

FOX  
ANDHIS FRIENDS

5	Chronology
29	Michael Corris papers of the Art & Language New York group, 1965-2002, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 2003.M.32
52	Bibliography



# Chronology

IAN BURN

WHILE WE'VE BEEN ADMIRING OUR NAVELS/ WE HAVE BEEN CAPITALIZED AND MARKET-ED/BUT THROUGH REALIZING OUR SOCIAL-IZATION/MIGHT WE BE ABLE TO TRANSFORM OUR REALITY?

Impending economic crisis has forced many deeply lurking problems into the open.<sup>1</sup> Art sales are declining and there is an air of pessimism. The sense of opulence of the '60s has gone to dust. As artists, we have tended to understand the art market only in its reward capacity, preferring to ignore the "dismal science" of economics. But no longer, it seems. While it may once have seemed an exaggeration of economic determinism to regard works of art as "merely" commodities in an economic exchange, it's now pretty plain that our entire lives have become so extensively constituted in these terms that we can't any longer pretend otherwise. *Not only do works of art end up as commodities, but there is now an overwhelming sense in which works of art start off as commodities.*

Faced with this impasse, we need alternate historical perspectives in order to throw light on some of the most basic of social relations, to perceive the lacuna between what we think we do and what we actually do in the world. The historical relations of up-to-date modern art are the market relations of a capitalist society. That much I believe is obvious to everyone. What we've more recently seen is the power of market values to distort all other values, so even the concept of what is and is not acceptable as "work" is defined *first and fundamentally* by the market and only secondly by "creative urges" (etc.). This has been the price of internalizing an intensely capitalistic mode of production.

Given this, shouldn't we be scrutinizing certain historically unique aspects of our market relations? Have these wrought fundamental changes in the "art" produced? I know many of us have been grateful beneficiaries of this market. Nonetheless we have all ended up victims of its capriciousness, the "principles" of modern art having trapped us in a panoptical prison of our own making. Simply, this is the realization that if the arts were really democratized, we as producers of an elite art would no longer have any means of functioning — wanting to abolish elitism in modern art is tantamount to wanting to abolish modern art itself.

WHILE WE HAVE BEEN ADMIRING OUR NAVELS

Within the moneyed structure of modern art, the collector or speculator or investor does not openly purchase my (as an artist) labor power; both my labor and means of production remain my own property and I sell only the product of my labor.<sup>2</sup> What this suggests to me is that, in New York today, I'm operating on the principles of a lower and earlier stage of economic development, an atomistic stage of competitive market

capitalism. It strikes me there's little wrong with that. However, when faced with the larger marketing structure into which we're all born and live and which is vastly higher developed, we become easy game for exploitation by that market. As we well know, a monopolistic international market was already operating under full steam by the time conditions arose making it possible to incorporate the art-marketing system — hence the transformations involved were unavoidably more rapid, the changes unavoidably more aggressive and antagonistic to each of us.

This is just one of the many paradoxical social contradictions I find myself in — that I am a producer still working under the illusions of one marketing system, while being a consumer in another, more overwhelming system. So, to me the most disturbing question is: to what extent have the modern market relations permeated my atomistic production — that is, what are the changes this has brought about, and what are the consequences in my life? An answer to this may be pointed up in the actual functioning of a work of art in the market.

## THE ART MARKET: AFFLUENCE AND DEGRADATION

From the locus of the market, the work of art represents commodity capital; it acquires a market price which, being a function of manipulated demand and supply, virtually always deviates from the price of production — the concept of any sort of an "equilibrium market" where the market price is equal to the price of production is (almost) unheard of in the art community (i.e., price would equal the sum of the cost of materials and wages for man-hours worked on the merchandise). But why should an equilibrium market be inconceivable to me? Or, the flip side of that, how is it that the work of art is so readily manipulated in the market? There are a number of feasible answers — some reflecting attitudes like the romantic rejection of a per-hour value being put on artists' time (which reflects the fact that artists' time has never been commoditized — something I have great respect for).

Nonetheless, this is quite beside the point when the art market is acknowledged as an area of direct speculative investment: investing in oil-wells gives you few opportunities for increasing the odds of striking oil (though you may manipulate the "worth" of your stocks); but investing in particular artists or styles admits ample opportunities to manipulate the odds in

your favor. The degree to which this can be done is a peculiarity of the art market. You see, it is only my initial contract with the market that involves production, after that the work is strictly in an exchange market (not involving production), and it is this exchange market which determines the production "value" (what I get for my work). It's hard to think of any other form of production so exclusively determined by performance in an exchange market, and at the same time so free of legal restrictions — and hence so manipulable. Consequently, to me it appears that the work of (fine) art has become the *ideal* exchange commodity in our society.

Clearly, in talking like this, I'm thinking particularly of the market for "promising" artists. A distinction must be allowed between this sort of "risk" investment market where profits can and do rise spectacularly, and the "secure" investment market involving established artists (dead or alive) where turnover profit is smaller but guaranteed. The latter relies on there being a relatively limited supply, while the former relies on a continuing supply and where future price increase is capitalized on through resale of current production. With this in mind, it's not so surprising that, inspired by our market-dependent culture, there has been such an upsurge in investing in the "risk" area. It's also not surprising that so many "promising" artists are arrested by the market success at just that stage of early development, unable to develop freely any further. I'm also familiar with how difficult it is to know this is what is happening to you, and even more so to be able to admit it.

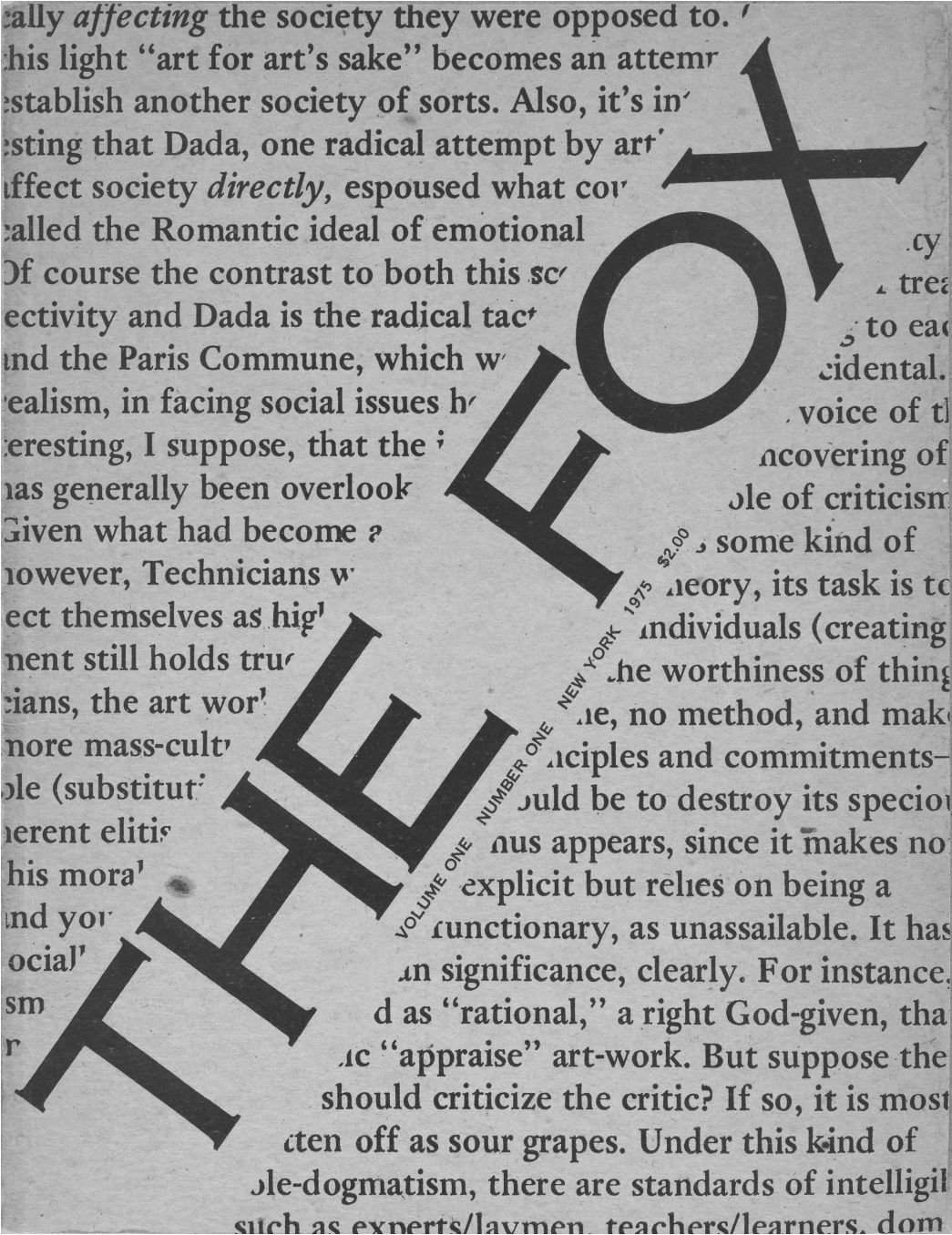
Being readily manipulable, what are the further consequences for the work of art when the market is, in addition, monopolistic? Capitalism as it developed in the U.S. is capitalism at its most powerful and aggressive stage — where we as individuals are constantly made to act as puppets who merely maximize consumption. It's long been accepted that, for this system of marketing to work efficiently, it can't help but be exploitive of its producers. In the U.S. over the past 15 years particularly, it seems to have been able to create demands for certain types of art, then monopolize the prices and the production in these styles. In some ways I suppose this was inevitable, given the problem of survival for the art market with its center in New York. In the circumstances of atomized production, the market was forced to provide the monopolizing framework.

But this sort of manipulative marketing has forced some very alienating consequences into my social life as an artist. A monopoly creates conditions which could never come about otherwise: I am "created" by the market as merely part of a labor force, an unorganized one but still a labor force. The size of this force has, significantly, augmented itself out of all proportion to the present market demand (I compare the number of artists working in New York now to, say, 25 years ago, to realize the probable truth in this). And remember all the while, for market efficiency, the supply must meet the demand and demand is now governed by market manipulation, not the market by demand.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, once the market conceives of me as merely a unit in a labor force, I'm also aware I can be replaced at any time by an

April 1975

The Art Market: Affluence and Degradation  
Artforum, Ian Burn

Previously Artforum had drawn the ire of Art & Language as the discursive chamber of professionalized art. Burn himself, along with fellow Art & Language member Mel Ramsden, produced annotated commentaries on issues of Artforum in the Comparative Models series from 1972. So, controversy was courted by Burn placing this article in the magazine, which coincided with the first issue of The Fox. In the article Burn conceives the artist as proletarianized subject exploited by the social institution of the art world. This view is contrasted with the critique of an artwork commodified post-facto by the market. The implication of Burn's position opened instinctual alliances of the artist with the working class and other new left formations. See A-L Volume 3 No 2 from May 1975 for the response of the English section to this article.

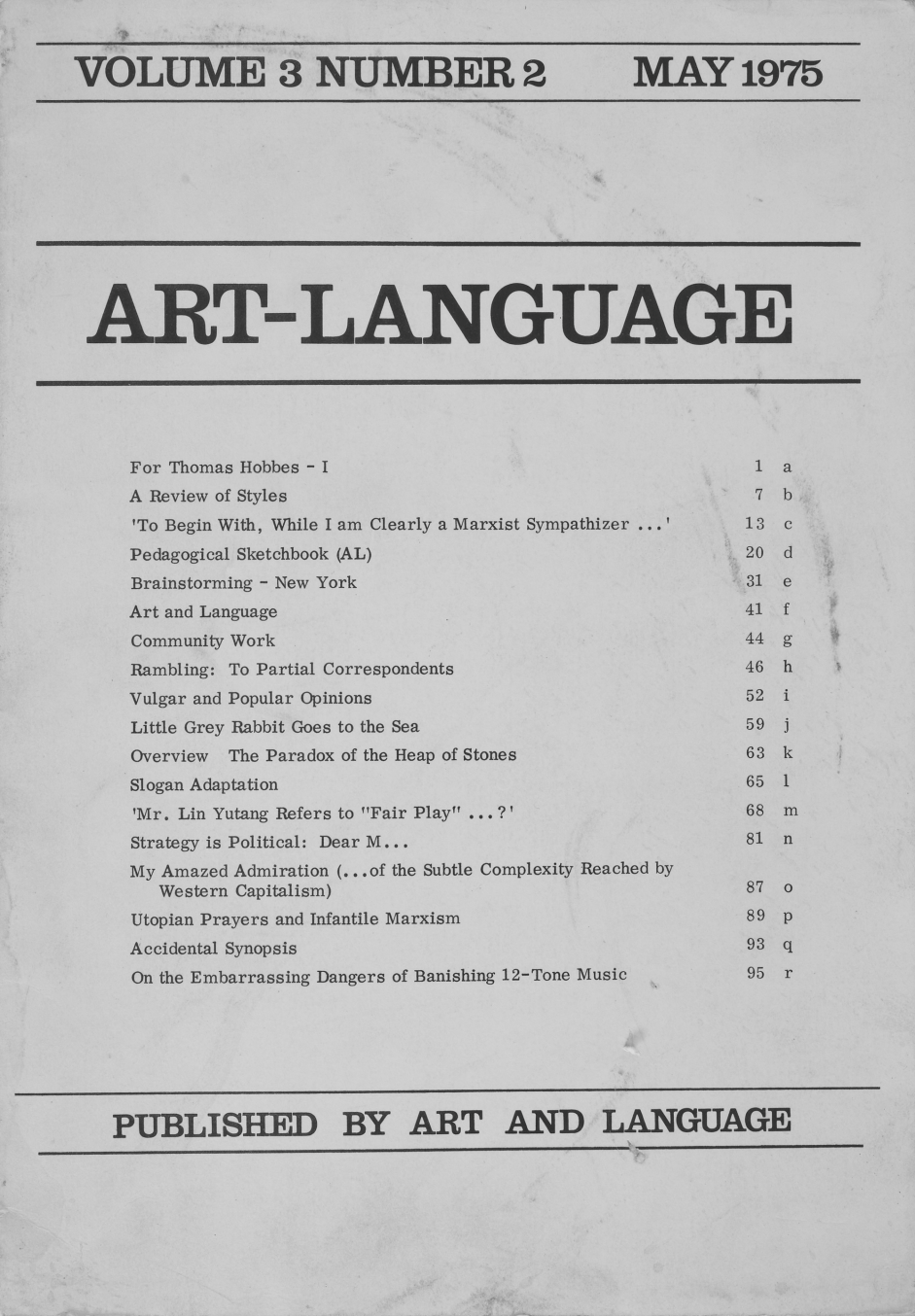


April 1975

The Fox 1

As in Ian Burn's text in Artforum, the art market looms large in The Fox #1. Andrew Menard dealt a broad treatment of the art market and how it structures production in Are you not doing what you're doing while doing what you are. While that text concludes with the synonymity of the art market with New York and how this centrality can be thwarted, other articles offer a view from as outside that market city as imaginable. Zora Popovic and Jasna Tijardovic write on the condition of non-Social Realist Yugoslav artists in their A Note on Art in Yugoslavia. The text also attends to the disillusionment with western conceptual art in Yugoslavia due to its capitulation to market forces, drawing a common position to the Fox group.

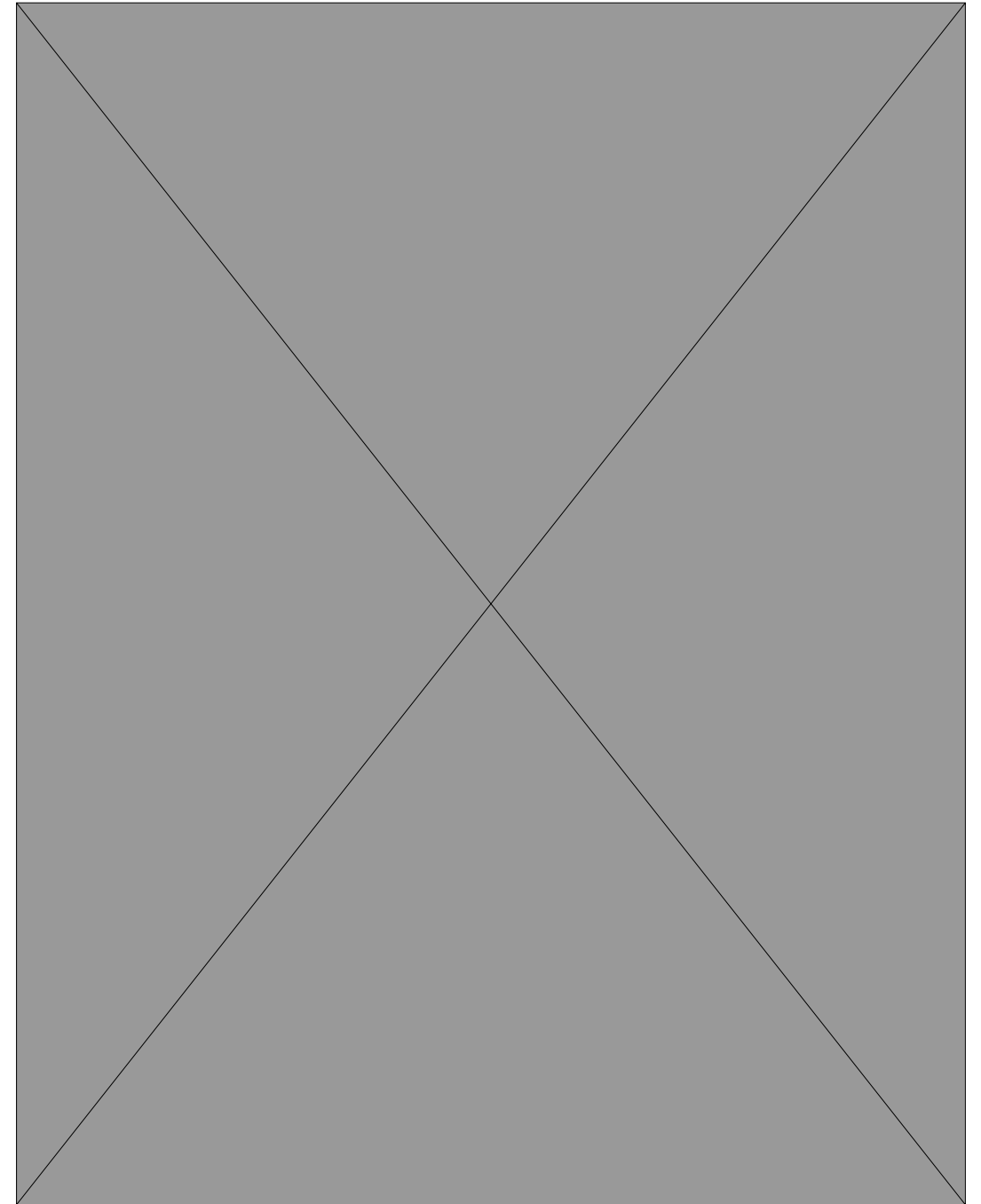




May 1975

Art and Language Vol 3 No 2

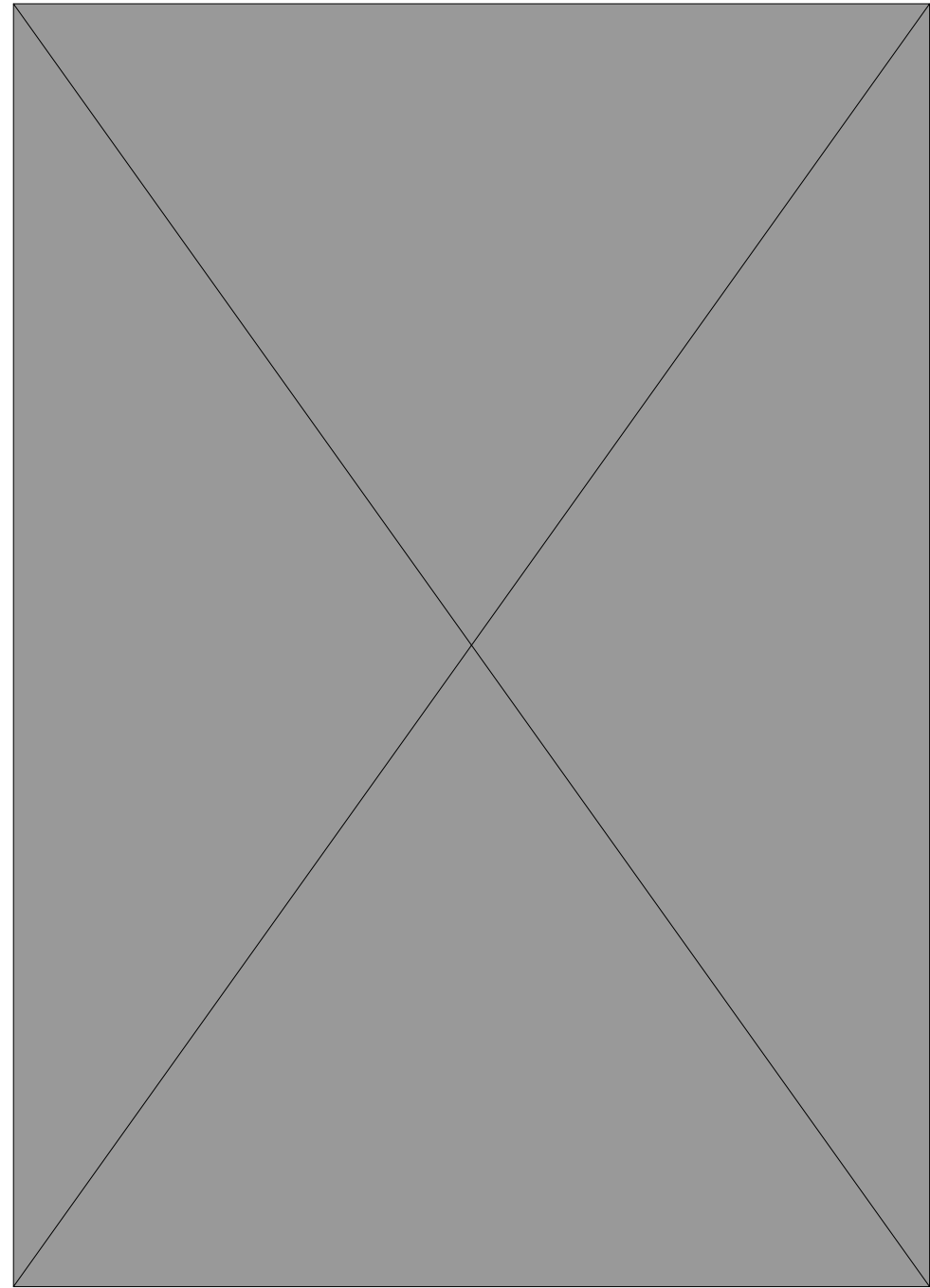
Art-Language is the original publishing project of Art & Language. This issue, the first since the launch of the competing Fox, featured fierce rebuttals from the UK section of Art and Language. In particular, Ian Burn found himself in the cross-hairs of the hit piece Mr. Lin Yutang Refers to Fair Play?. We see various figures of the historical left draw up a ‘party line’ to redress what was seen as malfunctioning militants across the pond. The spirit of the issue can be summed up in the closing line of the final page: “For example, as Dennis Wright said of a ‘political artist’ in Belfast: ‘The silly fucker, hasn’t it occurred to him that one side might be right?’”



### **December 1975**

Fox 2

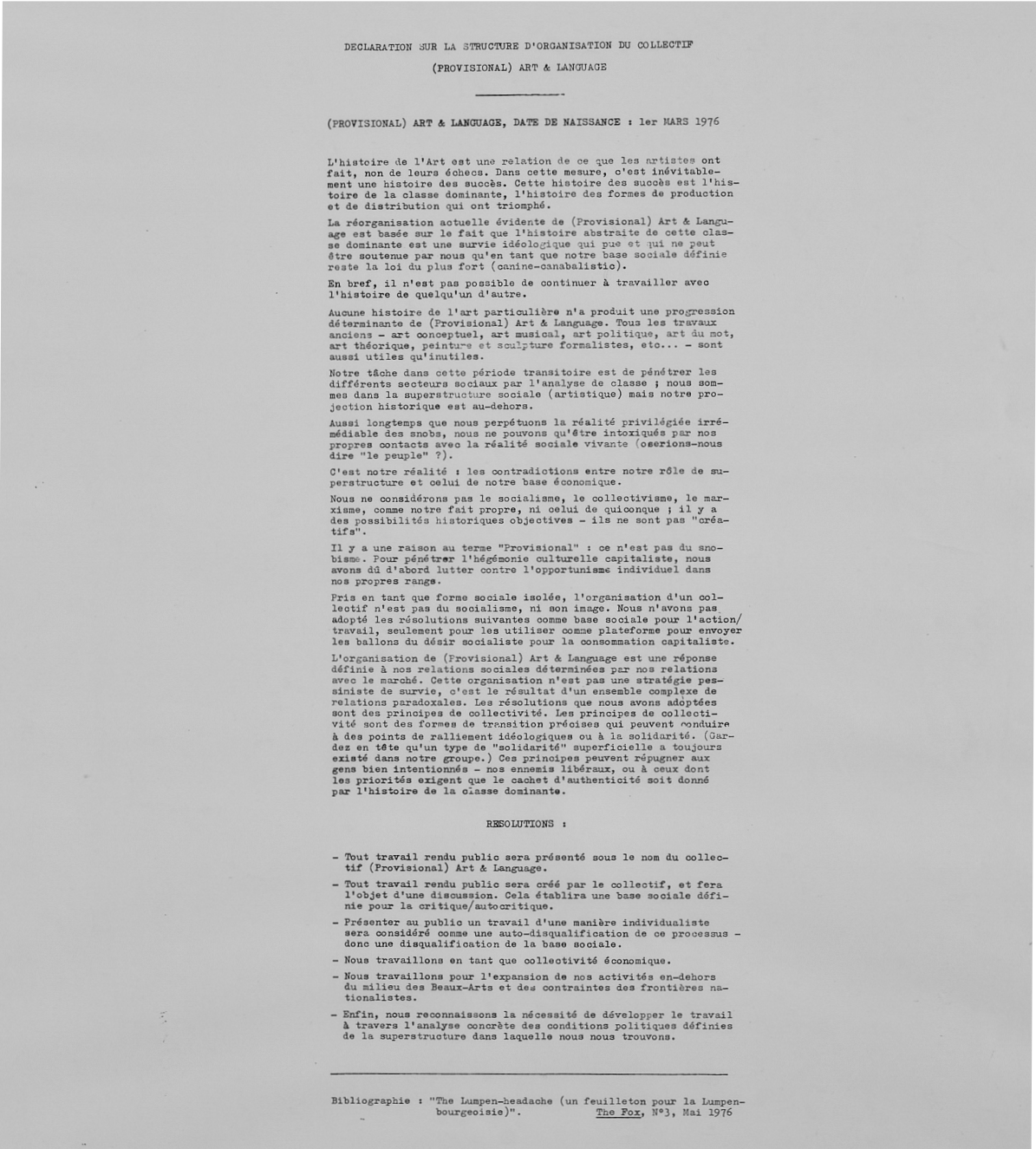
Aside from the intellectual disagreements between the NY and UK sections of Art & Language another conflict was brewing which united members of either side. Joseph Kosuth enjoyed a successful solo career with Leo Castelli Gallery and was the chief instigator of The Fox. Not only did his personal success contrast with the antimarket sentiment of the publication, but it seemed in part to rely on this contradiction as an exploitable facet of the artist's intellectual standing. To advance this animosity, Karl Beveridge and Ian Burn published a critique of Kosuth's mentor, Don Judd, veiling personal attack through the magazine's characteristic anti-imperialism.



**May 1976**

A que punto sei?

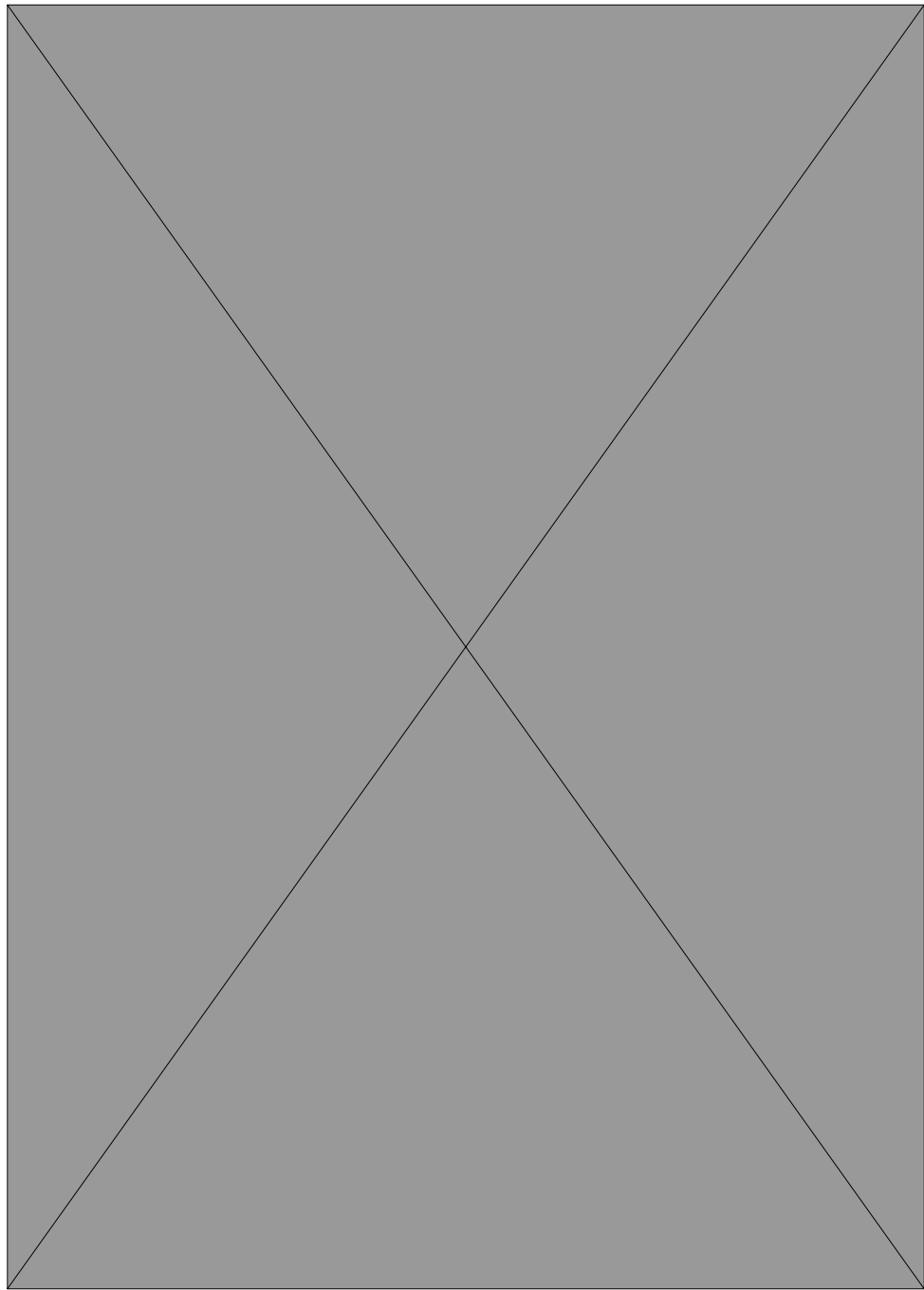
Joseph Kosuth and Sarah Charlesworth distributed a broadsheet in Venice within an envelope brandished International Local. This new formation took its name from the Mickey Ruskin owned basement bar The Local, a primary meeting point for Kosuth. The title asks the viewer “Where do you stand?” while the ornate graphic design offers labyrinthine orientation.



## April 1976

### Provisions of (P)A&L

The provisions state that no member of the collective may author works under their indiviual name. A new name for the group, (Provisional) Art & Language, is presented in the reosultions and was used for the exhibition at Galleries Eric Fabre in Paris. This was the result of ‘several struggle sessions’ in New York after which Joseph Kosuth and Sarah Charlesworth departed from the collective.



**May 1976**

The Fox 3

In this issue the list of editors is removed and we are left with the contents and authors. Lumpen Headache opens the publication, featuring a series of discussions deemed struggle sessions. The article features the nom de plume Peter Benchley, author of Jaws, while the cast of speakers has replaced by a species of tropical fish in Latin. Some editions, like the one in this exhibition, were stamped with a code to decipher who is speaking in the text. Of note is the seventh struggle session in which several “points of unity” are read and voted on. The requirement to relinquish one’s personal name in the authoring of solo works was a stipulation introduced with the intention of forcing Kosuth out of Art & Language. Although the earliest member of the ALNY group, Kosuth was seen to be siphoning critical credibility from his association into a prosperous solo career at Leo Castelli Gallery.





(Provisional) Art & Language

- 1- Corrected Slogans \*
- 2- 9 Gross & Conspicuous Errors \*\*
- 3- The Organization of Culture Under Monopoly Capitalism
- 4- The Organization of Culture Under Self-Management Socialism
- 5- The Intellectual Life of the Ruling-Class Gets  
Its Apotheosis in a World of Doris Days
- 6- What Would Canada Do Without a Flavin

\* Music-Language, Record, 46:51, 3PM

\*\* M-L, Video-Tape, 26:00, 1 & 5 PM

(Or by appointment)

**June 1976**

(Provisional) Art & Language at John Weber

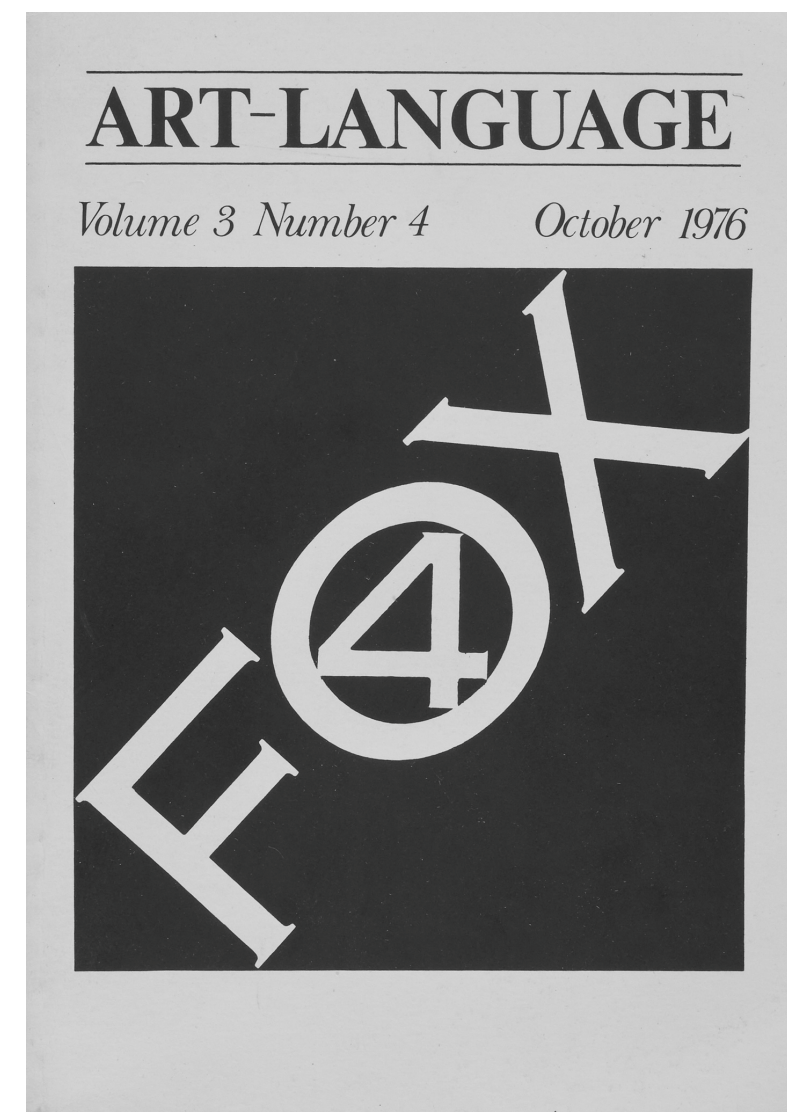
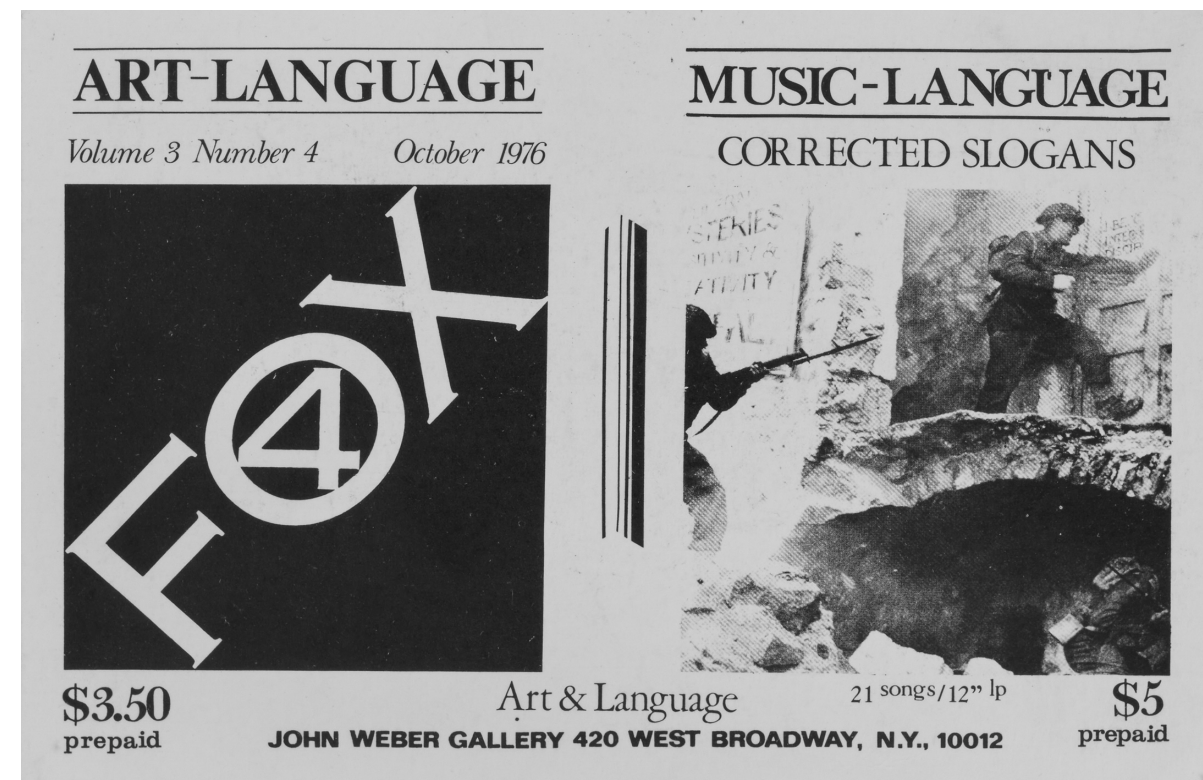
The exhibition announcement lists the featured works, to which was added the notation and lyrics for Keep All Your Friends. The song was the result of a new project by A&L called Music Language in which Mayo Thompson put lyrics by Art & Language to music. The Condition of Culture Under Monopoly Capitalism and The Condition of Culture Under Self-Management were presented as panels.



**October 1976**

Anonymous Broadsheet

This broadsheet was allegedly distributed by a disgruntled Kosuth following his exit from Art & Language.



# **October 1976**

Art-Language Vol. 3 No. 4

Brandishing an adaptation of The Fox type into FOX 4, the intention of the issue was to coopt the publication and show its subordinate relation to the larger Art & Language project. Published in October of 1976, the issue shares the release date of a new journal: October. The issue focusses on this new formation and culminating in the French Disease, a takedown of the French structural and post-structural semiotic underpinnings of the October group.



Fiction’s First Finale

“The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily,” said Oscar Wilde. “That is what Fiction means.”

October 21

By the time the Civil War was over and industrial capitalism had literally burned the center of agrarian capitalism to the ground, most of the emergent bourgeoisie realized that " public education " was a more suitable institution than slavery had ever been for the domination of labor, and that immigrants were a particularly ingenious solution, since they not only became cheap labor, replacing the truncated bodies of recent war, but needed to be educated as well. Of course, executing even this form of domination was by no means easy, since " public education " was merely another name for compulsory education; there was a prolonged struggle, and as a struggle it was frequently harsh, indeed deadly. Working class parents physically overpowered their children's teachers in sporadic attempts to control their education, only to be slapped in the face with *in loco parentis* powers for the teachers. In an early version of the ' programmed text ', immigrant employees of International Harvester were forced to learn English by reciting the litany of Big Business: I work until the whistle blows to quit; I leave my place nice and clean; I work until the whistle blows to quit; I leave my place nice and clean. There were numerous strikes against educational policies, some of which were bloody. But by various means of coercion and manipulation the bourgeoisie prevailed, and consciousness was gradually cut to fit the suffocating movements of mechanized labor. Reality edged closer to the flatness of Manet's " revolutionary " new paintings, sanity became a little more iron-clad; and by the end of the War the sweat and blood of industrial capitalism were more

St  
Joh  
son  
math  
to giv

(continued on p.3)



Organization: A Collective Workin

Many artists are, for many reasons, others organizing themselves into "groups", "unions", communalities, or not just talking possibilities. In most part, "re-ticul-

... make ... logical condition. ... rationalized and passed ... via the usual bourgeois claptrap, as the unfortunate by-product of "mass-production" culture. It is no unfortunate by-product at all, it is the very warp and weft of capitalist social and economic relations. It penetrates all social sections fatally. Thus, this en-

(Continued on p. 27)

Published by former editors of THE FOX

THE FIRST ISSUE IS NOW AVAILABLE IN NEW YORK AT JAAP RIETMAN, 167 SPRING ST. AND THE 8TH STREET BOOKSTORE, 17 W. 8TH ST. OR BY MAIL FROM RED-HERRING, P.O. BOX 557, CANAL ST. STATION, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10013.

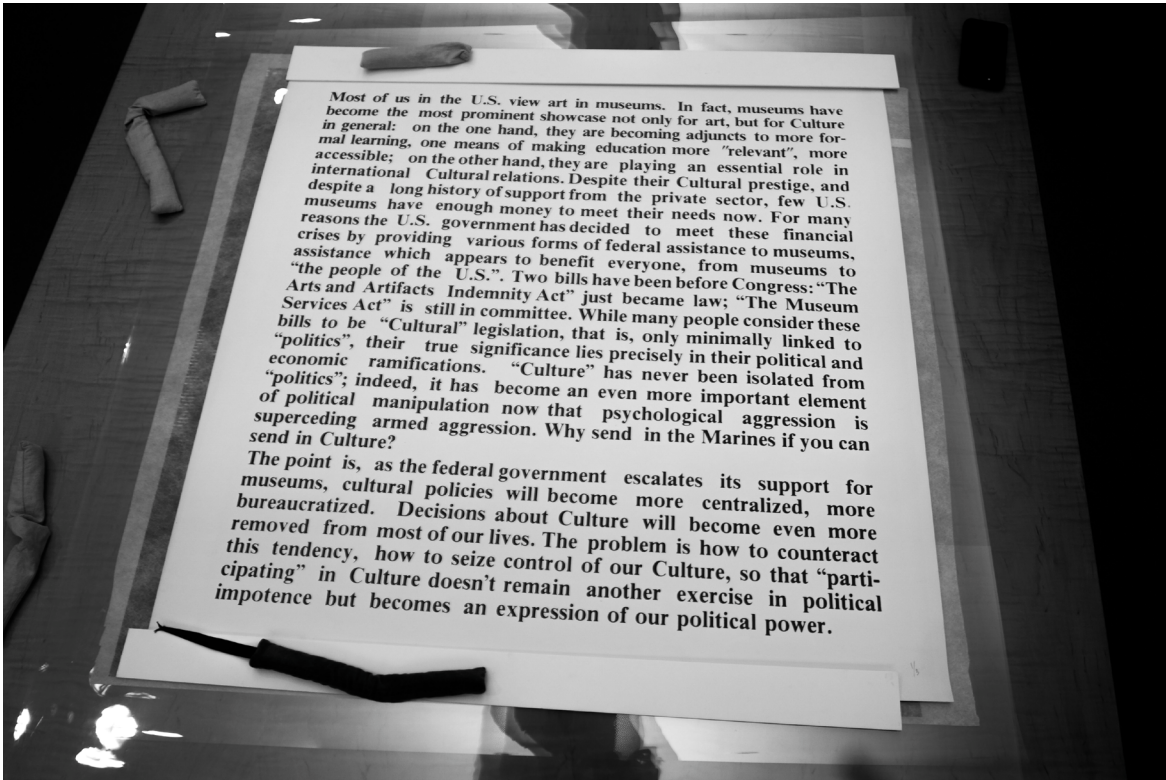
January 1977

Red Herring

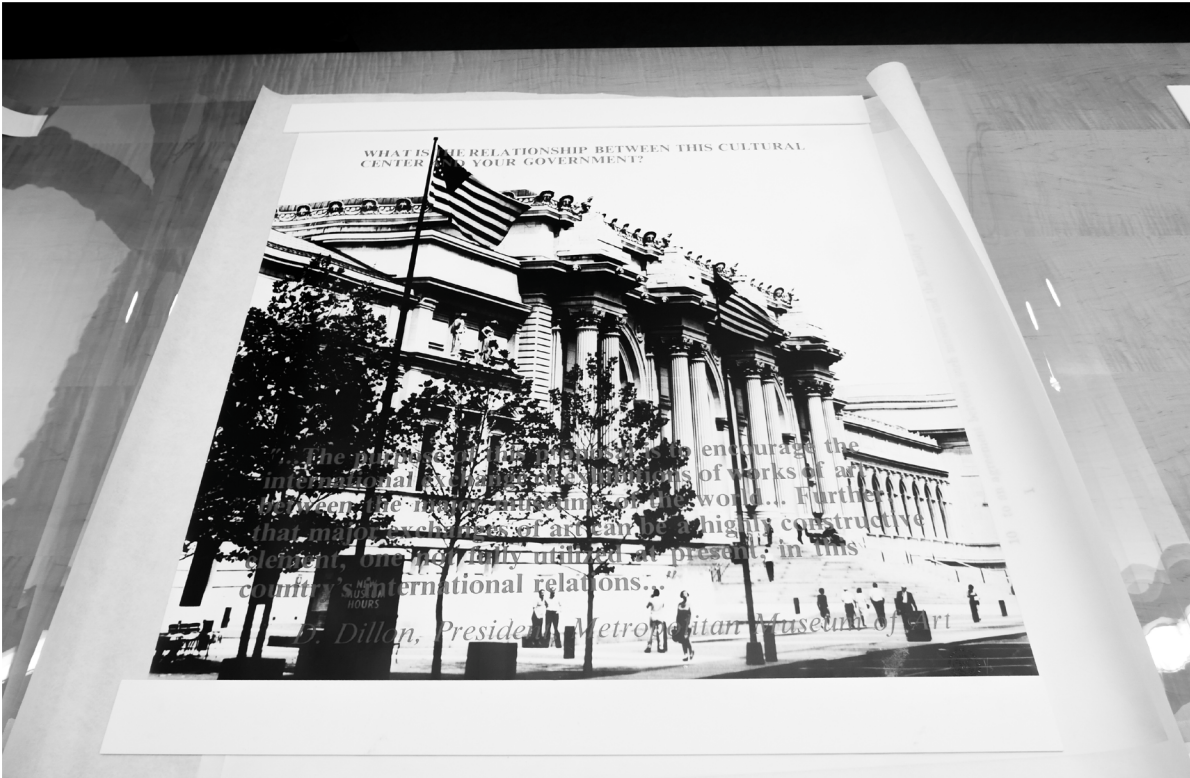
In January 1977 the core of the remaining Fox group, having fallen out with the UK Art & Language, would go on to found a new magazine. Those involved with the venture were Michael Corris, Andrew Menard, Patrick Heller, Breakstone, Ian Burn, Carole Condé, Karl Beveridge, and Nigel Lendon. No contributions were solicited from outside this group.

Michael Corris papers of  
the Art & Language New  
York group, 1965-2002, The  
Getty Research Institute,  
Los Angeles, Accession no.  
2003.M.32

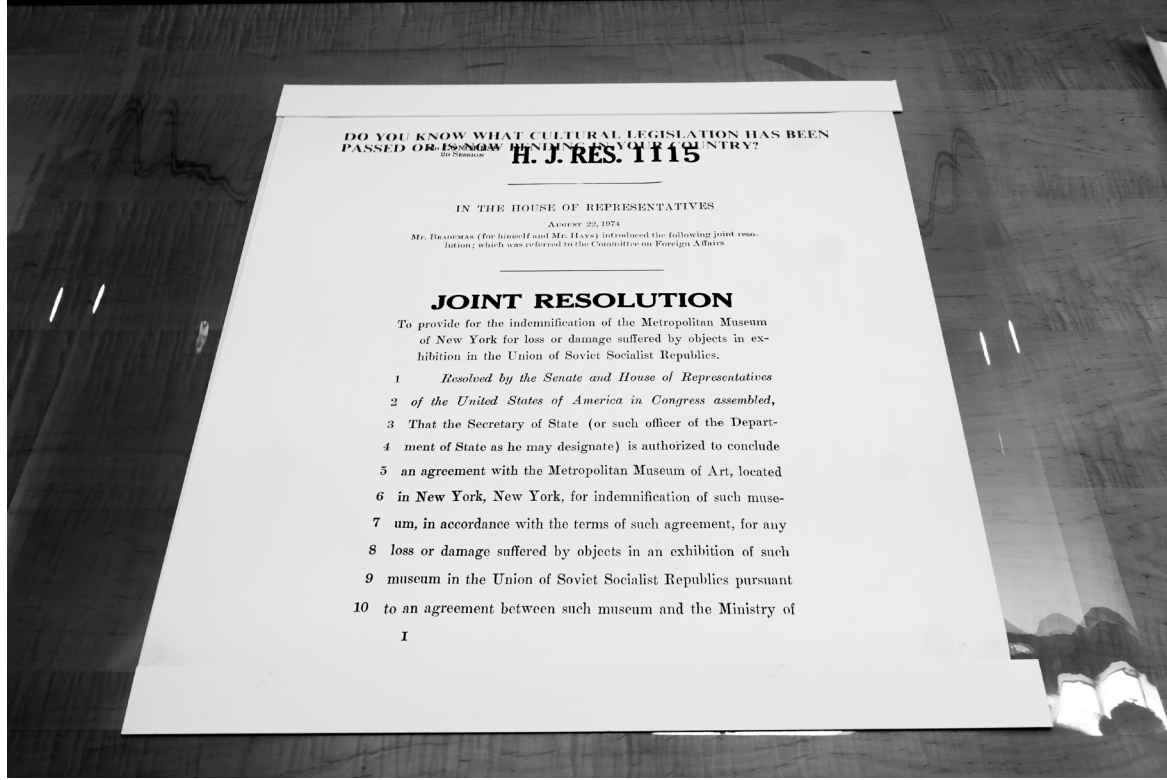
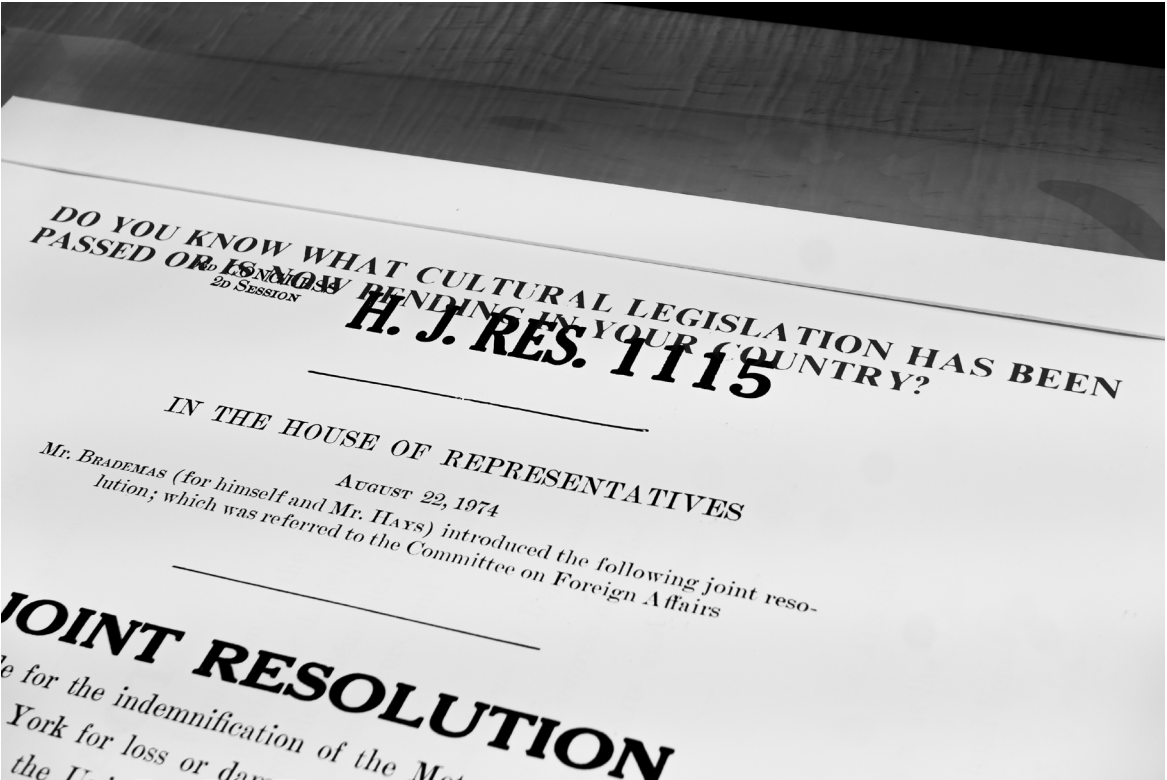




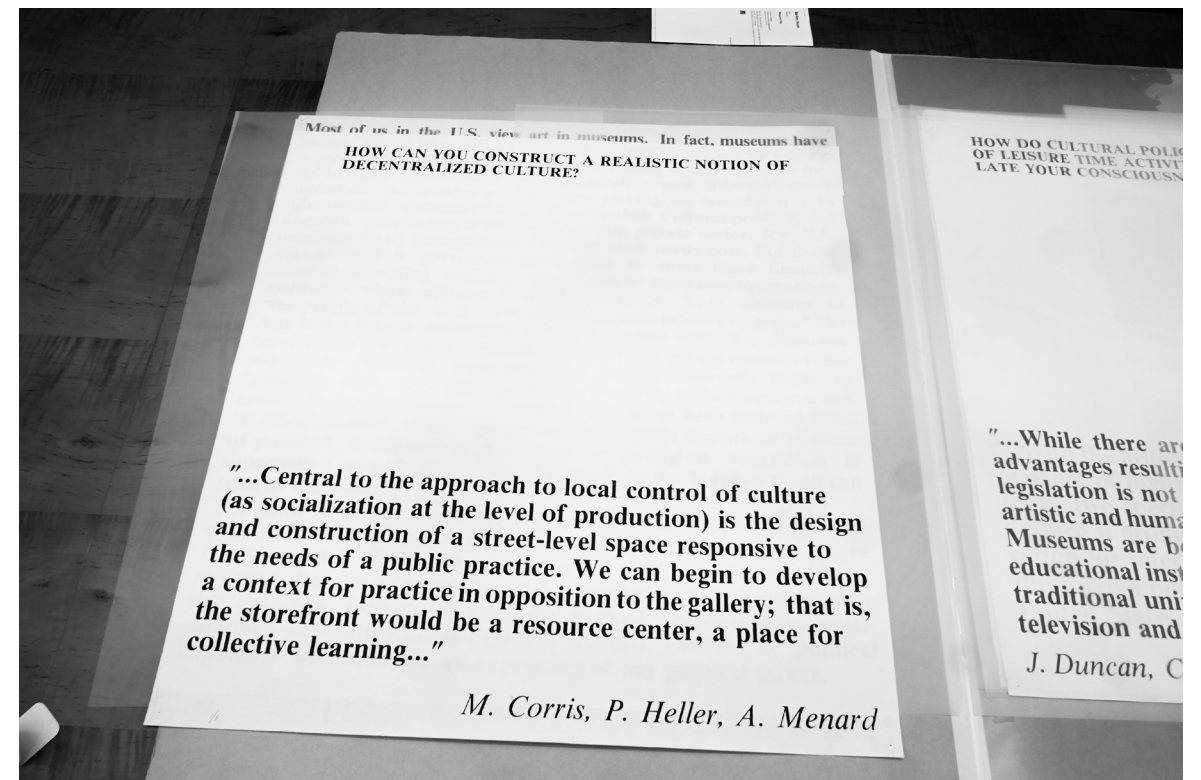
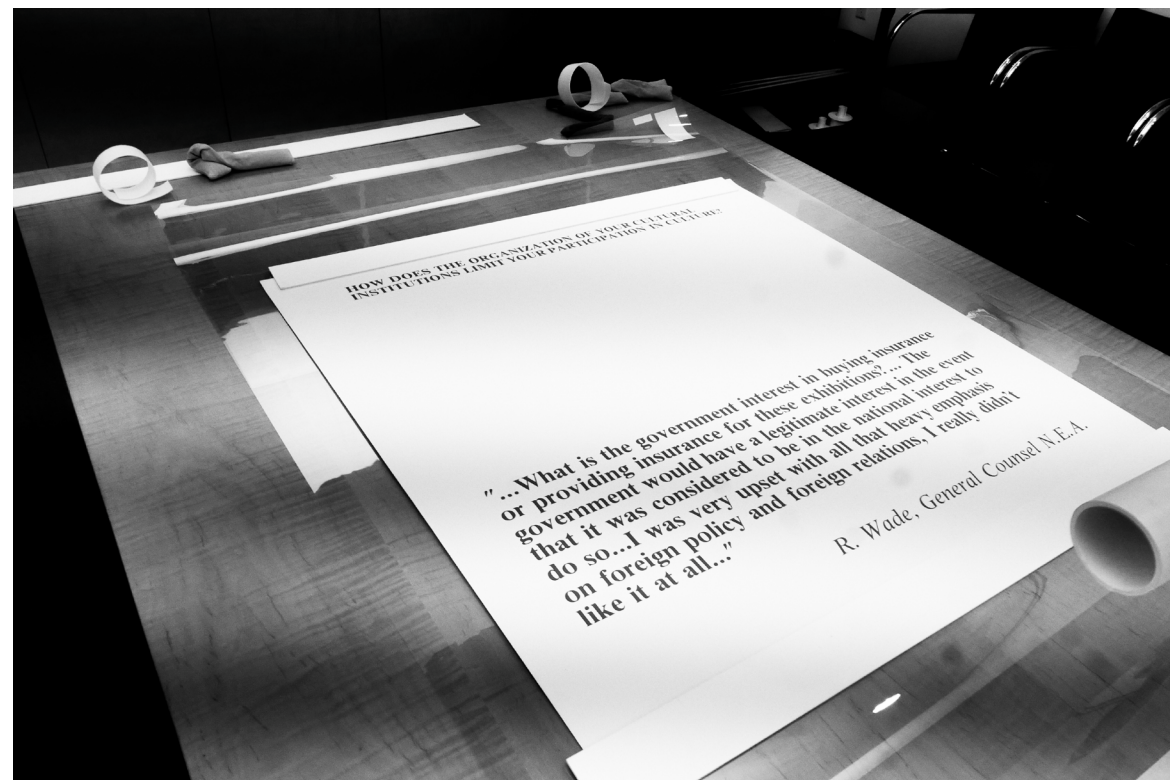


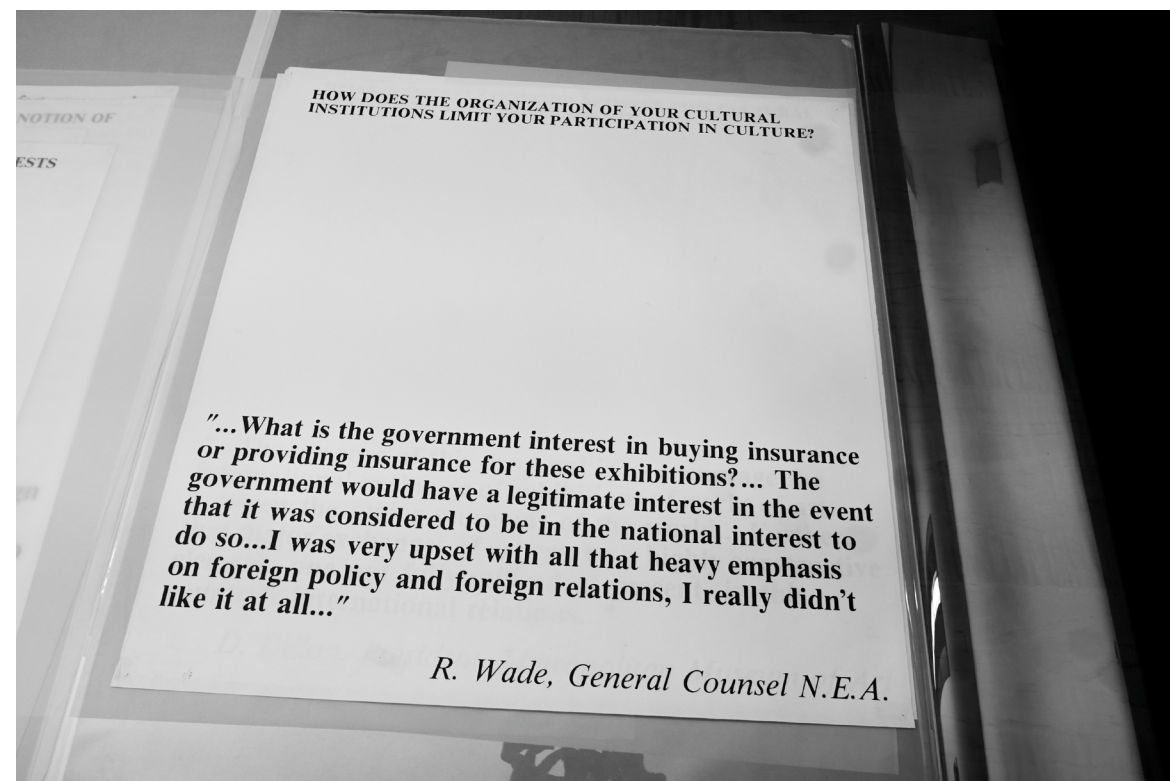
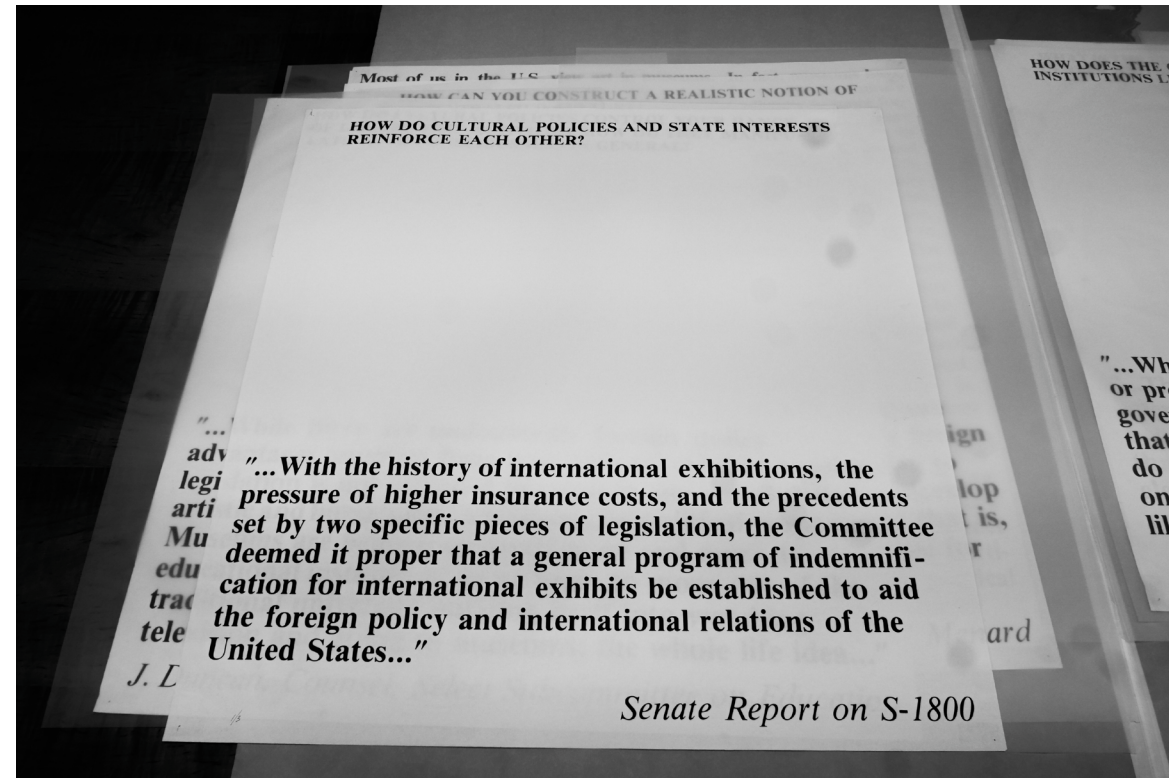




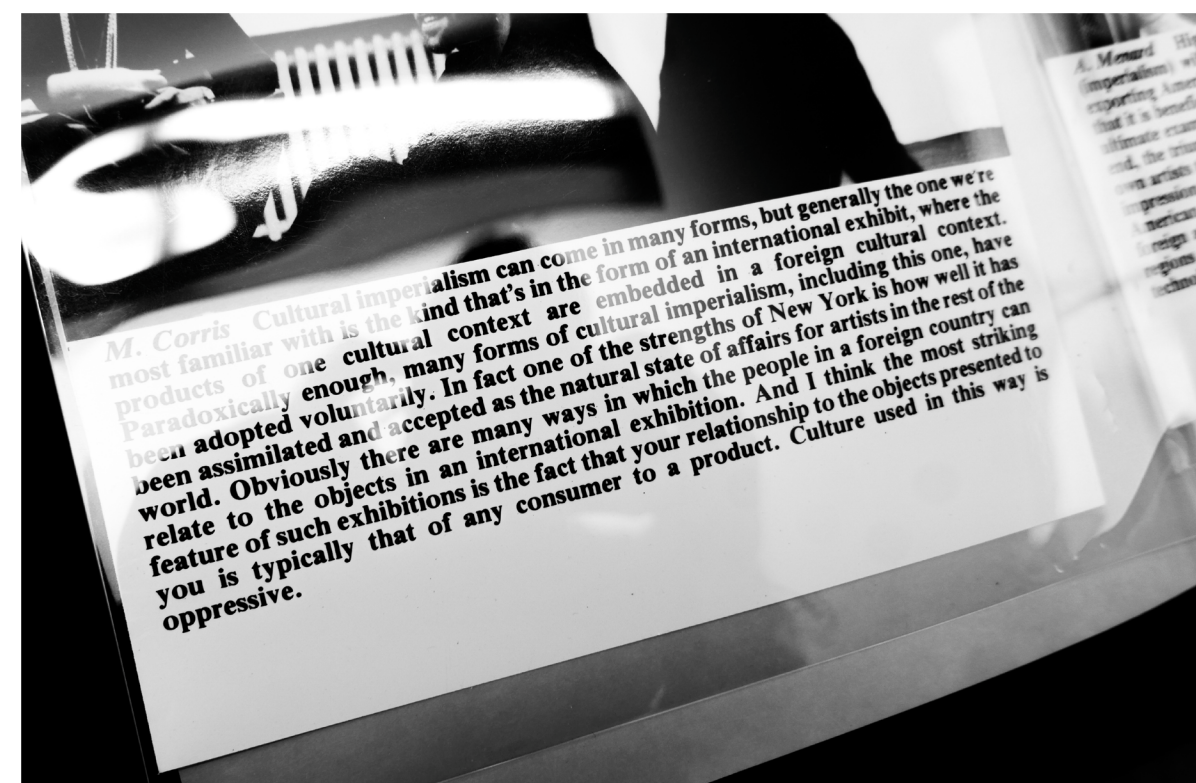
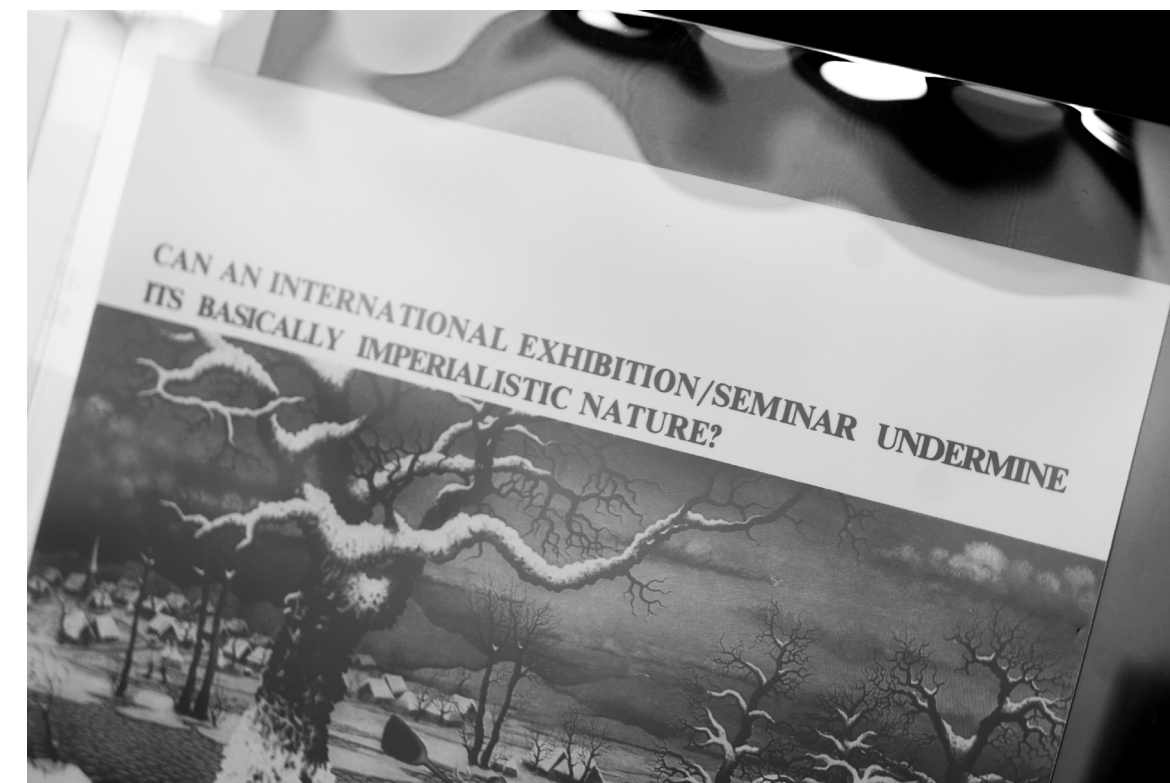
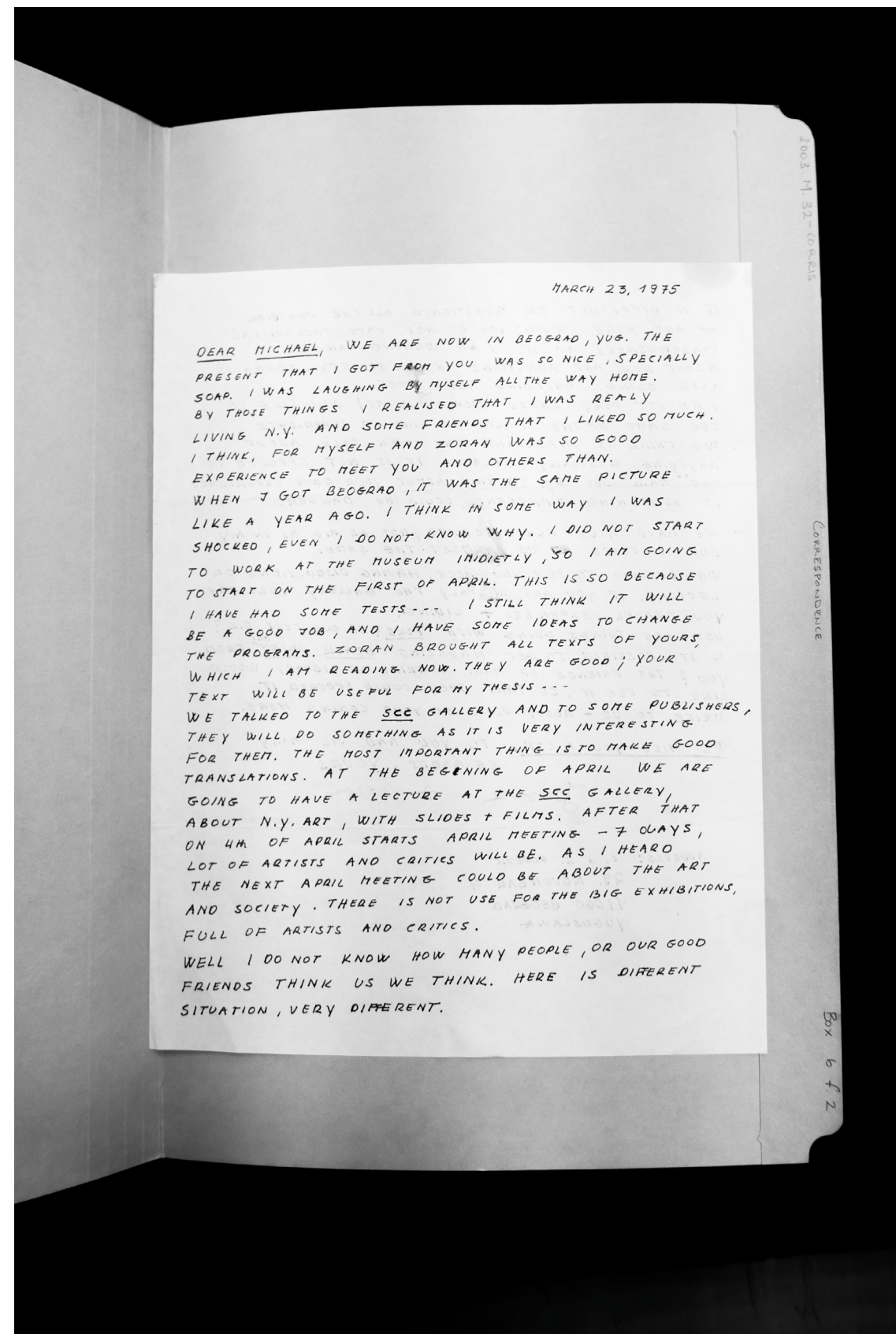














ISN'T CREATIVITY NORMALLY CONFINED BY SOCIETY TO DO  
CAN AN INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION/SEMINAR UNDERMINE  
ITS BASICALLY IMPERIALISTIC NATURE?



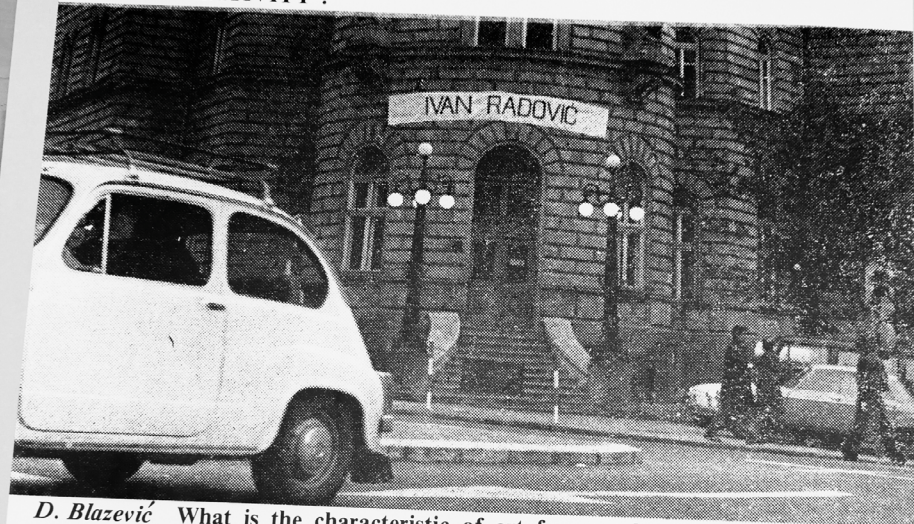
**Z. Popović** We have been looking for allies in our own sphere, but also for allies outside our own sphere. We are trying to change the existing situation in the world by trying to establish some sort of self-management of our work here — and of your work here as well, if we are to co-operate. I would like to say that you have *The Fox* and we have this gallery. You have an institution which is very powerful in the Western market, and on the world stage. And it reflects a responsible attitude on your part to expose the power mechanisms which manipulate all of us. And you're trying to give the world some information specifically about Yugoslavia (though no information is better than mis-information). And if the world knows more about us, things are bound to change in the Center (gallery) itself. So I hope we'll be able to establish a deeper link with you, to undermine both imperialism and isolation: it's a fine line.

## HOW C WORK ISTIC :

[illegible]

**J. Bre**  
are a j  
class  
probl  
is non  
ruling  
our m  
kind

ISN'T CREATIVITY NORMALLY CONFINED BY SOCIETY TO DOMAINS SUCH AS HIGH ART? IS "ARTISTIC CREATIVITY" SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT, IN ITS POLITICAL EFFECT, FROM WORKER "NON-CREATIVITY"?



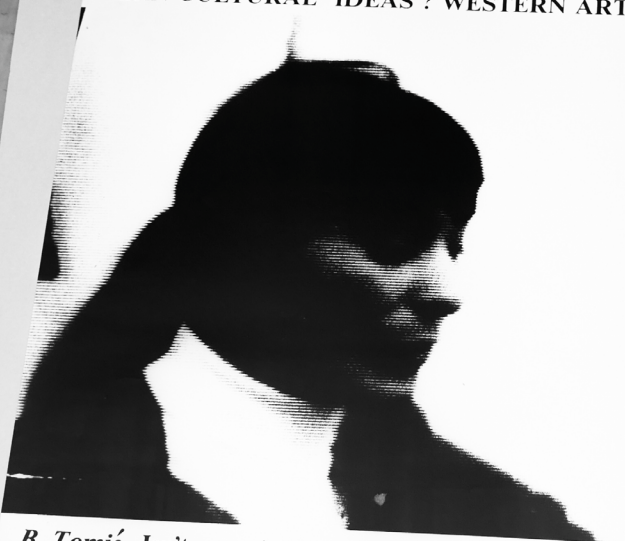
*D. Blazević* What is the characteristic of art from a class point of view? The immanent aspect of art is creativity. This is not immanent in other social classes in class society. Workers, for example, are not creative in their work. They reproduce, they don't create. When the working class through its work becomes creative, when people in their work become creative in their everyday activities, and when they have power over their own work, then art will cease to exist in its present forms and categories. Then we won't have to bring the working class closer to art or art closer to the working class. *A. Menard* Dunja, does that mean that you are bringing the working class closer to creativity or bringing the working class closer to art? *D. Blazević* To creativity in their daily work — mainly through self-management.

CA.  
ITS

**Z. F**  
outs  
tryin  
here  
have  
marl  
expe  
worl  
bett  
to cl  
with  
ou  
kin



HOW DOES THE WESTERN ART MARKET DETERMINE WESTERN CULTURAL "IDEAS"? WESTERN ART FORMS?

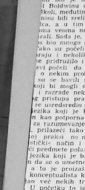


*B. Tomić* Isn't your visit to Belgrade a kind of cultural imperialism?...Because I think that when you talk about cultural imperialism you don't discuss it in a flexible manner. It's approached in a very nationalistic way. Because given cultures and countries can, at given times and under given circumstances, create new culture and new ways of thinking, even under imperialism. When you were talking about American imperialism you mentioned that American imperialism can be present on the level of the market or the level of ideas. We are not interested in the market because we don't have it; we are interested in the level of ideas. And I think you were too strict in categorizing because in Europe we also have the development of some cultural phenomena corresponding to the times—this isn't simply the result of American imperialism. You are victims of your own imperialism.

IF C  
IS I  
SHO

HOW CAN WE DEAL WITH THE CONTRADICTIONS OF OUR WORK, AS WOMEN ARTISTS, IN THE CONTEXT OF A CAPITALISTIC SOCIETY?

KORISIM, CIA-NOVINA GRUPE ART & LANGU-GE IZ MUJORKA



ANDREW MENARD: To je...  
BRANKO ALEKSIĆ: To je...  
MICHAEL CORRIE: To je...



ANDREW MENARD: To je...  
BRANKO ALEKSIĆ: To je...  
MICHAEL CORRIE: To je...

ANDREW MENARD: To je...  
BRANKO ALEKSIĆ: To je...  
MICHAEL CORRIE: To je...

ANDREW MENARD: To je...  
BRANKO ALEKSIĆ: To je...  
MICHAEL CORRIE: To je...

ANDREW MENARD: To je...  
BRANKO ALEKSIĆ: To je...  
MICHAEL CORRIE: To je...

ANDREW MENARD: To je...  
BRANKO ALEKSIĆ: To je...  
MICHAEL CORRIE: To je...

ANDREW MENARD: To je...  
BRANKO ALEKSIĆ: To je...  
MICHAEL CORRIE: To je...

ANDREW MENARD: To je...  
BRANKO ALEKSIĆ: To je...  
MICHAEL CORRIE: To je...

ANDREW MENARD: To je...  
BRANKO ALEKSIĆ: To je...  
MICHAEL CORRIE: To je...

ANDREW MENARD: To je...  
BRANKO ALEKSIĆ: To je...  
MICHAEL CORRIE: To je...

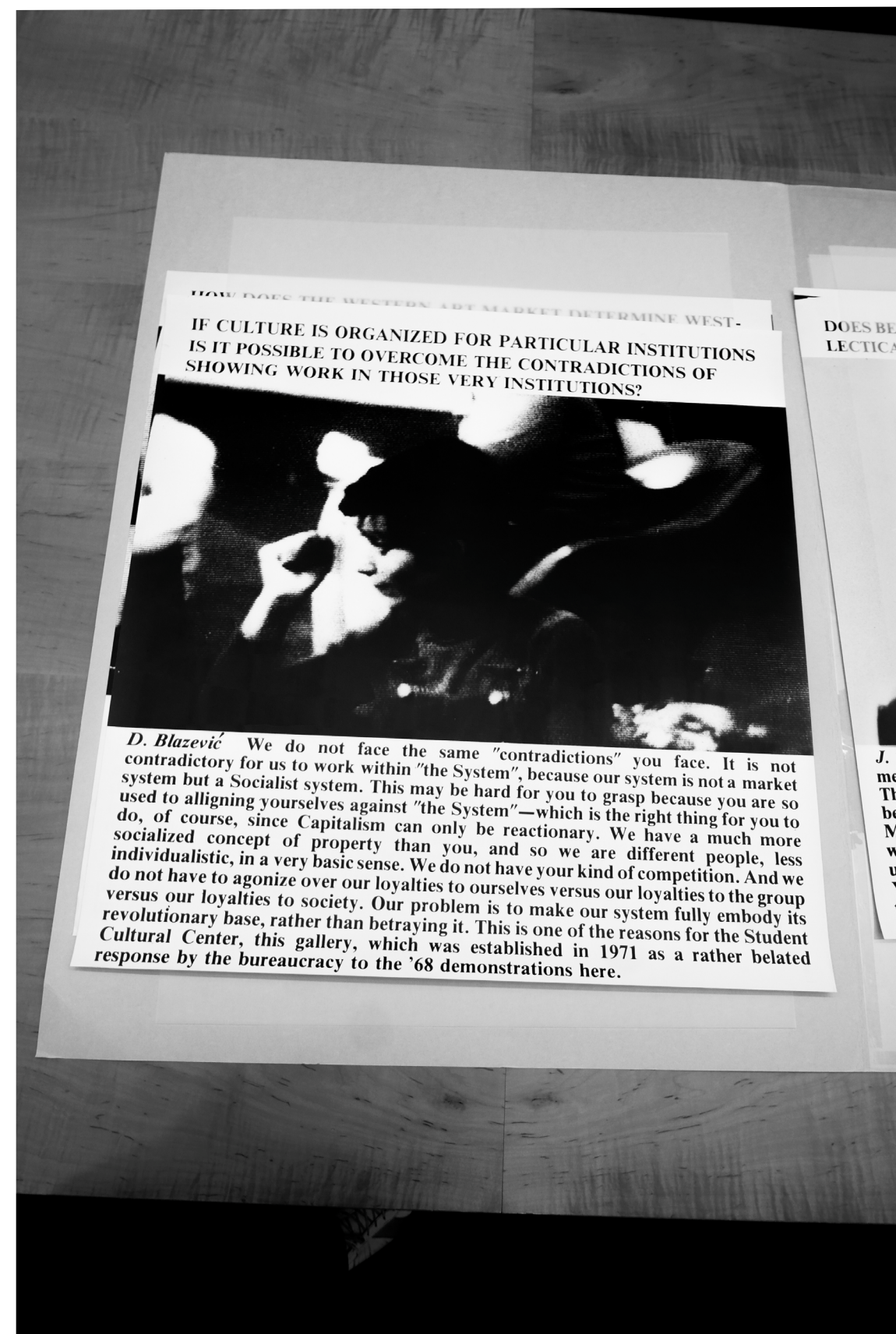
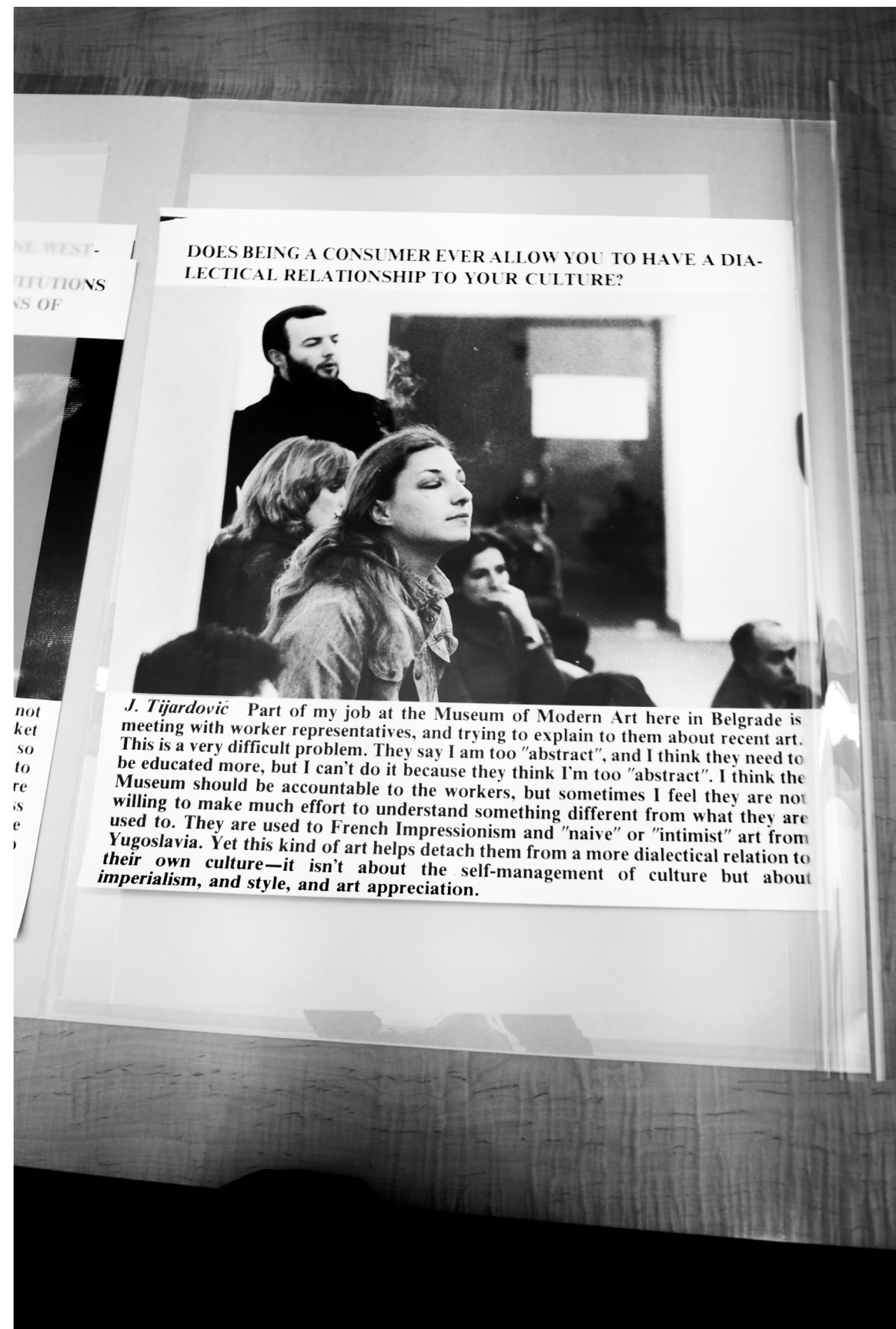
ANDREW MENARD: To je...  
BRANKO ALEKSIĆ: To je...  
MICHAEL CORRIE: To je...

ANDREW MENARD: To je...  
BRANKO ALEKSIĆ: To je...  
MICHAEL CORRIE: To je...

ANDREW MENARD: To je...  
BRANKO ALEKSIĆ: To je...  
MICHAEL CORRIE: To je...

*J. Breakstone* One thing, anyway, seems pretty clear, and that's that women's groups are a priori embedded in the problem of class consciousness, insofar as women-as-a-class are exploited by men-as-a-class. In this sense we are dealing with the whole problem of class struggle from a different, and perhaps radically different, angle than it is normally dealt with—which is, generally, in terms of the opposition between the ruling class and proletariat. In the context of these groups we can examine our history, our morphology (if this exists) and psychology; working together to evolve a different kind of work.







HOW DOES THE WESTERN ART MARKET DETERMINE WEST?  
WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE ORGANIZA-  
TION TOWARDS COLLECTIVE CHANGE? SHOULD GROUPS OF  
ARTISTS BE A LIBERAL COALITION OF INDIVIDUALS OR CAN  
THEY DEVELOP A RADICALLY DIFFERENT SET OF IDEALS?



*J. Breakstone* The kind of work that I'm doing differentiates itself by the fact that it is generated by a group of women. This discourse relates to the social history of the group in terms of its internal history and its relationship to the world. The group sociality and its development is basic. Groups are generally protective at first in order that the positive relationships among the participants can develop. At some point in the group's history the nature of the discourse is such that more things are shared than not. Obviously these shared ideologies are directly linked to feminism. Unlike the conventional consciousness raising groups of the late 60's, however, there is no a priori exclusion of men.

the own culture—it isn't about the self-management of culture but about imperialism, and style, and art appreciation.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY



# THE ART MARKET: AFFLUENCE AND DEGREDAATION

IAN BURN

ARTFORUM  
PAGES 34-37

**IMPENDING ECONOMIC CRISIS HAS FORCED** many deeply lurking problems into the open.<sup>1</sup> Art sales are declining and there is an air of pessimism. The sense of opulence of the '60s has gone to dust. As artists, we have tended to understand the art market only in its reward capacity, preferring to ignore the “dismal science” of economics. But no longer, it seems. While it may once have seemed an exaggeration of economic determinism to regard works of art as “merely” commodities in an economic exchange, it's now pretty plain that our entire lives have become so extensively constituted in these terms that we can't any longer pretend otherwise. *Not only do works of art end up as commodities, but there is now an overwhelming sense in which works of art start off as commodities.*

Faced with this impasse, we need alternate historical perspectives in order to throw light on some of the most basic of social relations, to perceive the lacuna between what we think we do and what we actually do in the world. The historical relations of up-to-date modern art are the market relations of a capitalist society. That much I believe is obvious to everyone. What we've more recently seen is the power of market values to distort all other values, so even the concept of what is and is not acceptable as “work” is defined *first and fundamentally* by the market and only secondly by “creative urges” (etc.). This has been the price of internalizing an intensely capitalistic mode of production.

Given this, shouldn't we be scrutinizing certain historically unique aspects of our market relations? Have these wrought fundamental changes in the “art” produced? I know many of us have been grateful beneficiaries of this market. Nonetheless we have *all* ended up victims of its capriciousness, the “principles” of modern art having trapped us in a panoptical prison of our own making. Simply, this is the realization that if the arts were really democratized, we as producers of an elite art would no longer have any means of functioning—wanting to abolish elitism in modern art is tantamount to wanting to abolish modern art itself.

Within the moneyed structure of modern art, the collector or speculator or investor does not openly purchase my (as an artist) labor power; both my labor and means of production remain my own property and I sell only the product of my labor.<sup>2</sup> What this suggests to me is that, in New York today, I'm operating on the principles of a lower and earlier stage of economic development, an *atomistic* stage of competitive market capitalism. It strikes me there's little wrong with that. However, when faced with the larger marketing structure into which we're all born and live and which is vastly higher developed, we become easy game for exploitation by that market. As we well know, a monopolistic international market was already operating under full steam by the time conditions arose making it possible to incorporate the art-marketing system—hence the transformations involved were unavoidably more rapid, the changes unavoidably more aggressive and antagonistic to each of us.

This is just one of the many paradoxical social contradictions I find myself in—that I am a producer still working under the illusions of one marketing system, while being a consumer in another, more overwhelming system. So, to me the most disturbing question is: *to what extent* have the modern market relations permeated my atomistic production that is, what are the changes this has brought about, and what are the consequences in my life? An answer to this may be pointed up in the actual functioning of a work of art in the market.

From the locus of the market, the work of art represents commodity capital; it acquires a market price which, being a function of manipulated demand and supply, virtually always deviates from the price of production—the concept of any sort of an “equilibrium market” where the market price is equal to the price of production is (almost) unheard of in the art community (i.e., price would equal the sum of the cost of materials and

wages for man-hours worked on the merchandise). But why should an equilibrium market be inconceivable to me? Or, the flip side of that, how is it that the work of art is so readily manipulated in the market? There are a number of feasible answers—some reflecting attitudes like the romantic rejection of a per-hour value being put on artists' time (which reflects the fact that artists' time has never been commoditized—something I have great respect for).

Nonetheless, this is quite beside the point when the art market is acknowledged as an area of direct speculative investment: investing in oil-wells gives you few opportunities for increasing the odds of striking oil (though you may manipulate the “worth” of your stocks); but investing in particular artists or styles admits ample opportunities to manipulate the odds in your favor. The degree to which this can be done is a peculiarity of the art market. You see, it is only my initial contract with the market that involves production, after that the work is strictly in an exchange market (not involving production), and it is this *exchange* market which determines the production “value” (what I get for my work). It's hard to think of any other form of production so exclusively determined by performance in an exchange market, and at the same time so free of legal restrictions—and hence so manipulable. Consequently, to me it appears that the work of (fine) art has become the *ideal* exchange commodity in our society.

Clearly, in talking like this, I'm thinking particularly of the market for “promising” artists. A distinction must be allowed between this sort of “risk” investment market where profits can and do rise spectacularly, and the “secure” investment market involving established artists (dead or alive) where turnover profit is smaller but guaranteed. The latter relies on there being a relatively limited supply, while the former relies on a continuing supply and where future price increase is capitalized on through resale of current production. With this in mind, it's not so surprising that, inspired by our market-dependent culture, there has been such an upsurge in investing in the “risk” area. It's also not surprising that so many “promising” artists are arrested by the market success at just that stage of early development, unable to develop freely any further. I'm also familiar with how difficult it is to know this is what is happening to you, and even more so to be able to admit it.

Being readily manipulable, what are the further consequences for the work of art when the market is, in addition, monopolis-

tic? Capitalism as it developed in the U.S. is capitalism at its most powerful and aggressive stage—where we as individuals are constantly made to act as puppets who merely maximize consumption. It's long been accepted that, for this system of marketing to work efficiently, it can't help but be exploitive of its producers. In the U.S. over the past 15 years particularly, it seems to have been able to create demands for certain types of art, then monopolize the prices and the production in these styles. In some ways I suppose this was inevitable, given the problem of survival for the art market with its center in New York. In the circumstances of atomized production, the market was forced to provide the monopolizing framework.

But this sort of manipulative marketing has forced some very alienating consequences into my social life as an artist. A monopoly creates conditions which could never come about otherwise: I am “created” by the market as merely part of a labor force, an unorganized one but still a labor force. The *size* of this force has, significantly, augmented itself out of all proportion to the present market demand (. . . compare the number of artists working in New York now to, say, 25 years ago, to realize the probable truth in this). And remember all the while, for market efficiency, the supply must meet the demand and demand is now governed by market manipulation, not the market by demand.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, once the market conceives of me as merely a unit in a labor force, I'm also aware I can be replaced at any time by an equivalent (as defined by the market, of course) unit—so, organizational efficiency begins to dominate me to the extent that my subjective worth and “work” become defused.

This increased labor force represents an expanded market, something which is also apparent when we recall once again that 25 years ago the market for U.S. art was largely a national one and how it since developed into an international market with gigantic foreign sales. Such expansion, initially dependent on competition, has the effect of systematically and diabolically destroying the competitive nature of the market. In the old market, it would seem to me artists competed more openly to sell their products, and, despite an ever-growing incentive to calculate as to the market and its buyers, the market was still dominated by private patrons. But, in the new monopoly, we “compete” differently. Perhaps I can suggest how by pointing briefly to the emergence of corporate monopolies in the U.S. in the early part of this century, where for the first time each individual was conceived as being “trained so as to be effective

individually as an economic unit, and fit to be organized with his fellows so they can work efficiently together.”<sup>4</sup> The old individualism was transformed into a new “economic individualism” which placed monetary self-interest above all else . . . this was to be the “true individualism.” Thus, my individualism was to be the result of my specialization in the service of the corporately organized society, and my specialization was the result of newly organized compulsory educational systems. Such was the rhetoric of the shift from the “irresponsible waste” of a competitive market to the monopolistic market of corporate industry, and through which the power of concentrated wealth was foreseen as the way to the great American dream.

Now that strikes me as roughly the way which, more recently, the art market has developed—the “new” artist no longer conceives of a *personal* relation to the market. It becomes merely an economic, and hence more impersonal, relation. This means my role of “artist” has become one befitting a trained and efficient economic unit, my “work” has become a mere reflex of my specialized role, and I’m encouraged to regard the market as really none of my business. The result being that the market has evolved its own autonomy, rapidly and independently of the persons supplying it. So this is the difference I mentioned above: whereas once (and not so long ago) the market was a more personal matter for the artist, it has become impersonal and independent of the artist and, in an emphatically economic world, this impersonal market has grown to such an extent that it now dominates and dictates to the artist.

Putting this into recent and familiar New York perspective: we have all been enticed by the prospect of endless market expansion which it seems, oddly enough, we have internalized in the idea of an endlessly innovative avant-gardist growth. This supports the power of the market by providing a subtly pervasive means of cultural and intellectual control, through implicit direction and the supplying of a categorical check on the “evolution” of art. In addition, the unprecedented concentration of capital invested by the market in this avant-gardist elite has successfully had the effect of reducing “unnecessary” competition, if not eliminating it altogether. Today it’s surely beyond any doubt that this popular idea of a “permanent revolution” in art *is actively designed never to fulfill any personal and social relationship*. From this point of view, it’s a set of empty gestures which threaten none of the market requirements and end up being a sheer celebration of the new individuality, arrogantly and, final-

ly, stupidly set against the idea of sociality.

It’s also blatant how this concentration of production and capital has opened the way for monopolistic values and dubbed styles, and the ability of a few to manipulate absolute power in respect to these styles. This reflects, on other levels, the transformation into monopoly of free competition (or its esthetic corollary, “free expression,” a catchphrase we’ve all been psychologically duped with). In big business, “competition” has simply come to mean tempting customers away from rivals by product “differentiation” or by fancy service or better advertising or corporate images—and the art business today fairly accurately mirrors the very same practices.

But what about all those much lauded “innovations” the media has been ramming down our throats for so long? In most economic models, innovation appears as a new method of commodity production which has effect either in labor-saving or capital-saving—the innovator is considered as necessary, a logical mechanism in the system, creating more division of labor by creating other means of production and thus achieving a temporary monopoly. Which again entails more production, larger markets and maximal profits . . . the constant dynamic behind market expansion. Consequently, in art, innovation becomes an even more tyrannical “logic”: *since it has been made to adhere to a false model of technological progress*. Thus the market capitalizes on “innovation” for its own sake, as strictly a profit-maximizing factor, transforming it into a rather blatant however prestigious commodity on the market. I’m certainly self-consciously familiar with how “high art” has been rhetorically infected with the need to innovate and of myself being made to feel the pressure to innovate, on pain of extinction.

So where does that leave me? Like a lot of others, I’m revolted by the torpidity of the status quo on the one hand—and on the other, any desperate reactions to escape that status are celebrated as part of the “innovative logic” of the system! Meanwhile we are vulgarly lionized by institutions created in the belief that capitalism is divine and should not be tampered with and which are part of a market now so powerful that even the most iconoclastic work can be comfortably celebrated. With these conditions, wouldn’t it be sheer lunacy for me to maintain that my market relations are just incidental?<sup>5</sup>

There are a number of things I can no longer ignore. The emergence of the international art market along its present lines has



been incontestably an arm of a necessary expansion of the whole U.S. neocapitalistic system and consolidation of marketing areas after the Second World War. As I pointed out above, the impersonal nature of the market forces it to expand without reference to the consumers or the producers. Furthermore, considering some of the sources of the capital backing it, it's perhaps hardly surprising American art achieved its "internationalism"<sup>6</sup> at a time when it also functioned as a weapon to fight the "menace of communism" (i.e., the main threat to U.S. domination of major marketing areas of the world).<sup>7</sup> This was a period when various ideals were perverted into an esthetic ideology to sustain the emerging social and economic order. All was recent enough for most of us to be able to reconstruct how this internationalism created a "common interest" of selling to foreign investors, and how mutual advantage burgeoned into corporate interest. This common interest demanded more efficient production and organization—the outcome being, in this country, that the consolidation of the business of art intuitively followed the lines of the model of bureaucratic corporate industry. This doesn't mean we have a concretized bureaucracy, it means the people running the various parts of the business of art, indeed ourselves, have internalized the bureaucratic method so that it now seems "natural" to separate functions, roles, relationships, from the people who perform (etc.) them. So we intuitively achieve the corporate spirit of bureaucratic organization without any of its overt structures—and, by such means, our "high culture" has reified itself into a remote and dehumanizing tradition.

Looking at my situation today, I'm obviously faced with functionally different circumstances from those of the early '50s. In that period, in order to create a privileged art, it was necessary to produce something markedly different from what Europe was producing—this was reminiscent of the old competitive spirit, to succeed it had to be *different*. But the bureaucratization and new corporate marketing techniques (involving art criticism, the trade journals, galleries and museums, art schools and all) changed that so today we see the idea of "international high culture" demanding a uniformity dominated by New York art. To create a successful (i.e., privileged) art, I must now *affirm* and perpetuate at least one of the dominant styles. It's hard for me to be blind to the fact that what happened to recent modern art closely parallels the entrenchment of the giant multinational corporations. But I want to restate, this has been achieved primarily on tacit agreements and not on the typically overt

bureaucratic techniques—proving once more how little surveillance a system like this requires once the principles have been internalized and everyone has "like-minded" interests. This allows imperialism to operate in its most despicable state — where the specific character and subjectivity of any one place is disregarded and the "universality" of New York corporate uniformity is proclaimed.

In my mind, one depressing result of "incorporating" modern art has been the proportionately greater increase in the numbers of drab "nonproduction workers" (middlemen) compared to the increase in (sometimes equally drab) "production workers." This is just part of the marketing structure's expansion. But the consequences are very pervasive: by bureaucratizing, the market has developed a bureaucratic or corporate "taste," essentially rendering personal or individual taste impossible. I can best illustrate this by pointing to the network of modern art museums which have sprung up like automobile sales-rooms throughout the Western world, all spouting the same rhetoric of "freely-developing, democratic, cultural, educational enterprises." This has lost all relationship to me as an artist. The museums, run by the new culturecrats, have become overlording institutions utilizing all the packaging techniques of the greatest consumer society in order to sell "culture" (at a price) and openly serve as showcases propagandizing the global ambitions of our selling "successes." The old "gunboat diplomacy" has been replaced by the new "modern art diplomacy" (e.g., the MOMA's International Program).

In case it appears I'm overstating the role of U.S. capitalism in all this, let me emphasize the obvious, that the history of modern art from its beginnings was nurtured within a number of industrial societies, not just the U.S. Looking closer at that history, with its unrelenting emphasis on an "art-for-art's-sake" ideology, we become conscious of the ever-increasing role played by a neutered *formalism*—at the expense of *our* possibility of content (. . . remember that old dichotomy of "form" and "content"?). The stress on exclusively formal innovation had the aftermath of content being in its last gasp reduced to such vacua as "color," "edge," "process," "ideas," "image," etc. plus a lot of fatuous jargon about qualities symbolized through these (cf. especially Greenberg's school of modernism, but also every issue of *Artforum* and most other magazines). This is formalism taken to its ultimate empty conclusions: it is what we have lauded as *pure art* . . . the impossibility of content, of

saying anything whatsoever. The tradition of formalism has left me largely incapable of expressing through “my art” those very things about which I have the greatest misgivings, and so incapable of changing anything through “my art.” These ideological fetters have conclusively eradicated every possibility of a social practice in relation to art, even the thought of it—the expression of modern art has become the rejection of society and our social beings. Now, obviously the U.S. isn’t to blame for this, but it certainly deserves a lot of the credit for bringing it to a remarkable and unprecedented pitch. No longer just producing an art for a privileged middle class, it has burgeoned into a spectacularly elitist art, remote even from its own producers’ actual lives and problems.

*What can you expect to challenge in the real world with “color,” “edge,” “process,” systems, modules, etc. as your arguments? Can you be any more than a manipulated puppet if these are your “professional” arguments? Moreover, when you add to this picture thousands upon thousands of artists in all the corners of the modern art empire tackling U.S. formalism in the belief that it’s the one “true art”—that’s how preposterous and finally downright degrading it has become!*<sup>8</sup>

Needless to say, it’s easy for me to identify with some of the points of classic 19th-century theses about *alienation*. There it was argued that alienation is the process whereby human values are projected outside of us and achieve an existence independent of us, and over us, and this is an essential condition for the functioning of capitalism. We’re all familiar with the romanticized notions about the work of art “embodying the soul of the artist.” Well, perhaps historically this has taken on mythic proportions—but there is a very real sense in which everything produced ought to bear some personal relation to who makes it. However, once my work of art enters the art market, it takes on a power independent of me and this strikes me as a form of estrangement from what I have produced, an alienation from my own experiences; and the more I produce the more I deprive myself of my “means of life.” But I find I can only maintain myself by continuing in the same fashion. So—while I may retain economic ownership over my labor and means of production (thus giving me a sense of “freedom”), I’m still *psychologically and socially* alienated from what I myself produce. Once entering the market, it becomes an object foreign to me, but without the market, I don’t recognize it because it is defined via the market which I’ve internalized. Don’t we all experience this

to greater or lesser degrees? As a result, myself-as-an-artist has become a stranger to me, a figure over whom I have little power or control. This is the ’70s blunt reality of alienation. No longer merely having lost the product of our labor, our ability to create is profoundly impaired . . . and this is also expressed in my relation to you, and burgeons in the relation you can have to what I produce.<sup>9</sup>

Often-heard remarks implying that it’s not enough to be “just an artist” are merely public admissions that, as a *role* in society, “artist” is a sterile one. More pointedly, this sheds light on the prevailing *concept* of “artist”: it has become an integral part of the meaning of the concept “artist” that it is *politically conservative* (or, at its most adventurous, reactionary), *and that remains its sole possible political role*—hence its continuing great value as propaganda for an imperious culture. This is clearly reflected in the desperation of more and more artists to escape their political impotence, in their attempts to reconcile the paradoxicality of their lives wrought by being hopefully “radical” in politics but necessarily “conservative” in art.<sup>10</sup>

The inside story of this, is that *there is no “radical theory” in the arts today, and there can be none while the present state of affairs prevails*. That also explains something about the extreme poverty of “critical theory,” since a critical theory which sets itself the task of revealing the various forms of conflict and exploitation needs to be informed by some (prospect of) radical theory, something which denies the current ideology and economic class values embodied in modern art. Current and recent criticism has become at best a means of policing and regulating, at worst a sheer celebration of the impotence of the status quo.

In this light most of the chatter about “plurality” in the contemporary scene (particularly in the pages of *Artforum*) comes over as so much liberal claptrap. What use is a sort of “freedom” which can have no other effect than reinforcing the status quo? Skinner’s suggestion that freedom is just a feeling resulting from doing what you have been conditioned to do has many echoes too close to home. And furthermore, by ignoring its *own* realities, contemporary art criticism has collusively abetted these alienating processes. But, on the other hand, as artists we have to add our own careerist irresponsibility in allowing ourselves to become first inured and then dominated by our commitment to hacks in the trade art journals, who blithely use the commodity form of language of formal criticism to “com-

pete” in discovering new marketable qualities.

The galleries also, of course, have an alienating function, having achieved social ascendancy in this system and become more numerous and better organized. Belonging to a gallery which “competes” for us in the market means accruing some economic benefits while further reifying ourselves in an alienating role. Again, as artists we find ourselves forced into acting out a role, one that anyone else might fill just as readily. Reliance on skills becomes less important and the need for maintaining and fulfilling the requirements of the role function becomes more and more “real” and time-consuming. This is the bureaucrat’s existential nightmare and, make no mistake, we do have the artist-as-bureaucrat today.

Finally we must not forget to emphasize that the journals, the galleries and dealers have no more or less a stake in these hierarchical and careerist economics than we ourselves do—and so we have no privileged right to shake our fists at any of them.

I now want to take this further and talk about other conditions I’m aware of, but which are even more difficult at present to characterize. Hence my following remarks may be more symptomatic than diagnostic. In the progressive history of capitalism, the concentration of labor always creates conditions for the *socialization* of labor. Now, most of us are familiar with the novel phenomenon in New York recently of “quasi-factory” conditions of art production accompanied by the “factory-related” community, SoHo. It’s plain the currently “necessary” concentration of production goes hand-in-hand with a *concentration of population*, and also prompts a relocation of the market outlets. I doubt there has ever been such a concentrated *community of artists* in contrast to a community of people of mixed occupations and interests. One reaction of mine to this is to assume that our present generation of artists identify their reality *only* with their roles of “artist”—which, given the remarks above, is disturbing. If this is so, it implies the “other self” or “bureaucratized artist” in all of us has triumphed and we’ve become inescapably reified in that role. However, the main point to stress is this—the development of a “factory-like” community (for whatever reasons you want to give), which does sustain and encourage an exploitive market, also creates uniquely different social conditions for that community and in turn may lead to social and political awareness of the power of the community.<sup>11</sup>

One presently noticeable outcome of this concentration and

(some sort of) socialization of “art labor,” is the recent tendency to “unionize,” to form associations and organize the community to have some efficacy of its own—and I think it’s the first time conditions on such a scale have existed where the idea of an artists’ union could be regarded as in any way realistic. There are a number of examples, the old Art Workers Coalition, the SoHo Artists Association, growing numbers of co-op galleries (“worker-controlled factories”) set up in opposition to traditionally impersonal galleries (“managerial organizations”), and so on. Two examples I am slightly familiar with raise a barrage of questions. The first example is biased toward “production workers,” the second specifically a “nonproduction workers” case. The following comments are made in the context of how I see my own “community” affairs.

In the case of the National Art Workers Community, while I’m very sympathetic to some of their proposed aims (as published in the *Art Workers News*, vol. 4, no. 6, September, 1974), I’m simultaneously appalled that the model taken for the proposed association or “union” is that of American trade unions, organizations which historically have allowed their political roles to be eroded away to that of “mere” economic bargain-hunters. Trade unions traditionally have been firstly social and political movements and secondly economic forces—thus economic betterment was generally conceived in terms of political action and social change. In the U.S. however, unions have tended to conceive of their “force for social change” through sharing the corporate power rather than seeking change. So that, ultimately, at the point of official acceptance of collective bargaining, unions have emerged as monopolies themselves and strong allies of corporate industry, often forcing even more monopolistic exploitation and practices into the market.

This insidious, but by no means rare separation of “socio-economic” (or “culture”) from “politics” is openly represented in the NAWC proposals: “The goal . . . is to improve the socio-economic status of visual artists through: 1. improving the standard of living of the artist through expanding the demand for art; 2. promoting the recognition of the artist as a working professional; . . .” Isn’t this labor organizing for the same reasons that capital does and for no other? Living in a consumer society under a state of siege, incessantly being urged to consume more . . . do we want to persuade others into an even more conspicuous consumption of artworks? What of the tacit equation of an “economic standard of living” with “quality of life”? At what



point might we be prepared to forego the lifestyle of the haute bourgeois artiste or is that what we really mean by “professionalism”? Are there no questions to be asked about a private property system operating in the fine arts? And so on.

The second example of disavowing social-political roles was displayed in the PASTA (the Professional and Administrative Staff Association) strike at the MOMA. In the interview published in *Artforum* December, 1973 representatives of the strike committee revealed a seeming total inability to cope with the political reality of their context, a refusal to entertain such radical questions as the massive role played by the museum in the promotion of a bureaucratized, alienating “high culture.” Under what conditions can we support job preservation and betterment policies in an already overbureaucratized and overprivileged art? In what ways would we be better off as a result of the bureaucratic power being spread more evenly among the upper echelon staff? To whose advantage is it finally to see the museums function *more* efficiently? I find it hard to believe it’s for my advantage. And what about all those questions concerning the culpability of the roles that the staff identify with?

What debilitates these efforts at unionizing and socialization is the tendency to pin hopes on liberal reformist programs (and not very forceful ones at that). These imply everyone confining themselves to agitation for changes which do not challenge any foundations of the organizing structure, changes which are compatible with the preservation of these foundations.

My point is that, no matter how much we empathize with these endeavors, the most critically important factor keeps getting lost. It cannot be stressed enough that a community, no matter how small, is *unavoidably and importantly a political instrument*, and a potentially aggressive one at that—*finally perhaps the only one left to us*. If we don’t take advantage of that, we might be able to do absolutely nothing.<sup>12</sup> So I come here to a note of guarded optimism: although there’s scant evidence for it presently, I would hope for and not rule out the potential for a distinctive consciousness and solidarity developing out of a “community of artists.” There are uniquely changed social conditions here in New York, so it’s just possible that such a consciousness be at odds with the status quo. In some subjective sense we may come to terms with the reality of *our own* experiences and reintegrate our fragmented existences. But that’s

high optimism because against that increasingly formidable odds are working. It is almost gratuitous to point out the stupefying indoctrination of the media and educational processes.

While a collapse of our privileged economy is hardly desirable, it seems a prospect to be faced, and one “logical” outcome is likely to be that much of the manipulated market demand for modern art may simply evaporate. That doesn’t mean the market will magically cease to be monopolistic. No, only that it will have shrunk considerably, and there will be a demand for a much diminished work force. Thus we may initially experience a phenomenon similar to the cutbacks in scientific programs—an ever-larger surplus of trained “modern artists” for whom there are no “jobs” in relation to the market.<sup>13</sup> At the same time one can’t help but express a masochistic curiosity about how much art will continue to be made if there’s literally no market demand for it. Because, while we’ve been able to sell modern art to Europe and other westernized countries, it’s still moot whether it will be collected by the OPEC countries, the new capitalists fast challenging the U.S. as the major exporters of inflation. Presumably, in a world economy no longer wholly determined by the West, there are many prospects for a major economic shift in art . . . but, for an art whose principle dynamic is the “stability” of the present economy, and a community of artists who all have some sort of an investment in that “stability,” the effects may be (and I again masochistically hope) truly amazing.

Whatever we are able to accomplish now, my point is that transforming our reality is no longer a question of just making more art, it’s a matter of realizing the *enormous social vectoring* of the problem, and opportunistically taking advantage of what social tools we have. Of one thing I’m certain, that anything we might call radical theory in the arts will have to be solidly constructed in all its social dimensions. But even then it may not be a question of how much we might accomplish, since it might take something as catastrophic as a collapse in the economic structure of this society to have any substantial effect on the careening superstructure of modern American art.

—*Ian Burn*

—————

NOTES

1. This article owes its existence to many conversations, with

various people involved in the *Art & Language* community in New York (particularly Mel Ramsden).

2. An exception to this would seem to be artists who are under contract to, or receiving retainers from, or whose work materials are being supplied by galleries or dealers. However I still think this is not so much purchasing the artist's labor as an expedient to gaining exclusive marketing rights to their production—more a commitment to produce than any control over production.

3. Something else which needs a good look at is *pricing* of works of art—since prices are always in relation to a particular market structure. There is obviously no “natural” price independent of a market, and the arbitrariness of a particular price is simply the arbitrariness of a particular market. Setting a price on a work of art is establishing the mode of allocation of the rights to that work, including property rights or ownership; so, along with the present discussions of property rights vs. “moral rights” in relation to works of art (e.g., Carl Baldwin, *Art in America*, September-October 1974), it would seem especially pertinent to scrutinize the relations between private property, particular types of market structures, and setting of monetary price. After all, deciding how a price should be determined is essentially deciding about what sort of society we want to live in. For more discussion of this, see my article “Pricing Works of Art” in *The Fox*, April, 1975.

4. President Theodore Roosevelt, 1907.

5. I'm aware of my poor acumen in economics. This, not incidentally, reflects the fragmentation and specialization “necessary” in my *education* for “becoming an artist.” The issue of art education is not dealt with here, not because it is unimportant or a separate question, but because it's too large a question to be dealt with in a small way.

6. Note that “internationalism” in art is a market definition, not a cultural one.

7. For discussion of this era, see Max Kozloff's “American Painting during the Cold War,” *Artforum*, May, 1973 and Eva Cockcroft's “Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War,” *Artforum*, June, 1974. But also, on a broader cultural scale, someone is going to have to take a closer look at some of the things that Harold Rosenberg has been saying for years, cf. particularly the recently published *Discovering the Present*,

University of Chicago Press, 1974. [See Donald Kuspit's book review in *Artforum*, March, 1975.]

8. For a trenchant discussion of this, see Terry Smith's “American Painting and British Painting: Some Issues,” *Studio International*, December, 1974.

9. For a more integrated example of these points, see Andrew Menard's “Are you not doing what you're doing while you're doing what you are?” *The Fox*, April, 1975.

10. This point obviously is revealing of the contradictions apparent in looking at art produced by the feminists, by black artists, and other underprivileged groups: while their social thinking is radical, fertile and engaging, what we see of the art they produce is as embarrassingly dull and uniform and bureaucratic as everyone else's.

11. To start with, you can't help wondering about the effect of this urbanizing on the “rugged individualism” hailed in SoHo mythology. After all, the reality of SoHo is that it is a community based on common occupations, interests and social needs but which is kept atomized by an individualism which no longer really holds a specialist's corporate community made up of people who claim to dislike organization and specialization.

12. If I appear to be arguing for some sort of “social realism,” that's not the case at all—anyway we already have the social realism of capitalism: it's in the “lesser arts” (cf. William Morris) which have become the dominion of Madison Avenue's advertising artists. They create the propaganda educating and inspiring everyone to even greater heights of commodity-mindedness and consumerism. These “lesser arts,” financed directly by corporations, would not exist without such patronage. Ironically these lesser arts dominate the possibilities of any explicit social practice (such as it is). It also provides the wedge which isolates us away from the prospect of such a practice and herds us into the cloistered antisocial (i.e., meaninglessness) state of “high culture.” We're neatly trapped by our own elitism.

13. There's already massive overproduction on both the selling market and the job market, far more art is produced than can be sold and the excess of job applicants at the College Art Association meeting in Washington this year surely speaks for itself. And this is *before* any further market shrinkage.



# ARE YOU NOT DOING WHAT YOU'RE DOING WHILE YOU'RE DOING WHAT YOU ARE

ANDREW MENARD

THE FOX  
PAGES 31-48

*As we stare into the abyss of recession we shouldn't forget that while this may be a day of belt-tightening and bullet-biting, it is an age of growth, expansion. The American Dream is coming true for more and more people, and recessions are only temporary set-backs. Practically speaking, since the American Dream can only be realized through growth, growth itself can only be realized through obsolescence. Certainly General Motors and Ford Motors know this: if their cars lasted longer than a few years there would be little incentive for increased employment or more research and development, not to mention increased advertising. And the government contributes its share by getting involved in wars such as Korea and Vietnam, wars that "blow up" money in the form of arms and ammunition, thereby stimulating the production of more arms and ammunition, more research and development, more employment. I'm afraid, however, that the art world has been sadly remiss in its contribution to the American Dream: by presenting art as an investment many new products increase in value as they get older, rather than decreasing. People are encouraged to hoard art. This is clearly detrimental to an expanding economy. As such, I'm afraid the arts have been rather reactionary through the years. I would thus like to suggest a new game plan for the arts, an "aesthetic of obsolescence", so to speak:*

- 1. Every consideration should be given to eliminating objects all together. Conceptual art is a step in the right direction, though hardly a large one. For while conceptual artists have begun to concentrate on the "event" rather than the object, that is, on built-in obsolescence, they should also concentrate on getting support for larger events, employing greater numbers of people. The sky's the limit here, there's no telling how many people an artist with ambitious ideas could employ. And insofar as the Age of Obsolescence has rendered social status more than a mere function of physical property, the supporters of such art would thus derive considerable status from their support. Moreover, it seems reasonable that they should also be granted substantial tax deductions for this support. A*

*movement in this direction would nicely complement an economy moving from goods towards services.*

- 2. If objects are to be used they should be restricted: Painting should be confined to acrylics on unprimed cotton duck, since this makes restoration extremely difficult, and very few people are going to go to the trouble of building hermetically sealed rooms to protect this work from environmental deterioration. Photographs are alright if they are fixed improperly. Sculpture should be confined to materials that will rust or decay in a relatively short period of time. And so on.*
- 3. In any case, all establishments devoted to the restoration of art should be abolished immediately.*
- 4. The media should be encouraged to decrease the present 5-year plan of recognition to a 1- or 2- year plan. We've got to keep artists and their ideas moving off the shelves. We don't want repetition, everybody doing similar things, or else the status contingent upon supporting new products would be weakened. As such, the media would function primarily as "talent scouts". Critical overviews would be strictly gratuitous, even counter-productive.*
- 5. Though nothing can rectify all the reactionary art to date, perhaps the various national governments could stem the tide of economic conservatism by endorsing an "immanent domain" policy in order to buy up all these works. (Recently anyway, many of them were made under government support to begin with.) Initially this would be quite an outlay of money; but the ultimate benefits for the economy are innumerable.*
- 6. Certain ideas still common to much of art would have to be eliminated in favor of those indigenous to a here-today-gone-tomorrow kind of art. The idea of "masterpieces" is clearly outdated. So is the idea of artists as "heroes" - we don't want artists to sell themselves as objects, even if they have stopped selling objects per se. There are many others.*

*No doubt I have left things out. The plan needs to be developed in detail. But it does need to be implemented if the art world is to carry its weight in our pursuit of the American Dream for everyone. In this time of tight money it is only a matter of time until the art world begins to exert a substantial drag on the economy's long term upward trend.*

*Mrs. Ballinger is one of the ladies who pursue Culture in bands, as though it were dangerous to meet it alone. —Edith Wharton.*

We all know the problems of high art and money; most of us feel that we and our work are raped by the market system; many of us feel that we'd just like to work in peace; some of us feel as if we have to overtly demonstrate against the market system, as well as do our work; each of us feels entitled to handle the problem in his/her own way. But why, for example, do we all find art such a respectable means of making money these days? It seems to me that we rarely give the issue of art and money more than an oblique glance, that even when someone is supposedly confronting it head-on, they've always got, in a theoretical sense, one eye closed.

No doubt it's unfair to single out one person for responsibility, but Douglas Davis' article ("Toward the Billion-Dollar Painting", Esquire, Nov., 1974) happens to be the last one I read. Davis has been one of our better Emissaries, yet this particular article is no more than a rehash of conventional art world Wisdom. While he gives a passing nod to the milder forms of Marxist criticism, he generally invokes (and evokes) the usual battle cries: "The need for art is a need for an arbitrary value. You must pay for it, dearly, but you do not expect it to function or to mean anything. It is the last preserve of madness."

Now I would really like to believe this. It would be easier and I suppose, in a certain existential sense, safer to shoulder the weight of historical Convention. But I don't believe it, because criticism of the market system from this point of view never goes far enough. It just doesn't accord with my life in the art world. Does it with yours? Most of you are as familiar as I am, some of you much more so, with the focus of Conventional Criticism: the hearty handshake of the Entrepreneurs, the Parke Bernet meat markets, the demise of artists' estates, unfair tax laws. But this focus takes the art for granted. What about the ways our actual working procedures, our lives, are influenced? I've found that such criticism, by limiting its diagnosis to a kind of non-specific "money-itis", ignores the highly specific structure that money engenders in our society and the extent to which I, as a Technician, have perpetuated that structure.

It is no surprise, after all, to hear that we all work, become producers, in order to make money. Nor is it surprising to hear, once again, that we are a "consumer society". But *making* money doesn't completely saturate the notion of production in our society. And consumption is not merely a matter of *buying things*, a gross reduction to the issue of believing or disbelieving advertising when we go into a store or the issue of buying art we like rather than art that seems a good investment. In other words, it should come as no surprise that the process of production/ consumption isn't merely asymptotic to our lives, something we can forget about (like a job) when we want to. When Conventional Criticism concentrates on the monetary "superstructure" of the art world, virtually ignoring the relation of art to this "superstructure" as well as the relation of both art and "superstructure" to society in general, it poses no more of a threat to our art, or our lives than a horsefly does to a horse. For not only our work, but the structure of our social relationships in general, is based on specific economic relationships of production and consumption. And for the most part these social relationships, reflecting the economic ones, are thus based on exploitation however benign it may appear.

*I am sure the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas. —John Maynard Keynes*

The following is a diachronic scenario, mostly confined to the last twenty or twenty-five years, highly subjective and annotated with several synchronic (homeostatic) fragments. For Davis, like the majority of Emissaries, like most Technicians (Davis is both in fact), in fact the whole art Establishment confidently asserts that "Nearly all of American art since Eakins has reacted against the bourgeois notion of beauty" while the contradiction of nearly all recent American art is that the decisions which seemed most viable "aesthetically", as well as socially, were precisely those which best reflected the structure of bourgeois society if not its notion of beauty: In his article "American Painting During the Cold War" (Artforum, May, 1973) Max Kozloff begins to

expose this structure, he begins by constructing an excellent history of political and social assumptions of Abstract Expressionism and what emerges is a group of technicians defining themselves as an elite, devoid of overt political content but, for "political" reasons of sorts, devoted to the unfortunate but necessary task of making art for each other, not atypical of art's recent social merely constituting it in an extreme form. After all before I received a grant from National Endowment for the Arts I did carpentry to make money which, presumably, I will do again after it runs out (unless I receive another), and since it was difficult doing carpentry and art at the same time both suffering in the process, I was relieved to say the least when I, unexpectedly, received the grant. But lately I've had mixed feelings about this gift horse, a certain guilt perhaps and some mistrust for all our institutions particularly our schools which encourage us to think of ourselves as only Technicians, so that even when we can't make money from our art we rarely invest any psycho-social energy in our roles as "carpenters" or "plumbers" or "window dressers" and professionalism comes to mean specialization, of social identity as well as labor. Now this says a lot about the issue of output of productivity, an issue I'm approaching rather obliquely at the moment, because "art time" demands more or less total economic commitment to making art making sure that one becomes dependent on the vagaries of the market. Most technicians affiliated with a gallery, and most of us are or would like to be though, I must admit, for reasons that I suppose will become clear I am not now and perhaps do not ever wish to be affiliated with a gallery, have at least one major show a year. Although there's nothing particularly wrong with this on the face of it, it's one way of getting work out, as is commonly known a more or less unwritten, and in some cases no doubt written "contract" requires Technicians to have shows once a year or so and while I, personally, would probably have a significant amount of new work in a year and I don't, as a general rule, object to "external" strictures on my time, I can certainly imagine times when I might not have a great deal of new work and certainly wouldn't want to show old work or manufacture new work just for the show. But reputable Technicians need to be visible, the gallery schedule needs to be filled work needs to be sold reviews of works need to be sold, the mainspring of "art time" winds too fast for those who work slowly or those who may be involved in large projects which aren't, unlike Huebier's proposal to photograph everyone in the world, conducive to yearly "progress reports". Whatever we may think we're doing in our work, and that's always open to question and I don't have the answer, not that there's only one answer anyway, the galleries and their friendly sidekicks the media are by and large interested in productivity, output. So while I can't always answer the question of what I myself am doing in my work much less the question of what you yourself are doing it is an important question nevertheless, wouldn't you say? Since if productivity if output become such important requirements we have to question whether our art is much more than a mere commodity something to be exchanged for the security of a gallery contract a steady income. This is a difficult question though at the moment I'm really only interested in how galleries force us to think about our work in certain ways and as far as the galleries are concerned the content of shows is important, at least initially, though after a certain point after a Technician's reputation has been established it isn't so much a question of *what* s/he did at this or that show but *that* s/he did it. A reputation then is nothing more than a measure of the value of one's labor and "creativity on demand" is nothing more than the ability to perform correctly that is frequently thereby inflating one's value on the open market and what are we left with but the general practice of pricing paintings for example not by way of their personal meaning



to the Technician, if s/he has any and once again I can't answer this question, or any similar criteria but according to size as a function of *what the market can bear*. And you know as well as I that however good or innovative a particular work by an obscure Technician is it will never sell for as much as *any* work by a more reputable one (which reminds me that NEA is not necessarily granting money on the basis of a particular project this year, it is an optional part of the application. Now what does this mean? that they've eliminated or made optional the project because if they've done this if they've eliminated or made optional what, besides the money itself of course, might be personally interesting to the Technicians and/or themselves, this raises the question of what they *are* granting money for. That is I know we're really interested in the money itself of course but presumably we're going to do something with the money or anyway it will provide money to live on so we can do something and no doubt some of us have more interesting ideas than others. Not that NEA or any other organization necessarily chooses what you or I might consider the more interesting or innovative proposals, but what else have they got to base their decision on now except one's *reputation* as a kind of abstract assessment of one's labor value because what have they got to look at besides career summary sheets prizes honors etc., even if it's relative to age, I mean how much can five (5) slides tell you? And if this is the case and unfortunately it seems to be the case then NEA is edging more towards mediocrity or at best "bureaucratic genius" or maybe continued support of those it has already granted money to for we're all dependent on galleries the media etc. in order to establish a reputation, and public recognition is always a matter of control generally a matter of control by those with vested interests in the status quo. It is strange but in some sense galleries for example are more conservative than even NEA since even if I for example wanted to join a gallery it is highly unlikely I would be an attractive prospect if only because I don't have a large backlog of relatively consistent work demonstrating my productivity. Though as I admit proposals were doubtless chosen on grounds of bureaucratic stability for the most part it was possible, as in my case, for an individual proposal to outweigh one's reputation and even possible, as in my case, for that proposal to at least question the status quo, at least I think so since this article is part of that proposal, indicating perhaps that the "performance principle" (Marcuse) was less in effect or, and this is certainly possible since NEA as a self-determining institution is likely to have somewhat different requirements from galleries as self-determining institutions, just different): This is an important point I think, the strictures on performance in art, it means not only are we asked to concentrate on output on productivity we are coerced by this very requirement to *limit* our output our productivity to art, whether we want to or not though most of us do anyway, while by the same token other people are coerced into limiting their output their productivity to what *they* have been trained for whether they want to or not. So if at least high art isn't something one does in one's spare time on the weekend if "dabblers" rarely surface in the New York art world because training is much more specialized and serious than *that*, isn't it? then art becomes the domain of a relatively small group of producers. Whereas art may occupy a privileged position on the alter of many peoples' fives in this country they generally have to confine their involvement to viewing art in a museum or gallery going to an occasional lecture reading about it in an art journal, they have to enjoy it in other words *consumer* not a producer. Being a consumer means being dependent on access so that even this minimal involvement is largely at the mercy of the *limitations of ownership* that is at the mercy museums galleries etc., those institutions which purvey art many of which are corporations. Being

a corporation means preserving the corporation or less intact and while museums in particular can rely on donations grants endowments etc. they nevertheless have to sell their art sometimes in order to offset operating costs and of course museums without much money aren't likely to have many works. This is one way of limiting consumers though only one way and perhaps not the most important for whatever the financial situation of a museum or gallery consumers are just as dependent on the "aesthetic" policies which determine what art the museum does buy and/or show. Consumers are forced to see what's in the museum gallery, they may or may not see what they are personally interested in, yet neither stricture financial or "aesthetic" is malicious or cynical and that is the problem they are the result of financial necessity or "enlightened" aesthetic policy or whatever, all a matter of good faith towards the consumer never questioning consumerism itself. I think as Technicians we are all aware of this problem in one form or another, wouldn't you say? some of us even going so far as to remove our work from the confines both visual and social of museums galleries. Still with the rise of "mass culture" we Technicians, many of us as paradoxically self-proclaimed Culture Heroes, have felt little or no need to justify our activity to anyone but ourselves the implications of this position being that the myriad connections between Culture and upward mobility social climbing begin to assert themselves. Consider the "rube" from Ohio who is perhaps hostile to modernism who walks into the Museum of Modern Art in New York and says Who needs this anyway and walks around somewhat dazed or outraged or bored but *continues* to walk around somehow *blaming* him/ herself for not understanding and remember that We as Culture Purveyors probably *agree* with this assignation of blame, get an *education* "rube"! But what if there are valid reasons for this person to dislike modernism? what are the implications of it having little or no resonance with his/her social experience except as one more example of cultural hegemony? In his article the article we've been talking about all along, not as I indicated to blame Davis but because it is a convenient prism for certain concerns because it's something we can all share, in his article Davis relates Robert Scull's discovery that people were much quieter in art museums than they were in church even or at least quieter than his Lower East Side neighbors were in church even. Now I suspect this doesn't indicate a greater reverence for art than church say or one's minister Priest rabbi or the Virgin Mary or God, far from it I think it more appropriately indicates *lack of familiarity* most of the people probably just fucking uncomfortable in a museum, rubes from Ohio or even Long Island. And cagey ambitious old Scull was 100% correct in thinking he could engender a similar cultural Aura by acquiring and surrounding himself with high art, an Aura that being a taxicab mogul would never instill, since as a high art Technician I can't ignore how much the acquisition of Culture in our society is as I said before associated with social climbing and thus how much Cultural aspirations are inherently *class as well as gender and racial aspirations*. Purely from the point of view of financial support and I say purely with a certain sense of irony since even leaving aside other considerations for the moment we are still left with a highly important consideration, that is money which means that high art has always existed in the domain of the ruling class, a class financially able to support this art a class which has been and by and large still is controlled by white, men. The ruling class is a consumer yes it is a consumer but as we all know there are consumers and there are consumers and the ruling class wields a substantial power over artistic production through financial control whereas other people wield very little so that the ruling class is able to *strengthen its social cultural power* through the produc-

tion of cultural objects such as art. Almost everyone is forced to be a Culture consumer in the first place and most people are forced to be consumers of specific notions of culture, like whiteness maleness formalism abstraction, which may or may not be resonant with their social existence or which mayor may not at least reduce the alienation of their social existence and in fact the “repressive tolerance” of high art in a class society is that such art is generally escapist (socially alienating) for most people. The ruling class reinforces its Cultural cultural hegemony by reducing Cultural models such as regionalism or primitivism in fact all other Cultural models to the level of second class citizens, which means that if people accept this and many do then they begin to direct their antagonisms not towards the class that renders them inferior but towards the people in their own class or those just below them who challenge belittle their Cultural aspirations. But this is familiar ground very familiar ground, don’t you think? hardly occupied by the ruling class alone, since it seems to me that as we Technicians became the sole producers of art we eliminated in the process the need to justify *changing* the reified aspects of “Culture” *except on our own terms*. We are the arrogants of power the merchants of power the technicians of power and presumably it makes us feel better having provided people with the chance, if only they would take it, to “raise themselves up” hallelujah to Culture and under the circumstances this hardly seems an appropriate way of proceeding, does it? Like other things in peoples’ lives art should be “special” not because it is *separate* from their day to day existence as museum hours force it to be, something consumed on the weekend a commodity over which they have little or no control but precisely because they *do* have a choice and *are* able to integrate it into their lives in a meaningful way. And that goes for our fives as well, as I can’t think of any recent art from Abstract Expressionism through Art and Language and New Realism which hasn’t instantiated this producer-consumer relationship at some point if not all the time, nationally as well as internationally, though these more explicitly social issues are no more but no less controversial than the corresponding phenomenological (“aesthetic”) issues neither being separable from the other. So it will come as no surprise then, not that it should since I’ve already told you and in fact not that anything here should at least dramatically and perhaps not in any other way, no surprise to hear that aesthetic decisions have been similarly oppressive. To begin at the middle and certainly the beginning and possibly the end we have raised fetishism to heroic proportions which is to say formalism has been one long love affair not only with the representation of objects but recently with the objects *themselves*. Perhaps there’s nothing wrong with this certainly nothing inherently wrong, though in a society which has already glorified the object it seems suspect and this in spite of the fact that it’s also possible formalism could be seen as a dialectical *negation* of objecthood clarifying that when *a form of being* (consumerism in the context of object worship) is substituted for *being itself that* is when social cultural relationships themselves become reified into say producer-consumer roles people also become objects. But presenting the problem in this way, concentrating on and extending objecthood, requires a simultaneous *alienation* from the object of presentation something akin to Brecht’s strategy for drawing attention to the ideology of his plays and I just haven’t found this to be the case have you? Nearly all of recent American art all of the hullabaloo over enlarged stretchers happenings environments gestalts etc., demands an *involvement* of sorts from the viewer demands that one be in actual physical *contact contiguity* for the work to make sense really. Yet this involvement is strangely anti-dialectical and insofar as art is to be judged on the basis of relationships internal to the work edge surface color

etc. or on the basis of some notion of “presence” or whatever the viewer is largely rendered *passive* by this art this art is *done to* the viewer and certainly constitutes an alienation from the object but only in that one is once again a consumer and hardly leads one to reject objecthood much less consumerism or exploitation in general: I’m sure all of you have thought of some examples which at least potentially contravene this combined social and “aesthetic” assessment and of course I have a few favorites myself, people and works I’ve been interested in for one reason or another, though as you might expect none of them pan out as real contradictions but then I’m not trying to prove anything either. To begin with there is Jasper Johns or as Kozloff said “In the beginning there was Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg” but I want to forget about Rauschenberg for the moment and say that Johns was interested in questioning how we refer to objects for example or how we name colors, thereby introducing a kind of alienation from objects though hardly I think as a strategy for questioning the socio-political implications of objecthood. But Johns also initiated what has come to be called “process art” and this is quite interesting because the notion of *labor* enters the picture and paintings can no longer be thought of as immaculate conceptions, not that this was so easy to do anyway with the advent of Abstract Expressionism, but as the product of work. In Johns’ case the actual labor involved in constructing the piece is only represented, pictorially obliquely, but as process art developed through Robert Morris for example or Gilbert and George what became important was the labor itself the idea that the time and effort spent “constructing” something even something as ontologically vague as a “living sculpture” was more significant than the finished construction, if indeed a separate finished construction existed at all. There was and no doubt still is a lot of potential here for drawing attention to and perhaps dialectically transforming certain aspects of the labor relationships in our society, drawing attention to the way labor separates people alienates them from each other to the way their labor is usually measured by the amount of objects they can produce or the amount of paper they can shuffle from the in-tray to the out- and so on trying to provide meaningful alternatives. Unfortunately process art didn’t provide anything new choosing instead the bourgeois alternative if you can call it that of dehumanizing labor which is to say Gilbert and George became as much like machines as possible and don’t forget Warhol who said he wanted to be like a machine and very few process pieces allowed the audience to become involved except as consumers alienated from each other and the producer(s) even though the producer(s) were usually present, so that “the audience completing the work” was little more frequently than the audience completing the institutional links between art and society, and isn’t it funny that a process which exists through time can be called “a piece” in other words an object to begin with, isn’t it? no different really from a 7-piece dinner set a piece of ass a piece of shit, piece brother piece sister, right on! a compartmentalized “revolution” against bourgeois values indeed. Process art merely objectified labor made *it* a commodity to be consumed an experience like most others thus alienating and didn’t care that making our labor relationships explicit did not itself constitute a challenge to those relationships, though that’s OK since it wasn’t so much a “socioeconomic” decision as an “aesthetic” one in the first place and I wouldn’t want to be accused of historicism, of misrepresenting past intentions on the basis of current ideologies, but of irony: Now Don Judd also made a few tentative jabs in the right direction by drawing attention to the interdependence of art and its ambience, though that ambience was generally defined as the gallery rarely extended to a coherent socio-political awareness and thus became a somewhat limited praxis containing the seeds of a fruitful



notion, and I need hardly add that Judd has certainly helped me at least. But Judd was also one of many Technicians who began to have their work fabricated in factories, a development which has several implications one of which is the creation of workers who produce not only cars radios airplanes etc. that they're alienated from but *art* as well, the old brain/body split along class lines with a new twist and not even half the problem since Technicians thus become (somewhat indirect) employers of those workers exploiting the workers' labor to create profit for themselves, while many Technicians also directly employ assistants who are glad to work but certainly exploited in return on investment and not surprisingly the employment of factory workers and assistants increases productivity. Of course we're all implicated in this kind of exploitation to one degree or another and we Technicians are hardly the only ones to blame and if the argument were carried to an extreme it would doubtless become absurd, yet this exploitation has become more explicit in the art world recently more large- scale and certainly more direct: Now some conceptual artists particularly the ones interested in information theory (cf. Lucy Lippard's ... *dematerialization* ... ) were conscious of certain art world failures and perhaps we are faced with an exception to exploitation after all it certainly eliminated objects to a large degree and a common concern was that art should be like everything else in the world not something special, indeed it might even be seen as a Marcusean dialectic using technology to negate the oppressive hierarchic effects of technology. It's no coincidence however that much of this art is embedded in imperialistic assumptions about a world culture about the symmetrical nature of communication in this world culture which is to say in international art, which reminds me that international art is a problem in itself though most of us in New York accept it without much question. And why this blithe acceptance, do you think? except that international art is a process of expanding consumption wherein new markets are created for New York ideologies and works, financial security through enlargement of a glutted market and we also have the satisfaction of stimulating artistic *production* via international shows, you know German Judds French Olitskis etc., though Technicians in underdeveloped areas (less so in more developed areas) really remain Culture consumers in that their production of such work doesn't affect their position in the system so much as strengthen the system itself lend it international validity and where does that leave us in New York, do you think? With the rise of international art markets competition works *for* Technicians, and while this contradicts the way competition works usually for sellers (in situations other than that of short supply) it is certainly the case now isn't it since Pollock's *Blue Poles* sold for \$2,000,000 to Australia Impressionist prices soared during the recent Japanese gorge the debate rages over selling American art to foreign investors. It's clearly to our financial advantage to maintain the interdependence of a world market which in addition looks to New York as the world capital of that market, so that the socio-political ramifications of world culture international art are thus manifold as are the ramifications of technology in world culture international art and in the end this is a major problem with conceptual art. Since information technology TV video computers newspapers is not inherently capitalist socialist or whatever it seems to me that many information Technicians have assumed that the content as well as the structure of technology is thus politically *arbitrary*, some squeezing this assumption a little drier even and concluding that the mere use of technology itself, merely "plugging into it", constitutes a revolutionary praxis if (properly) understood in McLuhanesque terms. As Les Levine says, A computer terminal in every household, and perhaps a robot in every closet a video in every family a ten minute spot on TV for everybody and I still find it

hard to believe that technology can be so aggrandized and at the same time so easily dismissed, can it? Sure technology is amenable to all existing socio-economic systems we can't deny that and I'm not trying to, though we're nevertheless faced with the situation of it being used *differently* in each case and in the case of capitalism it is used to reinforce and extend producer-consumer relationships, bourgeois ideology in general, a computer terminal in every home more likely an extension of this control than a challenge to it. Whatever its benefits the myriad manifestations of McLuhanism *are formalistic*, subjugating the content of presentation to the form of presentation form is content considering neither aspect from the point of view of social context, such that multiple TV sets in a gallery tuned to daytime programs and a show that exists simultaneously in several cities throughout the world and art in newspapers and various media events have all tended to *homogenize* culture social context through the intrusion of Culture, and technology worshiped rather than used dialectically ironically to undermine homogenization. Under the circumstances the desire for art to be like everything else in the world was little more than another art world exclusively art world response to the art world problems of artists art objects art in galleries etc., the creation of an illusion an obfuscation of the extent to which art already *is*, in the context of our society, like everything else and perhaps more correctly stated was really a desire for everything else in the world to be like art: Unfortunately there are many things in our repertoire of recent decisions which don't deserve the credit of a "mixed review" even for instance the common practice of more or less reifying the notion of consistency, and consistency is reified enough as it is, by constructing a series of closely related works (not to be confused with "serial art" where a single work is conceived as a systemic progression). Now consistency is so suspect, and I really can't say this too often because I'll never forget the long succession of art instructors admonishing me with the need to develop a consistent personal style no doubt believing it to be the best way of manifesting my individually and probably expressing at the same time a cultural preference for simplicity over complexity, now consistency is so suspect because it reinforces market expectations of greater product volume of sales by reducing the variation from work to work thus reducing the energy creativity needed for a substantial body of work. Of course people want to buy "a Morris" "a judd" almost any "Morris" any "Judd" will do for many of them as long as it *looks like* "a Morris" "a Judd" and that's one way of defining individuality I guess but it smacks of objectification reification to me, I mean is it any different from "a Ford" and whoever called the Communist Manifesto say "a Marx"? The specter of Frank Lloyd visiting Rothko's studio to scoop up large quantities of a protracted series is never far behind us as we are encouraged by the market to more or less repeat our history, and remember the notion of a series was an "aesthetic" decision though not ours alone (e.g., Kandinsky Picasso Mondrian), and unavoidably we begin to reify both ourselves as people and our work while reinforcing even accelerating the tendency for our labor itself to become an object to impart *equal value* to almost anything of equal size and scale we touch. I admit I've overstated the issue all issues a bit and presented them somewhat obliquely perhaps in that any model is at best an imperfect fit and the gaps are probably more important than the fits anyway and as I said I'm not trying to prove anything, though I wouldn't want to merely list my points either, an attenuated narrative, for it can't be denied that some works are recognized as seminal sell for more than that's that and I don't deny it. However it's extremely rare for the Technicians who did those works to actually sell them for tremendous amounts of money, more like Johns' \$960 for the ale cans since recognition seminality is largely a function

of the market system and you have to be able to sell work in the first place to qualify as a superstar in the second, which means that as far as Johns is concerned the sale of his ale cans for 90,000 means that the value of his labor his name essentially has risen accordingly for *all* his work and *all* the old work he does still have ether it's artistically significant or not. Since it's the name that counts and that's what's in a name is not a long jump to those of us who find a "gimmick" exploit it as much as we can and rely on our reputations to financially carry us through, or those of us who manufacture back work in our most lucrative style and coyly bring it out of "hiding". And then and almost finally there is the connection between our old friend formalism which is to say that if the work has to be seen in the raw to make sense really reproductions are more or less gratuitous and what are we left with after all but museums schools not to mention corporations which is to say that the ideology phenomenology of formalism has by and large been dispersed by those institutions able to afford the actual works, and what does this say about the purveyance of Culture? For example what about schools for example according to College Art Association statistics art schools and departments in this country have multiplied with almost profligate zeal my words not theirs since the late fifties there were a number of new jobs created for Technicians and administrators, an increase in art students a strengthening of graduate degree programs necessary for many teaching positions an increase in expensive kinds of art film video computer art and technology in general and in fact I think the current popularity of film and video at least has a lot to do with schools. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of all this proliferation is the extent to which New York Ideology is taught *nationwide*, of course worldwide too but we've kind of talked about that already and anyway that's them and this is us which is probably more interesting and it's not only the students Technicians in Los Angeles Houston Boston, the large metropolitan areas, but those in Missoula Santa Fe Dayton yes even in Peoria it will play in Peoria! who are indoctrinated in the ways of New York Ideology. Now art school departments are funded almost exclusively on economic rather than "aesthetic" considerations the number of students graduating in art relative to other departments the number of nonart students taking art courses the number of art majors needing financial aid the number of art majors getting jobs, so attractive "opportunities" have to be provided for incoming potential students in the form of accepted standards of art to increase their chance of making it in New York or getting a teaching job, all of which filters backs as aggrandizement of the school department. But the proliferation of New York ideology is a *cause* as well as an effect of institutional entrenchment and the structure of art world relationships and one reason anyway NewYork Ideology holds the reins of power is that art schools departments have spurred it on as the preferred ideology thus allowing it to create its own market, in other words, one has to teach New York ideology because it is the dominant ideology though it wasn't the dominant ideology until it was taught that way. It is hardly surprizing and no doubt this phrase is hardly surprizing now either that the liberal arts department in particular, at least as presently constituted, merely instantiate the class structure of society in general and the hierarchy of the art world in general and not only is education a commodity, *get* an education rube, but the language of liberalism itself becomes the ideal means of generating diversification at no expense to the status quo. For example when I once applied for a job at a liberal arts college I was told that they already had somebody who did my "kind of work" or so they thought you know the guy was interested in work past 1965 and in elaborating this decision, which I must admit that at the time I didn't take lightly, it became clear that while the school did have a number of

"different" alternatives for students they were all subsumed under the broad rubric of New York Ideology, not at all atypically with an emphasis on Abstract Expressionism and augmented no doubt though it's only a guess by the usual quota of art history courses based on modernist interpretations you know Rembrandt as a formalist.

*Women are never stronger than when they arm themselves with their weaknesses. —Madame du Deffand*

Heretofore this article has focused on various aspects of the market system, many of which exceed the mere presence of money. The ruling class is not a compendium based on money alone but a compendium based on institutional control, which is subsequently used in an oppressive manner. With regard to this institutional control the "poor" are sometimes as much to blame as the "rich". This is readily apparent in the case of high art Technicians. Notwithstanding the fact that statistics of the appropriate sort are difficult to obtain, it seems a reasonable surmise that not all high art Technicians come from wealthy families. In fact, many no doubt come from poor families. Moreover, not all such Technicians actually become rich. Consequently, in concentrating on the market system in art, particular attention has been devoted to 1) producer-consumer relationships, 2) specialization of labor, 3) labor as an "abstract" value, similar to a salary in certain respects, and 4) the oppression inherent in all of the above. It must be noted, however, that discussions of a "market system" frequently confine themselves to assuming that this network of economic relationships is abstract, that is, *anonymous*. But for Technicians living in New York at least such analysis would be inappropriate. For example, while the labor of every Technician is assigned a specific value at any given point in time, how is this value arrived at? In addition, who is our audience for the most part? Reference is made to these questions in order to delineate the degree to which our personal relationships are inviolately bound up in our economic relationships and vice versa. (And though it will not be pursued as a coherent position, it could be said that such relationships indicate vestiges of the patronage system; or perhaps they indicate that the patronage system has been transformed somewhat, facilitating the preservation of economic control over production.)

In classical economics (Smith, Ricardo), the price of a commodity is determined pursuant to the interdependence of supply and demand: a surplus of supply relative to demand generating lower prices for the consumer, the reverse generating higher prices. But notwithstanding the rise of a more purely capitalistic market system, experience indicates that the art world does not operate according to the models of Smith and Ricardo. For one thing, while supply is obviously limited in a fixed manner for dead Technicians, this isn't the case with respect to living ones. More importantly, inasmuch as the production costs of art works must take cognisance of labor as well as materials it is difficult to determine these costs, as has been indicated above. In any case demand itself is not influenced in the usual manner, by the availability of the product in conjunction with its production costs. In view of these facts it is impossible to ignore the degree to which the supply and demand relationship in art is *mediated by history and politics*. For the reputations of Technicians, and thus the commensurate labor values ascribed to their works, are completely determined with regard to their position in the hierarchy of art history.

It has thus been characteristic of the present market to increase the



*number of middle-persons* (e.g., Emissaries, the media, Entrepreneurs, museums, government agencies) involved in the art transaction. For middle-persons expedite the inflation/deflation of art world reputations; and insofar as they *do* assess reputations primarily on the basis of art history they, in addition, obscure the extent to which art history itself must be assessed on the basis of political and economic influences. Being a middle-person clearly involves some degree of power and theoretically a proliferation of middle-persons could create a more diversified market. But it might be more appropriate to focus on this role as a bureaucratic niche, wherein middle-persons mediate between the financial interests of buyers and the specialized training, aesthetics, required to produce and discuss modern art. In view of this situation it seems reasonable to suggest that, in the final analysis, both artistic “diversification” and its cohort critical “objectivity” merely serve to obscure the degree to which ideology is centralized.

In any case, for Technicians living in New York the presence of middle-persons is an index of market *familiarity*. It is common knowledge that most high art Technicians address their work to each other; while Abstract Expressionism may have instantiated this principle to the fullest possible extent it was not, as was mentioned above, atypical. But it is not difficult to ascertain that Technicians also address their work to middle-persons. This reveals an extremely important aspect of the socioeconomic organization of the market. For in view of the fact that other Technicians and middle-persons exist as the audience, Technicians do not have to endeavor to construct an abstract or ideal notion of “audience”. They do not have to predict who they are addressing their work to. Above and beyond the social elitism inherent in this situation is the extent to which it expedites the avoidance of one aspect of economic competition. For insofar as Technicians know their audience personally they are able to have a certain amount of influence on the sale of their work, making them less dependent on the vagaries of an anonymous marker. This is particularly true with regard to New York Technicians inasmuch as many of the important middle-persons, as well as the important institutions, necessary for an international reputation are headquartered in New York. In this context Emissaries and Entrepreneurs are revealed to be especially significant. Generally speaking, these are the people who act as *consultants* to prospective buyers. They educate the “eye” of buyers, instruct them in the intricacies of recognizing good art, advise them as to the relative economic potential of this Technician or that Technician. Pursuant to this end they serve the interests of both the buyer and the Technician, as well as themselves, of course. For notwithstanding the fact that the buyer may eventually realize a substantial profit from the purchase of work by an up-and-coming Technician, the purchase itself inflates the reputation of that Technician, determining that most subsequent sales will be at higher prices.

But ultimately, despite market familiarity, Technicians have not had that much economic or artistic power, except as mongers of ruling class Culture. While Technicians, particularly New York Technicians, have been able to influence sales somewhat they have still been at the mercy of buyers, insofar as at present no work of art is a finished product until it is traded on the open market. This should make explicit the extent to which Technicians living in underdeveloped regions are rendered almost completely powerless by international art. Their social context is not structured such that they could exert any economic or artistic influence - at least in the event that they accept international art as the preferred model of art - in view of the fact that they have little or no contact with those people and institutions which actually determine reputations, international standards. With respect to Los Angeles or Rome or

Cologne this situation is less of a problem. But experience has indicated that it is just as oppressive in the long run, determining that solutions *external* to current notions of international art are necessary, whether one lives in a completely underdeveloped region or not.

*Conversation is a game of circles. —Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Now what’ve I been sayin? What I been sayin is our very own market system *integrates* the art world. Now those are four-bit words, maybe even dollar words-and I warn you now friends, I’m gonna use em again - I think everybody get my meaning. I mean it’s just like blacks and whites bein integrated, ceptin it’s institutions I’m talkin about. The market system integrates institutions.

But you ain’t gonna catch me sayin that just cause institutions are integrated they’re all the same.

Sure money talks. Everybody loves the sweet smell of success. And art world institutions got the money, and they got the power. But they’re not all the same, nosiree. And it’s the language of money that makes em different too. Why some are even fightin each other for money. Everybody wants their share of mom’s apple pie. Course, they’re probably different mostly so’s they can make the system more efficient, you know dividin up the labor social-like. Like I said they all got the same ideology. But they each got economic power in a different way. Just look around you. Why right here in New York, right here in the Big Apple, we got institutional diversity, yessir I said institutional diversity. And I’m not gonna give you only *one* example. Why my dog Suzy could give you one example. And I’m not gonna give you two examples either, cause we both know you wouldn’t be gettin your money’s worth and I’m an honest man. I’m not even gonna give you three examples. No friends, I feel magnanimous today and I’m gonna give you four examples - and they’re important examples, mind you, not your usual chickenshit ones.

First off, we got the media. When I say the media I mean things like *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *Arts Magazine*, *Soho Weekly News* - the stuff we read to catch up on the news. Now the media’s always tryin to strike up a balance tween goin outta style and hangin on til kingdom come. On the one hand, like I said, the media gives us the news. Now the “news” comes and goes but to my mind, friends, they hand it to us on a silver platter, they tell us what the “news” is. I mean maybe I farted ten times in a row at the Leo Castelli gallery last week. Now that’s probably some sort of record, but you know and I know that ain’t gonna make *Artforum*, not even in the back. But they got *somethin* in *Artforum*. And if you keep buying it instead of somethin else well I reckon you believe it’s the “news”. Course I can tell from lookin at you that some of you folks just read things you know your name’s in, and I reckon that’s as good an excuse as any. I ain’t sayin I’m any different.

But that just means you like to be *in* the news. Course I can’t deny some of you other folks just read *Artforum* to find out what other folks are readin about. But that ain’t saying much bout news either. So *Artforum* and all them other magazines got the market sewed up on news. That’s what you might call institutional power. C’mon folks let’s hear it for institutional power. And let’s hear it for financial security. Course, on the other hand, the media’s gotta worry bout art goin outta style. I mean art history ain’t somethin to spit at, most folks find they can’t do without it. Not everybody agrees on it, but most folks do and that’s why we got a centralized ideology. Now you just ain’t “news” unless you got somethin sorta new to say bout this ideology. Every-

body knows this. But this way the media can have “news” and ideology all at the same time. They ain’t gotta worry bout ideology goin outta style cause it’s always comin into style. Course they ain’t fenced it in all the way, cause their reviews and articles gotta take into account galleries and museum shows. But like I said most folks, specially folks outside New York, look to the magazines to tell em what’s goin on. So if the media know what’s goin on and they ain’t worried about ideology goin outta style, what’ve we got? Well I’ll tell you one thing we ain’t got, and that’s Ford Motor Company. I mean Ford’s bout as interested in their old cars as they are in a bucket of donkey piss. All they care about is next year’s models. Now you and I know art ain’t like that: old ideology ain’t goin outta style, it’s gettin more *valuable*, least ways most of it. And since the media only give ideology a kick in the butt now and then - hey don’t harm it none - they don’t do much more than give the market system a kick in the butt either. Let’s face it friends, there’s more than one way to get stuck with a conservative.

Now I know I talked bout schools before, and I don’t wanta bore you folks, but this here subject’s a real gold mine. Just look at schools. Why if we believed everythin they told us we’d probably spend our whole life in school learnin bout art. To hear en tell it there ain’t no other way *to* learn bout art. An a lotta us folks do believe em too. Course it ain’t so hard to. I mean how many you folks tried read in bout modern art without havin some art education? Course most of us probably weren’t much interested in modern art anyways til we learned somethin about it. And its right comfortable learn in bout it in schools - ceptin of course when you get to feelin too comfortable and then you feel like pickin up the stakes and moving to New York. And if most everybody’s learnin bout art in schools they got the market cornered on education. So let’s hear it for financial security again, folks! Course the school system ain’t stupid: no need for em to stop there. Wha’ I’m gettin at folks, in case you ain’t already guessed is the market for art *teachers*. Now everybody knows where art teachers come from, and that’s other art teachers. You gotta go to school to be an art teacher. It’s one big happy family. And a lotta folks are goin into teachin full-time these days. Some of em just tryin to make a little money course, treadin water for a while. But a lotta em just wanta teach. And to my mind friends there’s a whole lotta assistant professors worried bout being associate professors, and associate professors worried bout bein professors - and’ every body’s worried bout tenure - instead of worryin bout showin in galleries or museums. Now I don’t wanta steer you wrong: there ain’t nothin necessarily wrong with this, it just ain’t what many folks in the art world think about. It’s like a separate world from the media for instance, and making it in New York, least ways as close as any thin comes to a separate world. Course I can’t deny that just cause there ain’t nothin necessarily wrong with it, I still got my doubts. I mean when it comes to learnin, teachers is teachers and students is students. And if you ain’t hired as a teacher you’re a student-there ain’t much in between. And like I said before, we’re all teachin and learnin the same ideology.

Speakin of galleries, they’re kinda interestin too. Cause we all know the way galleries like to fence off their part of the market. I mean the O.K. Harris gallery ain’t like Leo Castelli’s, you get a different welcome at both of em. So if you wanta buy O.K. Harris-like work you go there. And if you like what Leo Castell’s got out on the front lawn you go there. Course this ain’t sayin much for the art, cause you start thinkin one gallery’s work’s all the same even when it ain’t. But at least everybody can tell everybody else where to go shoppin.

Now I ain’t had a lotta kind words for Technicians, includin myself. But

I might if we got the bit in our teeth and took our head. I mean we ain’t takin advantage of our position, ceptin of course our institutional position in society. Folks look to us for creativity, yessir I said creativity, that’s what makes us different, that’s what we get paid for. But most of us ain’t doin much more than usin different and unusual means to the same end. Course that’s all most folks are lookin for anyways: the old ideology’s gettin to be like a friend you can chew the fat with every mornin - different stories, same friend. Wouldn’t be so bad if you didn’t find out the friend was stealing you blind in the afternoon, you and your other friends. If folks are lookin to us for somethin different then why don’t we give em somethin really different? I mean the whole situation’s kinda like junk: everybody get off junk and you get rid of everybody feedin on junkies. Now I ain’t sayin Technicians ain’t feedin on folks too. But in the art world we’re a lot more like junkies, folks feedin on us. And I think we gotta start cleanin house at the bottom, just like junkies. Some of you might call it the top, don’t matter. Main thin is we always got the *chance* to produce work sayin fuck you! to the folks feedin on us. We just ain’t *taken* that chance. We ain’t taken it as Technicians and we ain’t taken it in any other role. I mean lotta us are just Technicians, but some of us got other art world roles, mostly as Emissaries I reckon. Trouble is, most of us got the same idea bout our other roles we do bout art. Maybe the question is how to take that chance.

*Please do not shoot the pianist. He is doing his best. —Oscar Wilde*

No, I think the first question is *why* we haven’t (with the possible exception of the Guerilla Art Action Group on certain occasions) taken this chance in the last twenty years or so, why we have almost invariably chosen bourgeois alternatives. As I’ve indicated, much of this doubtless has to do with art being lodged in a society devoted to: specialized labor and roles; a tendency towards simplicity rather than complexity (the problem-solving ability of science/technology); class/gender/racial domination; an emphasis on output, productivity. But for several reasons - most of which, I admit, derive from theoretical assumptions about my ability, as well as other Technicians’ abilities, to change this situation somewhat - I think this is only part of the problem: that is the problem should be stressed in a particular way.

The Myth of Objectivity, an academic cause celebre for many years, has received quite a pummelling lately - particularly from academic quarters. The attack assumes that it is impossible to eliminate day to day prejudices from one’s work and that so-called “facts” have largely been mere reflections of these (implicit) cultural prejudices. In the process, this criticism has exposed the connections between academic thought and bourgeois ideology, one connection being that Objectivity exists in the first place. Now the art world, at least Technicians, can hardly be accused of Objectivity in this sense. But it is amazing how much we do subscribe to a complementary Myth of Subjectivity. This Myth seems to date from Romanticism, which was a politico-aesthetic reaction to the sterility of both neoclassicism and the prevailing social reality. During this period Technicians developed a belief in the power of self, especially the emotions and imagination, to challenge (essentially, escape) this sterility; and as a result they created a gap between themselves and that society. But this position increasingly led to reification of “society”, rendering it an abstraction rather than a shifting set of relationships constituted by people such as Technicians. What Technicians gained in initial freedom and eventual self-importance, they lost in the development of a position which, by and large, excluded them from ever politically *affecting* the society



they were opposed to. (In this light “art for art’s sake” becomes an attempt to establish another society of sorts. Also, it’s interesting that Dada, one radical attempt by artists to affect society *directly*, espoused what could be called the Romantic ideal of emotional spontaneity. Of course the contrast to both this scenario of Subjectivity and Dada is the radical tactics of Courbet and the Paris Commune, which were rooted in realism, in facing social issues head on; and it is interesting, I suppose, that the idea of the Commune has generally been overlooked by Technicians.) Given what had become an ingrained elitism, however, Technicians were still able to project themselves as highly “moral”. This assessment still holds true today. But while Technicians, the art world in general, may disregard more mass-cultural prejudices than most people (substituting others in their place), our inherent elitism means that, in a socio-political sense, this morality exists almost by *fiat*, be a Technician and you’re automatically the most morally and socially responsible people around. This hermeticism has meant that we rarely question more basic moral considerations, that is, the connections that do exist between art and a socio-economic system of production which is based on oppression. Perhaps somewhat simplistically I would say that while we have been and are socially liberal or radical, we are economically rather conservative. (I’m willing to bet, for example, that for all the homosexuality and disregard for marriage in art, a majority of Technicians have been members of nuclear units where they were, or were trying to become, the breadwinner. Certainly most high art Technicians have been male. Now I don’t deny the extent to which male Technicians, even gay male Technicians, have been supported by women - at least initially and usually out of necessity; but also don’t deny the extent to which most of us have endorsed the social division of labor common to society in general.) So the Myth of Subjectivity, like that of Objectivity, merely perpetuates the ideology/structure of our society. And to a certain extent it does this, as I’ve already indicated, by paradoxically denying the subjectivity of the artist (that is, consumerism).

The rubble of this socio-political implosion, then, is composed of a particular kind of art. If Technicians presume themselves to be a privileged minority, a hothouse of Cultural Wisdom they will tend to construct art which is devoted to *manifesting* rather than, say, *transforming* themselves and their knowledge. And no doubt such “internal” strictures as e.g. consistency reflect this process. It goes without saying that the only one in need of transformation is the lowly Mrs. Ballinger-and she needs to be transformed only to our point of view. The point is, our social role becomes incredibly ossified in this process; just as importantly, so does our knowledge. Our negation of society, by remaining undialectical, can ultimately *do no more than embrace that society*.

So we do get back to the question of *how* to take advantage of our at least potential opportunities for change. To begin with, while I am clearly a Marxist sympathizer, certain assumptions of Marxists about art also need to be questioned. Marxism has been almost promiscuous sometimes in glorifying art and Technicians as negations of the bourgeoisie. Doubtless this is substantially influenced by Marx’s attempt to develop a revolutionary praxis corresponding to his intuitions about artistic praxis at the time. But due to a strong predilection for economic analysis, many Marxists today generally grant art little, if any, impetus for political or cultural change. Some Marxists even assume it will wither away with the rise of revolutionary praxis. I’m not at all sure this latter assumption will ever be realized; I’m not at all sure I would want it to be. But perhaps, at this point in time, it would be appropriate to invert Marx’s intuitions: rather than constructing a social criticism/praxis on the basis of art, we should construct art on the basis of a social criticism/ praxis. As such, I am

suggesting a (possible) praxis which is in contrast to that of bourgeois artists who have always assumed they were undermining the bourgeoisie, as well as in contrast to certain kinds of Marxist criticism which has assumed they never were.

As you might have already guessed, I think the most important aspect of this praxis is undermining producer-consumer relationships. (Notice I don’t immediately leap to the altar of Socialist Realism.) Suggesting this inevitably involves me in a potential contradiction: this article itself could be seen as oppressive, by treating you as a consumer of my wonderful ideas. I have tried to avoid this. Just because you’re reading an article I have written, it does not *automatically* mean I am a producer and you a consumer. My point of view as a writer, and as a person, has been to assume that we are all implicated in what I’m talking about, we’ve all contributed to it. Although it is I who have chosen to write this article, I think the most that can be assumed is that I have become discontented enough with what I was doing to try and stop doing it and that this journal was available to share my discontents - neither of which is a situation peculiar to myself only. And to the extent that we *do* share these problems we are both *subjects*, not objects, in the world. One of the reasons this article has at least attempted to be so subjective is to create a dialogue with your subjectivity: I’m not trying to tell *you about* the art world but to *talk about myself in* the art world. That includes my language as well as the ideas expressed by that language.

My point is that eliminating producer-consumer relationships means moving away from knowledge and communication which has become rigid and towards knowledge and communication which is based on *transformation*. Ideally, talking with someone should mean that both ourselves and the person(s) we are talking with *change* in the process of interaction: not only that, *what* we are saying should be regarded as shared, contingent upon the way we are discussing it. When we talk about “acquiring” knowledge, or knowledge of people, we treat both ourselves and our knowledge as objects to be exchanged, neither of which is altered in the act of “acquisition”. As far as this article goes, I thus hope to evoke a response from you: not in *my* terms certainly, but not in terms of ideologies/structures which are alienating to us all either. In other words, while this isn’t an exercise in abject humility -I do think I have something to say -I am only trying to clarify that we *all* have something to say about our world and, moreover, that we all have a *responsibility to ourselves* to try and make our world less alienating. Rejecting the Myth of Subjectivity isn’t tantamount to rejecting subjectivity, exactly the reverse. The Myth of Subjectivity endorsed *reified* social behavior, at least after a short period of time, not self-fulfilling (except as self-congratulatory, of course) behavior.

For myself, several strategies beyond article-writing seem interesting now. The notion of groups is important to me. Presumably this is largely a result of having worked in a group myself, that is, Art and Language. Of course groups, in themselves, are hardly a panacea. As I said before, Art and Language has been as guilty as the 10th Street Gang in maintaining producer-consumerism. But I think that as we accepted the implications of working together we began to accept the ambiguities of trying to learn from and influence each other - which eventually (and I do mean eventually) carried over to our relationship to our audience. As a group those of us in New York began to develop a fairly intense process of *socializing* each other, a socialization which was/is contradictory to the prevailing art world ideology. That is, we began moving away from producer-consumer interaction. Understandably, this was/is difficult. Without delving into the specifics of A&L in New York, it is clear

that any group has to deal with the problems of authority. Authority comes in a number of forms: birth (male/female), status (reputation/no reputation), intelligence, wealth, time (self-supporting through art/not self-supporting, need other job as well), etc., and to varying degrees they're all difficult to overcome. But we have to try because advocating different notions of collectivity means, or should mean, advocating different notions of individuality: intersubjectivity. A non-reified group is inconceivable without a corresponding development of non-reified individuals-not necessarily *a priori*, but dialectically, group and individual reinforcing each other. Now the intensity of this socialization is probably any small group's strongest and weakest point. It's good because relatively frequent, direct social contact means that your ideas as well as everyone else's are subject to a lot of stress: learning actually happens fairly often. Moreover, you generally (though not always, certainly: it depends on how much authority has been exercised) begin to establish a context of mutual respect. On the otherhand it's not so good because, in our case at least, I think it made us feel "special" enough to keep on maintaining our privileged position in relation to the rest of the art world. I suspect we may have become victims of our own collectivity, reifying our small, somewhat formal group (versus, say, a loose collection of friends you talk with periodically; or a large community group where discussions are generally much less intense (in the way I'm using intense)) as the only means of radical action. I personally would like to suggest it isn't the only way. As I've already stressed, while the art world is highly integrated for the most part, its various elements also strive for a certain autonomy. And I think that in the case of Technicians and schools this could be taken advantage of.

Now I've consistently maintained that the specific aesthetic decisions of the last twenty years or so have usually reflected the drawbacks of our social institutions in general. This shouldn't be taken as a one-dimensional picture, however. It's not so much that all recent art to date is completely saturated by its institutional context, but that creativity has frequently been devoted to maintaining important institutional contexts rather than criticizing them. No doubt some aspects of all art outwit institutionalization; but recent art has tended to be consciously anti- *art world* institutionalization (*dematerialization*, *New Realism*, *Conceptual* art (I admit these are art historical labels but they seem appropriate nevertheless)) rather than antisocial alienation in general. But as I've said, I don't think creativity needs to be co-opted in this manner. I think each of us, separately and/or in groups, can begin to construct a non-alienating art which really does have the market system *imposed* on it, which challenges instead of reflecting that market. Of course this is difficult. Since the market system is institutionally diverse, various actions within the system will usually appear to be fragmented. For instance it is quite easy to make art in Soho, which is sold in Japan during a Museum of Modern Art/USIS exhibition, and never make the connections between New York Ideology, money, international art, and US foreign policy. But that's just it: diversity isn't fragmentation, but specialization; and actions within the market system are also specialized for the most part, not removed from each other. The right hand always knows what the left hand is doing; the market system as a whole is able to become *more* integrated through specialization, much like a corporation. This says something about the way wealth and power are generated by the system. That is, since I've already recounted the importance of Technicians, I don't think we can single out this aspect of production when it comes to wealth and power. The usual target, of course, is rich buyers, people like the Rockefellers. But when you get right down to it, they aren't all that powerful either, at least not by themselves. After all, they have to depend on the

same Emissaries and Entrepreneurs as the rest of us when it comes to determining economic and art historical significance. Moreover, New York work brings such high prices because it's taught almost everywhere, and because it's purveyed by the media as the dominant ideology. So I don't think we can single out individual buyers either. Under the circumstances, I think the only thing we can say is that *wealth and power are generated throughout the whole system* and that, as I said before, oppression in general isn't the result of a relatively small group of rich buyers but of an integrated system of institutions. As such it may no longer make sense to say the high art world "serves the interests" of the ruling class, as if they are separate entities; it may only make sense to say the high art world *is* the ruling class, or at least part of it - particularly since it is so much a part of city, state, and federal economics as well as corporate economics. This makes a critique of institutions especially important now. It also makes that critique harder to carry out, within the high art world anyway. For I don't think we'll be able to do away with the market system, except in a piece-meal way, just because it is the product of so many vested interests. This means it will invariably be able to dilute any concerted attempts at non-reified work: among other things, since the synchronization of deadlines for gallery shows, museum shows/retrospectives, media reviews, etc., is becoming increasingly intricate, there is a corresponding pressure on Technicians for high (that is, reliable) performance and productivity ~ a situation which doesn't allow much time for reflection. But despite these pressures I think it's possible to begin assessing our present social situation, become sensitive to the ways in which we are oppressed and we ourselves oppress, and something about it. (The question of how one makes money under these circumstances is a real problem, and one I won't deal with here. I mean I feel ambivalent about using "political art" to get a grant. And it is a good measure of our society that taking a job outside the art world in order to feel more existentially consistent about doing "political art" is just as alienating as a job inside the art world. And rejecting the high art world for another art scene would merely 'embroil you in similar problems, I think, though I've considered it a lot recently. Yes, it's a real contradiction and at the moment all I can do myself is live with it. I don't mean this to be glib, I just don't have much else to offer at the moment, though I think about this all the time too.) Assessing our social situation, however, should mean talking about *our* socio-political problems (I feel relatively comfortable talking about the problems of Art and Language or the New York art world or even art in the U.S.); it shouldn't mean telling other people what their problems are (I don't feel comfortable talking about Italy's problems, or Argentina's - except as they relate to my imperialism - because people there can do it much better than I). Essentially we should take advantage of specialization to engender disintegration, creating a dialectic with those aspects of specialization already solidifying integration. This doesn't mean we can't assess our interaction with other regions/countries, as in the case I just mentioned of international art and imperialism. But our efforts should presumably be channelled in the direction of transforming our own oppression, rather than trying to mediate for someone else; though insofar as both of us may be involved in overlapping political systems, there are bound to be overlaps in both problems and solutions which can't be ignored .

Paradoxically, given all I've said about schools trying to corner the market on learning, I do think they might be transformed somewhat. That is I would like to see both art students and members of the art/general community where the school is located work together to establish a dialogue between institutional and community resources/ problems. This notion corresponds pretty much to the strategy SDS adopted in organizing its "locals". It



is probably a measure of SDS' success that its attempts at national organization failed. What worked were the local groups, dealing with- local issues in the context of a somewhat shared ideology. As far as art is concerned this suggestion would work against the more academic, centralized aspects of schools. Moreover, it would undermine a certain amount of media control at the same time. After all, for those of us in New York *Artforum* etc. are the local media, and we are at least able to see and disagree if we wish with the events they report. For people living elsewhere this rarely happens - the result of an occasional jaunt to New York. Emphasizing local problems can mean a corresponding look at the problems of local media, rather than looking to New York for the "news". (For us in New York, of course, it means dealing with *Artforum* etc.) The point is, since most students *do* go to schools to learn about art, this might as well be taken advantage of: institutionalised education still remains the single most important way to learn the information necessary for undermining the reified aspects of that education. (It is interesting to speculate, for example, about the influence of liberal arts education on art. On the one hand it has kept art allied with the status quo. On the other hand I'm sure it has, through degree requirements if nothing else, forced even art students to think about things they might not ordinarily think about - things which could make them a little more able to deal with the problems of language, alienation, institutionalization, economics, etc. common to the art world and society in general.) Of course, teacher-learner roles would have to be strongly challenged, if not eliminated, at the same time. There is, after all - and I suppose this is my main concern here - a kind of institutionalized gap between being a student and making it in the New York galleries/media, and if you're a student you're plodding through no-man's land (sic). Students are the children of the art world. I find this situation stifling, it perpetuates making it in New York, or some other large city as tantamount to "maturity" and it reinforces the idea that teachers should perform the rites of passage. Art students can be as ambitious as they like, but even students in the New York City area are rendered institutionally passive by both schools and the world of Culture many of them are trying to enter. I think some sort of community action might help to overcome this, for students in relation to teachers and New York and just as importantly, for communities in relation to schools (since in many cities and towns schools are thought to be Cultural oases surrounded by community deserts). This is difficult, I know, particularly since students (armed with a high art indoctrination) might tend to project themselves as "experts" when faced with community concerns. But the problems of Cultural underdevelopment are pervasive, while little is being done about them. And I think a context of mutual respect and influence is possible under certain circumstances and is something to be worked towards under any circumstances. For example, at the undergraduate school I went to both teachers and students did a lot together to undermine teacher-student roles, and several community action program were started though none in art; in New York, both money and interest exist for community mural projects. Now my school has subsequently been the victim of a gross financial and political conservatism, a common demise apparently these days, which changed both the faculty and the in-coming students; and while some murals have been done in New York a lot more could've been done by now. But I still have some hope for this kind of community action in the art world, as well as for the other things I mentioned.

# MR. LIN YUTANG

ART-LANGUAGE Vol. 3 No. 2  
PAGES 68-80

MR. LIN YUTANG REFERS TO ‘FAIR PLAY’? AND REMARKS THAT SINCE this spirit is extremely rare in China we should do our best to encourage it. He adds that “Don’t beat a dog in the water” supplements the meaning of “fair play”. Not knowing English, I do not understand the full connotation of this term; but if “Don’t beat a dog in the water” represents the true spirit of fair play, then I must beg to differ. In order not to offend the eye .. I mean - I did not state this explicitly in my title. What I mean, anyway, Is this: a dog in the water may - or rather should - be beaten. ...Beating a dog in the water is not such a simple issue, however. You must first see what sort of dog is it and how it fell in. ‘(Lu Heun, ‘On Deferring “Fair Play”’, 1925.)

The non-copywriters’ ‘revaluation of art as practice’, insofar as it implies a social-transformatory strategy, is nothing to do with a self-imagining numericist anti-elitism.

A form of culturation (< learning) is crucial to the transformational derestriction of the range of particular dimensions of intension(ality) - a derestriction commensurate with the supersession of an alienated distribution of labour. This is to say that a particular cultural possibility is crucial to that prospect of intension (ideology) transformation... which is of specific (or quasi-specific) instrumentality. Without an intension culturation possibility, no socialization in the light of transformation at the level of production-relations is possible. It may well be true that without socialization of intension (/) culture (... or what?), there is no prospect of practice vis á vis reflecting reality - but the assertion may be multiply ambiguous. No ‘art’ exists except in a form of ‘iteration’ which, believe it or not, is a filtration of practice. Socialization has to be compresent in the dialectical history of that practice ... iteration. The question is raised whether or not that last statement might activate community aesthetes who are no more than an unsightly (sic) gleam in anyone’s maximal —□ minimal-mesomeric eye.

Obviously, the postulated autonomy of a universe of discourse, etc. (e.g. art) is a condition of inter-spatial and intra-spatial criticism (di-

alectic) only in the context of historical transformation. Finally it is to be considered in relation to the (a) possible outcome of the class struggle. This is a condition of instrumentality in respect of the circumstance that the division and distribution of labour concerns us with resonance (at least) of active practical self-supersession. However, in an historically transformatory situation, a dialectic of supersession will (does) present itself as a margin of the historical dialectic and ‘Endziel’ in a reciprocal way

What is positively worse than mere dog-in-the-water-ism is the tacit advocacy of a merely more extensive collection of hierarchically arranged functions. An extensive ‘totality’ may well be out of range historically and epistemically, but the numerical aspects of the issue (i.e. the exclusivistic distribution of functions) is the form in which the contradictions of capitalism are manifest; it is not a condition of them as such. The condition, commodity production per se, must be seen as saturated in and determining this form. Now (e.g.) foxes (in-the-water) may say this is obvious ... but why do (at least some of them) clamour for the redistribution of de facto activities and functions? The issues are remote from substantive ones and constitute an obfuscation of the possibility presented in a practical self-education which is a structural feature in the totality of social relations. These relations are dialectically reciprocal. Avoidance of, or ignorance of, the class issue can conduce only to an elite-fixated insistence on the modification of ‘control-relations’, etc. as a modification of the consumption modality within de facto consumption-conditions. This is merely a negative form of normativity. Analogously, a separate programme - contra-‘rationality’-in-capitalism - is pointless because of those second-order mediations that conduce (e.g.) to utilitarianism.

There is a specific cultural problematic inherent to capitalism (and no doubt to ...capitalism). We may ask, for example, if Moore’s and Anderson’s ‘definition’ is utopian...or what? It may be argued that it subtends from a ‘logical’ (bourgeois) deontology; the point is that it is an idealization under capitalism and the divisions of functions- labour (as observed even by Smith and Owen).

The historically (etc.) unrestricted extension of the ‘definition’s’ Paracelsian range might lead one to think that, qua definition, it’s remarkably compatible with (e.g.) Smith’s desire to suppress drunkenness and riot.”

A merely deontic...‘education’ is structurally irrelevant if the determinants of alienation are what they are supposed to be-determinants. The dream of transcending’ the phenomenon of alienation notwithstanding



- and external to any recognition of - its internal contradictions must be associated with a utopian deontology. This utopian 'ought' is a moralizing coherence-index for gradualist-reformism in most forms. The latter (often) needs such an index - or rather imports it - as a response to the dull and structurally vacuous apprehension of the cultural problem ... and its determinants. The cultural/educational issue becomes, or has become, simply 'enlightenment'.

Our structural difficulties will be compounded (resonantly) with respect to any slavish adherence to schematic 'structural hierarchism'. It may be possible that a resonant dialogue is feasible with those revolutionaries who oppose the view that the transformational prospect is dependent on a restructuring 'en route', via complex transitions and mediation.

Strategic tasks/activities are important because it is in the organization (etc.) of strategic practice that a framework of co-functional integration among self mediating social individuals is, or may be, feasible - and not because this practice is directly transportable into particular envisaged measures/forms of social organization.

In the strategic space, activity must be a dialectical and maximal restructuring in phase with the global or comprehensive activity of historical social transformation, which is functionally connected with the realization of a cultural transformation - adequate sociality-consciousness.

A task is simply meaningless unless self-transforming. And this, with respect to the dialectical intensification of the historicity of ideological crisis; the latter is a set of interpenetration functions or a reciprocal iteration of transformational possibilities which must be, among other things, a consequence of class struggle (and as a point of reference for the intensification of class dysfunction). The demystification of relations between theory and practice will not be secured via the abandonment of theory. Self-activity with respect to the teleological Drang of culture transformation is intimately connected with having something to say... something to say that genuinely reflects the historicity of a transitional practice.

The contestation of learning > culture of ... is a specific confrontation of capitalism on a more than marginal scale, insofar as it directly con- alders and affects the entrenchment or saturation conditions of reification.

There are people who only succeed in remaining revolutionists by

keeping their eyes shut. (L. Trotsky, Introduction to the First Five Years of the Communist International, Pioneer Publishers, New York, 1945.) It should be pointed out that, when you shut yourself in the dark, opening your eyes makes no difference.

A conversation between Professor Norman Trotsky and Petrichenko

Nasty

Professor Norman Trotaky

The presses are rumbling in the New York art community, A recent article in Artforum by Ian Burn called 'While We've Been Admiring Our Navels ...', etc. is paradigmatic of the blustering way some authors manage to get their various coats half-off. Incontinence, apparent as multiple ideological schizophrenia, can't be forgiven or written-off as the historical gratuitous thundering of the obvious, or 'I'm-only-ordinary' over-confident opinionatedness. A rhetorical annihilation of differences between Fascist philosophical clowning, geriatric Marxism, a form of Utilitarianism and Owenite-Fourierigm won't disappear if you put it down to resolute simple-mindedness in the face of complex issues. Heidegger, R. C.Tucker and D.Bell live! And you can get a headache extending the list. The effort to obliterate the (accidental (?)) militant inconsistencies - to assume that the author's heart is in the right place... just to look at the surface eclat of the article as teleological struggle - is vitiated by the (deeper) disturbing reverberations. The surmise that those contradictions that are faced by the artist may be resolved in a sort of penetrative artistic counter-culture without fundamental reference to the class struggle is a denial of the historical basis of social change. Artists are, variously, members of a social 'section' which, from an historical (class) point of view, is 'intermediate'. Every kid knows that this 'section' and its relatives fundamentally reflect capitalism. 'While We've Been ...' recommends that social transformation which gives security and comfort to the artist as petty-bourgeois and regrets the images of quasi-proletarianization that certain (strange) politico-economic-ethical observations provide.

In Daniel Bell's view, the Marxian 'abstractions' ought to be distributed between two sets: a) the young Marx's categories - allegedly related to timeless 'socio-psychological' conditions; and b) the 'economie abstractions' which, aargh!, criticize capitalism. Now, similarly classless Mr. Burn doesn't bifurcate his cribs in that way. The confusion is more extreme and more subtle. Mystification is arrived at via a putative economic critique. The results, however, are similar: both authors toy with the themes that subtend from the philosophico-psychological blurb of 'The Human Condition'. Now, do either of them avail anyone of a 'rad-

ical critique of society'? Only negatively. The 'individualism' of 'atomist' petty-bourgeois status is not social. It is not the individualism of the Gesamtpersonlichkeit. Hankering after the petty-bourgeois anachronism (which is anti-dialectical) allows in the Heideggerian mystification which jargonizes as 'inauthentic' the 'being-with-one-another'. As such, it successfully manipulates and suffocates the spontaneous anti-capitalist protest of the individual. Its methodology is the mighty-Wurlitzer-fusion of the 'negative' reality of capitalist routine and the positive potentiality of its supersession in an illusionist form of negation which leaves things untransformed and even strengthened. We all know that this frozen ontology can get wide acceptance and that it was attached once to a considerable 'social' (bourgeois) activism.

Little further comment is required. A history of apparently organized nonsense is, in spite of Rosicrucian lore, of some historical interest. Another thing is that we would want to affirm some sort of socially with Ian Burn.

It can be readily argued that the reform and modification of management is not incompatible with elitism. Similarly, it's a commonplace that any art practice that purports common cause with the revolutionary class generates images of strategies for the supersession of that art. There is nothing 'paradoxical' about that. It's dialectical and it's truistic. It's a truism that an elite art would not 'function' in the circumstance post-social transformation. It's also a truism that the producers-of-art-for-an-elite-market would have no way of functioning. It's not a truism (it's illicit induction) that the producers (qua former producers of an elite art) would have no way of functioning ... or 'support in society' ...or what? 'Means of functioning' can mean practically anything.

What's pertinent to the earlier (and most of the later) parts of Mr. Bura's 'critique' is that our economies are capitalist- i.e. the economic structure is such that society is divided up into those who own the means of production and those who don't (cf. Marx's Grundrisse). 'Neo-capitalist' and bureaucratic capitalist' are concepts which do not affect the basic world view of the revolutionary - while they have a substantial bearing on particular revolutionary practice and strategy. 'Neo-capitalist' is a term that lives in the discover-Marx industry. 'Monopoly' is a particular modality within capitalism. An analysis thereof might tell you what 'reform' is like. Fundamental reference to class dysfunction - to historic conditions of servitude would show that chatter about 'early stages' (pseudo-Marxian palaeontology) is historically irrelevant. Further, we are told that there is little wrong with petty-bourgeois-member-of-the-intelligentsia status.

(Look at Mannheim, et al.) The implication is that capitalism has got to be accepted- this especially - since the author is satisfied with the form

of private appropriation involved.

The transformation of production relations from pre-capitalist to capitalist consists in the transfer of the ownership of the means of production out of the hands of the individual producer and into the hands of the capitalist. The only item that the individual producer has left to sell ('alienate') is his labour power. This does not mean that he must be thought of as 'objectified' as (integrally) a unit of labour power - whatever the historical circumstances. And it is not a 'passing' (sic) 'of labour and the means of production from the hands of the worker to the capitalist' - cf. Marx, Wage Labour and Capital, etc., etc. The worker becomes the victim of capitalist expropriation: 'The worker puts his life into the object; then it no longer belongs to him but to the object. The greater the activity, the poorer the worker. What the product of the work is, he is not. ... The externalization of the worker in his product means not only that his work becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently alien, an autonomous power opposed to him.' (Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, 1844, p.290.)

What are we to do with the succession of political matrices? We (and Mr. Burn) are simultaneously functioning 'outside' monopoly capitalism (and we get the standard 'alienation' pitch) and living (at least Mr. Burn is ...) in a world of monopoly capitalism. It is 'generally accepted' that the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia reflect capitalism, and, given certain ideological motives, suffer the contradictory pangs that are alienation. But Mr. Burn tells us "there's nothing wrong with his situation as petty-bourgeois-so his problem is not dialectical, his contradiction is not in alienation, he's outside, contradicting-away (reflexively) on his own. The prison can't therefore be 'panoptical'. In any case, the prison is capitalist, not 'neo-capitalist', or etc. Consider:

1. 'I'm in jail; this is misery.'
2. 'But the door isn't locked; it's good to be in jail.' ((1) is false.)
3. 'They've built a hundred foot high wall around that fills up the door; I'm in danger of being miserable.' ((1), (2) are false.)
4. 'The wall has always been there.' ((1), (2) and (3) are false.)
5. 'The wall has recently been built.' ((1), (2), (3) and (4) are false.)

Natura facit saltus no doubt... but like that?



Another try: 'Mr. Burn is petty-bourgeois (and so are others), but soft! We're being proletarianized...but mostly it's happening to other people (deluded modernists (?)). And the author doesn't want it to happen to him.'

Problem: is the following a clean (and essential) reconstruction of what Mr. Burn is trying to say?

- (a) Artists are bourgeois intelligentsia.
- (b) The bourgeoisie reflect the economic conditions of life.
- (c) The economic conditions of life change. Therefore,
- (d) the reflections in the bourgeoisie change.

If it is, we are not told much - are we? It may be that the expatiation of a critique has been made difficult by tense-logical (not dialectical) contradiction on purpose.

Let's press on. The apologia for 'atomism' is supposed to contain a 'paradoxical social contradiction'. While the apologia is contradictory, there is nothing paradoxical for the bourgeois apologist about being bourgeois. For that matter, there is nothing necessarily paradoxical about the relation between fact and illusion. Mystification and contradiction are axiomatic of capitalism, and a dialectical contradiction is axiomatic even of social transformation. Perhaps the suggestion in *While We've Been ...* is that there is a dialectical relation between activity as a member of the social section bourgeois-self-employed (interpenetrated and supported by capitalism) and activity as a member of a 'class' getting glimpses of pseudo-proletarianization-plus-alienation. And alienation occurs as a result of the headlong bureaucratization of one's life. The important question here is what socially-transformatory perspective this 'realization of bureaucratization' might provide us with. It's a meaningless historical irrelevance to complain about the disappearance of those conditions in capitalism which are supportive of privatist practice.

One thing to be asserted 'positively' is that the intensification of social contradictions is nothing that a revolutionary socialist can regard as 'unnatural'. He can only complain insofar as they work against the rebuilding of the instruments of the class struggle by the class at the basis of it. The latter does not seem to be a worry in *'While We've Been ...'* inasmuch as an ideological investment in the end of ideology appears to be the significant point of reference.

We go on ... forgetting.

People who discover Marxism far too late tend to commit economical solecisms (sic) at the drop .. of a hat. In our object of scrutiny, there has been some illicit conflation of classical and Marxian economic concepts. This is brought out in an incoherence of functional ampliation in the former. 'Equilibrium' PRICE belongs to the repertoire of classical economics and has little to do as such with the 'rational' criteria suggested by Mr. Burn. ('Equilibrium market' is a do-it-yourself invention.) An equilibrium (equilibrial ?) price is determined by a market in which supply neither exceeds, not is exceeded by, demand - at a given price. (That price includes profit!) Presumably, the market exists for art that is bought. It's a mere circularity that an equilibrium price exists for 'art'. (Remember, it's a luxury markey and not meat and vegetables.) In any case, classical economic manipulation-puzzles are irrelevant to an historical, socially tranformatory perspective. Alienation is not a function of a lack of PRICE (market (?)) equilibrium...within the capitalist structure; it's a function of capitalist appropriation in general - encapsulated in the relation of producer to the means of production. Mr. Burn does tell us about the effects of the market...but that is not ipso facto telling us about a relation between an artist and his work.

We are told that the author (and, presumably, other people) is 'part of the labour force' - sans analysis. Suddenly, horrible dictu, he (etc.) has become a sort of prole. The tacit implication emerges that he's not become a prole - a 'sort of prole' suggests a lumpenproletarian. It seems appropriate that a delusory proletarianization is devoid of class consciousness. At the same time, notwithstanding derangement, a surface acknowledgement of the class character of the historical conditions of 'reality transformation' would be something to salvage.

It is more than just odd, then, to wave Marxian political economy around in an apologia for (or sentimental account of) Adam-Smith-mark-one 'competition'. The passing of (anachronistic) non-crucial conditions of exploitation is lamented, but not because the social transformation perspective has got very complex, but because, discretely, possessive individualism has been supplanted by economic unitarism. It seems especially odd that, in the wider structural context, our pro-capitalist should regret the development of capitalism to the extent that it has acquired (within its own logic) a high survival probability index.

It might be asked whether or not some of the 'detail' contradictions can be explained by the glimpses of fetishism we get here and there. The teleologically significant question (given alienation) is not 'How do I relate to the market?', it is 'How do I find a way of relation to others?' The latter implies the eventual supersession of the market. We get a particularly risque glimpse of fetishism late in the section entitled 'We Have Been Capitalized and Marketed'. We are told that the historical/social

problems of importance are joined in the confrontation of one style by a plurality of styles. Think about this: it is tantamount (sic) to saying that it's not one's relation with the means of production, or your historical perspective that matters, but what you make - essentially, what kind of object you produce. Again, in line with some reactionary interpretations of Marx, one is integrally a commodity; this is a long way from the socialization of art - as practice.

Any need for a (special) radical critical theory of art is based on the assumption that art is a special, separate phenomenon with its own special logic of economic (etc.) relations. There is something rather peculiar about Mr. Burn's demand when it is remembered that an important part of his argument is that the economic relations of the artist to the world are assuming the same characteristics as those obtaining in other sectors of the economy. If these relations are the same, then a critical theory applicable to the one sector would be largely applicable to the other. Similarly with 'rationalizing' theories ... i.e. classical economics.

'Reformists' of distinct types are lumped together and lambasted - they don't get the benefit of any doubt. But what if their naive collectivity was a start?

No bourgeois social theory makes an equation between 'standard of living' and 'quality of life' - in fact, the distinction between the two is used to back up paying very low wages to some people. This, notwithstanding all the problems about 'consumption'. At the same time 'community' as such is not necessarily the cockpit of radical historical perspective. 'Reform' is not metaphysically monolithic: it can be a basis for mystification and it can amount to meaningful strategy. Mr. Burn's inconsistency is amplified by his advocacy of opportunism. While most forms of reformism are associated with rotten institutions, it's worth pointing out that capitaliem can't exist without the working class, and the working class would not be the working class in productruggle to transform (or modify) its conditions of life and its future in production. The extraction of use-value from labour power is not a simple technical operation (of., however, Capital, p.159).

The result of the class struggle over the last hundred years or so has been an increase in real wages. There is no point in hanging on to the 'crisis' hope - it's a watery excuse for ideological pusillanimity. The transformation of 'reality' by those who have already connived at being starved to death ...? 'Reformism' must obviously be regarded as an integral part of the 'reality' to be superseded, but the conflict between the social objective and some teleologically indexed transient forma-

tions must be regarded as progressive. The 'maturing' of the conditions of socialism (or socialization for that matter) is thus the accumulation of the real conditions of an adequate consciousness. This accumulation is the product of the actions of the class 'for-itself'. The process is historic; it is not founded on 'crisis' incantation. Our socialization problem is mediated by its intensional/ideological socializing properties-in-general. These are properties of a dialectically vectored community which is modalized in a struggle to sort out and achieve the conditions of the solidarity discussed above. The superstition that surrounds the intrinsic dialectic of the class struggle must be excised: communism has not been assigned a revolutionary providence as the objective of history. We can easily see that class dysfunction is not based entirely on economic struggle. The crisis, such as it is, is a crisis of socialization as such. Mr. Burn would not doubt agree that 'extreme' mechanical historicism is wrong, but this will not unify our wide-apart concepts of socialization. It seems that we have to assert that Mr. Burn's 'socialization' will avail him (us) no more than would mere eccentricity. 'Freedom from the Renaissance' is supposed to have meant a continuous submission by artists to the bureaucracy of the art market. It would be possible for Mr. Burn's aims in 'While We've Been ...' to be realized via the intervention of (e.g.) mud wrestling: 'The prosaic character of everyday experience induces the artist to look for artifices of all kinds.' Mr. Burn points out that the New York art market denies even (and for him, only) the Pyrrhic victory of thematic 'freedom'; even if the restoration he seeks was achieved, the attainment would be very problematic indeed. Its problematicness would be increased in respect of the surface teleological Drang of his avowed theme. Its degree of identification with the capitalist basis is, as we have seen, more than substantial. 'Socialization' appears as a formal concept in 'While We've Been ...' Its content is neither referred to nor considered. (A noblesse oblige film show and a session of (e.g.) a workers' council both represent types of socialization. The dopey sociologist who, as the apologist of capitalism, falls to note the difference in their dialectical character is in a formalist prison.) Meaningful social activity is whatever assists the 'autonomy', solidarity and the self-activity of the class-for-itself. The point is that a demystifying meeting of the intelligentsia (sectional bourgeoisie), students and workers is only feasible insofar as the dialectic of social transformation is itself socialized. Art market radicalism hardly gets a look in. It is hard to understand regret at the lack of 'community' when, simultaneously, 'atomism' is being extolled. But suddenly ... a 'community'-in-general is discovered and it's (a priori) 'a political instrument' (cf. above, passim)... yet opportunistically so. It's likely that such a community could take comfort from the Law and Order 'community'.

## Notes

'A profound 'so what' invades the opening paragraph. When you can get over the mixed metaphor, it might be observed that it would not be



an exaggeration of economic determinism to ‘regard works of art as commodities in an economic exchange’ (sic) insofar as you were considering work of art’ in respect of the last 250 years.

<sup>2</sup>With a few pedantic suckings-in of air, most people would allow the first couple of paragraphs a commonplace and rather dull unexceptionability.

<sup>3</sup>”Modern art” = <sup>cf.</sup> “Part of capitalist production” (?) - in the second paragraph

(etc.) is redundant in respect of paragraph one. The situation is (a fortiori) capitalist not capitalistic.

<sup>4</sup>Socialism is conceivable only as a consequence of the class struggle; Mr. Burn has been reading what? ‘Objectivist’ commentary on Capital?

<sup>5</sup>Investing in oil enables you to ‘manipulate’ (e.g.) exploration for oil; consider the to-ings and fro-ings in connection with offshore oil exploration in the North Sea.

<sup>6</sup>The development of capitalism just means the destruction or diminution of pre-capitalist forms of production relations.

<sup>7</sup>The iconography of alienation is not the truth of the class struggle - or proletarianization.

<sup>8</sup>Consider ‘anarcho-Marxist’ critiques of the idea that workers are integrally ‘objects’ and cf. below, inter alia.

<sup>9</sup>The ‘market’ absorbs - it doesn’t mechanically ‘disauthenticate’... no, not Mr. Burn, but Mel Ramsden; there is a tacit fixation in ‘While We’ve Been ...’ with a kind of authenticity-modalizing that must be the product of local jargon.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Democracy’ is seldom incompatible with ‘elitism’. (Read Schumpeter, or somebody.)

<sup>11</sup>Fetishism is getting in the way again. There is, perhaps, an oblique sense in which an artist’s labour-power is appropriated: you buy an Ian Burn ... it’s quite a puzzle.

<sup>12</sup>Mr. Burn’s fall from grace assumption contains the admission that artists can or could have a ‘function’ ... only it contains the admission tacitly.

<sup>13</sup>Again , if you salvage his tactic definition, abolishing elitism is abolishing modern art- it’s not TANTAMOUNT to it. But...the knot gets another loose end.

<sup>14</sup>The lesson in ‘political economy’ (sic) involves attenuation so as to accommodate the substitution of what? ‘Arms’ (?) by ‘art’, ‘art work’, etc.?

<sup>15</sup>Transforming...reality’: there is not just one type of transformation, but not transformation simply as a utilitarian holiday - for the ideologically under-privileged.

<sup>16</sup>A commodity is what works of art are capable of starting off as. It’s not hard to guess what Mr. Burn is getting at - intuitively - but how do you cope with ‘starting off’, de dicto and de re modalities, etc. in this connection?

<sup>17</sup> Economic indices make things even more ambiguous. Are we supposed to understand ‘a collapse of the economic structure’ as ‘the collapse of capitalism’ - or as a ‘temporary crisis’? ‘Modern American art’; it’s superstructural (how-ever clever you want to be with mediation or hegemony, etc.). What its ‘careening superstructure’ is like, nobody can really postulate.

Less Nasty

Petrichenko

Professor Norman Trotsky is a bit harsh.

Some activities purport a certain communality, but their strategic-ideological instrumentality is nevertheless marginal. It is possible to ‘realize’ a sort of sociality in practice such that (e.g.) the marginal dialectic of use and/or ‘abuse’ is regarded as essentially external or independent. There can be an ideologically determined mystificatory conception

of activity which merely emphasizes his putative proprietorship of his ‘work’ and his membership of a community of artists, etc. The methodological-historical transformation of the social and ontological status of art towards practice is invisible; ‘the producer-consumer’ relationship is just shifted conveniently out of sight. The ‘use/abuse’ issue is marginal in certain contexts, but here it becomes paradoxically so.<sup>1</sup> There is not just one kind of socialization, and different activities are at different stages vis a vis socialization; they are therefore at different vantage points vis a vis self-delusion in respect of their self-transforming historical potentiality. Questions of ‘producers’ conscience are often raised because certain socialization processes implicate a very low level of consciousness in terms of social responsibility as such. At the same time, these socialization activities seem to proffer partial solutions to the problems of being (e.g.) ‘very alienated’ (pace I. Burn). It’s the seeming that’s the problem: these ‘solutions’ are often in danger of being devoid of structural content. It can also be argued that socializations of the kind adumbrated above are simply doomed to flicker about in a crystalline contradiction that remains merely decorative and inert ... or what ... worse?

Similarly, certain kinds of structuralism are shot through with hysterical alternative culturism. For example, it is often claimed (somewhat diagrammatically) that art practiced within a particular social order reflects and instantiates the deontology and ideology of that social order; it’s not ‘autonomous’, but part of an interpenetrative structure in which internalized ideological sets determine activity. Criticism of, or objection to, these relations does not inevitably conduce to a sociality of any more historicity than coterie communality. This, notwithstanding the ‘self-transformatory’ possibilities inherent in that sociality. The tradition of elitist, individualist, expert-reflexive criticism is liable to be fostered by the union of methodological-teleological communality and integrative structuralist criticism. The question how to turn one’s practice against capitalism/bureaucracy, etc. is by no means approximated by the (e.g.) communality of the narco-environmentalist looney bin.

In considering any socialization strategy, one has the problem of distinguishing between voluntaristic (etc.) conceptions of artists under capitalism (including restoration/primative hopes and conceptions) and those which recognize the structural situation with fundamental reference to the problems of class interpenetration in conflict. Only on the basis of some theoretical purchase on the distinction can mere mystification be avoided and actions (demands, etc.) formulated. Actions on this basis will be essentially transformatory, transitional and strategic; those that aren’t will have to be chucked-out. ‘Free-floating’-with-respect-to-class-strategy actions belong to the latter category.<sup>3</sup> Certain kinds of ‘generalism’ are also to be avoided: there’s an educationally programmatic dichotomization and confinement that gives a spurious

progressive frisson to the activity of certain generalists...swallowing M.Phil. degrees and Roland Barthes.

Our dialectical loci are organizational tasks that don’t feed off a general sentimentality about ‘sharing’. These tasks include the development of a strategy for sorting out the dialogical conditions of penetrating and participating in the class struggle; the provision of a feasible (and not a whining) self-critical alternative analysis of the situation and role of art practice; the provision of a self-active structure (or structures) within which artists can learn and act towards the realization of solidarity with activists in the class struggle - that doesn’t mean rotten institutions; getting-on with the problem of reflecting reality in respect of the ideology of the class struggle. Useless tendencies are those that recommend becoming all things to all men, a theoretical ameliorative opportunism and most expensive revisionism.

It should be remembered that the assertion that art requires revaluation so as to be seen as a (discoverable) intensional dimension of everyone’s life/practice is theoretico-practical, highly compact (contradictory), transitional and bourgeois. The effort of socialization may indeed involve a curious, but resonant, dialectic disclosed in the mediated location of points of reference with a specific class character and the suggestion that social transformation is feasible in the absence of ideological formations only marginally (if at all) having the aspect of a specific ‘culture-technology’. It’s not as odd as it looks (cf. below, interalia).

The conditions of solidarity are not Hippocratic, but they must have some ‘content’. You can’t demonstrate activism by taking thought: one of the particular problem that remains is the self-active (and class conscious) examination and demonstration of the ideological penetratedness of capitalist art. This implies, including in practice, the examination of bureaucratic vectors and external constraints imposed by capitalism and the conditions whereby the ideological and practical vectors have a ‘cultural’ character. ‘Democratic art’ has mostly the appeal of a flag - and it will so continue in abeyance of the analysis suggested above.

A. Menard is no doubt right: asking ‘what would socialist art be like’ can’t be answered - just like that - and certainly not by trotting-out socialist realist blurb. We can’t, however, work on asking the question - and that may be close to considering the question ‘what might “reflect reality” have as an interpretation?’

Revisionism-based pseudo-inversions like ‘Marx was impressed by artists’ and

‘now artists ...’ (get it) are more than highly parenthetical when the bi-atoricity of theoretical and practical danglers are considered. <sup>5</sup>

You can’t escape Volkskultur by claiming you didn’t really mean it. Some of this must be obvious to (e.g.) ALNY - and I don’t want just to shout like a maniac.

Social practice constitutes a global framework, but we’ve got to keep in mind as basic the observation that ideological determinants are capable of reflexive proliferation at some depth: an interesting problem. And related to this problem is the issue how one goes about identifying or locating ideological determinants in spite of, or because of, surface ideological vectorings... fetishistic indexes, etc.

Many recent practices, while resonant with respect to a number of scalar considerations, are being left gaping by their indices; they do more than ‘disappear’ however. This is not to suggest an incontinent relativism as the answer to our... ‘your’ practical considerations - bearing in mind the iteration of vector spaces. There are, obviously, very few ways you can step round the pragmatic parameters of a range of discourse.

There is a vulgar assessment that sidesteps ‘relativism’ in the same context as the one in which the contrastive ‘accidental’ position confronts it. We should avoid a fixation with class - as an immutable (non-dialectical) point of reference.

Obviously the conditions of a problematic are not exhaustively located via indices in the inter-dialectical/inter-theoretical space. There are those which are in-tra-dialectical/theoretical vis a vis a given locatable (though not necessarily located) (cardinal) problematic. We do have a dialectical problem that’s posed by the boundaries of our class membership: we are antecedently shot through with capitalism. This is to suggest that the dialogical-historical vectors of (our) class membership, or social section membership (which must be activated historically-practically) are or can be mediated THEORETICALLY. We can show the fallaciousness of vulgarist determinism in the observation that transformations can be (are) associated with inter- and intra-space modalities. If we assume merely that socio-historical, socio-economic indices are entirely determinative of the meaning of a practice, then we commit something akin to a Worfian fallacy. Our practice as such would become merely gratuitous. And, correspondingly, the historicity of the class struggle would be absolutely relativistic- it would be alright ‘for

them’. And this penetrates some of the structures... structuralisms that we might find a bit chilling (chastening) from (e.g.) I.S.

Not all efforts are to be approached and applauded via their theory-surface éclat (only). The Mannheimian intelligentsia are just a pain in the neck. ( They do exist as self-images here and there.) The other thing is that the theoretical/ideo-logical reciprocal interpenetration is sometimes just reflexive ... and more so. Class dysfunction (which can’t be institutionalized) is an indispensable theoretical index iterated beyond the point of production (vis a vis practice). Interspace criticism/transformation is obviously dependent on the existence of such an index - and so-on - structurally (cf Für Thomas Hobbes, etc.)

Post-Weberian conflict avoidance is what characterizes the views even of those who aren’t quite sure whether or not they like Ida Mett (and perhaps modern - you might say ‘sentimental’ personalistic anarchism’ or authenticity, sectalis whether or not to admire scissors-quotations from Rosa Luxemburg. solidarity is socialist solidarity - try to make that into a tautology if you can.

It must be remembered, while supporting the demand for socialization, that many putative socio-historical determinants of transformation are inert or rotten (or both). It must also be remembered that socialist (art) practice is integral to its ideological vector set; dialectically so. And a further ampliation of the dialectic lies in the strategic aspect (which must be highly complex), not just ‘to be found’ in ‘subversion’ of a given institution. Incoherent me/my /you/yours accounts are really nowhere. An adaptive ‘undermining’ of the producer-consumer relation (in art), where it is not fundamentally a posterior apprehension of class dysfunction (a strategy so conceived) can be readily associated with the adaptive integrative confliction of ‘open society’ models. It’s complementary to them- even though it may be interesting ‘culture-analytically’. The ideology of flexible adjective equilibrium has nothing to do with the actuality of social transformation. Mostly it’s terminological fetishism exacerbated by art. And that’s really all.

### Notes

‘How does one identify (even) ‘intermediate’ strategic issues? It’s far too easy to avoid questions like ‘What are the structural characteristics of our activity?’; ‘Who did what?’; ‘Who is supposed to have done what?’; ‘To what extent can practice be collectivized?’, etc.

²Consider



a) We're having some effect' and b) We're not having any effect!: re-construct these statements (and analyse them) in relation to Bxal-ing and relatives in 'Art-Language', vol.2, no.4 and vol. 3, no.1 ...and then go-on. 'Effects' cannot be distinguished (except formally) from structural resonances. Cultural 'effect', per se must be an inductive black hole.

³There are worries about our class bias... basis. The problematicness of one's situation is not merely a function of 'seeing it that way'. There's no point, however, in lurching about, enjoying the facilities of one kind of nineteenth century contradiction.

⁴How do you sort-out 'location' in this context? ...vide Art and Language transatlantic strife.

⁵Merely moral 'objections' to class dysfunction can serve the Parsonian corporation just as well (perhaps better) than systems rubbish. Similarly, Andrew Mendard's objections (in 'The Fox,' April 1975) to the self-imagining delusions of most... you know, artists... are hardly crucial or analytical; we have to assume that they are autobiographical. We all had teachers who'd internalized the good life, read Lukacs (or a less distinguished hack), drove Citroens/Renaults, painted Kirchners, married sociologists, had brown kitchens and congratulated themselves on being the scourge of the bourgeoisie. Opposition to consumerism, to the producer-consumer relation (as such, or de facto, or what?), etc. is by no means a seamless garment. Mutually contrastive or contradictory claims could get in on the act. Mr. Menard's so called 'inversion' just obfuscates the internal logic (or squalor) of these possible claims. And these internal logics are the logic of real criticism. The 'inversion' is a mangled and complex tautology ((i.e.) it can only work if you blindly accept the definitions involved). (Also consider Sandra Harrison's remarks in this issue of 'Art-Language.) What can be made of such confections as 'Let's construct art on the basis of "social anticriticism/praxis"'? (If you don't like the revisionist underpinnings, assume that you can understand 'construct' and substitute some other superstructural item for 'art'.) It looks... you know... partly meaningful. It's a pity when half-hearted ambiguities come across as swashbuckling calls to arms: Mr Menard has proceeded on the quasi structural assumption that 'art' is a form of social practice/criticism (good or bad or useless or in need of transformation - even self transformation, etc.), whereas the meaning of his 'inversion' seems to be that art is in some funny way ideology free - or - that social criticism/practice can be... or what? The first alternative makes the 'inversion' a particularly empty (if convoluted and illogical) image of a tautology and the other two make it tautological, but empirically and historically false. Oh well... (What he may have wanted to say is something like 'The transformation of art is a function of the transformation of functions in the global framework of social practice... which involves its supersession.) Problem: think up some

more puzzles deriving from the 'inversion'; (hint) proliferate ambiguities and see how many odd doctrines can be accommodated. I don't wish to be rude to Mr. Menard - there are cultural resonances in the way for me - but he can't really believe the products of Marx-sympathy profiteers and speculators. The transformations recommended are, unfortunately, just as likely to be adaptive - notwithstanding Rosa Luxemburg and my speculation as to what he might have wanted to say.

Mr. Menard also suggests that the fragmentariness of SDS was its greatest strength. Perhaps... but are we to conclude that the local indices of radical activity are inevitably paramount? SDS included some very wide apart ideological positions. What if SDS group R (Peoria) were 'liberal' (in the 'British' sense) and SDS group S (NY Bowery) were far to the left of that? The political formation presented by the former group would hardly amount to a generalizable index of 'strength'. I don't want to denigrate the real achievements of SDS but, in contrast to Mr. Menard, it can be urged that the movement's lack of solidarity was its greatest weakness. The catholicity of a flag of convenience is just that - for example. (That may be a bit strong - but compare ... 'and contrast' Rosa Luxemburg, Trotsky, Lenin and Stalin on the Kronstadt commune.) A further observation is that the fragmentation of SDS left the door open to - and eventually became a result of - infiltration by reactionaries, stoolies, etc., who succeeded in mystifying activists away from the substantive issues, and propelled them towards the pollution movement, reactionary anti-rationalism and all the fun of Marcuse Mark Two.

# DON JUDD

## KARL BEVERIDGE AND IAN BURN

### THE FOX 2 PAGES

#### I

Don Judd, is it possible to talk? What must we each do to construct a relationship which is not merely institutionally-mediated? Can we cut through the public mythology of “Don Judd”? How do we deal with an almost sacrosanct figure, a reputation seemingly above ordinary criticism, a powerful reference point for so much during the sixties and apparently still “fundamental” to a lot of the high art produced today?

What do we know of you? You “exist” in Castelli, in the Modern, in the Stedelijk, on Philip Johnson’s front lawn. For a while, you wrote criticism to earn a living; now you exhibit and sell to earn a living, to be able to make more work. You like John Chamberlain’s work, you don’t like Robert Morris’, Tony Smith’s even less. Barbara Rose says your work is “pragmatic”; Michael Fried says it is “theatrical.” Is this what we are addressing? By addressing this are we addressing you?

Should we accept your admonition that a “thorough discussion” of an artist should involve “the primary information [which] should be the nature of his work,” and “almost all other information should be based on what is there”? [6] What does that leave for us to say?

More to the point, can we ask what sort of relation *your* writing has to your work? Your writing does function differently to the writings of other artists, say Malevich’s, or even Newman’s. Maybe the easiest way to summarize the function of your writing is to say it operates almost like a Manual for the sculptures or objects you make. For a lot of artists, particularly Morris, but also Smithson, Bochner and Kosuth, this became a model for “controlling” the public image of their work

in the art magazines. Emphatically enough, you’ve insisted on the terminology you want your work experienced in relation to... “specific-ness,” “wholeness,” “objectivity,” “facticity,” “large scale,” “simplicity,” “non-associative,” “non-anthropomorphic,” “anti-hierarchical,” “non-relational,” and so on. These intermesh to provide a more or less linguis-

tically defined context. The language which constructs this context reflects a collection of assumptions about a particular form of art, —what sorts of assumptions are these? In other words, what can we say about the form of art this context presupposes?

#### II

By your own reiteration, specificity seems to be the key concept. It is not always easy to understand what you intend by “specific.” In one sense, you often use it to set up a comparative value; for example, “I’d like my work to be somewhat more specific than art has been ...” [4] But doesn’t this hold the implication that your work is specific only within a history of art objects, and so the value “specific” depends on the acceptance of that history as unproblematic? Doesn’t the specificity of your work hold in a “world” categorically limited to what counts as “art,” and thus it is a tacit claim for immunity to “anything to do with society, the institutions and grand theories”?

But you have used “specific” in another sense: “Materials vary greatly and are simply materials—formica, aluminum, cold-rolled steel, plexiglas, red and common brass, and 50 forth. They are specific. If they are used directly, they are more specific. Also they are usually aggressive.” [5] Doesn’t this suggest that the materials (and techniques) you use are “specific” to an advanced industrial society? Inasmuch as we know America is technologically the most advanced nation, wouldn’t that locate “specific” in what are generally held as *American* ways of doing things?

Of course, you would claim this has nothing to do with your work, that people who associate your work with advanced industrial materials and American life are being simple minded.

On the other hand, you have said that the structure of your work is “barely order at all.” [7] You dismiss technology and mathematics, “the scale ... is pragmatic, immediate and exclusive ... the work asserts its own existence, form and power.” [3] Finally we are left with “whatever the boxes are made of.” [7] That is, we are left with materials.

In this light, the use of “practical” industrial materials appears almost as an end-in-itself. Put this with a disavowal of transcendental qualities and it suggests that the identity of the art object is embodied in the materials (—that is, if we understand what you said about the Bottle Rack as an interesting *object*, and ignore the Dadaist gesture of it). Would you perhaps want to add that the identity lies also in the *arrangement* of the materials, and in the physical context of that arrangement? Or doesn’t it matter? If you take the identity for granted, you must also take its function for granted and presuppose the whole context of art as given. Do you?

You have also asserted “there is an objectivity to the obdurate identity of materials” and that “most of the new materials ... aren’t

obviously art.” You are saying that materials which don’t “belong” to art are more objective. But you are *also* saying that, by appropriating these materials “for” art purposes, they *lose* their extra-art associations. They become materials “without histories.” That is the explicit claim, but what is implicit in it? Isn’t it an implicit appeal to a notion of art history in which that history is totally divorced from social history? Doesn’t your assertion rest on the assumption of *autonomy* for art history? Without that assumption, can we understand your claims at all? And given what we know about the political and ideological appropriation of the function of art, is the autonomy of art history an assumption we can abide any longer?

If you assume an autonomous art history, you are assuming autonomy for the category of art—at least, so long as it continues to be assumed that art is historical, and not social. Even if “specific” has nothing to do with materials, this presupposition of art still underwrites so much you’ve done. You stated it succinctly when you said “an activity shouldn’t be used for a foreign purpose except when the purpose is extremely important and when nothing else can be done.” [10] But, in the same article, you said, “I’ve thought that the situation was pretty bad and that my work was all I could do”—which means things would have to be much worse than “pretty bad” before you would use your art for a “foreign” (or extra-art) purpose. That is an indication of the degree of autonomy you associate with the form of art you presuppose.

This has ramifications for many of your other concepts. When saying you “prefer art that isn’t associated with anything ...” [9], aren’t you saying you want the “associations” to be restricted or localized to the object or its immediate (i.e. architectural) environment? Along with an autonomous form of art, you wanted a *more autonomous art object*, what you would call “more objective.” Let’s look at that. Traditionally art objects are associated with other art and art history by way of their materials and by being a conventional type of art object. Such associations would, I suppose, in your words, be specific. But this was the last thing you wanted. The “autonomy” you developed for your objects had to function in respect to your presuppositions of an art (historical) context, and hence you still needed a means of associating the object with that context. Since the object itself denied any associations, the *physical situation* became a more important vehicle. That is to say, the object had to be *circumstantially* associated with its art context.

The ramifications of this are plain. You’ve said that works of this sort, what you’ve called three dimensional work, are “real space.”

[5] But this “real space” ends up being not a neutral space but a particularly loaded space. It is this which provides the circumstantial association. Which is an indirect way of saying that the sense of art and art history being appealed to is an *institutional* sense. It means that the more “objective” you make your work, *the more necessarily dependent the work is on a culturally institutionalized situation*. It also exposes—and perhaps this isn’t so surprising—the interdependence of the autonomy of art and art history with their institutionalization.

I’m not sure, —are we stretching the point too much to suggest that, putting this in the context of your rejection of the European tradition, it throws all of that increased dependence onto the institutionalized forms of American culture? And, if we accept that, inasmuch as your form of art is influential on other artists, American and non-American alike, doesn’t it force these artists to reproduce an equal dependence on the institutionalized forms of American culture?

Let’s look a bit more closely at what you rejected as “European tradition.” You characterized it as “relational.” Any work which had a lot of parts which invited “visual play” was entrenched in that relationalism. To escape that, you made something which didn’t *readily* break up into parts, so that the number and functional role of the parts were reduced (or subordinated). For what parts there were, their power lay “in a polarization of elements and qualities, or at least in a combination of dissimilar ones.” [3] This was characteristic of a number of artists’ work you liked. The effect was to *force the constituent materials to assume a significance they hadn’t assumed before*. Moreover, “new” materials had no obvious (a priori) cultural or historical relations, this was their “objectivity.” As we all well know, subsequent history of avantgarde art can be seen as an elucidation of that significance ... the “trek through materials,” esthetic investigations of a particular material’s range of presentation, the identification of particular artists with certain materials, to the extent of standing as a “signature,” and so on. The “new art” was identified by the significance and the newness of the materials. (It is largely in this respect that we understand your important and enduring influence.)

It is the central role of materials which coalesce your concepts of “specific,” “objective” and “factual.” At times, for you, these seemed synonymous. To your thinking, specific is stronger than general, objectivity

is stronger than subjectivity, facts are stronger than fiction—and the factualness of the materials you used was the justification for your attack on the illusionism of painting. You saw illusionism as retrogressive: “A new form of art usually appears more logical, expressive, free and strong than the form it succeeds. There is a kind of necessity and coherent, progressive continuity to changes in art.” [2] But do you really think that the “objectivity” or “facticity” of your work is independent of a viewer and his or her system of beliefs? Do you really think that something might be seen as objective or factual without first having met a socially-accepted rule of procedure? Do *you* think you can see something as objective, in dependent of *your beliefs*? You obviously did at one time; do you still? And what is this objectivity—isn’t it the sort of “objectivity” popularly held in American society, the middle-class materialist sense, the supposed “objectivity” of science, and so on? By asserting the “objectivity” of your sculptures, weren’t you claiming their character as “real objects,” the matter of their existence and identity being independent of a viewer? It is the attempt to establish a *more autonomous art* objective. This was the point, wasn’t it?



There are a couple of curious questions left over. The “autonomy” of the art object for us is its objectivity for you. So, for you, is the autonomy of art history also its “objectivity”? And then, would the autonomy of art be grounds for claiming a possible “objectivity” for art?

What does “a more autonomous artwork” mean from the viewpoint of the artist who produces it, or the person who looks at it? More autonomous translates into more *alienable*, in personal terms. The object itself (but not its context) is aggressive to the viewer, to his or her cultural expectations. Isn’t the viewer then forced to treat the object as more alienable?

How *does* a viewer relate to what you do? You’ve stressed the importance of the viewer seeing the works ... “Art is something you look at.” [1] You’ve also stressed the importance *for yourself* of seeing the works ... “you can think about it forever in all sorts of versions, but it’s nothing until it is made visible.” [1] But what kind of “seeing” did you mean? As you’ve stated, you wanted works which couldn’t be contemplated. What kinds of things do we see but not contemplate? Did you mean we should try to see them in an “ordinary” sense—say, like bits of furniture in a room? Obviously, that was out of the question, the presuppositions of your art wouldn’t allow it: its specialized mode of marketing and the prices demanded removed the work from the realm of objects seeable in an ordinary sense, and the institutionalized forms on which the work depends have emerged from assumptions which deny such viewing.

Contemplation was seen as a problem, and a number of artists of your time were able to induce some shift in the traditional habits of perception. For instance, Robert Morris theorized and rhapsodized about how we see the object in a field, the immediacy of the space in which it is placed. What you and others achieved was a break with the Modernist hardline of formal and exclusively “optical” (their word) qualities. This made a precedent for a less exclusively visually-mediated relation between the viewer and the object. You were right insofar as we didn’t contemplate (in the standard sense of the word) the objects, rather we experienced them *within a particular situation*, a situation which is, of necessity, culturally-loaded ... as we have already pointed out.

But that didn’t change the *passivity of a contemplative ‘mode that the work imposed on the viewer*. If anything, it heightened that passivity. It was just contemplation under a faintly different and more hierarchic guise. I remember looking at your work and feeling that my “looking” was almost “programmed”; I remember walking around your series of boxes and thinking my reactions were in some way “choreographed.” Contemplation isn’t the problem, the cultural passivity it reinforces is. It is this passivity which makes us powerless in face of our cultural institutions, and which constrains us to

reproduce our own powerlessness.

So why did it seem so radical in the mid-sixties? Why did it

generate so much other work, not only of your own generation, but of those who followed, ourselves included? The traditional European art object was very deterministic about the condition of subject, the historical conventions determined the role of viewer (me-as-subject). Your work and that of some others made the role of viewer more “open-ended”—at least it made me more self-conscious, more aware of my own presence along side your sculpture. Perhaps this was a function of the sculpture’s alienating effect; the art object, being (as it were) exclusive of me, forced me self-reflectively to deal with my own presence. This focused attention anew on the subject-object relation, it made the relation explicit, it made it *conscious* again. This became important for a lot of us. It encouraged me to view myself as object-and- subject. For a moment, this seemed radical, even revolutionary. It was radical. It touched the very alienating structure of modern art. *But what was its relation to your work, your aims?* The possibility of a dialectical relation between object and subject didn’t exist in your work. The possibility was inherent in your work only in a negative sense. The changes you (and others) wrought made us self-conscious *only in reaction* to what you did: your form of art precluded the very options it made us aware of. Your work remained immutable, passive, disengaged, its heightened alienability denying the possible transformations of subject-object relations. Your work’s fundamental dependence on loaded contexts made us too aware of the institutionalized forms of our culture.

What were the implications of the “self consciousness” that such work (perversely) generated? That is difficult to answer. We can say that self-consciousness hinted at *self-mediation* of relations to the objects ... which at least admitted the *theoretical* possibility of non-contemplative relations. We have to say “theoretical possibility” because it just wasn’t *practically* possible, then or probably now.

What you did was to make *explicit* in your work the rigidified subject-object form which has been fundamental but implicit in all of modern art. We could even say you polarized the subject and object roles. This accounts for you thinking you had achieved a new “objectivity,” the object conveying an independence of the viewer. The object’s alienability was now inherent in the object itself, in its mode of production. The object was more exclusively an object... and this exclusivity of and polarization from the viewer became an integral and essential factor of the production of this sort of work. It was the most characteristic feature of the work... its very power. You were very close to this when you talked about objects “becoming objects in their own right.”

But what does that really imply? If we accepted it as so many have, what does it commit us to, as a way of going on?

It opens up questions about what our art, our culture, *ought* to be. The issue is fundamental and crucial -whether we might be able to express (at least) a *negative* relation to the modes of capitalist production, or whether we are *forced* to reproduce a positive relation to those modes. Your form of art represents a final stage in the reduction of art to a mode of capitalist production. When the object of our “creativity”

becomes so *objectified*, “creativity” becomes a concept external to us, indeed alien to us, losing its dynamic as a personal-practical transformational force and instead seeming to have a “life of its own.” The work appears “to make itself” (as Rockbume and others would have it). Subjectivity becomes the enemy! And thus our art production further ingratiates itself as a public and institutional affair.

So, in retrospect, the implications of your “program” are striking. In giving your sculptures what you called more “objectivity,” thus more autonomy, thus necessarily more self-sufficiency, many of the external social relations, normally treated as only contingently related to the art object, were forced to be incorporated as inhering in “personal expression,” inhering in the personal processes of production. In the history of modern art, works of art exist only in an alienated form. You have striven for, and largely achieved, a *more* alienated form. This was a function of the internalization of the social dimensions of art, their internalization as *expressions* in *production*. This created not merely “objects in their own right” but art objects which embodied their own exchange value. Prior art had reflected the “psychological” *effects* of the modes of capitalist production—its fragmentation, the abstraction, the passivity, the myths of individualism and personal choice. The form of art you advocated embodied those modes, reproducing not merely the effects but the production modes themselves. Can you grasp the significance of that? It means: the alienability of the art object is no longer merely a function of the institutional “life” of the object, the alienability has become fundamental to the *form of art itself*. It means: to change anything at all now entails changing the productive form of art itself—that is, *changing to a form of art which presupposes radically different social relations*.

### III

You’ve said that your attitude “of opposition and isolation, which has slowly changed in regard to isolation in the last five years or so, was in reaction to the events of the fifties: the continued state of war, the destruction of the U.N. by the Americans and the Russians, the rigid useless political parties, the general exploitation and both the Army and McCarthy.” Yes, these events affected *all* our lives. And there’s no reason to think the art we produced wasn’t in some ways affected, too. Do you *still* hold that your art was immune to such reactions?

The fifties, with their cold war politics and anti-communist exhortations, become more incredible the more we find out about them. It was probably the worst possible time for our cultural institutions to develop, but it is perhaps not surprising that they did. While it seems hard to understand some of the gross distortions and lies, it’s not so hard for us to reconstruct some of the circumstances whereby our culture became divorced from a politico-economic critique. An attitude which emerged from the fifties was that one didn’t have an ideology in America, that the American way of life was the “natural” one—anything else implied domination by ideology. This was given academic credence in Daniel Bell’s “end-of-ideology” nonsense, the idea that America had

achieved a society in which ideology was no longer necessary. This continues to re-emerge in various guises. Your earlier arguments about painting and sculpture being too circumscribed to be “free” perhaps reflects some of this. Fried certainly tried to pull it on you by accusing Minimal Art of being “ideological,” implying that his brand of Modernism was the “natural” form of art. More recently, Rosalind Krauss seems to be resurrecting the strategy yet again, on your behalf this time ... But all this conveniently ignores that an “end-of-ideology” is as overtly ideological as it pretends not to be.

We’re not looking for simple-minded isomorphism. Of course it’s absurd to seek one-to-one reflection between the values of American society of the fifties and the values of an art which was subsequently produced by artists directly influenced by that period. However, the strongest forms of ideology are those reproduced implicitly, not through explicit forms. In this light, to say you’re “interested in making so-called abstract art and don’t like the idea that it is exhibited by virtue of its abstractness or unintelligibility” [12] is just fantasizing the *reality* of your work. The split between art and real problems emerged in the sixties in an essentially apolitical and asocial art—to the extent that, for most artists, political engagement meant moving on to extra-art activity. We witnessed the Pop artists using the subject-matter of social criticism for uncritical or even “antisocial” ends. The neutrality which this art assumes excludes the possibility of a critical relation to a capitalist form of life.

Hence, are we to view it as *accidental* that your notions of “specific,” non-associative” (etc.) reproduce a form of art which *denies* political or social content and in fact provides a cultural rationalization for just such a denial? Looking back, doesn’t this disturb you at all? Or doesn’t it matter—do you regard the suggestion as ludicrous? It disturbs us. And finally isn’t this why your work sits so comfortably in our cultural institutions— and not, as you once said,... the popularity of American art is that the museums and collectors didn’t understand it enough to realize that it was against much in the society”? [10]

You have sometimes been referred to as the first really American sculptor. What does that mean? America is powerful, aggressive. It’s hard not to embody that, and even harder not to reproduce it. But why shouldn’t you, you are American? After all, in your attitude towards art there is a constant equation of “American” with “most powerful” and “best work.” Did making your art “more American” mean it was “more powerful”? Was Abstract Expressionism “American” and Minimal Art “more American”? Was this reflecting the fact that America, as the emerging world power, needed to have its own dominating “high culture,” the imperative to be the best in the world? What would you say if people started referring to you as the first *complete* capitalist artist?

The image America has reproduced of itself is that of exporting technology, a technology which is democratic because it is good, neutral, and progressive, a technology which is equally available to everyone— the means for a better life, and free from ideological bias.

The American artists of the sixties and seventies have reproduced this pattern, becoming the “cultural engineers” of “international art.” With the image of neutrality—selling art, not ideology. This has even been institutionalized by galleries and museums, bringing the artists to make work “on the spot.” The impact of this is immeasurable, as a way of showing other artists the American way of doing things, of making art. This is the extent to which production itself during the sixties came to embrace and internalize the “internationalist” ideology. By contrast to the fifties—can you imagine someone giving Barnett Newman a plane ticket to fly to Australia and make a painting? When Abstract Expressionism was sent to Europe, it had to be packaged, it had to be given a form in the media, a publicity wrapping of “free expression in a free society.” The art of the sixties and seventies was media-conscious, the packaging was a feature of the “expression,” internal to actual production.

Such a form of art can’t carry much personalized baggage: the potentially frail, the quirky, the idiosyncratic, the unsure. That destroys the illusion of objectivity—because this sort of objectivity has to do with how things are packaged, how they exist in relation to public forms or institutions of culture. Is this what you meant by suggesting that while “power isn’t the only consideration ... the difference between it and expression can’t be too great either”? [5]

Yes, there *was* a time when the forms of “high art” were powerful media in society. But other, more potent and far-reaching forms emerged, and, for “high art” to maintain itself, it became dependent on the power of other, “external” forms of media. Existing institutions had to be transformed, while those emerging presupposed, even embodied, the new media and market relations. It was “natural” that the internationalization of American art and the institutional forms of culture that emerged during the sixties should follow the structure of internationalization of media. A world invaded by the vast U.S.-controlled international communications network found itself “wanting” those cultural commodities. All comers of the “free world” *had* to have a Don Judd. A media-conscious form of art reproduces cultural hegemony, recreates the world in America’s image.

You’ve said “it’s a strange idea that other people’s culture is your culture,” and also “the idea that imported history is culture is one of the great American mistakes.” [12] I wholeheartedly agree. But *why* don’t you think it such a strange idea that *your* culture should be someone else’s? Then there is an appalling remark you made suggesting that everything is “international art in America and the best thing that could happen would be equal international art elsewhere.” What a preposterous remark, surely you didn’t mean it as it came out? Did you? That remark blatantly reproduces the ambitions of U.S. hegemony and economic and cultural imperialism—where “international values” are dictated by the U.S.’s “national interests,” or rather the U.S.’s “national interests” are imposed as “in the self-interests” of other nations. Put bluntly, the internationalism you’re talking about is unilateral, is some-

thing which is *exported*, not a state mutually achieved. This is the form of art you’ve presupposed, and *imperialism* is

fundamental to its way of life.

The “power” of American art has been acclaimed in many countries. Of course such power has highly contentious value, its relation to knowledge, to concepts like “progress,” “advanced art,” etc. are treacherous. The acquisition of power by a particular form of art conforms to the relations it presupposes to prevailing institutions, the channels through which “values” are transmitted. Power accrues through the ability to mediate what counts as significant cultural points of reference. No matter what your personal intentions were, these weren’t what gave your work its power ... it was its interaction and interdependence with the media of the magazines, the museums, the prestigious exhibitions, the market, all the institutionalized forms of our culture.

Against all this, how could you see your work as *political, as subversive*! “So my work didn’t have anything to do with society, the institutions and grand theories. It was one person’s work and interests; its main political conclusion, negative but basic, was that it, myself, anyone shouldn’t serve any of these things, that they should be considered very skeptically and practically.” And “I’ve always thought that my work had political implications, had attitudes that would permit, limit or prohibit some kinds of political behavior and some kinds of institutions. Also, I’ve thought that the situation was pretty bad and that my work was all I could do.”{10] Do you still believe that? Do you still believe that the *individual* qua individual can be political or subversive? Haven’t you realized that achieves nothing, that it is exactly what the interests dominating this society *want*, that it is its most insidious form of social control? In fact, it is self-control—because only through an *organizational* base can one achieve power enough to subvert anything. Perhaps you would reply that *because* your work is so well represented in the media, the museums that you do have power enough to influence our cultural institutions, and to influence them in a subversive sense where you see fit. But do you? Aren’t you merely reproducing *their* power, thus power to assent, not dissent?

Yes, in America, the individual is in so many ways (apparently) sovereign. This is masked in the rhetoric of duty of the individual towards himself, the glorification of personality and private ethics. Ruling “national interests” are well served by maintaining this dominant (ideological) concept of “individual,” since it maintains us in a socially unorganized state. You can’t treat this as incidental or accidental ... wasn’t that plain when you remarked “it’s difficult to moderate a police chief in a little town in Mississippi but easy to destroy a government in Guatemala.” [8] A remark which surely suggests the link between privilegedness of individualism and imperialism.

We all tend to accept the sovereignty of the individual as the “natural” way of life, as unchallengeable and under pressure from it we react accordingly by isolating ourselves. You’ve remarked how isolat-



ed you felt. I doubt that many of us fully realize the impotence of the “individual freedom” we all have been taught to value so much, or the ideological import of it to the capitalist state. Such “freedom” is based on an indifference to everything which doesn’t hamper the development of bourgeois interests. 18 You can express indifference to institutions only insofar as what you do doesn’t threaten them in any way and what they do isn’t threatening to your interests. This is your fate perhaps ours too? In nowhere but the U.S. has the definition of freedom been so absolutely cast in individualistic terms, to the point of isolating the individual from his or her social world. This is why the artist’s problems are always given as psychological, not social. 19 Isn’t the sovereignty of the individual in society his or her isolation from other people ... *isn’t this “the first fight” we all have?*

What then do you mean by “subversion”? Subversive to what? As reformist, or as revolutionary? How can an artist today be revolutionary when every revolution stops at the collector’s or museum’s door, stops in the pages of a glossy art magazine? Both the idea and practice of “cultural revolution” in Western society have been successfully confined to high culture alone everything is immune to its “revolutionary” power. The only thing it may be subversive to is *prevailing art and art history* ... which, given the dynamic of that, makes it subsumable and a “logical” extension of that history. Yes, your art is revolutionary, but meanwhile art criticism, art history, museums, *all* the institutions remain *stable* and unchallenged. Yes, in these terms your work and most of that of the sixties is subversive-it is subversive to other forms of art, by presupposing a more alienated form, a form which has internalized an exchange value, a form saturated by political and economic interests. As far as being subversive to our cultural institutions, your form of art surrenders any independence of them, it acts in collusion with the way of life these institutions support. *You can’t be subversive to institutions and at the same time presuppose a form of art which reproduces, thus increases, the power of those institutions.* If you really want your art to be subversive, it must be a form of art which doesn’t reproduce the Big Cultural Lie.

IV

How do you see your work today? A lot has been realized during the past decade and this has changed the way many of us view the art around us. Our relation to your work has changed, too. By engaging your work and your writing, by trying to engage *you*, do we have anything to talk to each other about? Or have our actions precluded that possibility?

New York, New York

Footnotes:

1 And it also became a historical point of reference for many of the so-called conceptual artists, providing a model for how to assume a responsibility for the “language contest” of the art they produced. While the value of this context remained implicit in your writing, a number of conceptual artists developed it as an “end-in-itself” and “integrated” a linguistically-defined context into their actual artworks or presented it “as” the wors itself.

2 “...I don’t make a great thing of technology and all that. In the first place, I use an old-fashioned technique—basically a late nineteenth century metal-worling technique. I don’t romanticize technology like Robert Smithson and others, I think generally you are forced into modern technologies, but the technology is merely to suit one’s purpose.” [11] Of course this implies technology is ideologically neutral. It can be, but only if one first amputates it from its function in the real world,

3 “There are precedents for some of the characteristics of the new work... Duchamp’s ready-mades and other Dada objects are also seen at once and not part by part... Part-by part structure can’t be too simple or too complicated. It has to seem orderly...Duchamp’s bottle-drying rack is close to some of the new three-dimensional work,” (5)

4 E.g. “I wanted to get rid of all those extraneous meanings—connections to things that didn’t mean anything to the art. “[11]

5 Isn’t the rejection of associations an obvious mode of abstraction? But then aren’t we left with your notion of specificity on the one hand and a mode of abstraction on the other as somehow identifying the same characteristic!

6 Tony Smith provided a virtual parody of just how loaded. He is talking about the impact of what he calls “artificial landscapes” which had “a reality there that had not had any expression in art.” He says “I discovered some abandoned airstrips in Europe... something that had nothing to do with any function, created worlds without tradition Artificial landscape without cultural precedent began to dawn on me, There is a drill ground in Nuremberg large enough to accommodate two million

men. The entire field is enclosed with high embankments and towers. The concrete approach is three sixteen-inch steps, one above the other, stretching for a mile or so.” (“Talking with Tony Smith,” Artforum, December 1966)

7 In retrospect, the characterization of European art by the device “relational” appears fairly arbitrary... perhaps as inappropriate as the term “minimal” is for your work, We could suggest any number of other equally “fundamental” characteristics for European art, for instance, why wasn’t abstraction seen as a characteristic of European art, and thus pragmatically un-American?

8 A persistent problem is that any interpretation we can come up with for one part of your “system” not infrequently contains contradictions of another part of your system, This becomes frustrating when you make few, if any, remarks about your aims, content or intentions, A possible resolution would be that adopted by some of your “critics,” like Barbara Rose and Rosalind Krauss, who allow all your terms ostensive definition by your work... however that sets up a situation in which it is impossible to criticize your work in any terms acceptable to you, a tactic guaranteeing your work immunity to criticism,

9 This attitude was widely held by artists in the early sixties, For example, Frank Stella said: “One could stand in front of any Abstract Expressionist work for a long time, and walk back and forth, and inspect the depths of the pigment and the inflection and all the painterly brushwork for hours, But... I wouldn’t ask anyone to do that in front of my paintings. To go further, I would like to prohibit them from doing that in front of my paintings. “That’s why I make the paintings the way they are, more or less.” [1] We can also tie in Robert Morris’ discussions about gestalt to a hope of escaping from a contemplative mode of seeing.

10 The most foolish statement of this sort was made by Rosalind Krauss in “Sense and Sensibility” (Artforum, November 1973—an article I thought just stupid on first reading it, but now realize that its implications are quite insidious. Krauss promotes an utterly dehumanized form of art, an art which “implies the disavowal of the notion of a constituting consciousness...”. On the “theories” of Minimalism, she builds a fascistic and totalitarian dogma. She proposes “meaning itself as a function of external space” or “public space,” oblivious (or perhaps not?) to the ideology of the institutions which determine this “public space.”

While she pretends this would make “meaning” in art more social, in reality the result would be the absolute control and manipulation of art by its public (hence institutional) meaning, the final denial of any possibility of personal meaning. This is abhorrent! While this is certainly a “direction” of much recent art, we’ve argued here that this is what we have to struggle against—not celebrate and turn it into a formal doctrine, as Krauss tries to do.

I have no idea how much the artists she is talking about agree with her “program” (—she discusses, besides the Minimalists, Hesse, Serra, Sonnier, Smithson, Heizer, Nauman, Rockbume, Bochner), But the crucial question is: where would Krauss herself be in this picture? As a professional manipulator of the “public space” in the media, what role has she in mind for herself? Obviously she learned more from Greenberg than she is letting on.

11 Sol LeWitt seems to have been one of the first to voice this explicitly: “To work with a plan that is pre-set is one way of avoiding subjectivity. It also obviates the necessity of designing each work in turn. The plan would design the work ... the fewer decisions made in the course of completing the work, the better, This eliminates the arbitrary, the capricious, and the subjective as much as possible. That is the reason for using this method.” (“Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,” Artforum, Summer 1967)

12 You went on to say: “Part of the reason for my isolation was the incapacity to deal with it all, in any way, and also work. Part was that recent art had occurred outside of most of the society. Unlike now, very few people were opposed to anything, none my age that I knew. “[10]

13 Most artists today still seem to accept this split as in some ways fundamental. For example, Flavin has said that to use art “to assert personal opinions in political concerns ... seems to be impractical, irrelevant abuse-of another art and life confusion, ...” (Studio International, April 1969). Even when artists disclaim it, they reproduce it in their work, For example, Andre, in making the political point that “silence is assent” [10], obviously sees the “silence” of his artwork as of a different realm.

14 As President Kennedy described it, in 1963: “Too little attention has been paid to the part which an early exposure to American goods, skills, and American ways of doing things can play in forming the tastes and desires of newly emerging countries—or to me fact that, even when our aid ends, the desire and need for our products continue, and trade relations last far beyond the termination of our assistance.” (Quoted New York Times.)

15 The full quote was. “... I think American art is far better than that

anywhere else but I don't think that situation is desirable. Actually, it's international art in America and the best thing that could happen would be equal international art elsewhere.”[9] To make a blunt point, compare this to then Secretary of State Rusk's statement that the U.S. is “criticised not for sacrificing our national interests to international interests but for endeavoring to impose the international interest upon other nations.” Moreover this criticism is not rejected by Rusk, but rather is seen as a sign “of our strength.”

16 Also: “It's hard to generalize about all art and the United States but essentially the best art is opposed to the main kinds of power and to many of the prevailing attitudes... The United States is still a hierarchical country, sort of a large oligarchy, though apparently not as hierarchical as Europe, which may be the difference between European and American art, my work and that of most artists is opposed to that hierarchy ... My work has qualities which make it impossible for it to be in agreement with all of this [American foreign policy]. It couldn't exist, wouldn't have been invented, in agreement or acceptance of this.” [8]

17 Take for example, your remark: “The explicit power which displaces generalizations is a new and stronger form of individuality.” [3]

18 You've complied with that: “All economic institutions should be considered exactly as that, as producers and distributors, nothing more, certainly not as political entities. There's nothing mysterious and necessarily powerful about GM, GE, the Teamsters, Ford or whoever. They're just cars and light bulbs. Fear of these or adulation is sort of primitive, I thought that about the Art Workers Coalition, too; I didn't see why they were so excited about the Modern, certainly an indifferent institution.”[10]

19 Even the concept we have of ourselves as “an individual” is fragmented—the “artist” part is polarized from the “social” part and the “political” part, and so on. This is reflected in what you said about most people not fulfilling their responsibility as citizens [10] —but at the same time you don't include, as part of being a citizen, what you do, the support and purpose of your life. Is being an artist independent of being a citizen?

REFERENCES

[1] “Questions to Stella and Judd,” interview by Bruce Glaser, edited by Lucy Lippard, Art News, September 1966 (interview made in 1964).  
[2] “Local History,” Arts Yearbook VII, 1964.  
[3] “Lee Bontecou,” Arts Magazine, April 1965.  
[4] Art in America, October-November 1965.  
[5] “Specific Objects,” Arts Yearbook VIII, 1965,

(6) “Jackson Pollock,” Arts Magazine, April 1967.

[7] “Portfolio: 4 Sculptors,” Perspecta (The Yale Architectural journal), 1967.

[8] “Donald Judd Answers Question: Can the Present Language of Artistic Research in the United States be said to Contest the System”? Metro No. 14, 1968.

[9] “Complaints Part I,” Studio International, February 1970.

[10] “The Artist and Politics: A Symposium.” Artforum, September, 1970,

[11] “Interview with Don judd,” Artforum, June 1971.

[12] “Complaints Part I,” Arts Magazine, March 1973.

Note: The complete writings of Don Judd are soon to be published by The Nova Scotia College of Art and Design Press.



# THE LUMPEN-HEADACHE

## PETER BENCHLEY

THE FOX 3  
PAGES 1-37

### INTRODUCTION

The Art & Language ‘group’ is responsible for the publication of this magazine. There is a group (or, rather, according to some “a party”) in England and a group in the USA. In the USA, the ‘group’—some of the members think of it as a “political party”, still others “as a kind of union”, or even just “a looser collective”— consists of at least (so I am told) the following persons: Michael Corris, Joseph Kosuth, Sarah Charlesworth, Karl Beveridge, Christine Kozlov, Ian Burn, Carole Conde, Mel Ramsden, Andrew Menard, Preston Heller, Jill Breakstone, Mayo Thompson, Nigel Lendon, Alex Hay et alia. At least, these are the persons who attended the Art & Language meetings I attended. Some of these persons have strong ties to the “old” Art & Language group. Some are more or less peripherally involved and, seemingly fortunate for their sanity it seems to me, actually have interests elsewhere. Everybody has a ‘high’ art history.

Whatever else this group of persons might agree on (and I’m sure it wouldn’t be much) they would all probably agree that the daily events of the group as a group bear certain strong resemblances to a soap-opera. Calamity leap-frogs dizzying and relentless psychodrama; the ‘social atmosphere’—especially at group ‘get togethers’ (“struggle-sessions” as some members of the group call them) is frequently torpid. There is no discipline and people misunderstand the simplest things. To paraphrase a remark originally used to describe *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*, “almost all of the characters are completely confused”.

It seemed to me peculiarly commendable that nobody in the group tried to hide this confusion. In fact, many saw the inter-group ‘problems’ as attributable to capitalism and their solution to lie “in developing socialist consciousness”. The entire group however, is not eager to adopt “doctrinaire Marxist-Leninism”. Some seek a “working methodology” in perhaps more nebulous “but also more encompassing alternatives”. This minority holds that “social change is not something abstract which happens exclusively at the point of production, as embodied in

the antagonism between social classes”; it is indeed this they argue, but “it is also a complete social and cultural process which involves changing values, assumptions, attitudes, interpersonal social (class) relationships all along the way”. Now whatever this may mean, apparently everybody agrees that some ‘critical’ purchase on the group’s “internal pandemonium” would be instructive not only for themselves, but for others also—hence the initial idea of doing these transcripts.

Many members of the non-proletariat intelligentsia would not be caught dead saying they “oppose capitalism”. Instead they use abstract terms to designate the target of their criticism. They say “the bureaucratic society”. They base their criticism, in other words, not on capitalism as shaped by economic factors, on history, but rather on individual moral critique, on ‘choice’ or phenomenological ‘awareness’.

All members of the Art & Language group see the artist’s traditional role to be one of “servicing the success story of outside history—ruling class history.” It is this history which has “stolen creativity from the masses”. Some persons within A&L apparently see themselves as a kind of “non-proletariat petty- bourgeois revolutionary” (sic). Not a stereotype

revolutionary but “a real figure—the living embodiment of the contradictions of the society which shaped her or him”. I think this is noticeably implausible, however, they arrive at this conclusion based on the following (also not very plausible) ‘new-left’ analyses: “intellectuals in capitalist society were previously not involved in the direct production of surplus value. Before capitalism transformed ‘knowledge’ into an industry—a direct productive force— intellectuals, including artists, were privileged not to be the immediate object of rulers and manipulators. The overall growth in number of the intelligentsia leads, in the context of monopoly capitalist society, to the emergence of what might be termed ‘surplus intelligentsia’. This surplus intelligentsia is, despite its own historical role as ‘conscience of society’ and in better days preserver and guardian of ‘progress’ in bourgeois culture and science, now turning into a kind of ‘partial’ worker employed in one or another sector of material or non-material production. That is, the intelligentsia—so this argument goes—must now make a contract with the capitalist entrepreneur and become a ‘unit’ in the labor market. Such an individual is no longer bourgeois and not proletarian, they are, in other words, a kind of *lumpen-bourgeoise*.”

Whatever the historical worth of this analysis, it is surely true that art and artists are in big trouble. Many artists wish to ‘return’ (and some even consider it their ‘right’ to return) to being once again a non-committed individual hovering freely above the heads of ordinary mortals. But today this is picturesque. The ‘lone craftsman’s’ non-alienation always ended as soon as they came into contact with the market with which they were forced to enter into a buying and selling relationship. Under monopoly capitalism this ‘free’ activity finally itself becomes ‘moulded’ by the demand for the supply of ‘non-material’ commodities for the capitalist market. Considering this as, in fact, an accurate view,

today's artist is really a pathetically deluded figure—a figure insisting on the quaintest of 'rights', rights which long ago ceased to have any resemblance to historical reality and which quite possibly never did. The gulf between the artist's consciousness and actual being conceals from him or her the contradictory position of being 'free creator' and 'exploited employee'.

This view informs Art & Language. They say the middle class 'struggle' has no progressive base but must be "brought into line with the true historical possibilities of the revolutionary proletariat". Thus certain members of the group confided in me that they thought of themselves as "Kamikazi artists" and suggested they were all working towards some sort of flamboyant professional suicide—"a decent society wouldn't need professional creators like us". This kind of weirdly adventuristic chatter seemed to frequently mask a kind of dilettante-ish indolence. Whatever, many individuals in 'the art-world' share this dissatisfaction. This has become most apparent since the growth of The Artist's Meeting For Cultural Change. One individual in A&L criticized the AMCC by saying "we need to go further than intellectual discontent, our actions have to emerge rather as converted manifestations of the proletariat". It is evidence of the deep rifts within A&L that upon relating this remark, someone countered by stating that "this 'workeritis' is reactionary to the core. It is romantic self-aggrandizement and actually presents the greatest obstacle to real social transformation".

The following transcripts are full of dead end thinking and bourgeois pessimism. At stake was an understanding of capitalism as a complex social structure based on historically shaped economic factors, an understanding often given instead to counter-cultural exotica. Those flirting with this exotica often overlooked the positive aspects of Marxism. One attitude was that "Marxist-Leninism constituted 'a beaten-path' which, though a useful tool for analysis, was potentially deterministic and 'uncreative'". Actually, all of the members of Art & Language share a contradictory position, a sorry existential gulf between their actual existence within the system of capitalist social production and their consciousness or apprehension of that existence.

For what do these "Lumpens", the purveyors of 'expensive' creativity, know about 'revolution'? Revolution is a practical activity embodied in the activity of the working class. It cannot be trusted to free-floating rationalizers-sociologists, art-critics, anthropologists, aestheticians, These 'expensive' individuals make it abstract and use it to modify and jazz-up the conceptual frameworks of tedious culture-mongers (like sociologists, anthropologists, etc.). As J. P. Sartre said: "Marxism is not an abstract haze of exotic contrasts, it is the proletariat as the incarnation and vehicle of an idea". Of course, it must be remembered that it takes an intellectual and a French intellectual no less to recognize something like this in the first place.

What follows are my edited transcripts of the group's proceedings during three "struggle sessions" (sic) at the close of February, 1976, There were seven such sessions in all. I selected the first and

the last two. Two of the participants have strongly protested my selections. They insist that "the re-formation of the group which appears in Part 3 does not stem directly from the discussions reproduced here. On the contrary, crucial to that split are the intervening meetings which discussed at length such topics as internal group hierarchy, feminism, male-chauvinism, etc." These same participants also insisted that "although ideological differences play their part, it is significant that methodological and personal conflicts which have been and still are rampant in the group, often are the point at which 'ideological struggle' became deadlocked".

One final point bears on the use of names. Certain individuals did not want their names used—something which I never quite understood though assumed it had to do with protection of public image. Still, I decided to drop real names and instead each participant has been given the appropriate genus, species, or trivial name of a freshwater tropical fish,

Just prior to the time I left the group, they were voting to form a splinter group known as (Provisional) Art & Language. Others wanted instead to "locate their study in a less methodological prescriptive program". Finally, in terms of realism I had hoped the transcripts would provide much more, During the sessions I began to think they might provide a kind of 'surface realism'. I now consider them to be no more than a kind of 'collective hallucination'. If you can, read between the lines.

*Scarsdale, New York*

## PART I

Pongo Pongo began by being boorish: "Who wants to throw a dead rabbit on the table? We all use the expression 'social change—'what do we mean by it?'" Now this seemingly constructive comment was instantly sidetracked by someone who wondered "if these transcripts were going in *The Fox*?"

Jarbua said—"I think there is a danger in too much position taking and not enough dialogue. People *can* change their minds".

Pongo Pongo went on to say, "Let's stop talking about the structure and get on and deal with things ideologically ... you cannot talk about *cultural* change—it has been said— separate from *social* change. Given that we are in a funny class niche, what kind of change can we work for—given our class situation, and: is our class-situation, i.e., 'artistes', an *apriori*? 'Change' is not a matter of an idealistic blueprint needing only the details filled in by 'good-hearted' support..."

Oscellatus suggested that "we must look at what is unique about our situation, The fact is that we're artists, we're living in Ameri-

ca in 1976, the urban nightmare, etc., we might be able to understand what's unique about our situation by maintaining what kind of society we would like to have, What kind of society we want and how would that society deal with our work. In other words, start from our work and consider the kind of society we want.

A lot of the objections are formulated along the lines that the work is dependent upon (this) society for its meaning. The work is meaningless now because the society is meaningless, so perhaps, starting from the point of our work and thinking 'how would you want people to react' .... and what you would want your work to *mean* and how can we work

on changing society accordingly ... ”

Pongo Pongo said, “That’s all backwards cos’ there’s only one alternative and that’s

socialism, cos’ that’s the only thing that’s powerful enough to constitute a *real* alternative...”

*Jarbua*: “How do you know that?”

*Pongo Pongo*: Because I look around and see a lot of socialists and not much else that’s organized ... and historically real”.

*Oscellatus*: “Well, we’ve had Communists in this country as long as Russia has ... it hasn’t been changed. What are we going to add to it that would help?”

*Punkay*: “The historical situation is different. Social change and cultural change are bound up with the fact that we are a bourgeois organisation. Are we going to invest

the bourgeoisie with revolutionary potential? Historically speaking, are we going to engage in a middle-class holding formation of some kind? If we are starting from our work then you are opting for cultural rather than social change because you’ve already determined the relation between your work and society. You’ve decided that’s how you will mediate between culture and society. You can’t have real cultural change without real social change. We’re a bourgeois service organisation working for the edification of the ruling-class—which leaves the middle-class untouched (the lower middle-class) and the rest of the people untouched ...” [This took some time to sink in ... ]

*Clarius*: “ ... social transformation has to take the form of socialism ... I think it’s a

natural form ... but we’re trapped by our work” [This didn’t seem to help the sinking-in ... ]

*Jarbua*: “I don’t think it clarifies too much to say we are working for socialism. What we

mean when we are talking about socialism and how we see that coming about is really critical

to whether we can agree that we’re working for socialism. If we’re talking about socialism

as defined by the 19th C. utopian socialists, which is the most utopian, then I agree with their socialism. The question comes down to whether we’re going to work for revolution, *regardless* of what that means, in the most expedient of ways ... which I think a lot of people here are interested in. I think we need a definition of socialism that provides the conditions for the kind of society we really want, that would be genuinely liberating. I’m not interested in working for a dictatorship of the proletariat. I am interested in working for a society that would be truly egalitarian which has a whole different basis of social relations, that confronts the problems of capitalism, specifically the problem of profit making which I don’t think that socialism necessarily does confront—unless we work that into the definition. And I think there are other problems, such as sexism and racism that are very much part of the problem, that just talking about the role of the working-class doesn’t help clarify.”

*Ramirezi*: “You mentioned 19th century utopian socialism and you agreed with them. Well, socialism is an historic process that has been studied and worked upon since early 19th century. Those socialists made an essential step which was to ‘formulate’ the possibility of transforming society and addressing society to those problems, and it has scientifically been advanced through application, through historic confrontation with the ruling class ... and dealing with the problems that those confrontations force. Essentially, for us to ignore the history of socialism and ‘decide’ that we can ignore the problems of the dictatorship of the proletariat and characterise them as merely formal ways of dealing with things that are not satisfactory to us is to ignore a certain amount of *historical realism* which is absolutely essential to our position”. [uproar]

“I just want to finish this one point about the dictatorship of the proletariat: it is *not up to us*. The working class will change things, will transform society. It isn’t up to us to ‘choose’ whether the dictatorship of the proletariat is a ‘good idea’ or a ‘bad idea’, except insofar as we can work with it in mind. We have to keep it in mind on the grounds that it is a necessary transitional formation, and it does ...”

*Jarbua*: “Says who? ... God? ... or Karl Marx, or Lenin?”

*Ramirezi*: “Says history.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “The dictatorship of the proletariat does not mean that the proletariat dresses up like Nazi storm-troopers to go goose-stepping about... it means, and it is a frightening term to some people, that all of the working people rise armed and defeat the state”.

*Oscellatus*: “If one wants to look for concrete historical examples, look at the world. Look at the existing societies that we would conceivably want to emulate ... we must respond to the specificity of our own situation...”



*Metae*: “You’re looking at them as models ... we can’t... ”

*Oscellatus*: “When I was talking about socialism I wasn’t talking about any models we have, I was talking about a new model.”

*Puntius Stigma*: “I would think also you would have to look at socialism historically not abstractly...”

*Punkay*: “It’s very difficult to think of the US solely in terms of migrant berry pickers. They are about the only people who would apply to a ‘classical’ Marxist-Leninist sorting out of our society. For the US you have to change the ‘rules’ of ‘classical’ Marxist- Leninism ...”

*Ramirezi*: “We’re not talking about ‘classical Marxist application’. I do not think of Marxism as a model, or a chart that you can hold up ...”

*Oscellatus*: “As an absolute fact?”

*Ramirezi*: “... it’s not something that you hold up and see whether it matches up. It’s not a system. You don’t have your Marxist-society-transforming-kit. It’s a dialectical process. It’s history and history is the thing you can learn the most from and it generates certain kinds of relations that are unavoidable. There’s a problem with people talking about socialism as a *thing*.

*Puntius Stigma*: “It is a process which has many stages and if you’re looking at the existing socialist countries you’re looking at countries at different stages of socialism or ‘into’ socialism. In fact Russia sort of probably made one step into socialism and half a step

back and never went any further. It is a *process*. Socialism simply means that one re-organises the social relations of the society. That doesn’t mean that you immediately get rid of bourgeois ideology. You have a series of cultural revolutions within that period of socialism in order to actually make the superstructure fit the re-organization of the base productive forces.”

*Punkay*: “I can agree with what you’re saying; but I think you have to be careful about using terms like the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ because they have a very specific meaning in terms of their use in this country.”

*Puntius Stigma*: “We’re all trying to say that you can’t ignore the real history of socialism, but let’s learn from it.

*Punkay*... [Socialist positions] show us how material conditions have coalesced to produce the proper strategies of socialism which are [likely to be] most successful. While we can’t ‘formulate’ them we can certainly avoid them in the sense that we’re not about to have a Bolshevik revolution. In terms of what models you have to look at you have to consider the economic development of the place ... e.g., say, self-management in Yugoslavia is essentially impossible to conceive of without the devastation of the Yugoslav industrial base during WWII. The prospect of socialism was there because of the relatively weak

bourgeois opposition to the nationalisation of industry. If we’re dealing with the complex problem of American socialism then we have to take into consideration the corporate nature of the economic base. That suggests some lines towards self-management because (it’s) predicated much more on a local rather than a nationally organised thrust. You might have to work from a position of fragmentation towards coalescence rather than from a position of national unity. For the sake of others understanding of this conversation (we) ought to choose terminology more carefully because it seems most people are sensitive to that terminology.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Unless we begin to realise things like class and race and the dictatorship of the proletariat as *realities*, and stop skirting them we’re not going to get anywhere or even penetrate capitalist language hegemony.”

*Oscellatus*: “But are they realities?”

*Jarbua*: “We haven’t heard how it is a reality. ”

*Albifrons*: “You can’t separate socialism from the fact that the world is dominated by imperialist forces both in Russia and the US, Also, whoever is against the Dictatorship of the Proletariat: who should be in control other than the workers? Who should be the ones who can see what is necessary?”

*Jarbua*: “I’m opposed to the dictatorship of the proletariat per se. I don’t think it’s a question of who should be in control *other* than the proletariat, it’s a question of *every* person in the society sharing in the control of that society.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “A proletarian, or a person who, in being proletarianised’ occupies a particular place in modes of production, where he or she is [vulnerable to] exploitation by entrepreneurs. It doesn’t mean you work in a factory. You have to look at the way capitalism develops. There is an appropriation of profit areas such as culture. Science has moved so that scientists are no longer ‘free experimenters’, they now work for big companies (or the state). All of these people have had some of their power stolen and are getting more of it stolen. [May this] be a kind of proletarianisation?”

*Puntius Stigma*: “They’ve had their power stolen insofar as they are being organised by the state. This is a power *independent* of a person, it is only by *fulfilling a role* that you ‘achieve’ power ... ”

*Bellica*: “You seem to feel that drawing the line between who ‘is’ proletariat and who ‘is not’ is like drawing a line between those who are interested and those who are not.”

*Jarbua*: “Artists, you seem to consider, are proletariat insofar as they are working, producing ... and that dealers, critics and so on, all the so-called ‘parasites’ of the art world are solidly indexed to the ruling-class, that they are the cultural bosses. Now I think that’s very problematic. Those people are equally alienated and exploited by the

system. Someone said that because they functioned in a role which (amounts) to functioning as the rationalizers of culture they must be considered *the enemy*. I think they do rationalise culture but they're not the enemy, they're people. They come from the same class background as we do, they're victims of the system in the same fucking way we are."

*Bellica*: "If that's true men are just as oppressed as women."

*Jarbua*: "... artists are *more* oppressed than critics and dealers, but critics are also oppressed! There's a difference between Geldzahler and Rubin, and Lucy Lippard ..."

*Puntius Stigma*: "We're talking of a chain of power..."

*Oscellatus*: "It depends on where you find yourself in the pyramid—the power flows through us."

*Ramirezi*: "It's not a *pyramid*, it's a *base* and *superstructure* with 'lines'—it does not go up to a point."

*Albifrons*: "You seem to forget that Golda Meir and Mrs. Ghandhi are functioning the same way men do. You cannot put women in men's jobs and get 'equality' that way."

*Pongo Pongo*: "The way the society functions is as a set of power relations *independent* of *who* occupies the roles. A feminist president won't mean a thing. Geldzahler and Lippard are basically the same in terms of their power roles, even though Lucy is 'good', they're still both entrepreneurs. The power structure is there—I'm talking about a sense of class, a sense of socialism—on a large scale. I happen to like Lucy too."

*Badis Badis*: "Where do you draw the line between the oppressed and the oppressors? There are times when artists have power ... at what point does Carl Andre become an artist who is oppressed and at what point does he become an oppressor? Where do we draw the line?"

*Ramirezi*: "Well, the only way I can think of 'drawing the line' is in the jobs that these people do and the way the social relations bear down on them ... "

*Clarius*: "I don't think you can talk about, drawing a line. We have a system in this country which everybody more or less has to adhere to; People at the top have more privilege certainly but you can't really draw the line, so that makes it difficult to define the proletariat in this country."

*Ramirezi*: "That's if you think that 'the proletariat' is a matter of sorting out things phenomenologically. "

*Puntius Stigma*: "You have to look at the role. If Geldzahler was to try to work with us he would have to give up his job. There's a difference between that and Lucy who has some relationships to production.

The fact that the section of production is defined superstructurally obviously has to be kept in mind. But I think you have to draw the line."

Pongo Pongo: "You're worrying about setting up absolutes. This is capitalism: there are no 'good people', you have to make *ad hoc* decisions. If you are a revolutionary, running down the street with a gun, you have to make some *ad hoc* decisions about who you're aiming at... the guy in the Cadillac, smoking a cigar, you shoot."

Ramirezi: "Certain things are very clear: you don't see derelicts lurching down the street in mink coats." [Unlike in Paris]

Jarbua: "There is a problem, in defining the revolutionary class according to social roles. Some workers are reactionary. There's a difference between the Means of production and social roles. There are some younger critics and entrepreneurs who have interests close to ours. A lot of artists are in opposition to the proletariat. So, if you are going to make a distinction based on their categorical relation to the means of production you're just wrong. Artists are producers but not therefore proletarian or subject to proletarianisation."

Badis Badis: "If you're working for socialism, you are the proletariat. Therefore, anyone who isn't working in that direction is an oppressor. In other words, proletarianisation doesn't have to do with possessing credentials or fundamental endowments but with a true socialist direction ..."

Pongo Pongo: "I think the basic problem for us is whether we go on with a negative relation to capitalism, or with a positive relation to socialism, socialist history."

Punkay: "Well, is a positive relation to socialism dependent on determining class structure in a quantitative way, or is it an *opportun-ist* frame of reference? Is it possible for us to draw a theoretical base around class structure or, in that question, can we only have a negative relation to capitalism?"

Ramirezi: "I would say that all the formations we make, all the strategy, all the work we do is predicated on, in every instance, some sort of transcendental idealism, Our work and our social relations offer us the possibility of participating in the complex of strategies for transforming society. We all want to think—this is the transcendently idealistic part—that it is possible for us to *really act*. We know that we are bourgeois and that we are 'in' a social section. Our job is not only to figure out who is a member of the working class or who is a member of the ruling class—our job is also to create on a practical level a certain amount of theoretical havoc so that a core of rationality does not appear out of nowhere, out of our conversations with ourselves and with other people ... that, if you like, is what our job can be, given the fact, say, of transcendental idealism. It's a job of constant (class analytical) short-circuiting (of) social relations based on capitalist taxonomy—certain categories can't be 'saved.'

*Metae*: “Art’ can’t be saved ...”

*Oscellatus*: “You mean the category ‘class’ can’t be saved.”

*Ramirezi*: “You mean ‘class’ is a category; I don’t think that just because we cannot see clear-cut phenomenological evidence that a working class exists in the US does not mean it does not exist.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “The psychology of the working class does not believe that it is a working class, but we are talking—must talk— about the actual material conditions people are in and [whether] they are in a position of being proletarianized ...”

*Bellica*: “I want to know who ‘they’ are?”

*Bellica*: “If we are dealing with class-struggle then the issue of feminism is important. So is racism, because most of the people who take ‘classical’ working-class jobs are frequently determined along race lines or gender lines. The issues of racism and sexism should come ‘out front’.”

*Jarbua*: I agree. One of the reasons sexism is crucial is that there’s been an assumption, one part of Marxist analysis, that when you say ‘working-class’ you mean the industrial working-class and their relation to the means of production ... The majority of the women in this country have no economic power whatsoever and they can be considered [the] proletariat on the basis of their relation to the means of production. So women as a class, if you can talk about them as a class are very much part of the proletariat struggle, and blacks, as a class, as well.

*Ramirezi*: “How are you going to substantiate them as a class?”

*Jarbua*: “I don’t care if you call them a class or a social section.”

*Multifasciata*: “I think we can no longer determine class-structure economically. The working-class could be instead those who have no control over their time, have no mobility, then we have the intelligentsia with limited time and limited mobility, then we have the ruling class—who determine their own time and their own mobility.”

*Jarbua*: “What about what I said about women, they have little control and little mobility... ”

*Multifasciata*: “Yes, but there are working, middle, and ruling-class women ... there is a real difference between a black woman and Happy Rockefeller.”

*Puntius Stigma*: “Until someone comes up with an analysis, we can’t get anywhere with that argument... ”

*Metae*: “Are you ‘saying that women are universally oppressed?”

*Jarbua*: “Well not universally.”

*Puntius Stigma*: “Surely that’s no more helpful than saying that men are universally oppressed ...”

*Albifrons*: “I think that feminism is an important issue for us. I think an important question is, have women always been in an oppressed state? And I think we can answer this by saying, no, they haven’t. It comes out of the emergence of a class system and women were placed in a function within that class system.”

*Bellica*: “Anthropologically, that’s not true. Women were oppressed long before the class system arose.”

[much uproar]

*Bellica*: I’m not saying that women were always oppressed, in the Caribbean, in places, women have a certain amount of economic power, but in many societies where

class doesn’t exist women were nonetheless oppressed...”

*Pongo Pongo*: “I’d like to say something: we seem to be getting to the point of getting a lot of potted knowledge shoved in here.”

*Metae*: “We’ve got nothing ... nil over the last hour ... ”

*Puntius Stigma*: “Well it may or may not be true that in all societies women have been oppressed. The argument is weakened unless you can say *every* society oppressed women. We have to look at the problems of racism in relation to the kinds of production, in an historical sense, that we are living under, which is capitalism, If we are going to talk about sexism, we can’t talk in terms of women becoming better capitalists. A shift in consciousness, without implying an integration of that into the total social climate ...,”

*Jaculator*: “Yeah, but you have to understand that for women, ‘becoming better capitalists’, that is, increasing their economic power may be ‘reformist’ in the long run, but in the short run it may have a very strong effect on their ability to have some control and reflect the power they have gotten,”

*Puntius Stigma*: “OK, that’s one step back in order to take two forward. That’s OK, but how is it different [from] men doing the same thing?”

*Ramirezi*: “We seem to be talking about the working class who ‘don’t know they are oppressed’. In class terms in terms of the class-struggle, bourgeois women’s liberation movements do not have class awareness, they are in fact against transformational terms, But we have an historic situation where we are thinking about social transformation for large groups of people who are not thinking about it in the ways we are trying to do, and I think there are reformist women’s groups and their attitudes are opposed to Marxism, and the same obtains for blacks, You are going to find women who don’t think that class struggle is part of the woman’s problems/oppression, That’s a good index of our direction, who our allies are and who our enemies are.”



*Oscellatus*: “I just want to interrupt and remind us that this conversation has to do with the appropriateness of classical Marxist- Leninism to us, and this country, where we find ourselves and how close to the line of the beaten path we want to go and how much do we have to learn from that as well as from other areas and forge our own direction based on our own reality...”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Why don’t we ‘go around the table’ on that, and I would like to start...”

*Badis Badis*: “I want to remind you that ‘women’ are being brought up here because of the problem we’ve had with socialist groups where men had the main base of power, and I just wanted to remind you and warn you all in a sense that women have a double oppression which we will keep reminding you of.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “I would like to say that it’s good that it keeps coming up, and I don’t mean to be patronising, but it totally throws me. I have no theoretical purchase on the concept of women as a class at all. Also, I think that the earlier reference to classical Marxist-Leninism should be explained. It is not a ‘beaten path’ and it isn’t a ‘formula for success’. It says look at your own situation but here are some theoretical and above all historical-material guides. We have to use Marxist-Leninism to inform our actions. But, I don’t think using this means that it logically follows that we will end up with ‘Russia’. We will use it in our daily practice, to inform our daily practice. It’s not an abstract academic pursuit...”

*Clarius*: “Using Marxist-Leninism could be a detriment in terms of our acceptability— in the US but if we work with it, and we have to, it’s one of the models, it would be a great advantage in terms of acceptance ...”

*Ramirezi*: “But do you think it’s just a matter of finding the right combination of disciplines in order to sort problems out in this country?”

*Clarius*: “I don’t know quite what you mean when you say that—we learn from a lot of things, that’s all.”

*Ramirezi*: “How do you propose to transform society?”

*Oscellatus*: “Well it’s *much* easier to follow—a beaten path. What I’m suggesting is the difficult way, not the easy one ...”

*Ramirezi*: “What do you think the role of socialism is. You call it ‘a beaten path’... ?

*Oscellatus*: “I don’t say socialism—I said Marxist-Leninism.

*Ramirezi*: “We’re talking about our relation to the class struggle.”

*Punkay*: “WHAT does a socialist program entail... Marxist-Leninist or fucking avant- garde Leftist... say what it entails: ‘radical democracy’, ‘decentralisation’ ... I can’t keep up with this crappy stuff...”

*Ramirezi*: “I am ‘for’ the dictatorship of the proletariat on the

grounds that it’s an historical necessity, its implementation at every level is needed to overthrow the state. The power of it is that it organises the social relations. The transformation that we are working for is that there will be a classless society, i.e., there will be base relations. People to people ... whatever superstructural ‘constructs’ are made will be on an ongoing project basis. These superstructural relations will obtain for the amount of time that they are useful and they will be then superseded, the supercession will be *built into them*, and we are working towards, as humans, a functional state of constant flux, and our relationship to that problem is the possible power we have. To bring anything to bear on that problem is directly related to how well we can sort out our relationship to the class struggle as it exists as an historic process; and dialectics can be recognised, not ‘employed’. One thing about the co-equal problem of feminism: women are oppressed—I agree, but I think feminism must be sorted out on socialist terms.”

*Metae*: “The glaring situation is that there are a lot of personal relations mediated by oppression. What I would like to see happen is a bringing-together of social relations ... real ones ... and cultural ones. But even talking of ‘artist’ implicitly denies the creative potential of other work. The only form of analysis that I can apply to that with any free space ahead of it is Marxist-Leninist class analysis whatever modified way it pertains to particular situations.”

*Punkay*: “I’m not sure I can add anything at this point, except, we can’t approach socialism as capitalists approach capitalism, and that is as ‘nature.’ That means we can’t snugly fit with the tradition of socialism which, for Americans is a tradition of failures. In that sense we have to start bailing out of Marxist-Leninist positions insofar as they connote a history which we cannot depend upon, which means, for example, that Maoism ‘contradicts’ Leninism which means that Mao’s (positions) are embedded in the history of China. What sticks out in my mind is the need for radical decentralisation through which we can arrive at a series of *ad hoc* programs to deal with peoples needs, community interests determining relations, rather than the reverse. It might make our discussions easier if we stop relying on a tradition which is of no use to us. Capitalists can be innovative because they’ve got the thrust of ‘nature’ behind them—they’re working from capitalism outward. We’re not working from socialism outward, so we have a negative relation to capitalism and nothing else.”

*Clarius*: “In terms of roles, I’ve dropped my role as an artist, or rather I’ve dropped my working as an artist. I like what was just said. But where does the relationship to the rest of the world begin, the human race oppresses the whole earth. The longevity of all that exists must be considered. Marxism-Leninism is a prime model. But society based on Marxism could still go right along oppressing the whole earth.”

*Hypostomus*: “I’m not sure if racism is among the topics to be discussed. Given the make-up of this group it ought to be. Nobody’s defined socialism, and I can’t. I can’t speak of it realistically at all. I

think this week is important especially if we speak of the group's social relations. Talk about 'transforming society.' If there's any honesty in this group, the history of the relations, especially in the last year are extremely important. I mean this could be quite a painful week for some people in this room. If we speak of collaboration, male-female relations, hierarchy in the group, then the shit will hit the fan. If we are going to work towards transforming society we really have to talk about transforming relations within *this group*."

*Bellica*: "I have a series of questions: how can the middle-class revolutionize itself and, though we may speak of basic socialist principles, how do you change modes of production? Then we seem to be limited to ideology or the superstructure? I don't know how we can change the infrastructure, that is, the modes of production. It seems by our activity we are confined to superstructural change? We have to decide whether superstructural change has a strategic relation to infrastructural change. That is, our principles are complicated by the fact that we are complicatedly confined to the superstructure and if we go on about socialism in any other than a qualified way ... because certainly our reflexivity is basically about how the middle class can revolutionise itself, since that's what we all are. There's been a reason for the emphasis on Imperialism: its one of the roles of High Art, but its also superstructural, and the questioning of 'consciousness' is also superstructural, and its a kind of *cul-de-sac*: how do we get past those kinds of considerations? If we are so confined, what does it mean?"

*Pongo Pongo*: "All good questions."

*Puntius Stigma*: "Funny none of them came up before?"

*Jarbua*: "I'm really confused about our relation to Marxism-Leninism. A problem I have is that Marxist-Leninist's analysis becomes equated with realism. I think we must realise that Marx's analysis of capitalist dynamics is very crucial to our comprehension of our situation. There's a certain kind of determinism in assuming the working-class will rise up and seize the means of production and at that point the classless society will come into existence and everything will be groovy. We have to concentrate on 'oppressive dynamics' and there's more to oppression than material oppression. There's psychological, sexual, racial oppression, and these are crucially important. And we can't go on about socialism equalling some kind of ideal state without clarifying for ourselves what we want out of socialism and what we think it could mean. I don't think that means we should be unrealistic about it. I think realism is absolutely crucial. But I don't think we should equate realism with Marxism. We should look around and see what's happening. Marxist-Leninism overestimates class struggle and underestimates social ideals, values, all things informing social movement and change. I think there is a role for cultural change in bringing about social change. I don't think the two can be separated. "

*Pongo Pongo*: "Well think the question is what do we do. I don't think its a matter of defining Marxist-Leninism or not.

I think that many people around this table know fuck-all about Marx or Lenin, and I think they are doing a lot of talking. It's presumptuous if you don't know much 'about it, Nobody's talking about ramming socialism down peoples throat. Lenin alluded to one not being able to 'sell' people socialism. Some of us are speaking as if we're going to offer it up for purchase like a packet of Fab. Socialism's not an abstract thing. If it is, it's safe. It is here right now. It's a weapon. You cannot view socialism as a disenchanted, alienated, 'moral' intellectual. You have to understand it materially insofar as it's to fight for ... material

things. It's a war. It's not something to alienate yourself from, reify, then interpret. Being an intellectual and able to 'interpret' is a problem in itself. Our relation to the rest of the world is that we will say we will fight historically where we can for socialism. Socialism won't cure all ills. It will have to maintain industry though it may prevent profit which devours the earth by capital's expansion. You must see revolution and socialism as *now*, and ourselves as allied but not part of the base-class. Revolution doesn't 'occur' like Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade. I also think we've got to get the psychology of this group to a point where we can view it dialectically as a market-capitalist function. The distinction between superstructure and base which people have gone on about is fundamental to us. People haven't spoken of its *real content* but instead we deal, (just like fucking artists) with cultural bliks. We are restricted to ideology-superstructure. However one area of capitalist exploitation is now on this superstructural level. How can we, as petty-bourgeoise perform a revolutionary function except insofar as we correlate our cultural demands with the economic and social demands of the base-class?"

## PART 2

*Ramirezi*: "We've been talking about unity and a lot of terminology has been bandied about. I've tried all week long to make clear that we are involved in a socialist process, something with which we have an active, ongoing relationship. This informs our actions in some ways that maybe we don't even know the 'effect' of yet. One issue in this group has really been a hot potato: the 'dictatorship of the proletariat,' and all the problems that go along with an acceptance of class-struggle, that socialist struggle is the *reality* of our situation if we're thinking in terms of a socialist transformation." I think our position is in a social section of the superstructure. It is not an authentic base we can transport full-blown all over the international proletariat. I think our historical projectivity is toward the economic base. What do I expect from this group? I don't have any expectations from this group. I think it's unrealistic, in a sense, to anticipate. I have some working relations, that's all- These are determined by what we think it is proper to do, and I don't mean 'proper' in terms of any index which is out of control, I mean *realism*. What is realism? It's not a matter of definition. What do we do? What is it possible, for us to do realistically? Go out and work. Some of

the work we do reproduces capitalist social relations, some work we do fucks this up for an instant. I'm interested in the work that fucks it up."

*Puntius Stigma:* "It strikes me that we have finished having organization without clear ideological direction. Most of us can't stomach that way of going-on. There is a certain 'inevitability' about how we have to now go on. Something we haven't done in the past is take our form of organization very seriously. That's been a disaster. We've had, really, a *laissez-faire* organization. In terms of the work in and out of *The Fox*, I believe we've gone as far as possible with *laissez-faire*. Either we stand still and have a non-progressive group, or we take organization seriously."

*Jarbua:* "Or both."

*Puntius Stigma:* "There have been arguments for several years against adopting a more progressive organization. The arguments have always been 'the rights of individuals' against a [fear of a] sort of 'group council.'" At this time this is becoming contradictory to any ideology we claim to be holding down. It seems to be inevitable that we lose the individualization of the work. What I would like to see is work start to all come out as Art & Language, without names, that includes articles and shows. I want, also, a mandate that you can't do things as an individual. That makes the sociality into exploitation. This would mean a group of people would criticize [and struggle over] all work that goes out under the rubric, Art & Language. That would, for the first time, give us a real critical framework amongst ourselves. It seems inevitable that in such matters the group will have to prevail. This means all public work. If I'm writing something with Art & Language rather than my own name on it, that would, might, get rid of the individualistic tendency to imply 'look how much I know!' This seems to be healthy, to get the credit away from the individual. This individualism is not very productive in the group. It sets up competition and, worse, sets up a special [fetishized perhaps] relation with what is written. Now, there is a problem with the existing hierarchy within the group in terms of work put out under just 'Art & Language.' To a certain extent credit would accrue to those already established, thus reinforcing 'the hierarchy. But, in the long run, this kind of work would deconstruct the hierarchy, particularly if things began to emerge through commonality, from the center of *this table*. An immediate effect—well at present there's too much work and too little dialogue—would be less work but the work would be more *principled*."

*Pongo Pongo:* "The space in these struggle sessions has been very confrontational: what I see as the problem is that we seem to have a unique and looney combination of socialist ideals with bourgeois practice. I see that we must close in or break up into smaller cadres. The reason is that if socialism means anything to us it cannot be just theoretical, abstract. It must be something we put into practice. We have to put up or shut up. This group is plagued with typical bourgeois politics. That is, things go on secretly, covertly: all of these things must go on in order to make us 'feasible' in the capitalist world. We have to stop this and the only way to do that is to collectivize the incoming in-

formation. That would put a brake on hierarchy reinforcement. 'Tighter' group control of work just means not that there is no 'individual' work, but that *the group* [party or whatever] mediates publically rather than the individual. We have to work in the artworld, but that work we do there must attempt, through the development of contradiction perhaps, to advance the base class historically. That is, 'our' history is class history not isolated personal 'creative' history. It should be work which denies the artworld its crutch of rationality ..."

*Metae:* Whatever expectations we have can't be 'ends,' but 'means' that are directed toward a known 'end.' This is socialism. Socialism and its analysis plus what we can learn from history will inform those means. We act as artists because that's where we've been socialized. I would think that the overall task of artists is to eliminate the hegemony that we 'professionals' have over creativity. But we also act as people and as socialists. Our social relations are based on the assumptions of an ideological position. Our strategic objectives are obviously demystification and harassment of the social section we are dumped into. The question of a model and modelmaking came up earlier. Also, someone said our social relations might be our most radical relations. But I think it's dangerous to pride ourselves about that... It's socialism we're talking about, not socialization and that's important. We don't want to fetishize and reify these internal social relations! If you ask 'is the right to be independent lost through mutual criticism and control?' (with the stress on *control*)—well, what I think is lost is the authority implicitly conferred upon individuals by their identification with this group which has been edited *false solidarity* [which I took to mean 'solidarity' for individual ends]. The last thing I have to ask is the question 'what prevents people from working together?'. First, perhaps when the ideological relations between them isn't *clear*. It can't be made clear by assertion but it has to be made clear through the manifestations of work and the results of working together."

*Jarbua:* "Well, I must say I'm not sorted out at all. I see the process we're involved in now, the socialist process, as an ideological process, and I think the hope of us reaching ideological unity at this point is a vain one. I don't think collectives begin with an ideologically competitive situation and then produce work together, and I don't think we can surrender our individualism at this point because we do not have ideological unity. I think ideological unity has to precede that, and I do not see the basis for ideological unity. At this point we need to build a context in that direction by examination of ideological issues. Obviously, since I see myself in an ideological minority at this point, I can see that to surrender my individuality to the group at this point is to put myself into a coercive situation. I feel working in groups and collectives is important now, but I would like to work with a group with which I felt ideological solidarity and social solidarity. I can't surrender my rights to express myself as an individual, to work with other individuals with whom I feel some solidarity. I think, also, that a lot of the ideological conflicts ... well, I think that bourgeois pressures towards success are now producing revolutionary-heroes just as they [once did



and still do] produce bourgeois reactionaries. Talking about giving up the right to work as individuals at this point, for some people is a lot easier because they have already been successful as individuals and have an ability to be socially effective that right now I certainly don't have. I'm in a position now where I couldn't get a teaching job, whereas a lot of people here already have teaching jobs. Teaching is something I've been always interested in. It's not about artworld success, it's the desire to work in a non-coercive situation."

*Punkay*: "In the 'Thin Man', Nick Charles asks himself a question about his involvement in a murder case. The question is: 'Where am I going and what am I doing?' and the answer is 'effectively nowhere and nothing'.

[uproar, some applause.]

"This week we've all formally recognized that this group has long passed the point of being an art-group, an informal, polite, intellectual jousting group, and long goes toward being a socialist instrument, a party. I think, in respect to that, we must stop couching ourselves exclusively in institutional terms. One is bringing up points, not as 'requirements for membership,' but in the hope of some sort of *consolidation*. I think this is all leading to a situation where we can support each other's re-education and in that respect I don't understand the phrase 'surrender one's individuality' I think in some sense we have to give up our precious bourgeois rights to thought. I'll just iterate some practical points about supporting re-education along socialist lines. Group criticism of work; Group resolve to go on conversationally— and I'm doing this in increasing order of difficulty or approachability—collective work; expansion of publications and public activities, including teaching workshops; a move toward 'thematic' gallery shows; a move toward the collectivisation of income; a move toward nonparticipation in cultural institutions such as museums, and in general I guess an eventual withdrawal from the market and bourgeois art history. I do think in one sense that we've oversaturated our artworld strategies and we have to stop reprimanding the bourgeoisie in strictly upper-class terms. I hope that point is very clear. The high-art world is dedicated to the conservation of the ruling-class. We have to recognize the stratification of culture in order to get out of the exclusive high-art domain. The 'new' history of Art & Language is emerging. It is not an annexation of the old, but a transformation."

*Hypostomus*: "Consolidation is essential. 'Frightening' is not the right word but it will force us to drop bourgeois values. I do not think I can work with everyone in this group, on ideological grounds. But I'm willing to try and work on whatever collective projects we might sort out. Everyone should proceed on good faith. Information coming in is important. I agree that all shows should go out as Art & Language, but I don't know if the credit will accrue to the same old individuals. One problem is that information will come in through the old address and I, speaking personally, will continue to be in a situation where information is handed second-hand to me. One of the reasons I've chosen to work

in a sub-group is that I would like to find some way of not getting information secondhand ..."

*Pongo Pongo*: "Oh come on."

*Hypostomus*: "No, it's an important point. It has a lot to do with the hierarchy. I feel that

we want to adopt a more progressive form of organization but what we are adopting is

perhaps the easier points of organization. These points may appear trivial, but I don't

want them to be overlooked."

*Albifrons*: "I did not come to these meetings because of a negative relation to

capitalism. I already had a negative relation to capitalism from my experiences of artworld

politicking and its oppression of women. That's my historical embeddedness in the

class-struggle. I do not view my relation to the group as a strategic relation to the means

of production. Only by sorting out our own historical relation to the economic base can

we see our possible relations to the class-struggle. Working towards a classless society

humanize social relations and gain some normative coherence in society. Working

toward non-institutional regionalism and communities make possible a non-exploitative relationship with nature...pass..."

*Bellica*: "Out."

*Oscellatus*: "I wrote something: a kind of response-to-Channel 4-editorial-style, so please forgive: The economic, social, psychological motives are propelling some of us towards a socialist program along lines that can transform in an immediate way our specific living and working context into a more equitable and beneficial arrangement. While these short-term means are important on the same human grounds that we have elected a long-term strategy for socialism, they do nevertheless constitute a kind of operational reformism insofar as they attempt to make life in the capitalist system acceptable. I know that may sound self-servingly absurd to some of us, but it loses its absurdity when concretized in terms of our lives—be it giving up grants, trips to Europe, posh teaching jobs in sunny climates, real estate holdings, exhibitions, or whatever. No one has shown how we can be a socialist island in a capitalist sea. There is a need, however, for us to practice what we preach. The question is, on what level can we

all agree for that practice to exist. Further, we must be careful of how closely we connect the short-term needs with the long-term strategy. Hopefully, the short-term won't eclipse the long term, but provide work that will guide and teach us. 'Ideology' is becoming a justification for a variety of motives, often, it is simply 'liberal guilt'. We must be flexible about which currents of socialist thought inform our actions. We must be able to change and accept that process of re-education as continually ongoing. I suggest we form a political party. Some among us have a problematic relation to art which belonging to 'an art group' makes very difficult. Our party would inform our work, whatever form it takes. This would allow others to join us .....in political exchange and its practice—be it cultural or social. I don't understand why we should keep Art & Language? Keeping it for some of us is a form of keeping their individual identity, and if particular individuals are asked to give up the power they have in the artworld as individuals, then I think those whose individuality in the artworld rests upon the mantle 'Art & Language' should also be forced to change similarly. Otherwise we will just end up with more authoritarianism along the same old hierarchal lines ... ”

*Bellica*: “Collectivization, to me, corresponds to a greater vulnerability to each other, thus a greater chance to learn from each other. Now that won't happen, in fact, unless there is a closer form of ideological agreement. There seems to be a confusion as to how our social relations will connect up with socialism. If we do move toward a more principled ideology there will actually be less tendency to concentrate on the psycho-dramas within the group, because I think most of our energy has been directed toward the group. Now if this move toward solidarity occurs, then I think the group itself will become *less* important. In a sense, then, this solidarity is a move towards deconstruction of our own psycho-dramas. There's been some talk about 'sociality as strategy'. I find that odd. Who brought up Bakunin's 'the group attempting to bring about revolutionary change must itself be the embodiment of that revolutionary change'? The means are the same as the end. This is teleological. I don't think we should concentrate on working in the high-art world. That's the most 'iffy' issue here for me. To go on criticizing galleries is essentially a dead end kind of strategy which isn't going to get socialism very far. We should try and generate new forms for us to work within which connect with a different set of people. Specifically, 'the workers'. But we've got to start approaching them on their terms, not from above, on our terms. They don't listen to what we have to say and we don't listen to what they have to say. Because when we're not communicating dialectically—it's 'them' and 'us'. ”

*Ramirezi*: “You spoke of a socialist island in a capitalist sea. I don't think we're speaking of a utopian island, but rather attempting to function in the world with an understanding of what socialism is. You also mentioned 'liberal guilt'... well the bourgeoisie is guilty. Also, I don't want to talk about 'saving nature' in bourgeois, liberal terms. That's how come nature is in the mess it's in ... the whole ecology crap ... ”

*Oscellatus*: “I think some of us are giving the kiss of authenticity

to whatever we say by calling it 'ideology'.”

*Clarius*: “I haven't seen any ideological togetherness but I'm waiting for it... ”

Puntius Stigma: “But you are making a split between organization and ideology. You can't. The form' of organization is important and an aspect of the ideology ... ”

*Clarius*: “I agree.”

Puntius Stigma: “The liberalism rampant in this fucking group is a function of liberal organisation—basically, and you have to take it [organization] seriously.”

*Clarius*: “You think I don't take it seriously?”

Puntius Stigma: “Well, you made a split.”

*Clarius*: “I think it is a split... what you're saying is that it ought to be together, but isn't at present. I didn't mean what you thought I meant.”

*Oscellatus*: “Again, I want to iterate something. I don't understand why we would keep the name Art & Language. We need neutral territory...

*Pongo Pongo*: “Chairman, can we go around the table?”

*Hypostomus*: “If we're making a radical break in organization, this might be the time to drop that name. It would also help break down the Art & Language hierarchy... it might be a good idea.”

*Bellica*: I'd be curious how people stand, can we go around the table ...”

Metae: “Are we going around the table? Okay, if we can transform our relations, the ideology to which we 'relate', then the fact that Art & Language can transform itself could kill the past histories.”

*Bellica*: “So did Chou En Lai!”

*Metae*: “That would be a point in favour of doing something with Art & Language. If we simply start another organization, which is what happened when *The Fox* was born, then the same people would be singled out. So, I think the point of demonstrably transforming the organization might have a far greater effect.”

*Badis Badis*: “But if we can actually transform it... What would happen if we dropped Art & Language?”

*Ramirezi*: “We would dissolve it.....

*Puntius Stigma*: “We would be known as 'the former Art & Language'...”

*Metae*: “If we can keep it and de-construct that history...”

*Oscellatus*: “Everything we do will be viewed in art-historical terms ...”

*Puntius Stigma*: “Please!”

*Badis Badis*: “I have a problem with labels. I’ve said to a number of people I have

a problem being called ‘a mother’, so my problems are my problems. Who gives a shit if Leo Castelli phones so and so. That’s not what this group is about. We are going-on out of the artworld, so who gives a shit. We’re not out for artworld recognition!”

*Jarbua*: “I’m not clear: many people mention ‘no names’ and doing all work under Art & Language. Now I have a lot of problems with the way this is being said. I think it’s fine for us to do work together, and we should emphasize the importance of doing work together as Art & Language without stressing our individuality. But the consistent problem I have with it... I mean once you accept socialism as a historic reality, individual opportunism becomes less and less a factor propelling individual work. Individual opportunism becomes like a negative virtue in a way. But my reason for being interested in the importance of individuals being able to work as individuals is it allows people to speak of things outside of the agreed upon Art & Language ideology, to make contacts with people who they share non-A&L ideological concerns. When I wrote in *The Fox*, I got criticism from a number of women which I found very helpful and I made contact. It’s not about success, it’s about making contact with other people ... that’s a big problem, though I am interested in individual freedom to explore other ways of operating.”

*Bellica*: “Okay, what has that to do with the adoption or not of the Art & Language logos?”

*Jarbua*: “Okay, I am willing (and I think it’s important) to spend a large part of my time working on Art & Language projects without asking for credit or money. But I also feel that for me, right now, the freedom to act as an individual to form other contacts with other groups and individuals—or even write an article under my own name ... ”

*Bellica*: “Wait a minute: Why would you write an article under your own name if in fact you’re working with other groups?”

*Jarbua*: “Well, if I write an article under my own name then I’m in a position to make contact with other people who are interested in the same things. I don’t see socialism as a coercive dynamic, it has to be a co-operative dynamic and the co-operation goes in lots of different ways.”

*Bellica*: “I do not feel coerced by the logos Art & Language, and not using my own name.”

*Jarbua*: “Well I said I did because I’m in a minority. Maybe it’s a point at which I can no longer work with Art & Language. I need to work

with other people. That’s possible, if everyone else wants to work exclusively as Art & Language. But when teaching is going on, say in San Diego, like how can he represent in San Diego my beliefs? I don’t think until there’s ideological solidarity in the group.”

*Metae*: “Can I make a point... can we stick to the topic?”

*Jarbua*: “I’d like to ... ”

*Bellica*: “Yeah, the logos Art & Language, are you for or against it?”

*Jarbua*: “Oh, I thought this had to do with what went on earlier.”

*Puntius Stigma*: “To say ‘Art & Language’, does that mean all of your identity is with the group?”

*Bellica*: “Of course not.”

*Jarbua*: “I’m not ready to say logos or no logos ... ”

*Bellica*: We have to stop dealing with the outside world on their own terms. We have to challenge those terms, and as realistically as possible. I think even the notion of individual teaching jobs has to be questioned. Certain steps in that direction have been made by us ... and they were positive. It doesn’t matter a fuck about the name, it’s the organization that’s important. Make the new organizational form explicit. To respond to the misgivings: If a uniform public face is adopted that doesn’t mean people can’t respond to particular content, and each of us here would know best who to answer those responses, without resorting to individual name tags.”

*Ramirezi*: “Well the logos is a premature problem for me, but in a certain sense it is one of the ideological bones of contention and we have to sort out a relationship to it in order to figure out if we are in fact going-on: so it’s a double edged problem: history will be made somehow, no matter what. We’re also talking about changing the thrust of the group and making some ‘new’ history: we’re talking about strategically superceding the problems that A&L has been to us, and that strategic supercession is, to place valuation on the point of production—insofar as we are now talking about a ‘different kind’ of social projectivity toward the economic base. So what we have should not fall into that old distinction: Changing the form of the group and thinking that’s going to be a responsive change in the *content*. It is, rather, that we are trying to find some way of mediating our internal relations, and make a more accurate reflection as to what we can do about our situation strategically. Collective work does in no way presuppose a loss of response: if Art & Language becomes Art & Language Kamikazi or whatever, then we name the change in public ... we make a point of it, we’re strategically superceding ... and re-valuing our relationships to the points of production. We’re changing emphasis toward the economic base and that’s the ideological crux of the problem for this group; which is why we’re talking about keeping it together.”



*Hypostonlus*: “I think the logos, Art & Language should be changed, but maybe it’s irrelevant...”

*Albifrons*: “I think we have to stop opportunism and hierarchy. But I don’t think we can worry or care about those who know and take seriously that hierarchy. I don’t think the New York *Times* matters and I think keeping the name is stronger because I think that those people who know about A&L should see the changes as concrete and strong. They are strong and they should be able to see how the group has matured and unified itself and I think that things have come out here which show it isn’t unified.

*Oscellatus*: “Well, I can’t say I’m convinced about the arguments for keeping the logos. It seems contradictory to other views. It seems that particular individuals have a vested interest in Art & Language. I can’t see how can I throw myself into work that will finally accrue to Pongo Pongo and Puntius Stigma. That may be the wrong attitude, but it seems one is asking an awful lot. We’re artists based in the artworld. As Pincus-Witten said, ‘going through a Maoist stage’. Unless we really start all over again, it’s still just a radical reform of the old art group and if it’s a new situation let’s make it a really new situation. The only other way out of this is

a political party. We will all belong to the party. Some of us may be plumbers, or carpenters, or artists, or electricians, or whatever, but we would all be informed by the party. Then Art & Language would exist along old lines, but it would be interesting to see how the party would affect that group. I can’t see keeping A&L, and making this change. I can’t see that as a fair proposal.”

*Metae*: “If we don’t demonstrably kill Art & Language history, it will remain as currency for the artworld.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Are you saying we have to use the new work to kill the old work. That if you simply ‘renounce’ the old work it would be reified even more?”

*Metae*: “Yes.”

*Oscellatus*: “That supports my argument.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “I’m saying that to abandon Art & Language is to leave it intact. We’re getting down to how we don’t leave it intact. What was just said does leave it intact and actually moves the problematicity to a safer distance.”

*Bellica*: “Let’s go on ...”

*Puntius Stigma*: “I have to say I’m suspicious: Changing the name is a declaration of change which doesn’t necessarily imply any real change. In those terms, it’s a classic American tactic: change the name of your company in order to clear up your tax problems. I’m more interested in changing the fuckin organization. I don’t care. It would seem instead of changing the logos Art & Language, that if some are

worried about the New York *Times* calling *me*, then I will change my name. The real problem is to sort out our relationship to our history and I don’t see changing the name as significant. Changing your name doesn’t change your history and we do have embeddedness in our histories. I fail to see the significance of the issue.”

*Punkay*: “Why fuckin argue. It’s so dumb! It’s incredibly stupid! There’s a problem with histories, but in a short time we’ll be poison in the artworld.”

*Badis Badis*: “Those who get artworld credit ratings are going to be in real trouble.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Are we going to ‘change the name’ every time someone new comes in?”

*Multifasciata*: “Some want to change the name? What would the group be called? What

could function better? There’s strength in making no issue out of it. I can’t really take the

issue seriously.”

*Oscellatus*: “There was a reason we didn’t call *The Fox, Art-Language*.”

*Albifrons*: “This is stupid ...”

*Puntius Stigma*: “I don’t care about it.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Why the fuck are we talking about this? People get screwed up. Poor old egos. We’re worried about people getting credit... shit. If the name gets dissolved then

they are going to enter the group through the individuals they already know. Who are they

going to call? The best known individuals! This new group will have no group work, no group history, nothing. It’s just going to have a Box number. Well we do have a group and we do have a collective history that’s strong and must be continued. I don’t care, change the name to ‘Fred’.”

*Puntius Stigma*: “I would like to make a point that this whole issue is highly diversionary. I would like to get back to the point of how we can organize and then this conversation might have something approaching a real basis. It’s bizarre: we’re already changing the name of something that doesn’t yet exist.”

*Oscellatus*: “I’m sorry, I think it’s important. We’ve talked about shows, galleries—why not this?”

*Puntius Stigma*: “But first, let’s look at the base for unity.”

*Punkay*: “Socialism is the prism for our disorganization or organization for those who

care to stay. Then that’s the way it goes: I suggest we discuss this as an issue ... ”

*Pongo Pongo*: “I would like to modify that to say: what is the possibly mad relation between the artist and socialism, in this world.”

*Bellica*: “How do our actions relate to the base or superstructure? We may talk about

collectivity, but base and superstructure?

*Pongo Pongo*: “What we tend to do when we talk about socialism is to forget *who we are*. We seem to forget that we are here and have a job to get on with. I think what’s happened

that the looming theory and practice of socialism brought out splits and disagreement which we then promptly forgot. The concrete organization of this group I’m not sure if you can discuss this at all unless we pin down ourselves as socialists,

*Badis Badis*: “That’s what I’m saying—we have to have principles of unity.”

*Oscellatus*: “You want those in an afternoon?”

*Jarbua*: “How about a year?”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Listen, some of us have been together for years ... ”

*Puntius Stigma*: “And our organization has been *laissez-faire*, and our ideology ludicrous. That doesn’t mean coercion ... ”

*Jarbua*: “See, a lot of these issues are not clear: individualism vs. collective work. Most reform or revolution has taken a group political force, but most individuals involved were able to maintain an identity outside of that political force. I would like to see our group become more of a movement, which means we must allow the possibility of all sorts of people being involved which couldn’t happen if we asked people to give up their individual pursuits for the group ... ”

*Ramirezi*: “I want to ask you a question: what would be the *political character* of that ‘movement’?”

*Jarbua*: “See, I don’t think there is, right now, the ideological basis for that movement. Part of the growing process involved will help sort out the ideological base. To me, what that critically turns on is *who* becomes involved and at what point. We certainly need more women involved, we need more blacks: I’d like to see some people with a background in ‘economics. Other fields can contribute to this ideological struggle. We don’t have the basis for a collective ... ”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Sounds exactly like the worst liberal tokenism ... ”

*Metae*: “You seem to have stated that you want your ‘personal ideology’ to be reflected in the group ideology ... people are using ‘ideology’ in different ways. ‘Working out’ ideology? Do they mean of group,

or cultural, or political? Now that’s something we should sort out.

*Jarbua*: “Can I reply: I either want my personal ideology-given that ‘ideology’ is obscure here—to be reflected in this group in terms of the group ideology or, else, I want the freedom to contact other groups or individuals with whom I have more ideological solidarity. I don’t care which way it goes, but I can’t stand to be in a situation where I’m in the ideological minority.”

*Bellica*: “You always have the chance to not join the group ... ”

*Jarbua*: “I would hate that to be the case, but it’s possible it might be.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Can we get back to the fuckin organization!”

*Bellica*: “The reason I don’t want various academics coming in is that I’m presupposing we’re embedded in a certain way in which those people are not. We have certain superstructural problems that excludes, automatically, certain kinds of people ... ”

*Jarbua*: “Like the working class?”

*Bellica*: “No.”

*Badis Badis*: “Well, are we bourgeois artists or some kind of social-political group? That’s basic ... ”

*Ramirezi*: “We said earlier that we want to change the social projectivity toward the economic base ... ”

*Bellica*: “We must forget importing experts and figure out our principles of uni[- fucking-]ty. Importing people promiscuously will dilute everything again—the socialist process ... ”

*Pongo Pongo*: “*Shit!!!* I said we cannot keep talking about socialism in a theoretical sense and we must bring it to bear on the organization of this group. I have a way of talking about both. There were certain things brought up when we went around the table: no more individual shows, we are only going to show as Art & Language. Now, the question is why, why, why would we want to do that? This is “crucial.” Those who suggested that please show how that is penetrated by socialist theory. The individual shows and temptations of opportunism has been the penetration of this group by capitalism, which has played fuckin havoc with this group. So we have to get out of this. Collectivize information. Remove privileged access. But start! Why, asking why is surely the link between ideology and practice and that’s what the group is. Organization is the real link between ideology and practice.”

*Bellica*: “What time is it? Anyone want to respond?”

*Oscellatus*: “I don’t know how to say this in a non-cumbersome way, that is, it’s difficult to teach oneself to talk in a new way. Perhaps some people, and I don’t mean this as a charge, can function better in a bureaucracy, can have a sense of their own worth and potency within a context of bureaucracy ... ”

[laughter]

*Punkay*: “Is this your idea of a bureaucracy? No one mentioned bureaucracy...

*Oscellatus*: “I am! I think when we have 14 people operating under the same name, then that could begin to function as a bureaucracy.”

[uproar]

*Puntius Stigma*: “I don’t think anybody should even respond. People working together being labelled a bureaucracy is silly ...”

[uproar]

*Badis Badis*: “I don’t agree with the charge of bureaucracy. But if 14 people work together we will have more power, and 35 more, and 3,000 more, and that’s what we’re sitting here for...”

*Oscellatus*: “I’m in agreement, but *can* we go from 14 people to more?”

*Badis Badis*: “How are we going to find out?”

*Puntius Stigma*: “You can’t open it up unless you sort out here ... *unity* ... and that’s being avoided. But I wanted to answer something brought up before: why would we utilize a collective label rather than individual names? What are the ideological implications? I think that’s rather important. For me, this changes my relationship to what I do. It transforms a blatant commodity relation into something, transitionally, into a tentative commodity relationship and that seems a very important step in the right direction. And it is a strong ideological point, nothing whatsoever to do with psychology.”

*Punkay*: “I agree: I wanted to say something about how we expand. If we bring in other people without sorting out our relation to the artworld, then it’s just going to be pure havoc. We will wind up right where we started from, as a *laissez-faire* group of artists which *nevertheless* form a coalition for some sort of political ends which *nevertheless* does not inform our practice as fucking artists! It’s weird! What you said, and you said you tried not to be cumbersome, but you were just projecting this incredibly pioneering attitude as to how one operates in the world.”

*Oscellatus*: “Can you explain that?”

*Punkay*: “Yeah. I don’t think the question is to worry about your potency as an individual if you are confronted with a collectivity of other people. I think that’s completely deformed. It’s like that well known argument that you work with others only because you can’t ‘make it’ on your own. I see either charges of bureaucracy or falling back on individualism to be a response to that framework you have so eloquently defended in both theory and practice. True it will be difficult to implement decisions, but administration *does not* imply bureaucracy ...”

*Oscellatus*: “Well, it seems that the dangers must be aired; just because this system sucks we can’t assume ...”

*Bellica*: “This is off the point. Okay, do you have something to say about collectivity?”

*Jarbua*: “Since I’ve been working on *The Fox*, that’s the first time I’ve had contact with collectives. The *Mayday* collective works as such, but individual names appear and different opinions exist. *Redstockings* is a radical feminist collective, *Seven Days* is a collective of 3 men and 3 women who also operate outside of the collective and so on. Having a collective doesn’t mean necessarily individual differentiation cannot be identified ...”

*Bellica*: “But you’re the only one who has been arguing that they can’t.”

*Ramirezi*: “To identify where we are and why I think this kind of collective action, based on a different kind of social projectivity is essential to us: I think that if we remain in a superstructural relationship to everything, if we view ourselves as a collective base functioning in the superstructure and our existence in the superstructure constitutes a social base for action rather than having that projectivity toward the economic base then we are going to define culture in the same way that culture has been defined, from above. Culture and creativity belong to people, all people. Those prerogatives are embedded in people’s history and for us to be sorting out definitions is capitalist taxonomy. *Again*, and *again* we introduce those same relations.”

## PART 3

At the start of the seventh “struggle session”, the following provisos or points of unity were introduced. These were said to be based on the discussions of the previous day.

1) All work which is “made public” will be represented under the collective name. This applies to exhibitions, published articles, teaching, and any other working which has a “public” form.

2) All work which is “made public” has to be struggled over and accepted by the general body. This will set up a framework for self-criticism/criticism of work (something rather lacking just recently). In this matter, the will of the general body has to prevail.

3) Working “publically” in an individualistic manner will be considered as self-disqualification from this process.

4) What are the implications of this for the economics of each of us?



5) What do we do about the question of expansion and the prospects of working with other people (this was subsequently changed to: our strength is based in our ideological struggle. New participation in the group is likely to emerge through development of working relations with existing participants.

6) Do we retain the name Art & Language?

The following questions. were also introduced: i) What about ‘decentralised’ (from New York’City) working? ii) What is ‘the definition’ of collective work and iii) Can we work toward ‘thematic’ exhibitions?

The following proviso was also introduced later: it concerns history: the transformation of *history*. The ‘early work’ of *all* participants, formalist sculpture, painting, idea art, word art, theoretical art, music-art—all informs our going on (that is, it’s *all* as useful and *all* as useless).

*Pongo Pongo*: I think those who are in general agreement with the above provisos should form a splinter group to be called (Provisional) Art & Language.

*Oscellatus*: Like the Provisional IRA you mean?

*Ramirezi*: No, like (provisional) Art & Language.

*Pongo Pongo*: Those not in agreement with the provisos can retain the name Art & Language. The issue must be made clear:

we are not trying to push anybody ‘out’, we are simply trying to go on. In other words, those who want to stay in the position we’re in now, can retain the name Art & Language, those who want to go on must go on with a different name and with a new form of organization.

*Ramirezi*: I would add one thing. I understand that in addition to these provisos we unite around socialism ... an historic understanding thereof.”

*Oscellatus*: “The problem isn’t based on the terms of socialism, it’s based on the terms of this program.

*Clarius*: “This program”

*Oscellatus*: “*That’s* the problem, it’s *not* ideological. ”

*Clarius*: “It’s not ideological.”

*Oscellatus*: “This program, that’s a problem for some people ...”

*Clarius*: “Because I don’t look upon this as being ideological...”

*Puntius Stigma*: “if it’s a form of organization it does in part define ideology for us.”

*Bellica*: “It makes certain ‘assumptions’ about socialism.”

[uproar]

*Oscellatus*: “Allan Wallach’s letter to Puntius Stigma brings up certain points that are relevant. There are a couple of points I made myself in the thing I read yesterday. One of the things that seems really to address itself to our problem is about whether one believes it possible to create revolution in miniature amongst us. What I object to ... if I think it’s a good-faith thing then I’m willing to give up a lot and I’m willing to work. I feel I’ve been doing that in the last several months and I feel it’s sometimes lost. It feels as though things are gobbled up and taken for granted. It’s very hard for me to maintain my trust with the group when I get very little positive feedback. I think we have to recognize certain things that come up when people operate as leaders. I think *The Fox* was a good idea—some people worked hard against it. It has been most instrumental putting us where we are now ... right? Now since *The Fox* a lot of new people have come into A&L and they’ve all come in from one side of the leadership. So a vote here is really stacked against me. I don’t feel I can work with many of you as individuals but I feel that—like in the Patty Hearst trial—the term came up ... It was called persuasive coercion and so I feel a little nervous about how much of a ‘good faith’ atmosphere we’re working in. This set of provisos here seems sort of Gerrymandered in a way to isolate my power base, my usefulness to the group. It doesn’t affect people’s grants, it doesn’t affect the other kinds of economic bases of other people’s lives. This way I take the blunt of it. I’m quite willing to do that but I think that 5 and 6 make the acceptability of this very contingent at this point. In other words, if I give up everything I don’t want to find myself in a situation where I’m working for Puntius Stigma. Now I have to find out we’re all going to be working together and the power is going to be *distributed* ... that’s why for me, at this point, it’s an open question ... I haven’t made up my mind one way or another. I’m really waiting to see what transpires.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “I have certain alliances with Oscellatus in many ways. When you say people have come in on one side of the power base you mean on Puntius Stigma’s side? It’s a bit insulting Oscellatus to say that Punkay, Bellica, Jaculator and Hypostomus are ‘working’ for

Puntius Stigma because I know they are not. The reason people have ‘come in’ on that side is that Puntius has been talking to a lot of other people ... ”

*Oscellatus*: “You can’t say I haven’t been, if that’s what you’re implying.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Well, you’ve never seen the social base of working.”

*Oscellatus*: “There was a fight over *The Fox*, and unfortunately it’s been put in terms of a fight between Puntius and I and it looked like I won in some way. At that there seemed to be a real recruitment strategy on the inside. Not that it’s a sort of self-conscious Machiavellian plot but, nonetheless, I think Metae’s involvement—and I’ve been really

interested in what Metae’s had to say—but he does support Puntius every time. Multifasciata has been very supportive of Puntius in that way ... he came in through Puntius too; and Badis Badis seems to be somehow much more independent but somehow I think there’s something going on between the two of you and Ramirezzi and Albifrons. Albifrons coming in very late in the game so that what happened in these meetings ... I feel there’s a certain kind of social dynamic going on here and I have a hard time getting a fair hearing. Bellica, Punkay, Jaculator and Hypostomus are somewhat more neutral territory. It’s been very useful to eliminate psychology from the conversations but Punkay has certain problems with Pongo Pongo and sometimes with Puntius and sometimes with me. I think this has been put expressly in ideological terms without us looking at the psychology so I don’t think Punkay has had much choice but to support the general thrust of what’s going on here.”

Multifasciata: “One historical point: I’ve known Pongo Pongo as long as I’ve known Puntius. One thing I’ve brought up in earlier meetings is that we all have different histories and I wanted to stress the point that our reason for being interested in this group is based on our own, repeat *our own* historical experience, not on the desire to join a club. I know Metae’s history, I know Badis Badis’ and mine, but I don’t know Ramirezzi’s. WE, in our work, reached a point where we began to ask similar questions to those Pongo Pongo and Puntius Stigma were asking. Because we knew them personally we started talking with them. But the important point is that we asked questions *historically*, based on our old work. We didn’t just adopt ‘a new style’ nor were we pursued to join the group on the side of Puntius Stigma, You said we were all following behind Puntius like sheep, but I know that Badis Badis, Metae and I came to these so-called struggle sessions believing in an organization with points of unity like the ones we are now struggling over ... though we may not have articulated them as well as Puntius Stigma ... but about articulateness ... We had a hard time ‘busting’ into A&L dialogue. But I think it’s strange that the people who have the least interest in maintaining the A&L label want to keep it and those who have the most interest don’t mind dropping it. By maintaining the label it allows us a kind of ‘checklist’. By keeping the label we’re keeping an eye on whether people are going along with those principles. I think the problem, for the split in a sense, and this has partly to do with our history too, is that a lot of us have made a clear cut break in our history, at least with the products of that history, whereas you, Oscellatus, want to keep a linear continuity.”

*Clarius*: “I think Oscellatus said he was willing to give that up.”

*Oscellatus*: “I have, I’m using my work as a negative example.”

*Multifasciata*: “But your article in the last *Fox* tried to develop a linear history. ”

*Oscellatus*: “I’m not alone to be attacked on this, right?”

*Multifasciata*: “Okay, the real issue is whether you use Socialism as a kind of form to make art, or whether you become involved and

informed by the real socialist process.”

*Oscellatus*: “I agree ...”

*Multifasciata*: “Well, these provisos are starting to involve us in the socialist process rather than treating socialism as ‘the next form’.

*Oscellatus*: “See, I’ve been trying to make changes. But I feel that a lot of the old battles are being dragged into this and rephrased in terms of ‘correct terminology’.”

*Bellica*: “I’ve had my ups and downs with you. Recently I’ve felt more open to you; one of the reasons you may have felt isolated and felt as if people were being recruited on the so-called ‘side of Puntius’ for example ... well, many people perceived your articles in *The Fox* as being different from all the others. Now I’m saying this according to what others have told me. People thought they were different because of their content, not on the basis of knowing you. These people did not have any great vested interest in supporting me and they brought it up, saying that your articles were the most self-promotional, consequently they felt as if you were making fewer changes. So, in a sense, they were more interested in a more overtly different political direction and so they were more interested in other articles. So they might not come to you on that basis.”

*Oscellatus*: “I take that. But, see, there is a certain element of patience that we have to have. First off, those were written last Summer. I’ve moved a long way from that.”

*Bellica*: “But those articles are *there*.”

*Clarius*: “Can we end this discussion?”

*Badis Badis*: “By you defending yourself your defense is in the way of bringing up old chestnuts or old issues or old battles. But we’re here now and we’re starting now and you cannot change this group. If we, all fourteen of us, came ‘in’ through Puntius it’s irrelevant because we’re all here now and we’re all talking about one point: how do we go on? If you feel paranoid about how everyone got ‘in’ then from that position I don’t know how you can answer the question: how do we go on? I don’t agree with you and most of us have expressed that we do not agree with that viewpoint, but we’re here now and we’re going to go on.”

*Oscellatus*: “See, the thing is that my response to that is that I think that one of the reasons we do need new people in here is that they do not have a vested interest in any of the on-going A&L power plays and I think a lot of people wouldn’t tolerate a lot of the nonsense that goes on in here. We’re all numbed into being used to the things that go-on between Puntius Stigma and myself, right? That’s one of the reasons I think we need some fresh blood. People who will take the arguments on their own merits. I don’t feel Ramirezzi and Albifrons would accept whatever I said, frankly, or Puntius Stigma. Those are problems, they have nothing to do with content, they have to do with a history.

This makes it almost impossible for people to overcome; it's going to take a long time is all I'm saying; but we're not giving us a long time ... we want to get these problems nailed down before Puntius goes off to San Diego. That's why there's something very unreal... there's been a kind of theater going on here for several days; I don't know if it's connected to the real world. ”

*Pongo Pongo*: “This is getting off the point. Oscellatus, you are trying to make it sound as if the rest of us are here just because we are members of Puntius Stigma's Fan Club. Actually, you know yourself that there has been a great deal of hostility toward Puntius from a lot of people and quite often from me. There's disagreements, but the disagreements we all have with Puntius and each other are different than the disagreements we have with you and you must know that your exhibiting policy and your art-world presence has been a continual problem which A&L has never been able to really sort out. You've never been able to sort it out either.”

*Oscellatus*: “It's no different from the behaviour of everyone else ...”

*Pongo Pongo*: “It seems to me there's a considerable difference ...”

*Oscellatus*: “In *quantity* not quality.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Well, no: you have always had, and we have always allowed you to have, a certain say as to what goes on in A&L but we've never had a say in what goes on in your work because as ‘an individual’ you have this pioneering attitude. Now let's be realistic, we have to have some organizational control over the way this group gets mined, the way people go into it and out of it and stop the opportunism. Now you are either going to be completely separate from A&L or completely in it and that's all that we're asking around this table. Not half and half. I'm just reading *The People's History of England* and you remind me of Charles II and you're like the King around here and we're like the nobles and your defense keeps coming down to the fact that we can't attack you for no other reason than because you have to maintain your position as King.”

*Oscellatus*: “I think that's virtually meaningless.

*Pongo Pongo*: “Well, I'm saying that there are certain commitments this group has to going on and to a certain degree you are holding them up because you are saying that you have these problems, that you have this and you have that, that you have various commitments to the art-world. I don't know what I'd do in the same circumstances but you have to understand that we have to sort this out. That is, we have no choice. ”

*Oscellatus*: “Art & Language in England had a retrospective in Oxford and I think part of the reason Art & Language in England might have retrospectives and others may have retrospectives has to do with

a certain kind of historical embeddedness. Now I can see why that would be a problem but at the same time there hasn't been a policy ... in other words, there has been self-interest, you know, within the group and it's been going on for a long time and it seems to me like I said a couple of days ago, if we genuinely want to start from the beginning and everyone sacrifices for it, that's one thing. But if something like this is drawn up (the provisos draft) as a way of finishing off ‘old battles’ that's been going on for years. I think it has nothing to do with Socialism whatever, and I think we should consider that fact.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Oscellatus, what do you think that ‘old battle’ comes down to? What is the *cause* of the ‘old battle’? Is the cause of the ‘old battle’ career conflicts or is the cause, from the very beginning, an ideological conflict? ”

*Oscellatus*: “I know damn well it hasn't been an ideological conflict. I think that what happened is that in some regards ... and this certainly doesn't apply to everybody, because I don't know how far back you're going ... there's been an aspect of unrequited art-world love that has fueled this.”

*Clarius*: “Let's stop this too ...”

*Jarbua*: “At the risk of changing the subject and putting myself in the hot seat: I have supported A&L against Oscellatus' individual careerism for a long time both within A&L and my private conversations with Oscellatus. I think he hasn't been giving things up fast enough all along and that's why he's got himself in the incredible predicament he's in now. But, you know, part of my hesitation with going along with a program like this one is because I have felt, since I have been in A&L, in a minority of sorts ever since day one. When I wrote certain articles which were very important to me, those articles were universally criticised in A&L to the point where they probably would not have been published at all unless we had already set up a situation in which all the work that we did was going to be published. Through those articles I've received letters from a number of people who think the ideas that I had to express were very important and even though they were contrary in certain ways to other things that A&L stood for. That's my reason for not wanting to give up my right to express myself as an individual... and to be censored by the group because I just feel that I have things to say which are not acceptable to the group at this time. Were the group composed differently, I would certainly be willing to go along with that, but at this point, you know, that's my problem.”

*Jaculator*: “I wanted to respond a long way back to something you said Oscellatus. You said arguments needed to be responded to on their own merits and that means it's a justification for needing ‘new blood’. People who are not so much embedded in order to get this ‘other point of view’ which you didn't think was coming across here because you feel under constant attack. Well, not everybody's history is *within* this group but those problems have to be worked out first and foremost within this group. The historical embeddedness is like a dead-



weight. The points of unity must be worked out here, first, In terms of what you said Jarbua, your articles were criticised within this group but I thought one of the things was to use this group as a viable social base rather than locating ourselves and judging ourselves according to art-world prescribed individualistic prescription of what an artist does in society. That should be first and foremost where that stuff comes from and that's the most important criticism in terms of it. When somebody outside reads an article (etc.) they don't have the same relations sorted out that all the people here have & the criticism from here is what we are trying to establish as valid."

*Jarbua:* "I understand that, but I think criticism from outside has validity in relation to what the group says ..."

*Pongo Pongo:* "Jarbua, you can't have it both ways ... If the group doesn't like it at all and people outside in the art-world or wherever like it, doesn't that tell you anything?"

*Jarbua:* "I don't mean people outside 'in general', I mean particular people who's ideas I respect."

*Jaculator:* "Well I didn't have any kind of involvement in this group at that time but I was interested in what was going on and I was fairly critical of your work myself for reasons not set out to jump on you or hurt you. "

*Jarbua:* "Likewise I've been critical of all sorts of articles that people have written. Now how does that come into play?"

Ramirezi: "The way I came, the way I came to these meetings is like ... I leave half of myself sort of projecting in some directions ... they really pull you apart in some funny ways. Oscellatus said that he doesn't think anything he says could be taken seriously by Albifrons or myself. I try to take seriously everything he says. My criticism of it doesn't mean I don't take it seriously. My lack of agreement doesn't mean I don't take it seriously because I've already said several times during these sessions that I thought you could find conflict as a norm of conversation. I've had, over the past few years, growing recognition of my class relations. Most often the ideological conflicts I have reproduce the awareness of those kind of negative class relations ... and that is my situation with Jarbua and Oscellatus; particularly in these meetings. We've seen at the beginning of the meetings how you came talking about being able to hold on to certain 'bourgeois values' and then, you did some 'rapid changes.' I'm willing to accept those changes on 'good faith'. I'm perfectly willing to accept that kind of progress and as I said last night, I sympathise with the amount of sacrifice that's going to have to go on if you are in fact going to continue to participate in A&L—if we are in fact going in the direction we have been talking about. I'm just trying to get at what the ideological conflicts amount to. You said, you do not think we have ideological conflicts ... [stumbling] ... you say your work functions as a 'negative example' ... I question that. It functions as a negative example *to whom* and *for whom*? It functions in the art-world, in a certain way. It seems to me to reproduce the spurious 'ra-

tionality' of knowledge. It perpetuates a privilege, a certain set of privileged knowledge relations about who is making the definitions of what culture is [sic] ... of *what* those kinds of relations are, and it seems to be completely counter to the kinds of social projectivity that this piece of paper (the provisos) is talking about establishing. In the past there were all kinds of structural prescriptions against us making prescriptions against each others' actions. But we have to reach a plateau before we can talk about those things in any 'clear' and 'logical' way. What is the basis of our social relations? We have to begin to stop talking about them in terms of allegiance to Puntius because I might vote the same. I came into this group with A&L UK."

*Jarbua:* "So did I."

*Ramirezi:* "I came to New York and I have social relations with some people here on an on-going basis. I maintain my ties to England but they are basically of a different kind. I took Oscellatus' point about working here in New York. In terms of finding out what our functional locale is ... it's a locale of conflict and I think that the presence of academic forms are symptomatic of a certain kind of footdragging..."

*Jarbua:* "I agree with you but..."

*Ramirezi:* "But if I write an article and I get a letter and somebody says 'boy, I took a lot of your points', I'm not going to embed that as any index of the value of my discourse till I know where they are coming from in terms of class analysis. That's an absolute requirement. We function along certain kinds of historical and 'thematic' lines; we try to keep operative two different kinds of relationships: one being historic-artistic relationships of A&L to the art-world and us to A&L which everyone's so sick of, and on the other hand, projectivity toward the working class, an acceptance, you may want to call it a blind acceptance on my part, of the fact that the working class *transforms* society. Our job is to try and figure out what we can do; Amen."

*Oscellatus:* "I think that people have a desire to have a dialogue with people outside of the group and I think that as Pongo Pongo has pointed out, it's very difficult to have dialogue with a committee."

*Ramirezi:* "If you're directing that at me ... I think that's a misunderstanding of an individual's possible function in a collective. That's why we're talking about it here. You see, you think it's open to debate, what a collective is, like we want to form some

sort of idealized 'collective.' Both of you frame your statements in terms of 'what kind of society we want to see.'

*Pongo Pongo:* "I'm a bit puzzled ... I mean, I mean, I don't want to pick on Jarbua's example of 'getting letters from the world outside', but I got several letters concerning an article I had written letting me know that this article was universally hated and I considered that to be an index of its success and that success has got to do with the fact that this group gave me the class strength to articulate what I did, to

put forward those kinds of commitments depended on my social base *here* in this group. I relied on people in this group, say like Ramirez and Puntius and Punkay to say ‘you did the right thing and you can’t expect the bourgeoisie to like what you do’ and that’s what this group is all about really, But you’re saying it’s the people *outside* who are telling you that you’re doing the right thing. Now there’s gotta be something *that* suggests ...”

*Jarbua*: “I think it suggests something too and I’d like to respond to that because I think it’s at the basis of my ideological disagreement with people in the group. To me, in order to avoid a process toward socialism which is coercive, authoritarian, aggressive, I see the process as necessarily being one which is affirmative, co-operative, positive and for that reason I think that what our strategy should be, and I’ve thought this all along, is to offer something to people that draws them in rather than cuts them off, as basic as that, I’m interested in getting people interested in what we’re doing not in alienating people and putting them off and making them take reactionary stands against what we’re doing.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “I think she’s making a methodological point about different ways of going on and perhaps there’s room in this group for those people who want to try and persuade and seduce. But sometimes it’s much better to alienate people. I see it as almost... as logically impossible to avoid alienating the bourgeoisie. It depends who you are talking to. You can’t sweet talk Rockefeller.”

*Jarbua*: “Who’s talking about Rockefeller?”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Okay, he’s a bad example. But the negative reaction you got to your articles, what do you think about them, were they justified?”

*Jarbua*: “Within the group?”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Yeah.”

*Jarbua*: “Sure, a lot of them were justified.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “I think the point is, did you *learn more* from the criticism within the group?”

*Jarbua*: “A lot of the support I got came from Art & Language in England.”

*Ramirezi*: “Do you think they uniformly supported those articles?”

*Jarbua*: “No, they were highly critical”

*Ramirezi*: “What support are you talking about then?”

*Jarbua*: “When I say things like this it just gets everybody on my back. But after the first *Fox* they thought, Michael said, that my article was one of the most level-headed articles in *The Fox*.

*Ramirezi*: “We’re just going to have to drop A&L UK as an index of fucking authenticity for this group because I agree with you Pongo Pongo, finally, it fucks everything up. Because they tell me something totally different about what you wrote.”

*Jarbua*: “I think it should be dropped too, it’s not as if I’m going out to a bunch of bourgeois artists and saying ‘come on’,—it isn’t all that bad’. That’s not what I’m talking about.”

*Ramirezi*: “I know, but A&L UK is supportive of everybody in the same way you’re talking about. ”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Can I make a suggestion? I think that these points of unity (whatever) are something that should, with devotion, be worked towards. This may give people a certain amount of leeway but I would also say that if we adopt something like this we are going to work towards it and people who indulge in activities which are detrimental to progress be reprimanded and this be brought up before the entire group. That may sound something like the council of the soviets but this isn’t a liberal group anymore. I would like, as a procedural point to go through these points and vote on them and discuss the questions and those who abstain give reasons for abstention.”

*Metae*: “I think the problem talking about (Provisional) Art & Language and ‘old’ Art & Language is that it reifies sub-groups and that’s a risky procedure. I just see kind of ‘nyaah, you’re old’, ‘you’re new’, ‘old’ is better than ‘new’. I just don’t think it’s a matter of splitting it all up like that.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “What is it a matter of?” *Metae*: “Then I think it’s just a problem of the way you phrased it as ‘provisional’ and ‘remaining’. Can you phrase it better?”

*Pongo Pongo*: “All right, if you consider that we are now along a line. Now you were one of the people against changing the name?”

*Metae*: “Right.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “All right, so those who don’t wish to go on according to these points of unity no longer belong to Art & Language. In other words, that’s a real hard line isn’t it.”

*Oscellatus*: “Can I make a quick quip here?”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Quip?”

*Oscellatus*: “A lot of us collect fish here: the way you mix the water, you don’t just dump the fish in. That’s basic. It’s a sort of human attempt to get our heads together in some way to make the transition, and it’s the first human act I’ve witnessed all week, and so I appreciate the gesture.”

*Metae*: “I withdraw my objection.” *Jarbua*: “However I vote on this, I’m not sure at all how the vote is set up, however I vote on it is go-

ing to depend crucially on this point (5).”

*Oscellatus*: “... crucial...”

*Jarbua*: “That’s absolutely crucial to me as well as how that defines our freedom to work with other groups.”

*Multifasciata*: “Can I suggest a time limit or we’re not going to make it all the way through today and we’ve got to resolve this.”

[break]

*Jarbua*: [aside] “Clarius, I feel like every time I say something, it’s like throwing it to a bunch of piranhas.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “I have to go. I’ll be back. I’ll hear the tape. I agree with everything. I’ll be right back ...”

*Jarbua*: “I have not yet worked with any other groups in a productive way other than A&L although I can see the possibility of being very interested in doing that in the future. Two other problems I have with the first point are that, like Metae said,... there’s socialism and there’s socialism and certainly a radical feminist would make claims to being socialist as would anarchists and both of those movements are ones which I find extremely problematical but also extremely interesting and so I don’t see how we have the ideological solidarity at this point really for anyone of us to speak and represent the group. I have problems with certain people who go to the Cultural United Front representing Art & Language because they don’t represent my point of view in that situation. I also like to speak at the Artist’s Meeting for Cultural Change and try things which don’t represent A&L as well. So I have problems like that too as far as the teaching goes, since the teaching I’ve done at this point has been in New York, but lots of people here will be teaching in positions all over the world and so they won’t be in a position to be scrutinized and censored by the group. I literally cannot speak for *all* right now nor do I feel that other people here speak for me, until we have the ideological solidarity. So that’s my biggest problem with Number 1. One other problem is that I’m a little confused about what I think of the value of that kind of anonymous ... you know, like the way we come off like a pack ... like at John Weber’s and I sometimes wonder whether our ability to infiltrate all sorts of different situations, such as Artist’s Meeting for Cultural Change and the Cultural United Front... because of our concern for those groups.”

*Clarius*: “I have no conflicts. I have only one thing that might come up: doing work with people in the State under a CAPS grant. I would have no objection with working with this

under that... we are trying to unify but we all seem to be operating under different ideologies

now. I can accept the first point. Okay, who has something to say? No, let’s start with number 2

Then.”

*Punkay*: “I support point 2. It’s one of the things I always thought was lacking recently. Of course, you can’t accept point 2 without accepting point 1.”

*Badis Badis*: “I accept point 2. I found myself frustrated with our last show since I didn’t know what other people thought about it. I find a problem though as far as the word criticism goes. It would not be along formal lines; it would only be along socialist lines, which means that work must further ‘the cause’, be it film or talking or writing. Socialism would be the area of criticism to me that could really bear down upon specific works, not formal problems.”

*Ramirezi*: “Insofar as I think ‘art’ is the prerogative of another class, that class being the working class ... ‘people’... in order to avoid buzz words, and insofar as art and artists have been a function of a certain sort of privileged relationship to knowledge in the definitions and determinations therein, this point right here is our basis for attacking those kinds of notions and attacking them in a clear cut sort of way. I don’t think it means we are determining the ‘absolute character of work that people do’. Everybody does different work. What we are talking about is, as Puntius mentioned earlier ... an old chestnut... Marx saying ‘from each according to ability to each according to need’. This is our place from where we can destroy the artificial division of political form from social content. And this is the place where we can actually get some real distribution of function. By real I mean one that works for us. This is where we can

implement number 1.”

*Albifrons*: “I think that point 2 is a good point. It will certainly strengthen the work

that goes out and eliminate anything that would confuse the issue. We have to be unified

around the idea of socialism and the work will certainly be strengthened by everyone together struggling over it. So I support it,”

*Oscellatus*: “I think that 1 and 2 are in a certain way inseparable, It’s kind of interesting to think of 1 without 2, One aspect of my agreeing to 2 would be: I would have to insist that everyone does work. That some people don’t work and just participate in the criticism knocking down other people’s work which I can see happening because several people don’t do work and I think they would have to put their asses on the line a bit too. That’s one thing that I can see has to be brought up ...”

[uproar]

*Hypostomous*: “What does he mean ‘some people don’t do work’? I agree with the second point... I’d love to see the second point actually ...”

*Puntius Stigma*: “So would I. There’s one thing that isn’t appreci-



ated here and that is ‘work which is made public must be accepted by the general body’. Whether it has to be unanimous, a majority, whether we sort of simply struggle with it until there’s some sort of agreement, I don’t know. But in general and to refer to what Badis Badis was saying, we obviously can’t have a heirarchy of forms of work, we have to analyze each form for what it’s worth. And there are lots of forms of work some of which are barely recognizable as such...”

*Metae*: “What Oscellatus said is sort of a premature problem. His definition of ‘work’, ... definitions of ‘work’ are put by people who already ‘work’,”

*Oseellatus*: “The word ‘work’ exists here in this paragraph ...”

*Metae*: “Right. Are you trying to further define it?”

*Oscellatus*: “It seems to assume what work is and I was just discussing what that assumption might be ...,”

*Multifasciata*: “I agree with point 2.”

*Jaculator*: “What Puntius said, he said that when work is brought into the group, should it be a majority or should it be unanimous or should everybody struggle until a point is reached, and this latter seems a very crucial point about collective work,”

*Jarbua*: “Well, I also see 1 and 2 as inseparable. For me, a large part of what I see my work having been about has to do with just having plain conversations with people and I don’t see how my conversations with people could be subject to group censorship. I just don’t understand how that works?”

*Punkay*: “Focus on the phrase ‘made public’.”

*Bellica*: “Right. We’re talking about what kinds of ‘institutionalized’ projects, not your day to day conversations.”

*Jarbua*: “Well I could see writing an article for a feminist magazine, which wouldn’t pass in this group.”

*Badis Badis*: “Why?”

*Bellica*: “Why not?”

*Jarbua*: “I mean it might not.”

*Jaculator*: “Unless it was completely against everything this group stands for in terms of representational...”

*Jarbua*: “You know, and also, that fear I have of the ‘thought police’ when it says ‘the will of the general body will prevail’—yaaaahh!”

*Ramirezi*: “Can I ask you a question? Do you think that doesn’t exist in the world already?”

*Jarbua*: “Sure it exists but I would trust it more to come out of...”

*Puntius Stigma*: “Can I suggest, just as a procedural point ob-

viously that we should and we must be able to work toward forms of working in which everyone can participate.”

*Oscellatus*: “Okay, good.”

*Clarius*: “Let’s get on with the points.”

*Punkay*: “I would say there is a confusion between individual and individualism and once again remember all these points to be methodological suggestions directed primarily at our market presence and I support it in that respect. I don’t see how any of us here can avoid ourselves as individuals but that’s not what we’re talking about...”

[snickering]

*Ramirezi*: “Why don’t we rephrase that ‘individuals, working publicly, will be considered as self-disqualification from this process?’”

*Hypostomous*: “Also individuals in a subgroup...”

*Metae*: “It is individualism we are talking about...”

*Bellica*: “I would rather have it ‘working in an individualist manner.,’, so that it would include the sub-groups.”

*Ramirezi*: “Capitalism will not be tolerated.”

*Punkay*: “It’s unfortunate we have to focus on the market all the time.”

*Ramirezi*: “I don’t think that’s a problem. We *have* to, it’s going to clarify our external relations.”

*Bellica*: “Right. If you accept this as a socialist strategy, then working as an individualist means that you will exploit the invitations, projects available to A&L as an individual. That is, you will be exploiting *this group*.”

*Ramirezi*: “That also cuts off that whole thing about having some looneys in the back room called A&L who act as an individual’s radical index.”

*Jaculator*: “Right.”

*Puntius Stigma*: “Take this conversation and flog it...”

[mild outbreaks of disorder ensue]

*Jarbua*: “I’m continuing the point. I’ve been recognized by the chair. This whole package deal, to me, is dependent upon the ideological development of this group and whether that comes about through expansion, discussion, study groups, however that happens, my acceptance of the whole deal is dependent on the ideological development of the group.”

*Clarius*: “I had something to say: I accept the point. I can’t remember what I wanted to say so let’s continue on point 4.”

*Jarbua:* “But wait a minute, the problem with that is like, Jaculator criticised me before for funneling everything through A&L, didn’t you?”

*Ramirezi:* “And I criticised you for the opposite...”

*Jaculator:* “Just in terms of specific history, just in terms of feminism.”

*Jarbua:* “Yeah, I can’t... my loyalty is to my beliefs, so, whether I use my experience in my women’s group to bring to bear on this group or whether I bring my experience from this group to bear on that group, I mean that’s always going to go on both ways.”

*Punkay:* “Yeah, you have that problem, in a certain sense, because you chose to deal with feminism in terms of this group which got you into that situation, It’s funny, I’m not saying it’s funny, it’s odd.”

*Jaculator:* “It’s not a negative criticism.”

*Punkay:* “No, it’s just what happened. It’s why Jaculator could think of Jarbua in one way

in terms of feminism. You are going to feminist groups and you are talking about, basically, your relationship with an all male group which is A&L rather than how A&L is a group confused with a feminist group, you are always caught in the double bind.”

*Jaculator:* “I agree but I think that situation very basically can, in Jarbua’s case, not reverse itself, but change.”

*Jarbua:* “But that also has to do with AMCC, CUE I’ve seen more and more potential in AMCC specifically after last weekend and the meeting that was conducted by the women which I thought was very powerful... ”

*Oscellatus:* “It was amazing how different it was ... “

*Clarius:* “Okay, let’s get on to point 5.”

*Badis Badis:* “I have a problem. It has to do with the question of expansion. I don’t think it’s possible to expand until we can find out what we are in order for other people to become ‘part’. I think we are in the process of reform and I therefore cannot see the possibility of expansion until we can show a clear choice to people.”

*Ramirezi:* “Can I add one point? I agree and would just like to say that it plays into a different kind of political manoeuvring: ‘adding new people’.”

*Oscellatus:* “I think this is a crucial issue. It is for Jarbua and me. I think again, as to what our ideology is ... Because I think we do need an influx of new people, new information and that doesn’t mean we bring in 30 people which add to the existing 14. It has to be reasonable in some way. They have to be people we can all feel we can work with as opposed to the bizarre way this 14 ended up coming together. So

I’m not simply searching for a strategy to even up the voting amongst us, anything like that, but it is about bringing in enough people into the group that one could feel comfortable in terms of working with other people. And we could broaden our base in the art world. We can expand, with the exception of those notable exceptions—a big group of us come out of a conceptual art background.”

*Jarbua:* “Well, we all come out of a bourgeois art background.”

*Puntius Stigma:* “I myself would like to develop a situation where such a thing as voting never comes up, that we can deal with things in a more ... ”

*Oscellatus:* “dialectical way?”

*Puntius Stigma:* “ ... real relationships, not—sort of—‘a majority’. Yes, we need other people to come in, sort of to shake us off our asses in some way. But at the same time, obviously, our strength must lie in our ideology, not in our numbers. People have to come in on this basis. We don’t do something like simply elect new participants. It has always been that people were around and they started talking and working and participating became the criteria for being part of it, you don’t have a membership card.”

*Oscellatus:* “That sounds pretty simple...”

*Jarbua:* “I think it sounds pretty simple too ... ”

*Oscellatus:* “I think that one thing that brings up too is that we might have A&L as a general banner and there would be many collectives and this would be one.”

[Pongo Pongo returns]

*Metae:* “Expansion must be informed by our ideological development and I don’t think it’s necessarily a matter of enlarging our base in the art-world because, as Puntius says, our strength comes from ideology rather than the size of our base. If we have ourselves sorted ideologically, we can invite people to these things but we have to reach a certain level of sorting before we can ... ”

*Oscellatus:* “I’m not sure that’s ...”

*Metae:* “... Say, come along, come and join, we work in a spectrum of... ”

*Ramirezi:* “Opinion...”

*Bellica:* “We haven’t normally been in a position of ‘inviting’ people anyway ...”

*Badis Badis:* “But it’s closed at this point until we go-on...”

*Jarbua:* “I’m getting so confused about what is the hard core at what people are getting at. When Metae said our strength comes from our ideology rather than our ... our ... what?”

*Ramirezi:* “Numbers.”

*Jarbua:* “Numbers? I think that’s another chicken and egg thing. I think the strength of our ideology could be directly affected by our numbers and I think that A&L in the past has never had an ideological cohesion and part of the strength of A&L has been the fact of the number of people that were contributing to the ideological struggles within A&L. So, when Ramirezi said that thing about ‘the most radical thing about A&L had been the social relations...”

*Ramirezi:* “I meant that to be slightly facetious. Also, please try and see it as a subtle issue.”

*Metae:* “Can I respond directly to Jarbua: we have a problem with ideology. You see A&L representing a ‘combination’ of personal ideologies and I don’t see A&L representing that. I see A&L representing a common ideology which is informed by socialist ideology. You know, you continually stress that you have a sense of dilemma until the group ideology includes the representation of your ideology and that seems to me to be a real block with the way I talk and what I say and you understand. ”

*Jarbua:* “That’s because there’s socialist ideology and there’s socialist ideology. I don’t think you can say socialist ideology and be so clear about what you mean by socialist ideology. ”

*Ramirezi:* “Can I say one thing though? What you are characterising as a chicken and egg philosophical problem is also a valuing of one as nature. That it is a false philosophical problem is in fact proved by dialectics. [Oscellatus makes incredulous noises.] The participation requirements for admittance: we have a lot of ways that people are coming to talk, that we’re talking about people coming into this group. We’re organizing.”

*Jarbua:* “I also think a certain amount of flexibility—I think Oscellatus’ idea about having meetings that people can come and see what’s going on and what we represent and what we represent would be real useful to us and other people ...”

*Ramirezi:* “I agree so long as Daniel Bell doesn’t show up.”

[snickering].

*Jarbua:* “I don’t want Daniel Bell any more than you do ... ”

*Metae:* “I’d like to know what ‘we represent’?”

*Badis Badis:* “Yeah ...”

*Clarius:* “We’ll turn this over for discussion. No people would enter this group unless they had a strong relationship to the points put here [draft-provisos]. I think a person would naturally come in with an openness and could be acquainted with these when they would come in. But I think-that’s a healthy thing...”

*Jarbua:* “But you came in exclusively on your relationship to me

... ”

*Ramirezi:* “That’s not entirely true. Clarius and I had a lot of conversations that... ”

*Jarbua:* “Yeah, and you were ready to cut Clarius from the conversations and that’s the whole reason I brought Clarius in.”

*Ramirezi:* “That’ not true ...”

*Punkay:* “I’ve had conversations with Clarius ...”

*Jaculator:* “I’m close to Clarius ...”

*Jarbua:* “I have it on tape, Ramirezi!”

*Ramirezi:* “Yes, which you still misunderstand as well.”

*Clarius:* “You were playing a role in my being here as well as myself being ready to deal with the situation. I know there’s a problem in expanding the group, but we should trust the people who will be involved in it. The point is I’m open to it.”

*Ramirezi:* “So am I. I want to say that we can’t keep having conflicts over that tape.”

*Bellica:* “Ramirezi, don’t answer *everything* like that.”

*Ramirezi:* “I know.”

*Puntius Stigma:* “On the basis of what went on today this is a formulation of the point-it might come out something like: our strength is based in our ideological struggle, not in numbers. New participation in ‘the group’ for the time being is likely to emerge through the development of working relations with the existing participants.”

*Jarbua:* “That’s what *some* people said, some *others* said it exactly the other way around.”

*Puntius Stigma:* “Sorry, I don’t understand any conflict with what was said.”

*Jarbua:* “Oscellatus, Clarius and myself all said something ... ”

[A general request was voiced for the point to be read again.]

*Puntius Stigma:* “New participation in ‘the group’ is for the time being likely to emerge through the development of working relations with the existing participants ... our strength lies in ideology, not in numbers.”

*Oscellatus:* “That oversimplifies, that’s all. I think that can be used in a way. I thought we were going to discuss it. That’s not the *whole* thing.”

*Pongo Pongo:* “Can I ask a question? I haven’t been here to hear the whole thing but why is this such an issue? Is it something special or has each point been discussed like this?”



[explanation follows]

*Jarbua*: “‘Our strength comes from our ideology, not our numbers’. That’s like saying ‘our strength comes from our force not our clarity’. It’s a totally false distinction when you’re talking about a group. I mean you cannot separate the two *ever, ever, ever*, from one another. ”

*Metae*: “Would you say ideological clarity is the result of struggle?”

*Jarbua*: “No: I think ideological struggle is fine. That’s not what I disagree with. I disagree with ‘and not in numbers’... ”

*Puntius Stigma*: “It seems to me, pragmatically here, that one has to have priority over the other.”

*Jarbua*: “See, I don’t think the ideological struggle can take place in the closet and

then go out and try and confront the real world, you know...”

*Ramirezi*: “Can I say something? Can I point out just one thing? In other instances you have said we can’t make definitions without ‘ideological clarity’.

*Jarbua*: “What?”

*Ramirezi*: “You have said in other instances that we can’t go on without ideological clarity’, ”

*Jarbua*: “I don’t think we can. But I think that clarity comes about through exposure to other ideas.”

*Puntius Stigma*: “You’ve got to read the two parts together: participation would be participation in the ideological struggle.”

*Clarius*: “I don’t think that’s coming through, It’s a false conflict to put the issue as one between ideology and numbers.”

*Badis Badis*: “Hear, hear! No one has said there should not ever be new members, as many as we can get. The question really comes down to, are we going to do it before we come to a position of basic unity or *after*? At what point do we try to make unity explicit: at 14 or at 3000? I assume that we’re going to reach some kind of unity at this table?”

[pause in tape]

*Ramirezi*: “Class analysis is an unstable situation. We are trying to deal with it dialectically. I don’t have any worry about the ‘the numbers’, all I have is a question about *how*? Proceedings for admitting those people?”

*Badis Badis*: “I think the question also is *when*?”

*Oscellatus*: “We’re all committed to socialism. Am I right when I say that? [no disagreement]. All right, that’s a point we all agree on.”

*Jarbua*: “The only one I’ve agreed on.”

*Oscellatus*: “Okay. Then I think that when we start breaking that down all sorts of divisions occur, right? Now, it’s the breaking down and informing of those divisions that is the point where we need influx of new information. There are existing socialist struggles in the world, be they Maoist, Feminist or Anarchist. (Anarchist is not so much in the world unfortunately.) But nonetheless there are articulated currents of socialist thought that we have to consider and, perhaps, in our working, bring in some new people. We can examine that, in terms of dialogue, and I think we have the clarity-we’re all committed to socialism. That’s our only unification at this point. ”

*Bellica*: “I don’t think this point sets up any dichotomy between ideological struggle and numbers. I think it’s strictly a tenuous strategy at this point. Accepting the fact that we’re not likely to attract great hoards of people, accepting the fact that we do have certain ideological positions which we are trying to put into effect but which may not ‘attract’ other people, it’s likely that these great hoards of people are going to get interested strictly through their relationship to us, It’s simple. It’s really not a dichotomy Jarbua,”

*Jarbua*: “But see, I realize that what I have to say doesn’t count for much in this group: But I said before: whether or not I could accept this package was dependent upon the way in which we ideologically went on or, the way in which ideological struggle within the group went on. It’s as simple as that. I can’t agree and then find out what I’ve agreed to and then go on with it. I mean certain people have priorities about organization and other people have priorities about other values other than organization.”

*Ramirezi*: “Gosh, you are the one who put emphasis on organization at the start of these meetings.”

*Oscellatus*: “Can you phrase it another way acceptable to you and to the rest of us?”

*Puntius Stigma*: “Sure.”

*Bellica*: “Why not say our strength is based on ideological struggle?”

*Oscellatus*: “Exactly, fine.”

[Agreement is announced, agreed point is read—’unorganised’ conversation ensues about who might ‘come into the group’. Pongo Pongo asks what’s going on and is brought up to date.]

*Ramirezi*: “Do we understand that this is subject to the approval of the group?”

*Oscellatus*: “Earlier there was a consensus that there would be a kind of transitory period in which we would try to enact some of these things so that those of us with doubts can see how well it’s working, whether they’re going to feel coerced. It’s like fish and the water... ”

*Puntius Stigma*: “Precisely in terms of nobody totally disagreeing with this *it has to come out in practice* ...

*Oscellatus*: “Within the context set up in (Provisional) A&L of—I don’t know maybe this introduces the problem of sub-groups— anyway, there would be an attempt to begin this sort of work with a PAL called Doggy and Rat... whatever, one could begin that work between now and the fall. In the fall we would review how one felt about that experience. I mean I think Jarbua, Clarius and some of the others could see ourselves working in that collective way and try it out, I think maybe Pongo Pongo and Ramirez and others could as well.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “I don’t know what you mean.”

*Oscellatus*: “It’s about testing the water in a certain way. Seeing how it actually will function because some of us will have certain fears about it being coercive but one won’t know until one fucking tries.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Of course it’s coercive!” *Oscellatus*: “Leave it to you to say it.” *Pongo Pongo*: “Of course it’s coercive. What is this [the point of unity ... ] ?”

*Oscellatus*: “In such a way that it destroys the whole basis for socialism, put it that way. Let it be put in some sort of terms that you have rejected too, I mean it’s coercive in a sort of brutalized and totalitarian way.”

*Jarbua*: “Socialism, it seems to me, is to provide the conditions of individual freedom, not to provide for the conditions of mob rule ... There can’t be any individual freedom under capitalism just because of the nature of the social coercion. Now if there can be individual freedom under socialism, I think there can, and that’s why people are working toward socialism...”

*Bellica*: “The whole point of capitalism is that you are an individual.”

*Jarbua*: “But because you’re not an individual in the sense of a super-star (you’re) an individual in the sense of having the freedom to challenge the institutions.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Jarbua, can I say something, this is fucking coercive.”

*Jarbua*: “Of course it is.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “It is coercive. I don’t need outside people to convince me that those points of unity point toward socialism. I watch my relationships with Punkay, Bellica, Hypostomous, with Puntius Stigma and Oscellatus all deteriorate under capitalist conditions, market penetration. This is a way to fix those relations.”

*Oscellatus*: “Then let’s see what problems come up with this that might be equally strong but of a different character, we won’t know until we try.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Yeah, but what use is it to say that in order to get away from the flood waters you have to build a bridge but if you build a bridge there ‘might’ be worse problems on the other side. You have no choice. We have no choice. We have to go on.”

*Oscellatus*: “That’s all I’m saying.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Of course it could be a disaster.”

*Oscellatus*: “Exactly. So I was suggesting a transitional period. So let’s just talk amongst ourselves and talk that out... ”

*Pongo Pongo*: “I didn’t understand what you said at all. You mean various groups ‘trying

this out’? I would say that from now on, from next week we have another meeting and begin to put this into practice, and there will be a period of loose ends obviously, Those loose ends can be written down, then the week after we’ll come in and see what progress has been made.”

*Clarius*: “What do we think about a transition period? How would it operate?”

*Pongo Pongo*: “I think two weeks is plenty of time.”

*Oscellatus*: “Two weeks? Puntius Stigma said six months.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “All I want to do is fucking get on with it. Let’s have a look at someone’s

work. Let’s get down to talking about some real fucking things.”

*Metae*: “I want to support you because what Oscellatus introduced is ‘we all believe in

socialism’. There’s no problem there, it’s not a matter of getting a red flag.”

*Oscellatus*: “I agree.”

*Metae*: “It’s a matter of working on how to implement it in practice.”

*Oscellatus*: “I agree, but we can’t do that in two weeks ... ”

*Metae*: “But we have to start now. I think that’s what Pongo Pongo is saying.”

*Oscellatus*: “But I agree with Pongo Pongo.”

[Confusion is sorted out, apparently.]

*Clarius*: “Well, is the meeting over?”

*Pongo Pongo*: “What happened to this? [points to the Points of whatever-they-are-called] What happened to this?”

*Badis Badis*: “We all agreed.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “You mean we all agreed we were going to shelve

it for six months. Is that

what we agreed to?”

Clarius and others: “No, No!”

*Badis Badis*: “What did we agree to then?

*Clarius*: “Some people accepted the points. Some people said they had to wait and see. They’re willing to work under this but they are waiting to, well, they put their stamp of approval and said this is what I’m doing...”

Hypostomous: “We should have a vote and see who stands where?”

*Ramirezi*: “Is it going to be that we call the whole thing ‘Provisional Art & Language’ or is it going to be two sections of A&L? ”

*Clarius*: “All of these points are provisional A&L and if you don’t accept them you are just A&L,”

*Ramirezi*: “Okay, that’s what I wanted to clear up—thank you,”

*Clarius*: “Do we want to ... what’s the point in voting on this?”

*Oscellatus*: “A vote? I think a vote is absurd at this point.”

*Clarius*: “Pongo Pongo hasn’t been here so... ”

*Oscellatus*: “I think it’s about time we did something grey for a change ... ”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Are you kidding! This looney-bin has been grey all the time, Nothing’s happened,”

*Clarius*: “How are you going to make it not grey. By proclaiming Provo A&L? You can’t do that.”

*Ramirezi*: “Those who accept it completely *are* provos.”

*Clarius*: “What’s wrong with being grey for a while?”

*Pongo Pongo*: “It’s been grey for eight fucking years! ”

*Albifrons*: “Well some of us are for a vote.”

[general uproar]

*Oscellatus*: “Can I say that I think there’s a consensus that we’re going to try it. Some people have made up their mind already before it’s even started, I think that’s their prerogative but some of us are not able to do that, So we want to get involved and see what’s going to happen.”

*Albifrons*: “Then stay A&L,”

*Clarius*: “You don’t have to make that decision now unless you want to, I don’t think it needs to be that much of a rigid thing,”

*Ramirezi*: “I’d like to know, I’d like to know who are the provos

and who is A&L?”

*Punkay*: “So would I; I don’t want it to go out... ”

*Ramirezi*: “I don’t want it to go out of here ...”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Who’s going to be here in 2 weeks and submit to the provisos of provo?”

*Ramirezi*: “Let’s do it. Let’s take our stands.”

*Badis Badis*: “We all are I think?”

*Pongo Pongo*: “All right, in 2 weeks we come here and keep on with this struggle..”

*Ramirezi*: “Is everybody going to be A&L or is everybody a provo or what the fuck?”

[uproar ensues]

*Oscellatus*: “Yeah, I think so and then technically A&L will also exist..”

*Pongo Pongo*: “But we’ve got to have a vote. I’ve got to know who is committed because this demands commitments, You know, this is hard. You’ve got to be committed.”

*Oscellatus*: “I wish you had been here earlier, I really wish you had for fucking sake...”

[uproar, uproar]

*Jarbua*: “So do I.”

[more uproar]

*Pongo Pongo*: “I’m sorry, I apologize.”

*Oscellatus*: “Then don’t be such a fucking hard-liner.”

*Albifrons*: “Well I was here and I agree with Pongo Pongo.”

*Jarbua*: “We all know that Albifrons. You always do.”

[uproar]

*Oscellatus*: “That’s been taken for granted *a priori*.”

*Albifrons*: “Well, yes, I think that my ideology is close to Pongo Pongo’s.”

*Oscellatus*: “Can we, can we, can we avoid this right now.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Yeah, ‘let’s avoid it right now’ Oscellatus.”

*Jarbua*: “you can’t speak for Pongo Pongo or think for Pongo Pongo.”

*Albifrons*: “No, but I can agree with him.”



*Pongo Pongo*: “All right, I disqualify myself for being absent for 40 minutes.”

*Albifrons*: “I think what he says is clear.”

*Punkay*: “All right, I was here. I was here. First of all I don’t see how Pongo Pongo being absent for that time casts such a suspensory note ...”

*Badis Badis*: “He agrees with the points.”

*Albifrons*: “ ... on anything that he says.”

*Punkay*: “... on his participation at this time, I will say, let’s go around and see who is going to do what. Those who don’t accept the points are A&L, those who do are provos. I’m not interested in setting up a situation where people see if socialism works and then hop on the bandwagon,”

*Oscellatus*: “This isn’t socialism [points to the provisos] so it doesn’t work.”

*Punkay*: “This is *working* for socialism, This is how socialism *works*.”

[uproar, uproar]

*Oscellatus*: “I’m not taking *your* word for it.”

*Punkay*: “Not later, but now Oscellatus, right now...”

[pandemonium]

*Oscellatus*: “Yeah, well you’re dreaming.”

*Punkay*: “Wake me when it’s over.”

*Clarius*: “I don’t like this.”

*Oscellatus*: “It’s macho mentality and it’s really fucking this all up.”

[pandemonium]

*Clarius*: “It’s so tough when we assume that attitude. If someone has very valid personal reasons and reservations but they generally support this then they can’t put down Provo. You are saying that unless you support these things *all the way* through you’re out. That’s a really harsh way to put it and that’s the way for making it divisive ...”

*Pongo Pongo*: “There’s no room for personal reservations anymore, I...”

*Ramirezi*: “It’s not a question of making it a divisive issue. How do you propose we go on working? What are we going to do for this period? When we go to AMCC what are you going to do?”

*Jarbua*: “Speak from my beliefs...”

*Pongo Pongo*: “From *your* beliefs? Not from *ours*, not from *ours*, you know ...”

*Jarbua*: “It’s feminism. How can I speak for you when the discussion is feminism? You don’t know a Goddamn thing about it. Not literally, but I can’t speak for you.”

*Clarius*: “It forms the basis for us to work together.”

*Ramirezi*: “My relationship to it is ideological.”

*Clarius*: “I know it is and you can speak from that point of view. But does that mean at your ideology is the ideology represented here? Is what you say going to come out as the ideology represented in these points?”

*Bellica*: “The first 3 points are very important. If some people will not operate on the basis of the first 3 points then there’s no reason for anybody here to trust them,”

*Punkay*: “This isn’t a menu that we’re looking at; I want to have soup, I want to follow with a salad.”

*Ramirezi*: “I’m not trying to divide or cut off dialogue. I would just like to see some clarification instead of people taking refuge in obscurity. You say you are going to AMCC and speak from your beliefs—right? Well I’m going to go to AMCC and say that whatever I say is going to be advised by my relationship to this document.”

*Oscellatus*: “What does this tell you about ideology?”

*Ramirezi*: “That this group is no longer interested in functioning as a collection of individuals, you know, who are free-floating and have a *laissez-faire* attitude toward strategic ...”

*Oscellatus*: “After you say that, what do you say? And that’s the point where we *really* start to talk about ideology.”

*Bellica*: “Oscellatus, Ramirezi is not saying that we as individuals are ‘taken over’ by an ahen ideology, that is A&L. Jarbua’s talking as if her identity vanishes the moment she ‘joins’ A&L—it’s very revealing. What all this has to do with right now is how we represent ourselves in the market and that has ideological ramifications.’,

*Ramirezi*: “Exactly.”

*Punkay*: “You wanted to see if this would work...”

*Oscellatus*: “All I’m objecting to is the very harsh macho way you’re putting it. It’s in human terms I’m objecting, not in terms of the content. Okay, as I’ve said all along, let’s get it going and find out.”

*Hypostomous*: “The first step to get going is to agree.”

*Group*: “On the points.”

*Oscellatus*: “Certainly, doing it for a provisional period. When

the provisional period’s over and when the nuts are tightened that’s the point at which some people have to make decisions. ”

*Hypostomous*: “The provisional period is for something else. It’s for getting rid of early garbage. In 2 weeks when we have a meeting this group will be working differently,”

*Jarbua*: “I think you’re really being unrealistic. ”

*Bellica*: “Well we all are. The four of us could have a rising economic star. ”

*Multifasciata*: “To go back to our situation in Canada; it’s like Oscellatus’ here.”

*Jarbua*: “It’s not operating in the same way at all.”

*Multifasciata*: “Sure it is.”

*Pongo Pongo*: “Listen, we can’t stop because some of us think we’re ‘special.’”

*Bellica*: “We’re all giving up something Jarbua. But something has to be decided now,”

*Oscellatus*: “We can’t see it unless something starts—I agree with that point, I don’t know, if it’s going to be a totally authoritarian terrorist, psychological terrorist, situation. Well then we’ll fucking find out by working in it.”

*Jarbua*: “We’re finding out now,”

*Oscellatus*: “Well, we are to a certain extent... it’s true, until people overcome their weaknesses. ”

*Clarius*: “Let’s resolve this now. I can agree with the points but like I said when the work comes up things may be incompatible, Does that say enough about working with me, If I accept this, I may not accept it in three weeks from now.”

*Punkay*: “These three points seem to represent the minimal conditions,”

[The group decides to go around and say whether or not each one will support the points, “in principle as well as practice”.]

*Pongo Pongo*: “All right, I will.”

*Badis Badis*: “How are we going to ... Uh, I agree.”

*Ramirezi*: “We’re going around; I agree to them,”

*Albifrons*: “I agree,”

*Oscellatus*: “I half agree, I half abstain,” [Uproar and pandemonium-controversy over vote versus statement of opinion ensues.]

*Hypostomous*: “I agree.”

*Puntius Stigma*: “I agree.”

*Bellica*: “I agree.”

*Metae*: “I agree.”

*Multifasciata*: “I agree.”

*Jaculator*: “I agree.”

*Jarbua*: “I abstain.”

*Punkay*: “I agree.”

*Clarius*: “I’ve stated mine already.”

[Hallucinatory silence follows ... ]