ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

THIS PROJECT WAS CONDUCTED ON NGUNNAWHAL AND NGAMBRI LAND.

I RESPECT THEIR ELDERS, PAST AND PRESENT.

I RECOGNISE THAT THEIR SOVEREIGNTY WAS NEVER CEDED.
I, Janis Lejins, declare that the material presented here is the outcome of research I have undertaken during my candidacy.

I am the sole author unless otherwise indicated. To the best of my ability I have documented the source of ideas, quotations or paraphrases attributable to other authors.
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THANK YOU.
ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how elements of the contemporary artworld can be seen to adapt in relation to an increasingly networked twenty-first century world. Recognising the advent of the World Wide Web as a point of paradigmatic disruption the text develops a selection of theoretical ideas. These ideas reflect that the cultural landscape is shifting to be evermore network orientated. The concept of a networked world, a cultural space defined by hyper-links, is projected onto the development of two forms of exhibition—the monumental commission and the mega-exhibition. By viewing these two case studies the thesis demonstrates ways in which key artworld structures may be reconsidered within a dynamic twenty-first century world.

The first case study, *Shock and Awe*, analyses the monumental commission as a conduit for networking—a site designed to produce a specific sociability. This section considers the development of the Unilever commissions at the Tate Modern’s Turbine Hall. Five monumental artworks are evaluated for the way they can be seen to operate as socialising media.

The second case study, *Mega-Forma*, explores the development of four mega-exhibitions by two separate curators across the last 15 years. *Mega-Forma* observes that these exhibitions have redirected their energy and become focused on redistributing cultural agency in a decentralised twenty-first century. These exhibitions are recognised as developing into a larger sort of *gesamtkunstwerk*, an all-embracing art form. The roles of the curators will be seen to shift from a mere arranger of things to a reprogrammer of cultural relations, a cultural auteur—an architect of experience.

Ultimately the thesis will underscore some ways in which we might reconceptualise the way the artworld operates in the twenty-first century.
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INTRODUCTION - A NEW WORLD MAP

The WorldWideWeb (W3) is a wide-area hypermedia information retrieval initiative aiming to give universal access to a large universe of documents.¹

Network culture could only come after postmodernity had run its course. Today the fragmentation of the sign, the end of the subject, and the dissolution of any sense of authenticity in media are fait accompli. If postmodernism celebrated the shattering of the subject, network culture takes that shattering as a given.²

The seeds of these future world-views are being sown today: whilst contemporary software engineers may perhaps appear to be engaged in discussions of unbridled pedantry, they may actually be in the process of setting the foundations of something far more important and enduring that may subtly influence every subsequent generation.³

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Fig 2. Nova totius terrarum orbis geographica ac hydrographica tabula, Map, 1630 - From Hondius, Hendrik. Gerardi Mercatoris atlas sive cosmographicae meditaciones de fabrica mundi et fabricati figura Nova totius terrarum orbis geographica ac hydrographica tabula. Sumptius Iohannis Cloppenburgij, Amsterdam, 1636.
We have looked at our world from the same perspective for nearly 500 years. In 1569 cartographer Geradus Mercator produced his first map using the ‘Mercator Projection’. Mercator’s topographical arrangement of geography enables the world to be physically navigated, and forms the cartographic basis for the world map that has become commonplace today. Mercator’s worldview presents a physical world which has now been thoroughly explored and conquered. This world has been segregated into territories, then fiefdoms and ultimately nations. For nearly 500 years Mercator’s spatial model defined our sense of the world and how we operated within it.

Over the last twenty five years another way of modelling the world has risen to prominence. Computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee brought the world’s first webpage online at The European Organisation For Nuclear Research (CERN) in December 1990. At CERN the webpage was thought of as an educational tool which would facilitate better sharing of information between researchers. The premise was to produce a simple hypertext system that would facilitate arbitrary links between content. The philosophy was any element designated as a ‘hypertext link’ should be able to point to any other page accessible by the network and thus produce a dense informational web. Navigation of Berners-Lee’s knowledge web was thematically relational, liberated from the circumscription of space and geography. The World Wide Web is a model cohered by recognising the shared, contiguous, connections between things rather than organising objects by segregation and relative levels of disconnection.

In 1993 CERN announced the World Wide Web would be made open source — free for anyone to copy. In 1993 there were 50 linked HTTP servers delivering a handful of websites, by June 1994 there were 155 registered servers.4 Fast forward to 2013 and

46% of households globally had direct access to the World Wide Web. In 2015 the World Bank estimated there were 3.2 billion Internet users. There are over 50 billion accessible webpages delivered from more than 1 billion separate websites housed on innumerable interlinked servers. The worldview modelled by Berners-Lee is not to be delineated by the superficiality of geography, race or fiefdom, he insists that the "world can be seen as only connections, nothing else." The Web's central ethos of the hyper-link; a thing enabling connections between arbitrary other content, has now been multiplied trillions of times across the globe. The hyper-link and the World Wide Web are fundamentally changing how we interact as a, now networked, society. We now have an experiential model that is irrevocably centred around a contiguous notion of togetherness and proximity; focusing on links, rather than surrendering to a geographic reality that is rationalised by distance and apartness.

This shift to digital communication technology and the World Wide Web is truly a global phenomenon; it is not solely limited to developed nations. In 1990 mobile cellular subscriptions had less than 10% global market penetration, by 2015 mobile cellular subscriptions had 97% global penetration. The most recent World Bank Development Report, Digital Dividends, observed that:

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7 Berners-Lee, Tim (timberners_lee). "http://t.co/D9pwMxLUOa recently passed a billion websites by their count....". 16 Sep 2014, 21:20 UTC. Tweet


More households in developing countries own a mobile phone than have access to electricity or clean water, and nearly 70 percent of the bottom fifth of the population in developing countries own a mobile phone.\textsuperscript{10}

This is not to say that the increasingly networked globe is bereft of inequality. When it comes to accessing core digital infrastructure a digital divide between developed and developing areas persists—six billion people do not have high-speed broadband, almost four billion have no internet access at all and two billion still don’t have a mobile phone.

What access to the World Wide Web does do, to whatever small extent, is connect people to virtual space beyond their immediate lived experience. A connection to the World Wide Web reaches beyond the immediate socio-geographic reality—it is a connection to a global commons; to a global network of knowledge and people. To whatever small extent a connection to the web gives a greater sense of agency and constituency with in the broader evermore networked society. Empirically we know that our societies are better off because of this new form of connection and self-determination.

The World Wide Web has gone from an idea; to an educational tool for scientific research; to a global phenomenon. In 2011 Frank La Rue, the UN Special Rapporteur On Freedom Of Expression, asserted the Internet was “an indispensable tool for realising a range of human rights, combating inequality, and accelerating development and human progress” and recommended “ensuring universal access to the Internet should be a priority for all States”\textsuperscript{11}. The right to Internet access now has statutory protection in a number of countries including Costa Rica, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, and Spain. No other technology in the history of the human race has had such a rapid and profound impact on global society as the fusion of the Internet with the World Wide Web.


The World Wide Web’s philosophical pronunciamento of a ‘hyper-linked’, hyper-connected, society is been endlessly replicated and amplified across a technocratic globe. Where Web based technology has been firmly established a network orientated perspective of the world appears to be a increasingly popular social, economic and cultural logic. Manuel Castells asserts we have witnessed a shift from the industrial age to the "information age"\textsuperscript{12}. This technology driven epoch has enabled the rise of an evermore dominant form of society; the "network society", in which “the key social structures and activities are organised around electronically processed information networks". In this epoch Kazys Varenlis\textsuperscript{13} asserts that the construction of ‘self’ is now driven by consumption of networked media via the Web:

Today’s self emerges from the network, not so much a whole individual as a composite entity constituted out of the links it forms with others, a mix of known and unknown others it links to via the Net.\textsuperscript{14}

Beyond a technical and social innovation Berners-Lee’s World Wide Web is enabling truly novel critical paradigms through which global behaviours are rationalised. Highly relational frameworks like ‘webs’, ‘social networks’ and ‘hyper-links’ are culturally lubricated concepts that are more prevalent in critical acquittals of the state of things.

This global transition toward a ‘network society’ has happened in lockstep with Moore’s Law\textsuperscript{15} —exponentially growing in population and power every year since the Web’s

\textsuperscript{12} Manuel Castells, \textit{End of Millennium: The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture}, vol. 3 (John Wiley & Sons, 2010).

\textsuperscript{13} The media theorist son of the painter of the same name.

\textsuperscript{14} Varenlis, "The Immediated Now: Network Culture and the Poetics of Reality".

\textsuperscript{15} “Moore’s law” is the observation that, over the history of computing hardware, the number of transistors in a dense integrated circuit has doubled approximately every two years - that computational power has roughly doubled every two years. The explosion of the web has tracked with the exponential growth in computational processing power.
inception.\textsuperscript{16} In 2003, 10 years since the Web became open-source, the Museum of Modern Art hung a new sort of world map the wall — Barrett Lyon & The Opte Project's Mapping the Internet. In 2015 Lyon & The Opte Project used the same mapping technique again to chart an Internet which was infinity more dense. When compared to Mercator's view Barrett Lyon & The Opte Project's Mapping the Internet represents an alternate view of our world. This is a rapidly developing world — it is bereft of geography and somewhat agnostic to nation states. This is a model of the world defined by nothing more than the density and quality of connection between arbitrary nodes in the system. Because of its dynamism and complexity this is a map of the world which probably will never be able to be fully comprehended let alone conquered by any nominal power.

The disruption of the Web has sent shockwaves throughout both the artworld and global society more generally since its inception. The Web demands that we rethink and remodel core institutions some of which have remained relatively unchanged for centuries. We are living in a world where capital, knowledge and culture can be transmitted across borders and into the palm of our hands at light speed. We are living in a world where our old maps are no longer that relevant. The spectre of the Internet and a networked society has led some to presume the deterritorialisation of the artworld.\textsuperscript{17} The logic follows that the artworld, as we know it, will become subsumed into this increasingly pervasive technocratic status quo. Perhaps whatever distinction there is left between 'art' and 'media' will disappear. The ascendency of Mercator's socio-political globe and the traditional hierarchies, and linear institutional structures therein, will give way to a more nebulous and fragmented cultural world. Conventional wisdom suggests that the


\textsuperscript{17} Deterritorialization can describe any process that decontextualises a set of relations, rendering them virtual and preparing them for more distant actualisations. Anthropologically it is understood as the weakening of ties between culture and place.
empiricist, and geographically rooted, structures that underpin the biggest artworld institutions will evaporate as the world becomes network orientated. What then for the public institutions who act as authoritative corner stones for the production of cultural capital?

The presumption is that the practice of leading contemporary art institutions will adapt and accelerate in order not to lag behind a Millennium Falcon-esque world that perennially rushes from one digitally decried zeitgeist to the next. In many respects this presumed acceleration hasn’t happened. Instead many key artworld institutions, including major mega-exhibitions and museums, have slowed down. The global shift in how we understand and conceptually navigate our world not only has demanded a paradigm shift from artworld disciplines but it also has made our institutions to rethink how they operate. The way we write about, curate, collect and distribute Contemporary art is being reconceptualised and reinvented. The point of this thesis is to examine some ways the artworld is responding to this new worldview.

Bruno Latour writes that “the notion of network is of use whenever action is to be redistributed” and in the artworld some centres have begun to shift their focus and initiated the process of redistributing their effort. The first case study in this thesis, Shock and Awe, will examine the Tate Modern’s development of the Unilever Series in their Turbine Hall. This section will examine how the contemporary public museum can metamorphosis into being a public forum and proactive site for cultural production as much as it is the authoritative receptacle of commodity based art objects. The second case study in the paper, Mega-Forma, will examine the conceptual evolution of the biennial exhibition as a unique cultural from. It will focus on four mega-exhibitions spread

across 15 years by Okwui Enwezor and Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev and observe how a redirection of curatorial effort has changed both the form the mega-exhibition takes and the role of the curator. *Mega-Forma* will observe how the form of the mega-exhibition has become focused on redistributing cultural agency in a decentralised world by acting as a *gesamtkunstwerk*,—an all embracing art form. The refreshed superstructures of the Tate Turbine Hall and the mega-exhibition will be understood and valued for the way in which, as larger artistic forms, they operate as a cohering principle for the production of new connections, new relationships, and ultimately new cultural networks.

The world we live in today is dramatically different to 25 years ago. The point of this thesis is not to explain, or even fully-comprehend, the explosion of critical and artistic production in the twenty-first century. Instead this text works through synecdoche - it explores small parts of the cultural universe of the twenty-first century for the ways in which they might indicate something about the whole. The thesis examines a rarified selection of cultural ideas and how two sorts of cultural products, the mega-exhibition and the monumental installation, have developed. This small selection of things will not be evaluated for the way they tell the whole story of the twenty-first century and its art. Instead they will be seen for how they can reciprocate the parallax of a networked society—a world wide web modelled around proximity rather than distance.
THEORIES OF THE NOW

A NETWORKED VISIONS OF ‘THE CONTEMPORARY’

Nor would these things be artworks without the theories and histories of the artworld.\textsuperscript{19}

Our economy, society, and culture are built on interests, values, institutions, and systems of representation that, by and large, limit collective creativity, confiscate the harvest of information technology, and deviate our energy into self-destructive confrontation. This state of affairs must not be.\textsuperscript{20}


\textsuperscript{20} Castells, End of Millennium: The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture, 3. p.379
A NETWORKED SOCIETY

This chapter will examine four bodies of theorisation produced since the advent of the world wide web. They will be understood for the way global changes across last 25 years can be seen to transform the atmosphere of theory shaping the artworld. At some level all four corpuses investigate how cultural theory and cultural production has become increasingly network orientated — there is a palpable critical acknowledgement that “contemporary life is dominated by the pervasiveness of the network.”

In 1996, Castells forecast would become “the new social morphology of our societies.”

Even during the World Wide Web’s infancy Castells asserted that a widespread diffusion of networking logic would substantially modify “the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power, and culture.” Castells preordained that the ‘network society’ would be fundamentally technocratic—its growth underwritten by the rise of the World Wide Web and electronic media. Later he asserted that the revolutionary thing that shapes the new networked society is not just technology but the rhetorical focus on inter-connection that the technological superstructure condones.

Throughout The Rise of the Network Society Castells pre-empted developments like social media. He theorised that in a fully resolved network society social structures and activities would be "organised around electronically processed information networks." In a world mediated by electronic information exchange Castells recognised that art plays a vital role

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21 Kazys Varnelis, Networked Publics (The MIT Press, 2012). p.15


23 Ibid., p.500.


as a humanising force. Castells realised that human experiences would increasingly be processed by nonhuman computational systems and asserted that the role of art in a network society is vital to restore human feeling and meaning into a world defined by hyper-productive and decentralised networks:

In a world where the last trench of defence is built from one's identity (always imagined) without reference to the other. The most fundamental issue is the restoration of meaning...so, when the darkness of senseless politics and aberrant economics and empty culture come on us, we resort to art and to artistic research...to remind us to include human experience in the work we do, to remind us we can still feel and need to share.²⁶

Contemporary art is critically important for the way in which it can retain the human element of human culture in the twenty-first century. Castells asserts that power relationships today are defined by the "shaping of the human mind by the construction of meaning through image-making."²⁷ At the level of networks artistic production is viewed as an act of empowerment. Castells sees the twenty-first century defined by the proliferation of the network and cultural experience as an increasingly electronically mediated model of togetherness. Within this system art is vital for the way it can re-inject our humanity, our feelings and subjectivity, into the process of modelling collectivity.

EMPIRE AND THE AGENCY OF THE MULTITUDE

When Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt published Empire (2000) and Multitude (2005) both texts orbited around an observation of a decentralisation and deterritorialisation of global power, similar to Castells's Rise of the Network Society. The primary thrust of Empire is that nation states are no longer the dominant imperialist powers they once were. Hardt and Negri observe a more nebulous postmodern state of relation between ruling


²⁷ Communication Power (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), P,194
powers - they call this state the ‘Empire’. This is a deterritorialized vision of the world, The
‘Empire’, is conceptualised as a model of the world relations "that supports the
globalization of productive networks and casts its widely inclusive net to try to envelop all
power relations within its world order"²⁸.

Hardt and Negri’s model of the world recognises a delocalisation of power centres and a
divestment of cultural authority away from the nation state. Instead they theorise power
nexuses - construing relationships between groups that make up what they call the
‘monarchy’, the ‘oligarchy’ and the ‘democracy’. Both Empire and Multitude focus on the
primacy of the ‘multitude’ as "the real productive force of our social world."²⁹ In Multitude
Hardt and Negri posit that the ‘multitude’, the constituents of the ‘empire’, are not unified
under a single authority and instead relate via network structures. Instead of nations there
now are social forums, affinity groups, and decision-making as a result of how groups act
together based on their commonalities.³⁰ As a result major conflicts increasingly take
place away from the nation state - happening between diametrically opposed elements of
networks. Whilst nations may happen to be apart of, or invested in, these conflicts Hardt
and Negri see them as originating from and being transmitted across networks, rather
than borders, writing "all wars today tend to be netwars." ³¹

A core postulate is that in the context of the twenty-first century the people who make
new sorts of connections, hyper-links, don’t just overthrow the traditional model of global
relations but become heroic figures:

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²⁹ Ibid., p.62.
³¹ Ibid., p.56.
We have to construct the figure of a new David, the multitude as champion of asymmetrical combat, immaterial workers who became a new kind of combatants, cosmopolitan bricoleurs of resistance and cooperation.\textsuperscript{32}

From Hardt and Negri's paradigm the empowered non-state actor, the networker, is not not only a core participant in the new networked society but also the key aggressor. It is the incentivised and empowered multitude who remodel this dynamic new world of the global network to better to accede to their own image.

**THE AESTHETICS OF RELATIONALITY**

In *Relational Aesthetics* Nicolas Bourriaud observed that within the artworld the 'network' had become a prevailing socio-cultural logic: Bourriaud noticed that the contemporary artist was more focused “on the relations that his work will create among his public, and on the invention of models of sociability."\textsuperscript{33} Bourriaud conceptualised artists as empowered non-state actors in a unique position to reprogram and disrupt the relational spheres of contemporary society: they operate like Hardt and Negri's David — social reprogrammers of the multitude.\textsuperscript{34} To this end *Relational Aesthetics* begins by characterising the ambition of contemporary art in a way that makes it seem analogous to a hyper-link:

Artistic activity, for its part, strives to achieve modest connections, open up (one or two) obstructed passages, and connect levels of reality kept apart from one another.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p.50.


\textsuperscript{34} See also Nicolas Bourriaud, Caroline Schneider, and Jeanine Herman, *Postproduction : Culture as Screenplay : How Art Reprograms the World* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2010).

\textsuperscript{35} Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, p.8.
Central to Relational Aesthetics is an insistence on the primacy of 'connection' as the central defining value of an artwork. The assertion is that the form artworks take can be evaluated "on the basis of the inter-human relations which they represent, produce or prompt"\(^{36}\) rather than just their physically innate properties. Relational Aesthetics focuses on the social relationships that the process of art encodes; it recognises that in the twenty-first century the artwork spreads beyond "its material form: it is a linking element, a principle of dynamic agglutination."\(^{37}\) Bourriaud asserts that 'art' happens in real-time, it is something to be performed: process- rather than object-orientated. Bourriaud's reconceptualisation of artistic form reframes the understanding of how art operates at the level of the network, it is "typified precisely by it’s generative power; it is no longer a trace (retroactive) but a programme (active)."\(^{38}\)

Bourriaud’s text shifts the role of the artist from just a maker to a facilitator. 'Art' is significant insofar as it enables connections between things. This aesthetic connecting process creates and alters power structures at the level of the network. The paradigm of Relational Aesthetics provides both the means and method through which socialising art forms can be understood to change (reprogram) the world.

**CURATING THE NOW**

Terry Smith’s recent work can be read to observe implications of a shift toward a network society for the Visual Arts. Smith’s belief is that in the context of the twenty-first century ‘contemporaneity’ has become “the fundamental condition of our times."\(^{39}\) Smith’s is a

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\(^{36}\) Ibid.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., p.20.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., p.70.

vision of a non-sequitur pluralistic cultural situation. In this ‘contemporaneous’ condition diverse and sometimes contradictory cultural impulses co-exist within a increasingly nebulous networked world.

In *What is Contemporary Art* and *Thinking Contemporary Curating*, Smith identifies three distinct conceptual currents within the contemporary artworld. Each of Smith’s perceived currents, a ‘remodernizing’ resistance, the post-colonial constellation, and the relational (web) turn, vaguely attempt to characterise a redirection of institutional energy in reaction to a shifting socio-cultural status quo. Smith acknowledges his currents may suggest a traditional dialectic logic but asserts that in the contemporary “synthesis will never occur.” Each of these currents is seen as “irreconcilable and indissociable” and “their friction in relation to each other is of their essence, They are, in a word, antinomies.” Smith postulates is that in the twenty-first century no one artworld trend will become ascendent. There will not be another epoch to supplant ‘post-modernity’ and ‘modernity’ before that. The ‘Contemporary’ is a totally unique and nebulous cultural space where three, or more, distinct pathways of artistic production can coexist.

Smith critically evaluates three sorts of reactions to a new reality; we are presented with the cultural resistance, the cultural opportunists, and the cultural devotees (or perhaps even zealots) of the network society. These three responses are not necessarily confined to any one sector of the artworld but they are pronounced in certain situations. The urge to resist comes from those who have the most to lose; major museums - who have a vested interest in parlaying a major restructure of their collection and radical rethinking of

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40 Ibid.


42 Ibid., p.255.

43 *What Is Contemporary Art?* p.269
how their organisation operates for as long as possible. Unsurprisingly the urge to take advantage of the shifting socio-cultural sands comes from those who were misrepresented and disenfranchised by the previous status quo. They look to engineer the new cultural situations, often via mega-exhibitions, to reassert their cultural agency and legitimacy. Lastly Smith presents those who have totally embraced of the new socio-technological reality. These are artists whose aesthetic education has been a bricolage of a 'traditional' artistic education inescapably fused with the development of the Web. All three responses react to a world which is being reprogrammed where power is being redistributed and cultural relationships are being challenged and reconstituted.

A WORLD OF NETWORKED PUBLICS

In the introduction to the collaborative book Networked Publics Mizuko Ito asserts that in the twenty-first century the 'networked public', as a social unit, is a totally different and more complex entity than the simplistic constructions of an 'audience' or 'consumer'. The core artworld relationship between artwork and respondent has irrevocably changed. The 'networked public' is intrinsically engaged and communicative and exercises greater agency and effective power as a result. Network publics are, or at least believe they are, constituents in Castells’s perpetual process of forming and reforming a world wide network society. It’s the direct agency multitude now assert over spheres of media consumption which Ito sees as experientially defining contemporary world:

Rather than assume that everyday media engagement is passive or consumptive, the term publics foregrounds a more engaged stance. Networked publics takes this further: now publics are communicating more and more through complex networks that are bottom-up, top-down, as well as side-to-side. Publics can be reactors,

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44 The text of Networked Publics itself is also a product of network integration. — It claims to be the first book written using Google Docs by multiple authors. As result the text acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy to it’s own claims that networking has become culturally embedded.
(re)makers and (re)distributors, engaging in shared culture and knowledge through discourse and social exchange as well as through acts of media reception.\textsuperscript{45}

In Network Publics's first chapter Kazys Varnelis rejects simplistic demarkations between real and virtual space and instead asserts a model of casuistry relation between the two. This conjoined model of contemporary experience echoes the writing of Baudrillard, and his theory of hyper-reality — that "today the real and the imaginary are confounded in the same operational totality."\textsuperscript{46} However in Network Publics Baudrillard's hyper-real experience is extended by recognising the all "pervasiveness of the network."\textsuperscript{47} This pervasiveness not only produces the "everyday superimposition of real and virtual spaces" but allows Varnelis conceptualise "the rise of the network as a socio-spatial model."\textsuperscript{48} The physical word and the virtual world are seen as equally significant. In the context of 'art' this suggests physical art objects are no way inferior to virtual or web-based art. Network Publics does not propose that 'old' methods of art making are redundant in the twenty-first century. Instead it suggests that out dated ways of thinking about relationship between art it's audience are no longer relevant.

The key concept throughout Networked Publics is that the relationships between the self, the 'real', the 'virtual', the artwork and the network are no longer independent. These relationships are co-dependant and casuistry; mutually constituting. Varenlis writes that though this inflection is "subtle, this shift in society today is real and radical" and that now "the network has become the dominant cultural logic."\textsuperscript{49} Like Smith Varnelis asserts this

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{45}Varnelis, Networked Publics.
  \item \textsuperscript{47}Varnelis, Networked Publics.
  \item \textsuperscript{48}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
not just another artistic movement but a whole new world, requiring a whole new paradigm to approach both reality and art history:

Today if network culture succeeds postmodernism, it does so in a more subtle way. No new "ism" has emerged: that would lay claim to the familiar territory of manifestos, symposia, definitive museum exhibitions and so on.  

Varnelis challenges the inherent value of the physical art object because “in network theory, a node’s relationship to other networks is more important than its own uniqueness” he goes onto challenge the concept of ‘self’ by asserting “individuals and more as the product of multiple networks composed of both humans and things.”

Varenlis theory reflects the culmination of a re-orientation of the artworld which focuses on producing new models of sociability as artistic currency. The twenty-first century artworld may now no longer value art-objects in themselves as much as it prizes the relationship artworks are encoded with with or are able to encode.

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50 Ibid., p.146.
51 Ibid., p. 155.
52 Ibid., p.155.
In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation.\(^5^3\)

A great deal of coverage took place in weather reports, for instance. The weather reports in many countries, of course, mostly in England, mentioned the work, and weather reports are among the most-watched programs on TV. I guess they were really happy that someone was finally doing something in their field of expertise. At any rate, this vast media attention, along with the city, the big museum, and the scale of the piece—these really came together to bring the project to people’s attention. So it’s not only the artwork itself, but also a combination of these factors that contributed to its success.\(^5^4\)

Last week, “These Associations,” his most complex piece to date, opened at Tate Modern, in London. At any given moment, the piece requires seventy interpreters—some civilians, some professional dancers—who will engage [in conversation], over the next three months, each of the museum’s estimated million visitors who take them up on the offer.\(^5^5\)

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Fig 5. Marcus Leith, Tate Photography. Interior of The Bankside Turbine Hall Before Conversion into The Tate Modern. circa 1994 - 2008. Digital Image File From Webpage, From (Gallery), Tate Modern. “Tate Online - Tate Modern - Turbine Hall.” TATE.

In 2000 the Herzog and De Meuron designed Tate Modern changed the way museums thought about the exhibition of art in the twenty-first century. The conversion of the Bankside power station into the Tate Modern featured 124,775 cubic meters of empty space. This vast empty space accounts for half the building’s volume. The vision was to convert the Turbine Hall, that had previously housed electricity generating equipment, into a grand entrance way — a forthrightly social zone "— a place for people." When the conversion was complete the Turbine Hall was both entrance area and gallery, regularly featuring some of the most ambitious installation projects commissioned by a public institution. The dual role of the space place makes the Tate a monument to one of the ways the public museum might transition into the ‘information age’. This immense building, a previously defunct monument to the industrial age, has been repurposed into what some call the ‘secular cathedral’ — a key centre for cultural production in the twenty-first century.

From the outset the conversion from power-plant to a major art gallery was conceptualised as a deliberately minimal intervention. This in part was the Tate reacting to the preference of artists. The results of a questionnaire sent out to artists world-wide indicated they preferred to exhibit in "day-lit conversions of existing buildings, where architectural intervention was minimal." In the case of the Turbine Hall this meant it was emptied of it’s machinery and expressly designed for "arriving, for orientation, for moving out into the outside world and into the museum it’s self; it is designed as a space for

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56 Tate Modern (Gallery), "Tate Online - Tate Modern - Turbine Hall," TATE, http://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-modern/turbine-hall.

57 Ibid.


people." By leaving the Turbine Hall empty the Tate signified a radical reconsideration of the role of the museum in the twenty-first century. This is an ideological shift - the Tate conceptualised “the museum as an inherently social space, a museum that is apart of the community.” Thus the engine room of industrial period was replaced with the productive force of the information age.

However the vision for anything resembling a Unilever Series — a large and impermanent monumental commission occupying the social zone of the museum — didn’t figure in Tate’s curatorial policy until late in the process of building the new museum. Unilever, whose offices faced the Tate, proposed an annual public sculpture competition. The logic was that the competition would gradually gentrify the public area around both buildings. The Tate staff resisted the idea of taking on another project beyond the building’s footprint but, as head of collections Frances Morris noted, they were in need of contributions:

We desperately needed collaborators. Although we were a public institution there was no public funding coming forward except for the lottery… So we went back to Unilever and said…we’d like to work with your idea of a sculptural commissioning project but…within our building itself.

This fusion of public and institutional space resulted in a series of commissioned installations that brought together public and private capital. The Tate did not want to lose a funding opportunity from Unilever but simultaneously did not want to extend its institutional footprint beyond the building. In turn Unilever wanted to align their brand with the Tate but wanted to do so in a way which enforced a very tangible public presence.

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61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.
In order to convince Unilever the Tate pitched the Turbine Hall not as a part of the museum but as "a covered street—the outside world inside the institution," a re-negotiable public space. The Turbine Hall was sold as a formative liminal zone which could concatenate the perceived cultural legitimacy of Tate with an individual's social experience of the world. Aside from the desire to capitalise on Unilever's funding offer there was not a clear curatorial vision of how any work could actually fill the void. According to Frances Morris the notion of a commissioning process, approaching artists to "take on the immensity of turbine hall", was a pragmatic delegation of the problem: "it was a sort of pass the buck - we can't think of what what do with this space, let's ask the artist."

When opened in 2000 the Tate Modern's biggest exhibition space had a corporate partnership with the gigantic multinational consumer goods company Unilever. The 4.4 million pound commission resulted in 13 commissioned works. To some extent each of the works have followed from the projects initial ambitions and occupied the massive public space with a unique form visual art spectacle and inso doing have instigated somewhat of an arms race among major institutions to commission larger and larger monumental pieces. Increasingly huge commissions are been made for ever-larger spaces:

This results in all the more colossal artworks, from the Guggenheim Bilbao to Dia:Beacon in New York and the Gasometer in Oberhausen. In 2007, the city of Paris announced a new yearly commission for the central nave of the Grand Palais, appropriately entitled 'Monumenta'.

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63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 (roughly 8.4 million Australian dollars) See David Batty, "Unilever Ends £4.4m Sponsorship of Tate Modern's Turbine Hall," The Guardian, 17/08/2012 2012.

66 Davidts, "A Grey Universe: Tate Modern's Turbine Hall and the Unilever Series."
At the outset of the twenty-first century the Tate Modern organised its institutional infrastructure in order to devote a massive amount of money, space and energy to the production of monumental and highly social artworks. By giving over so much space to one work the Tate implicitly favoured the production of a single provocative cultural idea over the re-telling of art historical narratives through a range of exhibitions. As a museum of the twenty-first century Tate Modern reasserted its agency by focusing on one of the only things other artworld actors can’t easily do: commission and endorse a truly monumental work, draw large crowds, and engineer a massive spectacle. What Herzog and De Meuron’s Tate Modern has done is transform the public museum into a far more productive force. The Turbine Hall acts as a less regulated, yet still institutional, public and social space.
Fig. 7. Anish Kapoor, Tate Photography. Marsyas Installation, Tate Modern Turbine Hall, 2002 - Digital Image File From Webpage, From (Gallery), Tate Modern. "Tate Online - Tate Modern - The Unilever Series: Anish Kapoor: Marsyas." TATE.

Fig. 8. Anish Kapoor, Tate Photography. Marsyas Installation, Tate Modern Turbine Hall, 2002. Digital Image File From Webpage, From (Gallery), Tate Modern. "Tate Online - Exhibition - The Unilever Series: Anish Kapoor: Marsyas." TATE.
The first two Turbine Hall commissions by Louise Bourgeois then Juan Muanoz, confined themselves to the eastern half of the space. It wasn’t until Anish Kapoor’s massive Marsyas (2003) that an artist occupied the hall’s full volume. Kapoor’s 110 metre long, 35 metre high form used 3500 metres of blood red PVC fabric and over 40 tonnes of structural steel to link the three distinct spaces of the hall - the entrance to the West, the bridge in the middle, and the eastern end.67

Marsyas seems like a surreal assemblage of three massive shoe horns morphed into one large bizarre shape. Marsyas had 3 large portals, positioned at each of the East, West and Bridge zones which spatially and aurally linked the experience of the three parts of the hall. The form acts to apparently unify the communal experience in each distinct zone into the experiential totality of the sensationally large object. The experience of the installation and the collective’s interaction within the public space seemingly become indivisible. By titling the work Marsyas, a reference to the ancient Greek allegory, the form of the installation can be seen to reference both the double headed flute of Athena and flayed skin of Marsyas. The historical reference suggests bodily experience and seems to "invite inevitable comparisons with our own humanity."68 Marsyas is the fusion of human imagination with the "seemingly limitless technological possibility may be what could be called a new Sublime, a technical Sublime."69 This ‘technically sublime’ commission occupies the pluralistically institutional, corporate and public arena of the Turbine Hall and in so doing links both human and material experiences into a single form of monumental collective experience.

67 Kapoor et al., Anish Kapoor, Marsyas.

68 Ibid. p.12 — The title makes reference to the Titian painting (and historical allegory) The Flaying of Marsyas in which Marsyas challenged Apollo to a musical contest and lost losing his skin and life in the process. The allegory focus on the hubris of Marsyas and the justice of his punishment.

69 Ibid. p.14
The socio-spatial transformation of public space into a site for collective experience has been developed in subsequent large commissions by Kapoor. *Leviathan*, which filled the Grand Palais for Monumenta 2011, employed a similar style of aural and spatial modelling as *Marsyas*. In *Leviathan* Kapoor fostered a collective experience of the art monument through sound by inviting the electronic music producer Richie Hawtin to perform and close the installation. The point of the free rave, which had thousands of participants, was to underscore the monumental, trans-figurative, collective nature of the work. Kapoor and Hawtin both agree that “a sonic atmosphere changes the meaning of the thing”. Kapoor saw the gesture as socialising the work and saying “come and be apart of this” noting the fusion “requires the viewer to perform at one level.” This collaborative vertical integration of music, dance, sculpture and forefronts how the monumental installation can strive to activate collective experience rather than acting as a inert and passive object for visual consumption.

*Marsyas* and *Leviathan* show that the larger-than-life-ness of monumental commissions can enable the artwork to transgress a individualised experiential model and effect multiple lives simultaneously. The works show how this sort commission can begin to be considered as the production of a collective public experience—the *Unilever Series* can be digested for the way it engineers new social webs. To produce a new work for the Turbine Hall is to reconfigure the social relationship between the individual and the collective as well as the relationship between institutional and public space. In a sense the commission is the use of installation as a spectacularly huge détournement for the institution — a repurposing of the museum, as DeBord describes it:

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70 Monumenta is sculpture commission similar to that of the Tate Modern Turbine Hal which annually commissions artist to fill the Grand Palais, it was established in 2007.

A détournement is the integration present or past artistic productions into a superior construction of a milieu...In a more elementary sense, détournement within the old cultural spheres is a method of propaganda, a method which reveals the wearing out and loss of importance of those spheres.\textsuperscript{72}

Rather than being an intervention which enables the "possibility of distinguishing true experience, authentic desire, and real life from their fabricated, manipulated, and represented manifestations"\textsuperscript{73} Marsyas and Leviathan collapse 'real' life and a fabricated experience into the operational totality of the installation space. The Turbine Hall thus becomes physicalised hyper-real\textsuperscript{74} zone blurring the point of demarkation between the space of 'virtual' artistic simulation, the museum, and the 'reality' of life in the public sphere.


\textsuperscript{73} Sadie Plant, \textit{The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age} (Routledge, 2002). p. 10

\textsuperscript{74} See Baudrillard, "The Hyper-Realism of Simulation."
CLIMATE CONTROL

Fig. 9. Olafur Eliasson & Studio Olafur Eliasson, *The Weather Project*, 2003, From Tate Modern. "Tate Online - Exhibition - The Unilever Series: Olafur Eliasson: The Weather Project."
The blurred lines between virtual and physical, and between the individual and the collective is a core concern of artist Olafur Eliasson. Eliasson’s 2004 Unilever commission, *The Weather Project* transacted one of the most collective socialising forces in daily life; the weather. By covering the roof in mirrors, using lights, fog machines and a large semi-circular screen Eliasson simulated a micro-climate within the Turbine Hall. The cultural zone of the Turbine Hall was insulated from “the rigours of the London winter” and visitors “found themselves facing a dazzling sun, shining in out into a setting almost devoid of colour, its outlines blurred by mist.” By the artist’s own volition the project’s ambition was to radically rethink the role played by the art object, the exhibition, and the institution in the twenty-first century. The work sought to produce a social process or in Bourriaud’s words it was “typified precisely by it’s generative power…no longer a trace (retroactive) but a programme (active)”

An exhibition cannot stand outside its social context, and we have a responsibility to understand that we are apart of what we are evaluating as well as the result of it. Museums can be radical

Perhaps no other project from the 13 Unilever commissions better reflects the contingent relationship between the formal accomplishment and grand socialising effect of the commissions. By introducing a utopian experience of a controlled climate into the public space (the sun, at the eastern end, of the hall seemed to be eternally rising) Eliasson produced a work which self-consciously focused on a collective experience of form. The collective focus of The Weather Project was extend beyond Turbine Hall as a broader cultural campaign. Beyond the installation Eliasson commissioned social research, co-

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77 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*. p. 70

opted the Tate’s advertising campaign and took advantage of the media attention. In combination with the artwork things like ads in London taxis proclaiming that “73% of London cab drivers discuss the weather with their passengers” worked to produce a societal self-consciousness about the models of collectivity both the weather and institution produce:

Extending The weather project well beyond the already cast Turbine Hall, the entire behind-the-scenes process set up by Eliasson critically addressed broad issues pertaining to the museum’s structure and functions as well as its powers to control information or display art in mediated forms of experience.\(^{79}\)

\(\text{The Weather Project}\) doesn’t neatly accede to a canonised view of art history and reflects a more general shift for the Tate Modern away from being a canonistic institution to more of an incubator for ideas — it is understood a space able to draw on a range of historical epochs.\(^{80}\) In Smith’s words the Tate refuses to be typecast and “makes public, in exhibition, the specific ways in which the artwork, each artist, each image out there accedes to, refuses, or deflects” thematic or temporal impositions\(^{81}\) and \(\text{The Weather Project}\) is no exception. On the one hand it could seem neo-Fluxus as a socially disruptive work it operates to address and engage the “setting of human experience”\(^{82}\) by it’s experiential “insistence on the literal presence of the viewer” which is both “the key characteristic of installation art”\(^{83}\) as well a core tenant of the Fluxus movement.\(^{84}\) Eliasson’s practice is also seen to reference land art sculptures like Smithson’s \textit{Spiral Jetty}.\(^{85}\) Whilst apparently natural \(\text{The Weather Project}\) exposes it’s inherent artificiality —

\(^{79}\) Beccaria and Olafur, \textit{Olafur Eliasson : Oe.} p.71

\(^{80}\) Iwona Blazwick, Simon Wilson, and Tate Modern (Gallery), \textit{Tate Modern : The Handbook} (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 2000).

\(^{81}\) Smith, \textit{Thinking Contemporary Curating}.


\(^{83}\) Claire Bishop, \textit{Installation Art} (Tate, 2005).

\(^{84}\) Ken Friedman, \textit{The Fluxus Reader} (New York; Chichester, West Sussex: Academy Editions, 1998).

the end of the space allows the audience to see "the technical components that created the installation: a wide semicircular screen back-lit by a battery of about 200 yellow mono-frequency lamps mounted 7.7 metres from the end wall of the hall." Along these lines the work can then be seen to act as a hyperbole of the sort of sublime illusionism which is inherent to both the Baroque and Baudrillard’s model of hyper-reality — *The Weather Project* folds real space into the virtual and the two become "confounded in the same operational totality." From Smith’s parallax *The Weather Project* is distinctly a ‘contemporary’ museological exhibition because it time-lapses a milieu of disparate references into a singular artistic experience.

Acting as both an interventionist and an illusionist Eliasson has recasts the collective experience of meteorological phenomena as innately cultural. In Eliasson’s words his interest is not "the relationship between the institution and the weather" but instead he is preoccupied with the "relationship between the institution and society." By rerouting and relocating the site for our relationship to the weather, Eliasson develops a collectively experienced social network:

> Fundamentally the work is about people passing information back and forth, at every stage spreading into the next chain, so that a sort of human nuclear reaction is taking place.

If not for the location of the project it could just as easily be marketed as a science project or a social experiment. Bruno Latour notes that Eliasson’s experimentation doesn’t try to assert the "tired old divides between wild and domesticated, private and public, technical

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86 Beccaria and Olafur, *Olafur Eliasson : Oe.*

87 Baudrillard, "The Hyper-Realism of Simulation."


89 Beccaria and Olafur, *Olafur Eliasson : Oe.*

and organic” instead in the work “they are simply ignored, and replaced by a set of experimentations on the envelops that nurtures our collective lives.” The formal experience of The Weather Project’s is seen to mobilise a social force — Latour observes that the work’s “climate control is not the outcome of a mad dream for total mastery, but, on the contrary, a rather modest set of attempts to measure up what sort of breathing space is conducive to civilized life — or not.” By affixing mirrors to the ceiling Eliasson reflects an image of community and makes the participants aware of their collective voice. As Marcella Beccaria notes the highly charged cultural zone of the Tate was valued for the became a highly a communal space and took western democracy back to basics:

Countless documentary images of the work show spontaneous meetings, celebrations, people embracing or revelling in the artificial light, or lying on the floor to gaze at their own reflections in the ceiling, and even episodes of civil protest. Ultimately reaffirming the social role of the museum, The weather project returned the institution to the democratic potential that the history of Western culture first experienced in the agora, the public square in Ancient Greek cities that was at the heart of every aspect of daily life.

By reaffirming the social role of the The Turbine Hall, as an agora, it became a site for social cohesion which transcended the art object and the weather. The Weather Project project was a site for dramatic performance, a site for exercise (amongst other things yoga classes were held in the space), and the site for collective action and protest. As social media the art process of The Weather Project mobilised people and community

92 Ibid.
93 Beccaria and Olafur, Olafur Eliasson: Oe.
94 (the Merce Cunningham Dance Company performed in the space as well as various impromptu dance classes and drama performances)
95 Carsten Höller, Jessica Morgan, and Tate Modern (Gallery), Carsten Höller Test Site, The Unilever Series. (London: Tate, 2007). p,8
groups before the ‘occupy movement’ was a thought bubble, before the Arab spring was even a hashtag and indeed before the hashtag, (or Twitter, and Facebook), had been invented. Like World Wide Web 1.0, *The Weather Project* was understood as to facilitate a form of collective space which is able to be occupied. *The Weather Project* transformed the communities feeling of constituency in relation to the institution and acted as the catalyst for the production relationships which outstripped, and in some cases perverted, the ambitions of it’s maker.

Among the multitude of interactions the work enabled there was a protest. On November 19, 2003, on the first day of US President George W. Bush’s (Jr) visit to the England 80 people lay on the floor of the TATE modern. Their bodies were arranged to spell out ‘BUSH GO HOME!’, this message was reflected back through the haze via the mirrored ceiling. An organiser of the event said the protest was "designed to get a

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98 See also Axel Bruns, Tim Highfield, and Jean Burgess, "The Arab Spring and Social Media Audiences: English and Arabic Twitter Users and Their Networks," American Behavioral Scientist 57, no. 7 (2013).

99 Facebook wasn’t founded until February 4, 2004, Twitter didn’t exist until March 21, 2006 and designer and developer Chris Messina who is credited with the popularisation of the hashtag didn’t propose Twitter adopt the hashtag until a tweet published on August 23, 2007


100 In a piece for The Guardian front of house manager Adrian Hardwick details some of the diverse and sometimes bizarre the public responses. He also recalls ‘a couple intimately engaged beyond a couple intimately engaged beyond what [one] would normally expect in a public space’, a couple picnicking, the site been used as a playground, the visit of ‘50 people dressed as Santa Claus’, and ultimately, a ‘visitor [who] brought in his blow-up canoe and sat there surrounded by strangers pretending to paddle towards the sun’. The seemingly ‘ordinary man, middle-aged and reasonably well dressed, […] packed up and moved after 15 minutes’. - For more see Adrian Hardwicke, "Secret Diary of an Art Gallery Attendant," *The Guardian* 2004.
message across; I think it is a brilliant use of art for the people." A Tate spokesperson said the gallery wasn’t forewarned of the protest but allowed it to continue, noting that the community interactions with the piece were integral to the project: “People have been expressing themselves in this space and reacting to the work since it opened in October. We hadn’t expected people to lie on the floor – it is very interesting to see all the different reactions to the work.” By the installation’s last day the Tate Modern announced that The Weather Project had received more visitors than the largest shopping centre in the world — the social agora of the Turbine Hall was one of the most engaged public spaces in the world.

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102 Ibid.

103 Wouter Davidts, “On Tate Modern’s Turbine Hall And ‘the Unilever Series’,” Footprint 1, no. 1 (2007). p.90
THE SLIPPERY SLIDE

Fig 10. Carsten Höller & Tate Photography. Test Site Installation, Tate Modern Turbine Hall, 2006. From, Tate Modern. "Tate Online - Exhibition - The Unilever Series: Carsten Höller: Test Site - Images."

Fig 11. Carsten Höller & Tate Photography. Test Site Installation, Tate Modern Turbine Hall, 2006. From, Tate Modern. "Tate Online - Exhibition - The Unilever Series: Carsten Höller: Test Site - Images."
We conceived the Turbine Hall installation as a large-scale experiment to see how slides can be used in public spaces, how they're received, and what they do to users and to viewers.\textsuperscript{104}

Carsten Höller's \textit{Test Site} (2006) featured 5 slides, departing different levels of the Tate Modern and arriving under the bridge in the centre of the Turbine Hall. \textit{Test Site} was easily read as a "blatant confirmation of the dominance of spectacle-as-art."\textsuperscript{105} Superficially the Tate seemed to have fallen into a common trap for twenty-first century museums who confuse entertainment with engagement and act as an elaborate playground to get visitors through the door. Of course the commission's ambitions were far loftier, Höller's introduction of slides into public space was an attempted catalytic intervention. The space of the Turbine Hall had an agenda to produce a social experience which could reach beyond the auspices of the institution to legitimise the introduction of sliding in the civic environment.

Jessica Morgan, the curator of \textit{Test Site}, described the project as ‘nothing short of a re-evaluation of the accepted forms of descent in architecture."\textsuperscript{106} Morgan asserts the projects relationship to the Turbine Hall is essential in helping it stage an argument in a very public way, she writes:

Where else could one be given the opportunity to introduce the slide into the workings of a public building with a granted participative audience of millions? An conversion in architecture and experience such as this could never be achieved by the quiet incursion of the small-scale project. But, viewed from this perspective, the Turbine Hall can be seen as a relatively minor platform, a modest beginning for the wide-scale transformation of behaviour, and most of all, experience, proposed by this project.\textsuperscript{107}


\textsuperscript{105} Höller, Morgan, and Tate Modern (Gallery), \textit{Carsten Höller Test Site}.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
So the Turbine Hall is conceptualised as an incubator and sort of cultural ‘kickstarter’\textsuperscript{108} — it initiates both an immediate change in behaviour and advocates a reprogramming of civic infrastructure. Along with the installation Höller used the commission to produce two separate feasibility studies examining the use of slides in public space. One study, by General Public Agency, \textit{Slides in the Public Realm; A Feasibility Study For London}, was tasked with examining how slides could be a “beneficial and practical addition to the life and fabric of the city” by investigating “the design, legislative and technical feasibility.”\textsuperscript{109} General Public Agency found that in some cases the implementation of slides in the UK was an economically efficient repurposing of public space:

An architectural re-landscaping of pedestrian squares can cost up to £500 per m\textsuperscript{2}. The cost of the slides averaged out over the area of the square would be around £300 per m\textsuperscript{2}. This investment would create a unique urban environment for less cost than other high quality public realm projects within the UK.\textsuperscript{110}

The other case study, by Foreign Office Architects, \textit{Hypothetical Slide House}, produced detailed design for a 22 floor multi-purpose building where “most downward movement would be done using the slides.”\textsuperscript{111} The firm produced designs for a tripod shaped high-rise with an exoskeleton of over 70 slides. The slides strategically distributed the building’s occupants between the building’s different zones and the exit. The study proved the architectural use of slides might fundamentally recalibrate the design and layout of medium to large buildings.

\textsuperscript{108} Kickstarter is a public-benefit corporation which has built the world’s largest global crowdfunding platform focused on creativity. The company’s stated mission is to help bring creative projects to life. It was founded in April 2009.

\textsuperscript{109} General Public Agency in Ibid. p.59

\textsuperscript{110} General Public Agency Ibid. p.70

\textsuperscript{111} Foreign Office Architects in Ibid. p.90
When, as a child, I participated in Höller’s attempted civil infrastructure revolution — I was not aware my sliding was apart of something more than good fun. I had very little cognisance of the of *accepted forms of descent in architecture*, nor could I really comprehend the scholarship and feasibility studies produced with the commission in the project’s catalogues. My understanding of *Test Site* was confined to the physical experience of the art object. I was pretty typical of most of the “participative audience of millions” many of whom were children, and the majority of didn’t buy or read the catalogue. None the less the unwitting participants at the Tate were seen as the “modest beginning for the wide-scale transformation of behaviour.”112 Herein lies the rub with *Test Site*: It operated "on such a public level and in a manner other than the one of phenomenologically orientated critique" which the post *Weather Project* had come to expect.113 As much as the work’s participants were constituents they were also guinea pigs, test subjects. As Dorothea von Hantelmann notes the subject and object of the exercise fused in the act of sliding, “the visitor’s experience is […] not just an important part of the work; it is the work and it is the meaning of the work.”115 Olafur Eliasson’s *Weather Project* simply used the monumental installation and the site of the Turbine Hall to model a site of sociability which ultimately produced indeterminate and inadvertent outcomes.116 By contrast Höller’s later work postulates the experience the mega-installation enabled could service a highly determinant outcome, Mark Windsor writes

*Test Site* provides a model or prototype for change in our urban environment. It presents the possibility of an exuberant and joyful experience in the negotiation of

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112 Ibid.

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid.

115 Dorothea von Hantelmann, ‘I’, in Ibid. p.30

116 - Eliasson probably did not anticipate the exhibition space becoming the site for protests for instance but he was tolerant of the possibility.
something as simple and ubiquitous as the necessity of getting down from an upper floor of a building. ‘Art does not transcend day to day preoccupations’ says Bourriaud, ‘it brings us face to face with reality though the singularity of a relationship with the world’.\textsuperscript{117} One reality that Test Site ‘brings us face to face with’ is the level of control exerted over our day-to-day lives through the physical structures which mediate our activity: the way that towns, cities and buildings are organised to maintain obedience and subservience on the part of their inhabitants. What is at stake here is not the practical efficiency of urbanised environments but the insidious exertion through them of psychical and ideological control.\textsuperscript{118}

At one level Höller presents this futile dream that the shared experience of slides in the Tate might lubricate the installation of slides into wider society. However perhaps the work can be better understood for the way it demonstrates the Tate Turbine Hall can be seen not only as a culturally innovative, socially inclusive, space but also as a politically reactive zone. The Unilever commission is seen as an attempt to reprogram the prevailing forms which exert psychical and ideological control in our society. Beyond being an oversized receptacle for large objects the Turbine Hall here is seen as the site for shared societal experimentation, innovation and a form of resistance. In conceptualising Test Site and the Turbine Hall as not "as an object" but as a productive "platform of interaction"\textsuperscript{119} Höller again progresses the role of the twenty-first century Tate museum away from just acting as a passive recorder and enabler of societal actions to a proactive and ideological producer of societal change.

\textsuperscript{117} Bourriaud, \textit{Relational Aesthetics}. p.45

\textsuperscript{118} Mark Windsor, “Art of Interaction: A Theoretical Examination of Carsten Höller's Test Site,” \textit{Tate Papers} 15(2011).

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
IMPOTENT SEEDS


Ai Weiwei's Unilever commission *Sunflower Seeds* (2010) filled the Turbine Hall with a landscape of 100 million handmade porcelain sunflower seeds. The 150 tonnes of faux seeds were made in China, renowned for its culture of counterfeiting\(^{120}\), and then shipped to the Tate Modern. For two and a half years leading up to the exhibition the commission enabled Ai Weiwei to employ 1600 artisans in Jingdezhen\(^{121}\) to use a vertically integrated 30 step process to produce the husks.\(^{122}\) At the media preview in London Ai Weiwei stood in the middle of the pile of porcelain facing the scrum and in his cupped outstretched hands he presented a few hundred seeds.\(^{123}\) Ai tells one reporter that the work is the collection of a "kind of effort, the small pieces symbolises the kind of activity I'm doing on Twitter, which I think is most beautiful and important, our time is about the sharing of information."\(^{124}\)

Ai Weiwei asserts the collection of impotent seeds are emblematic of his antiestablishment Twitter account — a collection of innumerable small, seemingly futile, interventions which cohere collectively to produce a challenging anti-establishment statement. Conceptualised through the Web centric form of a tweet the meaning of Ai's work can be understood for how it works within cultural networks to produce "extensive cross-referencing between related sections of text and associated graphic material"\(^{125}\) — the work has multiple meanings which are contingent on the links forms to to different social contexts. Similar to Höller's Test Site the crucial element of *Sunflower Seeds* is how it's process


\(^{121}\) Jingdezhen has been the dominant centre for Chinese ceramic and porcelain production since at least the Yuan Dynasty see also Stacey Pierson, "The Movement of Chinese Ceramics: Appropriation in Global History," *Journal of World History* 23, no. 1 (2012).


\(^{123}\) This one of the most widely distributed images of the work. See Alison Klayman, *Ai Wei Wei: Never Sorry*, (USA: Madman Entertainment (2012) (Australia), 2012). 80mins

\(^{124}\) Ibid. 81mins

of production enables a final installation which operates as an overt political action. Symbolically the
Sunflower Seeds are only “constituted with in networks” but their “meaning given by their position in
relation to others and their use.”

Ai Weiwei’s work is seen to challenge perceptions of cultural progress and disrupt what one might expect a Turbine commission to do and say. Salman Rushdie observed the socialising force of Sunflower Seeds produced a politically loaded and culturally fraught situation where English feet trample the fruit of the labour of the Chinese working class.

Ai Weiwei’s export of porcelain is nothing new, since at least the early 9th century Chinese porcelain has been seriously traded globally, especially in the West. Porcelain was particularly coveted during the 16th & 17th centuries and was often carried aboard Dutch East India ships bound for Europe. Frequently objects would arrive in England only to become anglicised and repurposed with garish silver gilt mounts — simple bowls would be appropriated into functionless culturally inter-bred objects. Again in Sunflower Seeds there is a situation where a Dutch commercial power-house, Unilever, enables the production of functionless Jingdezhen ceramics and their export to England. To interact with Ai Weiwei’s work is to inadvertently become a participant in a fraught history of cultural triangulation between the three countries. The symbolism of porcelain and it’s displacement is not lost on Ai — this is a conscious decision which informs the work. Ai notes that in a Chinese specific context:

porcelain...is the highest art form, and belongs to the Imperial Court. In fact, it’s almost synonymous with Chinese culture. My work has always focused on how to bring older craftsmanship into a new contemporary context and how to create or to use a new language.

126 Varnelis, “Conclusion: The Meaning of Network Culture.”
129 Ibid.
130 Weiwei Ai and Juliet Bingham, Sunflower Seeds (London: Tate, 2010), p.22
At a superficial level Ai Weiwei’s *Sunflower Seeds* is a clear commentary on the now pervasive and socio-historically engrained concept of ‘made-in-china’ but this is a work about the creolisation, the cultural intermixing, of visual language. An artist who is perceived, in the West, as ‘Chinese’ has manufactured the ‘highest art form’ in China and then displaced to London. An “insistence on the literal presence of the viewer is arguably the key characteristic of installation art” and in the Tate this produces a culturally intermixed situation where English footsteps trample the highest Chinese cultural form. The irony of the work is that each seed is the product of a network of laborious time intensive processes in China only to produce a fleeting engagement at the site of consumption in the West. The presence of these invisible networks who labour to inform a very simple visual outcome reflects the “increasing impotence of the modern worker, creating meaningless products for distant, demanding markets” or as Ai Weiwei quips:

> China is blindly producing for the demands of the market … My work very much relates to this blind production of things. I’m part of it, which is a bit of nonsense. The sunflower seeds can never be planted and can never grow, but the process of continuously doing something that’s not really useful in such a massive way and takes such a long time and with so many people involved reflects these conditions.

The process of commissioning and the transmission of the objects from one context to another creates a cultural double blindness. The final product is just as invisible to the collaborator in China

131 Despite living and training in America for twelve years between 1983 and 1993, Ai claims the first English book he ever read was The Philosophy of Andy Warhol - from Ibid. p.50

132 Bishop, *Installation Art*. p.6

133 Ironically the subjugated seeds exercised a subtle revenge. The grinding of the seeds produced a mildly-toxic dust which led to the interactive possibility of the work ending after a few days the sign read: “Although porcelain is very robust, we have been advised that the interaction of visitors with the sculpture can cause dust which could be damaging to health following repeated inhalation over a long period of time.” The abstract risk of of respiratory illness in the visitors was too much for the Museum. Ironically The Tate and Unilever were happy to commission 1600 workers in China to produce the Seeds - all of whom would have had repeated inhalation over an extended period of time - yet when it came to even the remotest prospect of harm to English visitors the institution immediately foreclosed any interaction. This enforces the contrasting values applied to the distinct social spheres of the work presents.


136 Ai and Bingham, *Sunflower Seeds*. P.24
just as that same worker is invisible to the participant in the final work in England — despite to being blind to the experience of the other they are connected through the art process.

Sunflower Seeds are often read as symbols which Chinese specific narrative of the cultural revolution, they are links to the characterisation of Mao as the sun and the Chinese people faithful sunflowers, who turn to face him. The narrative is seen by Ai Weiwei “to represent how loyal people should be during the Cultural Revolution.” The impotence of the seeds can be read as an indirect and scathing commentary on the failure of the revolution. The seeds exist as a perpetual reminder of the broken promise of communist utopia and the deaths which went with it. During the first interactions in England the seeds were overwhelmingly seen as artistic entertainment — Ellasson created a sunset and Ai Weiwei seems to have produced the bizarre shore of a pebbly beach — there were sand castles, snow angels, et cetera. The different perception of the work is the result of two largely independent cultural streams of aesthetic conditioning which started in 1949 and continue into the present moment. It wasn’t until an unavoidable curatorial decision that the funerary element to the piece was read symbolically:

The association here with the hopes and savage disappointments of the time, both spiritual and material, was unmistakable. Tate’s decision to stop visitors walking on the work three days after it opened—a result of health concerns about inhalation of porcelain dust—increased this sense of sorrow and stillness. It reinforced allusions both to ash, with its connotations of cremation, and to the fundamental tensions between the individual and the collective in Chinese society, as the field of seeds, seemingly identical yet each unique, laid dormant.

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also see Michael Wilson, How to Read Contemporary Art, (Farnborough: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2013).

also see Foundation, “Ai Weiwei’s Sunflower Seeds - About Ai Weiwei’s Sunflower Seeds”.

139 Evident in the film: Klayman, Ai Wei Wei: Never Sorry.

The mass production of the inert seed is meaningful when it is read for how it produces a compromise between a range of different cultural vectors at play in a networked society. No one paradigm of seeing dominates or defines the piece. The work's "cultural traffic inevitably flows in both directions." The work reflects a model of the 'Networked Society' as a non-hegemonic and pluralistic cultural space—Sunflower Seeds refuses submit to a world where cultures collapse into one another and become inseparable and instead creates models of social relation that allows the networking of world cultures to "mutually reinforcing each other's separateness and their own respective essentialism."

Productively understanding Sunflower Seeds turns on recognising that in the twenty-first century cultural knowledge is created by making the "theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space." The seeds act as a material hyperlink between a socialising zone in London and a zone of material production in Jingdezhen. It is clear in Sunflower Seeds that an originally geo-spatial paradigm like East/West still has some utility when it is understood not as the defining hegemonic discourse but one layer in a larger heteromorphic reality of the networked society. This is a world conceptually defined by a World Wide Web in which multiple meanings and multiple cultural narratives can to converge at one point of singularity. Sunflower Seeds illustrates how in a networked world discourses might become linked and can collaborate, cross-pollinate, augment, deconstruct, and reconstruct multiple meanings for singular things. In the case of Sunflower Seed the Tate facilitates the suspension of a unilateral models of culture. Thus the commission enables the construction of

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141 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Psychology Press, 1994).
143 Ai and Bingham, *Sunflower Seeds*. p.50
144 Ibid. p.51
145 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*. p.125
146 Castells, *Communication Power*. 

58 of 122
collective cultural identities as a "interstitial passage between fixed identifications" which then creates "the possibility of cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy."\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{147} Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture}. 59 of 122
In the final commission, These Associations, Tino Seghal did not present an art object and in doing so he brought the Unilever Series to a logical conclusion. Tino Seghal creates art with no physical residue—to the extent that no photography is allowed and exhibition terms and sales happen by oral contract in the presence of a notary. Instead of filling the Turbine Hall with an object, Seghal installed a troupe of performers. Their choreographed use of movement, sound, and conversation produced what Seghal described, quoting situationist Guy DeBord, as “constructed situations.” The aim of the Seghal’s inclusive work was to “redefine art as the transformation of actions rather than of things.” By focusing forthrightly on art as the “transformation of actions,” These Associations made explicit the social focus which had been growing throughout the earlier commissions.

In These Associations, Seghal paid each of his ‘interpreters’, the performers of the piece, around 13 US dollars an hour to, amongst other things, frankly divulge deeply personal stories with museum attendees they had engaged in conversation. There were over a 100 non-specialist performers, from all walks of life, recruited to the project. Various reports, as no documentation is allowed, stipulate that anywhere between 50 and 70 people could have been performing at any given moment. Guardian reporter Laura Collins reports on one such bizarre exchange:

“Next, the notary went over some stipulations regarding opening hours (the pieces had to go on as long as the venue showing them was open), installation (by Sehgal or a designated representative), photography (none), and resale (only by oral contract). At least, this is what I think he said, as Sehgal didn’t allow me, or anyone else, to take notes. “One day, if we have a conflict with Vincent, we’ll call you and say, ‘You were there,’ “ he said. Nearly a hundred thousand dollars was at stake, but owning a Sehgal piece is a notional concept”


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148 Laura Collins reports on one such bizarre exchange:

149 Ibid.

150 Ibid.

151 Ibid.
Cumming observed that even though the social interactions produced in These Associations could happen in the world beyond the museum the context of the Turbine Hall enabled a sociability entirely different from a normal quotidian experience:

For the connections are sudden and immediately open. There is no preamble and the register of the conversation is quite extraordinarily frank. Yet these strangers are full of respect in forging this vital sense of connection. There is no social barter; you feel no pressure to divulge anything in exchange. It is like the best, and least demanding, party.\(^\text{152}\)

Seghal was adamant that the performers be direct and trained them through a series of rehearsals with ‘rhetorical strategies’ to engage and maintain a unique sort of connection with the audience member. Seghal impressed on the performers that “even though it may seem like an everyday situation, it’s not...You’re here in the main hall of one of the biggest museums in the country, and people have come here to experience something.”\(^\text{153}\)

Some, including Benjamin Buchloh\(^\text{154}\), believe that Seghal’s bizarre demands, like there being no tangible artefact of the piece, function unduly focus on the work producing a ‘spectacular’ and sensational outcome:

Seghal is the kind of artist who—had he encountered Duchamp’s urinal in 1917—would have proposed to exhibit a kitchen sink the next year, fully convinced that he had become a radical artist overnight. A particularly telling aspect of Sehgal’s pointless radicality are the actual conditions of experience imposed by the work on its participants…one can generally diagnose a case of derailed artistic narcissism whose demands for the blind exertion of power try to compensate for the aesthetic debacle...he withholding all visual documentation—as though we did not know...an aesthetic of total withdrawal has always generated instant spectacularization. Thus, in the total reduction of a work to a mere strategy (that of a pseudo-counterspectacle), his intervention paradoxically reveals its essential character as pure spectacle.\(^\text{155}\)


\(^{153}\) Collins, “The Question Artist. Tino Sehgal’s Provocative Encounters.”

\(^{154}\) (the Franklin D. and Florence Rosenblatt Professor of Post-War Art History at Harvard University)

Despite the pseudo-counterspectacle the revolutionary thing about the project was seen as the way it made art out of just making simple connections between people. Adrian Searle, said he understood it as "a new form of art...based on an immense gathering of humanity that includes all of us as live participants. Life art, I suppose."\(^{156}\) Despite couching his practice in the work of the Situationists there are clear parallels between what Seghal is doing and a history of other ‘life art’ experiences (notably the work of John Cage\(^ {157}\) and his work 4'33"\(^ {158}\)\(^{159}\)). This ‘life art’ — art as the experience of an immense gathering of humanity — is something that had been steadily developing at the Tate through earlier commissions and really it is something had indirectly envisioned when they originally optimised the design of the space for social interaction. More generally the work is been read to reciprocate a wide variety of 20th and twenty-first century artists and thinkers who "address the need for the reconfiguration of the relationship between the individual and the collective".\(^ {160}\) Much like Hardt and Negri's model of the Multitude and the reality of the World Wide Web participation in These Associations is a circumstantial inevitability. As soon as the audience enters the relational field of the Turbine Hall, as Claire Bishop observes, "we have no choice but to participate."\(^ {161}\) This sort of implicating, ‘art life’ practice, is seen as growing from the "the feedback loops of Web 2.0 and social networking, while its fascination with eccentric laymen parallels the populism of reality


\(^{157}\) See John Cage, Silence: Lectures and Writings (Wesleyan University Press, 2011).

\(^{158}\) 4'33" (in Proportional Notation), 1952/53. each page: 11 x 8 1/2" (27.9 x 21.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

\(^{159}\) See also Kyle Gann, No Such Thing as Silence: John Cage's 4'33 (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press New Haven, Conn, 2010).


\(^{161}\) Katerina Paramana, "On Resistance through Ruptures and the Rupture of Resistances: In Tino Sehgal's These Associations," Performance Research 19, no. 6 (2014).

\(^{161}\) Claire Bishop, "In the Age of the Cultural Olympiad, We're All Public Performers," The Guardian 23(2012).
television.” These Associations the Turbine Hall enables a situation where life no longer imitates art but instead is absorbed into it.

Despite having no artifice what so ever, These Associations, was a spectacular and monumental undertaking. Across many months the work engaged a huge variety of participants, both paid and unpaid, in developing of innumerable complex and durational interactions. The media coverage and word of mouth reporting of the event meant the work assumed an almost folklorish reputation. Seghal’s Unilever commission forthrightly unified the concept of the art spectacle, the concept of audience participation and the idea of social connection. Thus Seghal cements the thesis that in the context of the twenty-first century the institution “far from being oppositional from spectacle, participation has now entirely merged with it”.

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162 Ibid.
THE SOCIAL MEDIUM

Following the unbridled success of Marsyas and The Weather Project subsequent Turbine Hall commissions took evermore socially orientated slants. The site of the Turbine Hall and the commission were increasingly understood for the way they facilitated "the rise of the network as a socio-spatial model." The spectacular monumentality of the Turbine Hall and the art with in it made participant aware of societal behaviours, as Thomas Schelling would say, this self-consciousness made manifest the relationships "between the behaviour characteristics of the individuals who comprise some social aggregate, and the characteristics of the aggregate." Subsequent commissions built from the socially forthright example of The Weather Project to produce ever more politically pointed interactions. These subsequent works saw art as a "site that produces a specific sociability" and ultimately the artwork was understood as "the transformation of actions rather than of things." The social narrative within the commissions seems to have operated in synchronistic relation to the Tate Modern's own strategic ambitions for the Turbine Hall to be a major socialising force. The Turbine Hall narrative reciprocates a desire for the museum itself to become a proactively cultural actor. It is then no surprise that Tate commissioned artists who increasingly envisioned their monumental "artwork's form as spreading out from its material form" as "a linking element, a principle of dynamic agglutination."

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166 Bourriaud, Relational Aesthetics.

167 Collins, "The Question Artist. Tino Sehgal's Provocative Encounters."

168 Bourriaud, Relational Aesthetics.
The social development in the commissions fits with the Tate's desire for the "museum as an inherently social space, a museum that is apart of the community", whilst reciprocating Bourriaud's & Varnelis's socially orientated models of artistic production. Thus the story of the Unilever commissions act as a tacit validation of Lévi-Strauss's model of culture as "a communication network."\textsuperscript{169} What all the featured commissions do is initialise some form of "shared action" which produces "socially cooperative experience as art."\textsuperscript{170} The participatory 'life art' aspect to the commissions is understood as coinciding with the "the feedback loops of Web 2.0 and social networking."\textsuperscript{171} Web 2.0 can be vaguely dated as beginning around the beginning of 2004 when Facebook was established of both Facebook\textsuperscript{172} and The Weather Project ended. Recognising the correlation between a key development of the Web — the popularisation of user generated content (the defining feature of Web 2.0) — and the increasing socialisation of the institution underscores the significance of the new networked orientated perspective of twenty-first century culture.

When Herzog and De Meuron converted the Bankside power station in to the twenty-first century Tate Modern they initiated something which would remodel how one thinks of the institution. — Commissions in the Turbine Hall became a new sort of social medium and thus re-conceptualised the role of the public art museum from a receptacle for commodity based art objects to a productive, and highly social, cultural actor.


\textsuperscript{170} Tom Finkelpearl, \textit{What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation}  (Duke University Press, 2012). p.361

\textsuperscript{171} Bishop, "In the Age of the Cultural Olympiad, We’re All Public Performers."

MEGA-FORMA

A MORPHOLOGY OF TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY MEGA-EXHIBITIONS

There is no straightforward road from the fact of looking at a spectacle to the fact of understanding the state of the world.\textsuperscript{173}

Is it absurd to want to retool our disciplines to become sensitive again to the noise they make and to try and find a place for them?\textsuperscript{174}

\textsuperscript{173} Jacques Rancière and Gregory Elliott, \textit{The Emancipated Spectator} (London: Verso, 2009).

Over the past 25 years ‘mega-exhibitions’, such as Biennales, Triennials and dOCUMENTA, have become less insulated from the nebulous socio-cultural world and have directed their energy away from disseminating new art. Keeping track of the contemporary art pulse is the provenance of commercial art fairs and dealers who have been are incentivised by a hyper liquid art market worth over €51 billion.\textsuperscript{175} By contrast mega-exhibitions, which have very little commercial incentive,\textsuperscript{176} seem focused on disrupting and decentralising the cultural status-quo. Mega-exhibitions are developing into increasingly unique multi-modal forums; cultural summits whose core agenda is to reevaluate and redistribute cultural agency and foster the production of new forms of cultural knowledge.

Going against convention mega-exhibitions are less and less shackled to a single place. Over the course of exhibitions like dOCUMENTA events are convened in multiple exotic locations, sometimes simultaneously. This glocalization has made the concept of the mega-exhibition so portable that there are roving thematic exhibitions like Manifesta: The European Biennale of Contemporary Art, which changes location with each iteration or Experimenta Recharge: The 6th Biennale of Media Art, which is touring around Australia throughout 2015 & 2016. Like major global forums in other fields, such as economics, the twenty-first century mega-exhibition and its director are less preoccupied by the tangible currency of art than they are concerned with unraveling the philosophic and cultural conditions in which that currency is produced. The mega-exhibition has become both an art form and the primary cohering principle in a continual process that reevaluates, redistributes and reconstructs cultural space in the twenty-first century.


\textsuperscript{176} For instance a sales ban has been enforce at the Venice Biennale since 1968.
This chapter will examine two dOCUMENTAs and two biennales spread across 13 years. The exhibitions were directed by two prominent international curators, Okwui Enwezor, and Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev. I seek to suggest that these major cultural summits have been iteratively engineered to disrupt and supplant notions of a hegemonic 'international contemporary'. Both curators work to rebuke a single defining transnational artworld paradigm. The projects of Enwezor and Christov-Bakargiev pursue a pluralistic, and largely value agnostic vision of contemporaneity and contemporary art. These mega-exhibitions seem to be conceptualised as holistic forms in themselves— brooding statements generated by an empowered curatorial mastermind.

In the increasingly dynamic and multi-modal situation of the twenty-first century mega-exhibition the role of these two curators has evolved from being just a mere arranger of objects into that of an auteur— they subordinate all exhibited expression, aesthetic and otherwise, into the service of a totalising intellectual and creative vision. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev curated dOCUMENTA (13) in 2012, was the artistic director of the 2008 Biennale of Sydney. Okwui Enwezor was the first non-european to curate dOCUMENTA in 2002 and in 2015 became the first African to curate the Venice Biennale in its 120-year history. By tracing the trajectory of these two curators across the early twenty-first century it is clear both practices try to decentralise the artworld, disrupt the art historical schema and deconstruct the form of the mega-exhibition. These projects are now less concerned with the display of artworks than they are intent on becoming the primary cohering form for the production of unique cultural meaning.
DECOLONISING THE EXHIBITION
*DOCUMENTA (11)*, 2002.

In the forward to the *dOCUMENTA (11)* exhibition catalogue Okwui Enwezor declared his vision was to stage the "relationships, conjunctions, and disjunctions between different realities: between artists institutions, disciplines, genres, generations, processes, forms media, activities, between identity and subjectification." Enwezor’s project worked to "connect levels of reality kept apart from one another." From the outset Enwezor refused to entertain the notion of a single global cultural master narrative. Instead *dOCUMENTA (11)* came to terms with the ‘global’ as a complex network of linked localities. The project revised dominant cultural narratives to generate a polyphony of critical and artistic voices that were noticeably more ‘worldly’ than ‘global’. To help expound this perspective *dOCUMENTA (11)* took on a more involved format than just an exhibition — it entertained scholarship as well as art. As a multi-stage process *dOCUMENTA (11)* used four highly academic ‘platforms’ to produce a corpus of new scholarship. This new critical input then informed and validated elements of the subsequent exhibition in Kassel. *dOCUMENTA (11)* gave agency to a multitude of voices, both artistic and academic in order to promulgate a more complex and decentralised view of the ‘contemporary’ artworld.

d*OCUMENTA (11)* was patently dissatisfied with it’s status as "a receptacle of commodity-objects." The platforms featured "a plurality of voices," and were meant to be "a material reflection on a series of disparate and interconnected actions and processes." The four separate platforms were convened on on four separate continents. By traversing the globe the initial academic enterprise wanted to be seen to overtly reinvestigate what


179 Enwezor, Documenta GmbH., and Museum Fridericianum Veranstaltungs GmbH., *Documenta 11, Platform 5: Exhibition*, Catalogue..
Enwezor described as the complex network of global knowledge circuits on which interpretations of all cultural processes depend.\textsuperscript{180} Though the titles for \textit{dOCUMENTA (11)’s} symposiums appeared relatively open ended\textsuperscript{181} the outcomes produced seemed choreographed to accede to the general post-colonial mission of Enwezor’s \textit{dOCUMENTA (11)} exhibition. The academic focus clearly was to critically challenge a perception of cultural hegemony and instead model of a world of interconnected cultures. For instance Enwezor’s agenda to unify and express a multitude of cultural voices in the exhibition was intellectual cornerstone of at least two ‘platforms’ - \textit{Creolité and Creolisation}, staged in St Lucia, and \textit{Democracy Unrealized}, held in both Vienna and Berlin.

A point of departure for \textit{Creolité and Creolisation} was the work of Édouard Glissant, specifically his metonymical assertion that “the whole world is becoming creaolized.”\textsuperscript{182} Enwezor’s explained in the book that resulted from the symposium that understanding creolisation offers a stratagem which one can use comprehend the rapid re-configuration of global culture today.\textsuperscript{183} After establishing the significance of creolised expression through an entire academic symposium it was not a surprise to find the final exhibition prominently featured works like Congolese sculptor Bodys Isek Kingelez’s \textit{New Manhattan City (2001-2002)}. The work was a phantasmal diorama of the Manhattan skyline featuring resurrected Twin Towers modelled as titanic pagoda. The mixture of encoded social relationships the work represented — the bizarre orientalist models mixed with the

\textsuperscript{180} Okwui Enwezor, “The Black Box - Ground Zero or Tabula Rasa” -Ibid.


\textsuperscript{183} Enwezor, \textit{Créolité and Creolization: Documenta 11_Platform3}.
geographic reality of the real place and the location of the artist — epitomised the exhibition's mixed and anti-hegemonic cultural approach, one critic remarked:

Against the metropolitan ascendancy of the West, the horror of brutalised subcultures and collapsing infrastructures, Kingelez sets up an architectural fantasia: it may resemble a child's construction set, highly coloured and made from diverse materials, but it is charged with a sophisticated, Utopian and counter-establishment spirit.\(^{184}\)

By resurrecting the recently destroyed twin towers as culturally mixed architectural fantasia Kingelez's creolised aesthetic imagination reciprocates the decentralised and horizontal cultural models advocated in the preceding symposiums. \textit{dOCUMENTA (11)} directed significant effort toward proposing cultural models which would envelop the exhibition. In this model it is conceivable for a sculptor in Kinshasa to create a phantasmal, orientally themed and visually creolised, reimagining of the New York City skyline. Enwezor's display of a culturally plural skyline counterpoises the reality of that same skyline being as the stage for the performance an extreme brand cultural unilateralism less than a year earlier on September 11.\(^{185}\) In a similar way the larger exhibition sought to reject cultural unilateralism and worked to contrast “the supposed purity and autonomy of the art object against a rethinking of modernity based on ideas of transculturality and extraterritoriality.”\(^{186}\) This exhibition did not just rethink it's form but attempted to reconfigure the critical context in which it sat and through which it would be understood.

Enwezor’s expansive approach to \textit{dOCUMENTA (11)} was the antithesis of Jan Hoet's \textit{dOCUMENTA (9)} which ran a decade earlier. \textit{dOCUMENTA (11)} was culturally productive beyond the exhibition of art and rejected the idea that art works can exist autonomously.

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\(^{185}\) See also Jill Bennett, \textit{Practical Aesthetics: Events, Affect and Art after 9/11} (IB Tauris, 2012).

\(^{186}\) Enwezor, Documenta GmbH., and Museum Fridericianum Veranstaltungs GmbH., \textit{Documenta 11, Platform 5: Exhibition, Catalogue}. 73 of 122
from the cultural world that contextualises and exhibits them. By contrast *dOCUMENTA (9)* set it’s terms of reference through a strictly object orientated lens:

An exhibition must always take its own material circumstances as its point of departure; buildings, lights paths. It must always see and experience that, rather than look for theoretical concepts.  

The governing assumption of *dOCUMENTA (9)* was that the exhibition was restricted to the experience of art objects in the closely regulated context of it's physical location. By 2002 Enwezor was less focused on actual art objects and artists than he was concerned with cultivating the theoretical and cultural concepts which enveloped them.

d*DOCUMENTA (11)* existed simultaneously as a series of academic symposiums and a series of publications as well as a major global exhibition. Regardless of the form it took the thrust was fundamentally to challenge any overarching definition of a cultural status quo. Enwezor's openness to such a gallimaufry of unresolved modes, languages, ideas and cultures reflects the changing form of the mega-exhibition in the twenty-first century. By rethinking the form of *dOCUMENTA* Enwezor redistributed effort away from a mere exhibition of art toward a sort of cultural forum. This summit was less concerned about the tangible currency of art than it was concerned about interrogating the conditions in which that currency is being produced and unwrapping the complexities of that cultural situation. The mega-exhibition is seen undergo recalibration so it can operate in relation to a world of cultures rather than a world culture.

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DISRUPTING THE HISTORICAL SCHEMA
(16TH BIENNALE OF SYDNEY - REVOLUTIONS: FORMS THAT TURN, 2008.)

By 2008 the new cultural role played by the international mega-exhibition was explicit. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev was forthright her introduction to the 16th Biennale of Sydney:

The rise of biennales and international exhibitions in recent decades has decentralised art. It as provided a platform for artists from so-called peripheral areas of the world to practice and enter into the conversation of contemporary art that has traditionally been associated with old centres.\textsuperscript{188}

Christov-Bakargiev's *Revolutions: Forms That Turn* went beyond a renegotiation of cultural relationships and also became a trans-historical project. The biennale disrupted the art-historical schema by creating links between the avant-garde aesthetics of the 20th and twenty-first centuries. The historiographic element of the exhibition delivered through the museum venues of the Art Gallery of New South Wales and Museum of Contemporary Art where works from a range of historical epochs were displayed in close proximity to each other. As a result of this curation distinct contemporary and historical experiences are connected and played off against one another.

Christov-Bakargiev's invocation of avant-garde precedents worked by creating hyper-links — by acknowledging arbitrary elements shared between forms within the broader context of the exhibition. By not adhering to a conventional canonical retrospective hang the museum exhibitions concatenated concepts from a range of periods and suspended the experience of time and thus disrupted the prevailing historical schema. In *Revolutions: Forms That Turn* the utopian ambitions of modernity, the turbulence of the post-modernity and lived experiences in the contemporary all coalesce. The confluence of the myriad of perspectives the biennale presents is seen to create created a dialectical play.\textsuperscript{189} Despite not being temporally contingent the interstice of the biennale enabled work from different periods to fuse and produce a discourse in the synthetic context of the museum.

\textsuperscript{188} Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev et al., *2008 Biennale of Sydney: Revolutions-Forms That Turn* (Fishermans Bend, Vic.: Biennale of Sydney in association with Thames & Hudson Australia, 2008).

Christov-Bakargiev’s curation instigates a détournement, or re-routing, of the art historical narrative and creates hybrid spaces in which new dialogues might be unearthed.

At the Museum of Contemporary Art a dead horse hung from the ceiling - Maurizio Cattelan’s, Novocento (1997). Cattelan’s suspension of the limp agrarian archetype references Bernardo Bertolucci’s epic 1976 film, 1900, which tells the story of an Italian class struggle during the political turmoil of the early 20th century. In the Museum of Contemporary Art the pasquinade of Cattelan’s limp horse stands in as a metonym for modern Italy’s failed attempts at modernist utopia - both facisist and communist.

The horse is juxtaposed with Alexandr Rodchenko. Rodchenko’s angular hanging mobiles, *Hanging Spatial Construction No. 11, Square in Square*, 1920-21 and *Hanging Spatial Construction No. 9 Circle in Circle*, 1920-21. The contrast means that Rodchenko’s ambitious construction of new art for a post-revolutionary Russia is circumscribed by Cattelan’s cynical meme of Bertolucci’s film. Rodchenko’s forms reflect a country hoping for Communist utopia, which is the same state in which Bertolucci’s film leaves Italy, and Cattelan’s morbid horse connotes the savage disillusionment of both dreams. The airspace of the Museum of Contemporary Art does not necessarily provide any definitive answers instead it creates a formal link between two objects of knowledge — the proverbially flogged to death horse and the geometric mobiles which enables new comparisons and thus new critical discussions. This is a new sort of extra-territorial and pan-temporal link between twentieth and twenty-first century ideas. By holding two art historical antimonies in abeyance an arbitrary connection is created which ruptures the prevailing historical schema — here modernism is not supplanted by post-modernism and then the contemporary. Instead the three epoch coexist and collaborate in the production of meaning. *Revolutions: Forms That Turn* can be understood as a forum for a rerouting of
the historical program, it creates situations in which previously disconnected historical nodes become linked.

At the Art Gallery of New South Wales the ambitions of Joseph Beuys and his first blackboard for the Office for Direct Democracy (1971) were set against the provincial contemporary disenchantment of Raquel Ormella’s Wild Rivers: Cairns, Brisbane, Sydney (2008). Joseph Beuys’ unresolved ambition was to produce a social sculpture or a “social organism as a work of Art”\textsuperscript{190} that would act as a catalyst for radical social change. By contrast Ormella’s exhibition of revolving whiteboards depicted a more dour vision of contemporary revolutionary experience — there is no evidence of change, only the aestheticised detritus of an environmentalist’s struggle.

In Wild Rivers: Cairns, Brisbane, Sydney Ormella’s imagery is drawn from her experience working as both activist and artist in the office of the Wilderness Society of Australia. An array of observational whiteboard marker sketches overlay and obscure other sketches, notes and images used in campaign imagery. The revolving medley of partially resolved expression is symbolically displayed through the coolly bureaucratic tool of the revolving industrial whiteboard. The materiality produces a paradoxical sense of stasis despite the heady sense of ambition implied by Ormella’s erratic expression. The practical infrastructure of revolutionary experience produces another hyper-link which counterpoints Beuys’ blackboard and Ormella’s whiteboard.\textsuperscript{191} This curatorial concatenation probes the ways activists reroute the styles of strategic planning and visual communication championed by the establishment bodies who they seek to disrupt. The context of the exhibition the relationship does not protract a singular revolutionary dictum but produces


\textsuperscript{191} Max Delany, “Review - 16th Biennale of Sydney,” Frieze Magazine 2008.
instead a site of unclarity; it is an experience which is self-consciously irresolute — it is a revolution in progress. The site of the gallery again features a disruptive historical cross-reference, a formal hyperlink, which prompts a new tangent for critical thought.

In 2008 the world was also confronted with a seismic and total failure global financial system; The Global Financial Crisis (GFC). At the time many considered the globalising of financial markets the bicuspied of globalisation, Terry Smith asserted the climate of economic certainty prior to fiscal collapse allowed some to culturally project the economic concept of ‘globalisation’ in place of ‘modernity’ and/or ‘postmodernity’ when they tried to ‘name the overarching framework of present and future possibility.”  

At vaguely the same time as this market meltdown began Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev presented the 2008 Biennale of Sydney— an whose potency lay in the way it transacted a range of critical narratives. *Revolutions: Forms That Turn* derived its power the way its connections rendered the patent inadequacies of a linear, hegemonic, model of culture and history. The tension and sense of disruption Christov-Bakargiev created by unifying of multiple critical and historical perspectives can be viewed (with the benefit of hindsight) as an early intervention, a *détournement*, against the brand of totalising ‘globalised’ logic which shepherded so many into disaster.

Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev’s model of art history is a web where selective links are possible between any constituent element in the system. The mega-exhibition is a vortex of conflicting historical plots that draws the audience into an experience incapable of a singular resolution. This Sydney biennale had relatively little concern for the dissemination of ‘new’ art into the world — a huge amount of the art displayed was not new at all. The forum was contrived to establish alternate sorts relationships to ‘old’ art in a way that

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might induce new relationships, new ideas, and new discourses. This mega-exhibition was engineered to disrupt our view of the world by changing the relationships we have with the past.

Much like *dOCUMENTA (11)* This multidimensional, multi-voiced, biennale propelled an inherently nebulous, unstable and evanescent cultural situation. Christov-Bakargiev and Enwezor seem to work at the continual destabilisation of any sense of status-quo. In a broader context of situation where biennales are becoming more and more prevalent globally a curator is not invested in maintaining a status quo where a singular narrative or critical framework prevails and can be securely established. Instead the curators has jobs going forward if they observe and contrive a cultural environment which exists in a perpetual state of flux. This perpetual cultural flux, a vortex of forms which turn, demands continual cultural reinvestigation and thus justifies the mega-exhibition-cum-cultural-forum's continued and expanded existence and perhaps the curators reemployment. So far Christov-Bakargiev’s and Enwezor’s mega-exhibitions have not only produced a curatorial vision that advocates a remapping the artworld but they also have sought to retime it too. The decentralisation of cultural space and disruption of the art historical schema is a deliberate act of destabilisation which necessitates ongoing mega-exhibitions driven by curators who operate as cultural architects to remodel the artworld.
DECONSTRUCTING THE EXHIBITION

DOCUMENTA (13), 2013

By the time Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev came to curate *dOCUMENTA (13)* in 2013 the discursive and synaptic form increasingly adopted by mega-exhibitions was plain to see. *dOCUMENTA (13)* was boundless, the exhibition site sprawled across Kassel— works by 190 artists were dispersed across an array of venues which were “individually sited as far as a pedestrian-spectator can go.” The pedestrian experience of *dOCUMENTA (13)* in Kassel was an endurance event which could take as many as four or five days to see in its entirety. Before one entertains the plethora of auxiliary events the physical exhibition demanded an investment of time, energy and attention that most attendees couldn’t reciprocate.

Despite its sprawl across Kassel the boundless ambition of *dOCUMENTA (13)* could not be contained to one locale. Similar to *dOCUMENTA (11)*, *dOCUMENTA (13)* was a trans-continental phenomenon; Christov-Bakargiev took *dOCUMENTA* on the road and convened exhibition, workshops and seminars in Kabul, Alexandria/Cairo and Banff. Christov-Bakargiev said the sites denoted the conditions of being ‘under siege’, ‘in hope’ and ‘in retreat’. Going beyond Enwezor’s staging of symposia Christov-Bakargiev made the *dOCUMENTA* exhibition itself mobile. There was an inherent implacability about this — no ordinary member of the audience could realistically be expected to visit Banff, Cairo, and Kabul in the same year, let alone during the exhibition period. This curatorial flourish of Christov-Bakargiev must be digested for its symbolic value, it was set up to signify a non-hegemonic artworld whose diverse artistic styles are driven by unique settings. Thus the implied role of the mega-exhibition curator in *dOCUMENTA (13)* was to not just to show world art “but at the same time show the worlds in which it is being made.”

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and Kabul are not just vessels for the \textit{dOCUMENTA (13)} exhibition but they are symbolic fodder for the project. These locations are semiotically absorbed into the internationalist posturing of the mega-exhibition to implore it's grandiose worldwide sense of cultural significance.

For most visitors the inaccessibility of \textit{dOCUMENTA (13)} made it partially virtual. A mental image was generated by the parts of the mega-exhibition the audience did see and the didactic curatorial statements that filled in the blanks for the inaccessible elements of the exhibition. In \textit{dOCUMENTA (13)} the curatorial team placed themselves a privileged situation where they were apart of a select elite able access the full range of works across four continents. This group of core officials were also apart of another niche group with the time and incentive to read, and make sense of, the 100 commissioned essays collated in “the hernia-inducing”\textsuperscript{195} exhibition catalogue-cum-encyclopedia, \textit{The Book of Books}.\textsuperscript{196} There is a stratum between those who have access to all of the knowledge of \textit{dOCUMENTA} and the majority who only can acquiesce it in select parts. Thus the curators become auteurs of the mega-exhibition are not only able to direct what work, essays or ideas are included for exhibition but also engineer a situation where by filling in the blanks the auteur can favourably direct and contextualise what should be thought about the sections that are unseen or in some cases unrealised. This curatorial dependency is established from the outset of the catalogue essay when Christov-Bakargiev waxes lyrical about “one of the projects that did not come to fulfilment in \textit{dOCUMENTA (13)}” —

\textsuperscript{195} Alex Farquharson, “Get Together.”

the proposal to bring the second-largest meteorites in the world, called *El Chaco*, from the north of Argentina to a spot in front of the Fridericianum in Kassel, not far from Walter De Maria’s invisible yet present 1977 *Vertical Earth Kilometre*.\(^{197}\)

Christov-Bakargiev not only reveals that is she literally empowered to move heaven and earth to curate *dOCUMENTA (13)* but also belies the unique position she is in to access and leverage partially visible and hidden objects to produce knowledge. The reality is *El Chaco* never made it to the Fridericianum and no one can see anything but the tip of Walter De Maria’s *Vertical Earth Kilometre* — the significance of both is driven solely by one’s level of faith in the curatorial testimony alone. None the less the audience is told the mental spectre of these forms defines Christov-Bakargiev’s exploration of how “different forms of knowledge lie at the heart of the active exercise of reimagining the world.”\(^{198}\) Prima facie it seems the defining form of knowledge for the exhibition is that held by the curatorial mastermind. The curatorial testimony of *dOCUMENTA (13)* not only defines the mega-exhibitions foundational logic but, because of the inaccessibility of the whole exhibition, informs the basis for the audiences own process of reimagining of the world.

In *dOCUMENTA (13)* objects are not valued because of their status as artworks but for “their encoded social, political and cultural relations.”\(^{199}\) Christov-Bakargiev says that some of what is exhibited in *dOCUMENTA (13)* “may or may not be art” yet the “acts, gestures, thoughts and knowledges produce and are produced by circumstances that are readable by art, aspects that art can cope with and absorb.”\(^{200}\) By refusing to

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\(^{197}\) Ibid.


\(^{199}\) Alex Farquharson, “Get Together.”

\(^{200}\) Christov-Bakargiev and Funcke, *Documenta 13: The Book of Books, Catalog 1/3* [Artistic Director, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev; Head of Publications, Bettina Funcke].
distinguish between works of ‘art’ and “alreadymades” Christov-Bakargiev elevates the significance of the curatorial role whilst implicitly devaluing artistic production. In dOCUMENTA (13) things like El Chaco, (a space rock which predates Earth and never gets to site), a collection of small vessels, (which have been used as props by Giorgio Morandi), and a fused mass of metal, ivory, glass and terracotta, (a product of bombing the National Museum in Beirut), are held in cultural equivalence to far more premeditated ‘artworks’. dOCUMENTA (13) reflects Caroline Christov-Bakargiev’s “holistic” and “non-logocentric” vision of the world and growing from the 2008 Sydney biennale refuses to organise itself around “any attempt to read historical conditions through art” blending artefacts from distinct eras thousands of years apart.

In what Christov-Bakargiev refers to as the ‘brain’ of dOCUMENTA (13), The Fridericianum’s rotunda, sit the “Bactrian Princesses” (2500-1500BC) — small female figurines carved by unknown artisans in central Asia. These female figures exist in relation to a portrait of photojournalist Lee Miller by David E. Scherman. The image shows Miller having a bath in Adolf Hitler’s Munich apartment on the same day Hitler committed suicide — April 30, 1945. On the left of the tub a small portrait of Hitler looks toward the nude form of Miller, who in turn glances to the right. On the right of the bathtub a small classical sculpture of a female nude simultaneously meets the eye-line of WII's great villain and one of it’s key witnesses. In the space of Christov-Bakargiev’s curatorial ‘brain’ there is a sense of a formal connection, a hyper-link, to the Bactrian Princesses which sit a few of meters away. It is the curation that brings together two different visions of femininity from diametrically opposed ends of human history and allows them to conceptually collude.


202 Christov-Bakargiev and Funcke, Documenta 13: The Book of Books, Catalog 1/3 [Artistic Director, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev; Head of Publications, Bettina Funcke].
Christov-Bakargiev's 'brain' also exhibits a series of contemporary photographs of 'bomb ponds' in Cambodian rice-fields. The images form part of the photographic series *Takeo* (2009) by Vandy Rattana. Each circular pond disrupting the rice paddies was made by an American bomb during their invasion in 1970. The reflect how the landscape is healing after the violent American incursion into Cambodia. Rattana's scarred landscapes sit metres from a fused mass of ruble — all that is left of an ancient exhibit after the bombing of the Beirut Museum during the Lebanese civil war (1975-90). The connection between two bombing campaigns on opposite sides of the globe creates a new neural layer in the 'brain' — the experience pulls away from a survey of femininity to a reflection on the relationship between the experience of time and the experience of trauma.

Christov-Bakargiev's ahistorical curation of *dOCUMENTA (13)*'s 'brain' is the curation of her own aesthetic neural network. This is a space which encodes abstract synaptic links between disparate historical experiences — it is a wide web of objects with dynamic and indirect relationships to one another. In *dOCUMENTA (13)* ancient human experiences can be concatenated with the human catastrophe of late modernity which in turn partially informs the reading of objects denoting the chaffing scars of the world's post-moderns upheavals.

In Christov-Bakargiev's 'brain' objects are clearly valued for their encoded social, political and cultural relations rather than their core object-hood. All of these relationships are materially fused together, akin to the vaporised exhibit from the National Museum of Lebanon, in the same operational totality of the exhibition. The mega-exhibition is now a site where arbitrary links are able to be cultivated between objects which, on the face of it, may seem totally divergent and not even necessarily designated as 'art'. By conflating invisible artworks with absent meteorites, by linking the art of today with that of modernity
and antiquity, and by connecting the Kassel site to four other corners of the world Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev’s approach not only decolonises the exhibition, disrupts the historical schema but it also de-prioritises ‘art’ as a category. Instead in *dOCUMENTA (13)* the mega-exhibition is seen to "re-prioritises the importance of ‘exhibition’ as the primary cohering production of knowledge and meaning."\textsuperscript{203}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{203} Weir, "Cosmic Alreadymades: Exhibiting Indifference at Documenta (13)."}
WELCOME TO THE AGE OF MEGA-FORMA
56TH VENICE BIENNALE - ALL THE WORLD’S FUTURES, 2015

Fig 17. Adel Abdessemed, Bruce Nauman & Okwui Enwezor. Installation View, Room 1 Arsenale, Venice Biennale 2015. From, Art apart of Cult(ure). “Art apart of Cult(ure) - Metafore dell’impegno all’interno della 56 Biennale di Venezia.” Art apart of Cult(ure).
You cannot curate an entire world, or all its possible futures. That would be God's job, but Enwezor has hubris enough to try. If his exhibition fails, it does so on a grand scale. ... All the World's Futures tells a different story, of a world too complex to submit to any single critique or system.\textsuperscript{204}

At the most recent Venice Biennale, \textit{All the World's Futures}, Okwui Enwezor believed it was possible to thoroughly disentangle the ambitions of the art object from the larger agenda of the exhibition. This is the casting of the mega-exhibition as both Brechtian epic theatre and as \textit{gesamtkunstwerk}. Enwezor reached beyond using exhibition as a form for just cohering culture. Instead he produced a nebulous array of critical perspectives with the explicit purpose of identifying social injustice and exploitation. He used his power as curatorial mastermind to make a cultural statement. Through his the 56th Venice Biennale Enwezor urged his audience to move from the simulation of the exhibition and effect change in the outside world, asserting that the "right of disengagement and distance might seem proper to art and the conduct of artists, for an exhibition of art, however, it is quite another matter."\textsuperscript{205} \textit{All The World's Futures} regarded the mega-exhibition as a cultural form with significant socio-political and moral obligations which dwarfed that of any single artist or art object.

In \textit{All the World's Futures} the mega-exhibition format is considered a throughly embedded forum — it's multi-modality was seen to enable "public discovery of art's potential in the face of difficulty." Enwezor's sense was that the exhibition is irrevocably "something that happens in the world, and carries with it the noise, pollution, dust and decay."\textsuperscript{206} Whether he intended it or not Enwezor's biennale is understood for the way it's largess underscores what Enwezor previously characterised as the "frightening Gesamtkunstwerk


\textsuperscript{205} Enwezor, O. 'The State of Things', from Luz Gyalui, \textit{La Biennale Di Venezia: 56a Esposizione Internazionale D'arte: All the World's Futures} (Venezia: Marsilio, 2015).

\textsuperscript{206} Ibid.
evident in the global mega-exhibitions that seem to have over taken the entire field of contemporary artistic production.\textsuperscript{207} This mega-exhibition reflects the coming of age of a new twenty-first century paradigm where the instincts and statements of the exhibition have become rooted in the auteur’s episteme of the world — the “task of an exhibition and the work of a curator is viewed as fundamentally contiguous.”\textsuperscript{208}

The brash staging of the 53rd Venice Biennale has to be emphasised from the outset. Enwezor’s overwhelmingly complex biennale can fundamentally was seen as an attempt to, at best, disrupt or, at worse, totally estrange the Venice Biennale from the austere and elite audience that flock to the art-world centre every two years. Enwezor seemed to neglect, or consciously disregard, the demographic reality of the people who would attend the show. The Venice Biennale occupies a privileged position at the centre of the prevailing, western, artworld and it’s first African curator used his position to brazenly confront the establishment, as The Guardian’s critic Laura Cumming quipped:

The big thematic show in the Italian pavilion, organised by the Biennale’s first African curator, Okwui Enwezor, is full of ladies in Louboutins picking their way nervously through an assault course of videos about global starvation, industrial pollution and the atrocious conditions of garment workers in developing countries. Whole galleries are given over to ecology and the arms trade.\textsuperscript{209}

Another review, this time in Frieze magazine, characterised the show as “a dense, theory-crammed, historically-ridden conceptual disquisition” going to assert that “if you like your exhibitions with light and shade and a generous guiding hand, you won’t find it here.”\textsuperscript{210}

Stratagems used in earlier exhibitions — decentralising the artworld, disrupting the art


\textsuperscript{208} Ibid.


historical schema, and asserting the primacy of the exhibition form, are deployed by Enwezor in All The World’s Futures with dystopian effect.

Enwezor’s brand of curatorial demagoguery was evident from the first room of the Arsenale. The first gallery featured the bright neon text works of American Bruce Nauman. These light works were hung on the walls and their candy coloured glare illuminated menacing islands of machetes lodged in the floor by Algerian-born Adel Abdessemed.

The playful and commercially successful post-minimal work of Nauman entertained his conceptual curiosity about language and the way words succeed or fail in referring to objects in the world. Generally Nauman’s neon lit wordplay is seen to reflect the post-modern disappearance of the belief that an artist must express his ideas clearly and powerfully. As much as anything these light works were intellectual exercises easily divorced from the reality of lived experience. Ironically the specific works displayed by Enwezor are read as the most overtly political work Nauman ever produced, something the artists reacted to vehemently by rejecting that art can be seen as at all political: “Art can never … [have] … any direct political or social impact on culture”\textsuperscript{211}

By contrast Adel Abdessemed’s installation \textit{Nymphéas} used constellations of machetes to produce oversized caltrops\textsuperscript{212} that defined the audience’s course through the gallery. When translated from French \textit{Nymphéas} means waterlily and the constellations of machetes were thus seen to act as a threatening three dimensional perversion of Monet’s series \textit{Water Lilies}. The aesthetic frivolity of French modernity overhung a statement of

\textsuperscript{211} Bruce Nauman and Janet Kraynak, \textit{Please Pay Attention Please: Bruce Nauman’s Words, Writings and Interviews} (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003). p.285

\textsuperscript{212} - spiked metal devices which are placed the ground to impede movement by puncturing car wheels and previously calvary horses
Algerian suffering in north Africa. The tension between western modernity and global post-modernity, a contrast the intellectual posturing of fiscally valuable western art practices and the caustic testimony of comparably valueless post-colonial art practices, was established from the first stanza of Enwezor’s Arsenale. In contrast to Nauman Abdessmend’s agenda is to unsettle and produce social change:

As artists, we must generate tensions for something very positive and extraordinary to come out, ... If we don’t put our finger on a problem, how will it get proper attention?²¹³

The machetes in the first room of the Arsenal were imbued with the pathos of the Abdessmend’s biography, his university education coincided with one of the most violent periods in the country’s history. In 1992 a coup annulled elections won by an Islamist party and instigated a protracted civil war which would leave 150,000 dead. Abdessmend’s aesthetic upbringing was so steeped in the gore of the war that the head of his art school was murdered at the school while Abdessemmed was a student. This educational experience could not be more oppositional to the privileged Wittgenstein-influenced musings of Nauman. Abdessemmed directly experienced the violence his work deals with and says “to this day, the wounds stay open and the questions remain unanswered: the arson attacks, the mass rapes, the unpunished murders.”²¹⁴ Enwezor’s first salvo in the Arsenale, which was filled with weapon based art, set the open wounds of Algerian civil war against the politically estranged cotton candy colours of a western artist.

In the seat of the ‘traditional’ artworld, the Venice Biennale, very different visual languages are linked to produce a situation which seems incommensurable. Enwezor describes Abdessemmed as “an irascible spirit, fearless, reflective” and “an artist who likes to probe at


²¹⁴ Ibid.
the scar tissues of pain.” If one multiplies the culturally unsettling experience of that first encounter out across the network of countless galleries and hundreds of artists and you have *All The World’s Futures*. This is the mega-exhibition using all the tactics developed earlier in the service of a loaded curatorial statement.

If the contemporary commercial art-fair seems a bit like a Hollywood movie — a mostly apolitical exercise where artworks seem designed with the same aesthetic half-life as the latest iThing — then the *All The World’s Futures* and *dOCUMENTA (13)* might seem like an epic straight from the playbook of Bertolt Brecht. When the Biennale becomes Brechtian theatre it is painful, compendious and difficult because it forces the audience to look beyond the action on the stage and develop a critical view of the larger pattern of action. In *All The World’s Futures* this experience provokes a confrontation with new, often irksome, critical perspectives and recognises social injustice, inequality and exploitation. The hope was is that the audience would be moved to go forth from the Venetian theatre and effect change in the wider world. Instead when confronted with a mega-exhibition with such a imprecatory socio-political statement many, like Guardian critic Adrian Searle, responded with indignant dislocation:

> All the World’s Futures tells a different story, of a world too complex to submit to any single critique or system, even Marx’s. I have seen the future and I’m not going.  

*All The World’s Futures* was not as impenetrable as many critics suggested; in fact it was quite the opposite. It was just that the experience of penetrating *All The World’s Futures* rapidly became deeply uncomfortable; across the whole Biennale Enwezor’s agenda seemed to be to generate this cultural cringe as a tacit acknowledgement of the real

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215 Ibid.


inequality of the world. It was this dystopian vision of the world that Enwezor’s critics so vociferously reacted against. However it was clear from the first room and the first lines the essay what the curatorial agenda was. *All The World’s Futures* clearly declared itself as "a part of the messy world", and thus carried with it the uncomfortable inequality, violence, gore, "noise, pollution, dust and decay".  

Breaching the harrowing, overwhelming, and sometimes hyperbolic, surface of *All The World’s Futures* was an unwelcome reality check for the largely euro/americain critical infrastructure. To accept *All The World’s Futures* would be to admit how thoroughly the artworld experience of Venice has been insulated from the lived experience of billions of people. The exhibition demanded a connection between divergent cultural realities that implied a level of culpability which most audience members, struggling around the proverbial artistic assault course in their *Louboutins*, were totally unprepared to assume. Perhaps the most unsettling aspect of Venice 2015 was the way it showed how easily the mega-exhibition, as a *frightening Gesamtkunstwerk*, can be programmed to articulate a forthrightly anti-establishment political statement. *All The World’s Futures* showed the unambiguous power that both curator, as master-mind, and his creation wield in the context of a networked world.

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218 Gyalui, *La Biennale Di Venezia : 56a Esposizione Internazionale D’arte: All the World’s Futures.*
MAKING WORLDS WITHIN THE WORLD

In a world which over the last 25 years has become rapidly deterritorialized by new technology it comes as relatively little surprise that flagship mega-exhibitions have become increasingly multi-voiced and multi-cultural. What perhaps is more surprising is how the curatorial agenda to challenge cultural hegemony has led to a rethink the form the mega-exhibition takes — it is no longer just vessel for art objects but acts more broadly as an all encompassing cultural forum.

The explosion of the numbers biennales around the world, which has happened instep with the development of both the web and developing economies, has had a lot to do with the changing conception of what a mega-exhibition can do and aspire to be. Before 1989 there was around 25 international biennials in 2010 there were 159. Belting and Buddensieg assert that the development of new global paradigms has raised the issue the world map of art and "how such a map might be drawn, and what should be marked on it." The mega-exhibition is now seen as a site for the large-scale injection of cultural capital — a perverse sort of cultural stimulus package. This has created increasingly hectic competition between multiple art regions, "in which travelling curators operate as global agents, presenting packages of international plus regional art" to diverse audiences in an ever-expanding range of exotic locales. Mega-exhibitions are now producing more ambitious socio-cultural statements in order to redirect perceived vectors in the cultural landscape.

Curators are now becoming cultural producers in their own right through the unique production of the mega-exhibition. Artworks, artists and historical objects are being used

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219 Belting et al., The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds. p.148
220 Ibid. p.28-29
by mega-exhibition curators as materials to weave a complete web of encoded formal, social and historical relation. In this applied context the notion of a hyperlink, something able to connect any bit of content with any other bit of content, seems to reciprocate the liberal approach to the curation of art-objects and art-history. The artistic director now plays the role of auteur, an architect of experience, expected to produce a more totalising experience, in addition to showing art they also, screen films, convene symposiums, publish new texts, et cetera to achieve their strategic goals. The mega-exhibition auteur is now a multi-modal architect of culture, knowledge, and history as well as art and space. A bit like Berners-Lee the master-mind of the mega-exhibition devises a system of links which models a new cultural world from their own sense of time-space, proximity and connection.
CONCLUSION

In 1991, just after the World Wide Web came online, the global art market managed around €8 billion in sales.\textsuperscript{221} As emerging markets became have become more developed and better connected the value and distribution of the artworld has exploded accordingly. In 2008 Robert Hughes noted that aside from illegal drugs ‘art is the biggest unregulated market in the world.’\textsuperscript{222} By 2014 the value of the global art market broke all known records, one report valuing it in excess off €51 billion.\textsuperscript{223} Of the 390 million sales reported in this record breaking year the value of ‘Post War and Contemporary’ art accounted for 48% of all art sales. Commercial art galleries and dealers sold half (52%) of all art and 40% (€9.8 billion) these sales came from art fairs, mainly the 180 major international art fairs. This meant art fairs became the second largest expenditure item in the market costing €2.3 billion (19% of the total).

By contrast the reported operating budget raised for the curator of the 2013 Venice Biennale was around €3.8 million,\textsuperscript{224} it had 475,000 visitors.\textsuperscript{225} In 2014-2015 the Tate Modern reported 5,702,364 visitors,\textsuperscript{226} five times more than the attendance of the top 22 art fairs combined. The public programs budget for the whole Tate group of museums was 37.3 million pounds (€47 million).\textsuperscript{227} The Tate public program budget might sound like a lot until one hears that in 2015 two successive auctions of ‘Post-War and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{221} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{222} Robert Hughes et al., \textit{The Mona Lisa Curse} (Channel 4, 2008).
\item \textsuperscript{223} Maastricht, “Tefaf Art Market Report 2014.”
\item \textsuperscript{226} Nicholas Serota, "Tate Report 2014–2015," (London 2015).
\item \textsuperscript{227} Nicholas Serota, "Tate Report 2014–2015," (London 2015).
\end{itemize}
Contemporary art in a week at Christie’s totalled in excess €1.15 billion.\textsuperscript{228} In 2008 artist Damien Hirst held an auction of 223 new works, \textit{Beautiful Inside My Head Forever}, in London and netted just over €176 million\textsuperscript{229} — the equivalent of 46 Venice Biennales. At both auctions individual works sold for far more than the annual exhibition budget of the Tate Modern.

In no small part the hyper-liquidity and economic imbalance of the artworld has led to the redirection of artistic energy in major public institutions and major public exhibitions suggested in the case studies above. The public arenas of the biennale and public art gallery are not incentivised to take the contemporary art pulse and have had direct their energies elsewhere and into things that money can’t buy. These institutions are becoming highly social and highly inclusive cultural producers in their own right. The public museum and exhibition are becoming the locations for the monumental production of new sorts of cultural and social capital. Rather than trying to keep pace with schizophrenic digital zeitgeists and ravenous markets these institutions have slowed to focused on delivering two unique sorts of cultural products.

What we see in the monumental commission and in the mega-exhibition is a reprogramming of key artworld superstructures. There is a reconsideration of the form the exhibition takes and a redistribution of the sorts of art which is being shown. As one participant said of Eliasson's \textit{The Weather Project} these approaches are a "brilliant use of art for the people."\textsuperscript{230} This new orientation toward creating and harnessing new sorts of artistic networks correlates with the explosive growth of the World Wide Web. The growth


\textsuperscript{229} Belting et al., \textit{The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds}, p.140.

\textsuperscript{230} beguemot - Ions Weblog, November 27, 2003,
of inter-connection the Web has enabled may suggest “world can be seen as only
connections, nothing else.” The relational hyper-link way of considering things offers a
new paradigm for thinking about art. The notion that we are collectively interconnected
both, literally and metaphorically, is the antithesis of Mercator’s original worldview which
modelled the world spatially according to distance rather than thematically according to
proximity. This new world functions on the idea that we are bound together by shared
aesthetic and social experiences. This new style of art, this new style of curating simply
does one thing, it creates links — the twenty-first century is, and will continue be, defined
by the art of connection.

231 Berners-Lee and Fischetti, Weaving the Web: The Original Design and Ultimate Destiny of the World Wide Web
by Its Inventor.
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