doors, co-op organizers had already received online pledges totaling more than \$1.2 million. But the organizers wanted to make sure members were first committed to the task of incorporating before accepting the money.

Brooklyn beneficiary

After the meeting, nearly everyone who attended submitted a membership form and \$10 to help start the co-op's collective fund.

One of the first organizations the group plans to assist is Sure We Can, a nonprofit that operates on a 13,000-square-foot lot in Bushwick, a couple of blocks from the increasingly pricey enclave that has sprung up around [Roberta's Pizza](#).

Sure We Can serves as a depository for the recyclables collected by people around the city who make their incomes from the 5 cents they get for returning each item. Beyond sorting cans and bottles and returning them to distributors, Sure We Can has created a community space for canners, most of whom are homeless.

The largely self-sufficient nonprofit has been paying its rent of \$4,243 per month with little more than the modest commission it makes from distributors for acting as a middleman. Operating on a budget of about \$300,000 this year, Sure We Can is in danger of losing its lot to the highest bidder when its lease is up in 2018—unless it can come up with the landlord's \$3 million asking price.

"The landlord wants to keep us here, but only if we can find a way to buy the property or find someone else to buy it," said Ana Martinez de Luco, the executive director.

The budding co-op has a way to go before it can make commitments to organizations such as Sure We Can. The initial goal is to "have a list of realistic properties and the money to secure at least one of them within two years," according to an email to members.

After the church meeting, Ms. Woolard said she felt "excited and overwhelmed and accountable."

Ultimately, though, the success of the co-op will hinge on the commitment of its members.

"I'm gonna go have a beer after this because putting this meeting together has been a lot of work and I'm feeling a little bit done," Ms. Segal told the audience after last month's meeting. "But I'm really glad that there are all these new members who are going to step up and do the next phase of the work."

Correction: Caroline Woolard believes the NYC Real Estate Investment Cooperative will have more luck buying vacant city-owned buildings. That detail was characterized incorrectly in an earlier version of this article.

CRAIN'S

NEW YORK BUSINESS

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LIVING

Trade balance

By Christopher Moore

April 26, 2010 | 4:56am



SWAP MEET: Yoga and pilates studio owner Elisa Chen has traded classes for photographs from Tom Judge (left) and squash lessons from Mansoor Razzaq.
Photo: Michael Sofronski

Cash is not necessarily king anymore.

Consider, for example, the experience of Elisa Chen. Laid off from her finance job, Chen recently launched a family-friendly yoga and pilates studio, Body and Mind Builders, in TriBeCa. While getting the business off the ground, she began to think of ways to cut costs.

ADVERTISING

“Things were slower than I anticipated and I was running low on capital,” she says.

The answer: bartering, which became her preferred method for purchasing everything from logo development to photographs for her Web site. She even bartered for squash lessons for her two children.

“One extra person in class is not costing me anyway,” says Chen. “I can’t say enough good things about the experience.”

In an era of unemployment and job insecurity, a growing number of New Yorkers like Chen are trading on their talents. The evidence can be seen in the growth of forums for exchange, from Web sites to a newly formed Meetup group, as well as Craigslist’s ballooning bartering board. A recent visit to the latter revealed a life coach looking for someone to help write Web copy, a masseuse looking to trade rubdowns for electrical work, and an attorney offering to craft a will for someone who’d paint his kitchen.

Even the city itself is getting into the act. Just this month the Bloomberg administration launched a time-banking initiative, as part of a larger effort to encourage volunteerism.

“The economic downturn increases people’s awareness of bartering,” says Tom Judge, the Brooklyn photographer who took the shots of Chen’s studio — and will in turn take classes there with his wife. When times get tough, he notes, “Everyone still has his or her trade.”

At the Visiting Nurse Service of New York’s Community Connections TimeBank, membership has grown from 274 at the end of 2007 to 1,292 members today.

“People are really eager to sign up,” says director Mashi Blech, who said many members are un- or under-employed.

Under the TimeBank system — which VNSNY has duplicated in Upper Manhattan and Sunset Park — members trade services on an hour-for-an-hour basis, making time deposits and withdrawals rather than swapping services directly. Each person’s time is valued in the same way, whether they’re offering tutoring or home companionship.

On top of being a creative way to trade services, time banks are great community builders, says Blech, whose group holds regular potluck gatherings.

“The more our members meet, the more they trust,” Blech says. “And the more they trust, the more they trade.”

Among those trading is Elizabeth Berger, 23, who learned of the time bank through her job with AmeriCorps. A member since last fall, she leads an English conversation group in Sunset Park to help others improve their language skills. In return, she’s received alterations and Mandarin lessons. She appreciates not only the services she trades for, but the chance to interact with a group that’s multi-ethnic and cross-generational.

“It’s not a group I would have met with my job,” she says.

Angela Badolato of Bay Ridge joined last year, offering slots in her belly dancing classes for much-needed computer help.

"I have a lot of things on my computer that are a little bit beyond me," she says. "QuickBooks, especially."

If part of bartering's appeal is to get cash-free services, another is to take part in a community-based form of commerce in a dog-eat-dog city, says Badolato. She likes the idea of experiencing life "from a more flowing place," she says.

Caroline Woolard, a Brooklyn artist and co-founder of the online network OurGoods.org, sees the rise in bartering as part of "a general cultural shift toward resource-sharing," and cites Zipcar as an example.

The idea behind OurGoods — which is currently running in a prototype phase, pending a fall launch — is to provide for the sharing of services to support independent projects throughout the city.

"People can invest in each other's ideas and help each other with their work," Woolard explains.

This past winter, the site's founders ran Trade School, a Lower East Side-based bartering bonanza where participants hosted instructional sessions on topics ranging from playwriting to butter making, and students paid in trade.

"The idea is to introduce people to the concept of bartering," says Woolard, who's among those working to bring the school back next fall for another go-round. She describes bartering as a common-sense response to bad economic times, but also as something more meaningful — a different model of behavior.

"It gives space to develop relationships with people," Woolard says.

Or as Badolato, the belly dancing teacher, puts it: "It's not about what you can get. It's giving as well."

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Nato Thompson

Contractions of Time: On Social Practice from a Temporal Perspective

Many can relate to a sense of disembodied franticness that expands across the landscape of our daily lives. We are busy people. We are plugged in to phones and computers, and constantly on the move. An elusive horizon—the purpose of our quicksilver existence—has been erased in favor of a go-to emotional state that is the result of a privatization of time. We are frantic workers even when we work against the very conditions that produce our franticness.

In his incisive book *Capitalist Realism*, Mark Fisher diagnoses various psychological ailments (Attention Deficit Disorder, dyslexia, bipolar disorder) that have emerged from a social environment of deeply privatized and consumable moments:

If, then, something like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is a pathology, it is a pathology of late capitalism—a consequence of being wired into the entertainment-control circuits of hypermediated consumer culture.¹

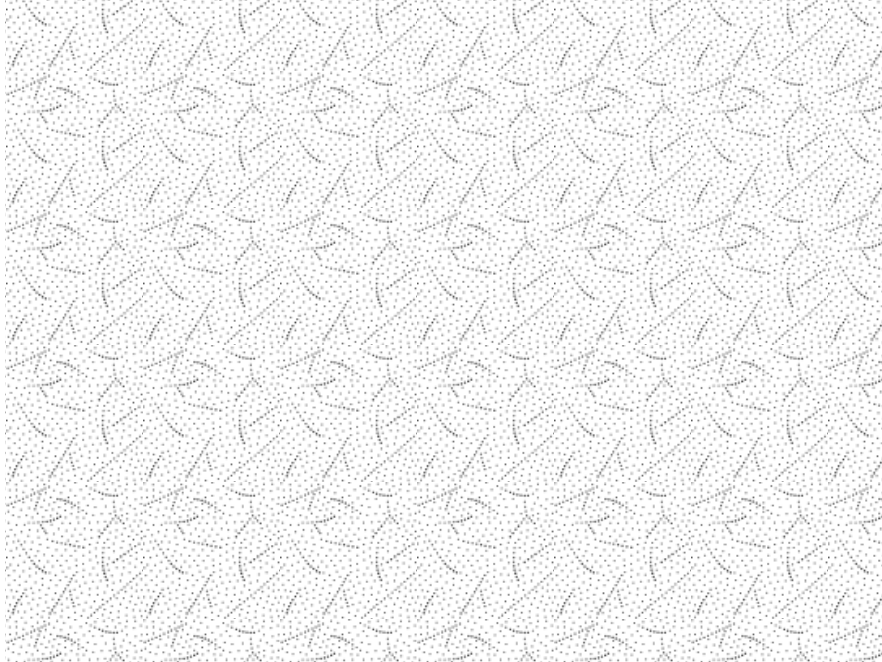
This affective control not only perpetuates a form of consumption but, more basically, a particular temporality. If products demand to be produced and consumed in ever-expanding contexts, they may also be adapted to durations more suitable to electronics than to what our bodies can endure. And without a doubt, the accelerated pace of disembodied consumer desire ultimately alters the basic structure of our bodies. “The consequence of being hooked into the entertainment matrix is a twitchy, agitated interpassivity, an inability to concentrate or focus.”² We are plugged in. We are in the matrix. We are atrophied hunger machines.

Fisher’s lament that life is getting too fast and that people cannot concentrate is hardly new. And in left-leaning art culture, pointing the finger at capitalism is no more novel a diagnosis. Certainly, the dominant social order is responsible for the present social order—the system perpetuates itself and we are its subjects. And the self-help industry would be much more compelling if its balm for depression and spazzed-out children included a radical redistribution of wealth, but that goes without saying. Nonetheless, the picture Fisher paints offers a clue to an evolving condition of behavior that must be accounted for in the production of meaning in culture writ large. Any cultural formation that comes into being now necessarily does so according to the terms of a general cultural shift toward the twitchy, the disinterested, the agitated, the dyslexic, and the bipolar.

When Marina Abramović sat for hours at a time in the central gallery of MoMA, bright lights beaming down on her as she met visitor after visitor with her steady gaze, what shook the audience was her commitment. The act of willfully placing oneself on a rigorous schedule best suited to an endurance sport, sitting passively and doing nothing but staring, struck the audience as touching upon the two poles of the elegiac and nihilistic. The artful meaning of looking into the artist’s eyes was eclipsed by the pure physicality of it all—how could she possibly sit there every day?

Having emerged in the context of 1960s art, the durational performance finds a new form of reception at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. The return of the body and of prolonged time resists the dematerialized, agitated nature of the current era. Abramović’s performance brought the world of spectacle into the two forms of experience many considered beyond its purview: the body, and time. If spectacle is meant to be consumed rapidly, and from a distance, then Abramović’s performance rendered the spectral character of fame human flesh, placing it front and center for the

long term. Imagine Brad Pitt just standing there day after day, not running away from paparazzi and their flashing cameras; just a sustained presence. It runs counter to the collective nature of spectatorship, and for that reason, Abramovi 's performance sparked the imagination of a mass public. The title of both the work and the exhibition, the phrase "The Artist is Present" captures a heightened sense of engagement—as though, for the very first time, the artist is finally here. Elevated to the stature of an icon by marketing materials promoting the exhibition, Abramovi 's performance, in a reverse gesture, pulls the artist down into that space we normally occupy without noticing.



Marina Abramović, view of *The Artist is Present* at the MoMA. Photo: C-Monster.

In witnessing Abramovi 's steady breathing calm, we sense our own fidgety qualities. We sense our own nervous appetites. The arts have long played host to patience and duration. One can usually identify contemporary video art, dance, and performance by its agonizing embrace of all things slow, endless, and tedious. Operating against the grain of contemporary temporality may not only be a hallmark of the arts, but also the delineation of their discursive boundary. How do we know it is art? Because it takes so long to appreciate, it couldn't be aimed at a typical consumer. Because it is so annoyingly long it must be interesting.

Inevitably, the fast pace of consumerism is accompanied by the tantalizing promise of slow time—Allen Ginsberg once complained of a heart attack en route to his weekly meditation.

Just as the arts were reinvented in the age of the camera, so too must they be in the age of accelerated time. If the internet and the touch screen represent the apparatuses of our age, then the material and the prolonged have become a niche for the discursive and formal role of the arts. Much like a spa, the arts play host to a malnourished subject eager to experience something nostalgically other. Slow time and tangible bodies become so rare experientially that their aesthetic value finds a home in the cul-de-sac of scarcity that is art.

Since the advent of mechanical production, the arts have been the space in which the hard-to-find seeks refuge. And while the art market has been much discussed, we now find another form of scarcity in forms of experience. At times in tension, at times in collusion with capitalist scarcity, the scarcity of experience encourages forms of art that are not as easily distributed as—and thus more distinguishable from—the mass produced goods of the broader market. Massive installations, sculptures, performance, civic institutions (the museum), time-based relational aesthetics all find value in their experiential distinction from larger markets. Museums offer special opportunities to experience the body in space. In this spasmodic era, we find the arts recalibrated as a temporal, spatial, and bodily escape.

This kind of shifted aesthetic disposition resists not only the pace of the information economy, but, perhaps more importantly, our very ability to consume our experience. If we are frantic, it is only because we need to be so in order to keep up. Slowness does not only characterize a mode of consumption, but also a mode of behavior. To that end, we now find numerous forms of contemporary art that gain resonance by tweaking behavioral codes with regard to the body and temporality. Some projects comprise bite-sized moments that are quickly consumed, context-specific chunks of experience that enter the mind and dissipate quickly, in harmony with the frantic and the contingent. They are brain candy and they are meant to be delicious. While there is nothing new in describing numerous forms of participatory art as mere products of an information economy that caters to the needs of power, their temporal qualities certainly play a role as pithy and poetic correspondences to capitalist consumption.

2010 could be described as the year that relational aesthetics made its way to the mainstream in the US, where it had remained quietly operational for ten years. Abramovi's retrospective, which could in theory be collapsed into a relational sort of zeitgeist, garnered the most attention, but there were many other associated phenomena. Over at the Guggenheim, Tino Sehgal had a multi-generational armada leading people by the hand in explorations of the idea of progress. At the New Museum, Rivane Neuenschwander granted wishes on bracelets. At Creative Time, Paul Ramirez Jonas's project titled *Key to the City* allowed the general public in Times Square to briefly participate in a ceremony that provided them with a key to the city of New York. This object, to all appearances an ordinary house key, awarded to the public in a brief but intimate moment at the heart of NYC spectacle, is not only symbolic, but also functional, in that it opens a myriad of locks across the five boroughs. These unmediated interpersonal projects take as their starting point a specific experience, a poetic moment, that is registered, digested, appreciated, and completed.

Just upstairs from Abramovi's time-based project at MoMA, we found a carnival of discreet projects in which performance artists were hired to enact Abramovi's earlier works, bringing new life to these works. The most notable of these works was *Imponderabilia* (1977), originally performed by Abramovi and her partner Ulay, in which the couple stood naked in a doorway and visitors were required to squeeze between them in order to gain access to the other side. The 2010 reenactment had a different character altogether; sliding between the two naked performers became an option and not a requirement, as one could simply access the same room through an alternate hallway. This slight transformation reveals something about our present condition, and perhaps also something about the popularity of the exhibition itself. In place of coercion or daring, the passage assumed the character of a carnival ride. People opted to participate, and participate they did. Lines grew as the eager public waited anxiously to brush their bodies against the bodies of the performers. The performers' nakedness became even more tantalizing as people waited in line for this strangely sanctioned experience. Whereas Abramovi's central-gallery project was about duration, the retrospective upstairs was a discreet pleasure zone, a mall of bodily experiences ready for consumption.

But what else can a museum or public art organization do? Without question, certain temporal limits are necessary for artistic projects to be brought to a general audience. Were the discreet embodied moments of Abramovi's retrospective limited simply by the duration of a conventional museum visit? Is there really any value in a critique that calls for a duration so extensive that no public institution can actually host it?

Rather than make normative claims regarding the display or function of these works, my intention is to clarify the emerging cultural landscape across which these aesthetic experiments function. The reenactment of these performance artworks of the past allowed the work to fit neatly into the current aesthetic needs of a public deprived of its own bodies, wherein any renewed interest in performance has to be reframed and displayed in a manner that accounts for the dematerialized and accelerated climate of today. And the aesthetic allure of Abramovi's physical presence captured the temporally agitated imagination of a mass audience.

But this kind of artistic production also provokes skepticism for its compatibility with a predatory capitalist economy. It can be bottled and sold as tiny little moments, all for the taking. Tino Sehgal's *This is Propaganda* (2002) hovered over the

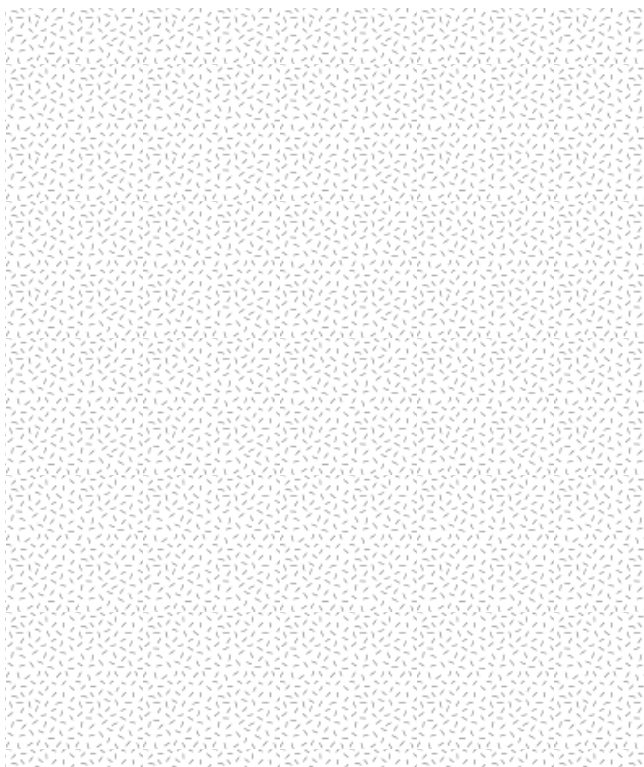
exhibition of the Dakis Joannou collection curated by Jeff Koons at the New Museum, in the voice of a paid performer who sang, “This is propaganda.” The voice expands melodiously throughout the space and then states in a rather officious tone, “Tino Sehgal, This is Propaganda, 2002.” What is propaganda? Perhaps self-conscious, perhaps commenting on the artworks on display, or perhaps commenting on the condition of communication in general, this reflexivity certainly gains another layer when sung in the public exhibition of a collection of a New Museum board member. “This is propaganda,” as the song goes—a song paid for and included in a collection, that whistles its way into the ears of an audience finding their way through a museum. This is propaganda.

Tino Sehgal’s work has enjoyed a tremendous critical reception from the writer Claire Bishop, who has written:

It is worth paying closer attention to Sehgal’s aspiration to a “simultaneity of production and deproduction instead of economics of growth.” It is clear that what is being deproduced in his practice is the materiality of the art object; but what is being produced? Gesture—and here it may be worth recalling Giorgio Agamben’s claim in *Means Without End* (2000) that gesture is the purest form of politics (and also of intellectual activity).³

Despite Sehgal’s reflexivity, or perhaps enhanced by it, the singular embodied practice of a song sung during an exhibition nonetheless constitutes a form that is extremely convenient for a dematerialized economy. It should be noted that Bishop’s assessment came following Sehgal’s work being on display at London’s ICA in 2004. But with the intentionally vague “this” of its “*this* is propaganda,” the work’s meaning shifts radically depending on context. And so the performance at the New Museum, situated in an exhibition of a private collection, had an entirely different character than its ICA counterpart. If the statement at the ICA had some implications, in the context of the New Museum it became a confession of outright complicity.

Can it really be the case that market-friendly forms are simultaneously, and conveniently, the highest form of political content? Now that information has become a commodity and advertising codes have penetrated the very essence of what it means to communicate, we can no longer pretend that art remains magically outside this logic. While it would be wonderful if the gesture could somehow escape this trap of cultural production, the museum and gallery are not safe-zones immune from capital and power. As a result, we must continue to view artistic gestures with the special skepticism reserved for all cultural production. Reflexivity alone won’t save it. An advertisement that tells you it’s an advertisement is no less edifying, just more contemporary.



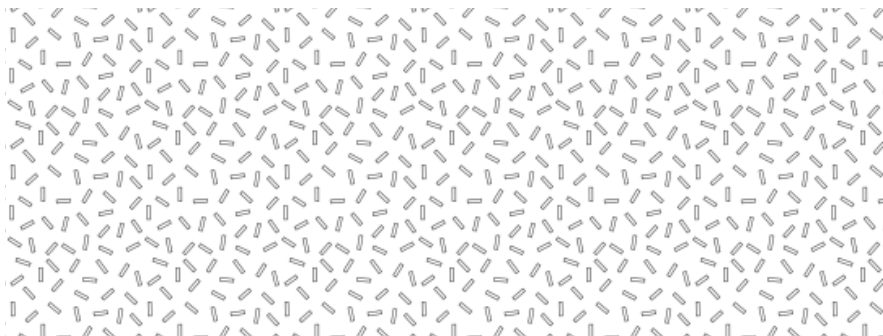


Tino Sehgal casting announcement.

Even if the disembodied and easily consumed are not inherently corrupt, they are assiduously brought into the fold of a transitioning art market. And this quality of economic acquiescence that characterized relational aesthetics in the '90s can now be found in the United States. So while there are certainly merits to discussing the limits of the gesture, the commodification of the present nevertheless plays out across the body and time.

In some cases, a strategic recalibration of the gesture's market-friendly quality has resulted in cultural projects seeking refuge in the long term, in methodologies that expand across a temporal horizon. Slowness has emerged as a strategy for resisting the consumable flow of information and developing a form of social cohesion that withstands the frenetic needs of capital. Artist and de facto urban planner Rick Lowe's seventeen-year involvement in the alternative arts and Project Row Houses certainly demonstrates an exceptional commitment. Unwilling to follow Richard Florida's pro-developer gentrification models, Lowe created a locally based community housing project that combined cultural production, community organizing, and artist residencies in an economically depressed African-American neighborhood in Houston's Third Ward, even integrating art residencies and housing for single mothers.⁴ This peculiar hybrid, multiuse center evolved over the last two decades into a space of trust and, to use that Deleuzian term, becoming. The community of the area gradually became involved in a process of spatial transformation. Rather than operate with a top-down model, Lowe introduced the tools and resources for the neighborhood to rebuild their own subject positions, and his commitments demonstrate that time is indeed a more valuable social relation than money. What makes Lowe's project altogether different is its resistance to not only the demands of consumer culture, but also to its underlying class and race determinations.

There are few corollaries in the arts to Lowe's work, which has more in common with civic infrastructures that tend to be far more vernacular and collectively produced than art projects. Churches, social clubs, fraternal organizations, union halls, faith-based youth organizations, after-school programs, the workplace, and schools are all social spaces that evolve over time. As sites of becoming, they go far beyond the gestural. Unwieldy, loose-knit, and often dealing directly with sites of power, they hold far more sway than the arts in producing collective social imagination. And yet, the prospect of undertaking a seventeen-year project such as Lowe's Project Row Houses is extremely daunting. According to the terms of survival in a flexible contingent economy, committing to such a long-term socially based project seems like economic suicide. Could such a long-term practice be a little *too* successful at resisting the market? How can one gain the social capital (or, for that matter, the capital) necessary to survive while being committed to a project in the long term? The answer is not easy and must be negotiated at the heart of the politics of cultural production today.



Project Row Houses, before, during and after renovation. Photo: Project Row Houses.

The artist Tania Bruguera has said that it is time to put Duchamp's urinal back in the bathroom. That is to say that bringing life into art can no longer be considered an important gesture. Rather, life should be viewed from the epistemological vantage point found in some contemporary art. If one is interested in a more ambitious and meaningful

project, perhaps it isn't enough to depend on the niche market that is art. As accelerated time comes to characterize not only survival in the arts, but also the default condition of the public, we find forms of meaning that resist the tide of capital and gravitate toward not only the long term, but also the profoundly civic.

A certain interest has emerged in civic infrastructural projects that unfold over an extended period of time. While a pedagogic turn has been heralded in the field of contemporary art, it has been accompanied by a temporal logic. As alternative schools appear, so do more sustained commitments to subjects that resist the readily consumable moment. This is not to say that these infrastructural projects are impervious to the needs of the market, but rather that this shifting economic and cultural landscape has produced heightened interest in forms of infrastructure (they will most definitely find their own moments of coercion and vulnerability). Socially based artistic projects in the form of alternative schools, markets, legislation, and food programs appear to be on the rise as a move away from the gestural and convenient.



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6/09/2014 @ 11:59AM | 227 views

Can a Sharing Platform for Artists Point to a More Equitable Society?



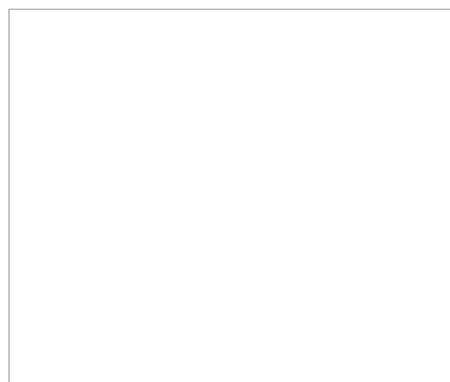
Adam Ludwig , Contributor



Can a Sharing Platform for Artists ...



What do you do if you're an artist in need of supplies, but you happen to be broke? Creative people have been pooling and exchanging resources for generations. Now, the emerging Internet-enabled sharing economy makes it easier than ever to swap, say, legal advice for lumber. That's the kind of transaction that OurGoods, a new resource-sharing platform for artists, actually facilitates. OurGoods also serves "designers, technologists, makers, farmers, and activists," said co-founder and activist Caroline Woolard when we talked to her at the recent [Sharing Economy Summit](#) at NYU's Stern School of Business. "Artists have a lot of skills and also education, but don't necessarily have money to pay each other to get their work done," said Woolard. But OurGoods doesn't just aim for



one-off online bartering. Its greater goal is to build what Woolard calls “cross-class trust networks” that “enable a kind of trust-building that leads to social justice.”

Woolard believes the sharing economy isn’t just about shared tools, but “shared wealth, shared decision-making.” She has an idealistic vision of how a sharing economy could evolve in local communities, with “each neighborhood having a tool-lending library, an open-source computer station, and a way ... to enable people who are moving around all the time to connect with people who have been sharing for generations.” But she worries that government and big business may disregard the ideals of the sharing economy, and ignore our collective responsibility for broader social welfare. She sees a much darker future potentially emerging. She is particularly concerned about the impact of ballooning student loan debt on the economic future of “creative debtors.” Woolard believes that helping leaders understand the principles of a sharing economy will lead to a “more exciting world” where “you can walk outside of your house and know that other people are supported and sustained.”

Original article published on Techonomy.com.

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DISASTER CAPITALISM **BLOG**

An Economy We Want to Occupy

At a time when so many are so clear that the current system is not working—what might? Is it already happening?

By Laura Flanders

MARCH 21, 2012

Plans are afoot for a grand reawakening at Occupy Wall Street and with that comes a return to the main project. While confrontations with police have grabbed the media's eye (there was another big police bust-up this weekend), for many, the encampments have always been as much about possibility as they are about protest.

In that spirit, and in the spirit of the conversation begun here last month about a possible worker co-op at the old Republic Windows and Doors factory in Chicago, I'm posting the transcript of an interview I conducted last November with members of what was then a loosely defined group at Occupy Wall St who were studying "solidarity economics."

In part two of this interview, you'll hear from Mike Johnson of Solidarity NYC, who's been deeply involved in cooperative live and work projects in the city since the 1970s. Part one

features Jen Abrams and Caroline Woolard, co-founders of OurGoods.org, in a conversation about value, markets and surviving the money economy.

I want to hear from you. Post your comments and tales of alternative models you have been part of in the comments section below and keep your e-mails coming.

At a time when so many are so clear that the current system is not working—what might? Is it already happening? There's more information about OurGoods.org at their website and you don't have to be officially ordained as an "artist" to join it.

Let's start with some introductions:

I'm Jen Abrams, I'm a choreographer and a co-founder of [OurGoods .org](http://OurGoods.org). We are a barter network for creative people...

Which means what, exactly?

Caroline Woolard: Our Goods is a barter network for creative people that connects artists and designers and craftspeople and activists with each other so they can trade skills and spaces to get independent projects done.

What gave rise to OurGoods?

CW: We are all artists and designers as cofounders, and we've experienced forever that there's' no clear market value for what we do. Still, we want to continue to do it. We're motivated by something other than profit. What we do feels valuable to us as a community, so we've always gotten things done by trading with other people whose projects we value.

That reciprocal exchange feels satisfying; it also helps to get the project done, and we thought—why not make a larger network so more of us can connect across disciplines?

JA: Put another way, the market value (within the capitalist valuation system) for what we do is very low, but the market value for what we do within our circles, within the circles of people who appreciate art, is very different...

CW: it's an alternative market.

How do you demonstrate value?

JA: In my case, people come see the work and most times they'll have a lot to say afterwards, about their experience. They'll have had thoughts, their own sense of their humanity, their connection to others may have changed; their perceptions may have been shifted in a particular way. All those are innate goods in the human experience, yet they are externalities in the capitalist market system. They are things that must happen for us to be fully human, but there isn't a money market for these experiences. So [our question was] how can we create other kinds of valuation systems that support those things happening?

But many people would say there is a functioning market system for art. Some painters, designers and dance companies are super-successful in the money market system.

JA: I'm not saying there is no way to value any art in market system. I'm saying that the majority of what gets done in the creative sphere does not fit well within the capitalist system.

CW: Another way of looking at it is capitalism is founded on a model of scarcity, and creative work happens in abundance. Everyone is creative. When there is a scarce amount of dollars out there, there will never be enough money for everyone, so in order to meet our needs as creative people and as humans, if you work in a mutual aid model, where everyone helps one another, then the question of value is more about how to support one another than self-interested accumulation.

How does OurGoods.org work, exactly. Say I arrive on your site, then what?

CW: You log in, make a profile, and you list your needs and what you have, and what sort of projects you're involved in. Then, people can search for what they need and find people who can fill those needs, as well as what projects they might have that you could help with. When two people have found a potentially good match, they have a conversation, and decide between them how to rate the exchange of labor.

JA: There's so much value that comes from that conversation. First of all, the fact that we're asking people to have a conversation about value is disruptive and valuable. You can tell it's disruptive because people are confused by it. They don't instinctively know how to have that conversation. It's a skill we don't have but one we need to nurture.

There are all sorts of possible metrics of exchange. One metric is hour per hour: right now I'm receiving an hour of yoga lessons in exchange for an hour of business plan consulting.... Other exchanges are less obvious: an object for a skill, say, or exchanges that involve people with more or

less experience. Sometimes it makes sense to use money value—how much am I paid for what I do/how much are you paid—but without the money.

CW: What's important is there is no answer. There's no clear way to value people's labor. It's subjective and that's the main thing. We step back and say as long as the framework is mutual respect, then the conversation can come out any way. There's no right way in particular.

What constitutes a successful outcome. Want to share an OurGoods success story?

JA: In the case of an artist I admire, I may just want to help him—and that's my end of the exchange. I get the experience. He gets the help. We're asking people to engage with each other and with uncertainty and see how it changes their lives.

The fact that we're having these conversations at all is a successful outcome. A lot of projects are getting done, some shifts are happening in people's creative process, and then there are people who've gotten very practical things exchanged: video shooting in exchange for a website for a documentary maker, etc.

Gaia [an online think tank soliciting "third world" ideas for "first world" development] needed translators, but through the barter process, he ended up with collaborators who helped him spread his project to new countries.

It doesn't have to be transactional, it can blur towards collaboration, gift giving or sharing. The bottom line is mutual aid, not self-interest.

JA: we're not trying to say that people don't have self interest. They do, but there are other motivations too, and we see them in action all the time, every day. This isn't some story we're making up in our minds or wishing to be true—we see it. When you offer a tool for people to offer assistance and surface those other motivations... Wikipedia is one obvious example, but ours is a real [not virtual] interaction.

Has OurGoods changed you?

JA: I've changed everything. My life had been all about navigating scarcity.

But how do you survive, make a living, pay your bills?

JA: How do I survive is very different from how do I get money.

I survive because I'm part of WOW [a thirty-year-old women's theater collective in the East Village in New York]. If I weren't in community I would kill myself.

How do I get money? [Before OurGoods] I was working at small non-profits as an administrator. The groups I worked for operated on a shoestring, with never enough money to do what they needed to do, and I was deeply entrenched in poverty. Health insurance was eating up 20–25 percent of my income. Now I have it through my partner who works for Time Warner/AOL. How do I pay bills now? I've reduced my expenses through exchange, a grant supports me at OurGoods.org and my partner has a middle class job.

But you said everything had changed. The material conditions of your life don't seem to have changed much.

JA: My life has changed because if I want something I don't have the money to buy, I have a way of getting it without money. But it's really as an artist that the change is most profound. I've completely changed the way I work.

I used to make only the work that would fit within the very limited resources available. I couldn't make work bigger than space that WOW provided. I couldn't make work that called for skills that people at WOW weren't able to offer. I could only work when WOW was open.

Our Goods has busted all that open. My network is now ten times larger and includes people from very different backgrounds with very different perspectives and very different skills, and instead of being a sole creator I'm involved in all these huge collaborative pieces. My mindset has completely changed.

I'm now very exploratory because I'm not worrying about what kind of work I can make given the constraints that I have. (And my constraints at WOW were much less than what most artists are dealing with: they're mostly dealing what can I make in my living room. What can I do with the \$50 I have left over from my day job at the end of the week?)

The project I'm making now is massive in scale, with at least five other generative artists working on it—and that's just not a way that I could work before.

How long has OurGoods been around and was there a particular trigger for its beginning?

CW: The economic crisis led to a personal crisis...

JA: I'd been working on being presented at a particular venue for five years—and in 2008 they were finally interested in presenting me. And then the bottom fell out of market and the venue backed off my project. I thought, damn, I'm back to self-producing and everyone is back to self-producing—how is this going to work?

How old are you?

CW: I'm 27.

JA: I'm 40.

Caroline—your story?

CW: For years, I'd done everything I could to stay out of the money economy because I find it makes me really depressed to work a job that doesn't value my whole self. So I've done everything I can to reduce my needs, reduce my expenses, cut my rent.

I've done all sorts of things to not have rent be my main expense. I lived in backyard sheds that I retrofitted in Greepoint.... Then I started living with a bunch of artists and built out a huge studio space. In 2008 we signed a five-year lease and made a commitment to each other, the place, New York, and just at that moment, I realized we could do things on a scale together that were impossible for me alone in a little shack trying to do all these small things. In the middle of the economic crash, we can buy our food in bulk and it's really inexpensive.

For money, I was working at Cooper Union as a studio technician in the night shift. It gave me some benefits and paid pretty well, but slowly OurGoods has been able to pay me more out of grants, and most importantly— everything through the exchange is lower, and rent is cheaper because of the collective living space.

I'm now working for OurGoods more or less full time and I'm teaching a class on barter at the New School—and they pay me for it. [Jen points out that nonetheless, Caroline doesn't have health insurance.] That's right, but still, it's a very strange turn-around.

What happened?

CW: Ever since running a studio space with a group and trying to be transparent and explain why some people pay more rent than others based on how much labor they put in to it, I've been wracking my brain about the ethics of payment and what could be fair, given our current reality. In the studio and at OurGoods, the question became: *How do we figure out what's fair?*

I was trying to learn about alternative systems that exists—and that led me to solidarity NYC and I started getting really excited about the idea that there are lots of people who meet their needs and have livelihoods that are completely outside of the economic system, or have the economic money mapped onto them, but the abundance of the economy they exist in is huge in contrast to that system and not clearly related to it. That led me to Solidarity NYC and a whole circle of people who value each other not the individual scarcity/accumulation thing.

In part two: Meet Mike Johnson, SolidarityNYC and find out what Occupy has to do with any of this.



LAURA FLANDERS Contributing writer Laura Flanders is the host and founder of *The Laura Flanders Show*.

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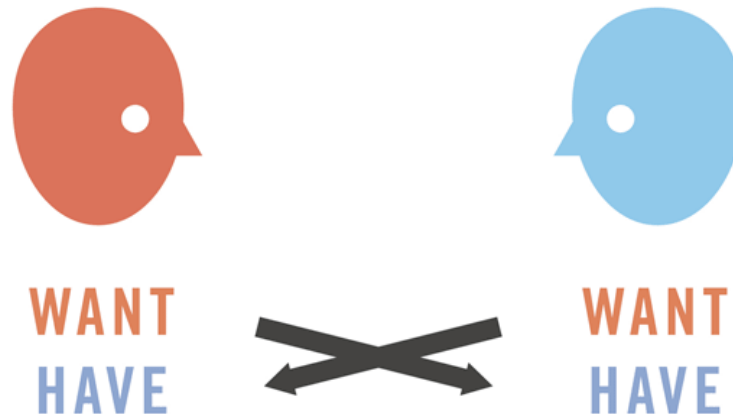
JAN 20, 2010 –

Interview with Caroline Woolard of OurGoods

BY JENNY JASKEY

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Over the next four weeks, I will post a series of interviews with artists and organizers who are exploring new models for the relationship between art production and economy. Groupwork, non-competition, bartering, and sustainability are a few of the catchwords that surface when speaking about these community-based efforts. As a primer to these conversations, I highly recommend the new publication "Art Work: A National Conversation about Art, Labor, and Politics" produced by Temporary Services of Chicago. An online version of this collection of writings by scholars, critics, and artists is available online at <http://www.artandwork.us>. – Jenny Jaskey



I first learned of [OurGoods](#) from an advertisement in "Art Work: A National Conversation about Art, Labor, and Politics." Intrigued by their claim to provide an online infrastructure for artists to obtain goods and services without cash, I wrote to Caroline Woolard, a co-founder of the OurGoods project, to find out more. For those in the New York area, OurGoods will host "[Trade School](#)" in a storefront at 139 Norfolk Street in the Lower East Side from January 25th through March 1st.

What is OurGoods?

Caroline: OurGoods is an online barter network for artists, designers, and cultural producers to barter skills, spaces, and objects. Members of OurGoods organize creative projects with "haves" and "needs" and OurGoods matches barter partners, tracks accountability, and helps the business of independent, creative work. The site can be used to find collaborators, see emerging interests, or execute projects without cash. For example, I can help you write a grant if you make my costumes. OurGoods is a new model for valuing creative work. It fosters interdependence and strong working relationships. You will get your independent work done with mutual respect instead of cash.

What motivated you to get started?

Caroline: At one point, I wondered: Why can't I get my favorite band to play in my studio? Is cash the only way to pay for a labor of love? I didn't know the band members personally, but hoped we'd have a mutual understanding of the passion and respect that motivates labor. I wanted to work hard for them because I love their work. I want to support them directly, with my labor of love. We decided that they'd play if I gave the lead singer one of my [Work Dresses](#) and the guitarist a day of spackling and sanding help in his studio.

Creative thinker-makers often work for free, expanding the public imagination while trafficking in a murky labor-value exchange. Rather than complain about limited funding and access to resources, OurGoods shows that we already have a lot as a creative community. What happens if we have the agency to decide what our objects and skills are worth? Let's find out.

The OurGoods community offers more than cash funding offers artists. It helps us honor and value our work. It draws the creative community together into mutually supportive relationships. It is a locus of generosity and a hub of collaboration. OurGoods makes passion productive. It replaces the zero-sum funding game with a game of "the more you get, the more I get."



Display of "Work Dress" - an item up for barter through OurGoods - in Providence Art Windows

Who is behind the project?

Caroline: The group behind OurGoods is: Jen Abrams, Louise Ma, Carl Tashian, Rich Watts, and Caroline Woolard. OurGoods will work because our computer programmer, Carl Tashian, was the senior site engineer at Zip Car for the first five years, answering phone calls in bed until the site made resource sharing ubiquitous; because the person cultivating support for OurGoods (Jen Abrams) has self-produced shows in a collectively run, sweat-equity theater space for a decade; because two of the best designers in NYC (Rich Watts and Louise Ma) have donated hundreds of hours to user interface design and architecture; and because I won't stop until OurGoods is great.

How is OurGoods funded? Do you utilize the bartering system to fund the site itself?

Caroline: OurGoods received \$15,000 through The Field's Economic Revitalization for Performing Artists grant and \$1,500 from the Brooklyn Arts Council for outreach. With five co-founders working on OurGoods for a over year, however, most of the OurGoods labor is not remunerated in cash. We will benefit from using OurGoods, but as an infrastructure for mutualism, it is an act for the commons, so we need to barter with the commons. This is an ongoing dilemma for us and many open source people. How do we support public works today?



could pay individuals who work for OurGoods, but the point system cannot exist without a robust network and a communal acknowledgement of the site's value. Just as our national currency only works because we all agree to use it, we cannot implement a point system until a community of trust is established.

Who do you hope will use OurGoods?

Caroline: Anyone with art, design, or craft projects (so called "cultural producers").

What are your thoughts on the virtual context of your service? Is something lost by not bartering with others in a physical and known community?

Caroline: The virtual component of OurGoods is necessary because artists and designers comprise a transient community, always on the move. In some ways, OurGoods.org is simply a directory of available creative people ready to connect in real space to share skills and head towards a barter negotiation. In-person meetings are incredibly important. This is why we will have a storefront for the next month in the Lower East Side. We are also looking for a long term space.

Can you tell us more about your plans for the storefront? Any special programs or events we should look out for?

Caroline: From January 25th to March 1st, the OurGoods group is running a storefront at 139 Norfolk Street in the Lower East Side. This space is called Trade School and will help OurGoods members get to know each other while sharing resources: the space is for co-working by day and sharing skills by night. Find out more at GoPublicProjects.com or OurGoods.org.

INFO: Trade School

By Day: A Shop

Drop in to barter with artists, designers, and craftspeople on a range of products and services. Peruse the trading board for things you want, and leave a contact card for things you have to offer. Skilled staff will help you make connections.

By Night: A School

Take a class with a range of specialized teachers in exchange for basic items and services. Secure a spot in a Trade School class by meeting one of the teacher's barter needs. For example, grant writer Caroline Woolard is looking for local produce from the farmers market. Agree to bring her a dozen crisp apples, and you're in.

DAILY

11-3: Co-working for TradeSchool teachers

3-6: Barter Agents Available

6-9: TradeSchool



How can we get involved in OurGoods? When do you launch?

Caroline: Sign up to be part of the public launch at www.OurGoods.org. We will launch to the public in the Spring!

What are some books or articles that have influenced your thinking about new economic models?

Caroline: *Creating and Understanding Alternatives to Legal Tender* by Thomas Grecco, *The Gift* by Lewis Hyde, *Slow Money* by Woody Tasch, excerpts from *The International Journal of Community Currency Research*, and *Predictably Irrational* by Dan Ariely.

Jenny Jaskey is Rhizome's Curatorial Fellow

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COMMENTS

[Michael](#) Jan. 20 2010 13:13

www.OurGoods.org is not online yet.

How do I submit my project?

[Heather Dewey-Hagborg](#) Jan. 20 2010 15:57

The last link to OurGoods.org is broken

[Justin](#) Jan. 20 2010 16:32

It's really great to see such a timely conversation about this. I'm anxiously looking forward to the next installment in your series, Jenny. And thanks for the reminder about checking out Art Work ...

The New York Times

A Trade School Where Ideas Are Currency

By **Emily S. Rueb** February 23, 2010 5:07 pm

On Sunday evening, 16 people gathered in a cramped Lower East Side storefront for a class on making irrational decisions. One woman was between jobs and apartments and wanted help thinking things through; the artist sitting next to her wanted to shut off the part of her brain that impedes creative thinking. No money changed hands. Instead, the teacher asked everyone to “pay” for the class by bringing ideas — an example of a good decision made in the last two weeks, and one made in the last five years.

The organizers of this place call it a Trade School, but they’ve turned the “trade” into a verb. It’s a month-long experiment in bartering services and ideas where teachers, D.I.Y. buffs, Maker Faire entrepreneurs, even high school students sign up for classes ranging from the concrete (crocheting and portrait photography) to the abstract (daydreaming and the foundations of ghost hunting).

In return for their services, teachers have received a trombone serenade, a block of cheese, a pair of socks or even Tootsie Rolls, as payment. So far, more than 800 people have matriculated.

The school is inside a 350-square-foot space on Norfolk Street that was once a barber shop that also dealt drugs. The place is furnished with recycled objects from the paint-bucket stools on up (and down), a testament to the mission of the organizers, a group known as OurGoods, a bartering network for artists that was, until January, only online.

At another class on Sunday, “Business for Artists,” the teacher, Amy Whitaker, asked for travel recommendations or a pie-in-the-sky idea: What would you do if money were no object? In the past, she’s asked for Facebook and Twitter tutorials, vegetarian recipes and band recommendations.

“The barter just feels like good will, like kindness and thoughtfulness the way a gift does,” she said. “It’s the inverse of how weird it would be if a friend invited you over for dinner and then asked you to chip in money afterward.”

Jeremy Fisher, a former investment banker who has taken five classes and hopes to start a Web site that aggregates restaurant reviews, sees it as an opportunity to network.

“Once you’re working there aren’t as many opportunities to connect with people,” he said. He said he liked the feeling of paying with something other than filthy lucre. “I would not have paid \$15 for a class,” he said. “But I would have gone out of my way to get a nice bottle of Belgian beer, if that’s what was asked for. I am willing to pay more because of the perceived value of what I’m getting.”

Caroline Woolard, a Jill-of-many-trades who co-founded OurGoods, said the venture was about creating a new model for completing creative projects with mutual respect instead of cash. She said she hoped it would be a model for artists, performers and other “cultural producers” to find others with the resources they need to complete their projects. Eventually, the group hopes to serve the more general population, as sites like BarterQuest, Itext.com and even Craigslist have done.

For now, the five members of OurGoods are operating without a budget, donating their hours and resources. Even the physical space was gained through bartering services with the design firm GrandOpening. Funding has come from the Brooklyn Arts Council and The Field’s Economic Revitalization for Performing Artists.

What’s next for OurGoods? There’s a class for that. On Monday, March 1, from 7 to 9 p.m., all are welcome to exchange ideas in a forum.

New York on Less is a weekly City Room feature about coping with the recession. For more coverage on the human side of the recession, visit the Living With Less guide, where readers can share their photos, moods, and tips for weathering the economic downturn.

Comments are no longer being accepted.

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Will Teach for Goods: An Experiment in Bartering

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Queue



Mar 7, 2010 · by **Brigid Bergin**

New York, NY — Last month a Trade School popped up on the Lower East Side offering classes on subjects like composting, portraiture, and one class titled “Demystifying Caviar.” The subjects are not the only thing that's different about this school. There is also no tuition. That's where the “trade” part comes in.

Trade School <<http://tradeschool.ourgoods.org/>> barterers, rather than charging a fee for classes. Teachers post what they want on a Web site and students agree to bring those items when they register for a class. ([Click here <http://ourgoods.org/howitworks>](http://ourgoods.org/howitworks) for a primer on how bartering works.)

For 35 days, more than 800 people crammed into a narrow storefront on the Lower East Side for classes at Trade School. The temporary space was more like a glorified hallway with a chalkboard on one side, coat hangers on the other, and modified buckets that were turned into tiny benches. Here, people traded skills and knowledge, but money never changed hands.

One student, Michelle Chu, an unemployed graphic artist, went to Trade School to learn how to build her own Web site. She signed up for a class on Web design and a few others.

"I came on Friday for a beginning piano and song-writers class. That was my first class, and it was excellent. It was very informative, and I happened to stay for the next class, which was 'Foundations in Ghost Hunting,'" Chu says.

"For the Web design class, I brought spices. There was a whole list of things, like fancy cheese, fruits and vegetables, herbs and spices. For the next class I'm signed up for I brought a mix CD," Chu says.

Trade School is an experiment, but, the founder of Trade School, Caroline Woolard, says it's not a new concept. "Artists have done this forever to get their work done. This is just a way to expand the number of people that you could interact with," Woolard says.

"What I am more interested in right now is finding a network of people who are open to sharing their skills and slowing down to have a conversation about how we could work together," she says.

Woolard and a group of four other young artists applied for a grant from an organization called **The Field** <<http://www.thefield.org/default.aspx>> , which helps artists come up with sustainable economic models. Their original plan was to build a Web site that matches people based on what they can offer and what they need. And while they were working on that they had the idea for Trade School.

Alex Mallis, 25, is a documentary film maker and took a class on composting. He was so excited by Trade School that he immediately offered to teach a class on photography called "Death to Auto: Maximize the Manual Mode On Your SLR."

In exchange, Mallis asked for an assortment of items.

"I made sort of a strange list. I asked for Legos, socks, sharp cheddar cheese, '90s hip-hop 12-inch records, and general ephemera," he says.

He didn't get exactly what he asked for. "I walked away with exclusively sharp cheddar cheese. Everybody brought cheese. I was really hoping for Legos, I was really hoping for socks, records,

general ephemera would have been cool, but no. Nothing but cheese," he says.

While bartering works within this group, it doesn't solve people's larger financial issues. Trade School organizer Woolard still needs to pay her bills.

"We have to work day jobs in order to pay for this project because I still can't barter with my landlord," she says.

But Woolard and her group are determined to figure out a way to make bartering work, for the sake of their art and the community they've created.

The first Trade School finished March 3, and this month Woolard says they plan to reflect on what worked and what did not. Next on the list: finish their bartering Web site and plan Trade School 2. The site launches this summer.

For more on Trade School, visit the [WNYC News Blog](http://www.wnyc.org/news/articles/151305) [<http://www.wnyc.org/news/articles/151305>](http://www.wnyc.org/news/articles/151305).

Queue

GOINGS ON
ABOUT TOWN

EXPLORE

ART OCTOBER 20, 2014

LOCAL HEROES

The Brooklyn Museum surveys recent art from the borough.

By Peter Schjeldahl

*The artist Shaun Leonardo stages dance-hall events that toy with tradition: women pay men for a spin around the floor.*

GOINGS ON
ABOUT TOWN

EXPLORE

York City shifted, and Manhattan became a suburb of Brooklyn. A show at the Brooklyn Museum of works by thirty-five local artists and collectives, “Crossing Brooklyn: Art from Bushwick, Bed-Stuy, and Beyond,” expatiates on a situation already patent in the borough’s galleries and hangouts, notably those in Bushwick—a funky Montparnasse four L-train stops past the tamed Montmartre of Williamsburg. If you are young and a New York artist lacking a trust fund today, you are pretty surely in Brooklyn, and Brooklyn is imbuing you.

The show’s curators, Eugenie Tsai and Rujeko Hockley, shun the abstract painting and portable sculpture that pervade the borough’s gallery scene. Properly, for a museum, they promote institution-dependent installation, performance, and conceptual work, including the “community practice” that tends to occur when artists live within walking distance of poor people. Demotic touches include an alluringly swanked-up tricycle for vending shaved-ice treats, which Miguel Luciano pedals around. Pablo Helguera, of Red Hook, has made a lovely parlor space and decorated it with art works from the museum’s collection, all dated 1899—the year that Susannah Mushatt Jones, a Brooklyn supercentenarian, was born. In a related vein, Shaun Leonardo, of Clinton Hill, contributes photographs of “Taxi Dance,” his colorful reënactment of a ten-cents-a-dance hall, with the price hiked up to two dollars and paid by women to men.

Particularly memorable are the adventurers. The Red Hook-based Duke Riley raised homing pigeons in Key West (the ramshackle coop is here, with live birds in it), took them to Cuba, and fitted them with either contraband cigars or tiny video cameras. Most made it back. The bird’s-eye videos of cities and sea, with wing-flap sounds, flabbergast. Videos by William Lamson, of Boerum Hill, demonstrate an apparatus that lets him appear to stand on the water of a rustic river.

The show suffers a bit from an air of the art-school thesis project, typifying a time when competition for notice among tyro artists, setting in too early, abets reliance on received ideas and styles. The collective BFAMFAPHD (the initials of academic degrees) spreads a homeopathic wet blanket on the show’s high spirits with statistical documentation of the hard lots of current graduates—the staggering number of artists,

GOINGS ON
ABOUT TOWN

EXPLORE

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GOINGS ON IN ART

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Through Jan. 2.

Charlotte Brontë: An Independent Will

Morgan Library & Museum
Midtown

Through Nov. 16.

Tetsumi Kudo

Rosen
Chelsea

Through Dec. 22.

Ree Morton

Alexander and Bonin
Downtown

Through Nov. 5.

Evan Whale

321 Gallery
Brooklyn



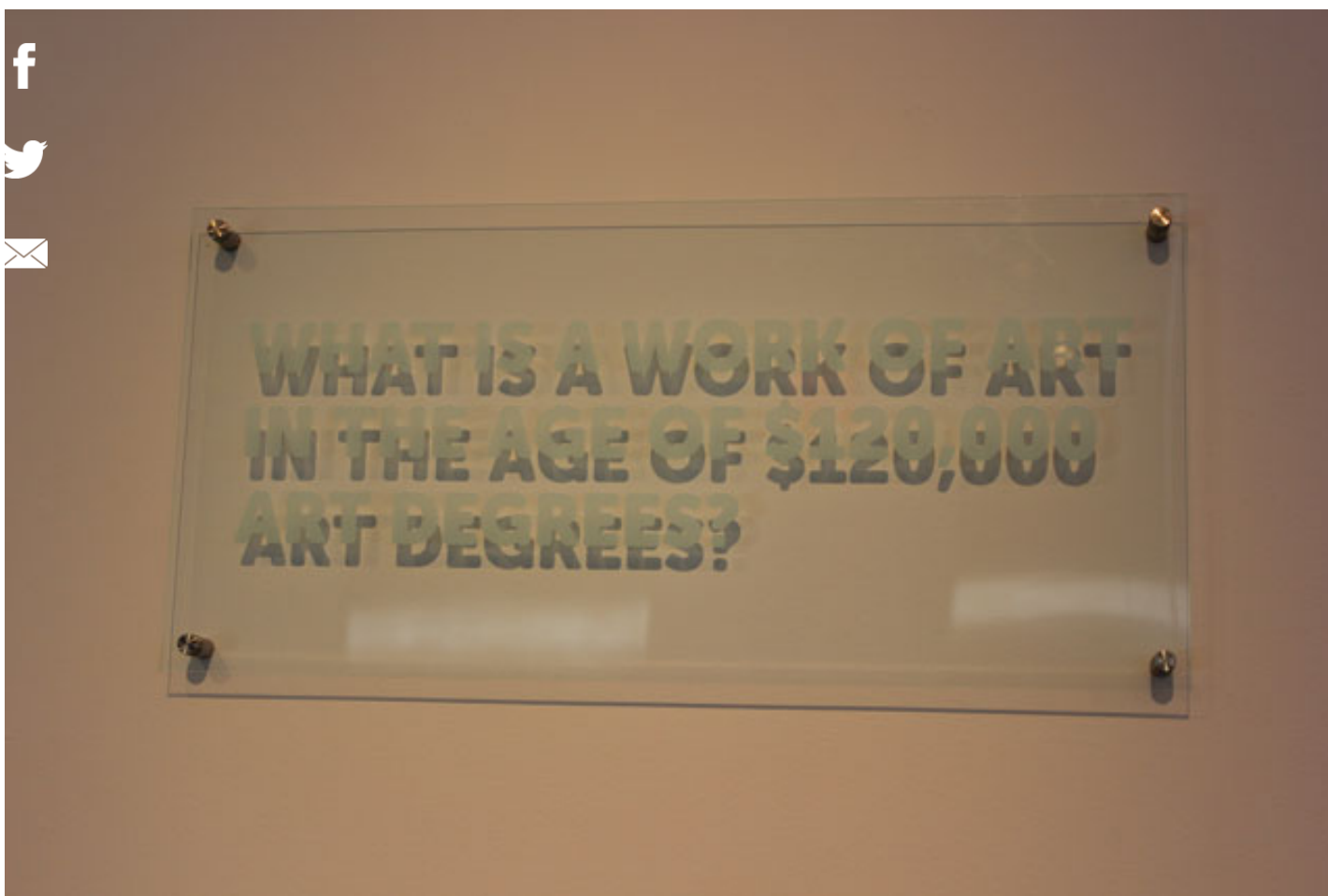
HYPERALLERGIC

ARTICLES

Report Finds NYC's Art World 200% Whiter Than Its Population [UPDATED]

Jillian Steinhauer | June 30, 2014

13k
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Caroline Woolard, 'Statements,' ongoing series of etched office plaques, on view in 'NYC Makers' (photo courtesy the Museum of Arts and Design)

With the [Whitney Biennial](#), the [withdrawal of the Yams Collective](#), and [questions of race](#) fresh in our minds, the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) opens its new biennial, [NYC Makers](#), tomorrow. Included is a project that offers another stark reminder of the

imbalanced demographics of the art world: [Census Report](#), produced by the collective [BFAMFAPhD](#). Consider this, undoubtedly their most striking finding: New York City's formally educated arts world (in this case defined roughly as working artists and those with arts degrees) appears to be 200% whiter than its general population.



Installation view of BFAMFAPhD's work in 'NYC Makers,' with Lika Volkova's "Disclaim Bolt N.14.6" in the foreground (photo courtesy the Museum of Arts and Design) (click to enlarge)

Organized by artists Susan Jahoda and Caroline Woolard and curator Blair Murphy, BFAMFAPhD (BFA, MFA, and PhD mashed together) is a group of people ("[artists, designers, makers, technologists, curators, architects, educators, and analysts](#)") examining debt, rent, and other financial pressures in the lives of artists and creators, with a particular focus on the increasing professionalization of artistry and accordant student debt. In the lead-up to the *NYC Makers* show, BFAMFAPhD members Vicky Virgin (an interdisciplinary artist and demographic analyst) and Julian Boilen (a creative technologist) have drawn on the US Census Bureau's 2010–2012 [American](#)

[Community Survey](#) to create their own Census Report that looks specifically at the demographics and lives of artists in New York City (available [online](#) and on view on an iPad at MAD).

In the [introductory text](#) on their website (written by Woolard, Murphy, and Jahoda), BFAMFAPhD offers a series of statistics that may stun even the most politically minded art-worlders. Importantly, however, they draw not just on race or ethnicity alone, but on the two combined — a categorization that's termed “mutually exclusive race and ethnicity,” Virgin explained to Hyperallergic.

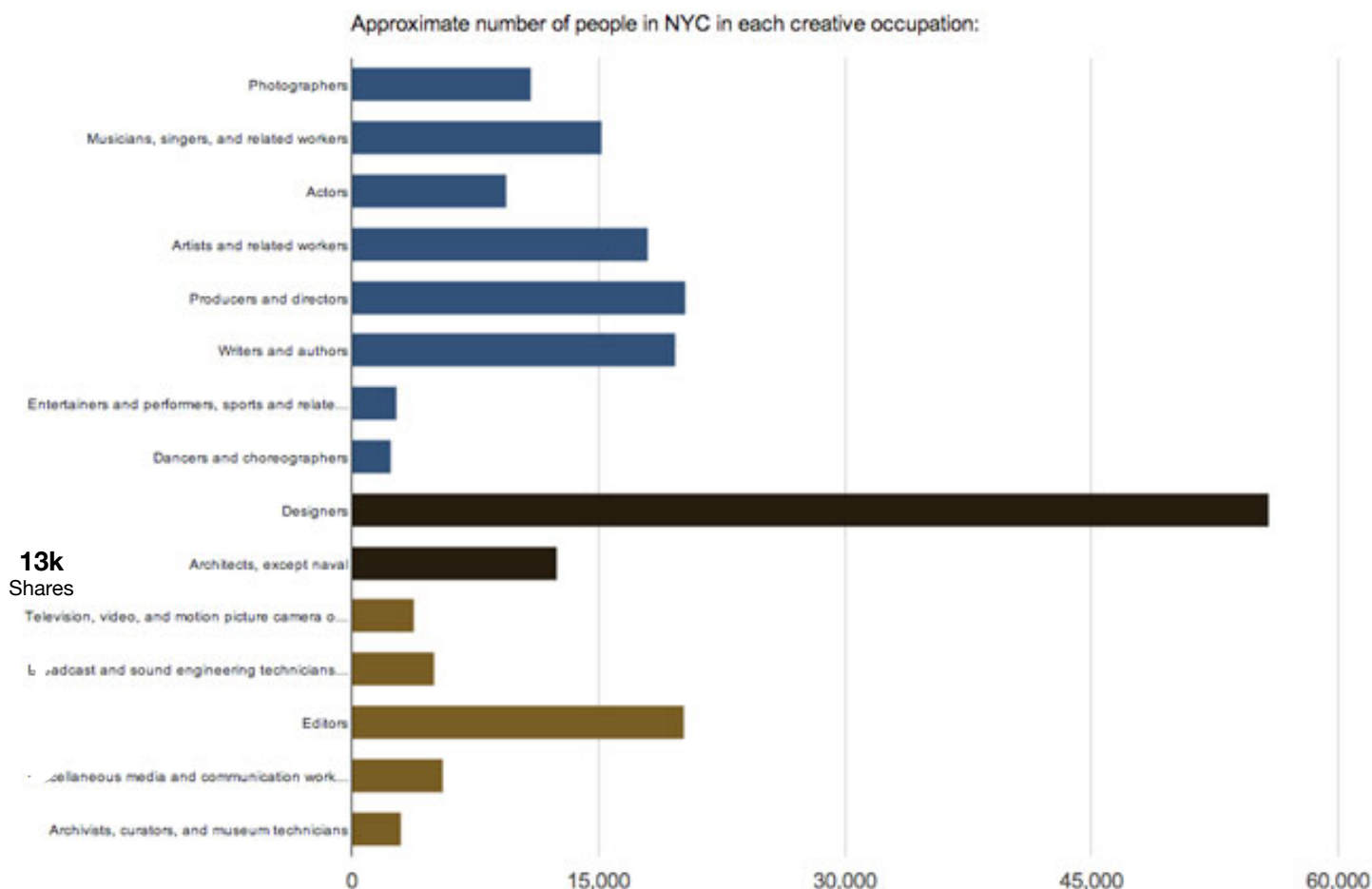
- 13k**
Shares
- New York City's population is 33% white non-Hispanic, but 74% of people in the city with arts degrees are white non-Hispanic and 74% of people who make a living as artists are white non-Hispanic.
 - New York City's population is 23% black non-Hispanic, but only 6% of people in the city with arts degrees are black non-Hispanic, and only 7% of people who make a living as artists are black non-Hispanic.
 - New York City's population is 29% Hispanic (of any race), but only 8% of people in the city with arts degrees are Hispanic, and only 10% of people who make a living as artists are hispanic.
 - New York City's population is 13% Asian non-Hispanic, but only 10% of people in the city with arts degrees are Asian non-Hispanic, and 8% of people who make a living as artists are Asian non-Hispanic.

To say, in light of this, that the art world has a [diversity problem](#) seems like a comical understatement.

They also include this gender-related figure, which aligns with what artist Micol Hebron told us about [MFA programs](#) earlier this year:

- “Of the people who identified their primary occupation as artist in the 2010-2012 American Community Survey in New York City, 55% were male, even though only 42% of people with art degrees are men.”

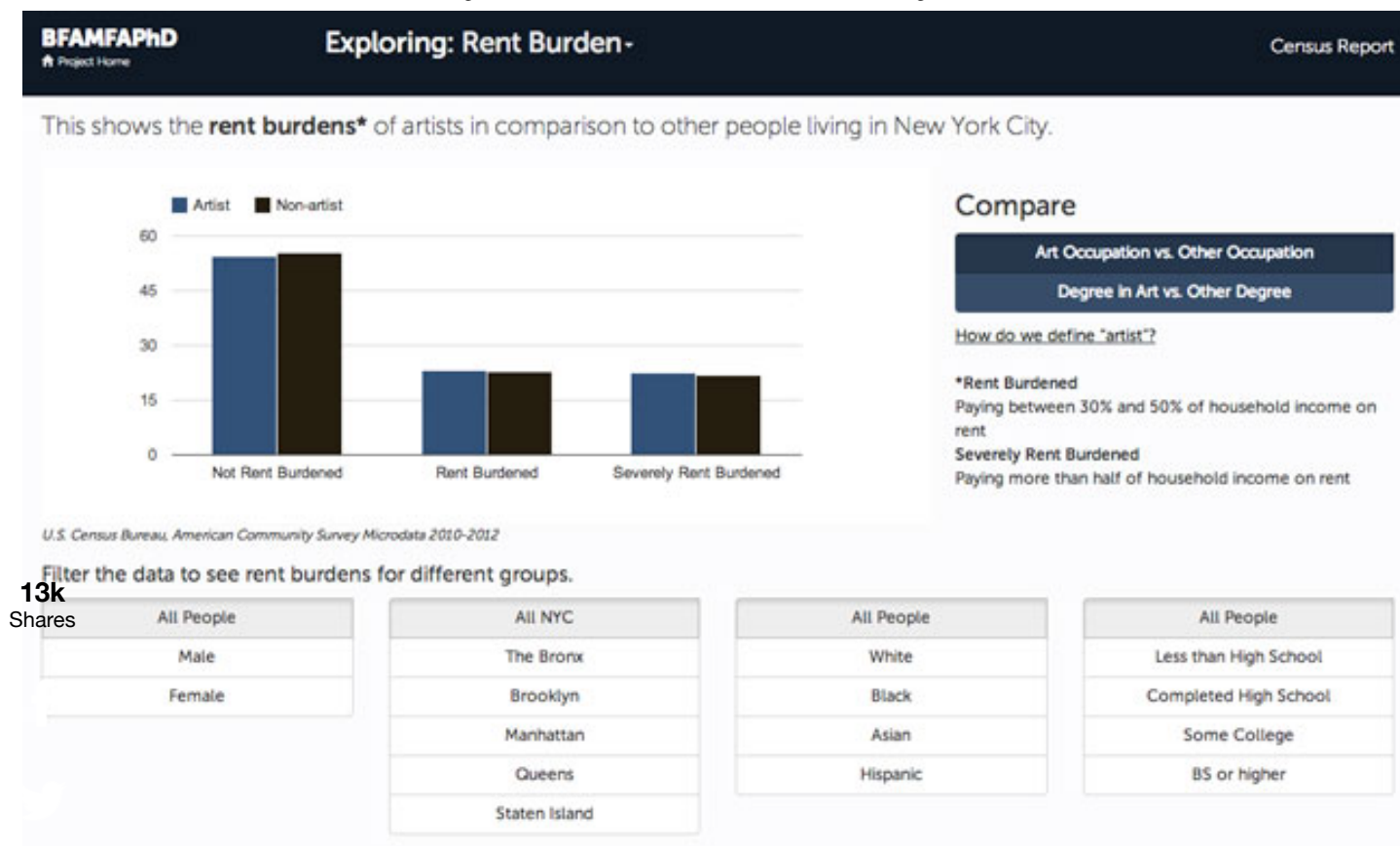
(For more on art degrees and gender, see Ann Chen's BFAMFAPhD data visualizations [here](#).)



(screenshot via censusreport.bfamfaphd.com)

From there, you can dig into the actual Census Report, which is both user-friendly and fascinating. In the section labeled “[Artist](#),” the group breaks down how they’ve defined artists for the purposes of the report: either by primary occupation or by bachelor’s degrees. The latter seems like a much iffier/less accurate indicator, but it does offer a glimpse of the much-discussed and lamented education bubble: there are 168,413 adults with art-related bachelor’s degrees (including Art History and Criticism) in New York City.

In two other sections of the report, “[Poverty Rates](#)” and “[Rent Burden](#),” you can explore how artists in the city compare to other inhabitants in these categories. On the whole, a much lower percentage of artists live in poverty than average NYC residents, and artists’ rent burden aligns fairly closely with everyone else’s. But the most interesting feature of these two sections is that you can filter the data by gender, borough, race, and education level to see how it plays out in different ways. Asian artists are more likely to be rent burdened than their non-artist peers, for instance, and whereas 14.1% of black male artists live in poverty, only 6.5% of white male artists do.



(screenshot via censusreport.bfamfaphd.com)

The final feature of the report is a sweeping chart that shows the kind of jobs NYC residents with arts degrees are working. Although somewhat difficult to read, the chart does offer telling moments — e.g. of all the people who reported having Studio Arts degrees, not a one of them makes a living as an artist (versus 22% of those with Music degrees). Overall, only 15% of those with arts degrees in NYC are making their living as artists, and NYC artists' median earnings are a depressingly meager \$25,000. To put that in perspective: it won't even pay for one year of art school.

BFAMFAPhD's Census Report is available online and on view as part of NYC Makers: The MAD Biennial, which opens at the Museum of Arts and Design (2 Columbus Circle, Manhattan) tomorrow, July 1.

Update, 7/1, 11:55am EDT: Some of the statistics originally reported in this article were mischaracterized based on incomplete data: all of the racial figures are based on mutually exclusive race and ethnicity categories, e.g. "white non-Hispanic" rather than simply "white." Additionally, the \$25,000 median amount earned by those making a

living as artists was mislabeled as income (money earned from all sources) rather than earnings (wages from a job), and misattributed only to those people with arts degrees, rather than all artists.

Virgin sent Hyperallergic this statement offering further explanation of her methodology as well as the limits of the report:

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The BFAMFAPhD Census Report is a compilation of data collected by the American Community Survey (ACS). This is an annual survey that is designed to sample one percent or about 3 million households in the U.S. The ACS collects detailed socio-economic data that was previously collected in the long form of the Decennial Census. So while timeliness is gained in the yearly data produced by the ACS, the sample size is smaller meaning that the issue of sampling error becomes more important.

For this study we use the Public-Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), a subset of the full ACS sample. In New York City, this translates into a robust sample of roughly 25,000 households providing data on such things as household composition, income, employment and occupation.

A myriad of issues arise when using these data to study artists. First and foremost is the definition of an artist. For this project we use two variables to identify this population: “occupation” defined as the primary occupation (secondary occupation is not collected in this survey) and “field of degree”, a relatively new variable asked of those who have a bachelor’s degree. The occupation variable identifies only persons who are “making a living” as an artists. Those with an art degree, the larger population, are persons who are working not only in artist occupations but also as teachers, waitresses, salespersons, etc.

For the record, this data project was overseen by Vicky Virgin, demographic analyst, dancer, and choreographer. In 1987 she moved to NYC to dance, supporting herself with the B.S. she had received in economics. In this study she would have been missed in both metrics – with a primary occupation as a demographic analyst and economics as the field of degree. In the meantime, she continues to live in NYC creating art and crunching numbers.

 **comments (9)**

The New York Times | <http://nyti.ms/1xnUw1H>

ART & DESIGN | ART REVIEW

Many Hands in Creative Frenzy

'NYC Makers: The MAD Biennial' Has About 100 Contributors

By ROBERTA SMITH JULY 3, 2014

The Museum of Arts and Design is plunging into the deep end of the biennial pool with a big, messy splash. Part swan dive, part belly-flop, its inaugural edition, "NYC Makers: The MAD Biennial," is an ambitious, inchoate, sometimes dissatisfying sampling of visual culture from across the five boroughs.

MAD is, of course, the acronym for the museum's latest name, adopted in 2002 after the institution spent decades as the American Craft Museum. With its move in 2008 to Columbus Circle from West 53rd Street in Manhattan, the letters seem intended to imply feverish innovation, but they also conjure "madcap" and a lack of seriousness. Far too much that goes on view in this museum qualifies as fun, cute, clutter-making or useless, and seems aimed at people with plenty of disposable income, homes to decorate and a yen for unusual items. "The MAD Biennial" is not enough of an exception to this, but it hasn't really had time to be. Its problems are signaled just inside the front door with the glittery party decorations of Confettisystem.

The biennial's first iteration was proposed in October by the museum's new director, Glenn Adamson, as he arrived from the Victoria and Albert Museum, in London, where he was director of research. The show represents 100 creative individuals, duos and collectives, whom it instructively calls "makers," to level the usual hierarchies among art, craft and design; high and low and beyond. Its egalitarian outlook is reflected in a selection process that began with 300 of New York's cultural movers and shakers, who nominated 400 makers. In the name of

transparency, the members of this committee on steroids — perhaps as close as New York gets to a People's Choice format — are listed in the catalog.

The nominees (who also might have been listed) were then winnowed down to 100 by a committee of 10 professionals from every borough, as well as Mr. Adamson; Lowery Stokes Sims, the museum's chief curator; and Jake Yuzna, its director of public programs and the show's chief architect. Mr. Yuzna then visited studios and consulted with the participants, over 80 percent of whom are showing at the museum for the first time. Many works were made especially for the show. Nearly everything in sight is by one of the exhibition's participants, including some of the pedestals, benches and lights. And, in the catalog, the usual director's introduction is printed on the opening endpapers, a nice touch that reflects both the tightness of space as well the desire to rethink things.

The selected artists span the generations, including éminences grises like Laurie Anderson and Meredith Monk, whose contributions feel obligatory, to Yoko Ono, still rocking and mildly pretentious at 81 with a music video that includes cameos by talents like Questlove, Ira Glass and Kim Gordon. Outstanding among the newbies are the imaginative tattoo artist Amanda Wachob and the fashion team of Eckhaus Latta, whose slouchy clothing designs, seen on video, operate somewhere between Comme des Garçons and Susan Cianciolo, while their models include elderly Chinese ladies doing qi gong and the designers' J. Crew-ready friends. For a sense of the actual garments, the museum's guards are all wearing a smart vest I wouldn't mind taking home.

Shoehorned boutique-style into two floors of galleries, with additional works throughout the building, the exhibition probably looks as good as it can. It is arranged according to big, sometimes amorphous themes — the studio, community gardens, performance and tools — and spans scores of mediums and hybrid mediums, including objects of art and design, sound art, neon signs, wallpaper, theatrical costumes and a nightclub interior that desperately needs revelers (although the plants are nice). And don't forget the artisanal candy, coffee, liquor and ax. Did I mention that a majority of the participants work in Brooklyn?

There are examples of new technologies, some of which seem slightly redundant, like Miriam Simun's tiaralike head piece intended to enhance smell while the wearer is eating. Others are tantalizingly futuristic, like Aisen Caro Chacin's "Echolocation Headphones": mini-radar screens that promise to enhance the wearer's spatial acuties.

And some participants seem as much doers as makers, most notably the Spectacle theater in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, an all-volunteer micro-cinema (think of DIY Cinémathèque Française) that screens rare films and is also an educational center. In addition, the collective BFAMFAPhD is shaping information, sifting through recent census data to reveal the racial (mostly white) breakdown of the many New Yorkers with art degrees. And one member, Lika Volkova, also turns discarded paintings into garments with striking results, going by two jackets here.

There are numerous artists, including some known for functional art. Paula Hayes is represented by three large, thriving terrariums, biomorphic in shape and made of handblown glass. The painter Marilyn Minter contributes wallpaper as shiny and glamorous as her Photo Realist canvases. Donald Moffett's gray painting combines art with obsessive craft: Its mysterious furred surface might be trying to tickle our eyeballs. And Hank Willis Thomas, who tends to be hit and miss, has a winner in a technologically advanced screen print, "And I Can't Run." Made with the Lower East Side Printshop, it is a diaphanous white-on-white image. But photograph it with your cellphone, and it registers shockingly in vivid black and white as an early-20th-century photograph of the public punishment of an African-American. This discreet presentation of a horrific image that also enacts the suppressed legacy of slavery is one of the show's most emotionally real moments.

The biennial also honors those who labor behind the scenes with, for example, a Roman Catholic bishop's choir dress by Marvin Goldman of Duffy and Quinn/

Craft Robe Company, and the wonderfully textured approximations of armor worn by dancers in the Cincinnati Ballet's recent production of "King Arthur's Camelot," designed by Sandra Woodall and made by Sally Ann Parsons of Parsons-Meares. A custom museum crate by Boxart is a work of art in itself. (It was built to transport a table/sculpture by Wendell Castle in the museum's collection.)

One reason for the term “makers” is that there is so much multitasking, but the results are not equally good. Too many participants here are not thinking critically enough about innovation or purpose. Constantin Boym and Laurene Leon Boym, the married founders of **Boym Partners**, are represented by small bonded-metal monuments to a century of American disasters (the Triangle Waist Company fire, President Kennedy’s assassination, Sept. 11). The pair would have been better served by their stainless-steel flatware, reproduced in the show’s catalog, than by these Conceptual Art knickknacks. And some hybrids are simply neither here nor there, notably “Moonmilk,” by Chen Chen & Kai Williams, a large vase made from delicate pours of pigmented concrete left over from making planters. Generic as art and as design, it is basically a conversation piece.

Exceptions to the show’s superficiality include Charles Goldman’s “RE>CRETE>BLKS,” recycled building material made mostly from plastic trash, and Misha Kahn and Anne Libby’s painterly paving stones of concrete and pigment. Most impressive, however, is a prototype for the PowerClip, an unfolding device akin to an enlarged jackknife that enables small electronic devices (six at time) to be run off car batteries. Designed by Robin Reid, Surya Mattu, Phil Groman and Federico Zannier, it is strikingly plain (one red section, one black), a relief from the prevailing froufrou. It could actually save lives.

This exhibition, which will be accompanied by a full retinue of performances and workshops, gives the Museum of Arts and Design an expanded reach and vitality. It is well worth seeing, even if you mostly argue your way through it. But not enough here contributes to a principle increasingly elusive in this country: the greater good. Too often, its contents look distressingly appropriate for a city with a shrinking middle class, whose architectural fabric is being ruined by a flood of new condos for rich people who don’t actually live here. It would be great not to condone this particular madness.

“NYC Makers: The MAD Biennial” runs through Oct. 12 at the Museum of Arts and Design, 2 Columbus Circle; 212-299-7777, madmuseum.org.

A version of this review appears in print on July 4, 2014, on page C15 of the New York edition with the headline: Many Hands in Creative Frenzy.

ART & DESIGN

Outside the Citadel, Social Practice Art Is Intended to Nurture

By RANDY KENNEDY MARCH 20, 2013

In Detroit a contemporary-art museum is completing a monument to an influential artist that will not feature his work but will instead provide food, haircuts, education programs and other social services to the general public.

In New York an art organization that commissions public installations has been dispatching a journalist to politically precarious places around the world where she enlists artists and activists — often one and the same — to write for a Web site that can read more like a policy journal than an art portal. And in St. Louis an art institution known primarily for its monumental Richard Serra sculpture is turning itself into a hub of social activism, recently organizing a town-hall meeting where 350 people crowded in to talk about de facto segregation, one of the city's most intractable problems.

If none of these projects sound much like art — or the art you are used to seeing in museums — that is precisely the point. As the commercial art world in America rides a boom unlike any it has ever experienced, another kind of art world growing rapidly in its shadows is beginning to assert itself. And art institutions around the country are grappling with how to bring it within museum walls and make the case that it can be appreciated along with paintings, sculpture and other more tangible works.

Known primarily as social practice, its practitioners freely blur the lines among object making, performance, political activism, community organizing,

environmentalism and investigative journalism, creating a deeply participatory art that often flourishes outside the gallery and museum system. And in so doing, they push an old question — “Why is it art?” — as close to the breaking point as contemporary art ever has.

Leading museums have largely ignored it. But many smaller art institutions see it as a new frontier for a movement whose roots stretch back to the 1960s but has picked up fervor through Occupy Wall Street and the rise of social activism among young artists.

“Say what you will, this stuff is happening, and you might want to put your head in the sand and say, ‘I wish it was 40 years ago and it was different and art was more straightforward,’ but it’s not,” said Nato Thompson, the chief curator of Creative Time, a New York nonprofit that is known mostly for temporary public art installations but has been delving deeply into the movement.

Works can be as wildly varied as a community development project in Houston that provides both artists’ studios and low-income housing, summer camps and workshops for teenagers run by an artist collective near Los Angeles or a program in San Francisco founded by artists and financed by the city that helps turn yards, vacant lots and rooftops into organic gardens.

Art of this kind has thrived for decades outside the United States, mostly in Europe and South America, but has recently caught fire with a new generation of American artists in what is partly a reaction to the art market’s distorting power, fueled by a concentration of international wealth. Many artists, however, say the motivation is much broader: to make a difference in the world that is more than aesthetic.

“The boundary lines about how art is being made are becoming much blurrier,” said Laura Raicovich, who was hired last year by Creative Time as its director of global initiatives and to run a Web site called Creative Time Reports.

The site’s recent pieces include a video by an Egyptian-Lebanese artist about Tahrir Square, the locus of the Egyptian uprising two years ago, and a short film

about family debt in America made by a self-described “debt resistance” art collective with roots in the Occupy Wall Street movement.

“We’re not trying to do what journalism does,” Ms. Raicovich said. “But we think artists can supplement and complement it through a different lens. And what they’re doing is art.”

Social-practice programs are popping up in academia and seem to thrive in the interdisciplinary world of the campus. (The first dedicated master of fine arts program in the field was founded in 2005 at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco, and today there are more than half a dozen.) But for art institutions the problems are trickier: How can you present art that is rarely conceived with a museum or exhibition in mind, for example community projects, often run by collaboratives, that might go on for years, inviting participation more than traditional art appreciation?

At the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts, a private institution founded by the collector and philanthropist Emily Rauh Pulitzer that opened in St. Louis in 2001, the staff for many years included two full-time social workers who helped former prison inmates and homeless veterans as part of the curatorial program. And in December the foundation, responding to a 2012 BBC report about racial and economic disparities in St. Louis, held a town-hall meeting on the issue. The goal was to open a dialogue with people who live near the institution, which sits near a stark north-south divide between mostly white and African-American neighborhoods.

“We hoped maybe 100 people would show up, and more than 350 did,” said Kristina Van Dyke, the foundation’s director, who collaborated with the Missouri History Museum in organizing the event. As the foundation approached its 10th anniversary, she said, “we wanted to start envisioning art more broadly, as a place where ideas can happen and action might be able to take place.”

“The question became: Could we effect social change through art, plain and simple?” she said, adding that the foundation is now exploring ways to orient its programming toward design projects that would help the poor, for example. “To me art is elastic. It can respond to many different demands made on it. At the same time

I have to say that I don't believe all institutions have to do these kinds of things, or should."

Some in the art world feel that all institutions (and artists) should resist the urge completely. Maureen Mullarkey, a New York painter, wrote on her blog, *Studio Matters*, that such work only confirmed her belief "that art is increasingly not about art at all." Instead, she argued, it is "fast becoming a variant of community organizing by soi-disant promoters of their own notions of the common good."

But many institutions, especially those in cities and neighborhoods with pressing social problems, see the need to extend their reach.

The Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, for example, is constructing a final work by the artist Mike Kelley, who committed suicide last year, that will function as a kind of perpetual social-practice experiment. Although Kelley was never identified with the movement, he specified before his death that the work, "Mobile Homestead" — a faithful re-creation of his childhood ranch-style home that will sit in a once-vacant lot behind the museum — should not be an art location in any traditional sense but a small social-services site, with possible additional roles as space for music and the museum's education programs. Whether visitors will understand that the house is a work of art and a continuing performance is an open question. Smaller institutions like the Hammer Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and the Queens Museum of Art, which is acknowledged as a pioneer of social-practice programming, have also begun bringing the movement into the spotlight. (Tania Bruguera, a New York artist who is known for helping immigrants and has been supported by the Queens Museum and Creative Time, sometimes explains social-practice art with an anti-Modernist call to arms: "It's time to restore Marcel Duchamp's urinal to the bathroom.")

Still, the political nature of the movement propels it into territory that is unfamiliar to many artists and art institutions. Last year, for example, a group of artists boycotted a summit meeting that has been held annually by Creative Time since 2009, saying they objected to the participation of a digital art center supported

by the Israeli government. (Creative Time later made clear that the meeting received no funds from the organization or the Israeli government.)

Mr. Thompson of Creative Time said that many of the most dedicated social-practice artists see a huge divide between themselves and the commercial art world. “There are artists who don’t want to be the entertainment,” he said. “During a crisis of vast inequity they don’t want to be the sideshow, off to the side juggling.”

Caroline Woolard, a 29-year-old Brooklyn artist whose projects include collaborating on temporary “trade schools” where classes are paid for through bartering, said she became a social-practice artist not because she objected to the commercial or institutional art sectors but because she felt that the art world was too isolated.

“It was the realization that the types of people who went to cultural institutions — museums or galleries — were such a small section of any possible public for the kind of work I was interested in,” she said. She added, though, that she believed the movement would only broaden, and that museums and even the commercial art world would have to find a way to get involved.

“I do think that there will be ways for new kinds of collectors to emerge who will support these kinds of long-term projects as works of art,” said Ms. Woolard, who was recently asked by the Museum of Modern Art’s education department to take part in a social-practice program, “Artists as Houseguests: Artists Experiment at MoMA,” over the next few months.

Pablo Helguera, who is organizing the experiment as the director of adult and academic programs in MoMA’s education department, said that departments like his, as opposed to curatorial ones, are often the doors through which social-practice artists enter the museum world.

“There have always been artists working this way, but we started seeing more and more of them,” Mr. Helguera said. “My theory is that the shift began happening sometime after 9/11. I think it was the question ‘What is the meaning of making art in the world like it is today?’ ”

Mr. Helguera, who has written a book on the subject, “Education for Socially Engaged Art,” added that galleries and museums are only now beginning to scope out the movement’s contours. “The art world has these expectations,” he said. “It’s like you’re supposed to deliver your fall collection and your spring collection, and then what are you doing for the summer, for the art fairs and the biennials?”

“But this kind of work doesn’t operate according to that calendar,” he said. “It might mean a connection with some community or group of people for years, maybe some artist’s whole life. It’s hard to bring to the public. Sometimes it’s hard to define.”

Even those who live in the world of socially engaged art sometimes need help defining it. Justin Langlois, a Canadian artist, recently wrote a wry David-Letterman-style list of questions that artists can pose to themselves to determine whether they are indeed practicing social practice. Question No. 19 was “Can your work be critiqued by a painter?” Question No. 22: “If your project was a math equation, did the sum always end up as a critique of capitalism?” And the final question: “Were you asked to explain the reason you think your project is art?”

A version of this article appears in print on March 24, 2013, on page AR1 of the New York edition with the headline: Outside the Citadel, Art That Nurtures.

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CRAIN'S

NEW YORK BUSINESS

Hundreds join a new kind of co-op to buy commercial property in high-rent areas

The goal is to create affordable space for small businesses and arts organizations

[Caroline Lewis](#)



Buck Ennis

Caroline Woolard (left) hopes the investment co-op she founded can help Ana Martinez de Luco's nonprofit.

Published: May 24, 2015 - 12:01 am

Caroline Woolard first got the idea to invest in commercial property when she realized she would soon be priced out of her artist's studio in Brooklyn.

But when she and a handful of her fellow renters — welders, fashion designers, painters, woodworkers — looked into investing in their space, they learned that they didn't qualify for a loan. Banks didn't see co-workers banding together; they saw individual artisans who simply didn't have the cash required of them.

"It's expensive to be poor," said Ms. Woolard, 31. "If you don't have capital, not much is possible."

As a small group they may have been financially powerless, but if they were an organized collective of hundreds of small investors, Ms. Woolard thought, they would not be. By forming the NYC Real Estate Investment Cooperative, about 200 New Yorkers from diverse neighborhoods, professions, ethnicities and tax brackets hope to invest jointly in commercial property in areas where rents are rising rapidly, carving out permanently affordable space for community-based small businesses and cultural organizations.

The idea for the co-op came out of a Facebook conversation between Ms. Woolard, who built "sharing economy" websites Our Goods and Trade School, and her friend Paula Segal, an attorney and founder of nonprofit 596 Acres, which helps people turn vacant city lots into community gardens.

The two were inspired in part by the Northeast Investment Cooperative, a group founded by neighbors in Minneapolis four years ago, which has grown to more than 200 members who have each purchased a share in the co-op for \$1,000. The first organization of its kind in the United States, that co-op has so far acquired three abandoned buildings and leased or sold space to a bike shop, a bakery and a brewery.

First in New York

If Ms. Woolard and Ms. Segal succeed, it would likely be the first of its kind in New York City: a real estate co-op that would invest in commercial property in order to preserve space for small businesses, as well as social-

service and arts organizations. But succeeding won't be easy. Land is expensive and scarce, while incorporating is tricky business.

The co-op has yet to settle on a structure, but it may choose to become a limited-liability corporation, which is a common legal designation in both the real estate market and the world of worker co-ops.

Alternatively, it could incorporate as a cooperative, which is classed as a nonprofit in New York.

Similar efforts by community groups to band together to own real estate have taken decades to bear fruit and have typically grown out of only one neighborhood. The Cooper Square Committee, created in 1959 to survive the wrecking ball of master planner Robert Moses, took decades to achieve its aim. Cooper Square's Mutual Housing Association spent \$20 million in the 1990s refurbishing affordable housing in 22 formerly city-owned buildings.

"With a limited capacity, certainly in the initial phase, the question is going to be, which neighborhoods are going to benefit?" said Tom Angotti, director of the Hunter College Center for Community Planning and Development.

If it were entirely up to Ms. Woolard and Ms. Segal, the co-op's portfolio would buy city-owned properties in need of renovation and ones that house established community institutions. But it's a collective, and decisions are made by all the shareholders.

"Saving spaces that already exist—unfortunately, those are the more expensive buildings," said Ms. Woolard.

She believes the co-op will have more luck buying vacant city-owned buildings. The city used to regularly sell vacant land for as little as \$1 to developers that would renovate the property and keep some of the apartments affordable. And although most of the remaining lots the city auctions are residential, she hopes that once her organization is established she will have some power to ask the city to sell lots to co-ops of the kind Ms. Woolard is trying to create.

To get there, potential members gathered late last month at the Middle Collegiate Church in the East Village.

"We need affordable business space so we don't get overrun with chains and bars," said Renée Holmes, a middle-school teacher from Bedford-Stuyvesant, who learned about the co-op from 596 Acres' [website](#). Before the church opened its doors, co-op organizers had already received online pledges totaling more than \$1.2 million. But the organizers wanted to make sure members were first committed to the task of incorporating before accepting the money.

Brooklyn beneficiary

After the meeting, nearly everyone who attended submitted a membership form and \$10 to help start the co-op's collective fund.

One of the first organizations the group plans to assist is Sure We Can, a nonprofit that operates on a 13,000-square-foot lot in Bushwick, a couple of blocks from the increasingly pricey enclave that has sprung up around [Roberta's Pizza](#).

Sure We Can serves as a depository for the recyclables collected by people around the city who make their incomes from the 5 cents they get for returning each item. Beyond sorting cans and bottles and returning them to distributors, Sure We Can has created a community space for canners, most of whom are homeless.

The largely self-sufficient nonprofit has been paying its rent of \$4,243 per month with little more than the modest commission it makes from distributors for acting as a middleman. Operating on a budget of about \$300,000 this year, Sure We Can is in danger of losing its lot to the highest bidder when its lease is up in 2018—unless it can come up with the landlord's \$3 million asking price.

"The landlord wants to keep us here, but only if we can find a way to buy the property or find someone else to buy it," said Ana Martinez de Luco, the executive director.

The budding co-op has a way to go before it can make commitments to organizations such as Sure We Can. The initial goal is to "have a list of realistic properties and the money to secure at least one of them within two years," according to an email to members.

After the church meeting, Ms. Woolard said she felt "excited and overwhelmed and accountable."

Ultimately, though, the success of the co-op will hinge on the commitment of its members.

"I'm gonna go have a beer after this because putting this meeting together has been a lot of work and I'm feeling a little bit done," Ms. Segal told the audience after last month's meeting. "But I'm really glad that there are all these new members who are going to step up and do the next phase of the work."

Correction: Caroline Woolard believes the NYC Real Estate Investment Cooperative will have more luck buying vacant city-owned buildings. That detail was characterized incorrectly in an earlier version of this article.

CRAIN'S

NEW YORK BUSINESS

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CAPSULE REVIEW: ARTISTS REPORT BACK

Only 16% of working artists in the United States have arts-related bachelor's degrees.



By [Louise Geraghty](#) on May 16, 2016



"Few and Far" photo taken by Bill Dickinson

Title: Artists Report Back: A National Study on the Lives of Arts Graduates and Working Artists

Author(s): Susan Jahoda, Blair Murphy, Vicky Virgin, Caroline Woolard

Publisher: BFAMFAPhD

Year: 2014

URL: <http://bfamfaphd.com/>

Topics: arts degrees, debt from arts degrees, the lives of working artists

Methods: Summary statistics from data from US Census' 2012 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Micro Sample (PUMS).

What it says: Only 16% of working artists in the United States have arts-related bachelor's degrees. Forty percent of working artists over the age of 25 do not have bachelor's degrees in any field, and the

remaining 44 percent have bachelor's degrees in other fields. Of the two million annual arts graduates, two hundred thousand make their primary living as an artist. The median income of working artists is \$30,621, but those with bachelor's degrees have median earnings that are higher at \$36,105. Arts grads' debt loads tend to be higher than non-arts grads, and some of the best arts schools in the country have shockingly high student loan default rates. Those pursuing arts bachelor's degrees are largely white and female, and the majority (54 percent) of working artists are male. The report makes three recommendations for the art schools and the field:

- While the majority of working artists do not have arts degrees, formal arts education is still a valuable way of building critical thinking, skill building, and other competencies that would be difficult to gain outside of formal school. The authors encourage those seeking arts degrees to seek low-cost or free options instead of expensive schools.
- Philanthropic and cultural institutions should look beyond higher education for emerging talent.
- Encourage groups of working artists without degrees and those with arts degrees to share and learn from one another.

What I think about it: These statistics do not include those with Master's degrees or higher in the arts because of the way the Census collects data about educational attainment, and the methodology on earnings does not include those who make their livings as designers or architects. I wonder how many of those who do not have bachelor's degrees in arts-related subjects went on to get MFAs. The choice to exclude architects and designers also seems like it would exclude some high earners in fields that typically require or heavily favor those with formal arts education.

Additionally, I wonder about how the statistics on the probability of artists attaining degrees compares to the rest of the labor market. In the United States, just about a third of people over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree, and in the labor market, a proportion of 60% of people with a bachelor's degree puts it on the higher end of educational attainment in terms of professions. Further, I wonder how often people in other professions tend to stay in the same field as their college major, which would contextualize the other figures they cite in the report about the educational background of artists. I recognize that this is meant to be a critique of the conventional wisdom of a particular group of people about pursuing arts in higher education, but without some context about earnings and degrees in the United States, I think the findings and the interpretation can be distorted.

What it all means: The findings on the relatively high debt load for arts graduates combined with the seemingly low probability that those graduates will go on to become working artists presents troubling evidence for those considering higher education in the arts. Further, that seven of the ten most expensive colleges in the country after financial aid are art schools is evidence that arts students are over paying for their degrees. However, without additional context to compare these findings to the rest of the labor market, it's hard to really understand whether we should think the proportions of holding an arts job or an arts degree in the arts profession are high or low.

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by John Haskett



Installation view of *Time Table*, 2015, blown and cast glass, abaca paper, archival photographs by Hiram Maristany, paint, wood, light bulb, power cord, foam, fabric, community land trust reading materials, 20 × 40 × 40 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Hunter East Harlem Gallery, New York. Photo by Natalie Conn.

Artists generally fall into two groups: the makers (of objects) and doers (of activities). They survive, more or less, on the largesse of the art world. And then there's a third group, not creating objects exactly and not exactly performing activities, but working to change the way the doing of art gets done. Caroline Woolard is a member of this group. Yes, she makes objects, and yes, her work is informed by an understanding of social practice, but she takes that social practice out of the art world and grounds it in the practicalities of life—her life—along with anyone who's willing to join her. Part of the appeal of her work is the invitation to join the idealized world she's trying to create.

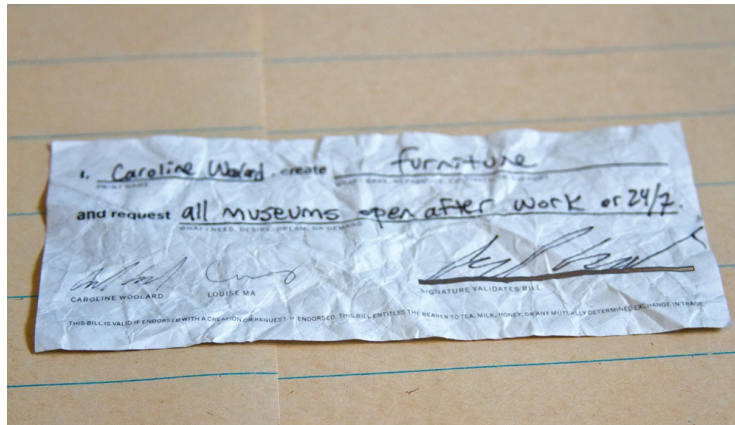


Installation view of *Barricade to Bed (for exchange café)*, 2013, police barricade, plumbing straps, hardware, 2 × 6 douglas fir cut off, maple wood dowel, tennis balls, foam, fabric, open access kit, prison abolitionist 'zines, 16 × 43 × 96 inches. Courtesy of the artist and MoMA: Artists Experiment. Photo by Ryan Temprow.

Idealized, in this case, is not the same as dreamy. With entrepreneurial gusto Woolard calls attention to injustice; and then, moving beyond that, she asks: How can we change a system that perpetuates injustice? For her it's a real question, and to answer it she uses, first of all, collaboration. Her work is about the collaborative process and about empowerment. How can

+ Share

disenfranchised people have access to power? Her provisional answer is: by banding together. Woolard is a co-founder of OurGoods.org, a thriving digital meeting place where the exchange of goods and services can happen independently of the normative, patriarchal structures that determine almost anything we do. TradeSchool.coop, another collaborative venture, is a place where information (like how to make a dress or how to start a beehive) is exchanged and bartered for other information, an I-can-help-you-and-you-can-help-me scenario that operates outside the mainstream of both commerce and art. Trade School is not just about the content of the education, it's about the form that education takes, a self-organizing form that ensures its own duration. Woolard isn't interested in creating a change that temporarily appears in a gallery or storefront, replaced in time by another change, another salable work of art, another exhibit of the artist's good intentions. Her ambition is not to *represent* empowerment, but to actually alter how art is distributed, how we see artistic labor, and to cause a shift in attitude that can maintain itself until change takes root.



Installation view of *Resources (for exchange café)*, 2013, tyvek, silkscreen, signature, currency exchange, performers, 2 3/5 x 6 1/10 inches. Courtesy of the artist and MoMA: Artists Experiment. Photo by Ryan Temprow.

Woolard has made a Barricade Bed for the protesters in Zuccotti Square, a Queer Rocker for anyone who feels queer, a Work Dress for serious working, and a Subway Swing for having fun. Her *Exchange Café*, at the Education Department of the Museum of Modern Art, is a brief experiment in bringing the ideals of the solidarity economy into the belly of the institutional beast. In all of it, Woolard's medium is the actual infrastructure of lives being lived and her aim is to make that infrastructure more cooperative. A recent collaborative project, called *BFAMFAPhD*, documented, like think-tank documentation, the structure by which art gets taught, gets made, and then gets taught again in a cycle of sameness and disempowerment that Woolard hopes to break. Like many artists, she looks out and sees society functioning in a certain way, sees the inequity of that way, and by fostering a spirit of cooperation her art indicates what a different way might be.



Work Dress for Barter Only, 2008–2013, cotton-denim, barter agreement, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist. Photo by Martyna Szczesna.

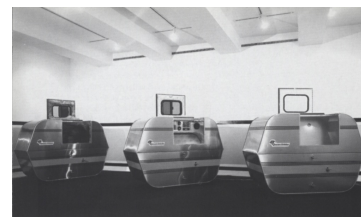


Installation view of *Hiding Table (for Exchange Café)*, 2013, glass, cherry and poplar wood cut offs, paper, 'zines, casters, leather scraps, assorted hardware, 44 x 30 x 30 inches. Courtesy of the artist and MoMA: Artists Experiment. Photo by Ryan Temprow.

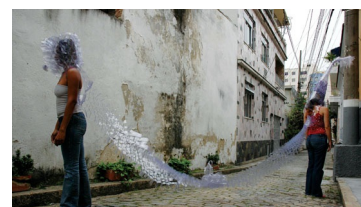
John Haskell is a Brooklyn-based writer and the author of I Am Not Jackson Pollock, American Purgatorio, and Out of My Skin. His essays have most recently appeared in A Public Space, Lucky Peach, and the David Salle catalog for Mary Boone Gallery.

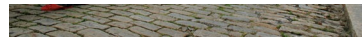
Tags: relational art, political art, institutional critique (art movement), collaboration

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Art in America

NEWS & FEATURES

EXHIBITIONS

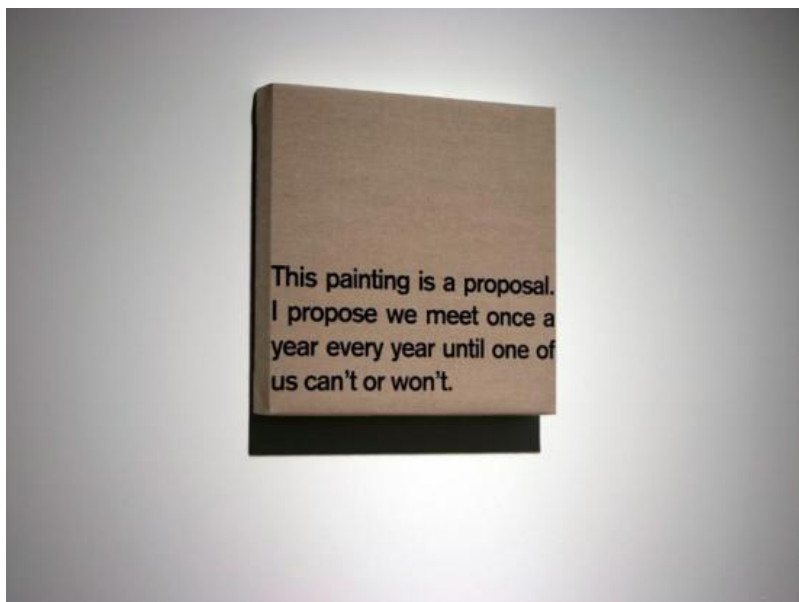
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EXHIBITIONS THE LOOKOUT



“Wound: Mending Time and Attention”

at 41 Cooper Gallery,
through Nov. 11
41 Cooper Square

When artists create opportunities for support and mutual aid rather than unquestioningly competing with one another for meager resources, they open a small space of resistance to the divisiveness that comes from an economically precarious existence. The brainchild of Caroline Woolard, a sculptor and social-practice organizer who has initiated various barter-based endeavors in New York, and curated by Stamatina Gregory, this group exhibition with work by seventeen artists and collectives is meant to be the first incarnation of Wound, a membership-based study center whose name suggests the activity of setting a clock. Attention and time, two things atomized by digital technology, are the focus of the objects displayed on the walls and tables and in the vitrines. Some works are text pieces, like Dave McKenzie's painting, which reads: THIS PAINTING IS A PROPOSAL. I PROPOSE WE MEET ONCE A YEAR EVERY YEAR UNTIL ONE OF US CAN'T OR WON'T. Judith Leemann shows altered chess pieces and talismanic objects that she uses in her practice to explore nonlinguistic forms of expression. Taraneh Fazeli, a member of Canaries (a network of creative people living with autoimmune and other chronic illnesses), presents several incarnations of her multipart project “Sick Time,” which involves workshops that address care and empathy; the displays here include drawings made during a workshop at Houston's Project Row Houses. An accompanying program of events at 41 Cooper Gallery includes sessions with the activist collective Ultra-red, whose work with sound and electronic music explores the political dimension of listening. —Cathy Lebowitz

Pictured: Dave McKenzie: *Proposal*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 16 by 16 inches.

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ART & DESIGN

What to See in New York Galleries This Week

By ROBERTA SMITH, WILL HEINRICH, KAREN ROSENBERG and MARTHA SCHWENDENER OCT. 20, 2016

Tomoo Gokita

‘Out of Sight’

Mary Boone Gallery
541 West 24th Street, Chelsea
Through Oct. 29

Tomoo Gokita, a polymath of drawing mediums and styles, turned to painting in 2005, basing his images on found photographs and working exclusively in the sharp whites, velvety blacks and myriad grays of gouache. They pack an unsettling visual punch.

In “Out of Sight,” at Mary Boone, the paintings’ neon glow and louche, vintage feel evoke the work of the Pop outlier Ed Paschke (1939-2004). Subjects include a pair of Playboy bunnies; nuclear families; couples out for the evening; a send-up of Manet’s “Olympia”; and “Madam,” a woman in a strapless, kaleidoscopically patterned cocktail dress. Faces are often disturbingly “out of sight,” masked with shaded curved visors suggestive of astronauts’ gear. They dehumanize, yet real emotions seep around their edges.

The paintings' surfaces look seamlessly perfect at first, but on closer examination appear to have been quickly, almost loosely, made, which adds a sense of economy and verve. Some have strange distortions. The clumsy hands and feet of the man, two women and baby in "Another Happy Thought," a kind of Adoration-picnic scene, recall children's drawings. Others have expert details: The shiny curls and bouffant hairdos reflect the artist's attention to sign painting.

In "I Don't Like Karaoke," a stiff, dowdy man — whose boxy suit and face seems to predate that form of entertainment — pulls back as a woman plies him with a hand mike. Her face is a large black mask, whose tiny eyes recall African sculpture and an artist under its influence, Modigliani.

With their outdated glamour, eerie glow, ambiguous emotions and descriptive quirks, these paintings are undeniably rich. I'd like them better if Mr. Gokita masked his men as often as he does his women.

ROBERTA SMITH

Arlene Shechet

'Turn Up the Bass'

Sikkema Jenkins & Company
530 West 22nd Street, Chelsea
Through Nov. 12

This year, Arlene Shechet staged an unprecedented intervention at the Frick Collection, for which she made work in Germany's venerable Meissen ceramics factory to be displayed alongside a collection of antique china from the same place.

But that will be up until next spring. What you should see first is "Turn Up the Bass" at Sikkema Jenkins. For her entertainingly inventive if not quite next-level show, this New York-born sculptor used wood collected from around her Woodstock studio and a special clay she developed that barely shrinks when fired.

The wood is hewed into rough, chunky blocks, sometimes painted, sometimes not. The clay is impressed against these blocks or else modeled into shims, wedges, tubes or vaguely internal-organ-like sacs before being stippled with welts of white or yellow glaze. Using these off-kilter constituent parts, Ms. Shechet has constructed what amount to 18 diagrams of cognitive dissonance — or of just how complicated the world is.

“All in All,” for example, a 5-foot-tall stack of wood and clay pieces, is like a small monument to the fear of falling down. From one side extends a long clay tube, like Mr. Magoo’s cane; and on the topmost block, just close enough to the edge to make you nervous, sits another small cylinder of mottled clay, this one about the size of a pencil case. The whole thing seems about to fall over in every direction, but it’s not going anywhere.

WILL HEINRICH

Lucky DeBellevue

‘Assignment’

Kai Matsumiya

153½ Stanton Street

Lower East Side

Through Nov. 5

To be an artist with gallery representation in 2016 is to face unrelenting demand for new work, as dealers require fresh material for each one of the year’s many fairs. In his latest solo show, a quirky compendium of processy drawings from the past 20 years and new paintings based on clocks and date-stamped photographs, the painter and sculptor Lucky DeBellevue takes a philosophical and self-scrutinizing look at this pressure to produce. (That, as the show’s news release notes, may come from institutions and nonprofit spaces as well as the commercial sphere.) The results engender some sympathy for overworked artists, but come across as an epic fit of procrastination.

About 400 of Mr. DeBellevue's sketches, jottings and proposals — mostly relating to works that were never realized — paper the walls of the narrow gallery. Some are renderings of his signature sculptures of twisted pipe-cleaners; others appear to be installation diagrams or studio-wall mantras (“Art is all over”; “Anything can happen anywhere”). A couple of variations on Mr. DeBellevue's name contribute to the impression of a gifted but bored student doodling during a lecture.

So do the paintings, which mimic round-faced clocks and hang high on the wall as they would in a classroom. Another series of “time-based works” (as Mr. DeBellevue calls them) consists of rectangular panels evoking shadowy surveillance footage or aerial landscapes and bearing bright-orange, faux-digital time signatures. Mr. DeBellevue may be trying to conjure a brooding, Nauman-esque vision of the artist's life, with lots of productive puttering and vacillating in the studio. But you sense that his inspiration comes more from interaction with materials (like the pistachio shells and plaid plastic bags that make up another, more promising group of paintings) than from 3 a.m. ruminations.

KAREN ROSENBERG

‘Wound’

‘Mending Time and Attention’

41 Cooper Gallery

41 Cooper Square, East Village

Through Nov. 11

Contemporary art is better known for critiquing situations rather than offering tangible solutions. Several current shows have sought to reverse this tendency, however. A. L. Steiner, an activist about art and labor issues, persuaded Koenig & Clinton to shorten its working hours during the run of her show, while Simon Denny at Friedrich Petzel proposes using Bitcoin-type currencies to create a more equitable world economy. Now comes “Wound: Mending Time and Attention” at Cooper Union, an exhibition and study center conceived by Caroline Woolard and organized

by Stamatina Gregory, which offers remedies for repairing overworked psyches and models for building healthier communication.

Objects in the show are called tools, and include a 1962 Yoko Ono proposal with instructions to carry on a dialogue composed entirely of questions, hence, an open-ended exchange in which no one has the answers. Also here is Paul Ryan and Luis Berríos-Negrón's "Rose Window" (2010-12), a handwoven diagram inspired by cybernetic theory that offers another prototype for communication. A host of free workshops range from Taraneh Fazeli's "Calling In Sick," focused on health, to Project 404's tutorial on mindful smartphone use.

The tools and training techniques are wildly experimental. (I participated in the Order of the Third Bird's fun and supremely geeky three-hour protocol for looking at art objects and a short but profound session with the longtime artist-shaman Linda Montano.) But "Wound" also shows how the art world's breakneck schedule of exhibitions, fairs and biennials undercuts the ability of socially engaged artists to develop long-term strategies and practices. In this sense, the project works within the time-bound exhibition system while pushing back against it.

MARTHA SCHWENDENER

Correction: October 25, 2016

A picture caption on Friday with an art review of "Wound: Mending Time and Attention," at 41 Cooper Gallery, misstated the title of a work shown and carried an erroneous credit. The work is "Two Stage Transfer Drawing" by Taraneh Fazeli and Sick Time With Canaries — not "Sick Time With Canaries" by Ms. Faneli. The picture is from Marget Long and the Cooper Union, courtesy of the artist; the Murray Guy Gallery was erroneously included in the credit.

A version of this review appears in print on October 21, 2016, on page C22 of the New York edition with the headline: Art in Review.

ARTFORUM

“WOUND: Mending Time and Attention”

41 COOPER GALLERY AT COOPER UNION

41 Cooper Square

October 13–November 11

The word *wound* is one of the English language's most powerful and contradictory homographs. As a noun it means bodily damage, a rending of the flesh or psyche; and as the past participle of *wind*, to have twisted something up. Artist Caroline Woolard defines her social-practice project WOUND, started in 2013, as the latter—like what one does to a clock. And yet “Mending Time and Attention,” an exhibition and a series of workshops organized by WOUND, seeks to heal the pain inflicted by late capitalism's compartmentalization and commodification of time.

Conceived as a study center, WOUND is best experienced in the context of events headed by like-minded artists and collectives. In the first week, the events included legendary feminist artist Linda Mary Montano's *Art/Life Counseling Sessions*, originally performed once a month at the New Museum from 1984 to 1991; Project 404's *Protocol of Attention and Adaptation*, 2016, which required participants to contemplate and discuss a single image on their phones over a two-hour period; and *Calling in Sick*, 2016, led by Taraneh Fazeli, a member of the Canaries, a collective of artists who live with autoimmune diseases and chronic illness. There's a rich collection of objects on display as well, including paintings by Dave McKenzie and Matthew Buckingham. Relaxing on ladder chairs designed by Woolard, one can take in *Rose Window*, 2010–12, a beautiful alpaca rug created by the late Paul Ryan for his relational “Threeing” protocol; Yoko Ono's *Question* score from 1962; and taisha paggett and Ashley Hunt's mirror piece *#10*, from the series “Par Course A,” 2009, which asks viewers to frame themselves in the outlines of outstretched hands or a radical raised fist.



View of “WOUND: Mending Time and Attention,” 2016.

— Wendy Vogel

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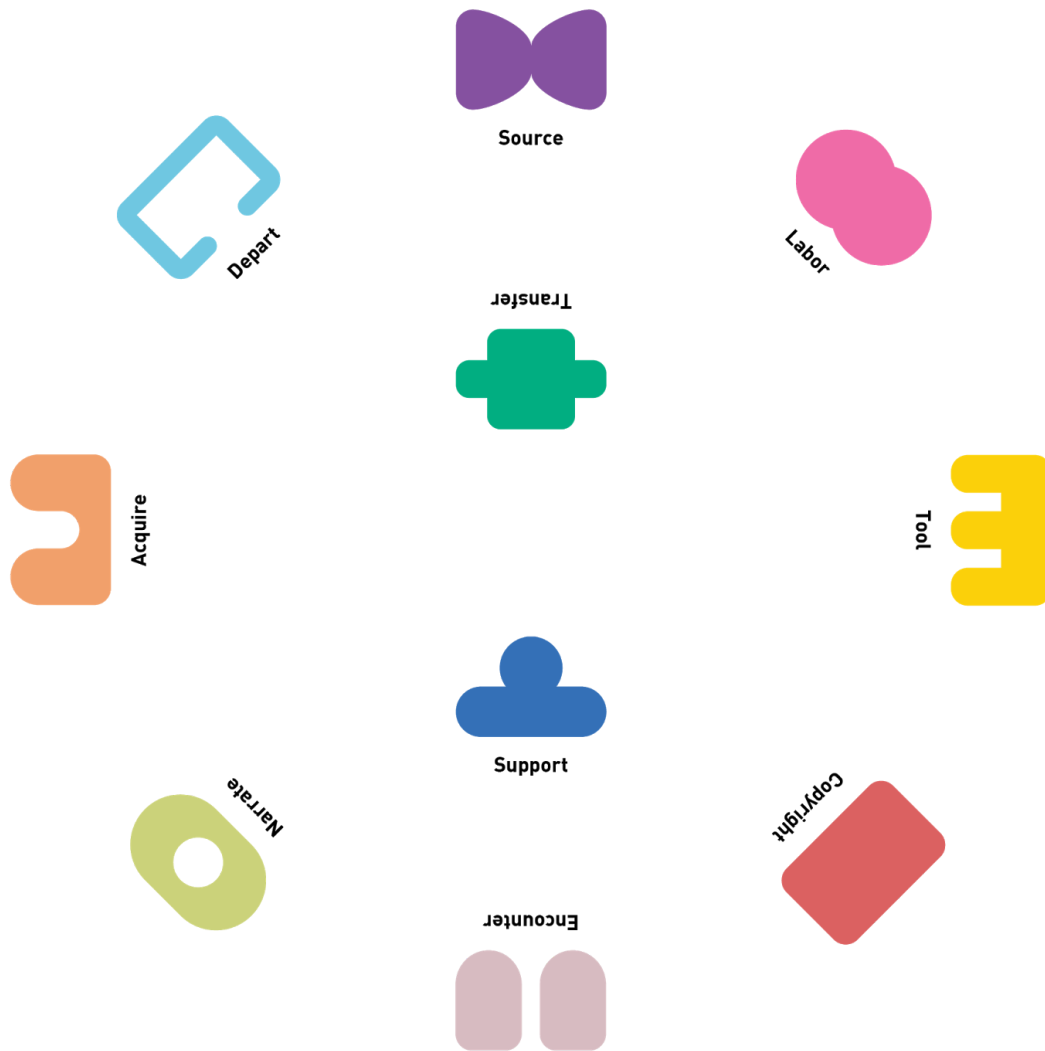
Wages against Artwork: The Social Practice of Decommodification

Leigh Claire La Berge

Abstract

From Foucault's claim that we are now all entrepreneurs of ourselves to Antonio Negri's (and others') claim that we are now in a moment of the real subsumption of labor to capital, the status of labor has changed. What aesthetic approaches to the status of labor as commodity can we locate at the end of labor, and how does this problem intersect with commodity-art? I suggest that a logic and an aesthetic of *decommodification* is required in order to continue our conversation about how aesthetics and value are co-constituted in contemporary arts practices; I introduce the artist Caroline Woolard's practice as a site to investigate the problem of artistic labor and aesthetic value in an entrepreneurial age. This essay is divided into two sections. The first offers a possible deduction of decommodification from the theoretical convergence of aesthetics and commodification. I move through the work of Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, Theodor Adorno, and contemporary commentators on commodity forms including Silvia Federici. The second considers Woolard's work as an example of how decommodification can help think through art, labor, and entrepreneurship in relationship to the emergent mode of social practice.

[aesthetic](#) [Caroline Woolard](#) [decommodification](#) [entrepreneur](#) [social practice](#)



Of Supply Chains

Susan Jahoda, co-author
Caroline Woolard, co-author
Emilio Martinez Poppe, designer
Contributors to BFAMFAPhD

Project Summary

Of Supply Chains is an open source text, workbook, and game for undergraduate and graduate classes of art and design that allows a wide range of choices for organizing work, compensating workers, and producing projects to become visible and open to contestation. *Of Supply Chains* can be used in classroom, exhibition, and workshop contexts to analyse and reimagine power relationships and support structures in the arts. We offer the vocabulary of supply chains to articulate the politics of production behind any project.

This resource takes a systems-approach, placing attention on all aspects of the production of a new project. Rather than enabling a singular focus on the finished project, we look at sourcing materials, organizing labor, representing the project, licensing it, and recycling it. We provide discussion prompts for the whole lifecycle of projects, on topics ranging from artistic process to art contexts and economies, from professional practices to ecological sustainability. *Of Supply Chains* reflects on the production process in order to connect production and process to artistic intention.

Rather than focusing exclusively on the relationship between a concept and a medium-specific technique, as conceptual artists might, we encourage a shift in focus to the connection between a production practice and a concept.

Acknowledgements

This project would not be possible without the generous feedback of many people, including Liz Barry, Jeff Warren, Or Zubalsky, Kate Cahill, Stephen Korns, Leigh Claire La Berge, and members of the Pedagogy Group particularly Maureen Connor and Robert Sember. Early iterations of this text and workshop were supported by Maj Hasager at Malmö Art Academy (Sweden), the Creative Time Summit (2015, New York), and the Pedagogy Group. We also wish to thank Fred Zinn, Office of Information Technology, UMass Amherst and Charlotte Roh and Laura Quilter, librarians at W.E.B. Dubois Library, UMass Amherst for their feedback on our copyright section. This project is supported in part with a Grant for Professional Development in Teaching from University of Massachusetts, Amherst, which we used to pay graphic designer Kieran Startup and web developer Ben Lerchin to make our resources available online. This project was also supported by Severine Von Scharner Flemming, who provided initial funding for a residency where the idea was pursued with intensity for the first time. The videos we offer online are possible due to the generosity of the School of Visual Arts Office of Learning Technologies, and to the video expertise of Walter Tyler and Bradley Crumb.

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Introduction

In 2014, members of our New York City based collective [BFAMFAPhD](#) published [Artists Report Back](#) to raise awareness about art student debt, to suggest how earning artists and arts graduates might advocate for one another, and to propose cultural equity initiatives to move toward a solidarity art economy in the United States. Our *Report* received national attention, placing us in dialog with student organizers, policy-makers, administrators, and government officials, including New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl. We are heartened by increased student activism, the [Department of Cultural Affairs' 2015-2016 diversity survey](#) that "offers a starting point for [the City] to take serious action," by the conversations emerging from the [Artist as Debtor](#) conference and the ongoing work of [Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts New York](#).

While our 2014 *Artists Report Back* used the quantified data report to advocate for structural change in higher education, *Of Supply Chains* (2015-2016) provides a comprehensive, free resource for artists and educators to apply sustainable, democratic, and socially just practices to contemporary cultural production, and to debate the difficulty of doing so. *Of Supply Chains* can be used in classroom, exhibition, and workshop contexts to analyze and reimagine power relationships and support structures in the arts.

The text, workbook, and card game offers the vocabulary of supply chains to articulate the politics of production behind any project. *Of Supply Chains* is for undergraduate and graduate classes of art and design and takes a systems-approach, placing attention on all aspects of the production of a new project. Rather than enabling a singular focus on the finished project, we look at sourcing materials, organizing labor, representing the project, licensing it, and recycling it. We provide discussion prompts for the whole lifecycle of projects, on topics ranging from artistic process to art contexts and economies, from professional practices to ecological sustainability. *Of Supply Chains* asks us to intentionally slow down our production process in order to connect all aspects of our process our intentions.

Of Supply Chains is designed by Emilio Martinez Poppe, a recent college graduate, and co-written by Caroline Woolard, an adjunct who has been teaching undergraduate and graduate courses for six years, and by Susan Jahoda, a tenured professor with thirty years of teaching experience. We teach and present our work most often within academic and nonprofit visual art settings in New York City, and we are also involved in radical pedagogy, critical design, and activist communities locally. We are feminist, research-based artists whose projects make reference to a long history of divergent modes of visual art, including: Dada, Fluxus, Happenings, Conceptual Art, Institutional Critique, Site-Sensitive Installation, and Socially Engaged Art. While the concepts of closed-loop systems and supply chains are familiar to the fields of architecture and design, the examples we use come predominantly from the visual arts. We hope that this resource

speaks across disciplines, and that future iterations include contributions from Performance Studies, Dance, Theater, Music, Sound, Fashion, Architecture, Furniture, Product Design, Graphic Design, and Service Design.

In Our Classrooms

It's the fourth week of the semester in our art and design class. Invited guests are in dialog with students about the challenges of connecting artistic intentions to the entire production process. Students are talking about labor and transfer; about the ways they have worked on projects (labor) and about how they have compensated themselves and others for it (transfer). On the eleventh week, students will present near-finished projects to one another by inviting project-specific guests to be in conversation with them about their work. On the fourteenth week of the semester, guests will speak with students about the documentation and narration of their projects and the ways these representations might circulate. Students will think through the constellations of photographs, ephemera, emails, critical texts, period rooms, reenactments, social media posts, and other forms of narration that might align with the motivations of the finished projects. Students will end the semester with a project that has been made with a conceptually relevant process: aligning the final project with its materials, labor, documentation, and plans for care or disposal.

We started the semester by talking about the power that projects have. When asked, "How does a project make an impact?", most people imagine the moment when a stranger encounters a finished project. But what if the encounter receded from view? What if the whole process of making a project could communicate the message that the finished project aims to convey? What if an artist's or designer's materials, tools, labor, intellectual property rights, documentation, and recycling or storage could be integral to the meaning, and the impact, of the project? For example, What if a project about sustainability was made sustainably? What if a project about loss was produced while having conversations about the loss? What if a project about money was not only discussed with strangers when they encountered the finished piece, but also incorporated bank employees in the planning and production of the project?

We continue the semester by imagining an artwork or a product of design that we love. We think about how this artwork or design affects us. What about the object, event, or experience makes an impact on us? Is it the subject matter? The use of color, shape, material, or form? A display of technical mastery? A story you know about the project? The context in which the project is presented? The person who made it or showed it to you? Or something else? We contend that a project can make an impact before it is finished by intentionally inviting people into the process of making that project. The encounter with the finished project then becomes one of many actions in a generative process that engages people. We suggest that a wide range of choices for organizing work, compensating workers, and producing projects can become visible and open to contestation.

This text asks: How might public discourse about the lifecycle of a project change the value — the cultural and social significance, as well as market prices — of that project? Regardless of whether you believe that art acts as a representation of the world or that art is a practice of everyday life, your production process has a politics.

Topics of Conversation

This text, workbook, and card game can be used to spark discussions about (1) process / pedagogy, (2) art contexts, (3) professional practices, (4) ecological sustainability, (5) economies, and (6) social imagination. We have outlined these six topics below, so that you can consider ways to use this text in conversation. After this, we will describe the component parts of the production process and the reflection practice at length. If you prefer to reflect upon your practice immediately, skip this section and go to the Supply Chain section.

(1) Process / Pedagogy

The process for making a new project is typically understood as preparation, inspiration, iteration, and fabrication. As a non-linear experience, the creative process can be visualized as a loop that begins with research (both material and conceptual), that is followed by conceptualization, development, and revision; repeated until the final project is resolved. [Artists Mario Ybarra and Diane Lee](#) visualize this process by drawing the component parts on each finger and on a hand, speaking of this process as a lighthouse, and the design firm [IDEO](#) illustrates the process as a linear chart. The research and brainstorming artists and designers do is often seen as less important than the finished project, but this process can communicate our intentions as forcefully as the finished work. Where does inspiration for the project come from? We suggest that artists and designers can cull ideas by considering the entire production process. When we begin to prepare, brainstorm, and do research for a new project, we can select aspects of production that will become integral to the meaning of the project

Rather than focusing exclusively on the relationship between a concept and a medium-specific technique, as conceptual artists might, we encourage a shift in focus to the connection between a concept and a production practice. For example, a project about silence might find expression in the material of glass, but which production practices could emphasize silence? Perhaps the project is made in dialog with glassblowers who intentionally choose to remain silent on a shared subject? Perhaps the project requires glassblowers who have a meditation practice?

How might our feedback sessions (open studios, studio visits, critiques) change when the entire process is seen as equally important to an encounter with the finished project? We might focus on labor by hosting open production sessions with feedback on technique, mood, or group relationships. We might have guest critics of narration who focus on project documentation and the form of representation that the project takes in social media, period rooms, ephemera, texts, or audio. The supply chain reveals that every phase of production can provide rich material for discussion, contemplation, and debate.

(2) Art Contexts

We believe that artists, designers, and teachers long to engage in conversations about structures of support in the arts. The artist and educator Paul Ramirez-Jonas put it this way: “We teach our students how to make art, but we don’t teach them how to make an art context.”¹ Students are often encouraged to think about the form a project takes but not how the material gets into their hands. Teachers may talk about the politics of context and display, but rarely about the politics of production itself. Students often graduate without the knowledge and skills to imagine how the existing cultural landscape could be altered. Students often accept the spaces, grants, payments, and publications available to them rather than shaping their own opportunities and art contexts.

To understand how a project makes meaning, we must investigate the project’s systems of support. The institutions and networks that make up the supply chain for a project are the art contexts that can echo the intentions of the project itself. A growing number of art historians, artists, designers, and cultural theorists are focused on these systems, which they call multiple names, including liberatory institutions², support structures³, [solidarity art worlds](#), letters and envelopes⁴, and [platform cooperatives](#). W.J.T. Mitchell’s definition of medium includes support systems. He writes:

The medium is more than the material andmore than the message, more than simply the image plus the support — unless we understand the “support” to be a support system — the entire range of practices that make it possible for images to be embodied in the world as pictures — not just the canvas and the paint, in other words, but the stretcher and the studio, the gallery, the museum, the collector, and the dealer-critic system. By ‘medium’ I mean the whole set of material

¹ Paul Ramirez-Jonas in conversation with Caroline Woolard, June 2016

² Yates McKee in conversation with Caroline Woolard, April 2, 2016.

³ Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics*, (New York: Routledge, 2011)

⁴ Amy Whitaker, *Art Thinking* (New York: HarperCollins, 2016)

practices that brings an image together with an object to produce a picture.⁵

Artists have visualized and mapped the support systems, art contexts, and art worlds they navigate as everything from [ceiling fans](#), [bodily organs](#), and [island formations](#), to [monopoly games](#), [pyramid schemes](#), and [supply chains](#), each drawing attention to the ecosystems they work within. These representations are vulnerable, particular, and idiosyncratic⁶ and stand in contrast to the commonly accepted concept of a monolithic “Art World.”⁷ The concept of a singular Art World renders ongoing struggles for representation, compensation, and cultural equity invisible. Ben Davis writes that “The Art World visualizes the sphere of the visual arts not as a set of conflicting interests, but as a harmonious confluence of professionals with a common interest: “art” and so denies class relations within that sphere.”⁸ If inequity in the arts was nonexistent, many so called “alternative” spaces would not exist.⁹

We at BFAMFAPhD do not call these “alternative” art worlds, as “alternative” relies on a binary between the dominant Art World and that which is “alternative” to it, making the alternative forever marginal.¹⁰ We prefer to name these “alternative” spaces by their principles or organizing structure; as self-organized, solidarity, nonprofit, for-profit, or academic art worlds. What if, rather than speaking about one Art World, we acknowledged multiple art worlds and multiple art contexts? Multiple art worlds include self-organized and solidarity art worlds, nonprofit art worlds, for-profit art worlds, and academic art worlds. By looking at the supply chain, interdependent networks become visible, showing ways that we might knowingly interact with institutions and people to sustain the worlds that we value.

⁵ Mitchell, W.J.T. “What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images.” (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 198.

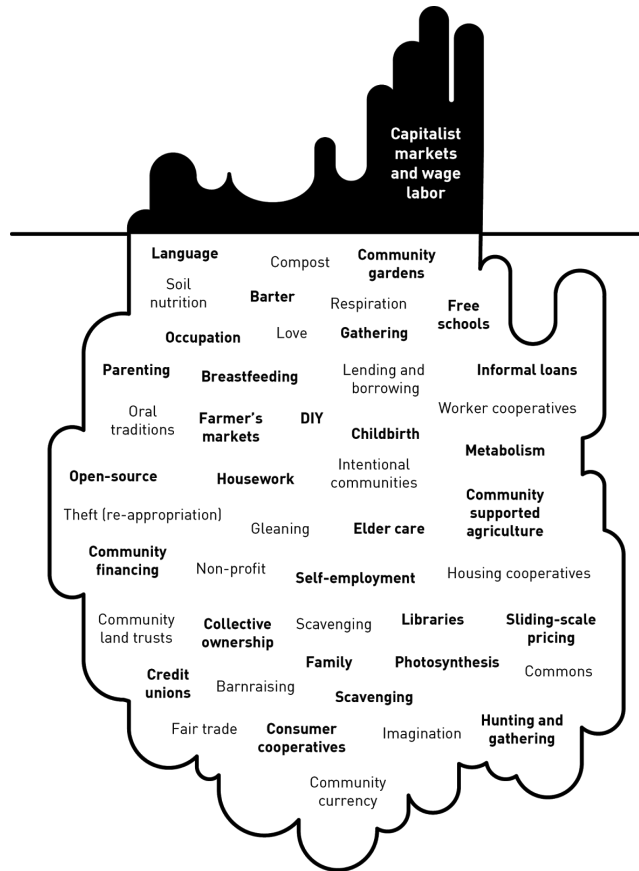
⁶ Robert Nelson reminds us that “maps are not empty mirrors; they at once hide and reveal the hand of the cartographer. Maps are fleshly: of the body and of the mind of the individuals that produce them, they draw the eye of the map-reader.” Robert Nelson, “The Map of Art History.” *The Art Bulletin*, (March 1997): Volume LXXIX Number 1 28-41.

⁷ In the 1980s Martha Rosler described “The Art World” as “the changing international group of commercial and nonprofit galleries, museums, study centers, and associated venues and the individuals who own, run, direct, and toil in them; the critics, reviewers, and historians, and their publications, who supply the studies, rationales, publicity, and explanations; the connoisseurs and collectors who form the nucleus of sales and appreciation; plus the artists living and recently dead who supply the goods.” Rosler fails to mention the fabricators, artist assistants, and non-gallery spaces that artists work with. The community spaces, self-organized spaces, so called “alternative” spaces, home galleries, and public interventions that make up the cultural ecosystem that we are shaping together. We are not referring to the Artworld as sociologists like Becker, Bourdieu, and Danto do. See <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/visualarts/Institutionaltheoryartworld.html> for more information

⁸ Ben Davis, *9.5 Theses on Art and Class*, (Chicago: Haymarket Books: 2013)

⁹ Herb Tam, *Alternative Histories: New York Art Spaces, 1960-2010*, (Cambridge: MIT Press: 2012)

¹⁰ Stephen Healy, says “Those who understand dominance from a realist epistemological perspective believe that it is possible to gauge relative degrees of power and the extent of vulnerability or powerlessness. They therefore almost always see alternative economies and organizations as weak and likely to be short-lived. Those who understand dominance as performative, on the other hand, see it as predicated upon and produced by the dissemination and repetition of knowledges.” <http://www.communityeconomies.org/site/assets/media/stephenhealy/AlternativeEconomies.pdf>



Adaptation of [Community Economies Iceberg](#)

(3) Professional Practices

Articulating the supply chain for a project allows consideration for the people, institutions, and networks that make any project visible in particular communities. Martin Irvine writes that, “What makes something an artwork is not an observable property in an artwork itself,” but instead “an interdependent network of social-economic actors who cooperate—often contentiously or unknowing—to enact and perpetuate [multiple art worlds], while at the same time negotiating kinds and levels of cooperation in a mutually understood careerist and competitive context.”¹¹ By seeing the supply chain as integral to the understanding of any project, and to the project’s visibility, we can imagine ways to intervene in and alter existing institutions and networks so that the work we believe in becomes visible. For instance, the artist [Matthew Deleget](#) helped to convene a community of

¹¹ Martin Irvine, “The function of the Artworld as a social-economic network,” *The Institutional Theory of Art and the Artworld*, <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/visualarts/Institutional-theory-artworld.html>

practice around the term “reductive abstraction” by placing the term in circulation in an online gallery that led to a physical gallery which sustains his work today.

The supply chain for any project can hint at the relationships of power that enable the project to circulate, be visible, or to remain unknown to certain communities. For example, a project that is reviewed in an art magazine will be known to readers of that magazine whereas a project posted on a local bulletin board will become known to people who frequent that site.¹² Linda Goode Bryant was careful to place Just Above Midtown in the elite Midtown gallery district of the 1970s, and to show unknown artists beside well-known artists, so that her experimentation was legible within the conventions of the visual art gallery scene in New York City at the time.¹³ Many founders of solidarity economy arts spaces attempt to place their venues in geographic communities with shared values. For example, in 1961, Ellen Stewart founded La Mama in a basement in the Lower East Side, a neighborhood known for decades of immigrant cultural venues and labor organizing. La Mama helped to foster the off-off Broadway movement, and community organizing for affordable space and affordable culture has been central to this history.¹⁴

By carefully creating a production process that is aligned with their intentions artists can build audiences and relationships with people who are involved in their process. Artists may engage material suppliers, co-workers, fabricators, technicians, photographers, and staff in conversations about the meaning of the project. Artists may even alter the production process so that it communicates the goals of the finished project. Artists may invite different people into the production process, building relationships with people formerly seen as the audience of the finished project. When people are invited to labor on a project in an equitable and respectful manner, they may feel a deeper connection to it.

To create and strengthen cultural institutions and networks that align with the goals of a project, artists might ask, How is visibility generated? How is visibility shared? What scale of visibility is desired? For example, artists who work in the oldest all-women and trans theater space in the country, Wow Cafe Theater, have created a space to show their work with visibility within the off-off-Broadway community, but they often have a difficult time getting the *New York Times* to review or report on their shows.¹⁵ Arts venues without proximity to geographic, professional, or identity-based communities of wealth tend to be less visible in mainstream and elite

¹² Hito Steryl, “International Disco Latin,” *E-flux*, (2013).

<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/international-disco-latin/>

Press releases themselves can be sites of supply chain conflict. As Hito Steryl reminds us, the use of the English language in press releases written by art interns is “an accurate expression of social and class tensions around language and circulation within today’s art worlds and markets: a site of conflict, struggle, contestation, and often invisible and gendered labor.

¹³ Linda Goode Bryant, interviewed by Caroline Woolard, School of Visual Arts, July 7, 2016.

Just Above Midtown was a non-profit artists space that Goode Bryant ran in New York City for fourteen years, from 1974–1988.

¹⁴ Deena Parham, “Fourth Arts Block: Manhattan’s only Cultural District.” (blog), Urban By Design, 2015

<http://www.urbanbydesignonline.com/urbanbydesign/2011/7/18/fourth-arts-block-manhattans-only-cultural-district.html>

¹⁵ Jen Abrams, Wow Cafe Theater member in personal conversation with Caroline Woolard, 2013.

media because they cannot afford to pay for publicity and are not already in social spaces with the wealthy elite. An e-flux advertisement costs over \$800 per email in 2016, and rarely features collectively-run endeavors, for example. While community-based networks generate inspiration, support, and identity for their members, these networks rarely scale beyond the existing community. For some artists who desire widespread and elite media attention, and for some audiences who want to know about this art, this is of urgent concern. If community-based networks wish to connect their members to resources and people beyond the existing membership, they tend to rely upon grassroots media, elite media outlets, or traditional broadcast systems to gain the attention of many people.

For more writing about visibility, turn to the **Actions (21)** section of this text, particularly under **Labor (23)** and **Narrate (30)**. We offer examples of artists who work together and share visibility to counter depictions of artists and designers as solitary workers and authors.

(4) Ecological Sustainability

We can use the supply chain to discuss the conflict between personal desires to experiment with new materials and the urgent challenges of ecological sustainability at a global scale. [Dee Hibbert-Jones](#) asks teachers and students to consider the moment at the end of every semester when the studio becomes a dumping ground and all unwanted projects go to the landfill. A focus on intentional process aims to foster dialog about the ecological sustainability of art and design education and production. When each phase of a project's supply chain is seen as capable of communicating the author's intentions, ecological sustainability cannot be disregarded for the sake of the public encounter with the finished project.

The supply chain for every project is difficult to trace. If ten people are asked to follow each of their project's materials back to the initial source of extraction, processing, and distribution, they will discover opacity and confusion as this information is always veiled. Failed attempts to follow the supply chain of any commodity back to its source reveal the limits of social knowledge in capitalism — the inability to understand the conditions people work within is partially what upholds consumer desire. “What is, in fact, a social relation between people (between capitalists and exploited laborers) instead assumes the fantastic form of a relation between things.”¹⁶ The impossibility of knowing who labors, and for how much, provides an entry point for conversations about the nature of commodities.¹⁷ The locations where commodities are assembled, sold, and discarded can become sites for discussion and project-based research. As Sven Beckert reminds us, “to be at the very beginning or the very end of a “commodity chain” thus was usually a

¹⁶ Karl Marx, *Capital, A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume 1, translated Ben Fowkes, (New York: Penguin) 1990

<https://www.cla.purdue.edu/english/theory/marxism/modules/marxfetishism.html>

¹⁷ Leigh Claire La Berge, in conversation with Caroline Woolard, 2016

position of relative [political] weakness.”¹⁸ Elite art institutions are primarily located in cities that are centers of capital accumulation. Recycling centers that host artists in residence begin to challenge assumptions that major cultural centers are never located near other institutions that support the end of the supply chain.¹⁹

Matter does not exist for the sole purpose of use or disuse by human beings. Jane Bennett recognizes the challenges artists face in navigating the practices of making with the practices of over consumption; practices reinforced by a political economy organized around relentless growth.²⁰ Implicit in her writing is the question — if there is an intention in our making that extends beyond the production of fetish objects for museums and collectors, what are its practices?

Should artists and designers who wish to make projects about sustainability produce their projects in an ecologically sustainable way? Randalls Zott encourages artists to follow an ecologically sustainable approach to making art because the “art system is like industrial food production, focusing on the products that are most readily brought to market. It creates monocultures, vast swaths of easily consumable, but highly infrastructure dependent crops.”²¹ The artist Natalie Jeremijenko rejects the focus on individual responsibility by joking that “the most sustainable thing you can do is to kill yourself - then you won’t use any resources.”²² Jeremijenko wants the focus to shift to governmental and corporate irresponsibility, as the scale of impact for institutions is immense when compared to households. Every artist and designer must consider the impact of personal versus policy-based theories of social change.

For example, architect and designer Joseph Krupczynski, Nuestras Raices, and the Holyoke MA, Food and Fitness Policy Council created an interpersonal platform to increase healthy food access in their ongoing project [Moveable Feast. DLAND studio team](#) designed and is currently implementing the *Gowanus Canal Sponge Park*, Brooklyn, New York where plants and engineered soils draw heavy metals and biological toxins out of the EPA Superfund site. Using a theory of social change that relies on grassroots organizing at a massive scale, the [Yes Men](#) worked with Occupy Seattle and [Greenpeace](#) to reveal the failures of Shell Oil and to advocate for the end of drilling in the arctic.

For more writing about sustainability, turn to the **Actions (21)** section of this text, particularly under **Source (21)** and **Depart (36)**. We offer other examples of artists who source materials for projects with the intention that their works will have a generative and less harmful impact on the environment. This text encourages artists and designers to become sensitive to the often contradictory tensions

¹⁸ Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, (New York: Random House, 2014)

¹⁹ See Artist in Residence programs at Materials for the Arts

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcla/mfta/html/home/home.shtml>

²⁰ Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, (Durham: Duke University Press 2010)

²¹ Randalls Zott, “Soil Manifesto.” (blog) Randalls Zott, 2016

<https://randallszott.org/2016/03/06/toward-a-soilpractice-socialpractice-manifesto-ending-the-art-system-and-restoring-aesthetic-ecology/>

²² Natalie Jeremijenko in conversation with Caroline Woolard, 2009

between representation and production, and to articulate a rationale for production that aligns with their goals for sustainable policies and (inter)personal practices.

(5) Economies

Many artists, designers, and students want to think through projects in relationship to the political economy. Of most urgent concern to us is a search for dignified work that extends beyond the author herself. David Harvey asks:

How might it be possible to build a sense of moral community or of social solidarity, of collective and meaningful ways of belonging and living, that are untainted by the brutality, ignorance, and stupidity that envelops laborers at work? How, above all, are workers supposed to develop any sense of their mastery over their own fates and fortunes when they depend so deeply on a multitude of distant, unknown, and in many respects, unknowable people who put breakfast on their table every day?²³

Imagine an art history, an art classroom, or an art market where production is taken to be as conceptually relevant as the formal qualities of any artwork. We say, form follows concept and supply chain. As artists, we want to narrate stories that foreground the economic practices that sustain us but are often not represented in our artworks. Our presentations will now include narrations of sourcing, laboring, licensing, encountering, narrating, acquiring, departing, transferring, and supporting.

As Hollis Frampton pointed out in a letter to MoMA in 1973, a robust economy of employment occurs with every artwork produced, even when the artist is asked to work without pay. In a letter to MoMA, explaining why exposure cannot replace compensation, Frampton writes:

I'll put it to you as a problem in fairness. I have made, let us say, so and so many films. That means that so and so many thousands of feet of rawstock have been expended, for which I paid the manufacturer. The processing lab was paid, by me, to develop the stuff, after it was exposed in a camera for which I paid. The lens grinders got paid. Then I edited the footage, on rewinds and a splicer for which I paid, Incorporating leader and glue for which I also paid. The printing lab and the track lab were paid for their materials and services. You yourself, however meagerly, are being paid for trying to persuade me to show my work, to a paying public, for "love and honor." If it comes off, the projectionist will get paid. The guard at the door will be paid. Somebody or other paid for the paper on which your letter to me was written, and for the postage to forward it. That means that I, in my singular person,

²³ Harvey, David. "Divisions of Labor." *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).126.

by making this work, have already generated wealth for scores of people. Multiply that by as many other working artists as you can think of. Ask yourself whether my lab, for instance, would print my work for “love and honor,” if I asked them, and they took my question seriously, I should expect to have it explained to me, ever so gently, that human beings expect compensation for their work. The reason is simply that it enables them to continue doing what they do.²⁴

Leigh Claire La Berge’s expansion of W.J.T. Mitchell’s definition of medium (see Art Contexts, above) aptly includes a crucial condition of possibility for the creation and circulation of artworks, namely the cost of training as an artist.²⁵ We must consider the current economic conditions of students and part-time faculty who are burdened by student debt, who are struggling to find employment, and who feel pressure to intern and exhibit work with little or no compensation. If policy follows perception, then it is our hope that conversations about intentional production will alter perceptions about working in creative industries today. It is our aim that this shift in perception, combined with invitations to organize with fellow students, faculty, staff, and artists, will lead to structural reform in the arts and in higher education.²⁶

The celebrity focus on a few individuals in the arts functions by limiting the numbers of artists and artworks that circulate at any given time in order to drive up their market values. This impacts who is hired to teach in our classrooms, who presents in lecture halls, how and what is taught and learned in these institutions, and what is deemed as legitimate and “good” art.²⁷ Who would be hired to teach in art school if solo shows and representation by for profit galleries were not important qualifiers? What art economies could art schools reproduce and support? What if we understood the economy as the way in which we met our needs together?²⁸ What might be called an “alternative” economy in the United States is known globally as the solidarity economy. This term emerged in the global South (as *economia solidária*) and is also called the workers’ economy, the social economy, the new economy, the circular economy, the regenerative economy, the local economy, and the cooperative economy.²⁹ It is recognized globally as a way to unite grassroots practices like lending circles, credit unions, worker cooperatives, and community land trusts to form a powerful base of political power. The solidarity

²⁴ Letter from Hollis Frampton to Mr. Donald Richie, January 7, 1973. Download full letter: <http://www.wageforwork.com/media/files/d663e7877e02c5506c6833ddabb49c19.pdf>

²⁵ Leigh Claire La Berge, “Debt Aesthetics: Medium Specificity and Social Practice in the Work of Cassie Thornton.” *Postmodern Culture*, Volume 25, Number 2, January 2015. 1.

²⁶ See BFAMFAPhD. “Artists Report Back.” Self-Published. 2014. <http://bfamfaphd.com>

²⁷ See Alison Gerber, “Bad Art is Good for Us All,” *The Enemy*, Volume 1: Issue 3, (2014-15). <http://theenemyreader.org/bad-art-good-us/> for a discussion on what matters to artists who make “bad” art.

²⁸ Ethan Miller and Michael Johnson in personal conversation with Caroline Woolard, 2010

²⁹ As Marco Arruda of the Brazilian Solidarity Economy Network stated at the World Social Forum in 2004: “A solidarity economy does not arise from thinkers or ideas; it is the outcome of the concrete historical struggle of the human being to live and to develop him/herself as an individual and a collective... innovative practices at the micro level can only be viable and structurally effective for social change if they interweave with one another to form always-broader collaborative networks and solidarity chains of production-finance-distribution- consumption-education-communication.”

economy is a system that places people before profit, aiming to distribute power and resources equitably.

The solidarity art world includes the ways in which artists engage in the solidarity economy, including sliding scale pricing, credit unions, worker cooperatives, and collective housing. By acknowledging that solidarity art worlds already exist when talking about supply chains, we can begin to visualize a wide range of choices for meeting our needs together. Economies that embody principles of mutual aid, social justice, democracy in the workplace, and environmental sustainability are not merely “alternatives” to the economy — always in opposition to a dominant model, always “alternative.” Raymond Williams writes that:

...there is a simple theoretical distinction between alternative and oppositional, that is to say between someone who simply finds a different way to live and wishes to be left alone with it, and someone who finds a different way to live and wants to change society in its light. This is usually the difference between individual and small-group solutions to social crisis and those solutions which properly belong to political and ultimately revolutionary practice.³⁰

When artists work with the aspects of the supply chain that are within their control, they may recognize the power that they have to engage with solidarity art worlds and the attendant forms of satisfaction that occur. While we do not accept the lack of financial remuneration artists receive or support the exclusionary systems that create visibility for a few artists, we do want to honor the deep satisfaction that comes from intimate conversations with people we respect, the rigor of our craft, and the pleasure of discoveries in research. The supply chain aims to make space for conversations about economic justice at interpersonal, grassroots, and institutional levels.

³⁰ Raymond Williams, “Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory,” *New Left Review*, 1/82, November-December, (1973): 9, http://www.extrememediastudies.org/extreme_media/2_mobiles/pdf/capsules_williams_base_super.pdf

(6) Social Imagination / Words Make Worlds

"If to change ourselves is to change our worlds, and the relation is reciprocal, then the project of history making is never a distant one but always right here, on the borders of our sensing, thinking, feeling, moving bodies."³¹

We have written five propositions to think through the impact that the supply chain might have on our conceptions of ourselves and of the arts and design as disciplines that we work within.

1. Every project has a story that circulates with it. We call these "[work stories](#)."³²
2. We read work stories online and in books. We hear about art projects recounted in lecture halls and podcasts, and we retell these work stories in conversations with friends and colleagues. Although we might not have encountered projects in person, we feel that we know them. For this reason, we take work stories seriously.
3. When the fantasy of the public encounter with a finished project ceases to control production and imagination, all aspects of a project's production become important. Artists and designers can choose to tell different work stories. We can align intentions with the project's lifecycle — how materials are sourced, how the labor for producing a project is organized, how tools are accessed, how a project is supported, copyrighted, narrated, encountered, acquired, and how it finally departs, ready for another life cycle. We can also draw attention to the multiple transfers and forms of support that occur throughout a project's production.
4. In talking about the entire process of making a project conceptually relevant, a wide range of approaches to production become visible and open to contestation. We can then compare production practices, the power dynamics at play, and the social relationships that are cultivated in a variety of practices.
5. Once we use the language of supply chains to talk about projects, we *may* change the way we work. For example, sourcing, accessing tools, laboring, licensing, or acquiring *may* become integral to the meaning of our projects — as important as the materials used, the name of the project, the duration, or the dimensions of the project.

³¹ J. K. Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2006)

³² Magnus Bärtas, "You Told Me: Work Stories and Video Essays," Thesis for the degree of Doctor Of Philosophy in Fine Arts, University of Gothenburg, *Art Monitor*, (2010): p 46, <http://konst.gu.se/english/ArtMonitor/dissertations/magnus-bartas>

Designing a Supply Chain Practice

Here are the ten actions within the supply chain that we have chosen to work with.

	Source	Where materials for projects are obtained.
	Labor	How work is organized in a project.
	Tool	The device or implement used in your project.
	Copyright	The exclusive legal right any author has over their work.
	Narrate	How a project is represented.
	Encounter	When a finished project is presented.
	Acquire	The storage, maintenance, and stewardship of a project.
	Depart	Where materials go when the project is no longer of use, value, or interest.
	Transfer	The exchange of resources for goods or labor.
	Support	The ways authors' needs are met in order to dream, practice, and work on any project.

We encourage you to read the following sections in an order that interests you, as a supply chain is never experienced in a linear manner. In each of the ten sections that follow, we begin with a definition of a supply chain action. We then situate it in relation to cultural production, provide examples of artists and designers who engage with and often challenge aspects of a project's lifecycle, and end with practices that might apply to a new project that you are working on today. To be clear we are not proposing that artists and designers who work through the entire supply chain are creating a new genre of art. Supply Chain practices exist to care for, and to be excited by, the entire production process.

The examples of projects cited in each action prioritize particular supply chain actions while secondarily engaging others. We have included artists and designers from different historical periods and geographical contexts, recognizing that supply chain practices inherently influence these choices. It is important to mention that we are not making value or critical judgements about the projects of the artists and designers we mention and welcome hearing from our readers about projects that we have omitted.

We know that it may be far easier to identify the messy supply chain for a finished project than it is to create a new project where the supply chain is chosen with intention. When beginning a new project, most artists and designers are comfortable emphasizing one aspect of the supply chain. For example, an artist exploring a new medium may start by sourcing materials, learning what the materials can do. A small collective may start by organizing labor, emphasizing the rights and responsibilities that each member will take on for the next project. A performance artist may start with transfer, thinking about what their audience will give and take in exchange for the performance. An artist who makes public art may start with encounter, researching the site where the piece will be seen. A land artist may start with departure, focusing on the ways in which her work will disappear into the landscape.

As you read about sourcing materials, organizing labor, accessing tools, transferring resources, copyrighting intellectual property, narrating the project, planning for a public encounter, and planning for acquisition, support, and the project's final departure, we ask that you think through the social relationships that you currently rely upon, as well as the support networks that you imagine being necessary for a successful project. We hope that approaching projects through the life-cycle actions will encourage both learners and practitioners to confront habits, test new assumptions and practices and, in general, encourage divergent thinking.

33

We differentiate between practices that result in object-based projects, practices that facilitate projects that may or may not be object-based, and practices that are focused on forms of support. For example, collectives often provide emotional labor for members that enable them to continue to work together; these may or may not be represented or narrated in an encounter outside the group.



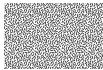



Social Forms of Organization

We have identified six forms of social organization that often structure any action of a project's production. These are visualized as different patterns in the design of each action (stripes, solid, dots, etc.). Your process might be structured by working

³³ These suggestions are also available as a card game that can be printed out or played online at <http://cards.bfamfaphd.com>. In the visual arts, this game could be understood as a Fluxus score or a commission; in architecture, a project brief with a site, client, and deliverable; in design, a toolkit; in music, a Fluxus score or composition; in dance, choreography; in acting, a theater game, in computer programming, a hackathon.


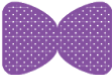


























































1) alone, 2) with family and friends, 3) with members of a community or collective, 4) with members of a business, 5) with members of a public institution, or 6) with members of a commons. We differentiate between these fundamental social groups to notice how levels of intimacy and structures of decision-making determine our behavior and actions. For example, a project produced by you alone or with friends or members of a family, community, collective, or commons is more likely to be created with non-capitalist or alternative-capitalist practices than a project produced with a business or a public institution. The [Community Economies Collective](#) notes that forms of social organization tend to be linked to particular economic practices.

Here are the forms of social organization we use for each phase of the supply chain:

	You	A single human being.
	Family / Friends	A person whom one knows and with whom one has a bond of mutual affection (oed).
	Community / Collective	A group of people who are legally, biologically, or intentionally related to each other (oed). ³⁴
	Business	A commercial operation or company (oed).
	Public	A group of people that share identity, geography, or aims (oed).
	Commons	The commons framework is implemented when property cannot (or should not) be owned by individuals. In the commons, use rights, governed by the users (commoners), rather than ownership rights, governed by the state, prevail. A commons can be a “natural” resource that has the ability to regenerate itself, a “digital” resource that can be replicated infinitely, or a “cultural” resource (P2PF). ³⁵

³⁴ We do not assume that a location has multiple communities. See <http://www.working-with-people.org> for more information.

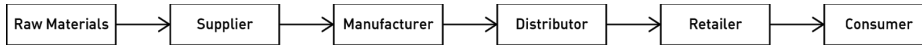
³⁵ See also Bollier, David, *Think like a commoner: a short introduction to the life of the commons*, (British Columbia: New Society Publishers, 2014, p.19. “Commons certainly include physical and intangible resources of all sorts, but they are more accurately defined as paradigms that combine a distinct community with a set of social practices, values and norms that are used to manage a resource. Put another way, a commons is a resource + a community+a set of social protocols. The three are an integrated, interdependent whole. .. What’s critical in creating any commons is that a community decides that it wants to engage in the social practices of managing a resource for everyone’s benefit.”

	You	Family / Friends	Community / Collective	Business	Public	Commons
Source						
Labor						
Tool						
Narrate						
Encounter						
Acquire						
Depart						
	Copyrighted	Partial Copyright (License)	Partial Copyright (Assignment)	Work for Hire	Public Domain	Creative Commons
Copyright						
	Free	Gift / Mutual Aid	Borrowed	Bartered	Paid	Stolen
Transfer						
	Cash Gifts	Debts	Past Sales / Grants	Day Jobs	Rentals / Investments	Mutual Aid
Support						

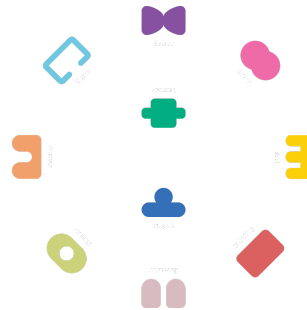
Graphing Supply Chain Actions and Social Forms of Organizing

Supply Chains

[A traditional capitalist supply chain](#) is drawn as a linear process that includes “all the individuals, organizations, resources, activities, and technology involved in the creation and sale of a product, from the delivery of source materials from the supplier to the manufacturer, through its eventual delivery to the end user.”



To create a supply chain for the arts that includes solidarity art economies, we bent the traditional supply chain into a closed loop representing one life cycle. This makes room for many forms of transfer and distribution, and the use of waste as a source material.



The third illustration is a reminder of the interconnectivity of all of the actions within the supply chain.



Actions within the Supply Chain



Source: Where are the materials sourced?

Many artists and designers define their practices based on the way materials for projects are obtained. Artists may choose to focus on the source of their materials for conceptual, environmental, social, economic, cultural, formal, or process-based reasons.

When considering the supply chain, the phase of production that is most familiar to artists is likely sourcing materials. This is because knowledge in the arts is still organized by material, or medium. Conversations about organizing labor or planning for acquisition are rarely a requirement for art and design students today. Disciplinary conventions require that students take a series of courses based on material, rather than research content or production method. For example, Painting is predominantly for those who use paint, Drawing is predominantly for those who use paper, Video is predominantly for those who use video, Sculpture is predominantly for those who use metal or wood.

Many artists are drawn to materials for their formal qualities. A painter might choose oil paint over acrylic for its luminosity, a furniture designer might ask for early access to new material for its uniqueness, and a photographer might choose to make a silver-gelatin print rather than a digital print for its luminous qualities. Other artists link materials to a personal biography, creating a recognizable iconography through their consistent use of unconventional materials. This approach rarely considers the manner in which materials are obtained. For example, [Joseph Beuys](#) linked felt to the myth of the aftermath of a plane crash, but he did not focus on the source of the felt itself. Arte Povera and Fluxus artists of the 1960s used found materials based upon their ubiquity, obsolescence, and common availability in part to critique the commercial art market.

Conceptual artists feel that the form a project takes can help inform its content, and often look at the political economy that surrounds a material. For example, [Miriam Simun](#) used breast milk to make cheese in 2011 to create a speculative design project that questioned the economy of milk production. Process-based, community-based, and craft artists also see the sourcing of materials as integral to the work they create. [Zoe Sheean Saldana's](#) *No Boundaries Lace Trim Tank (White)*, 2004 placed handmade copies of Wal-Mart clothing back on the racks for customers to purchase while Alison Smith in her project [Notion Nanny](#) described herself as an itinerant apprentice who engages with “traditional” makers in dialogues about the economies and politics of the handmade.

Environmentally-conscious artists realize that all materials come from the earth and they aim to make work that can be recycled, upcycled, or composted. For example, [Jennifer Brook](#) makes pigments from rocks found while walking, [Winfred Lutz](#) creates sculptures from accumulated detritus that is to the specific to the work's location, and architect [Alejandro Aravena](#), used over 90 tons of waste, generated by the previous Venice Art Biennale to create two entrances in the 2016 Biennale. [Wolfgang Laib](#) collects pollen from his hometown, creating vibrant floor installations as well as containers of pollen and [Basia Irland's](#) *A Gathering of Waters*, involves the collecting of water samples in a sculptural vessel that are transferred from community to community along the Rio Grande.

Socially conscious artists consider the relationships that can be built with people as materials are supplied. For example, [Kate Rich's](#) *Feral Trade Network* (2008-ongoing) tests the load bearing capacity of social networks by asking artists to add her products to their carry on luggage; enabling a network of personal shipping along the existing travel routes of artists. [Pascale Gatzert's](#) *Friends of Light* (2015-ongoing) attempts to engage an entire community in the Hudson Valley of New York, from the spinners or wool to the worker cooperative of weavers to the limited edition jackets made by hand.

In *Of Supply Chains* we consider the locations where artists and designers obtain materials, rather than the location where materials were mined, refined, or processed, because we wish to focus on aspects of the supply chain that are more consistently within our control. We might not be able to change the manner with which materials are sourced, or trace all of our materials back to their origins, but we can begin to investigate the locations in which we obtain materials and determine whether these are aligned with our intentions.

Locations to source materials include your home or studio, your family or friend's site, a community site, a business, a public site, or a commons. For example, you might use materials in your kitchen, your family's photographs, research produced by a collective, paper from a business, bricks found on the street, or materials from the ocean or the Open Knowledge Commons. [See the workbook to reflect upon your own sourcing practices]



Labor: Who is working on the project?

Labor practices determine the speed and scale of an artist's production. Well-known contemporary artists often reach beyond the scale of their own labor in order to meet the demands of galleries, non-profits, or commissions, relying upon contract workers, apprentices, or interns. Recall the fantasies that for many arts graduates begin inside art schools, of endless circulation and visibility: ten new artworks, twenty artists talks, and three solo shows annually. This necessitates labor practices that are impersonal and potentially exploitative.³⁶ Artists who work in groups can share skills, labor, and time. Collectives often acknowledge that in working together ideas coalesce; labor and creativity cannot be disconnected.

Artists who make labor visible in their work often do so to investigate power dynamics. For example, [Justseeds](#) artist cooperative members “work collaboratively both in- and outside the co-op, build large sculptural installations in galleries, and wheat paste on the streets—all while offering each other daily support as allies and friends.” [Tehching Hsieh](#) in *One Year Performance 1980-81*, clocked into his studio for eight hours a day. [W.A.G.E's \(Working Artists and the Greater Economy\)](#) mission is to establish a model of best practices between artists and the institutions that contract their labor. [The Carrot Workers Collective's](#) projects, a London-based group of current or ex interns, focus on the conditions of free labour in cultural sectors. Artists involved in [Participatory Action Research](#) methodology believe that those most impacted by research should design, conduct, and present that research. The artist [Jeremy Hutchison](#) asked workers at factories to “make a mistake” in their production, making visible the poetics of dysfunctional objects³⁷ and [Navjot Altaf and women members of rural villages](#) in central India have designed ergonomic water pumps within enclosures that provide protected public sites for women to gather for washing, laundering, and collecting water.

While artists often represent labor practices in their own projects, the labor that enables each project is often not revealed. For example, [Mierle Laderman Ukeles'](#) *Transfer: The Maintenance of the Art Object* (1974) involved a performance of cleaning and caretaking within a museum. Ukeles was paid a commission by the institution, but the payment of the on-staff maintenance workers was not made visible. If the social value of the all the contributors was integral to the conceptualization of the project, would the

³⁶ See Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture*. (London: Pluto Press, 2011) or Ben Davis, 9.5 *Theses on Art and Class*, (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013) p 29. **4.2** There are many links to the working class in the visual arts: gallery workers, anonymous fabricators of artistic components, non-professional museum workers, etc. Most artists are themselves employed outside the art world—the dream of having fully realized middle-class status remains aspirational for most people who identify as “artists”

³⁷ We have not been successful in determining how, and to what extent, the makers of these dysfunctional objects are compensated for their labor and if they receive money each time one of these objects are sold. See <http://www.erratum.co/products/>

compensation be discussed? Despite a long history of cultural organizing, art discourse continues to depict artists as solitary workers whose claims to solidarity with the working class is tenuous at best.³⁸ Similarly, in [Fred Wilson's Guarded View](#) (1991), Wilson performs as a guard, asking museum visitors to see the staff who protect the objects on view. Wilson received a commission and the guards - who are often artists - were not brought into dialog with Wilson.

Why is it hard for artists to understand themselves as in solidarity with other workers? Artists produce art by determining when they wish to work, what to make, for whom, and whether or not their work will be given away freely, sold, or traded. Ben Davis claims that "the position of the professional artist is characteristically middle class in relation to labor: the dream of being an artist is the dream of making a living off the products of one's own mental or physical labor while being fully able to control and identify with that labor."³⁹ Artists are often depicted as "free" to work whenever they please, without concern for compensation or future sales. In aesthetic theory, art has been theorized as "anything that is not a job."⁴⁰ This characterization often leads to expectations that it is a privilege for an artist to labor for free, that the promise of visibility is an adequate form of compensation.

Raymond Williams traces the historical conditions that produce narratives of artmaking that are focused on material outputs rather than labor processes, and on expression as separate from a job with a wage.⁴¹ Williams traces the rise of the Artist as a subject who sees artmaking as a protest against work. Artistic labor receded as "the properties of the medium were abstracted as if they defined the practice rather than being its means. This interpretation then suppressed the full sense of practice, which has always been defined as a work on a material for a specific purpose within certain necessary social conditions."⁴² When artists choose to reveal their labor practices, they confront this centuries-long preoccupation with medium and output in Art.

People who might be working on the project include you alone, your family or friends, a collective, members of a business, members of a public institution, or members of a commons. You might sew fabric alone in your studio. Your friends might help you assemble a sculpture. Members of a collective might help you write a text. A co-worker might take photographs for you. A public employee might provide research material. Contributors to an open source project might help you.

³⁸ See Julia Bryan Wilson, *Art Workers Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era*, (California Press), 2011 and Temporary Services, <http://www.artandwork.us> and the Art Workers Coalition

³⁹ Ben Davis, *9.5 Theses on Art and Class: And Other Writings*. (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013)

⁴⁰ Leigh Claire LaBerge, "Wages Against Artwork: The Social Practice of Decommodification." *South Atlantic Quarterly*, special issue, "Entrepreneurship," eds. Imre Szeman and Dan Harvey, 2015, p 575.
[https://www.academia.edu/15054268/ Wages Against Artwork The Social Practice of Decommodification](https://www.academia.edu/15054268/Wages_Against_Artwork_The_Social_Practice_of_Deecommodification)

⁴¹ Raymond Williams, "From Medium to Social Practice," in *Marxism and Literature*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 160

⁴² Raymond Williams, "From Medium to Social Practice," in *Marxism and Literature*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 160



Tool: Who has access to the tools / technology to create the project?

Tools and technologies determine the scale, quality, and formal constraints of projects. For example, Impressionism developed with the invention of the portable paint tube,⁴³ which allowed artists to work outside. Medium-specific artists often acquire the tools necessary for their work, but public artists and project-based artists often require tools for projects that change with each project. When form follows concept, artists often rely upon work for hire contractors or fabrication companies whose tools are not available to the artist beyond the fabrication contact.⁴⁴

Many artists seek out staff, faculty, and administrative positions in art departments precisely in order to access a wide variety of tools. When students graduate, getting access to their school's facilities and tools may no longer be possible. Artists often adapt their practices in relationship to the tools available: a sculptor might go from building large objects to doing performances. Collective purchasing of expensive and large-scale tools by weavers, filmmakers, and woodworkers often enables experimentation and ongoing development. Other ways to access tools and technologies include day jobs, apprenticeships, internships, community centers, schools, and residencies.

Some artists and designers wish to make the tools and technologies they use available to others. They may feel that the availability of tools follows an open source ethos, makes the process visible, or cements social relationships. For example, [Wim Delvoye's *Cloaca No.5*](#) (2000) digests food in real time and [Suplerflex's *Copy Shop*](#) teaches visitors how to make copies. In [Pedro Reyes' project *Disarm*](#) (2013) he turns guns into flutes and shovels, circulating tools for violence into tools for construction and music back into neighborhoods in Mexico City. [Public Lab](#) shares and adapts spectrometers and other open source tools with a community of citizen scientists, following the promotion of the [Free Culture Movement](#) of the 1990s "permission culture" to distribute creative projects. [Publication Studio](#) is an international collective of artists who use budgets from short-term exhibitions to purchase printing and binding equipment that then becomes available to members of the collective at the end of the exhibition.

In Supply Chains, we focus on the people who can access tools and technologies because the work itself is often interpreted based upon the tools used to produce it. For example, work made with Computer Numerical Controlled (CNC) fabrication facilities is often experienced in relationship to CNC sites as elite spaces with resources and power that are difficult to access, rather than democratic sites for neighbors that Makerspaces aim to become.

⁴³ <http://www.paintedetc.com/post/1051645636/the-paint-tube-was-invented-in-1841-superseding>

⁴⁴ Art programs are in the midst of debates around the necessity of maintaining and resupplying craft tools like looms and ceramic kilns. Other discussions involve thinking through the pedagogical implications of theme-based classes versus sequential learning.

Locations where tools and technologies are available include free software, the dark web, tool libraries, makerspaces, and collective studio spaces.⁴⁵ Tools might be accessible only to you alone, to friends and family, to a community, a business, a public site, or a commons. For example, you might be the only person who has access to the tools and technology for the project; you might use your own computer. Or, perhaps you, your family, or friends have access to a shared table saw. Perhaps a community or collective shares a printer, or members of a business have access to equipment, or members of a community college can access a ceramics wheel, or members of a commons access a composter or [Free / Libre / Open Source \(FLOSS\) software](#). [The Traveling Tool Library](#), a project based in Ithaca, New York, is an example of a mobile structure that lends tools for collective use.

Copyright: How is your copyright licensed or assigned?

All original work that you create is automatically copyrighted according to United States law and cannot be copied, distributed, built upon, or shared unless you allow it by license or assignment. As the Digital Media Law Project explains, “owning a copyright also gives you the exclusive right to prepare “derivative works,” which are the original works in new forms – for example, a translation into another language, or a movie made from a novel, or a revised or expanded edition of an existing work. Someone who does these things without your permission is infringing your copyright, and the law provides you recourse.”⁴⁶

In 1840, the anarchist and social theorist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon wrote that property *is* theft.⁴⁷ Many artists feel that a system of private ownership of art creates a system of theft; with collective ownership property cannot be stolen because it is already held in common. According to CreativeCommons co-founder, lawyer, and writer Lawrence Lessig, “there has never been a time in history when more of our ‘culture’ was as ‘owned’ as it is now. And yet there has never been a time when the concentration of power to control the uses of culture has been as unquestioningly accepted as it is now.”⁴⁸ From patents on seeds and DNA to Facebook user agreements that allow Facebook to take our imagery for any purpose, intellectual property law often protects private profit rather than the common good. Many artists sense the tension between a legal system based on private ownership and an ideal that art and culture should be freely available. Some art institutions attempt to take control of artists’ copyright by asking artists to sign a contract that provides the exhibiting institution, not the artist, rights to royalties

⁴⁵ Fab Labs, <http://fab.cba.mit.edu/>

⁴⁶ Digital Media Law Project, <http://www.dmlp.org/legal-guide/copyright>

⁴⁷ Demos, <http://www.demos.org/blog/10/8/14/why-property-theft-and-why-it-matters>

⁴⁸ Lawrence Lessig, https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Lawrence_Lessig

made in association with images and reproductions of that artist's project.

Artists who wish to challenge concepts of authorship and property in their work often make copyright an essential component of their projects. For example, [The Beehive Design Collective](#) creates anti-copyright images for use as educational and organizing tools, [SuplerFlex's CopyShop](#) encourages museum visitors to make copies of copyrighted works, and [FutureFarmers' Flatbread Society](#) turned a public artwork into a commons owned by all residents in Sørenga, Bjørvika in Oslo. [Sherrie Levine](#) re-photographs existing works of art, and architect [Santiago Cirugeda](#) creates free, technical and legal tool kits to help people recreate his projects. [The Free Culture](#) movement of the 1990s advocated for collaboration, sharing, and reuse of existing cultural products, and led to the creation of Creative Commons licences. In 2015 Getty Images demanded that the documentary photographer Carol Highsmith pay a \$120 fine for copyright infringement because she posted one of her own photographs on her own website. She subsequently learned that Getty Images had charged fees to many users of her images, an unlawful act since Highsmith had been donating thousands of her images to the Library of Congress since 1988 for use by the general public at no charge. There is a pending \$1 billion copyright infringement suit against Getty for "gross misuse" of 18,755 of her photographs.⁴⁹

There are many ways to license and assign your copyright. When you **license** your work, you lend your copyright to someone, controlling how they use it and how long they can use it for. For example, you might licence a drawing to a band for their album and also to an author for their book cover. When you **assign** your work, you transfer your copyright to someone else for specific uses. You can assign some or all of your rights but you are giving away those copyrights forever. For example, you might assign use of a drawing to a clothing designer for their website so that no other website will ever have that drawing on it. When you sign a **Work for Hire** agreement, you sell your copyright entirely. Anything you create under that agreement belongs to the person hiring you as if they created it. For example, you might make a drawing for a toy company under a work for hire agreement.

To make your work available in the **Public Domain**, you must lend (license) your copyright to the public as a whole. Under the Public Domain, anyone can use your work for anything, including commercial or political usage. For example, you might license your drawing with a Creative Commons CC0 license and opt out of copyright protection. Creative Commons licenses were created to allow authors to choose exactly how they wish to lend (license) their copyright so that others can copy, distribute, build upon, and share their work according to the license they choose. For example, you might license your drawing with a CC-NC-SA license so that others can build upon it and share it for non-commercial purposes.

⁴⁹ Michael Hiltzik, "Photographer sues Getty Images for \$1 billion after she's billed for her own photo," LA Times, July 29, <http://www.latimes.com/business/hiltzik/la-fi-hiltzik-getty-copyright-20160729-snap-story.html>



Encounter: Where is the project encountered?

Most artists and designers create work with the intention that their projects will be seen by other people. We call this an “encounter” with the finished project. The encounter might occur after months or years of preparation with the maker’s hopes that their desires to express truths, offer a vision, refine a craft, build community, or communicate without words is acknowledged.

While some artists deny the importance of the site of encounter, by suggesting that their work is uninformed by context, Miwon Kwon⁵⁰ reminds us that material and conceptual references in projects imply both a particular location and audience. Each site where work is encountered is mediated by institutions and social contexts and has norms and rules that govern the way the project is experienced and understood. Simon Sheikh, in his article “Positively White Cube Revisited,” also reminds us how museums and commercial galleries are described as neutral spaces, supporting a vision of artworks as timeless and outside of political or social context..⁵¹

People arrive at sites of encounter when they are open — often only during normal business hours — with expectations about whether or not they can touch the project, about how loud they can be, and about whether or not they can introduce themselves to other people in the space. Artists like [Andrea Fraser](#) demonstrate the social norms of galleries and museums by breaking them. In her performance, *Little Frank and His Carp* (2001) she rubs her body against the Guggenheim Bilbao as she listens to an audio guide.

Other artists are interested in addressing the histories and politics of “encounters” in museums and galleries. For example, [Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco](#) in the *The Year of the White Bear and Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West* (1992–1994), exhibited themselves in a cage in museums and at arts festivals. Performing as “authentic” Amerindians, their project recalled the history and practice of exhibiting human beings from Africa, Asia, and Latin America in theaters, and museums. [Hans Haacke’s](#) *Shapolsky, et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1 1971*, consisted of an installation of photographs of buildings, and diagrams with data about their ownership and assessed land value. The exhibition of this project was scheduled for the Guggenheim Museum but was cancelled a month and a half before its opening due to the speculation that members of the museum’s board of trustees were connected to the real estate group and their holdings. [Fred Wilson](#), whose project *Mining the Museum*, (1992–3) involved reassembling the collection at the Maryland Historical Society to make visible the curatorial biases that under-played the role of colonization, slavery and abolition in the State’s history.

⁵⁰ See Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002)

⁵¹ Simon Sheikh, “Positively White Cube Revisited,” *E-Flux*, 2009
<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/positively-white-cube-revisited/>

Also, the [Guerrilla Girls](#) (1985-present) have focused on gender and racial inequalities in the arts through a series of poster campaigns that aim to alert people to who is *un*-encountered and underrepresented in museums and galleries.

[Linda Goode-Bryant](#) speaking about racism in New York City's art system in the 1970s, reminds us that no universal viewer exists. Artist-centric spaces in New York City like [Just Above Midtown](#), Wow Cafe Theater and [El Museo del Barrio](#) were founded precisely because the art histories represented in elite museums and galleries predominantly excluded black, queer, and Puerto Rican artists.⁵² Community spaces, homes, work spaces, and other convivial sites of encounter are often chosen by artists for their capacity to embrace or create dialogue. [Common Field](#), a visual arts organizing network, includes providing spaces and platforms for reception, and exchange. They also organize the semi-annual [Hand in Glove](#) conference to gather spaces with shared goals for artists.⁵³

Artist's exploring the boundaries between art and life⁵⁴ often shift the terms of encounter through participatory, and dialogical practices that take place in "non" art designated sites. The sound collective [Ultra-red](#) often brings community groups together in their churches or community centers to facilitate listening practices that have no representational trace and the consortium Estar(SER) did a recent action (February 2016) at the Federal Plaza in New York City where Richard Serra's Tilted Arc once resided.⁵⁵ [Dread Scott's](#), performance *Money to Burn* (2010) took place on Wall Street where among traders and tourists he burned money while encouraging those present to join him with their own money. Other examples of projects with unconventional sites of encounter include [The Illuminator's](#) staged projections in public spaces, the activist art organization [Women on Waves'](#) travelling boat (founded by physician and artist Rebecca Gomperts) that anchors in International waters serving as a clinic for women who don't have legal access to abortion and other reproductive services and [Penny Whitehead and Dan Simkins](#) UK project *Self-welfare: Something for Nothing or Nobody*, a series of self-help recordings to be listened to "...before, during or following various anxiety inducing situations that state benefit claimants find themselves in, from compliance interviews to filling in online claim forms, from waiting in line to be processed to Work Capability Assessments."⁵⁶

Projects can be encountered at your home, a family or friend's home or studio, at a community or collective's site like a collective studio or a community space, at a

⁵² See Interview with Herb Tam, in *Alternative Histories: New York Art Spaces, 1960-2010* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012)

⁵³ Also see historic archives of alternative spaces <http://www.as-ap.org/oral-histories>

⁵⁴ See Nato Thompson, *Living as Form, Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012)

⁵⁵ ESTAR(SER) — *The Esthetical Society for Transcendental and Applied Realization (now incorporating the Society for Esthetic Realizers)* — is a private, dedicated body of amateurs, scholars, and interested parties who concern themselves with the historicity of *The Order of the Third Bird*. This community of researchers works to sift evidences of Bird-like attentional practices in the historical record, and to present those evidences to critical readers. <http://www.estarser.net>

⁵⁶ See Penny Whitehead and Dan Simpkins, <http://www.disruptdominantfrequencies.net/index.html>

business like a private museum or public site like a non-profit gallery, or at a commons like a fishery or GitHub.



Narrate: Who narrates the project?

Narration is the term we use for the way a project is represented. We narrate our projects when we create a website, show documentation, give a lecture, talk to friends, or in any way describe our projects. Artists and designers who desire that their projects be written and spoken about in a manner that aligns with their intentions can work with communities, businesses, and institutions to shape each project's narration. We believe that by actively taking responsibility for narration, we can impact the life cycle and circulation of our projects.⁵⁷

Artists often model the narration of their projects on the presentations and writing of art historians and critics. Art History and Criticism emerged as academic disciplines in Europe and North America in the late 19th Century to create a rational basis for art appreciation.⁵⁸ It wasn't until the mid-20th century in the United States that an artist became a common figure on campus, teaching art and speaking about their own work.⁵⁹ Many artists and designers perpetuate the modernist proposition of art speaking for itself by saying that their projects need no explanation. This allows others to account for and interpret their projects. In school, students may experience tension as some teachers support the legacy of the autonomous art object⁶⁰ while other teachers require that their student's writing reflect a research-based practice.⁶¹ Narration is a site of contestation over who speaks, about what, and in which context.

Michel Foucault in his essay *What is an Author*⁶² addresses the relationship between author and receiver, work and context, calling into question the assumption that the maker determines the work's meaning. He asks: "What are

⁵⁷ See Eve Tuck, "Re-visioning action: Participatory Action Research and Indigenous Theories of Change," *The Urban Review, Issues and Ideas in Public Education*, v41 n1 (Mar 2009): 47–65. The indigenous researcher Eve Tuck reminds European-American researchers that many indigenous stories are sacred. She advocates for researchers to work with a Council of Elders in addition, or as a replacement for an institutional review board (IRB). Many restorative justice organizers rehearse the stories of others to seek their approval in advance, and then speak those stories differently depending on the racial and ethnic composition of the audience of listeners.

⁵⁸ See Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, *Art History: A Critical Introduction to its Methods*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006)

⁵⁹ Mark McGurl, *The Program Era*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 2011

⁶⁰ See Clement Greenberg's essay "Modernist Painting" (1960) in Gregory Battcock, ed., *The New Art: a Critical Anthology*, (New York: Dutton, 1966)

⁶¹ See James Elkins, ed., *Artists with PhDs: On the New Doctoral Degree in Studio Art*, (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2009) and W.F. Garrett-Petts and Rachel Nash, "Re-Visioning the Visual: Making Artistic Inquiry Visible," *Rhizomes 18: Imaging Place*, (2008): <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue18/garrett/>

⁶² Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. ed., Donald F. Bouchard. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 124-127
http://www.movementresearch.org/classesworkshops/melt/Foucault_WhatIsAnAuthor.pdf

the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions?" He continues this line of thought by posing this final question: "What difference does it make who is speaking?"⁶³

We ask: How can we create work stories that reflect the world we want to live in? By including production practices and supply chains in the narratives we share, a wide range of choices for organizing work, compensating workers, and producing art become visible and open to contestation. What might we hear or read in this narration, that is often left out of contemporary work stories? We might narrate our art contexts, not just our artworks, including work stories in 1) community, 2) collaboration, 3) labor, transfer, and 4) support structures.

1. We might acknowledge the ways in which work stories change in relationship to geographic, identity-based, or professional communities. We might practice our re-telling in front of the people who experienced it, and incorporate their reactions in our work stories.⁶⁴ Narrating a project beyond the scale of experience is difficult because we must choose which aspects of the project to reveal from the multitude of relationships, conflicts, and contradictions in our supply chain. Talking about a project within a community might come across as an intimate re-telling of a shared experience from one person's perspective, or this sort of public retelling might feel unnecessary because the listeners already know the story. For example, [Bill T. Jones](#) presents his work in three performance modalities, [Jeanine Oleson](#) asked performers to recreate a performance from memory in *Hear Here*, and [Adrian Piper](#) publicly corrects art critics to maintain her work story.

2. We might include voices of co-laborers or collaborators in our narration. Historically, many important women in collaborative teams have been excluded from narration and therefore public recognition. These women gained visibility as support figures or, in some cases, remained invisible, although they were the actual, unattributed creators of the work. For example, [Artemisia Gentileschi](#), [Camille Claudel](#), Jeanne-Claude⁶⁵, Ray Eames⁶⁶, and Ellen Wexler⁶⁷ were barely

⁶³ See Risa Puleo, "A Pair of Performances Exposes the Politics of How Museums Operate", *Hyperallergic*, September 28, 2016 as an example of a project that utilizes one work story to expose another.

⁶⁴ See Foundry Dialogues, in *Dialogues: This is How We Do It: Another Safety*, 2:6:41, 2012, <https://vimeo.com/41901087>

⁶⁵ Christo and Jeanne-Claude decided to attribute their work to both artists after 33 years of collaboration. "In April 1994, married artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude fielded a question during an art-college lecture that forever altered their artistic practice. According to Wolfgang Volz, the couple's friend and photographer, a man in the audience inquired after "the young poet Cyril, Christo's son." Jeanne-Claude, Cyril's mother, wasn't mentioned. A discussion the artists, born Jeanne-Claude Denat de Guillebon and Christo Javacheff, had been having for some time about fully attributing their collaborative works to the both of them, and what that might mean economically and aesthetically, was foregrounded by an innocuous question about the couple's most intimate collaboration. From that point forward — and in revision, as far back as 1961 — the works of Christo became the works of Christo and Jeanne-Claude."

<http://prospect.org/article/recognizing-jeanne-claude-0>

⁶⁶ "For many of their early projects, only Charles was listed as the designer."

<http://gizmodo.com/a-glimpse-into-the-life-of-midcentury-design-legend-ray-1546759663>

recognized for the majority of their careers. The inclusion of collaborators and co-laborers can take many forms: video, co-presenting, co-writing, or agreed upon quotations. Gayatri Spivak writes that, “the principle of quotations or citations is central: letting others speak in my text is not only a way of inscribing my work in a collective political movement. It is also a way of practicing what I preach... Letting the voices of others sound through my text is therefore a way of actualizing the non-centrality of the “I” to the project of thinking.”⁶⁸

3. We might narrate the ways in which our projects were produced, including labor and transfer practices. When arts discourse includes the labor practices of production, listeners and readers can debate the possibilities and problems so familiar to neoliberal economies (unpaid internships, precarious adjunct labor, unpaid exhibition invitations, debt-backed education) and practices rooted in solidarity economies (sliding-scale pricing, worker cooperatives, intentional communities, and free education). How this will be visualized, narrated, and represented is itself a creative act needing critical thought. For example, [Nicholas Feltron](#) makes data visualizations of all aspects of his life, [Cassie Thornton](#), [Maya Erdelyi-Perez](#) and [Helki Franzen](#) formed an experimental artist union, for art teachers in precarious positions, [Marie Lorenz](#) keeps a blog of work in progress, and [Eve Sussman](#) takes material and allows it to be edited by algorithm.

4) We might pay tribute to the support structures which allow us to make our projects, including our friends and family members and networks of mutual aid. We might contribute to the social practice of acknowledgement, familiar to authors who follow this format in books, thanking the people who have made the project possible. Solidarity economies may then be articulated not merely as “alternatives” to an unchangeable economy, but as already existing practices that are thriving around the world and in the arts sector as well, as solidarity art worlds.

Artists call attention to the conventions of narration by creating performance lectures, by presenting multiple perspectives by speaking as a group, and by adjusting the format of the lecture itself. For example, Andrea Fraser in her performance *Official Welcome* (2012) narrates a context in which an artist is introduced and gives an artist talk, ⁶⁹ [Mary Walling Blackburn](#) refuses to create standard documentation of her work, and [Future Farmers](#) and [Peggy Buth](#) create and disseminate personal research booklets for each project. Other examples include the [Yams Collective](#) who give public presentations with over ten members debating one another’s narratives and BFAMFAPhD who have refused

⁶⁷ <http://www.allanwexlerstudio.com/biography> Note that the biographical statement, “Allan Wexler and Ellen Wexler are a collaborative team involved in projects that are interdisciplinary,” is followed by references exclusively to Allan Wexler. “From Aaron Betsky’s introduction for the 1999 catalog to the exhibition Custom Built: A Twenty-year Survey of Work by Allan Wexler which traveled to San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Contemporary Art Center in Cincinnati and The Forum for Contemporary Art in St. Louis: “Allan Wexler is an artist whose gallery objects brings us back to first thing: how we keep rain off our heads, how we define space, how we measure our time.”

⁶⁸ Rosi Braidotti, “Embodiment, Sexual Difference, and the Nomadic Subject,” *Hypatia*, Indiana University Press, (Winter, 1993): Vol. 8 No. 1. p 6.

⁶⁹ See “Women in Performance: Interview with Andrea Fraser, Part 1,” *Bad at Sports*, (October 12, 2012): http://www.artpractical.com/column/interview_with_andrea_fraser_part_i/

uncompensated invitations to appear in person, offering instead existing narratives about their work in forms that have been supported through grants or other means.

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Artists also shape narration by creating their own institutions and networks that publish, distribute, and represent artist's projects directly. For example, Art + Feminism⁷¹ was founded in 2014 by Siân Evans, Jacqueline Mabey, Michael Mandiberg, and Laurel Ptak, to organize Wikipedia Edit-a-thon's that both ensure women in the arts are included in this online encyclopedia, and to increase the percentage of Wikipedia's contributors who are female. The visual artists Anton Vidokle and Julieta Aranda founded the business [e-flux](#) in 1996 as a paid service to distribute press releases and to fund project spaces, events, and publications. The poet Kenneth Goldsmith founded [UbuWeb](#) in 1996 to freely distribute avant-garde materials regardless of their copyright status, and a group of artists including Sol Lewitt and Lucy Lippard founded [Printed Matter](#) in 1976 to make space for artists' publications; this led to Printed Matter's founding of the NY Art Book Fair in 2005. [Antonio Serna's](#) project *Documents of Resistance* reveals the lack of narration about the impact artists of color had on art activism in the 1960s.

As we recognize the power of narration to make practices visible and open to contestation, we also recognize the challenges in representing supply chains. We have seen the difficulty people have in tracing supply chains in other fields, including common practices such as "acknowledgements" in literature, "credits" in film, music/dance, and emergent practices like supply chain diagrams in service design⁷², videos of construction in architecture,⁷³ and lists of participants in visual art projects.⁷⁴ Typical work stories are shaped to create author's privilege, originality, and to accrue cultural capital or monetary value.

Even when artists co-create with others outside of their fields of expertise in what is called socially engaged or embedded practice there are few cultural frameworks to narrate what is truly shared, enacted, transformed, and sustained. The narration of [Project Row Houses](#), initiated by Rick Lowe, is an example of how complicated it can become for an artist to be the spokesperson for a project that has many actors.

We wish to acknowledge that supply chain narration is both our central focus and also an uncharted path in the visual arts. We ask: how can we navigate our projects' supply chains in ways that are both compelling and representative of the projects themselves without undermining the importance of a public's encounter with them? If we approach supply chain narrations as a set of practices and tools in

⁷⁰ Given that the out of pocket expenses for two members of BFAMFAPhD would be \$1,000 each to speak on a panel on adjunct labor at the College Art Association 2016 in Washington DC we decided that we would a video to represent us.

<http://conference.collegeart.org/programs/pink-collars-or-pink-shackles-how-the-adjunct-teaching-crisis-threatens-womens-lives-and-careers/>

⁷¹ Art and Feminism, "Only ten percent of Wikipedia contributors identify as female [in 2014]."

<http://art.plusfeminism.org/>

⁷² Service Design, <https://serviceinnovationhandbook.org/>

⁷³ See Venice Architecture Biennial 2016, <http://www.labiennale.org/en/architecture/news/18-07.html>

⁷⁴ For example, the Mildreds Lane newsletter lists fellows and artists equally.

which to emphasize and understand the implications of thinking about projects as sets of social relationships rather than fixed entities produced by solitary authors⁷⁵ then we support and reproduce solidarity art worlds.

The project can be narrated by the author, or by friends and family, community, staff in a business or public institution, or with members of a commons. For example, an author might give a presentation, friends and family might talk about the project, members of a community might write about a project, staff at a business might write text for the project website, staff at a non-profit might give a presentation about a project, or members of a listerv like Nettime might talk about the project. An author might work collaboratively with the groups above, or they might approve institutionally-produced narrations before they appear in public. The larger the institution, the more likely the institution is to control the written and spoken work stories related to any project.



Acquire: Who acquires the project?

Acquisition legitimizes projects by providing storage, maintenance, and visibility for the project so that it will be available to current and future generations. Artists and designers often dream that their projects will be acquired by an influential institution, typically by a library or museum. While museums may not pay artists to acquire their projects,⁷⁶ and have been known to obtain the objects in their collections illegally⁷⁷ and to deaccession artworks without contacting artists or collectors⁷⁸, artists' resumes which list artworks held in public collections represent enormous cultural capital.

Some artists and designers, however, believe that their projects should be cared for and acquired by people who share similar cultural, political, or environmental concerns. Recognizing that the entity which acquires a project will have control over the future narrations, encounters, and transfers that enable the project to circulate, these artists and designers have created acquisition networks that promote mutual aid, intimacy, proximity, and solidarity art economies. [The Fine Art Adoption Network](#) (2009) connects available artworks to collectors who otherwise cannot afford contemporary art, Antonio Serna's ArtCommon⁷⁹ invites projects to

⁷⁵ Please contribute to our exploration by contacting us and sharing your experimental narrations at <http://bfamfaphd.com>

⁷⁶ W.A.G.E., <http://www.wageforwork.com>

⁷⁷ See Repatriation (Cultural Heritage) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Repatriation_\(cultural_heritage\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Repatriation_(cultural_heritage))

⁷⁸ See American Association of Museum Directors (AAMD) Standards and Practices for Deaccessioning Artworks. <https://aamd.org/standards-and-practices>

⁷⁹ artCommon is a project intended to change the way we experience art by changing the way it is shared in our communities. How does it work? Art is added to a local 'artCommon', the community is then free to borrow the art in the artCommon. The artCommon is collectively managed by all participants in the community. From this collective effort new relationships are made within the community on an individual and collective level. A pilot program in Jackson Height was included in the [Queens International 2013](#) at Queens Museum, New York. Project website: www.artcommons.org

be held within a community and to circulate throughout the homes of neighbors, and Julia Sherman's Art Tag Sale⁸⁰ makes space for early /unsold works by artists to be sold anonymously in community centers for under fifty dollars.

Artists and designers who negate conventions of acquisition often do so to question notions of individual ownership. For example, Professor William H. Jackson willed an oak tree to itself in 1832, and *The Tree that Owns Itself* continues to draw attention.⁸¹ And the artist [Caleb Larsen's](#) *A Tool to Deceive and Slaughter* immediately attempts to sell itself on the auction-site eBay whenever the artwork is plugged in.⁸² [Pablo Helguera's](#) work *Vita Vel Regula* 2013-2019, (*Rules of Life*) was distributed to over fifty friends and colleagues who agreed to receive prompts for actions that will culminate in a public gathering in 2019, well beyond the likely date of Helguera's death. [Whitney Develle](#), provides free, day-long tattooing sessions to people with a history of self-harm who want to conceal their scars. In [George Maciunas'](#) drawing *Last Will* he leaves instructions for the sale of all his Fluxus archives, prototypes, and original documents to be sold to pay off various debts and expenses.⁸³ [Adrian Piper's](#) *What Will Become of Me?* consists of honey jars with an accumulating collection of her hair and fingernails. At the time of her death the last jar will be filled with her cremated remains completing the work. Included as wall text is a notarized statement donating the work to The Museum of Modern Art. [João Enxuto & Erica Love's](#) *Art project 2023*, describes how Google acquires the Breuer building, home to both the Whitney Museum of Art and recently the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, and replaces it with a 3D replica in order to better interface with their Google Art Project. Lastly, [Will Brown](#), curated *Illegitimate Business*, an exhibition exploring the life of an artwork after it leaves an artist's hands. It included well known works loaned by various individuals who had acquired the works without paying for them.

The Serpentine Gallery in 1995 curated the exhibition *Take Me (I'm Yours)*, subsequently re-staged in Paris (2014) and at The Jewish Museum in New York (2016).⁸⁴ In each iteration artists contributed objects that might function as both utilitarian or decorative objects to be, in some cases, acquired by visitors. Each institution's narrative suggests that by allowing strangers to acquire works of art it is challenging conventional notions of value. However, we would argue that the

⁸⁰ "Part personal therapy, part naive entrepreneurship, we invite you to shop this collective purge of art, books, film and ephemera. As artists and art-workers, we all experience anxiety around our old work and our personal archives. Faced with these spectres of our former selves, whether from one's childhood or from last year the question becomes: what are we saving it for? Should we pull a Baldessari and light the shit on fire? Cathartic as that might be, the gesture is too grand for such a common problem. We've gone through those old "archival boxes" with our black and white photography. We peeked under the bed at our "early work." And we invite you to buy it, gift it, hang it on your wall, adopt a little piece of our *oeuvres*." <http://juliasherman.com/art-tag-sale-a-collective-purge/>

⁸¹ "I, W. H. Jackson, of the county of Clarke... do convey unto the said oak tree entire possession of itself and of all land within eight feet of it on all sides. Despite its vague origin, the tree's status is accepted in Athens. As one writer put it, "However defective this title may be in law, the public recognized it." <http://www.aic.com/news/travel/see-georgia-tree-owns-itself/nrCgk/>

⁸² See <http://dornob.com/self-auctioning-art-object-perpetually-sells-itself-on-ebay/>

⁸³ The drawing was acquired by Harry Stendhal who created the Fluxus Foundation.

⁸⁴ *Take Me (I'm Yours)* <http://hyperallergic.com/323417/what-happens-when-a-museum-gives-away-art-for-free/>

measure of the object's value, its cultural capital, doesn't lie in its materiality but in a transaction that falsely suggests a challenge to the status quo.

Perhaps Take Me (I'm Yours) offers an opportunity to think through the complex connectivity of supply chain actions. For example: How and where you source materials for a project impacts how it departs. Over 400,000 objects were produced for the venue at The Jewish Museum. Is this a reminder to heed the question implicit in Jane Bennett's writing — if there is an intention in our making that extends beyond the production of fetish objects for museums and collectors, what are its practices?

Projects can be acquired by you, friends or family, a community, members of a business, members of a public institution, or members of a commons. For example, you might keep the work in your studio, your friend might keep the work in their bedroom, a community might keep the work in their gathering space, the work might be acquired by a private collection or a public museum, or it might be held in a commons like Wikipedia.



Depart: Who is responsible for the project's departure?

Departure is the word we use to describe the final resting place for a project and the materials associated with it. Departure is where project materials go when the author and the public no longer wish to give them attention. Departure is the word we use to describe the final resting place for a project and the materials associated with it. Departure is where project materials go when the author and the public no longer wish to give them attention. In object based projects most often what we make has been created from other manufactured artifacts. In Barry Allen's essay "The Ethical Artifact: On Trash," he refers to objects as assemblages or folds that ideally can be recovered, reversed, or ultimately remade into other assemblages when ready to depart. If not, they have reached their limit and become trash. A state defined by neglect or the withdrawal of care. Allen continues to argue that artists and designers have little alternative but to design for reuse and recycling.⁸⁵

Art students are familiar with the dumpsters that overflow with paintings, sculptures, and disclaimed artworks at the end of each semester. Even famous artists cannot find institutions or people to care for all of their work. This often leaves enormous amounts of material for friends and family to sort through after they are deceased. Other artists believe that "there are already enough objects, more or less interesting, in the world," and aim to make projects that are not energy or material intensive. We believe that by incorporating the final departure of projects into the

⁸⁵ Barry Allen, "The Ethical Artifact: On Trash," *Alphabet City*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006) also available as a PDF <http://alphabet-city.org/issues/trash/articles/the-ethical-artifact-on-trash>

work itself, artists and designers can shift the fantasy of cultural production from the future into the present.

This shift is difficult because artists and designers hope that their projects will be “discovered” by elite institutions before they die. They often archive, store, and hold onto projects rather than giving them away, selling them at prices that working class people can afford, or recycling them. A familiar and dominant example of a work story can be seen on MoMA’s YouTube channel where the commissioned short film

I See links alienation to practice and success. A historian narrates an encounter with a sculpture, saying,

“...and maybe this is what the artist Baranov Rossine tried to convey in his work, but at the time it was so experimental and unappreciated that the artist took a sculpture similar to one you are looking at and threw it into the river Seine. He was so discouraged that he wanted the water to swallow up and corrode his vision. But later he went back and recovered his work. Why, because somewhere at the back of his mind he had a lingering hope that someday, someone would feel what he felt, see what he saw.”

In elite institutional contexts, narratives about artworks exclude as much as what they assert. The value of projects often accrues through the exclusion and invisibility of many people involved in the project’s production.

Artists who incorporate the final departure of their projects often do so to address environmental or social concerns. For example, Dennis Oppenheim’s Reverse Processing Cement Transplant, East River, NY, returned refined cement to the location of preliminary processing. The Salvage Art Institute confronts and articulates the condition of no-longer-art-material claimed as “total loss”, resulting from art damaged beyond repair, removed from art market circulation due to its total loss of value in the marketplace yet stored in art-insurance claim inventory. A recent exhibition Waste Not: The Art of Medieval Recycling at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore is based on the repurposing of materials “...reflecting the medieval view of the world, where they saw their era as part of a continuum, built upon all that came before, and recycling was a deliberate demonstration of that idea.”⁸⁶

Further examples of artists who focus on departure as content include [Phil Ross](#) who makes projects out of mushrooms, Claire Pentecost who composted the American flag,⁸⁷ [Daniel Spoerri](#) who invites viewers to ingest sculptures made from sugarpaste and [Dee Hibbert-Jones](#) who asked viewers to vote on the future life of an artwork. The artist Gustav Metzger and other artists impacted by the violence of

⁸⁶ See Allison Meier, “The Hidden History of Recycling in Medieval Art,” [Hyperallergic](#), (August 29, 2016)

⁸⁷ Paula Calvo, “5 Questions: Claire Pentecost,” *F Newsmagazine*, (January 26, 2015) <http://fnewsmagazine.com/2015/01/5-questions-claire-pentecost/>

nuclear weapons used the term “autodestructive art” in the early 1960s for works that “within 20 years, return to a state of nothingness.”⁸⁸ In *Flight Patterns*, [Susan Jahoda](#) draws attention to community displacement by mailing hundreds of letters from addresses where residential buildings once existed to similar addresses in other cities. Undeliverable by the Post Office, they are returned and finally depart in the Dead Letter Office.

The people who might be responsible for the project's departure include you, your friends and family, a community, or members of a business, public institution, or commons. For example, you might take your work to a landfill, your family might repurpose it, members of a community might ingest it, members of a business might burn it, members of a public institution allow it to disintegrate or fall apart, and members of a commons might compost it.



Transfer: How are goods / labor transferred?

As artists and designers, we use cash non-cash transfers to get our projects done. We often gift, barter, and lend to one another because we do not typically work for a wage as artists. Some artists make projects that are not for sale, some artists are contracted by art institutions or collectors but are underpaid, and some artists are entrepreneurial and dream of future purchases, relying on non-cash exchanges while they build their businesses.

Artists and designers who make transfer visible in their projects often do so to investigate how social relationships are implicated in the production of a project. Some artists choose to include modes of transfer — barter, free gifts, or payment schemes — as integral to the meaning of the project itself. Members of the public are asked to consider the economies in which the project circulates. For example, [Felix Gonzalez-Torres](#)' *"Untitled" (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)*, 1991 allows museum visitors to take candy from a pile equivalent to the weight of his deceased partner. [Antonio Vega Macotella](#)'s *Time Divisa* is narrated as an exchange of one hour's labor from the artist for one hour's labor from an incarcerated person. [Basia Irland](#)'s *A Gathering of Waters*, involves the collecting of water samples in a sculptural vessel that are transferred from community to community along the Rio Grande.

While these artists *represent* modes of transfer in their projects, the actual transfers that enable their projects are often not discussed. For example, a co-author of this writing, Caroline Woolard, made tea available to visitors who paid with a local currency at MoMA in [Exchange Cafe](#), but she paid the cafe performers \$15 an hour with federal tender. She used remaining funds to purchase materials rather than paying herself. While she used to foreground local currency when telling the story of the project in public, she now talks about the production budget

⁸⁸ See Glossary of Terms, Tate, <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/a/auto-destructive-art>

for the project as well. Artists rarely speak about their own systems of payment and exchange when presenting their work. [The Carrot Workers Collective](#), [Working Artists in the Greater Economy \(W.A.G.E.\)](#), the [Architecture Lobby](#), and the [Non-Participation Archive](#) all attend to the importance of ethical compensation in the arts.

In the supply chain, transfers happen multiple times, as each action in the supply chain implies and interaction with a transfer of resources.

Goods and services might be transferred freely, given in a network of mutual aid, or they might be borrowed, bartered, paid for, or stolen. For example, a drawing might be available for anyone to take for free, might circulate between friends, be available on loan for borrowers, or it could be traded for another artwork. It could be also be sold, or stolen.

We want to acknowledge the connections between LABOR and TRANSFER because we feel it is important to address the relationship between the two. Readers likely have searched for jobs, only to find unpaid internships listed beside paid jobs. Arts graduates may have paid for school credits in order to work in internship programs. In arts contexts with immense capital accumulation,⁸⁹ widespread networks of workers are engaged to produce artworks, many of them arts graduates and working artists who are (under)employed.⁹⁰



Support: How is the project supported?

We use the word “support” to consider the ways in which each artist or designer meets their own needs each day, in order to have time and resources to dream, practice, and work on any project. Support extends beyond the life of any particular project because support is necessary for livelihood and for social reproduction.⁹¹ Support ranges from past sales or grants, cash gifts, inherited wealth, and income generated by rental property and financial investments to credit card debt, student loans, mutual aid, and day jobs.

To make projects that may or may not sell in a country (the United States for example) that does not provide stipends for artists, a basic income, or social welfare, artist and designers must find other ways to support their projects. In this context, support is often presented and felt as a personal or interpersonal struggle for survival rather than a structural economic policy whereby wealth is redistributed more or less equitably. Support practices are often spoken about as personal

⁸⁹ Whitener, Brian and Dan Nemser. “Circulation and the New University.” *TOPIA: (Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 28. 2012), 165-170

⁹⁰ BFAMFAPhD, <http://censusreport.bfamfaphd.com>

⁹¹ Fulvia Serra, “Reproducing the Struggle: A New Feminist Perspective on the Concept of Social Reproduction,” *Viewpoint Magazine*, Issue #5 Social Reproduction, (October 31, 2015).

choices in mainstream media. In reality, support has been made nearly impossible by decades of divestment and policies that support accumulation based on race, gender, age, ability, and class.⁹²

















Artists who make support visible do so in order to speak openly about the politics of social reproduction, about the often invisible practices that enable people to return to work the next day as healthy and capable workers. For example, [Danica Phelps'](#) *Incomes Outcome* series represents the ways she spends money made from previous sales of drawings.⁹³ The [Non-Participation Archive](#) documents and makes visible the moments in which artists and designers have not felt adequately supported by institutions, and have rejected invitations. [We are Canaries](#) is a mutual aid network of women artists living and working with autoimmune conditions, whose conversations and projects confront medical practices and culture that insist on the duality of mind and body. The mission of the [Procreate Project](#) is to create a platform providing practical help and financial support for artists struggling to combine motherhood with their practice and the [Robin Hood Investment Cooperative](#) is an activist hedge fund which uses investments to make money for people with “minor assets” and to use surplus to fund commons-based projects.





Artists and designers can rely on many forms of support for their projects, including cash gifts or inherited wealth, credit cards, student loans, or mortgages, past sales or grants, day jobs, money generated by a rental property or financial investments, or voluntary, reciprocal exchanges of mutual aid.

⁹² George Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the “White” Problem in American Studies,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (September 1995), 369-387, <http://socialhistoryofhiphop.voices.wooster.edu/files/2011/08/The-Possessive-Investment-in-Whiteness-Racialized-Social-Democracy-and-the-White-Problem-in-American-Studies.pdf>

⁹³ Phelps writes that she is “tracking the money generated by the sale of each of it’s drawings. Each time a drawing is sold in the series, a window opens onto my life and I draw what I spent THAT money on. When the money is spent, the window closes. Each green stripe panel shows the income that was generated as well as a little cartoon of the drawing or drawings that were sold to generate that income. When a drawing is sold, I also make the next generation of that drawing which then becomes part of the series. This project will be exhibited in new incarnations quite a few times over the next year.”

Below is a supply chain action analysis for the free PDF version of the *Of Supply Chains* text hosted on our website, bfamfaphd.com.

     	Source	You	Everyone mentioned in the Acknowledgments section as well as all the artists and writers whose work has been cited.
Family / Friends			
Community / Collective			
Business			
Public			
Commons			
	Transfer	Free	
 	Labor	Community / Collective	Susan Jahoda, Caroline Woolard and Emilio Martinez Poppe for BFAMFAPhD and our copy editor.
Business			
 	Transfer	Free	
Paid			
	Tool	Community / Collective	Google Drive, Adobe Creative Suite
 	Transfer	Free	
Paid			
	Copyright	Creative Commons	CC BY-SA (Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike License 3.0)
	Transfer	Free	

	Narrate	Community / Collective Commons	Susan Jahoda, Caroline Woolard and Emilio Martinez Poppe for BFAMFAPhD and those who have downloaded the PDF.
	Transfer	Free	
	Encounter	Commons	bfamfaphd.com
	Transfer	Free	
	Acquire	Commons	Those who have downloaded the PDF.
	Transfer	Free	
	Depart	Community / Collective Commons	Susan Jahoda, Caroline Woolard and Emilio Martinez Poppe for BFAMFAPhD and those who have downloaded the PDF.
	Transfer	Free	
	Support	Cash Gifts Past Sales / Grants Day Jobs Mutual Aid	

Please join us in this pedagogical project by emailing us with questions, adaptations, and comments about how it works in your context.

BFAMFAPhD

info@bfamfaphd.com

Susan Jahoda

susan.e.jahoda@gmail.com

Caroline Woolard

CarolineWoolard@gmail.com

Emilio Martinez Poppe

emiliomartinezpoppe@gmail.com

