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Abstract

This dissertation is fundamentally about composing the transmission of works of art. Beyond performance proper, the transmission of an art work is defined as the presentation of this performance as given by the domains of its space, sponsorship, performance agencies, performance protocols, the theaters of its pre- and post-performance, and the material technologies used to present it. Discretely and in concert, these domains locate their 'objects' in social space; at the same time, people locate themselves in social space through familiarity with transmissive networks ('TNs') and their domains.

In the context of late capitalism, this process is consistent with the 'commodification of everything'. We understand less that we experience cultural products and more that we consume them; and genres are like brands signaling various qualities of their consumers. A host of twentieth century art-makers and theorists have suggested that art can propose significant social alternatives only when contradiction and/or noise are encoded within it. Yet even the noisiest, most 'difficult' art is imbued with a commodity nature when presented through conventional TNs (such as concert halls, museums and galleries), especially since our engagement with a work's TN tends to precede our engagement with its contents. Thus conventional TNs attenuate gestures of resistance or transcendence that might be encoded in 'noisy' art, to the extent that commodity and genre reinforce the existing social order.

Following an introductory chapter, chapters on participation in the arts, noise and zen enlist key ideas of Theodor Adorno, Herbert Brün, Pierre Bourdieu, Gregory Bateson and Mumon in the service of this ultimately modernist idea: the extension of 'anticommunication' into the transmissive network. This discourse is intercut with five narrative case studies describing and evaluating with a consistently applied method work that exemplifies the concepts and gestures under discussion. These demonstrate that transmissive networks offer a compositional field rich in resources. The five artists and composers include the following: Nathan Lynch; Barnstormers; R. Murray Schaefer (the 'Wolf Project'); Robbie Conal; and Michael Swaine.

Three compositions are included with the dissertation. Georgia, &c. and Fountain Etude No. 3, performed by the Brentano String Quartet, Kojiro Umezaki and the author, are presented on CD; and Untitled (Koans), with animation by Michael Houston and Eric Knisley, is presented on DVD.
Dedication

I owe great and special thanks to Barbara White, my advisor, and Paul Lansky, first reader. I am indebted to the Department of Music at Princeton entire, the Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies at Princeton, and my teachers at Mills, Dartmouth and Exeter. I was funded while writing this dissertation by Naumberg and Josephine de Kármán Fellowships, and an Andrew C. Mellon Foundation grant. Those creative souls whose work I describe generated a lion's share of the text's positive vibrations. I have benefited especially from discussions with Newton Armstrong, Jeff Edelstein, Steven Tepper, Emily Doolittle and Daniel Biró. I have endless gratitude for the love and support of my family, and my very great friends out in the world—Ko, Ray, Joe & Molly, Mike, Jess, Alex & Kristen, Aurie, Nathan (times 2), Dylan, and others in the Saturnalian Croquet League. To Bekah: hi.
Multi-disciplinary artist Nathan Lynch has been performing *Where's Your Wheel?* since March, 2000. The piece consists in walking around in public wearing an orange motorcycle helmet, while pulling or restraining the forward progress of a large, crude wheel carved from a stump and tethered by a very thick rope. Other material attributes of Nathan's appearance—button-down shirt, khakis, work boots, backpack—as well as his demeanor—calm, warm, and helpful like an empathic clerk in a hardware store—'synergize' disarmingly, guaranteeing a wealth of conversations and other interactions with curious individuals.

Over the course of around three hundred full days out and about, Nathan estimates that around 1.5 million people have seen him walking his wheel.
He's walked the wheel in cities and in rural settings,

at universities and museums, ESPN's Winter X Games, Memorial Day festivities in Washington, D.C. and other parades. [For more detail, please see below.]

*Where's Your Wheel?* grew first out of the object itself—the wheel. Beneath Vermont's loden boughs, Nathan found a tree stump; drilled, chiseled and carved out its core. Next came the rope, wrested from the frozen ground and icy snow in which it was all but completely buried. He walked the wheel for a week; something was missing.
He saw the helmet in a second-hand store and began immediately to feel whole. Helmets are typically associated with wheels; and with moving fast, with danger. Thus in the somewhat awkward context of lugging the wheel around, the helmet is both 'reasonable' and ridiculous. "Unlike the wheel, the helmet is a normal, recognizable object. But it becomes confusing for people because it's divorced from its function." [Me: it's funny because the signifiers go together, but the signifieds don't.]

At first Where's Your Wheel? had something to do with the then recent death of Nathan's uncle—taken in his prime by brain cancer, leaving his wife, two boys and everyone else behind to fend for themselves. The labor of pulling the wheel—not a trivial thing—felt to Nathan like some kind of attritional act, an adjustment aimed at restoring some kind of balance. With time, Where's Your Wheel? began to refine itself, to re-form autopoetically.

Now, I think—as Nathan does—that the piece is about the images and (especially) the interactions with other people it generates. And the nobility of the work required to enact it; the force-value of persistence, walking it again and again and again. And modeling creative but 'non-productive' work. And being slow and available.

Let me just mention a few things that appeal to me about this piece, to introduce some of the axes that I find aesthetically and (maybe) ethically useful in making art. First, it delivers art to people indiscriminately—without regard to any of their sociodemographic attributes. It's free. There's nothing about the material resources used in its production that's out of
anyone's reach. It doesn't put on airs. You can interact with it and change its foreground and even middle-ground characteristics. It's confusing: most people would be hard pressed to say what its purpose is; yet it's friendly. *Nathan* is friendly. The whole thing is pretty happy and open.

These features challenge a conception of art as something rarefied—an entitlement of some elite group, the nose of which comes to be appreciated pursuant to received privilege. [Educational privilege counts.] Rather than binding art and 'commodity' together by shared social forms, these features propose art as an act of and toward some more nurturing, less selfish, more *beautiful* purpose.¹ The gesture involves an incidental display of force: it loves and is not a wimp. It is a gentle guerrilla.

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¹ That is, *I* find this manner of art to be more 'beautiful' than those which reinforce commodity form.
Chapter 1

Proper Introduction: Transmissive Networks of Semiotic Domains

This dissertation is fundamentally about composing the transmission of works of art. Beyond performance proper, the transmission of an art work is defined as the presentation of this performance as given by the domains of its space, sponsorship, performance agencies, performance protocols, the theaters of its pre- and post-performance, and the material technologies used to present it. These domains are presumed to be 'semiotic'—in that they constitute, separately and as a network, a symbolic language capable of projecting meaning to receivers.

Artists who design and implement alternative transmissive networks ("TNs")—whether they are motivated by an experimentalism arising from purely aesthetic concerns, sociopolitical or spiritual mandates, calculated avant-gardism, or any combination of these and others—are said to compose transmission. This document discusses the work of five such artists, describing and analyzing the domains of transmission of each as well as the transmissive network as a whole. Their TNs are then evaluated along the following three dimensions: (1) intra-disciplinary innovation, genre creation, the extent to which each contributes a novel (art) experience and for whom; (2) effectiveness in broadening, diversifying and deepening the participation of an audience; and (3) the extent to which each exists as a form of political speech.
Both the generative and receptive sides of each work are considered. It has been possible to interview the artists or producers of all the case studies to discover how they situate their work with respect to these four dimensions. Reception data has been assembled from documentation gathered by the artists, various documentary texts, by interviewing audience participants, and again by interviewing the artists, who often have valuable insight into the reception of their works.

My own interest in this subject springs from several sources. For one, all other considerations aside, activating the transmission as a zone of play effects a bigger sandbox—and all the other toys are still there. Why not 'make special' as much of the total experience of one's art as possible—as for instance Wagner did by expanding instrumental forces and building Bayreuth.\(^2\) The alternative is to accept defaults that may or may not serve one's vision.

Second, composed transmission can be seen as both a reasonable and necessary step in the teleology of western art (and civilization). In all disciplines, the twentieth century embraced an expansion of where one might compose, as modernists of many stripes asked, "What can we address next? What has been left to convention, unexamined?"

Those questions have been answered both from within various disciplines and by rupturing their boundaries. In music, for instance, the former case might be exemplified by various challenges to tonality, yielding atonal and twelve-tone music, and music built on just tuning.

systems (such as Harry Partch's 43 tone scale). Or Milton Babbitt's application of serial technique to 'everything'—so that, for example, articulation qua articulation was given legitimacy as a composable parameter. Other intra-musical frontiers were made possible by new technologies or new uses of technology. For example, Conlon Nancarrow's canons for player piano explored simultaneous tempi with irrational proportions such as 1 to $\sqrt{2}$.

Understood as the case where boundaries have been "ruptured," conceptual and performance art have clear antecedents in Duchamp, Futurist theater and other outliers. But as bona fide disciplines their critical mass was reached only after artists felt that intra-disciplinary exploration had largely been exhausted—in part, that is, as a response to crisis. And the exhaustive practices of ultra-rationality [referring, still, to a teleological perspective] contributed to this crisis on an equal basis with Jackson Pollock's destruction of 'illusion' in painting and John Cage's concise dissolution of the proscenium [$4'33"$].

Furthermore, a mandate for composed transmission follows from mapping developments in the sciences, social sciences, and other humanities to the arts. Art responded to revolutionary theories of science [Gödel, Einstein and Heisenberg] and the manifold post-structuralist theories (where it did not suggest their creation)—which by problematizing 'the frame' unfixed traditional authorities and proposed new, de-centered ones. Thus composed transmission, similarly unfixing frames and addressing ever wider contexts, reflects conceptual advances in other areas of human endeavor.

3. Articulation is just one of the musical attributes to be brought under the control of a single organizing principle (the row) in Babbitt's works beginning 1948: *Composition for Four Instruments* and *Composition for Twelve Instruments*.

4. And one could argue that the 'frame' is stretched to the breaking point in music of extreme duration—such as Eric Satie's *Vexations* and Morton Feldman's late music.
The third reason for my interest in composed transmission has developed through reading (and misreading) various species of critical theory. In considering my own work, I have become increasingly aware and wary of the 'symbolic violence' enacted by conventional TNs—as they constrain audiences per sociodemographic characteristics, and reproduce and reinforce power relations that are, to me, plainly unjust.\(^5\) I observe in myself a failure to engage consistently, operationally, with the sociopolitical implications of my work's transmission. I want to make work that is significantly aligned with my politics; yet mapping the \textit{social forms} in which I participate to the political sphere often obtains something like plutocracy.

However, this text is \textit{not} predominantly concerned with illustrations of complicity with Power by traditionally conceived educational or art 'elites'—

\(^5\) The phrase 'symbolic violence' points here to Pierre Bourdieu.
but rather with describing alternatives. Besides, I take the radical commodification of art experience, naturalized in language, thought forms and social structures, to be a phenomenon that benefits no one. Because this force is naturalized, it is especially difficult for artists to come to terms with how and where late capitalism (transparently) influences interior discourse on their own art-making and its social meanings—and particularly when this might recommend actions contrary to their own material and other self-interests. So, for example, it is instead common for an artist to think more of the very act of art-making as political, noble, heroic. And indeed, in other (imaginary) social contexts, where inherited institutions had rather weak ties to oppressive social orders, it would not be troubling if
artists sought to present explorations and expressions of their own (often rather apolitical) interests through those institutions. Unfortunately, that is not our situation.⁶

So the practical question is, to what extent can artists transcend this oppressive force—i.e., the fusion of (art) experience and commodity that itself marks and reflects the order of late capitalism—assuming they are inclined to try? And next, what might successful 'solutions' look like?

I would take it as an article of faith that artists could be particularly well-suited to propose alternative modes (of anything), modes consonant with their understandings of social justice. For reasons this text will explicate, these proposed modes take the form of models ('show don't tell')—especially respecting their social forms (i.e., 'transmission')—whose ultimate object is to empower. As Walter Benjamin writes in reference to Brecht:

[A] writer's production (whether it be of a novel, play or program) must have the character of a model: it must be able to instruct other writers in their production and, secondly, it must be able to place an improved apparatus at their disposal. This apparatus will be the better, the more consumers it brings in contact with the production process—in short, the more readers or spectators it turns into collaborators.

Of course, many artists occupy themselves with precisely this work, and a varied collection of them constitute my case studies.

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⁶ It is true that educational elites are more likely to encounter texts that expose and deconstruct this oppression—so they may be more likely to perceive the imprint of late capitalism's mythology on their own lives and work. I confess that I personally find it gratifying when they act from such knowledge and a little heartbreaking when they do not. (Please see the Zizek quotation below.)
Though I have already been a bit preachy, it is a happy fact that instead of discussing ethical matters, one can sometimes discuss aesthetic matters that just happen to have ethical consequences.7 [I say 'happy' because it is annoying when a graduate student questions your ethical status.] As Wittgenstein wrote in his Tractatus, ethics and aesthetics—the two sub-branches of 'value theory'—"are one."8

As a simple demonstration of this correspondence, I submit that advertisements in concert programs—for diamonds, petroleum companies, luxury automobiles or the lately rebranded parent corporation of Philip Morris & Co., Ltd. [Altria]—are uglier than no advertisements in concert programs. Imagine if those pages, often a majority of all pages, were replaced with poems, reproductions of art, descriptions of ideas, notices for tai chi in the park and so on. Pollyannaish?

Interlude: A long quotation from Slavoj Zizek:

[W]hen, in his programmatic text *What Is Enlightenment?*, Immanuel Kant provides the famous definition of Enlightenment as "man's release from his self-incurred tutelage," i.e., his courage to make use of his understanding without direction from another, he supplements the motto "Argue freely!" by "Argue as much as you will, and about what you will, but obey!" This and not "Do not obey but argue!" is, according to Kant, the Enlightenment's answer to the demand of traditional authority, "Do not argue but obey!" We must be careful here not to miss what Kant is aiming at—he is not simply restating the common motto of conformism, "In private, think whatever you want, but in public, obey the authorities!" but rather its opposite: in public, "as a scholar before the reading public," use your reason freely, yet in private (at your post, in your family, i.e., as a cog in the social machine) obey

7. Of course, the converse is also true.
authority! This split underlies the famous Kantian "conflict of the faculties" between the faculty of philosophy (free to indulge in arguing about what it will, yet for that reason cut off from social power—the performative force of its discourse being so to speak suspended) and the faculties of law and theology (which articulate the principles of ideological and political power and are therefore devoid of the freedom to argue)…

The ideological attitude opened up by this split, of course, is that of *cynicism*, of cynical distance which pertains to the very notion of Enlightenment and which today seems to have reached its apogee: although officially undermined, devalorized, authority returns through the sidelong—"we know there is no truth in authority, yet we continue to play its game and to obey it in order not to disturb the usual run of things …" Truth is suspended in the name of efficiency: the ultimate legitimation of the system is that it works. … [W]e are victims of authority precisely when we think we have duped it: the cynical distance is empty, our true place is in the ritual of obeying—or, as Kurt Vonnegut put it in his *Mother Night*: "We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be."

In contrast to what the media desperately endeavor to convince us, *the enemy today is not the fundamentalist but the cynic*—even a certain form of "deconstructionism" partakes in the universal cynicism by proposing a more sophisticated version of the Cartesian "provisional morality": "In theory (in the academic practice of writing) deconstruct as much as you will and whatever you will, but in your everyday life, play the predominant social game!"9

*End Interlude*

**Semiotic Domains**

I want to make a few points pertaining to the symbolic language of transmission networks, suggesting to the reader how 'semiotic domains' will figure in our discussion.

The contact a work of art has with each of the domains of its transmissive network (space, sponsorship, etc.) affects its reception per individual receiver, selecting for and/or transforming a network of interpretive imperatives. [And just as 'meaning' is constituted

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variously per individual, I also presume that temporally dynamic factors such as blood sugar level and whether or not an individual is newly in love may 'transform' a set of interpretive imperatives. Nevertheless ... ] The fact that we must first walk up seventy-two [?] wide stairs at Manhattan's Metropolitan Museum of Art, opposite grand Fifth Avenue apartment buildings, to emerge in an enormous, [marble?] entrance space, is sure to influence how we interpret whatever we subsequently view in the galleries. The nature of these inflections [bestowing authority ↔ not, transparent ↔ not, etc.] varies per individual temperament, and as a function of membership in educational, economic and other social classes—more precisely from membership in what V.N. Volosinov calls 'sign communities'.

Consider the following scenario, a typical situation in concert music: A pianist is about to play a program of new music; she enters from stage right; she pulls up and stops just at the piano; she faces the audience, she smiles; she bows; she moves to the piano bench, adjusts it; adjusts it some more; she attends to her score; she quiets, brings her mind to the task at hand; she lifts her hands to the piano; a quick inhalation and lifting of the head on the upbeat; she begins.

A member of the sign community (of the pre-performance theater) of new concert music knows how to respond properly to these actions—when to clap, when to commence the hellish and ultimately futile effort to suppress his cough, etc.; and he knows how to glean

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10. Obviously these two are often correlated. The phrase 'sign community' is from V. N. Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (New York: Seminar Press, 1973). For discussion of Bourdieu's 'habitus', please see below.
information from these actions. Does the pianist wear a blue velvet gown or black leather pants? If the latter, perhaps she is one of the new, punkish breed of classical musicians—like the 'cellist from the Kronos Quartet or the violinist whose breasts were concealed only by her violin on the cover booklet of her debut CD of Bach.\textsuperscript{11} That is, he understands a band of normative values that can be deviated from (in a process whereby a new norm is perpetually [re]negotiated). Does she smile gregariously? Or rather like the Mona Lisa? He might expect an introverted reading of the music. Anyway, he is comfortable—since he knows what's expected of him. These deviations merely modulate a carrier frequency to which he is attuned.

Furthermore, the experienced concertgoer anticipates this sequence of actions so well that the whole pre-performance theater as a thing is all but invisible. By design or by convention, in fact, it frames the performance proper in time and space, to differentiate it from life so that it [the performance proper] may be regarded in as 'neutral' a setting as possible.

To one for whom this code [this sequence of actions, this parade of signification] is unfamiliar, deviations are not apprehended in the context of a normative band—the analogy of a modulated signal does not hold. Instead, the code's transparency and its consequent rarefying function are likely replaced by a message of not belonging: that there is a

\textsuperscript{11} Joan Jeanrenaud and Lara St. John, respectively.
disconnect between the receiver and (1) those individuals and institutions transmitting the art work, and (2) (most likely) the work itself.\textsuperscript{12}

Interlude: Multiply Directed Linear Time [Or, A Paragraph From Later Appears Now]

It is not that social positioning / group identification / acquisition of codes as primary motivation for participating in art is entirely 'bad'. Only that: (1) it does have, clearly, a relationship to a ('bad') transactional conception of human action and interaction in the world; and (2) if there should be any art-makers who want to get something of 'universality' across—that is, ideas about the spirit that are more (forgive me) essential and metaphysically prior to an individual's condition ['self'] than his membership in a particular social group in a particular place at a particular moment (with all of the constructed, market-contrived baggage that this temporal position hauls along after it)—then the people-sorting implications of social-positioning-(etc.)-as-primary-motivation-for-participating-in-art must be addressed / challenged / deconstructed, somehow, by art-makers.

End Interlude

This is a situation predicted by Pierre Bourdieu's notion of \textit{habitus}—[in part] that it is an individual’s sense of her own place in society and the entitlements appropriate to it that determines the areas of culture she will seek to involve herself with. In the following

\textsuperscript{12}. As I am not an apologist for concert music—no, really: the same sense of not belonging, communicated in precisely the same way, more days than not, attends (for instance) my way-too-self-conscious interactions with mass culture.
section exploring participation, habitus (as understood by Bourdieu) will be more fully
defined and other sociological work will be called in to complicate it. For now, I would just
add that the subject does have some power in determining or negotiating her habitus; and
that, even though there is a time-honored association between high culture and variously
defined elites, it is precisely habitus that ensures, for example, that Noam Chomsky does not perceive the beauty in professional sports in America. [With that example, I mean to suggest a Sontag-like argument that elite habitus woefully narrows apprehension of beauty; and more generally, that all habitus constrains apprehension of beauty.]

Interlude: Four Questions:

Is there any TN for which 'everyone' possesses the codes? What does it look like?
Is there any TN for which 'no one' possesses the codes? What does it look like?

End Interlude

The Remainder of this Text & its Form

This text will now move through a discussion of participation in the arts, to a discussion of noise as it pertains to transmissive networks, and end with a discussion of selected texts and teaching practices in Zen Buddhism—which (believe it or not) have an uncanny formal resemblance to the TNs I describe. This relatively linear discussion will be interspersed with case studies.
Case studies are presented through a brief general description, followed by a more formalized, detailed description of the 'domains' of their transmission. These domains are subjected to an informal semiotic analysis, in an attempt to ascribe social meaning to the TN. This may be followed with a commentary, sometimes creatively voiced.

The manner of semiotic analysis is based on what Roland Barthes called 'second-order' semiological systems. In an early essay from 1957, "Myth Today," Barthes describes a mechanism by which a sign at the level of language—the product of a first-order semiological system—becomes a signifier at the level of 'myth', a "metalanguage." He illustrates this model with a figure, reproduced below, and two examples of which this is the more political:

I am at the barber's, and a copy of Paris-Match is offered to me. On the cover, a young negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour. All this is the meaning of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors. I am therefore again faced with a greater semiological system: there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (a black soldier is giving the French salute); there is a signified (it is here a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally there is a presence of the signified through the signifier.

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14. Ibid., 116. He later critiqued and problematized this methodology, notably in "Change the Object Itself: Mythology today." In that short essay from 1971 he remarked that, "any student can and does denounce the bourgeois or petit-bourgeois character of such and such a form (of life, of thought, of consumption). In other words, a mythological doxa has been created: denunciation, demystification (of demythification), has itself become discourse, stock of phrases, catechistic declaration; in the face of which, the science of the signifier can only shift its place and stop (provisionally) further on—no longer at the (analytic) dissociation of the sign but at its very hesitation: it is no longer the myths which need to be unmasked (the doxa now takes care of that), it is the sign itself which must be shaken; the problem is not to reveal the (latent) meaning of an utterance, of a trait, of a narrative, but to fissure the very representation of meaning, is not to change or purify the symbols but to challenge the symbolic itself." Image – Music – Text, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 166-7.
I am generally fascinated by the creative, artful treatment of (semiotic) domains of transmission; but this text privileges one particular dimension: to what extent is a TN dissonant with late capitalism; or to what extent does it fail to support the prevailing myths of late capitalism; or to what extent does it mock that which the society of the spectacle holds up as 'the case'. My semiotic analysis of these domains is "informal" in that it is focused on this one sort of signification to the exclusion of (valid) others.

Finally, this text as a whole will present a constellation of ideas and scenes and voices, rather than building a bridge to a triumphant conclusion. Such a form is appropriate to the subject. Furthermore, although I am not allergic to forceful statements, I have more questions than answers; I think the questions are more interesting than the answers, and I would most of all like simply to articulate (or illustrate) them. In this spirit, I would refer the reader to the Epilogue—a few caveats, restatements and expansions, marginalia, and alternative (sometimes contradictory) arguments to several of those made in the body of the text.
Nathan Lynch, Redux

[In describing various domains in the transmissive network of Nathan Lynch's Where's Your Wheel?, I draw from my own observations, countless conversations I have had with Nathan about the project, and direct quotation from formal interviews conducted in 2003.]

Space: City sidewalks, parks, plazas and building interiors (including stores, "endless cafés and restaurants"); museums; the Capitol Building: "Senate offices are by law open to all citizens—I had to pass through metal detectors but after that they let me roll down the hallways with the wheel—all of this would have been easier if I had made an appointment with my congresswoman." Modes of public transportation have been valuable: "buses, subways, BART, etc. Interactions on trains have been some of the very best." Rural and suburban roads and sidewalks. Parades, including: "Memorial Day in D.C.; Fourth of July in Tamworth, NH; the Winterskol Parade in Aspen, CO." "The Winter X Games; tailgating at USC & UCLA events." "A Swedish massage parlor in VT; NYC during the blackout."

Other notes: "Bars are dangerous, sidewalks are temporary, elevators are tight and beautiful, trains are contemplative, museums in DC are closed, museums in NY are open—except the Met ["We check bags not wheels!"]], grocery stores are altogether strange, flight attendants are mostly accommodating."

Sponsorship [Actual]: A lot of Nathan's own money; some from friends and family, following low-pressure solicitation; professional development and teaching development grants from the California College of the Arts.
[Apparent] Sponsorship: *Molto misterioso*. Nathan can't wear shirts with text or brand on them because people tend to think he's an advertisement for something.]

Performance Agencies: Just Nathan? Nathan & Friends?

Performance Protocols: "This really depends on the city or town I'm in … I try to match the local fashion vernacular as much as possible. … Vermont is flannel and jeans; NYC I usually go for khakis and a collared shirt. Despite the abundance of local cowboys in Aspen, the Carhartt jacket didn't work; so I went to a second-hand sports store and bought a fancy ski jacket—a US Olympic Ski Team jacket formerly worn by Katie Monahan. In addition to the official USA Olympic Team logos the jacket is covered with sponsorship logos like Chevy trucking, Sprint, and so on…. I think judges at the Aspen parade actually thought I was sponsored. What if I was sponsored by Chevy trucking?" Me: "Your rate of speed?" Nathan: "The rate is determined by the law that I really can't be in a hurry when I've got the wheel with me. Must always stop to talk, look, listen … " Kinda slow? "Yes." The deliberateness with which you, say, pull the wheel over a curb, there is a utilitarian sheikness to what you do? "Yes." That is to say, 'essay style'? A gestures-based-on-efficacy aesthetic? "Attention to every move, detail, gesture. … Give attention to the way you open the door, hold your pen, slice your carrots … " [That's the goal.]

Nathan has a few lines. He's factual. People ask him what he's doing and he doesn't give it up all at once: "I'm walking my wheel." Why the helmet? "Well, obviously I don't need it:
I'm goin' pretty slow." No, seriously. "Well, it just seems like helmets go with a lot of things that have wheels—skateboards, bikes, motorcycles … " This content deepens, per individual; and there's disclosure on both sides.

And there are lines on both sides:

"Ya know that's been invented already?"

"Yabba, dabba, doo!"

"You get three more of those and you'll be in business."

"Did you lose a bet?"

"Is this your penance?"

"What are you selling?"

"I have to ask … So, what's the story?"

"Hey man, I don't know what you're on but I want some."

"Nice dog."

"Bet you don't have to pick up after it, eh?"

"Nice wheel."

"Nathan. Do you want a girlfriend? Do you want to get married? The helmet is not helping." [End of a long conversation with two NYC cops who had seen me a week earlier.]

"This is not enough. You need to take this to overseas. Not Europe, I'm talking about the Far East."
[After a lecture to third graders in Colorado:] "What do you say when someone yells, 'Hey stupid, nerdy, wheel guy!'?"

"Hey you stupid mother f—!" [I turned around and waved to the teenage boys.]

Additional 'sociological' notes on reception:

"Curious groups traveling together will send over a delegate to speak with me, ask questions and then report back to the group."

"Women (young and attractive) will talk to me, admire my wheel, orange helmet, etc., if they are with their boyfriends—but not if they are with other women."

"Black people have a better sense of humor about it than white people."

"The people who seem most upset by my presence and activity are those guys that fit my demographic: 20 to 30 year-old white men [though professional-types]."

Pre-Performance Theater: Whatever anyone was doing and thinking just before running into the piece. [It's right in the middle of life.] Varies per individual.

Post-Performance Theater: Ditto.

[There have been a few different situations: There was a television interview in Aspen, wrapping Where's Your Wheel? in the signifying gravity of television—also sure to vary per individual. And with respect to parades, Nathan notes: "Parades disallow touching, discourage conversations. It's more about looking/leering/cheering, group or individual speculation."]
Material Technologies: The (homemade) wheel, the rope, the helmet; Nathan's street clothes; oftentimes a knapsack.

*   *   *

There is other interactive, street-based performance art—David Hammons (selling snowballs on the sidewalk in a blizzard), various moments out of Claes Oldenburg, the Situationists, etc. Where's Your Wheel? is a distinct flavor. The work has great integrity, flowing from Nathan's wise, nuanced sincerity; but it builds on an established genre. Yet nearly all people who encounter Where's Your Wheel? seem to find it a 'novel' experience. A very few ["absolutely less than 1%"] say: 'Oh. Performance art, eh?' More ask what Nathan's selling or what fraternity he's pledging.

The work is extremely effective in broadening and diversifying an 'audience'—especially per unit cost! Whether or not and how it 'deepens' any audient's participation is an open question. One provisional response is that work of this type is (odd and) rare enough in our culture that its very presence, assuming it is soulful, constitutes a deep and provocative gesture. [Also, certain people go nuts for the project.]

As will become abundantly clear, I believe Where's Your Wheel? is an example of well-aimed and profound political speech, concerned with proposing alternative culture and society—alternative, that is, to the essentially hostile culture and society reproduced by late capitalism.
Figure 5. Nathan Lynch performing Where’s Your Wheel? in NYC no. 2
Chapter 2

Participation 1: Participation and the Social

Every power to exert symbolic violence, i.e., every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations.

—Pierre Bourdieu

According to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, one of the key ways in which the dominant class reproduces its power is through the naturalization of (arbitrary) standards of cultural 'giftedness'. It creates and maintains institutions (e.g., educational) that reward mastery of styles and modes of discourse and presentation that its children already possess. These might include, for example, particular vocabularies, dialect variants, musical skills, codes of etiquette; a forthright way of interacting with adults, embodied confidence, 'charisma'. Early rewards boost engagement; success breeds success; and a stratified educational system invests in its charges with prejudice, before delivering them to their proper places. These social and cultural phenomena have violent political and economic consequences—as they work to guarantee that those who have the least power and capital stay put. What makes the systemic application of "symbolic violence" especially effective is precisely that the arbitrariness of the cultural definition of giftedness is invisible: class

16. Differences in what might be thought to constitute 'charisma' in the U.S. today versus in France circa 1977 will be discussed below.
warfare is misidentified as meritocracy. And, more especially, *everyone* participates in reproducing the system.

Bourdieu's theoretical mechanism of social reproduction is the *habitus*. It is, as well, the engine of his subjects' social practice in general. A concept he worked with and defined for forty years, two of many definitions provided by Bourdieu follow.

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations …

A system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, thanks to analogical transfers of schemes permitting the solution of similarly shaped problems.

Bourdieu's habitus is learned from infancy—at first from parents, who transfer their own habitus to their children, as well as from material conditions. Exposure to various types of material conditions becomes familiarity with same becomes comfort with same becomes manifest comfort with same. In the context of secondary education, these embodied 'dispositions' and other dispositions and skills (described above) are further reinforced,

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children are 'ordinated' by educators unconscious of the role they play in reproduction. Bourdieu describes a basic three-class structure [bourgeoisie, petite bourgeoisie and working class] wherein the bourgeoisie discover they are great at everything; the petite bourgeoisie aspire to the tastes and manners of the bourgeoisie but (perhaps a little comically) never quite get there; and the working class quickly realize they are doomed to failure (per these metrics), give up and drop out.

Bourdieu intended that habitus occupy the space between society as constituted by radical agency / free will (Sartre) and structuralist determinism (Levi-Strauss). Hence his "structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" allow an "infinite" range of possibility for creative action—within limits determined by habitus. Because the habitus governs "representation" [intra-subjectively] as well as social practice, the actual range of possibility for creative action does not present itself to any subject—even when the habitus is "accompanied by a strategic calculation tending to perform in a conscious mode the operation that the habitus performs quite differently." That is, even if you are Bourdieu, your habitus constrains the solutions to a given problem that present themselves for your consideration. [Please see below for criticism and possible integration of this notion.] Within the limits given by their habitus, individuals go about 'optimizing' their situations, seeking to maximize capital; and they are not inclined to challenge the rules of the game.

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As it is constituted (and constitutes) in part by 'tastes' and possession of codes, the habitus is strongly related to what Bourdieu calls 'cultural capital'. In short, it is the task of the educational elite to confer upon the economic and political elite those tastes and fluencies.
which mark cultural capital. As there has long been an (arbitrary, naturalized) hierarchy of cultural practices, the giftedness of the bourgeoisie in those areas helps to legitimize its dominance. According to Bourdieu, too, cultural capital can be converted into economic capital, as well as other instruments of power and prestige.

Although in the U.S. today 'cultural capital' does not perhaps map to a single, stable high low class scale, even fractured it informs determinations as to which areas of culture a particular individual feels comfortable participating in. If we accept the premise that only a certain type of art—a subset of modernist high art—even offers to receivers a statement of, a window into, their alienated status, and we are convinced of the [r]evolutionary necessity of this art, then we might concern ourselves, as creative agencies, with the sociological mechanisms by which the reception of such art is constrained. If the habitus produces an action that keeps certain individuals from certain types of aesthetic experience, our task is to develop transmission strategies that overcome these self-imposed (or self-policed) limitations. If we do not accept that premise, we still have to deal with the fact (if we are concerned with leading the 'examined life' with respect to this social dimension of art-making) that any art we make, that is transmitted through channels whose class-location in social space is understood, will be experienced only by individuals whose habitus allows them there.

24. I do not recommend we accept that premise, by the way.
Interlude: The Gates

Some thoughts and questions inspired by Christo and Jeanne-Claude's "The Gates." I mostly favor the work; naturally it's not the last word in art. I don't think there is any aspect of the work more beautiful than the way in which its transmission was composed. In part, this is an open letter to those who criticized "The Gates" on the grounds that the color of the gates might have been more effective elsewise, their shape might have been more compelling elsewise, the fabric was nothing to write home about, what they did with line was nothing to write home about, they would have been nothing without Central Park, they were kitschy, they were fluff, they were a sham and a ruse, they were about the self-aggrandizement of the artists, they served too well the interests of vendors in Central Park, they served the interests of [Republican] Mayor Bloomberg well enough to annihilate the populist or neo-Marxist stance of the work, they fold into late capitalism in a way not significantly different from Thomas Kincaid's paintings, Christo and Jeanne-Claude were Pollyannaish or manipulative or elusive in explaining the work.

[Preliminaries.] If you an art critic then "The Gates" is not addressed, is not signed, sealed, delivered to you. Can you imagine a work of art that is not addressed to you? Seriously: can you?

No doubt Christo and Jeanne-Claude are attached to the material, to the physical body of "The Gates." Yet this is a work where 'the art' is super consciously designed to be located not in objects, but rather in the experience of objects by humans. Or better, in the experience of a total environment activated by the objects. [By the way, that any critic would critique the work without going there is arrogant and awfully dumb.] Some have suggested that, because 'the art' was pretty center-less, enjoyment of the work might correspond to enjoyment of self more closely than in other art situations -- in which there may be more distraction, more markers of refinement, more opportunity to tell oneself how erudite one is, &c. Or I am suggesting that now.

If true, isn't it a lot that children especially enjoyed "The Gates"?

I found that "The Gates" aestheticized and 'made [a little extra] special': walking, people watching, looking up, the wind, smiling. That's a lot. Isn't that a lot? That's a lot.
Joy sustains humans. It is good when joy is distributed without discrimination, not as a function of humans' sociodemographic characteristics, not as a function of our educational or economic status.

It is emphatically and outrageously an act of political 'speech' to design something that distributes joy without discrimination, not as a function of humans' sociodemographic characteristics, not as a function of our educational or economic status.

Some things more critique as they do. "The Gates" more critiques as it does [and is].

If the language [of words] Christo and Jeanne-Claude provided along with "The Gates," repeated continuously by the 'gatekeepers' cruising the park -- namely that the work "doesn't mean anything," and is "free for everyone to enjoy" -- were any more complicated, it would dilute the political [social, spiritual], um, MEANING that flows out from the work. [And if it were uppity or whiny or in any way 'difficult', then critics could really dig into them for French-ness, &c.]

For let's say you want to propose a way of being that is very different from whatever late capitalism selects for. Let's say you would propose the idea that humanity could use its energy and resources toward creative expressions of its most compassionate, generous self. And even that walking among one's fellows is precious and should be considered as such. And even that wonder is reasonable. And even that joy is. [And that these things require no consumption.]

Just model it, then -- with a minimum of distraction. Don't talk about it. Talk is cheap. [This is why Zen masters hit people over the head with sticks: efficacy.]

How profoundly unsurprising to argue that everything -- and especially everything's mere representation in the media! -- decays and is assumed into the body of late capitalism. And funny grounds for a critique rendered from the same moving train. Woe the reflexive cynicism under which many of "The Gates" critics swiftly linked it to market and commodity and spectacle! Your reading could have more to do with your own [socialized] interpretive imperatives than the input. That is: check your own grid, Jethro.

Of course we are here, now, in the society of the spectacle; but I reckon Christo and Jeanne-Claude did everything possible to transcend-not-refuse it, to slip out of the dialectics of it.

Does the fact of Dada ninety-plus years ago diminish "The Gates" import? What if you've never heard of Dada? Happenings? The Situationists? [Again, this work is for whom?]
I would argue that the [physical] material of "The Gates" and its transmission are indivisible. I want to suggest consideration of some of the domains of "The Gates" transmission: its space, sponsorship, performance agencies, performance protocols, the theaters of its pre- and post-performance, and the material technologies used to present it. I presume these domains constitute, separately and as a network, a symbolic language capable of projecting meaning to humans who experience the work. [I also presume 'meaning' is constituted variously per human; not to mention the fact that temporal dynamics affect humans intra-humanly per blood sugar, just kissed my baby, &c. I know I'm recommending a pretty imprecise science. At the same time, if we can agree that sunshine is yummy maybe we can continue.] Except for the last ['material technologies'], I'll leave it to you to determine what 'meaning[s]' might be projected.

Space: A free and public park  
Sponsorship: Two humans -- very pointedly not connected to private corporations  
Performance agencies: Friendly people, crazy people, people on cell phones; you  
Performance protocols: Whatever  
The theaters of its pre- and post-performance: Whatever -- in my case, a cab ride from a Rasta and at the Plaza a piss  

[Pause. If you like, take a moment and compare these domains to those of another art event you experienced recently. More or less non-discriminatory second-order semiotics? More or less reinforcement of hegemonic modes and thought-forms?]  

Material technologies: Oh, you know...  

If the visual language of the gates [qua the gates] were more stylized, refined, exotic, or even concise, how would that affect the whole 'interpenetration of art and life' thing? That is [art critics], do you imagine there is a threshold beyond which aestheticizing the gates further would diminish their, let's say, friendliness? Did Christo and Jeanne-Claude radically miscalculate that threshold? If you wanted to propose an alternative to conventional relationships between the [joyful, liberating, Human] aesthetic experience of art and 'artifact', would you make the material mechanisms of that proposition wicked fine and exquisite? Would you load them up with anything that had the slightest chance of referring to elite art, the art of high culture -- given what these mean at this moment?  

If you said "yes," you may be a suckier artist than Christo and Jeanne-Claude.  

The gates [sic] are paint -- they are not the painting. If you like, you can complain that paint smells, is flammable and gets all over stuff; but maybe art criticism is not for you.
I wonder if it is a flaw that "The Gates" is so massive in scope, so involved with respect to human and material resources, that some humans might not imagine they, anyone, everyone can propose new systems, too. I hope not.

Anyway, I remember "The Gates" like a kiss. Can we agree that some kisses do not decay, and are not assumed into the body of late capitalism? Can we agree to dedicate our lives to a logic superior to the logic of late capitalism? Can we not only talk and write and make art about it, but do the dishes, too? I believe God wants us to do the dishes, just shut the ____ up and do the dishes.

End Interlude

Bourdieu's corpus is large and his ideas and their articulations are very complex. Still, I hope I have made a sufficiently faithful presentation of his 'habitus' and 'cultural capital' to describe now very briefly a few persistent themes in the critical response to Bourdieu's work. This will allow a purposeful adaptation of these concepts going forward.

First, critics find that Bourdieu's theory and its application tend to backslide into an essentially pure objectivism (structuralism). Though he explicitly claims habitus as the key to bringing subjectivist and objectivist models into harmony, its 'structured' aspect seems far weightier than its 'structuring' aspect. Bourdieu's subjects are often unconscious and unwitting social actors; and, again, in all cases (i.e., even when fully conscious, engaging the habitus consciously), the menu of possible actions is given by the habitus. They can never "invent a purely individualistic and asocial act."25 Instead, they exhibit an "amor

What Bourdieu calls a 'theory of practice', in which social rules and (thus) structures are perpetually negotiated and renegotiated by 'virtuosic' actors, begins to look paler and paler as the degree to which subjects' action is radically bounded becomes clear. Bourdieu directs such critics to the application rather than the theory of habitus; he presents himself as misunderstood (and no doubt he is). Nevertheless, here is an example of what he is willing to concede in this particular debate:

In contrast to the personalist denial which refuses scientific objectification and can only construct a fantasized person, sociological analysis, particularly when it places itself in the anthropological tradition of exploration of forms of classification, makes a self-reappropriation possible, by objectifying the objectivity that runs throughout the supposed site of subjectivity, such as the social categories of thought, perception and appreciation which are the unthought principle of all representation of the 'objective' world. By forcing one to discover externality at the heart of internality, banality in the illusion of rarity, the common in the pursuit of the unique, sociology does more than denounce all the impostures of egoistic narcissism; it offers perhaps the only means of contributing, if only through awareness of determinations, to the construction, otherwise abandoned to the forces of the world, of something like a subject.

[I.e., quite a lot: intellectuals get to 'reappropriate' a self whose crowning achievement is awareness of how it is (objectively) structured.]

A comparison of Bourdieu's worldview with that of the Frankfurt School finds that the former leaves less hope of human agency in positive social change. In Adorno's 'culture industry', commodity's domination over all other organizing forms obscures class (differences); whereas Bourdieu's model of culture as a play of symbols (cultural capital)

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26. A "love of fate." Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction, p. 244. [NEED]
27. Especially from a heroic, revolutionary standpoint. See Outline of a Theory of Practice & Logic.
29. Imagine being criticized that you are more pessimistic than Adorno about prospects for the redemption of human society.
produces a *misrecognition* of class—again, by legitimizing a hierarchy with the elites' native modes on top. Yet the Frankfurt School has enough Hegel and Marx running though its thought to posit a natural, perhaps 'spiritual', freedom-loving force in humankind (latent or not). [And this is what I mean when I ask, "Can we agree that some kisses do not decay, and are not assumed into the body of late capitalism?"]

Occasionally, the 'Bourdieu is strictly objectivist' argument is taken too far: "If the habitus were determined by objective conditions, ensuring appropriate action for the social position in which any individual was situated, and the habitus were unconsciously internalized dispositions and categories, then social change would be impossible. Individuals would act according to the objective structural conditions in which they found themselves, and they would consequently simply reproduce those objective conditions by repeating the same practices [italics mine]." This argument appears to reduce such an infinitely polyvalent, profoundly open system as 'humanity' to a closed mathematical model. If, for example, habitus is given in part by material conditions surrounding subjects, one can imagine social change based on whether or not it rains today. Or, less *deus ex machina*-esque: subjects are seen to be (with the help of their habitus) 'virtuosic' actors in social interaction; but are they *flawless, perfect* actors? That is, might not an individual's habitus—indeed, a *class's* habitus—evolve based on a *mis*reading or a *mis*-action that enjoys successful results? Or what about a mentor's effect on a particular kid? Or a kid's effect on a particular mentor? More generally, the capability of *noise* to modify habitus is full of possibility.

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Finally, Bourdieu's model seems to lag behind the present state of affairs in the U.S. for several reasons. For one, habitus (and this is true in France, too—see *Distinction*) is better at describing subjects' relationships to cultural phenomena than to material commodities. In short, cultural tastes tend to differ (per class) by *kind*; whereas various classes tend to consume the same material commodities—but the wealthy can afford them in greater *quantity*.\(^3\) America, too, is a less 'formally closed' society than France, and in particular there are more avenues to quality education.\(^3\) America is more multicultural and otherwise heterogeneous than France. As well, to the extent Bourdieu's model competes with *uber*-reification in providing consciousness of class structure, no culture would give greater advantage to the latter than the U.S. Relatedly, the ideation [better: *vision*] of success American media projects is more superficial, more materialistic, less intellectual and just plain trashier [think Trump] than anyone else's. In Bourdieu's model, there is a reciprocal action between the economic / political elite and the educational /cultural elite, each conferring status and privilege upon the other; as the U.S. represents the vanguard of unashamed materialism, one can imagine the educational / cultural elite might be outliving its use. [These elite are attacked, at least rhetorically, by our President, for example.]

It is possible to put a positive spin on several of these national differences—'less classist because more multicultural', for example. But most are related to the domination, increasing as a function of time, of the commodity form over other forms that might be used to interpret experience in our (American) culture. The notion of 'cultural omnivorousness', so

\(^3\) Gartman, "Critique," 426.
\(^3\) DiMaggio, "Bourdieu," 1471.
called by American sociologist Richard Peterson, similarly encodes both our promise and downfall.

This term describes the trend toward increased (and probably increasing) diversification of tastes for cultural 'products' found among Americans. Peterson, Simkus and Kern's research is based on a pair of studies [1982 and 1992] conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census for the National Endowment for the Arts measuring tastes in the arts—and music in particular—in the context of sociodemographic factors such as age, race, income and level of education. Their analysis breaks musical genres into 'highbrow' [classical and opera], 'middlebrow' [mood/easy-listening, Broadway musicals, and big band] and 'lowbrow' [country, bluegrass, gospel, rock and blues]; and breaks subjects into highbrow [likes both classical and opera, and likes one of those two genres 'best'] and 'others'.

[Because of its complex cultural status in the U.S., the authors leave out jazz altogether! Interested readers can see Scott DeVeaux's Jazz in America: Who's Listening, for participation data and analysis of the unique position of jazz in American culture.]

While all Americans grew to 'like' more genres over this decade, elites' tastes diversified more quickly. The 'snob', operationally defined as a person who likes classical music and/or opera and eschews all other genres, has all but disappeared from American culture—replaced by the cultural 'omnivore'. This finding makes great intuitive sense to me.

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34. While it would be difficult to argue the 'highbrow' status of 'classical' music and opera, the middlebrow—lowbrow delineation (or hierarchy) seems to me ever less probable as a function of time [i.e., 'now']. It is not obvious, for example, that a taste for 'easy-listening' would correspond more closely to a higher class subject than a taste for blues.
(and other academics, I imagine)—having witnessed the street credibility and chic claimed (tacitly and not) by academics interested in, influenced by and working with popular and folk forms. Again: all Americans are becoming more culturally omnivorous; elites are becoming more omnivorous faster. In "Classification in Art," sociologist Paul DiMaggio presents a case for why this might be. Those of us who have inherited and/or willfully cultivate a naïve ideal of the (visionary, for example) function of art will predictably find his theory a little depressing: artworks' "intended meanings may be sociologically less important than the ways in which they signify group affiliation." [In the following discussion, 'the arts' is used in a broad sense—to include popular forms and mass means (television, film) of transmission.]

For DiMaggio, participation in the arts is (in part) a mechanism by which identity is projected. Participation in the arts constitutes (in part) subjects' and social groups' marking of territory in social space. [DiMaggio further sees 'artistic classification systems' ['ACS']—types thereof—as representing, reproducing and/or enforcing arguments regarding (among other things) which of those territories are more valuable. So, for example, an 'ACS' that conceives a hierarchy of genres (as opposed perhaps to a level, multicultural diversity) may

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35. As you might expect, highbrows remain more likely than others to visit art galleries, attend a play or ballet, etc., as well; and "on average, have about two years more education, earn about five thousand more annual family income, are about 10 years older, and are more likely to be female than others in the sample." Richard A. Peterson and Roger M. Kern, "Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore," American Sociological Review, Vol. 61, Issue 5 (Oct., 1996): 901.

36. Paul DiMaggio, "Classification in Art," American Sociological Review, Vol. 52, Issue 4 (Aug., 1987), 440-455. Over the next two pages I will recapitulate a portion of DiMaggio's article that is particularly relevant to this discussion—the context he establishes by way of introduction. [And I will ignore most of the pithy invention built upon it.]

reflect a hegemonically oriented society. As 'consumption' of art is typically less visible than consumption of material commodities (such as clothing and cars), it is through conversation that people identify themselves to one another, establish co-membership in groups and reap social (including material) rewards as a result. These codes are of course used to exclude as well.

Taste, then, is a form of ritual identification and a means of constructing social relations (and of knowing what relationships need not be constructed). It helps to establish networks of trusting relations that facilitate group mobilization and the attainment of such social rewards as desirable spouses and prestigious jobs. Symbols (goods or tastes) become increasingly important to the organization of social life as the division of labor and the number of human contacts increases. Subjects of conversation supplant objects of display as bases of social evaluation. This process is accompanied by the rise of meritocratic ideology and the substitution of "cultural capital" for direct inheritance in the mobility strategies of the upper middle class (Bourdieu 1977).

DiMaggio makes a series of propositions—both anticipating 'cultural omnivorousness' and placing it in a causal relation to status and economic mobility: "Persons with wide-ranging networks develop "tastes" for the widest variety of cultural forms ... The number of genres that a person consumes is a function of his or her socioeconomic status." [Note that 'tastes' is in quotes—reflecting some cynicism about the late capitalist citizen's confused motivations, I think.] Following Max Weber, social success rests upon the ability to manipulate cultural symbols. Because of the complexity of contemporary social life, and the wide diversity of persons and cultures with whom many of us interact, successful social

38. "Where genres are ordered by prestige, persons who have invested in information about prestigious styles have more at stake in the preservation of the cultural classification system." DiMaggio, "Classification," 449.
39. Ibid., 442-3.
40. Ibid., 443.
41. Ibid., 444. Propositions 3 and 4; [italics in the original].
actors "culture-switch," "deploy[ing]" a variety of codes "selectively" per context. So, for example:

An upper-working-class father with a white-collar wife must know about sports and rock music at work, discuss politics and natural foods with his wife's friends, and instill an admiration of Brahms and Picasso in his daughter or son.\textsuperscript{42}

What I want to take from this discussion is the forest for the trees. The context DiMaggio sets reveals (if it does not presume) the triumph of exchange value over use value lamented by Adorno and Horkheimer in \textit{Dialectic of Enlightenment}. Cultural omnivorousness certainly has positive aspects—exposure through proliferation of media (old and new) to new cultures and their aesthetic expressions; the possibility of new empathic engagement with same; the possibility of discovering a new taste (and not just a new 'taste'). At the same time, however, participation in and experience of art becomes wickedly \textit{transactional}: we acquire its codes in order to jockey for status and material gain. This function is independent of art's 'truth content' [Adorno] or "intended meanings" [DiMaggio, above]—\textit{rather unrelated to aesthetic experience}. Aesthetic experience suffers the force of reification, made a \textit{thing} like other \textit{things}, a thing yielding cultural capital that can be converted to economic capital.\textsuperscript{43}

Again, this is not \textit{all} art is in our society—and it is perhaps especially not all art is to intellectuals-on-guard-against-reification. But it is \textit{part} of what art is in our society, a

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 445.

\textsuperscript{43} I cannot help thinking these conclusions are a little insane. We're asked why we went to a cultural event. Well, what's \textit{namable}? Doesn't 'for an aesthetic experience' sound effeminate? Who's going to pick that one? Or: I don't know why I do \textit{anything}. And it is of course fully insane to divorce the 'social' from 'aesthetic experience'. Maybe that breach is of our time and \textit{temporary}; I hope so. Please see 'This Literature' Interlude below.
naturalized 'understanding' ever more dominant, as media, 'determining our situation',
become ever more expert at reinforcing commodity form. If the reader will allow that
*genre* is linked in our psyche to (ultra-dominant) commodity form as well as to class, [and
if she will allow that commodity form is even more the adversary than the elite,] then it is
precisely genre that the [r]evolutionary artist might want to attack. It is genre that TNs
articulate. And this is true for every kind of art you can imagine—no less true for raves,
outdoor reggae festivals or downtown art.

Interlude: Grainy Photos

Was it last year I was in Manhattan at a musical performance by a couple friends. The
performance was in a downtown space. There were creaky, cigarette-burned, divot-ridden
and otherwise fucked up hardwood floors. The ceilings were pretty and, as is typical, there
were lots of pipes and ducts. The ceilings, the pipes and the ducts were painted black. The
regular walls and the walls in the halls were painted white to make a sort of gallery. On the
walls in the halls were grainy, contrast-y black and white photos. They were sort of V.U.-
esque photos of (maybe) junkies on, like, institutional, (once) blue-and-white-striped twin
mattresses, on the floor; down and out conditions. I recall they were mounted and framed
very well. Everybody was like me or like the people we'll be once we've been doing this till
we're 60; then (when we're 60) the other people who are like us or who will be like us will
say 'hi', &c. Maybe we'll have been a failure at love or maybe we won't. [Ah humanity!]
Maybe we'll henna our hair or maybe we won't. Maybe we'll be attracted to t-shirts that

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44. The phrase is Friedrich Kittler's.
45. DBR, for example?
express off-beat wisdom, &c. I said 'hi' to David Behrman, whom I know a little from my
time at Mills. The sound system was okay. The music was good if not especially inventive.
[Mostly carbohydrates.] I enjoyed seeing my friends. I had a good time in there. I was the
right person to be in there. I had the right habitus. I understood how to behave. Whatever
insecurities flashed through my emotional membranes I dispatched (provisionally,
apparently) with interior commentaries such as this one.

OR [from 'train_thought']:

other TNs support the authenticity—the elite rarefaction, ritual gravitas, hipness, &c.—of
the 'content'. I think of these elements as applying gain to the signal. For example, at a
concert I attended in Manhattan last year that was a downtown-y sort of thing in a gallery
space, black and white photographs of the cast of a Velvet Underground record on the wall
supported the authenticity of the [NYC-hip] music performed. This TN prefers to add these
images to the performance space—prefers them to a more austere choice [as stark walls]
that might more invite the receiver to apprehend the 'sounds themselves'.

authentic TNs, with their suites of locating cues, constitute 'genre' at the level of
transmission.

[we could think of the 'rarefied' as a species of the 'authentic' if we like—one that mostly
expresses [Modernist] values, propounding the autonomous nature of art. At the same time,
the rarefied is or can be simply a practical TN, invented anew per Occam's Razor as a
prerequisite of some imagined art experience.] [i.e., a rarefied TN often makes good sense.]

authentic TNs are the expected TNs. Transmitting one's art through a conventional TN is a
decision not to engage the transmission as a domain to 'make special' [in which to act
artfully]. Or it is a decision to add fairly well understood hues to one's art, to the read of
one's art. Hues of social positioning.

Conventional TNs reinforce the larger social forms that sustain them. Employing
conventional TNs reinforces the larger social forms that sustain them. [The difference
between those two statements has to do with responsibility.] Consequently, if an artist
would critique those social forms yet employs conventional TNs, then he or she is more or
less out of phase with his or her ideals. If a particular work would critique those social
forms yet employs conventional TNs, then it is more or less out of phase with its
transmission. [this is why i would say that the work of Brün and Wolff, for example, is diminished—literally *attenuated*—by its TNs. 'Cage Serves Imperialism.‘]

End Interlude

Composed TNs can kick genre up and down the street—and they do.

Another issue relevant to our discussion is the way participation in the arts in conceived and articulated by social scientists associated with or embedded in government, foundations and other institutions. Research by social scientists such as Kevin F. McCarthy and Maria-Rosario Jackson tends to be geared toward producing good strategic and tactical advice for arts institutions and contributing to the design of sound policy (for consideration by funders)—all in the service of increased arts participation. It will be useful to sketch a few key concepts and themes found in this literature before positioning composed transmission in the context it proposes.

Interlude: Of 'This Literature'

It's my impression that these three studies⁴⁶ are representative of the current language, attitudes and ideas of foundations, arts organizations and institutions, and agencies of government concerned with studying (and enhancing) participation in the arts and culture.

As was uniformly the case here, foundations (such as the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest

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Funds) commission such studies from research organizations staffed with academics (such as the RAND Corporation), in order to gain direction as to how they might distribute their money most 'impactfully'.

I have a friend with an interest in foundation philanthropy (among many other things, thankfully). In this connection he studies, for instance, the various ways in which art-makers and institutions have sought to tie participation in the arts to everything from economic development in communities to being 'better at math'. Here's a question: Does music participation in secondary school make you better at math? Controlling for parents' income and level of education, etc.? We have a hunch maybe not so much. But who made being good at math the index of anything? We need to invert this. Why not ask instead whether a strict hugging meditation regimen makes you better at listening to Mozart? As usual, the Devil is in the frame.

[i.e., why not things as ends in themselves. the soul is the ground upon which the body is built. why justify aesthetic exaltation—union with the divine / revelation of self / radical identity with fellows / radical identity with Nature catalyzed by aesthetic experience—with dumb, base metrics whose presence in our discussion legitimizes the Organization Man?]

To my friend's way of thinking, the need to justify participation in the arts by effects in other arenas rose with Modernism. As art-makers' languages became more and more

private, audiences became unable to come along for the ride. Or rather we/they became, perhaps, unwilling: for some art [as Picasso's? Stravinsky's?] was sufficiently compelling that we/they agreed to move, stretch, grow. In any case, Picasso's rapport with 'the public' is rare. A more typical response is confusion and a[n]ti]pathy—to abstraction, art about art, art made with dung, etc.

When the kabooms! and sublimities of aesthetic overtures find no purchase in philanthropists, philanthropists look for other metrics and means by which to justify philanthropy (and art). There's an outlet for this impulse in social service-oriented artists and institutions: an art of generosity, an art that cares. A practice of art that seeks to communicate (in something like a vernacular) and build communities is a sensible response to the communication / efficacy vacuum created by various species of Modernist navel-gazing. Building momentum through the 1960's (with plenty of antecedents), there were plenty of artists proposing projects that were in some way clearly ('materially') helpful.

On the other side, justifying the arts as a gateway activity to keen accounting skills is a rear-guard action, seeking to protect our precious babe from technocratic nincompoops—but a symptom of the same cause: too-hermetic, too-high art.

Nothing wrong with linking art and social utility [except, again, classical music doesn't make you better at math]; but if society is safer when criminals don't know who's armed, maybe society is also safer when Newfoundland puppies don't know who's been swept up in the flow of a badass percussion piece and delivered over the threshold of their cosmic
soul. [That is, maybe we/they understand 'social utility' to include communion with one's soul mediated by art.]

End Interlude

'Increased' participation is partitioned into three distinct types: particular strategies and tactics aim to diversify, broaden or deepen participation. 'Diversification' refers to recruiting individuals who are not typically inclined to participate in a given cultural experience—typically because of their membership in a population reluctant to do so. [By the way, 'participation' may describe a relation as passive as an individual's standing in the street as a polka band walks by—or even watching a polka band on television.] 'Broadening' refers to recruiting a greater number of individuals from a population that does already and in general is inclined to participate in a given cultural experience. 'Deepening' refers to increasing the intensity of participation of those already involved—producing high frequency of attendance, volunteerism or financial patronage.49

[Barbara White: "Again, what if we turn this around: 'Opera fans, skip Butterfly because you really need to see American Idol.'" OK! Joe Caterini: "Yes. It is essential that you watch and understand American Idol if you want to understand our musical culture."]

This literature affirms a variant of the cultural omnivorousness hypothesis. For example:

49. This tripartition is rather standard; see, for example, "New Framework," 33-4.
The people who participate in both the classical and popular types of arts and culture—who are also most likely to participate in multiple forms of arts and culture—attend more events, on average, than those who stick to either the conventionally defined categories or the popular versions of arts and culture, and they attend more events than those who participate in only one or two forms of art. … [T]he people who participate most frequently also participate in the most varied ways. …

The substantial overlap of audiences—both across art forms and within forms by style or type of arts and culture—coincides with greater socioeconomic diversity in arts and cultural participation than has been reported in the past. A prevalent perception among arts and cultural providers and supporters has been that participation in classical or conventionally defined arts and culture and popular styles or types divides sharply along economic and social lines. Analysis of the CPCP data shows that while there is an economic divide between people who attend only the conventionally defined or classical types and those who attend only the popular types, most participants attend both, and this audience in the middle is socioeconomically diverse. This finding argues for a more nuanced view of the social complexion of potential audiences than has been common.50

Similarly—affirming now the participation-as-marker-of-social-identity motif—respondents consistently cite (by a roughly two to one margin) "getting together with" or "supporting family and friends" over "experience quality art" as their primary reason for participating in arts and cultural events.

Participation in the arts has traditionally been linked to income and education. Interestingly, income disappears as a factor when education is controlled for. Also, positive effects of early socialization [music and art lessons, contact with the arts as a child] hold when level of education is controlled for.51 [That is, if you want a society of people disposed to enjoy a lifelong relationship with the arts, provide art-making and -enjoying opportunities for them when they are young, and generally allow them access to education.] The most important

predictor of an individual's level of (arts) participation is membership in a religious or any organization—but this finding is rests on a wide definition of 'art' to include music in church; and as well it may speak to the single most critical factor in participation—social motivation.\textsuperscript{52}

A wide definition of art demonstrates the progressive, multicultural, non-elitist attitude that is the norm in this literature. It considers landscaping and decorative gardening, culinary arts, "some graffiti" and low riders to be 'art'.\textsuperscript{53} The definition of participation venues is expanded to include parks, churches and living rooms (with their television sets). The "unincorporated arts" are added to the traditionally conceived for-profit and not-for-profit modes of (and avenues to) participation.\textsuperscript{54} Given these more relaxed criteria for defining 'arts' and 'participation', it is not surprising that more people participate in the arts in community-focused rather than 'canon-focused' situations.\textsuperscript{55}

Interlude: A Delicious Quotation of Robert Irwin

Of course, what's going on in such situations is precisely an artistic activity. A lot of art critics, especially New York \textit{Artforum} types, have a lot of trouble seeing the validity of such a contention. I once had a run-in with one of them about this—this was years later, in the middle of the Ferus period….

Anyway, so I looked in the paper, and I found this ad of a guy who was selling a hot rod and a motorcycle. And I took the critic out to this place. It was really fortunate, because it was exactly what I wanted. We arrived at this place in the Valley, in the middle of nowhere, and here's this kid: he's selling a hot rod and he's got another he's working on. He's selling a '32 coupe, and he's got a '29 roadster in the garage. The '32 he was getting rid

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{52} "Reggae," 47.
\bibitem{53} "Culture Counts," 17-28.
\bibitem{55} See, for example, "Reggae," 57.
\end{thebibliography}
of was an absolute cherry. But what was more interesting, and which I was able to show
this critic, was that here was this '29, absolutely dismantled, I mean, completely apart, and
the kid was making decisions about the frame, whether or not he was going to cad plate
certain bolts or whether he was going to buff grind them, or whether he was just going to
leave them raw as they were. He was insulating and soundproofing the doors, all kinds of
things that no one would ever know or see unless they were truly a sophisticate in the area.
But, I mean, real aesthetic decisions, truly aesthetic decisions. Here was a fifteen-year-old
kid who wouldn't know art from schmart, but you couldn't talk about a more real aesthetic
activity than what he was doing, how he was carefully weighing: what was the attitude of
this whole thing? What exactly? How should it look? What was the relationship in terms of
its machinery, its social bearing, everything? I mean, all these things were being weighed in
terms of the aesthetics of how the thing should look. It was a perfect example.

The critic simply denied it. Simply denied it: not important, unreal, untrue, doesn't
happen, doesn't exist. See, he comes from a world in New York where the automobile…. I
mean, automobiles are "What? Automobile? Nothing." Right? I mean, no awareness, no
sensitivity, no involvement. So he simply denied it: "It doesn't exist." Like that: "Not an
issue." Which we argued about a little on the way back over the Sepulveda pass.

I said, "How can you deny it? You may not be interested, but how can you deny it? I
mean, there it is, full blown, right in front of you, and it's obviously a folk art!"

"Anyway, he, "No, no."

So I finally just stopped the car and made him get out. I just flat left him there by the
road, man, and just drove off. Said, "See you later, Max."  

End Interlude

I want to make a few simple points about this [RAND, etc.] literature with respect to
composed transmission.

First, their hearts are surely in the right place: the ultimate object of these reports is
increased participation in the arts by all individuals and populations. And why? Because:

It may contribute, directly or indirectly, to

• supporting civic participation and social capital;

56. Lawrence Weschler, Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees (Berkeley, Los Angeles
• catalyzing economic development;
• improving the built environment;
• promoting stewardship of place;
• augmenting public safety;
• preserving cultural heritage;
• bridging cultural/ethnic/racial boundaries;
• transmitting cultural values and history; and
• creating group memory and group identity.  

Nothing that comes from our discussion should undermine these values or their expression in the world. [Nevertheless, notice 'more total joy' does not appear.]

However, this literature concerns itself with how to maximize [diversify, broaden and deepen] participation on the terms of the (structural) social situation as it exists now. These authors are not concerned with *rupture* or 'noise'. Hence there is much discussion of markets and marketing strategies, identifying "clear target groups" and basing "tactics on good information about these groups" in order to "increase … revenues" (among less objectionable reasons).  

Again, I do not mean to undervalue their explicitly stated noble purposes. But their sociology does admit a capitulation to late capitalist thought-forms. It is content to leave marketing, *packaging*, intact—if only because an alluring surface is conceived as a means to the nobler end of living amidst the arts.  

As well, it seems that increased participation is always seen as 'good'—though winning new participants through good 'diversification' strategies and tactics might have the look and feel of cultural imperialism, at worst containing hideous contradictions [the diabolical kind]—as when Chevron Texaco | funds a program with the Metropolitan Opera | to pipe in kids from

59. For a discussion of the debt to economic theory owed by arts participations literature, see "New Framework," 13-22.
Harlem | to learn | to appreciate | this great civilized form | while they are at the same moment complicit in the murder of Nigerian women | protesting the destruction of their environment | by Chevron Texaco's drilling practices.  

60

The presence of dominant thought-forms and models is both understandable and begging to be supplemented with (as much as is possible) outside reforms and challenges. I would argue that the policy proposed in this literature is, in Anthony Wilden's terms, akin to the [inside] counter-violence referred to in this quote:

While fundamental social change in the United States and in the world will no doubt be accompanied by a violence running counter to the violence of the established system—for in biological terms, one is EITHER alive OR dead—any possible change will be no change at all unless the pitfall of identity and opposition can be overcome.  

61

I would argue that it is important that someone not treat late capitalism awfully respectfully, and that anyone might be that someone.

Two of the studies proffer diagrammatic models for how individuals choose to participate in the arts:


Figure 3.1—Participation Model

Figure 7. RAND Participation Model, 2001

Figure 8. Reggae to Rachmaninoff Participation Model, 2002
Most of the strategies recommended by their parent studies—where they are not educational and thus implicitly longer-term—are in the end focused on influencing the attractiveness of the cultural 'products' of which individuals are to partake; or, based on these models, influencing individuals' perceptions about their ownership or right of access to same. There is an obvious relationship between these complexes of "beliefs about arts participation"—in the context of one's group or community—and habitus. The "behavioral model of participation" proposed by the RAND study, for example, "recognizes that an individual's decision to take a specific action involves a complex mix of attitudes, intentions, constraints, and behaviors, as well as feedback between past experiences and the mix of attitudes and intentions."[62] [Sounds like habitus to me.] This conception reflects the enormous influence of Bourdieu's ideas on American sociology.

It is not that social positioning / group identification / acquisition of codes as primary motivation for participating in art is entirely 'bad'. Only that: (1) it does have, clearly, a relationship to a ('bad') transactional conception of human action and interaction in the world; and (2) if there should be any art-makers who want to get something of 'universality' across—that is, ideas about the spirit that are more (forgive me) essential and metaphysically prior to an individual's condition ['self'] than his membership in a particular social group in a particular place at a particular moment (with all of the constructed, market-contrived baggage that this temporal position hauls along after it)—then the people-

sorting implications of social positioning (etc.) as primary motivation for participating in art must be addressed / challenged / deconstructed, somehow, by art-makers.

[The next sentence is very important.] The advantages of specifically 'gentle guerrilla' composed TNs with respect to the models reproduced above (and thus with respect to habitus) are: (1) composed TNs enable aesthetic experience with disregard to a person's beliefs about their right to participate in art; and (2) by that very fact—i.e., because and insofar as they announce their solidarity with all humans indiscriminately—composed TNs themselves constitute a kind of art content that some individuals might never otherwise be convinced they have a right to.

**Participation 2: Monologues Are Lonely Dialogues**

**Interlude: Composing Habitus**

Recognizing habitus in one's self, according to my experiments, can be like a practice of meditation, through which one comes to recognize the arising of (patterns of) thought and action → because of the play of (great or small) inner turbulences → because of preferences → formed by (patterns of) attraction and repulsion [→ present the moment there is 'other' → present the moment there is 'self']. In other words, I think the amount of self-knowledge and self-control required to compose one's habitus 24/7 is about on par with that required to sustain 'enlightenment'. But I have had some fun playing with habitus, enough to recommend being someone else: holding much tension in the shoulders; swaggering; taking on a downtrodden bearing; floating like a golden swan. I am worried, though, that being in
a position to play with habitus merely indicates a certain type of habitus [haute, I'm sure].
[Now there's some 'paralogical'.]

Anyway, I wish playing-with-habitus upon everyone. Dislocation of (unjust, especially) social structures is everything—détournement, Kristeva's 'incomprehensible' poetry, temporary autonomous zones: what is a habitus to do when it does not know what sort of transposition to effect (yet the phenomena it encounters are kind)? Imagine phenomena that demonstrate the arbitrariness of one's habitus with respect to one's soul. Imagine phenomena that demonstrate the arbitrariness of one's habitus with respect to one's soul.

End Interlude

All of the case studies presented in this text feature TNs that, as communicational channels, are (at least) bilateral rather than unilateral. That is, 'receivers' are invited to transmit—even during the 'performance', even in such a way as to affect (and effect) the composition of the art. Dialogue replaces monologue. Play replaces reproduction of order. As the Situationists' "Questionnaire" has it, the favored mode "aims at making situations, as opposed to passively recognizing them."63 This détournement is the antidote to, for example, Guy Debord's observation that the mediating technologies [media] selected by the spectacle are anything but 'neutral' or 'natural'; but rather commandeer all right of speech

for (administrative) power, dominating—Jean Baudrillard's 'speech without response'. Thus "[s]pectators are linked solely by their one-way relationship to the very center that keeps them isolated from each other."  

The favored TNs extend an opportunity to participate in *forming* that (objective) aesthetic experience; and as well they extend an opportunity to participate in [uniquely, per individual] locating that experience in social space—not to mention answering, more immediately, the question:

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The favored TNs enact the Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari situation in which participants can (and are encouraged to) regard "the work not as 'text' but as essentially uncoded; the practice of the 'revolutionary' schizoanalytic reader/writer will 'deteritorialize' any given representation [offering a subversion of capitalist totalities]."\(^{66}\)

Alternatively, what foolishness! Composed transmission is reactionary, there is no way it overcomes "the pitfall of identity and opposition." Funny how all these art-makers have MFAs. They diversify and broaden participation in the arts, maybe—if art this is; but what do they deepen? Do they open up any channel to anyone? Does it stay open? Or are their practices uselessly esoteric? [Or: subsequent to all this altruism, the academic jobs. Here, the *petite économie.*] The work itself, it *does* something? Fredric Jameson's statement of the problem:

> There is some agreement that the older modernism functioned against its society in ways which are variously described as critical, negative, contestatory, subversive, oppositional and the like. Can anything of the sort be affirmed about postmodernism and its social moment? We have seen that there is a way in which postmodernism replicates or reproduces-reinforces the logic of consumer capitalism; the more significant question is whether there is also a way in which it resists that logic.\(^ {67}\)

And if composed transmission might be a (radical) poeticization, a disordinating, chaotic operation upon default TNs, Julia Kristeva's *beautiful* questions:

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Finally, in the history of signifying systems and notably that of the arts, religion, and rites, there emerge, in retrospect, fragmentary phenomena which have been kept in the background or rapidly integrated into more communal signifying systems but point to the very process of significance. Magic, shamanism, esoterism, the carnival, and "incomprehensible" poetry all underscore the limits of socially useful discourse and attest to what it represses: the process that exceeds the subject and his communicative structures. But at what historical moment does social exchange tolerate or necessitate the manifestation of the signifying process in its "poetic" or "esoteric" form? Under what conditions does this "esoterism," in displacing the boundaries of socially established signifying practices, correspond to socioeconomic change, and, ultimately, even to revolution? And under what conditions does it remain a blind alley, a harmless bonus offered by a social order which uses this "esoterism" to expand, become flexible, and thrive?\footnote{68. Julia Kristeva, \textit{Revolution in Poetic Language}, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 16.}
The Barnstormers

The Barnstormers are a collective of New York/Tokyo-based artists who create large-scale collaborative paintings, films and performances. The group formed in 1999 after a pilgrimage to the rural town of Cameron, North Carolina. During the trip, twenty-five artists painted dozens of barns, tractor-trailers, shacks and farm equipment. Consequently, the tiny tobacco farming community became the unlikely Mecca for the urban collective. To this day, the Barnstormers continue to interpret and communicate the visual, cultural, and spiritual awakenings inspired by their trips to the south.

The Barnstormers continue to experiment and collaborate, both domestically and internationally, with yearly returns to Cameron to paint new murals.69

—www.b-stormers.com

The Barnstormers were conceived by Dave Ellis, a native of Cameron, North Carolina. On a trip to Europe when he was ten or 11, already a little obsessed with (still pretty nascent) hip hop, he saw graffiti for the first time. He returned home and started painting something like it on what readily available expansive surfaces there were—the sides of tobacco barns. [Time marched on.] Dave Ellis moved to New York, studying art (at Cooper Union), making art. Yet e'er did he keep in mind the idea that others might someday be persuaded to head on down to Cameron, North Carolina, to paint on tobacco barns.

In 1999 a crew of 20 people, the newly formed Barnstormers, artists mostly from NYC and Tokyo, did so—and have continued to make pilgrimages to Cameron about once a year. They have painted perhaps 70 sides of barns ["definitely less than half the barns in Cameron"]. Painting on tobacco barns is one of their core activities. They also make time-lapse films of large-scale murals (where, as usual, they paint over one another's work again and again), do live painting with DJ or bands in various urban settings, and have put together a massive, graffiti-strewn loudspeaker system of about 200 made and found-

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70. Invited! As a matter of fact, they were given their name by the community.
cabinet speakers—that can be set up wherever or put on a flatbed to rock several neighborhoods per hour.

Any of these activities would be of interest here. Regarding (in isolation) non-discriminatory transmission and distribution, for example, one of their time-lapse films (or 'motion paintings'), an exposé on the number 'nine' commissioned by Sesame Street, has been seen by lots of people, united most fundamentally by the fact that they are admirers of Big Bird. And the Barnstormers continue to work as muralists in public space—they painted a mural in Brooklyn just last week as I write.71 The loudspeaker project is unquestionable outrageous. But the tobacco barn project is close to their soul, is weird and funky and so noisy. Yum!

71. 1 June, 2005. The mural is at the corner of Atlantic Ave. and Smith Street.
Another note before describing that project's TN: I am connected to the Barnstormers through an old friendship with one of its core members, Mike Houston—with whom I sometimes collaborate on projects and whom I sensibly venerate. With Dave Ellis, Mike imagines and initiates Barnstormer projects and works out logistics. Around them is another group of seven or so core members; and around them, 30-35 artists who have painted, made, documented, and otherwise participated. [Everything in this section in double quotation marks comes from interviews with Mike Houston, mostly in 2004 and 2005.]

As with Robbie Conal's work [please see below], I will sometimes consider that the 'art' of the Barnstormers' work divides into two kinds. They exist in different times from one another and involve different participants. The first involves the Barnstormers' culture—behavioral modes they 'perform' with and for one another as they work. The second more
involves the *traces* of their work—for the moment, post-graffiti murals presented on rural tobacco barns. The distinction here is less resolved (less necessary, really) than in the other case mentioned; but is worth acknowledging. I will employ this bifurcation below only in the domains of Theaters of Pre- and Post-Performance, indicated as follows:

I. with respect to the Barnstormers' culture

II. per their traces [the murals] in context

The domain of 'Performance Protocols' pertains to [I.] only.

The Barnstormers' Domains:

Space: Barns. And tractor-trailers, farm equipment, shacks, the house of a guy named 'Fuzzy', oil drums, etc.; mostly in Cameron, NC, at the crossroads and remote reaches of a tobacco farming community.

Sponsorship [Actual]: Barnstormers pay out-of-pocket for transportation and pay for most food. They furnish some materials—buying rollers, tools and other supplies, schlepping ladders. They camp out [pretty economical]. You can't be at your day job when you're in Cameron; but you can take "commercial gigs to fund it." In Cameron there have been *lots* of "small-time" donations—old paint and other stuff from residents, hardware stores, etc. The "odd meal" is donated, too—cooked and served up by locals. [Earl and Juanita Harbour are a Cameron couple who have been into the project since 1999 and particularly generous.]
The Barnstormers have received the odd small grant, too. Last summer and fall they had their first major museum show at the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, for which (among other things—such as shaking the foundation with their loudspeakers and sustaining a chicken farm) they dismantled, imported, exactingly reconstructed and continually painted a tobacco barn borrowed from a Cameron field, from Earl and Juanita. [They closed, symmetrically, by returning it to the field. 'Stet'. Please see the sequence of images below.] The Cameron project results in no sales. ["But I guess you could say that once pictures of that shit got into all the hep mags, it indirectly resulted in sales for us."]

[Apparent] Sponsorship: Locals know the deal. For visitors: no clue.

Performance Agencies: Again, Dave Ellis and Mike Houston tend to initiate things. As to the larger group, their website lists the following artists:

Daikon, David Ellis, Doze Green, Maya Hayuk, Alice Helander, Kenji Hirata, Mike Houston, Che Jen, Kami, KR, Alex Lebedev, Madsaki, Martin Mazorra, Christian Mendoza, Mike Ming, Blust One, West One, Stephen Powers, Jose Parla, Rostarr, Sasu, Yuri Shimojo, South, Swoon, Chuck Webster, Kiku Yamaguchi, and documentarians Joey Garfield, Miyuki Hirai, and Gion Yukio.

About two thirds have art degrees; "practically no one has an MFA." A few are active in the streets ['tagging']; but most are just into legal [permission-granted] situations.

Performance Protocols: [I.] Dress and talk hip, no: hep. They can smoke cigarettes and drink beer while working if they like. There are rules of engagement for collaborative painting: in general, chipping away at ego is good. In the graffiti world, there's tagging over other people's tags—background-ing them; Barnstormers are more likely to cross-fade, integrating with, or respectfully washing out the last artists' work and then painting on. ["Re 'rules of engagement', it's pretty much understood that if you go over some or part of someone's stuff, the result should be better, or at least the sum of the two paintings greater than the whole. Also, things that obviously took a lot of time to paint are the last targets for going over."] At the end of a whole relay they might "paint it white and throw it in the trash." [More on this ethics-aesthetics below.] They draw in one another's 'black books'.

Figure 13. A Barnstormers Tobacco Barn in Cameron, North Carolina, no. 3
Pre-Performance Theater: [I.] There are road trips to get there. There's fried seafood and BBQ; tents around campfires; beer and partying.

[II.] Whatever you were doing when you drove up upon it. Again, the locals know what's going on—the Barnstormers got (local) press from the beginning. [They've since been covered nationally and internationally, landed bigger and bigger gigs, etc.] Casual passers-by are confronted with the Barnstormers' unlikely language and mission, both visually and culturally dissonant.

Post-Performance Theater: [I.] Similar to Pre-Performance Theater. [II.] Ditto.

Material Technologies: Ladders; scaffolding; paint (house paint, interior and exterior, oil and water-based); paint thinner; 'church keys'; GOJO Hand Cleaner; bags of rags; brushes and rollers, roller trays, tray liners; insect repellent; some Coppertone; tobacco barns.

* * *

Obviously painting murals isn't new, and neither is investing mural painting with shock value. [Consider, for example, the political intent of Diego Rivera, his (public) 'Space', and the immediacy of his visual language—all in the context of a still rather bourgeois, class-stratified and decorum-conscious Mexico.] However, I would argue that the Barnstormers work is innovative within the genre, because of the originality of its (something-like-Surrealist) juxtapositions—of (urban or urbane) post-graffiti language with ultra-rural
situation, of the (false but nonetheless marked) casualness of this language with hardcore industry, of the bold force of their social gesture with self-effacement a la Tibetan monks' sand paintings. The project contributes to a novel (art) experience for all who participate in it and all who view it. As with any experience, some people can locate it in a field of other experiences more readily than others.

As is typical with other 'interpenetration of life and art' projects, the Barnstormers undoubtedly diversify their audience. [At the same time, it's sweet that they build relationships with locals over time, that the project's perennial persistence leads to trust and understanding on both sides of the suburban divide.] They may not broaden their audience—since their core audience probably isn't about to trek to Cameron to see the work; maybe they'll check out its documentation. [In fact, the fact that its de facto hermeticism, the 'praying in secret' produced by the Cameron project's physical distance from its maybe-usual fans, totally works against broadening the work's audience is kind of … funny?]

Of course the work deepens participants' experience of art. People get involved—like, some residents have viewed some work, gone away; then come back and asked if they can get their barns painted, too. Hell, anything constitutes 'deepening' when you've never seen this before. [And who has?] Again, the work that obviously goes into this, for no purpose not in bed with joy—it has got to inspire the soul! Or not: A guy pulls up on a Harley, a big biker guy. He's a sign painter. He speaks with Mike. He says he thinks someone [himself?]
should take a Zippo and "burn all these things down." He's civil; still, he thinks it is "about the worst thing I've ever seen."

[Oh, but the joy! The hip, generous, un-capitalist joy! Don't you see? Free your habitus!]

The Barnstormers' transmissive network works against constraining cultural forces that recommend what goes where. The styles and imageries of the artists the Barnstormers comprise—the 'fillings'—vary with respect to explicit political content. For the most part, they're not wicked politically explicit—though graffiti still signifies anarchy and skepticism of property, capital, state authority.

So inspirational (to me) is the fact that alternatives-to-what-is are proposed—at the level of TN, too—that have such a sense of 'why the ___ not?' possibility, almost aggressively creative. At the very same time, the work embodies these ideals (on purpose):

If you can't be happy painting in the middle of nowhere—painting for whom?—then …

Zero establishment. [Totally do-it-yourself. Too messy for posers.]

It's all in the moment. [Process.] You can't take it with you.

Collaboration [strength-in-numbers, learn, defeat ego]

+ Impermanence [in the moment, defeat ego]

One more time: "paint it white and throw it in the trash."
Figure 14. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 1

Figure 15. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 2
Figure 16. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 3

Figure 17. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 4
Figure 18. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 5

Figure 19. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 6
Figure 20. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 7

Figure 21. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 8
Figure 22. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 9

Figure 23. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 10
Figure 24. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 11

Figure 25. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 12
Figure 26. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 13

Figure 27. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 14
Figure 28. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 15

Figure 29. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 16
Figure 30. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 17

Figure 31. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 18
Figure 32. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 19

Figure 33. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 20
Figure 34. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 21

Figure 35. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 22
Figure 36. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 23

Figure 37. Barnstormers Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Sequence, no. 24
Chapter 3

Noise, Here

Interlude: Two Quotations about the Creative Function of Noise

All that is not information, not redundancy, not form and not restraints—is noise, the only possible source of new patterns.

—Gregory Bateson, "The Cybernetic Explanation"

Evolution and revolution are the result of the creative integration of noise into the system as a memory trace.

—Anthony Wilden, System and Structure

End Interlude

The term 'noise' has a special place in the field of music and sound-art. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, it has been associated with a variety of experimental aesthetics and revolutionary politics.

In the 1913 manifesto The Art of Noises, Luigi Russolo wrote, "Futurist musicians must substitute for the limited variety of tones possessed by orchestral instruments today the infinite variety of tones of noises, reproduced with appropriate mechanisms." (Though he favored an anarchist rather than a fascist social order,) John Cage expressed a similar
thought in his "The Future of Music: Credo" of 1937: "Whereas, in the past, the point of disagreement has been between dissonance and consonance, it will be, in the immediate future, between noise and so-called musical sounds." Both composers, of course, put their music where their declarations were. In that same document, Cage pointed to the key role to be played by "electrical instruments" (among them "oscillators" and "film phonographs"). When magnetic tape became available to experimentalist composers as a medium for recording and manipulating sounds, Cage's vision was realized immediately. Among the first pieces produced by Pierre Schaeffer were the Études de Bruits [Noise Studies] of 1948.

With the advent of digital recording and reproduction technology [compact discs], it became possible to remove noise—erstwhile trace of production processes—from electroacoustic music and music playback in general. The next day (give or take), noise reappeared as a marker for authenticity. On both sides of this (digital) technological divide, noise and 'glitch' elements were linked to the native 'voice' of technology [as in David Tudor's electronic music and glitch or 'post-digital' music].

In general, noise means and has meant different things to different people at different times. Explaining this multiplicity of meanings (and future ones), Jean-Jacques Nattiez offers noise ['/noise/] as a culturally constructed and evolving term, tripartite as other 'signs'

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74. Kittler: thus synthesizing the imaginary and the real.
75. The term 'post-digital' is Kim Cascone's.
are—i.e., capable of being described and negotiated from poetic [generative], neutral [physical] and esthesic [interpretive] perspectives.76

Yet noise as non-periodic, random, raucous, unmusical or simply unpleasant sound is but one (material) way of thinking about it. Claude Shannon's information theory described a more generalized conception of noise—that which 'perturbs' a signal transmitted through a given communication channel, and thus the subsequent decoding of a 'message'.77 Gregory Bateson, quoted above, expanded the scope and valence of Shannon's definition, abstracting it further, placing it in 'systems' as well as 'channels', while retaining many of information theory's terms (and concepts). Bateson's noise is defined negatively: all that is not information, not redundancy, not form and not restraints.

In Bateson's cybernetics, 'redundancy' is (often) that which allows greater-than-random predictability of the next unit of 'information'—in the context of a given 'form' and set of 'restraints'. Redundancy issues from a relation of particular informational events to a context understood by a subject.78 So if we are on $V^7$ in Mozart [a context], a listener who understands the communicational environment and rules of classical music might expect an arrival on I or vi—and she will be correct more often than random probability would dictate. For Bateson, the informational event 'vi' following $V^7$ in Mozart is (to some degree)

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78. "The concept of redundancy is usually derived, as I have derived it, by considering first the maximum of information which might be carried by the given item and then considering how this total might be reduced by knowledge of the surrounding patterns of which the given item is a component part." Gregory Bateson, "The Cybernetic Explanation," in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 412.
'redundant'; and this redundancy can be measured and represented as a ratio of its probability over random probability. Communicational acts tend to consist of both information and redundancy.

We can apply the concepts of information and redundancy to particular types of music, at any level of remove. We can read in information and redundancy at the level of the beat, measure, phrase, etc., keyed to melodic, harmonic or rhythmic events, etc. Their action is multidimensional. Bateson writes: "To the aesthetic eye, the form of a crab with one claw bigger than the other is not simply asymmetrical. It first proposes a rule of symmetry and then subtly denies the rule by proposing a more complex combination of rules." We can read the (rhythmic) hemiola in much the same way. Thus Bateson's cybernetic model helps to explain an art (as classical music) that depends in part upon differentials between the normative and the actual—expanding its own logic 'autopoetically' with every utterance.

(Imagine if tweaking the transmissive [social] milieu in this way were common practice.)

To my understanding, 'noise' for Bateson becomes some combination of information, redundancy, restraints or form, once a system (including its subjects) has reorganized itself to accommodate or make sense of it. Because 'pattern' is constituted relative to a subject, what is noise for one person could be information for another—as with speech acts in a

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79. 'Particular types of music' being nothing more than contexts, systems of restraint …
'foreign' language. Elsewhere, Bateson uses a definition of noise lifted from information theory, speaking of signal-to-noise ratios. There, he seems to be thinking of noise as a force or quantum that prevents a subject from 'hearing' the speaking of a word he knows in a language he knows [to extend this metaphor]. These definitions are not incompatible, since languages are in one sense merely transformational systems [for objects, acts and ideas]; or perhaps Bateson's definition of noise is fuzzy or evolving in his writings. What is clear, and what I want to take from this discussion, is that Bateson's noise enters as an unknown and forms new patterns. Through feedback and self-organization, systems (including subjects) tame noise, assimilating it into 'pattern'.

[Pause.] This text will provisionally define 'noise' as follows:

A thing is noisy, relative to a particular subject, to the extent that it does not signify to her anything in particular, relative to patterns, forms or categories already understood by her.

In plainer language, a thing is noisy if you regard it and muse, now what the hell is this? [A 'thing' might be a material object, abstraction or experience, situated in any field.]

It is critical to admit that: we have experiences in time; perceive, discriminate, discern and amend the rules of our perceiving, discriminating, discerning [and amending] in time, by fluid and reflexive processes. And it is quite possible to find or include in one's self a

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81. Though not explicitly stated, this example is implied by Bateson's discussion of the importance of perspective in determining whether a thing is 'meaning', 'redundancy', etc.
category for 'noisy experiences'; and even to have a preference for (or against) noisy experiences.

[Please see the Epilogue for more objections, ideas and discussion.]

This leads us to the subject of designing (aesthetic) experiences that are noisy—and to some of the ideas of composer, cyberneticist and social theorist Herbert Brün. He articulated what is essentially a political argument for not making sense (at least not 'easy' or first-order sense) within the context of a work of art. Because Brün engaged an obsessive care with language, I am inclined to quote rather than paraphrase him. I will begin by introducing three key ideas for which Brün is known: 'anticommunication'; 'retard the decay'; and 'compose a music you don't yet like'.

'Anticommunication' is the idea in Brün's writing that I most closely identify with the working definition of noise offered above. It is [at the neutral level] and effects [at the esthetic level] a kind of noise that asks receivers to make space for a new pattern, form or category, to add new channels somewhere on their dials. Anticommunication is propositional; therefore it begs dialogues rather than monologues.83 Because it "emerges and is maintained through messages requiring and permitting not yet available encoding and decoding systems or mechanisms," anticommunication values and protects human beings and relations between them [by making them necessary].84 Brün's essay "Drawing

84. From the definition of anticommunication on Principia Cybernetica Web. The entire entry reads, "Anticommunication: a human relation between persons and things which emerges and is maintained through
Distinctions Links Contradictions" presents a network of definitions for the term in the
course of a discussion of Schoenberg's music and its reception—or of how to resist self-
enforced possession by the society of the spectacle—or you tell me …

Anticommunication is an attempt, not a refusal.

…

Anticommunication is the attempt at protecting a message
of contemporary relevance and significance from the
unconditional surrender to the addressed receiver.

…

Communication uses the order and the law that is meant
to be found by the receiver as his own; anticommunication
creates the order and the law that the receiver is to find
for the first time.

…

Communication appeals to the individual owners of personal
properties, like taste, repertory, language, a past,
privileges, beliefs, etc., and problems. Anticommunication
is the problem inviting the attack of all who are intelligently
tired of the unconditional surrender of long since conditioned
messages to ultimately adjusted receivers.

A key idea here is that anticommunication, enacted through 'composition', puts life back
into (social) systems. It is counter-entropic. It points to new regions and grammars and
messages requiring and permitting not yet available encoding and decoding systems or mechanisms.
Communication is a human relation between persons and things which emerges and is maintained through
messages required and permitted by already available encoding and decoding systems or mechanisms.
Communication feeds on and speeds the decay of information in systems on which depends the significance
of human relations. Anticommunication not only retards this decay, but even creates systems whose
significance depends on human relations. Insistence on communication ultimately leads to social and physical
violence. Anticommunication ultimately leads to insistence on composition and peace. (Herbert Brün)"
activates curiosity about them. Anticommunication 'retards the decay' of (the quantity of) information in systems, the systems themselves and the (human) beings who depend on them for survival. Brün links anticommunication to peace and communication to (totalitarian) violence. And anticommunication must be reengaged continually—as its messages decay and become "conditioned" as well. This is what Brün (provisionally!) means, and is the problem he describes with his famous statement, "a language gained is a language lost."\(^85\)

Interlude: Two Quotations about Assimilation of Noise into Pattern

At a Dada exhibition in Dusseldorf, I was impressed that though Schwitters and Picabia and the others had all become artists with the passing of time, Duchamp's work remained unacceptable as art.

—John Cage, Interview, 1973

Monsters cannot be announced.
One cannot say: 'here are our monsters',
without immediately turning the monsters into pets.

—Jacques Derrida\(^86\)

End Interlude


For Brün, 'composition' exemplifies critique—it does not deliver "goodies." More precisely, it demonstrates contradiction. To Brün's thinking, "contradiction is never affirmative of a system in which it is said to be a contradiction, whereas a conflict is always affirmative of that system in which it is considered a mere flaw." [This distinction can be mapped fruitfully, I think, to the alternative strategies of changing a system from within (conflict) versus from without (contradiction). It has a cybernetic basis: contradiction alone is the 'noise' that is the only source of new patterns.] Because for Brün our own (necessarily conditioned) tastes are suspect, he states (provocatively) that "it would be nice if in the definition of a composer would also be introduced the notion that a composer be a person who is trying very hard to compose at last the music he or she doesn't yet like."
Figure 38. Kurt Cobain, Integrity & Rolling Stone Magazine, Part I [note tee-shirt]

Figure 39. Kurt Cobain, Integrity & Rolling Stone Magazine, Part II [note headline]
The idea that the successful ['authentic'] work of art manifests contradiction is central to Theodore Adorno's thinking as well. The work he favors "reproduces the 'abyss'" between the subject [author or receiver] and his or her social environment. What is 'true' for Adorno is the bleak reality of our alienation—from other individuals, from society in general, from nature and from ourselves—and it must be encoded in the work. The music he favors [Schoenberg of Erwartung for example] is 'autonomous' both because it relies near-absolutely on interior relationships to speak, and (relatedly) by virtue of the extent to

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which it refuses to reflect (false or any) 'ideology' in its language and form. It "honors the listener by not making any concessions to him."\textsuperscript{92}

As a matter of principle, instead of searching for the musical expression of class standpoints one will do better so to conceive the relation of music to the classes that any music will present the picture of antagonistic society as a whole—and will do it less in the language it speaks than in its inner structural composition. One criterion of the truth of music is whether greasepaint is found to cover up the antagonism that extends to its relations with the audience—thus involving it in the more hopeless esthetic contradictions—or whether the antagonistic experience is faced in the music's own structure.

Intramusical tensions are the unconscious phenomena of social tensions.\footnote{Theodor W. Adorno, \textit{Introduction to the Sociology of Music}, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 68. “Music … is ideological only insofar as it is a false consciousness.” Ibid., 63.}

It is by the anti-ideological resolution of conflicts, by a cognitive behavior without an inkling of the object of its cognition, that great music takes a stand in social struggle: by enlightenment, not by aligning itself, as one likes to call that, with an ideology.\textsuperscript{93}

It may be obvious from this discussion that both Adorno and Brün are hostile to popular musics and popular culture in general. For both, art that does not encode alienation / contradiction always further reinforces the (illusory) soundness of late capitalism. Deferring for a moment a critique of their hostilities, I would demonstrate the (distinct) elitist modes in which they are expressed [mostly for fun]. Adorno is the Old World patrician:

There were times far into the nineteenth century when it was possible to write decent popular music.\textsuperscript{94}

And Brün is just plain smarter than other people [such as Thelonious Monk, I suppose], their worldviews being mere naïve subsets of his own:

\textsuperscript{92} Quoted in Held, \textit{Introduction}, 105.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 22.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 22.
Do you think there are exceptions to that? In other words, are there individual jazz or rock artists who are inputs rather than outputs of the society?

Sometimes it does not depend on individual potentials and talents. I can sometimes say that a whole system can be structured in such a way that any input that uses certain techniques, styles, and idioms is doomed.

No matter what the desire is, the context will destroy the good intentions?

Yes.95

It is safe to say that for both, engaging with the 'culture industry' is risky—aesthetically, ethically, politically, biologically and otherwise: one risks "affirmation of life as it is."96 For both, what happens in art has profound implications in human culture and life as a whole: consciousness (Adorno) and human survival (Brün) are at stake.

But it is notably easy [though, again, fun] to quote uppity moments in their corpora; a more pointful observation is that neither extends his argument into the social forms [TNs] in which performances of art are wrapped (and loaded up with significance). Composed transmission is this extension. The two main actions of this text are (1) simply to recommend the merits of composing transmission as subtly as we compose 'objects' while (2) accounting for features in the resistance [or, I would prefer, 'transcendence'] models offered by Adorno and Brün.97 [Adding a little good humor and body might be nice, too.]

Of immediate concern, there is the issue of where Adorno and Brün stop. Brün is a systems theorist who fails to apply his sophisticated critique to the next higher order of

95. Brün, "Toward Composition," 81. [An interview by Stuart Smith from 1975.]
96. Adorno, Sociology, 37.
97. I prefer 'transcendence' to 'resistance' because of the problem of dialectical validation-through-refusal: we require a 'metacommunicational' logic. Please see Anthony Wilden quotation below.
communicational discourse—the transmission of the work. Is that not surprising? As Bateson says, "This hierarchy of contexts within contexts is universal for the communicational (or 'emic') aspect of phenomena and drives the scientist always to seek for explanation in the ever larger units. …[I]n cybernetics: without context, there is no communication." 98 [Here, of course, 'communication' has its normative meaning.]

So Brün plays his work in academic settings and concert halls, gives lectures in museums and so on. He writes for string quartet. He writes for computers when computers cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. He wears a suit and an air of deliberate intelligence. He is gracious. Nothing could be less anticommunicational. 99

His (anticommunicational, presumably 'difficult') compositions are wrapped in conventional TNs. Habitus pretty much ensures that only economically and educationally privileged people will experience his works—which are accompanied, incidentally, by explanatory texts. 100 Therefore, whether or not its members engage in the good faith esthetic process his music requires, Brün is speaking to the one group that already possesses the codes necessary to 'understand' out-of-the-box [i.e., 'fail to engage with'] the social form of his work. And without even thinking about it, they [some of them] will produce a host of conditioned responses—such as 'poppycock', or 'there he goes again', or 'I want to anticommunicate just like him'. 101

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98. Bateson, Steps, 408.
99. On the face of it, anyway.
100. Announcing his monsters.
101. Now might be a good time to declare that I have found much inspiration in Brün's thought; this text is heavily indebted to him. I was personally inspired by his presence when I (once) met him. Graciousness is a good quality. As my colleague, Newton Armstrong, writes: "He staged his intervention in writing, not
Similarly, Adorno suffers from a conflict of interests: he is a connoisseur obsessed with class struggle. He loves an art that can only be apprehended by 'experts' (such as himself); and experts tend to be formed through association with educational institutions indivisible from the superstructure he hates. It is hard to imagine where Adorno is without late capitalism. [Not digging a ditch.]

Interlude: The 'Cage Serves Imperialism' Critique

Cornelius Cardew does read the music itself of Cage as oppressive. But this statement goes after its bourgeois social function:

'The first problem is: Literature and art for whom?' (Talks [of Mao Tsetung]). Whom does Cage's music serve? We can answer this quite simply by looking at the audience, by seeing who supports this music and who attacks it. Ten years ago Cage concerts were often disrupted by angry music-lovers and argumentative critics. It was the most bourgeois elements in the audience that protested against it. But they soon learned to take their medicine. Nowadays a Cage concert can be quite a society event. The audience has grown and its class character has become clearer in proportion. What happens nowadays is that revolutionary students boycott Cage's concerts at American universities, informing those entering the concert hall of the complete irrelevance of the music to the various liberation struggles raging in the world (18). And if it does not support those struggles, then it is opposing them and serving the cause of exploitation and oppression. There is no middle course.

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103. Cf. Adorno, Sociology, p. 204. Adorno [and subsequent sociologists and cultural theorists] have a more nuanced take on this: "[T]heory too must be reminded that social reception is not one with musical content, not even with the social one for which the musical one serves as a code. Whoever ignores this remains so sober, in terms of musical sociology, that his very sobriety will lead to decretive fantasizing."
104. Cardew, Stockhausen Serves, 35.
The note ["18"] reads: "This was hearsay from a source I had and have no reason to doubt. Cage denies that such boycotting took place, maintaining that the incident in question occurred in connection with a Stockhausen concert."

End Interlude

[Brief response: Maybe class domination is less a threat to humanity at the moment than the general loss of critical consciousness produced by (and producing) the society of the spectacle.]

**Noise, Composed Transmission** [Warning: Polemical & Overstated]

I believe the case studies presented in this text exemplify [in particular] Brün's aesthetic—executed at the next higher systemic-logical order, social form. (Their) TNs are not mere channels, they *speak*. Their TNs produce 'sentences' that do not (yet) make sense (to the majority of those who encounter them). Art is located in the TN.

There is no great work of art which does not convey a new message to humanity; there is no great artist who fails in this respect. This is the code of honor of all the great in art, and consequently in all great works of the great we will find that newness which never perishes, whether it be of Josquin des Pres, of Bach or Haydn, or of any other great master. Because: Art means New Art.

—Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*  

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Incidentally, Brün says he cannot, of course, simply speak the same (anticommunicative) thing to a new audience and another and another: that does not a satisfactorily prevent a language from being 'lost'—perhaps because the meaning has decayed for him. [So what?]

The case studies' TNs dislocate signifiers, destabilize social forms. [In particular, they propose something other than the commodification of (art) experience. In particular, they open up a discussion of who makes art and how and where, with what and for whom.] For the most part, their material technologies are on the homemade side—not having stable meanings; or they suggest the power of the individual to create her own material conditions. Against this [‘what-is-not-slick’], commonly a signifier for weakness, plays a pointedly strong will—for only the feisty will strikes out against the current as these artists do.

Interlude: Ought We Use A Printing Press?

When I was at the Blue Mountain Center on a [composer-in-residence] retreat I saw a homemade, hand-printed poster designed to exhort Californians to join in a protest rally against U.S. government interference in a certain election of a certain Central American country. The second-order semiology of the image hit me and I thought: NO! What are you doing! Don't you see this allows people to turn off to your message out-of-the-box? For you are already a known quantity to them! Your look [the whole John Barleycorn look of the hand-printed poster] is ossified, has been [r]edefined by them, on their terms! It's like how sloppy hippy protesters and salt & pepper short-haired dykes play on CNN! You have to play slick! Or something! You have to surprise them!
I spoke of this to Harriet, whose son had worked for Adbusters. *That's* slickness that gets in, that gets in under the table, behind the lines. That looked good to me.

But no: it's only sold at Whole Paycheck!

I'm thinking of Bread & Puppet. Emily has lived with them, you know.
If you're willing to do it, to be the commune, thou art admirable. You substantiate a field.

You are as communities of monks praying for peace, every day praying for peace.
Now I don't know when we hand-print. That's the technology Robbie Conal began with, but his images, the images themselves, are so grotesque [fleshy and meta-fleshy] as to create a clash of voice—one that points upward easily (to a higher logical type). Likewise my friend Mike's Cannonball Press.

![Figure 42. Mike Houston, "Unnecessary Cussing" from Seven Deadly Sins, 2004](image)

There we go. Yes, like that: homemade—but as we have [r]evolutionary goals, at this point, complicating, spiking the stability of whatever conventional [stable] technologies we might use is required. 'Modal mixture' is required.

End Interlude
If receivers take these artists to be artists, practicing art, any sort of noise might spin out from (these receivers' unique) pre-performance theater → performance proper → post-performance theater sequences. That is, the dissonances that have been observed to attend art ↔ life 'interpenetration' [after Duchamp, after Cage] attend Michael Swaine's art. Or sometimes, the case studies' material technologies are dissonant [noisy, noise-making] with other aspects of the TN, such as space—as when a French horn appears in the wilderness or a motorcycle helmet appears on the sidewalk. Paint is not dissonant with tobacco barns; only the Barnstormers' painting, their use of paint—the performance proper. And they, hipsters from Tokyo and Brooklyn, are dissonant as agencies with a space. The performance agency v. space dissonance also operates at Wolf—as when one of Canada's leading sopranos fades into the twilight of the lake, in a canoe, paddled by a 'wolf'.

These examples portray a noise produced by inventive juxtaposition of particular TN domains. But the TN works as a total system. Just as those who are attuned to symbologies in a given field of art recognize and can be struck by a new utterance, nearly all of us are attuned to the symbologies of our social forms. Whether or not we can describe the grammars by which utterances are formed does not really matter. Indeed, a receiver who can describe these grammars is probably in possession of a habitus that already knows it can make art if it so chooses.

Again, it is not necessary that composed transmission be apprehended and labeled as 'art' in order for it to have good [heartening, destabilizing, gastronomic] effects. Many artists who compose transmission refuse to call their activities art [If it quacks and it has an MFA … ]
Interlude: Ritual, Punk

Late capitalism applies a force to push (art) experience into congress with commodity. [This force is psycho-paradigmatic / mythological as well as economic]. Guerrilla art works against commodity [commodification of (art) experience]; but it can also work against ritual. For it often lacks the rarefying action of the frame. Therefore it might be desirable for gentle guerrilla artists to ritualize and 'make special' some aspect[s] of their look, sound and feel. [Consider Lynch, Swaine and Wolf.] Or not [Barnstormers, Conal]: the whole point might be unexpected creative action in the middle of workaday life. Maybe ritual is seen as pretentious or manipulative; artists might favor a punkish stance [of refusal]. In these cases, proposing other than the ties that bind art and commodity, and/or art and high art culture might be the aim.

End Interlude

[Oh:] What does it mean to make [r]evolutionary, 'political' music that is delivered through channels whose place in the structure of society is compatible with and secured by the existing social order, reinforcing undemocratic social forms (of privilege and the reproduction of privilege)? [Who knows.] I can imagine that any energy anywhere could have any number of unpredictable consequences anywhere else. [Chaos theory's butterfly flapping its wings]. The fact that monks all over the world have been praying for peace every moment of every day for thousands of years could be just that which has been
keeping us from annihilation. Or perhaps [your base contrast here] has served that function. Bob Dylan's explicitly political music (as so much cultural production of the 1960's) seemed to spark new consciousness [I use cliche deliberately]; but it appears escape velocity was not reached; that music is used (materially) now mostly as content for (corporate) commercial classic rock format radio, and Bob Dylan sells out to Victoria's Secret.¹⁰⁶

Repetition, restatement: We can try to inscribe non-commodity so profoundly into art [radically dispensing with "artificial style"] that it can never be turned into Muzak.¹⁰⁷ And it will be transmitted only to elites.

Interlude: Conventional TNs [File Under 'Participation']

Conventional TNs associate their content with 'commodity' [galleries]; or are themselves associated with and/or formally identical to a use of power that restricts access to itself through (actual) violence [academy]; or are themselves associated with charity [social service-oriented projects]. What is common to conventional TNs is the presumption and reinforcement of social hierarchy [injustice].

End Interlude

We can try to inscribe non-commodity profoundly into the TN. Mike Houston remarks with satisfaction that the time-lapse projects, for example—and the barn into the museum back into the field—*leave no physical traces*. It is all about process. Nathan Lynch's project is anti-productive. Its exchange value is 0. So much work and no traces outside artists' apartments and your head. [Music performance is somewhat like this—though often the character of its production apparatus is *not*.] Documentation may acquire exchange value, as land artists and conceptual artists of the 1960s found. [More on that below.] Per the dimension of commodity, the case studies present work that has no center other than the statement 'humanity & nature over late capitalism & commodity'. [Is this correct?] We do have to manage and be wary of the *petite economies* [of academic prominence, getting the girl and so on]. That is, cultural capital takes on many forms—and by no means do all of them have a 'hegemonic' bias [just think of the relationship between sex and *youth*]. At the same time, by mixing things up [making anticommunicational proposals] with the TN, certain things we (might) love may be recast and made 'defensible' from the perspective of neo-Marxist critique. When what has been the 'form' [i.e., of the 'object'] becomes the mere 'content'—'material' or 'filling', as I like to call it—of a new TN 'form', then there is less pressure on that filling to promote [r]evolution.

We can allow 'the beautiful' [in the sense of what your mom has found to be beautiful] back in. We can allow rhythm back in with less confusion about whether or not it points to goose-stepping. We can allow melody back in. We can allow back in to a [r]evolutionary art things that (I believe) simply *are* good for humans—such as *dancing*. I do favor 'filling' that contains *some* challenge, too; primarily because simply replanting an activity that has a
stable social meaning may too easily be snapped back into an already-understood social form [not noisy enough]—as busking, for example—even with a harp. But at any rate, composing the TN can allow human beings to recast and reclaim certain time-honored, soul-satisfying elements / activities that have been defiled (for me) by the dominance of commodity form.

The reason I have been keeping this critique focused so tightly on commodity form is simply that it plays such a dominant role in explaining to people what a thing is. From the perspective of 'trying to create an aesthetic experience that evolves people's discriminating faculties, their concept of what is & what is [aesthetically, socially] possible', it is simply annoying to encounter a hegemony that so brutally constrains the scope of these aesthetic experiences—and, of course, worse, tends to do so below the level of conscious discourse. I do not want to say 'commodity form as it now exists is valid' because I do not believe it. In fact, I believe the dominance of commodity form is poisonous to human beings and the global ecology. Art [as all creative activity] is deadly serious. [This is an exercise in saying what I want to say.]

While fundamental social change in the United States and in the world will no doubt be accompanied by a violence running counter to the violence of the established system—for in biological terms, one is EITHER alive OR dead—any possible change will be no change at all unless the pitfall of identity and opposition can be overcome. The double-binding oscillations which this relation of projection and identification sets up must eventually be transcended in the real and material relationships of man-and-womankind by the mediation of Symbolic DIFFERENCE. …As intensely conscious as one may be of the fact that ideas alone can change nothing, one has nevertheless to begin somewhere. There is only one escape from the dilemmas of opposition and identity, and it makes no difference whether one is talking in epistemological, ideological, or political terms. If dissent is to escape its own self-alienation, if it is to escape the automatic response of liberalism, that 'all
ideas are equal’ or that a new theory is simple ‘an interesting new point of view’, then dissent must transcend the status of negative identification. In a word, ALL DISSENT MUST BE OF A HIGHER LOGICAL TYPE THAN THAT TO WHICH IT IS OPPOSED. It will thus not make the Hegelian error of trying to reduce real and material differences to identity, for this is to be caught in an endless jeu de miroirs from which there is simply no escape.

…In open systems, the position of higher logical type is simply that which is most capable of dealing with the most context, and that which is most capable of understanding how methodological closures—like that of logical typing itself—inevitably generate paradox. In addition, therefore, to the traditional logical position dependent on laws of non-contradiction and identity (the analytic epistemology) WHICH WILL WORK INSIDE THE SYSTEM ONE HAS ISOLATED, there is a purely epistemological requirement for a logic of a higher logical type, subsuming the first, WHICH WILL WORK WHEN ONE TRIES TO CROSS THE SPATIAL, COMMUNICATIONAL, OR TEMPORAL BOUNDARIES SET UP BY CLOSURE. Such a logic will subsume the Gödelian paradoxes of analytical logic by a process of METACOMMUNICATION…

—Anthony Wilden, System and Structure, xxvii–xxix

What discourse is of the same 'logical type' as 'the commodification of (art) experience'? It may be appealing to think Brün's art [or any 'intra-art art'] capable of rendering a challenge to the force of commodity form. But no: commodity form is expressed through a (transmissive) symbolic language that surrounds art 'objects' completely. [Yes: transcendence could be in play. Please see Epilogue.] The commodity-status of art is constituted in great part by the TN. Therefore, at best, 'composed transmission' is of the same logical type as said symbolic language [conventional transmission, hegemonic transmission].

[An observation: It is easier to delimit 'the work' or 'the performance proper' for some of these case studies, and more difficult for others. Although 'the art' is always located in the total system (for me), the Barnstormers' tobacco barns can at least be put in a museum,
pointed to as art 'objects'. It is more difficult to parse Nathan Lynch's work in this way. His objects function more as invitations, avenues to *interactions*—at first perhaps about the objects, then about purposes, then moving off anywhere.]

Repetition, restatement: The 'enemy' is less 'art that reinforces undesired values' than 'art *experience* that reinforces undesired values'. The social meanings given by the transmissive network tend to trump the social meanings given by 'content'. Here, now, the art which reproduces radical alienation can only be spoken to elites. How uncritically can we interact with institutions that reproduce structures of power that are plainly unjust? We do so because they permit us [within limits] to broadcast texts that call out those structures of power? And such institutions just happen to increase the material and cultural status of those interacting with them? The commodity-status of art is constituted in great part by the TN. Therefore, at best, 'composed transmission' is of the same logical type as …

However, by the very fact that hegemonic transmission [that which reinforces commodity form] is so dominant; because this present discourse occurs explicitly to so few [maybe 'haunts' would be better]; because, of those, fewer still act significantly, in their art, based upon this present discourse: when it does shine (or spike on) through, composed transmission emphatically points to ways of understanding the world that are of a higher logical type even than late capitalism. [Imagine it.] This is my belief. I will leave it to the reader to contemplate the nature[s] of those ways.
[What about Land Art? Good intentions subverted [assimilated] as documentation images, \textit{special} piles of dirt, etc., metamorphized into artifacts sold in galleries to rich people?] I would argue that it is a mistake to try to \textit{fix} any 'solution' in a particular TN (let alone a particular style). Just about everything will decay—in this case, just about everything will tend to be assimilated into late capitalism. [Some kisses are exceptional.] Just as we hold that musical language, visual language, etc., must constantly evolve to 'retard decay', \textit{the language of transmissive networks must constantly evolve to retard decay}. We have let late capitalism rape both what we love and why we love it. We have lacked courage. We have been feeble. It is harder to hit a moving target. Let's roll.
Robbie Conal: Guerrilla Postering

Robbie Conal describes himself as an "agitprop posterer" and "guerrilla satirist." With the help of an ever-expanding network of volunteer associates, he has been slapping up sociopolitically themed posters on the streets of the US since 1985. Typically, the posters are reproductions of Robbie's somewhat grotesque painterly portraits of public figures, coupled with a word or two. Text and image together are intended to activate a moment of critical thinking or disjunction (and maybe a laugh) in viewers who were just going about their daily routines. Robbie describes the posters as, "a little surprise on the long drive to work in the morning: a bit of counter-infotainment, a low-level irritant, visual noise squawking away from every traffic light switching box."  

Figure 43. Robbie Conal, "Contra Diction"

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109. Ibid., 7.
Robbie comes off like a thoughtful, beat pragmatist. He chose guerrilla postering as a means of communication only after he realized that art galleries and other conventional institutions weren't designed to pass along in quantity the sort of critical political subjects that lit him up. As an added bonus: "It's not just art about politics when you deliver it this way and distribute it this way, it is politics"—if a "very minor form."\textsuperscript{10} His work might appeal to liberals—or libertarians; or anyone already or potentially alert to abuse of power by politicians or any other self-anointed 'authorities', to hypocrisy and hubris.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{false_profit}
\caption{Robbie Conal, "False Profit"}
\end{figure}

For the last ten years or so, Robbie's work has also been transmitted through the LA Weekly, where he has a monthly column called 'Artburn'.

\footnotesize
\begin{quote}
\end{quote}
As with the Barnstormers, it doesn't make sense to describe Robbie's guerrilla postering as a single discrete system. Clearly reception by the public of posters slapped up in public space is an essential aspect of the work; but Robbie's narratives make it just as clear that the community process of transmitting the work yields a massive payoff, too. Therefore, I will consider that the 'art' of Robbie's work divides into two parts. They exist in different times from one another and involve different participants. The first has to do with the fact that Robbie & Co.'s preparations and postering qua postering involve ritualized modes and manners—reasonably identified, I think, as a sort of performance art. The second lives in the posters themselves, issues around their design and manufacture, and the public's reception of them in context—i.e., already established in public space. As the transmissive network is parsed into domains below, each domain will be further divided to accommodate this two-part conception of the work:

I. guerrilla postering as performance art

II. regarding the artifacts and their reception

Space [I.]: Crews are briefed, given supplies (the posters and glue) and otherwise prepared in bars, diners and cafes. Or sometimes they might meet in a space provided by a sponsoring or facilitating organization. They drive around in whatever cars are available; Robbie began in 1985 with a Honda Civic wagon ("The Gluemobile") and a Rent-A-Wreck 1982 Mercury Cougar sedan.

111. When, as sometimes happens, Robbie Conal's work receives additional media attention—having gotten busted for this or that, there are additional effects.
Space [II.]: The posters are hung on city streets in the U.S. They "were originally scaled to the size of LA traffic light switching boxes—hint hint." Robbie suggests prohibitions against postering on church and federal property, and places where their presence (and removal) would create hassles for other people. Often the posters join the company of other, commercial posters, making de facto collages with existing posters beside or beneath—making it extra fun for posterers interesting in mining "serendipitous secondary meanings." Adding graffiti on the posters is encouraged as well. [There is a little more on this point under the next heading.]

Performance Agencies [I.]: Posterers are a random, ever-changing collection of people—friends, artists, actors, activists, punk and others. Volunteer crews are often aided by facilitators, "tour guides" and "ringers"—such as Mike Swindle: "[A] tall, goateed, Vietnam-generation poet. A true son of the South; denizen of the blues-lounge underbelly of the French Quarter." There are other people who respond (live) to the postering: cops, sex workers, homeless people and more. And since Robbie's work has achieved a degree of notoriety, he and his crews have often been accompanied by reporters and documentary film crews.

113. Conal, _Art Attack_, 16.
114. Ibid., 30.
There are also people who add to the posters *after* they're put up—"[c]omments, addendums, alterations and improvements. I welcome the participation. Positive *and* negative."\(^{115}\)

Performance Agencies [II.]: The posters are designed by Robbie; sometimes with his wife, Debbie Ross; sometimes collaborating with professional photographers (especially Alan Shaffer), silk-screeners and printers; and sometimes with commissioning agents such as the Greater Los Angeles Coalition for Reproductive Rights, Refuse & Resist and ACT UP.

Theaters of Pre- and Post-Performance [I.]: The pre-performance theater centers around communicating protocols and furnishing supplies, and a modest amount of food and drink. The theater of post-performance involves recounting posterling experiences, food, libations, dancing and partying. [A favorite spot in LA, for example, is Canter's Deli on Fairfax Avenue.]

Theaters of Pre- and Post-Performance [II.] With respect to reception, pre- and post-performance theaters vary per individual. They are formed in relation to whatever a given individual is doing, wherever she is going when she sees an instance of the poster. The post-performance theater may or may not involve a substantial response—such as reflection on a surprise manifestation of 'art' or an odd political gesture; or even an impulse to respond to the poster by writing on it, tearing at it, or in some other fashion. It may or may not involve sneering, full of hate, cranking up the Rush a couple notches, while taking another

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112. Ibid., 16.
pull on a fast food strawberry milkshake, contemplating the End of Days, snapping the neck of another kitten.

Performance Protocol [I.] This is bound to vary based on volunteers' backgrounds and dispositions. For example, in the late '80s, a poster campaign in Chicago was organized around John Cusack's theater company, "The New Criminals." They came to poster dressed in period costumes. [That's the exception.] As to recommended demeanor:

Be polite to everyone, especially the police; don't poster on merchants' windows, occupied buildings, or mailboxes. If people ask for a poster, give them one. If they ask for ten, give them one. If they want to discuss the issues, talk with them, but not too long. Don't argue. Stuff like that. The object of the action was alternative distribution—sharing our concerns about public issues, not troublemaking. As for not getting caught: Don't poster in a straight line. Zigzag around your turf. Don't stay at one site for more than five minutes, or out on the streets for more than an hour and a half. This was supposed to be empowering, not incarcerating. Not that anyone would ever listen. These were guerrillas, and this was supposed to be the land of the free.116

Conal also cites his 'party line': say you're doing "[a]n art project exercising my First Amendment rights, about choice in American politics."117

Here's more from Robbie's website [http://www.robbieconal.com/guerrilla.html], "Guerrilla Etiquette & Poster Techniques":

**WHAT WE WANT**

1. Mass distribution of our message.
The most direct form of unmediated expression available--cheap--to underfolks like us. "Get the Shiznit to the Public", as the Chocolate Sunflower would put it.

116. Ibid., 20.
117. Ibid., 57.
2. Counter-infotainment
A surprise for people on their way to work in the morning. Critical ideas where people least expect them. To tickle the general public into thinking along with us about issues we think are important to the health of American democracy, the Constitution, our First Amendment rights, and the future of Rock’n’Roll.

3. Empowerment To take direct cooperative action on an issue that concerns us.
For the general public who feel they have no avenues of resistance to the dominant power structure, no community support system, no ability to change their situation. To change apathy and cynicism to optimism.

WHAT WE DON'T WANT

1. Don't Get Arrested!
Be polite to everyone on the streets at night. Especially the police! Going to jail could ruin your evening. If you're hassling with the cops, you're not distributing our message. The PoPo are just doing their job out there. The Guerrilla etiquette definition of conversation with the police is: They talk, we listen. Do what they tell you. Get off their beat. Go to another neighborhood. They'll ask you what you're doing. Tell them it's an "ART PROJECT"- Nothing else. If they want you to stop, take the posters down, whatever--just say OK, do it and leave quietly. Then go to another part of town (easy in LA, it's a big town) and continue your good work! *PS- This goes for "Rent a Cops" as well. They'll lose their jobs if posters are found on property they're guarding--jobs are scarce; poster sites are plentiful.

2. Don't alienate our audience.
This includes merchants, private property owners and people on the streets. Don't poster on store windows, walls, surfaces. Don't poster on city property (though the posters were originally scaled to the size of LA traffic light switching boxes--hint hint), church property or federal property (mailboxes). Discuss the poster and the issues with pedestrians if they ask, but don't talk too long and don't argue. If people want a poster give them one. If they want two then--give them one. If cars roll up and drivers or passengers want a poster, give them one. They're our audience--our people. Treat 'em right! [anecdotal evidence; "Lenny Lambchop" was getting up on telephone boxes in NYC lower east side around 2 am; the bars were letting out. Two beautiful working girls wobbled over to him and asked if they could have posters. "What are you gonna do with 'em?", he asked. One of the ladies, wearing a too short spandex something, replied, "I'm gonna put "MEN WITH NO LIPS" up in my room." Concerned, L.L. said, "But we want lots of people to see them." The other woman winked, "Oh they will, honey, at least twenty people a night!" Good enough.

Sponsorship [Actual]: Robbie is an adjunct professor at USC. He sells books about his work. He receives commissions and honoraria for speaking engagements. He sells work. He has received grants from the NEA and the Getty Foundation. His work has benefactors, 'angels'. And he has a steady gig doing sheets for the LA Weekly.

[Apparent] Sponsorship [I.]: Sponsorship is unclear. It's clear that police officers don't know. No commodity is pointed to. It's not even clear in what sector of culture the posters originate. Art? Politics? Punk? Vandalism?

[Apparent] Sponsorship [II.]: [With respect to the artifacts and their reception.] There is usually no manifest sponsorship. In some cases, one might imagine (in error) that the posters are sponsored by political figures or machines opposed to those satirized. In many cases no such force or agent can be imagined. For example, the 'Contra Cocaine' poster was sponsored by the Christic Institute:

![Contra Cocaine Poster](image)

*Figure 45. Robbie Conal, "Contra Cocaine"*
Individuals viewing a pro-choice poster featuring Chief Justice Rehnquist are advised that it is within their rights to seek family planning counseling. That poster would suggest sponsorship by family planning organizations—as indeed it had received.

Material Technologies [I.]: Posters, glue in buckets, brushes; found 'performance' spaces; cars [if not walking], other transportation.

Material Technologies [II.]: Robbie's studio in LA; paint, brushes and other art materials. Sometimes photography and/or digital imaging gear. Posters have been produced by a variety of printing techniques—from a "Giant Black Heidelberg Press" to the "best
silkscreener in L.A. These days, there are a lot of digital transfers—involving computers and fancy printers. [Still, the ground level is cheap. 'Postering is the soccer of the art world.]

![Achtung Baby!](image)

*Figure 47. Robbie Conal, "Achtung Baby"

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As Howard Zinn writes in the forward to Robbie Conal's most recent collection of images and text, satirical image-making is a venerable form of political activism. Zinn cites cartoons published in France following the (kinda vaporized) Revolution, for example; and

those addressing the industry-driven call to WWI in America.\textsuperscript{120} [For a more sincere practice, check out Martin Luther's 'postering' activities.] Conal isn't responsible for the creation of a genre. His work is innovative in its synthesis of his images' characteristic over-the-top fleshiness [R. Crumb? de Kooning?]; his smart, economical, cynical, 'post' use of language ['False Profit']; and a guerrilla mode of distribution. In other words, he created a unique and identifiable style or voice in the total 'filling'→transmission network. The TN itself doesn't come out of nowhere.

["I'm happy if people look at it and say, 'what the hell does that mean?'"]\textsuperscript{121}

Nevertheless, that TN is outrageously effective in diversifying and broadening participation in the aesthetic experience it brings. And space (gladly) made for 'talking back' does deepen participation—and by anyone. Participation by ever-evolving communities of postering guerrillas is quite deep. And Conal's activities model a mode of DIY engagement that 'give permission' to other individual creators to do similar things. Again, Conal didn't invent, like, graffiti art; but he reinforces a delicious American [!] myth concerning an individual's right to speak back (with style) to power—and models this right for all to see. And a lot of people see those posters.

This work exists hugely as political speech—in its 'filling', in its TN, and in the combination of the two.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[120] Robbie Conal, \textit{Artburn}. From preface by Howard Zinn, p. 1.
\item[121] Conal, metropolitan.org interview, Part Two.
\end{footnotes}
The Wolf Project

And the Wolf Shall Inherit the Moon—the 'Wolf Project', as it is usually referred to by those familiar with it—is an awfully multi-faceted thing. Everyone who tries to describe or write about it acknowledges this up front. It is, for one, an eight-plus-day camping trip into the Haliburton National Forest, Ontario, Canada, undertaken by around 64 men, women and children every August. It is, for another, the twelfth and final work in R. Murray Schafer's Patria Cycle—a still-in-progress group of conventionally-staged and site-specific works exploring:

alienation and misunderstanding between two characters, a male archetype (variously a refugee, a criminal, Theseus, Mozart, Nietzsche, Anubis, and a wolf) and a female archetype (variously a child, a mental patient, a party girl, Ariadne, and a celestial princess).122

The drama that unfolds within And the Wolf Shall Inherit the Moon at long last consummates, resolves, unifies these various fractures. Not only male / female, but also mind / body, humanitas / technology, and human beings / deity are brought symbolically into harmony. This is achieved in an explicit, extroverted manner on 'Great Wheel Day', in which all participants come together on the project's penultimate day for a three-hour-long, dinner-straddling dramatic performance, with chamber orchestra and choir [everyone]. The events are situated in an enormous field; and later, on a cliff overlooking one of the Forest's many pristine lakes, as twilight settles into night proper.

On could make the case that other, interior harmonies are achieved by individual participants at other times during the week. Time is filled first with setting up one's own camp. The 64 participants are divided into eight clans, each having a totemic animal. Two clans share a campsite, for four campsites total. Each site has areas for pitching tents, cooking, eating, swimming and bathing, a campfire for storytelling, etc., a place to take one's constitutional. Even before arriving a schedule of chores is drawn up—equitably governing cooking, cleaning, obtaining and purifying water, and other miscellaneous tasks. A day or two is spent settling in. Experienced 'Wolves' begin to teach less experienced ones chants, songs, rituals, mythologies, the project's history and culture. There are a number of rituals performed daily—in the morning: silence → (playing or waking up to) the morning aubade → ritual morning poem (after which we may talk) → breakfast → 'opening the wheel', etc.; at day's end: campfire stories, songs, chants → ritual evening poem → silence → (teeth brushing, etc.) → (playing or listening to) the evening nocturne → (reading, writing, etc.) → sleep.

['Opening the wheel': each site has its own 'wheel', a circle laid out on the ground and adorned—a miniature version of the 'Great Wheel', maybe 30' in diameter compared to a couple hundred feet. 'Opening the wheel' in the morning, and 'closing the wheel' at night are among my favorite rituals. Anyone who wishes and is available in camp, after breakfast and dinner (respectively), walks a few minutes to the camp's wheel site, at first silent, then softly singing a chant as we draw closer. There are a couple observances upon entering the wheel. Then, processing clockwise, we fill in the wheel with our bodies, grouped by clan—first crows, in our case; bears further on. After a few whiles, we stop singing. We
stand in silence as long as we like (varying per individual). We leave, one at a time, whenever—again, moving always clockwise.]

These actions are part of a daily ritual order. Another form orders the whole eight days. Following the settling in period, each clan plans and prepares 'Forest Encounters'—dramatic and often musical, (more and less) participatory pieces ranging (even within themselves) from straightforward scripted / structured and acted dramas, to rather abstract, uncommented tableau-like experiences. Forest Encounters (again, even within themselves, varying over time) tend to suggest a variety of relationships between us human beings and our behaviors out there in the woods: we are performers & spectators, or co-collaborators; we are warm, rather earnest camping Canadians, or witnesses to strange species of the transcendent. A new wolf comes to know the people at her campsite pretty well pretty quickly; but Wolves in other campsites are (at first) strangers until these Forest Encounters. Then, the entire population of the project takes two or three days to hike from one site to another to check out what everyone else has been up to.

The final couple days—not counting packing up afterward—are consumed with preparing and realizing Great Wheel Day. So there's a gesture over these eight days from small (campsite) and relatively introverted to large (Great Wheel Day) and relatively extroverted.

[Here's this: We're camping out in the woods—way out in the woods. Having enough water to drink, being warm and dry, these things aren't trivial. I have a greater sense of 'what is necessary' to live—a rather minimal collection of items. That collection is more present in
my thoughts than it normally is; and it's a collection rather unrelated to most of the abstract or status-involved or consumeristic things my mind tends to orbit around ordinarily. At the same time, my days at Wolf are measured, time is ordered with work and ritual; a lot of time is comprised of ritual, contemplation, chanting. So there is time, thought and energy spent with fundamental physical concerns; and time, thought and energy spent with (what I, at least, take to be) spiritual concerns; and all the worldly concerns—in the middle?—typically disdained by gurus are right out.

Figure 48. An image from R. Murray Schafer’s *The Princess of the Stars*
The Wolf Project's Domains

Space: The Haliburton Forest, Ontario Province, Canada. This is private land whose use is granted to the Wolf Project by one Peter Schleifenbaum. The Project ranges over perhaps 50 square miles of this land—four campsites, several lakes, several special sites near or between campsites—all far from other human beings. There are fields great and small, high perches, ravines, trees that especially suggest themselves as stages, shallow caves, many (room-like) intimate spaces formed by geographical chance.

Sponsorship [Actual]: The Wolf Project's operating expenses are paid for entirely by participants. There is a yearly fee (of about $150) to cover food and project-level supplies; and in most cases, participants use their own money to cover camping gear, travel expenses, costumes and instruments, etc. A limited amount of financial aid is available for those who need it. Use of the Haliburton Forest is granted by the owner, Peter Schleifenbaum.

[Apparent] Sponsorship: Same as 'Sponsorship [Actual]'.

Performance Agencies: Approximately sixty-four individuals who share an interest in the project. Their ages range from two to seventy. They are mostly Canadians; a couple Americans; a couple Brazilians; a Greek or two. Many are involved (in their 'ordinary' lives) in some aspect of the arts or education; several are experts on all things outdoors; some have come to the project out of simple curiosity. Everyone must 'apply'—a process that requires letters of recommendation by two people already involved, and a statement of purpose and experience written by the applicant to the entire group.
[There is a sort of governing body, a subset, a 'council of elders'. Murray remains essentially the captain of the project entire; but anyone may steer themselves into a 'leadership role'—especially over time. I don't find it overly problematic that Murray, the project's principal architect, would (and does) want to exercise authority in matters of form, casting, materials, etc. However, in my view, there is yet too much ego involved in the project, manifest rarely but sometimes, in petty hierarchies, favoritism and sycophancy—a practice that isn't discouraged. Nothing's perfect.]

Bears, loons, turtles.

Performance Protocols: The Wolf Project contains so many kinds of performance. Canoe with strength and grace [get the 'J-stroke' in your soul]. Play your oboe as well as this downpour allows. Or this crackling 90˚ sun. Make the screen for the upper KYBO artful. [A 'KYBO' is a five-or-so foot deep hole in the ground, an ad hoc toilet, stands for 'keep your bowels open'.] Be thoughtful in your cooking and cleaning; serve yourself last. Volunteer a little extra. Push yourself to do something other than what you're already good at. Get into it. Have a can-do attitude. A bit of stoicism. Good cheer. A certain type of sincerity …

A sincerity within certain limits: I have often noticed the simultaneous presence of belief in enacted rituals (and their efficacy) and constant (though often non-explicit) awareness of late capitalist social order—of which, without question, Canada presents a relatively mild case.

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The Wolf Project forces a confrontation of the body- and soul-felt rightness and naturalness of what we're doing—with the artificiality of what we're doing. After all, in order to land our 'naturalness', we deny all but a few of the last few millenia's technological advances, we have to appropriate and adapt mythologies and rituals from cultures not our own, we have to radically isolate ourselves from our normative social settings. I learn that wholeness is yummy—just as the extent to which my culture is bereft of social forms that promote wholeness is underscored. Therefore, for me, there is self-consciousness lurking behind a good many natural moments. Not always; and maybe in suspension of disbelief the 'work' triumphs. And maybe the work triumphs, too, as it mounts pressure on me to compose an 'ordinary' life replete with wholeness-promoting rituals, rituals that are yet comfortable for me; so that the differential between the Wolf Project and ordinary life shrinks every year.

But I digress. Or maybe not—because the discursive complex of which this description is a quick sketch, tends to hang over or flood me as I participate in Wolf; and, I think, most others have an analogous experience. Everyone's personal response to 'alienation' / not-alienation attends the modes they discover and refine at Wolf, constitutes the culture, informs 'performance protocols'.

[What's wrong with inventing your own rituals? Isn't that the most glorious purpose of art?]
[Oh: For some reason, I am always hungry at the Wolf Project. I wake up hungry. I put on pounds and pounds out there in the woods. In my ordinary life I have to force myself to eat lest I disperse.]

Pre-Performance Theater: There is an email group. There are occasional meetings in Canada at which matters mostly practical are decided—such as where to move a certain campsite now that bears have discovered it as a mid-August source for food. The serious woodsmen spend a good week or so before the project starts at 'pre-camp'—clearing trails, doing some heavy-duty logistical stuff. On move-in day we meet in the parking lot before heading (way) into the woods. But I would consider even this to be part of Wolf. So I would define the theaters of pre- and post-performance to be the drives or flights up there; but one often carpool with other Wolves! So what then? I would say, 'preparations'—making and acquiring supplies, costumes, etc. And beyond that, 'ordinary life'.

Post-Performance Theater: See 'Pre-Performance Theater'.

Material Technologies: This is a huge category. Instruments—homemade, non-western and western (as big as a double bass in size, conveyed to the site by canoe), traditional and non-traditional; music and scripts; camping gear—clothing, boots, sneakers, foul-weather gear, tarps, tents, sleeping bags, rope, knives, machetes, chainsaws, a dozen or so canoes; food in bear-proof barrels; propane and gas stoves [some campsites use them; others go retro, cooking over a wood fire]; personal items—toiletries, books, journals, etc.; costumes and fixings for costumes; a satellite phone for medical emergencies.
Considering whether or not And the Wolf Shall Inherit the Moon is innovative within its discipline, one has first to address the question of what its discipline is. The project is clearly related in various ways to cults and communes, to the Bread and Puppet Theater's Domestic Resurrection Circus and Pageant, to Joseph Beuys's I like America and America likes me—not to mention Greek theater, passion plays or Druidic rites. The Wolf Project may represent a uniquely Canadian, 'Schaferian' version of communal musical theater, brimming with 'acoustic ecology', plentiful serendipities granted by the natural world, and mythological hybridization. Its duration is pretty extreme. Its physical conditions are regularly extreme [I'm thinking of weather and bears]. Certainly the project is innovative within its 'genre'. It provides a novel (art) experience for all who participate in it—and interesting new things happen year after year, against the backdrop of an increasingly familiar ritual order.

There is seldom an audience separate from performers / creators. Even when such a division is suggested, the 'audience' feels to be an integral part of the proceedings—painted and dressed up as animals, baking in the sun (or shivering in the rain). The project doesn't broaden or diversify its 'audience'—though membership has grown from nine to 64 over the last decade and a half, there isn't much turnover now. It does deepen participation of its 'audience' to an extreme.
The project speaks for nature and against a technologically impulsive, myopically anti-humanist mode of day-to-day living. Its design renders its commodification impossible—although it enjoys a mystique that might add to the value of other of Schafer's works (and I'm getting something out of it, for example, by being able to write about it). Mostly, though, it argues for cooperation and community, finding our roots, eschewing the hustle and bustle, creating meaningful myths and rituals—and these are sufficiently antithetical to the arguments of late capitalism as to be pretty intensely political. The Wolf Project does preach to the converted; but I think the understanding (of even the most converted) of 'what one ought to do' is deepened and nuanced.
Chapter 4

Zen, &c.

In the Rinzai School of Zen Buddhism, masters direct students to meditate upon koans as a means to progress toward satori, an enlightened state of being. ['Enlightenment' is described as a supra-rational mode of consciousness from which reason may still be employed at the (supra-rational) discretion of the enlightened being.] Koans are thought problems, sometimes presented as simple questions, such as: "Show me your original face before you were born," or "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" As it happens, reason can play no direct role in forming a solution that is acceptable to the master, for koans are designed to reveal that reason is a tool grossly inadequate to the task of apprehending truth. As long as she is allied with reason, the student beats her head against a wall—against a succession of walls that fly up to reveal reason's Mickey Mouse territory. The koan induces a crisis. The master ruthlessly intensifies the crisis. The student, if she is lucky, has satori.

Sometimes koans are embedded in stories, as in Mu-mon-kan ['The Gateless Gate'] by Ekai. In this work from the 13th century, Ekai follows each of 49 stories with a commentary and poem, forming a tripartite 'unity', a higher order structure. It is perhaps

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reasonable to imagine that the story-commentary-poem set might clarify the koan proper, helping the student to grasp its meaning and scope—because it engages the kernel of the koan from additional perspectives and with different voices. What does happen: relationships between poem, commentary and koan range from reasonable to obscure/oblique to nil. Therefore, this higher order structure reinforces (or does not reinforce) the logic ↔ illogic of the koan proper. Two examples follow:

7. Joshu Washes the Bowl

A MONK TOLD Joshu: "I have just entered the monastery. Please teach me."
Joshu asked: "Have you eaten your rice porridge?"
The monk replied: "I have eaten."
Joshu said: "Then you had better wash your bowl."
At that moment the monk was enlightened.

_Mummon's comment:_ Joshu is the man who opens his mouth and shows his heart. I doubt if this monk really saw Joshu's heart. I hope he did not mistake the bell for a pitcher.

*It is too clear and so it is hard to see.*
*A dunce once searched for a fire with a lighted lantern.*
*Had he known what fire was,*
*he could have cooked his rice much sooner.*

16. Bells and Robes

_UMMON ASKED:_ "The world is such a wide world, why do you answer a bell and don ceremonial robes?"

_Mummon's comment:_ When one studies Zen one need not follow sound or color or form. Even though some have attained insight when hearing a voice or seeing a
color or form, this is a very common way. It is not true Zen. The real Zen student controls sound, color, form, and actualizes the truth in his everyday life.

Sound comes to the ear, the ear goes to sound. When you blot out sound and sense, what do you understand? While listening with ears one never can understand. To understand intimately one should see sound.

*When you understand, you belong to the family;*
*When you do not understand, you are a stranger;*
*Those who do not understand belong to the family,*
*And when they understand they are strangers.*

We could argue that we discern something of a unified 'meaning' among two or three of these parts. For example, we could say the poem of *Joshu Washes the Bowl* states that the means needed by the subject to attain enlightenment are always right in front of him, in the simple and the mundane; indeed, their ubiquity (ironically) obscures their profundity. Surely this is what Joshu expresses in the koan, too—directing the monk to the task immediately at hand. On a material level, these two parts have only "rice" in common. But we could allow that both elucidate the 'right in front of you' theme obliquely, cubistically. We might acknowledge, too, that if we assign such a meaning we seem to reach beyond the text to what we have heard and read about Zen. How does the third part, the 'comment' fit in? Not very well, I think. But we could articulate our theme to the master. [And earn a stick to the head! For the master is looking not for a solution rendered in the language of our ordinary mode of being, but for a solution that *is* a different mode of being.]

In terms of how the parts inform one another, I find *Bells and Robes* to be noisier still, less obvious. And internally, too, its parts suggest (to me) less precise interpretation.
Here is another example, interesting because Ekai’s comment restates the koan almost literally—adding just one line that does seem to address the koan's 'problem' rather succinctly:

43. Shuzan's Short Staff

SHUZAN HELD OUT his short staff and said: "If you call this a short staff, you oppose its reality. If you do not call it a short staff, you ignore the fact. Now what do you wish to call this?"

Mummon's comment: If you call this a short staff, you oppose its reality. If you do not call it a short staff, you ignore the fact. It cannot be expressed with words and it cannot be expressed without words. Now say quickly what it is.

*Holding out the short staff,*

*He gave an order of life or death.*

*Positive and negative interwoven,*

*Even Buddhas and patriarchs cannot escape this attack.*

In general, I would suggest that Ekai is having some fun. Because the koans' solutions are not of logic and language, logical and linguistic relationships among the three parts are strictly discretionary. The object of discussion may be consistent or not. Insofar as it is not, the tripartite structure expresses illogic at a systemic-logical order one higher than the koan. Insofar as it is, the tripartite structure reinforces a pressure we feel for consistency and good faith 'elucidation' elsewhere in the text [i.e., in other koan-comment-poem sets where a search for consistency will disappoint]! Because *this very consistency* is

126. Is the form of the problem always consistent?
inconsistent from one koan-comment-poem set to the next, the entire text works just as the kernel of the koan does: to confound reason—at a systemic-logical order two higher than the koan. Illogic abounds. At no level of remove is the use of reason a bankable strategy.

Incidentally, the question "The world is such a wide world, why do you answer a bell and don ceremonial robes?" invites the student to look beyond the structure of Zen practice entire. It is the nature of Zen always to call out and act within contexts of higher logical types. This fact explains my interest in Zen with respect to TNs.

Zen's 'reasonable thought' is within limits analogous to (stagnant) cybernetic 'pattern'. Satori lies outside (and beyond) the domain of reason. Satori is transcendent with respect to the domain of reason: its experience involves, from our perspective, the addition of 'dimension'—'new patterns' for sure. Koans are noise that allow (or impel) the subject to reorganize herself. Koans are pure anticommunication.

Composed transmission and Zen have other things in common.
Yet another issue related to both Zen and composed transmission is the 'double bind' theory advanced by Bateson and others in the 1950's. Double bind theory explains schizophrenia as the result of a pathological mode of communication, usually originating in the family. This mode of communication results in 'victims' who are unable to distinguish between logical types (and from there the literal and the metaphorical, the Symbolic and the Real, 


Logical types were themselves described by Bertrand Russell in *Principia Mathematica*. The theory lays out a number of axioms that allow delineation and hierarchical arrangement of logical types—specifying in particular that a class cannot be a member of itself.

With respect to communication, logical types speak to *context*. Human communication uses several modes of communication [logical types] simultaneously. Higher logical types recommend interpretive imperatives per lower ones, and the network as a whole helps receivers to interpret 'correctly' incoming communication. Modes of communication may include spoken language, tone of voice, body language, historical context and more. In practice, the boundaries that separate logical types in human communication are breached as a matter of course. Wilden notes that "condensation" of logical types is particularly common in creative human endeavors—such as humor. And "[t]he diversity of communicational modes amongst human beings allows the breaching of the boundaries between logical types both WITHIN the message in any given mode of communication and BETWEEN the message and its contexts."\(^{130}\)

In practice, there is a world of difference between spoken language delivered in an ironic versus a sincere tone of voice. Body language functions similarly. Historical context informs apparent discourse, too—so, for example, promises to refrain from drunken rages mean one thing coming from Mother Theresa and quite another coming from late-stage alcoholics. Again, in the case of humor, "[t]he punch-line of a joke has the peculiar effect of

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requiring a reevaluation of anterior logical typing. Thus a previous message in the joke, which appeared as a communication (as literal), may be reevaluated by the punch-line so that it becomes a metacommunication (a metaphor), and it is the oscillation between message and meta-message which is amusing. On a darker note, double binding creates a universe in which the victim 'cannot win' and cannot escape—except by going mad. It is in this sense that schizophrenia is seen as an 'adaptation with survival value' (and the first step in the cure).

The following is an edited version of the double bind list of "ingredients" provided by Bateson et al.

... 2. Repeated experience. We assume that the double bind is a recurrent theme in the experience of the victim. ...

3. A primary negative injunction. This may have either of two forms: (a) "Do not do so and so, or I will punish you," or (b) "If you do not do so and so, I will punish you."...

4. A secondary injunction conflicting with the first at a more abstract level, and like the first enforced by punishments or signals which threaten survival. This secondary injunction is more difficult to describe than the primary for two reasons. First, the secondary injunction is commonly communicated to the child by nonverbal means. Posture, gesture, tone of voice, meaningful action, and the implications concealed in verbal comment may all be used to convey this more abstract message. Second, the secondary injunction may impinge upon any element of the primary prohibition. Verbalization of the secondary injunction may, therefore, include a wide variety of forms; for example, "Do not see this as punishment"; "Do no submit to my prohibitions"; ..."Do not question my love of which the primary prohibition is (or is not) an example"; and so on. Other examples become possible when the double bind is inflicted not by one individual but by two. For example, one parent may negate at a more abstract level the injunctions of the other.

131. Wilden, System and Structure, 118.
5. A tertiary negative injunction prohibiting the victim from escaping from the field … 

6. Finally, the complete set of ingredients in no longer necessary when the victim has learned to perceive his universe in double bind patterns. Almost any part of a double bind sequence may then be sufficient to precipitate panic or rage … 132

More:

A young man who had fairly well recovered from an acute schizophrenic episode was visited in the hospital by his mother. He was glad to see her and impulsively put his arm around her shoulders, whereupon she stiffened. He withdrew his arm and she asked, "Don't you love me any more?" He then blushed and she said, "Dear, you must not be so easily embarrassed and afraid of your feelings." … Obviously, this result could have been avoided if the young man had been able to say, "Mother, it is obvious that you become uncomfortable when I put my arm around you, and that you have difficulty accepting a gesture of affection from me." However, the schizophrenic patient doesn't have this possibility open to him. His intense dependency and training prevents him from commenting upon his mother's communicative behavior … 133

This recalls a sketch by Steve Martin in which he says something like this: if you want to have some fun with your kid, whenever you're around him, "talk wrong." The nascent schizophrenic is taught that distinctions between logical types are far are worse than useless. Rather than containing contextualizing information helpful in determining 'correct' action (to win the parent's love), his network of communicational modes delivers a paradox. That rule, so Bateson argues, gets generalized, with terrible results. As well, the 'other' that is at first embodied by this sort of parent is abstracted, generalized, and vests itself in other 'others'—out in society and in the psyche of the victim.

133. Bateson, Steps, 217.
Most interestingly, Bateson's paper contrasts this sort of double bind with the pedagogical methodology of *Zen*. Zen masters, the authors say, provoke a similar crisis with the koan. Their example joins use of the koan to a threat of physical violence [I would maintain that *physical* violence is generally non-essential to Zen's 'double bind']; you will recognize this variation: "If you say this stick is real, I will strike you with it. If you say this stick is not real, I will strike you with it. If you don't say anything, I will strike you with it." 

In Zen, the injunction "prohibiting the victim from escaping from the field" has been lifted. In fact, the master *has designed an experience that requires escape*—escape realized by implicitly or explicitly naming 'the field'. In Wilden's terminology, the solution is an act of (transcendent) *metacommunication*. The Zen master has a beneficent, compassionate attitude toward the student—quite unlike the double binding parent. The Zen pedagogical methodology is a *good* double bind.

Furthermore, the *good* double bind is generalizable: Bateson *et al* go on to argue that "all therapy depends on the proper use of the double bind." 

I have addressed this subject because I see a striking resemblance between the double bind (the good kind), and the art favored by both Adorno and Brün. [Although Adorno in particular seems to lose hope as a function of time that any sort of art can do anything, so grim are the circumstances he observes: "The core of the sociological difference between

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135. Wilden points out that metacommunication is in fact *always* possible and, again, going mad is a successful adaptive strategy (under the circumstances) for schizophrenics: it is the first step toward the cure.
the new music about 1960 and that of about 1920 is probably political resignation, a reflex on that concentration of social power which either forbids the impotent to act or transforms their action into that of another power."137] Hope for them lies in a ruthless representation of what is in fact the case, though—or 'especially because'—what is the case massively, devastatingly contradicts what we are every moment told is the case by the society of the spectacle.

In other words, the art they (and I) favor creates a situation in which the total network of communicational modes contains radically contradictory messages.

Finally, for better or for worse, the situation art-makers face resembles a double bind. [Actually, some artists are mostly whores, and we should forget about them for now. This discussion simply is not for people who mostly want to 'win'.] From various parts of ourselves, we hear and envoice truly noble, compassionate, loving, altruistic motivations—I think both innate and constructed, hard-won. And from others, we hear and envoice base, selfish and vainglorious motivations—both innate and constructed, easily-won. Both go into the internal discourse (recursive, of course) that attends our production of art—and then its transmission.

We may perceive what contradiction obtains. In all seriousness, I hope we may transcend the situation with a bit of metacommunication.

137. Adorno, Sociology, 182.
An Interview with Michael Swaine

Figure 50. Michael Swaine & Poster

Space:

Precisely where in the Tenderloin do you set up?

I set up at 509 Ellis, which is between Hyde and Leavenworth. And there's a little teeny alley called Cohen Alley. And the alley is now in part owned by this gallery -- I think there was all sorts of tough stuff happening in the alley -- so the city gave the alley to this gallery. So now it's kind of gated off, but it's opened for events, like puppet shows and dance performances and my sewing project.

Would you offer a description of the environment? Like what shops are across the street?

The two hotels right next to the alley are … you have to apply to live in them -- it's kind of low-income housing. So the people who live there pay a percentage of their income -- I think they pay 15% or something like that. And then right across the street there's a little Indian grocery store; and then a little further down the block there's a little school, a kind of playground. You know there're a lot of places to get Vietnamese sandwiches. There's a lot of ethnic mix in the Tenderloin.
Sponsorship [Actual]:

What's your day job?

[Laughs.] I wonder myself. You know, in the end I'm a freelance builder. Sometimes that's working for this … it's a very loose … I don't know if you've been to my friend's website? Future Farmers?

Yeah, I have.

So, you know, Amy does all sorts of things and she's a really famous web designer. So ages ago we started working together. So sometimes it's like we're collaborating and neither of us gets paid, and other times she has some big project that she wants to do and has some money to do the project. So it's kind of a changing thing. But for a long time that was my day job, working for Future Farmers. Sometimes that would entail sewing strange shapes for an exhibit she had -- so like we would sew backpacks or tie knots for this show. There was a chair we designed that went into [the Smithsonian Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum] for this design show in New York. So sometimes it's really fun, exciting things like that. Right now she has a lot less work, so right now my day job is closer to handyman work, to pay the bills: scraping paint, putting tiles down on the floor.

Grants?

There was the Generosity Show -- I forget, they've kind of changed the name of it; but that was really the first little chunk of money for the sewing project. And that gave me the money to build the cart, and gave me a little bit of money while I was spending the week walking around the city. Now there's not as much moving with the cart, and I just set up in that one alley, and it's kind of an experiment on regularity. You know, when you push the cart through the city, lots of time you'll meet somebody, and they'll be far away from their closet, and they'll be like, 'Oh, that's great, but I can't get to my clothes because they're at home.' And you give them a map but there's really no time, exact perfect time when you'll be in the next spot.
So now it's kind of like the regulars in the neighborhood know exactly where I'm going to be and they come. And now the people who run that gallery sometimes have enough money, and they'll give me a little bit of money for my sewing venture.

[Apparent] Sponsorship:

*What do you think people think is the sponsorship? Or what do you think is the apparent sponsorship? Do you think people wonder?*

Sometimes people ask and I'll tell them.

*And you tell them that you're just sort of doing it?*

Sometimes they'll say like, 'Aw, you should take money for what you do.' And I'll say like, 'It's just once a month, and I like it better just to do it for free, once a month.' And some people are really stubborn and they'll be like, 'I want to give you some money.' And so sometimes I'll say like, 'Well, you know, the people that run this little gallery, you know, they deserve the money. And sometimes they give me money; so, you know, you should give your money to the gallery.'

*Has anyone asked you if you were an advertisement for Singer?*

[Laughs.] No. The sewing machine I have is a White Rotary and it's really old. You know, I think they might think that if I had like a fancy, new one.

*But it's such a beautiful icon of sewing-ness ...*

Performance Agencies: [Michael Swaine.]

Performance Agencies [other than Michael Swaine]:

*The other 'regulars' who help out, that kid 'Chip', how'd you meet him?*
You know, Chip is, in a sense, not one of the regulars; but Chip is … my friend's friend is a teacher; and he's in this program where they need to do internships. So he actually came there from Oakland because of the school internship program.

_Is it art or fashion school?_

He's in high school and he's really interested in sewing, so …

_At Nathan's & Emma-Louise's wedding you mentioned, I think, an older Japanese guy?_

Right, Tashi.

_Is he still around?_

He's still around. He's a sushi chef and he lives across the street. So there was one beautiful day while I was sewing where he ran upstairs and brought down green tea for me, and he also brought some little sushi rolls.

_Uh huh._

So, you know, I sat and drank some green tea and ate some sushi in between sewing. And for awhile he was there a lot; and lately I haven't seen him. But sometimes it's like that: you don't see someone for awhile and then they show back up.

_Do you remember the story? He did hand-sewing?_

Right, I mean it was one of my favorite moments when -- you know there are several regulars who will sit down and help now. But there was one moment where he was doing hand-sewing for me, Tashi, sitting on the side. And then this young, kind of tough-looking kid came up and had this big jacket on and it had this little hole in it. And he said, 'Can you fix the hole?' And I was like, 'You know, it's down; it should really be done by hand. Maybe Tashi can do it.' And Tashi looked at it and he's like, 'Yeah, I can do that for you.' And he was watching his car across the street, to make sure the ticket person didn't give him a ticket. So he's like, 'Let's go across the street and sit in the trunk of my car.' So he went across the street and dropped the little back trunk. And they were kind of sitting on the back
trunk of the car, you know, him and this young, tough boy. And he slowly fixed the jacket. And you just … and then people came up to me while I was sewing and they were like, 'Ah, you've got competition across the street.' [I laugh.] And I was like, 'Oh no, that's my friend Tashi.' You realized when you watched it all happen that those two would probably never have said 'hi' to each other. But then this tough boy has, you know, a different respect for the old Japanese man.

_Yup. Oh, that's a good one._

Yeah. It was beautiful.

Pre-Performance Theater [Swaine]:

_How far do you have to walk the cart to get it there?

The cart is there, in the bathroom.

_Of the gallery?_

Of the gallery. And that's another thing that makes it very easy and doable, which is nice. Because it's been two years of once a month. So it's nice to make it doable.

_What's involved in setting it up? Just putting the umbrella up?_

Right. You open the one gate, open the other gate, bring some chairs out so people can sit down if they want to hang out while I'm mending things for them. Bring the cart out, put the umbrella up. It doesn't take that long.

_Are there any ritual behaviors that have found their way into your wind-up or cool-down?_

Usually I go before hand and get a Vietnamese coffee. I don't know if you've had the Vietnamese coffee before.

_No, but I was looking at the Mundane Journeys [http://mundanejourneys.com] website; am I on the right track?_
Vietnamese coffee is really the strongest coffee you can have.

[Intensely interested:] Mmm hmm.

Then they add sweetened condensed milk. This kind of really strong, sweet coffee. It's a really beautiful treat in the Tenderloin. There's a lot of places to get the Vietnamese coffee. Next time you come I'll treat you to a Vietnamese coffee.

I'll gladly accept.

I'll get the Vietnamese coffee, and sometimes halfway in between the day I'll get the Vietnamese sandwich, which is also another special thing. And it's a French roll heated up in the oven, in the little toaster oven, brought out; and then they put shredded carrots and cucumber, and then your meat or tofu -- I usually get tofu if I can. And you put the tofu on there, and this little sauce, and then jalapeno peppers and cilantro. But it's on this warm, tasty -- Uh. Such a good, cheap, cheap sandwich.

Performance Protocols:


Right. I just wear whatever I have. It's kind of, um -- you know, everyone puts the project into a different category. Some people think it's art, some people don't think it's art; some people think it's performance, some people think it's theater. And I think every couple days I might think about it in a different way myself. But I never really … I just kind of wake up and depending on how rushed I am I just throw on whatever's cleanest.

That's good. That's what I thought. And that's the answer I expect. And -- don't be insulted; I expect sort of analogous answers to the next questions: Are there any particular behavioral guidelines or principles you've learned through your experiences thus far? Is your sewing persona pretty darn close to your 'normal' persona?

Yeah, I don't really put on any … yeah, it's still just me out there.
So I guess I was ... I'm interested in a couple things, maybe; one is mode - -and I think I'm getting loud and clear that you don't have a special mode ...

Right. It's interesting: in a sense the Vietnamese coffee is a little bit that. I don't necessarily talk a lot during my normal day; I'm in my studio, or I'm working somewhere, and I'll listen to some music; but I'm pretty quiet. In the Tenderloin, a lot of people come, ask questions, sometimes at the end of the day I've sort of partially lost my voice.

[I laugh.]

So the Vietnamese coffee kind of pumps me up, prepares me for a day of interaction.

Are you extraverted normally?

I'm not introverted or extraverted, I'm somewhere in the middle. But, you know, a day where you're on the streets is very different than any normal one of my days.

When people say -- for instance, Nathan [Lynch, whom we both know] has a collection of lines that he speaks to the question, 'What are you doing?' Or, 'Why the helmet?' -- Just because he gets asked those questions so much, and he doesn't want to -- and I'm sure you don't either, you know ... you needn't think of what you're doing as 'performance art'. So, if somebody asks you what you're doing, you're not about to say, 'Oh, I'm doing performance art, because I have an MFA.' So what do you speak when people say, 'What are you doing?' Or does everyone know?

There're a lot of people who know now, so [that question comes up] a little bit less than in the beginning. But it's changed, at least changed in my head since the beginning. Usually it's like, 'What are you doing?' And I'll say, 'Free mending.' And it's the simplest, short explanation. And some people will be like, 'OK, why?' And then my answer is usually something like, 'I just think it's a nice thing to do for the neighborhood.' Or 'for the city.' And it's usually people who stay longer, who sit down for awhile; and I think they start to realize, you know, 'Huh.' You know, I kind of talk about ... if I wasn't there with the sewing machine, people wouldn't necessarily stop and say 'hi' to me. And same, probably, with Nathan and his wheel. You know, if he was just walking around with the helmet, they would just maybe move to the other side of the street. Or maybe they would just walk by
him. But somehow that sewing machine makes people stop. And it makes them step out of their thoughts for a little bit. And then they'll usually … or the whole group of people who're there kind of collectively gets somewhere else in their head, and they share it with each other.

Really?

Yeah. And sometimes it'll just start with, 'Oh, my grandmother had that sewing machine.' But then it like veers all over the place. And it's people that you never would have talked to otherwise.

Material Technologies:

You made or adapted the cart?

The actual sewing machine my friend and I found on the street, someone was throwing it away in this fancy neighborhood that we were driving through, and it just needed a new leather belt, it worked fine. And then I kind of cut it apart and mounted it into this crazy cart that I built. It's hard to see -- the neon sign is kind of … the battery sometimes doesn't work; it's pretty deluxe. You know, there's a little battery-operated neon sign that blinks 'SEW'.

So you made the cart?

You know, with some help -- like, my friend made these beautiful posters for me, that we put up in the city; my friend Amy made the neon sign. But most of it was, yeah, just me, in our shop.

What do you have on board? You have patches and thread and …

Right. There's a little stool that fits inside the cart, and you pull that out. And then all my little extra scraps of patches. And sometimes someone will give me jeans that they want turned into shorts; so then I'll have the other part of the leg. So that gets kind of jammed underneath the seat. And then there's drawers -- one drawer has thread, one drawer has scissors, you know, and then there are other little drawers with buttons and such.
Uh huh. Forgot about buttons. How would you characterize the aesthetic of the cart?

Yeah, it's tough. I found this tan material in the fabric store, and I really liked it. And then I just put this red trim around this tan material. And so that's a big part of the aesthetic, is this kind of tan / red. But I don't know if it's … You know, it looks like a vending cart -- even though when you get up close you can kind of see through the tan material, and see the treadle sewing machine and, you know, it's kind of some very subtle choices in there. But from afar it still just looks like … you know, people come up and they're like [sounds disappointed], 'Aw, I thought there was gonna be hotdogs.' And then they're like, 'What is this?'

Is it funky?

Ah [laughs], it's pretty well done. There's a couple like … if I was to do it over again, you know, the back wheel is too wimpy; it needed to be stronger. If I were to redo it I would do some things over, slightly different … it's almost too nice: you know, because I've sewn a lot. So the tan material, the red little trim, the little snaps, and it all snaps together, kind of like some deluxe, um, boat. And, you know, now I regret it, because I …

It's not as welcoming as it might be, because of that? It's too fancy?

It's just kind of -- yeah. I mean, it's nice, and people stop because it's nice; but, I kind of think like, ah! in the end I should have just wacked it on to some scrap of wood and put some wheels on and … it didn't need to be so fancy.

OK.

But you get carried away when you start building.

Yeah. OK. If this sounds like I'm reading it's because I'm reading: Sewing seems (to me) to really put its finger on a unique aspect of human reality -- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs-wise; it's like about half-way between providing food and shelter. How, for you, is the sewing aspect of the project unique? Because I think it's an amazing find …
I think that the generations are starting to change, but lots of people come up and say -- I mentioned it before -- like, 'My grandmother had a machine that was just like that.' And they'll say, 'Oh, hers was foot-operated.' And I'll be like, 'Oh, mine is, too.' And they'll come around and look through and, 'Oh, my gosh!' And so just that connection to this memory of your grandmother, or a memory of your mom or, you know, one guy came up and he was like, 'Oh, my dad fixed sewing machines, he fixed all these same old sewing machines.' So I think that definitely puts people at ease, makes them … puts them at ease so they could then talk about other things. And they would be in that kind of comfortable spot.

*Right.*

Which I think is really special.

*Yeah.*

You know, my mom gave me some lessons, but -- it's interesting: I had three older brothers, and I got the hand-me-down things. And I always loved, you know, that they were all worn-in already. But my mom would always be like, 'You know, that has too many holes, Michael; you should stop wearing that.' [I laugh.] I think she would prefer if I just threw things away and got some new things.

[I subject Michael Swaine to an overlong discourse on Aldous Huxley's sardonic 'ending is better than mending' slogan from *Brave New World.*]

Yeah, horrible.

*So in the Spark piece, you say that the Tenderloin has more "holes per capita" than other parts of S.F. And I remember you told me that everywhere -- like down on Montgomery, in the business district, for example -- everyone had mending needs; but that people in the Tenderloin seemed -- and this was before, or I think you had just started … the same place, same time …*

*Right, right.*
But that people in the Tenderloin seemed the most grateful. And they didn't take what you were doing for granted, they were more likely to want to give something back to you.

It is kind of strange. I mean, lots of people … like there's a little Chinese woman, and she brought to me some yoghurt, because I was mending their stuff; there was a Russian woman in the Tenderloin who gave me this little gift from Russia. You know, I've gotten lots of little gifts, or people trying to feed me, or this Indian guy brought down homemade chai, amazing, amazing chai tea. But when I was in the fancy neighborhood, there were two things that happened. One, it would be like, 'Oh, I don't have any holes in my fancy black suit.' Or they would be really into it, but they would see it as a novelty; like, 'Oh, that's great you can sew that thing on. Put that patch there, and I'll remember what happened, and what a novelty, and wow can I take your picture? Thanks. Goodbye. -- I mean it's not so cut and dried, either. I mean, there's people that I met … yeah, it's the whole range -- the city is nice … you kind of meet all sorts of people. One of the guys who … I think it was his father who fixed sewing machines, you know, that was actually in kind of a fancier neighborhood. But he was so … he just thought it such a great idea.

What effects does the persistence of the project have on you and, do you think, on other people?

I mean, the Tenderloin's kind of a tough neighborhood. So the first time I set the cart up, I think the people were kind of like, you know, who is that guy; and they're just, you know, a little reluctant.

Yeah.

But now after two years … someone came just recently, and they actually heard the Spark interview, and they live in Berkeley, and they took the BART over, and their bike, but they forgot the address; and so then they just started asking.

And they immediately found someone who knew ...
They just said, 'Do you know the sewing guy?' And, I think, the third person was like, 'Oh, yeah, yeah. He's on Ellis, between Hyde and Leavenworth. So now there's a lot of regulars, there's a lot of people who know me. Sometimes the Tenderloin has this toughness … and it's almost like the people would be my protection. I could leave the cart out, and if someone tried to steal it, people would be like, 'Hey, that's the sewing guy's cart -- you can't take that. Don't mess with his cart.' I think it's changed me in the way … it's very different than doing this one-of-a-time thing. Whereas the regularity makes me kind of fall more in love with the neighborhood and want to keep doing it. And want to make it sustainable somehow. Which is another … that's kind of the next question -- how to make the regulars into librarians, helpers. And how to give them some control.

Right. Just out of curiosity, what language do you use to refer, in your own mind, to those people you interact with?

It's weird, I call them 'customers'.

I was wondering. I thought maybe 'clients'.

It kind of depends; I have my 'regulars', and then sometimes -- yeah. I never say it, like, 'customer'; but I've said it in my head a couple times. [Laughing.] But there's no money transaction.

Right. But that's good because 'customers' has kind of like a coffee shop scale -- so you're dealing in nickels and dimes ...

Right, right. I mean, the other term that I sometimes say is 'collaborator'. And I definitely think of the regulars as collaborators -- even though I realize that, I don't know … sometimes it's more them. I mean, the Tenderloin is -- have you been to the Tenderloin before?

Oh yeah -- I used to live in San Francisco.

The Tenderloin has that kind of energy like New York City. There are certain parts of Market, like Market and 6th; but, you know, the rest of San Francisco is much calmer than
New York City. So in a sense, whatever you want to do, sometimes the city has more power than you. And I think the Tenderloin is a little bit like that. So, the Tenderloin is always collaborating with the project, sometimes gently and sometimes not so gently. Whether it's someone running down and the cops are chasing them, and the cops are like, 'Where did he hide the gun?' And you realize that you're still … that they're not even noticing you. And the other people around aren't looking at you either; they're looking at the cops and the gun search.

_OK. Inspirations? Antecedents?

My big inspiration … was this group called Haha -- do you know them?

_No.

Yeah. I don't even know if they're together anymore, I don't think so. But it's this older collaborative group from Chicago. And I lived in Chicago for a year; and when I lived there this project was going on, and it was called 'Flood'. And the city gives out money in the summer for these outdoor sculptures. So lots of it is, you know, maybe a weird metal thing that gets cemented in somewhere. They decided to take their money and rent a storefront with their money. And then they started growing hydroponic vegetables, so they had all these leafy vegetables in these rivers of water, big lights in there. So you'd walk by, it says 'Flood', and then there's this crazy bright light coming out. And since the vegetables were grown in this slightly acidic water instead of dirt and manure, the plants were a very clean version of a leafy vegetable -- where they would pump in the nutrients that it needed. And so they then took the stuff that they grew and handed it out to HIV organizations, and the stuff was delivered to people who had low immune … problems, and they really needed clean food. So I remember being in Chicago and seeing that piece and being like, 'Wow, that's the most beautiful use of art money that I've ever seen.' And I think I always have that somewhere in the back of my head.

_That's good.

And they would have meetings there for HIV -- it kind of turned into this little community center slash garden. Yeah. That's the one that's on the top of my head.
OK.

[An 'is this art' sort of discussion; and a discussion in which I tell Michael Swaine that I want to anticipate a critique of 'work of this kind' that finds it not 'deepening' anyone's participation at all -- which would make me and possibly him delusionaires. And he continues … ]

Let me just jump into the idea of who's an artist and who isn't an artist. Of course galleries and museums want to have their hands in this very tight form around that idea, and they don't want a lot of artists; they want it to be this very special thing, so that they can sell that very special painting for a lot of money. So there's the first thing: the art world …

... has an interest in radically constraining what art is.

Right, has an interest in really grabbing onto all that stuff. So lots of times people are like, 'Is this art.' And I'm like, 'I don't know if I really care.' But sometimes my answer is, 'It's art if everything is art.' And it's not art if … if only a couple people can be artists, then I'd rather not be one. I can see all the good in art. And the things that I usually am in love with … like there's this guy Swan -- I don't know if you went to this bookstore, Adobe Bookstore, in the Mission?

No.

But it's this small, little bookstore in the mission; this guy Andrew runs it. And it's a super special, special place. And he … yeah: it's a really amazing place. There's a lot of strange people that hang out there. But one of the guys is named Swan, and Andrew would let him sleep there, in the little -- he didn't even really want to sleep inside, I think; so he would sleep in the little gated area, in the little entryway. But he also would take care of wounded pigeons. So he would have all those milk cartons set up as like a condominium. They'd be all stacked in these -- maybe five different stacks, you know: four high, three high, two high. And then he'd have some little newspapers and some little food that he would make, and he'd go across the street to the bagel place, and he would mush up the bagel and make this little meal for the little wounded birds. And you would see him there with some iodine and his Swiss Army knife, holding the pigeon and doing surgery on their legs and stuff like that. But he writes this little 'zine -- he calls it his 'rag'; and for 50 cents he'll sell you a 'rag'.
And he does it pretty much every day; and he's been doing it for like 15 years or something like that -- it's an amazing, amazing thing that he does. So just the idea that …

*Definitely art, right?*

… he's one of my favorite artists. So, yeah, that's the first thing … most of the time I would think of it really not even as art. I think of it as a social city experiment. And I'm kind of excited about social city experiments.

…

I actually don't mind having clothes with holes in them. I kind of have a policy where I'd never buy any clothes. Someone is just throwing something out, or I find something on the street. So I try never to be the consumer and buy new clothes. But I think of the little cart, or my library idea as kind of this lemonade stand, guerrilla, urban planner. I don’t know if you got all those words together. [Yup.] So for me that's the exciting part. And I always tell people that in the end, I'm not doing any big, crazy tailoring; it's like, oh, you have a hole in your jeans, we'll make a patch and we'll sew it on there. And it takes, like, you know, fifteen minutes, and it's not a big deal. But sometimes the people in the Tenderloin think, I don't sew, and that's super awesome because those are my favorite jeans. And maybe to them that part is more important. But for me -- because I do sew, and I don't even really care if I had a hole myself, I'm looking at it in the direction of … how the lemonade stand changes a city block. You know, if you take kids anywhere and put them on any city block with some lemonade, I feel like people walking by will just have a different outlook on that one block that they just walked through.

*Right.* [Laughing.]

*Oh: Michael Swaine recently sent me this quote from the London-based group Platform:*

Meet the Speed of the City with Slowness
Meet the Anonymity of the City with Intimacy
Meet the Concrete of the City with Nature
Figure 51. Michael Swaine & 'Customer'
**Epilogue:** [Else]

This text puts forward a constellation of positions. By no means do I think these to be the whole story; I am often conflicted, and turn on them and turn them out.

It is nigh ordinary that, through art, human beings (suffer or) enjoy possession [i.e., being possessed]. As other powerful aesthetic experiences, art may speak directly to our bodies; it may flush and reorder our psyches; it may quicken our spirits; by processes we don't understand and can't articulate.

Beethoven played in a hall by people in tuxedos for too much money electrifies the spine. Thank you Beethoven; thank you Julliard; thank you 'unimaginative programming'.

Still, looking ahead, as I strive to create spine-electrifying experiences and convey them to other people [to whom?], how disciplined and thorough will I be in trying to produce entirely helpful aesthetic experiences; or will I leave things as they are, accept defaults, get in step with what is already the case?

[This is patrician.] I think this is a little patrician. I also think the Bodhisattva vow goes something like this: I vow to stay and help till all sentient beings suffer no more.

[There are other ways; there are other ways. Chaos theory is in play. All good will is helpful. All caring is helpful. I want to live in a world where there's nothing wrong with making beautiful things with smooth, sanded corners.]

[Noise.]

[noise, especially pure (white) noise, can swallow systems. madness is noise.] newton: white noise tames systems, assimilating them into its non-patterns (madness). [of course, this is the converse of bateson's patterns assimilating noise. it's nice that this symmetry exists.]
Newton: ... I'd say that no-thing is noisy relative to a subject. A subject is noisy, and things are rendered thing-ish by said subject's acts of perception and discrimination, relative to those acts of perception and discrimination that preceded the act in question, etc.

[i believe that is more subtly accurate than the definition i provide in the chapter on noise —and it happens to be quite similar to a buddhist understanding of how 'things' are constituted in minds. on this same subject, i daily try to get my mind to dis-integrate perception; i usually find this to be difficult. i try to perceive noise in situations in which i'm conditioned to perceive signal. for whatever reason, i value the dis-integration of consensus reality, and want my self to be ever more capable of dis-integrating whatever whenever. there are consequences pertaining to this text and to my aesthetics in general.]

[Losing listening.]

is it true that if one gets all involved with composing transmission, there is a cost to listening? certainly there needn't be. though a hall can be like a physical [time-invariant] version of a [time-variant] ritual. ... we can invent other species of petri dishes.

[More apology.]

Sometimes this text overstates its case. Often it uses language ['late capitalism', 'symbolic violence'] that many readers will associate with other overstated cases—in particular, arguments they may find to be insufficiently nuanced, polemical, manifesto-like.

Well, this is the 'counter violence' Wilden speaks of. It may be a shame that we have to deploy any sort of violence, but the adversary is bad. At the same time, the overstated is a gesture. It may be desirable to make a gesture in a field rather than working up an accurate description of that field. One thinks of the Abstract Expressionists.

It is unfortunate not to mention contemptible that idealistic, hippy art and composed transmission are unfashionable, dated. Likewise that the Marxist critique is dismissed as 'charming' by cynics [who are a great majority]. It is not: it remains absolutely spot on. Human beings and the natural world are being crushed all over the world, killed, by greed, selfishness and dumbness. killed. Finding in myself no courage, I capitulate to what appears
to be my own short-term interest by means of rationalization and busying myself out with Organization fodder.

[David Edwards.]

… [I]f the planet is being killed by institutionalized greed and the sacrifice of life for profit, then the solution is to undermine the illusion that greed is "normal" and even desirable. And one way to do this is through compassion. When we reinforce our capacity for compassion and love and concentrate on other people's needs, rather than on our own, we begin to weaken the psychological system that powers the selective inattention and self-deception we were talking about.

…

What prison could be more secure than one we're convinced is "the world," where the boundaries of action and thought are assumed to be, not the limits of the permissible, but the limits of the possible? Democratic society, as we know it, is the ultimate prison, because who's going to try to escape from a situation of apparent freedom? It follows, then, that we must be happy, because we can do whatever we want.

—David Edwards


[Three Fragments.]

No one is surprised that art experience can be a marker of status used to get the 'organization man' promoted—or worse, bedded; that he maybe does not truly share our depth of feeling for Mozart.

[Consider the following idea.] The power and beauty of the female voice, filling the hall, electrifying our spines, trumps the opera's narrative. [Who witnesses? Where are they in social space? What other ideology is proposed by the context? Does the context define
limit the range of that power, that beauty? Just don't leave the yard.] [But, again, if we allow for the transcendent, then all is well. Then the voice is at the top. And our only 'problem' is the exclusivity of the event.]

I am fairly certain acceptance of the default frame by art-makers is a terrible oversight, an unexamined capitulation and embrace of death—not to state things too dramatically.

[More.]

Art [and music—especially music] transcends its sociopolitical situation as a matter of course. In great part, that is what great [sic] art is—situation transcendence catalyst. Of human artifacts, pointer to the absolute more economical than which none can be conceived.

I have tended to scrunch my nose at the idea that the mystical is circumscribed by the political, the social, the psychological. I have mostly resented being pressed to account for the sociopolitical basis of my work—particularly when the presser seemed to think my perspective a mere naïve subset of his own. I don't want, now, in turn, to be him.

[There are other ways. There are worlds within worlds.]

Art sometimes mediates between human experience and the divine. Freaking out to the Beastie Boys (as I did yesterday) is another such channel. Eating an orange is another. This is to say: it is not the case that we have to protect 'art' more than we have to protect the eating of oranges. But we certainly have to protect the eating of oranges. It's not that art is more sacred than other things; it's that everything is sacred (and we're artists). If I grew oranges, I would try to grow them well, carefully, respectfully. I would care where they went, how they got there, how they affected their peelers.

[Again; again.] There are other ways; there are other ways. Chaos theory is in play. All good will is helpful. All caring is helpful. I want to live in a world where there's nothing wrong with making beautiful things with smooth, sanded corners.
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1993.


