Editors

Editorial

These days, it is fairly clear that we consider art to be a trans-disciplinary field in a position to nurture other disciplines, and to be nurtured by these other disciplines in turn. As promising as this might sound, the terms for this exchange become significant, because it remains unclear what exactly we presume art to offer to the world. When hard pressed, we usually prefer not to prequalify the nature of artistic contribution at all, because in fact artists reserve the right to offer nothing other than doing work on their own terms. This requires a delicate balance, and it becomes important to ask: how is it possible to engage other fields while still retaining the semi-autonomy that delineates the artistic field in the first place?

Tom Holert's proposal for "Art in the Knowledge-based Polis" warns against the increasing use of the concepts of "knowledge production" and "research-based practice" within art institutions and academic departments. Though art may find radical new forms in certain approaches traditionally assigned to the social sciences, it should likewise avoid being subject to the qualitative, "results-oriented" economies of such practices as well. If art is to engage these notions, it must do so using its own approaches to knowledge and non-knowledge, research, and discursivity.

Monika Szewczyk notes a similar potential for non-knowledge in her essay, "Art of Conversation." When discursive forms are presented as an inclusive medium, she suggests that conversation may be even a step more radical in its acknowledgement of the unknown, consisting not only in seeing one another (sharing views), but in revealing one's own blindness—making one's blindness seen. For Szewczyk, "art and conversation share this space of invention, yet only conversation comes with the precondition of plurality that might totally undo the notion of the creative agent."

In the second and final installment of his essay "Maybe it would be better if we worked in groups of three," **Liam Gillick** looks to the experimental factory as a possible parallel to forms of art production that are deeply embedded in notions of work and life. As evidenced by the attraction of art exhibitions to industrial spaces, artistic production often enjoys its proximity to the model of an experimental factory. And yet, given the right circumstances, an experimental factory could surpass art's capacity for critical reflexivity by manifesting its promises in the form of a functional model.

Simon Sheikh reflects on Brian O'Doherty's seminal "Inside the White Cube" essay, which marked a shift in the perception of the white cube exhibition structure from a de facto neutral context to a highly loaded, culturally specific project—a shift from functional support to loaded gesture. Consequently, the space of art came to be seen as a necessary precondition for work to be considered as such, and thus a point for negotiation. By introducing a consciousness of this inclusion and exclusion, art's

dynamic paradox grows richer. Though the white cube remains a de facto standard for excluding non-art from the exhibition context, its use is at least to some extent mediated by a critical self-consciousness lacking in so many other disciplines.

In **Natascha Sadr Haghighian**'s conversation with Avery Gordon at a Whole Foods supermarket near the New Museum, the two discuss how, in the midst of an organic megastore, with its mix of vague, socially progressive slogans and opulent environmentalism, critical forms of resistance and agency remain buried even in the structures that appear to divert and quell their potency. With a bit of "digging" through time and space to uncover those original driving forces and their historical precedents, it may be possible to somehow unearth similar forms of agency from the very structures that appear to obscure them.

For **Luis Camnitzer**, the question is not what other disciplines can do for art, but rather what art—specifically art education—can do for literacy. According to Camnitzer, art has the capacity to radically transform the concept of literacy by reversing a core sequence in the system of education: that of reading and writing. Alongside the obvious need to learn how to read before being able to write, Camnitzer finds a parallel notion lodged in traditional pedagogy: in order to express oneself, one must first understand expression as a discrete system—one must be "alphabetized." In art, the inverse process is taken for granted, and if education can also find a way to write first, and find a system with which to understand what is written afterwards, far more polyvalent means of teaching and learning may become available.

Finally, in "Gaza—Beirut—Tel Aviv," **Bilal Khbeiz** reflects on the divide that separates those who experience war directly from those who express solidarity with the afflicted from a safe distance. Feelings of bravery and resolve are usually left to those who have the luxury of relating to the afflicted, but who are not themselves forced to experience the affliction. Meanwhile, those who are directly subject to catastrophe emerge with no such resolve, but with the selfishness and opportunism typical of unwitting victims. Problems arise when the afflicted discover a degree of agency in their position—an opportunity to justify any manner of atrocity as "self-defense," an aggression in the name of the victim.

——Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle

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