

**Art
Production
beyond
the
Art
Market?**

Karen van den Berg and Ursula Pasero (eds.)

SternbergPress 

I Am Not My Office

Gregory Sholette

Interviewed by Karen van den Berg



Place of production: Gregory Sholette

KAREN VAN DEN BERG: Greg, you have been writing about activist art, collectivism, and the impact of the invisible mass for the art world for many years, and your writings are quite well known within the global discourse about art in public space and so-called socially engaged art. What I found interesting is that you do not act in the role of artist in your writings, meaning you avoid the presentation of your own work in your writing. I would therefore like to know how you would describe your own working practice as an artist. How would you explain your self-conception as an artist, and how is it related to your writing?

GREGORY SHOLETTE: To understand one's dual position as both a politicized individual/thinker and also as an artist—or perhaps what Pier Paolo Pasolini termed a “citizen poet”—demands today that one remain ill at ease when inhabiting either role, I think; even if that means playing oneself off against oneself. Or maybe the right tag here is actually something like a citizen poet sans citizenship or state? Anyway, we—that is to say, us faithless intellectuals, artists, curators, and administrators, myself included—we live in a moment of uncertainty and divided loyalties, and it would of course be easier to forget the convoluted nature of

our predicament if only “art” was an easy thing to do without generating contradictions. Don’t you agree, Karen?

KvDB: This is a very poetic self-description—so how could I not agree? I like the idea of a citizen poet sans citizenship. But could you still be a little bit more explicit? What does your everyday working practice look like? Do you produce works without a specific event or situation? Do you work on your own most of the time? Tell me how I can imagine the job of a citizen poet sans citizenship.

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GS: Depending on priorities, I divide my days between computer time and studio work. Some of this is work promised for an exhibition or publication, some involves new projects I hope to produce at some point. At the moment, I am, among other things, finishing up an essay for *The Blackwell Companion to Public Art*; doing research for a text on the idea of color and also for an art project about the militant, ultra-Left organization Madame Binh Graphics Collective (active in New York City in the 1980s); working with UK theorist Kim Charnley on a book of my selected essays; and also developing the next chapter of *Double City*, a graphic novel whose first chapter ran in the June 2013 issue of *Frieze*, with the second installment appearing in *Shifter 21* in October 2013. (*Double City* is a science fiction narrative with a plot that seeks to address issues raised by my book *Dark Matter* [2010], with subsequent chapters hosting various illustrators and appearing in different publications as the story unfolds.) And, to be perfectly honest, I feel that work is going on all the time, even in my sleep sometimes because I often wake up trying to solve issues related to ongoing projects. So much for the romance of the citizen poet! But let me try out another label with you: let’s use “mongrel researcher.” We could use it as a tag for artists involved in different registers of practice, including traditional studio art but also collaborative projects and online digital projects, as well as research, writing, lecturing, and teaching that seeks to expand and reflect on the social conditions of artistic production itself. It’s not much of a sound bite, though I suspect for a lot of artists this awkward, run-on description rings true. And perhaps not only for artists. My brother, for example, drives about the US

East Coast demonstrating and selling engineering products. Wherever he goes he must have a Blackberry device with him. He can hardly ever escape the office.

This seamless merging of life and work is becoming a pretty common condition for many people in post-industrial economies. Except that for artists (as well as independent curators, critics, scholars, etc.) the situation is especially poignant because allegedly our “creative” and “mental” labors are part of a vocation or “calling” as opposed to routine, wage-based work. But is that really true? I mean, after all, most of us have no choice but to engage in multiple forms of employment just to “pay” for our so-called artistic careers. At what point does our “free” creative labor—which presumably negates regulated productive labor—actually slide over into a kind of full-time affirmative work central to networked capitalism? These topics are on people’s minds. Curator Dieter Roelstraete has addressed this play-as-work/work-as-play and the ambivalence it produces by calling first for realism, followed by a self-conscious attempt at returning to art its negative, critical function.¹ A more sober, less optimistic analysis is Marion von Osten and Katja Reichard’s video *Kleines Postfordistisches Drama* [Small Post-Fordist Drama, 2004]. Have you seen it?

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KvDB: No, I haven’t. I’ve just read about the project.

GS: My own collaborative installation *I Am NOT My Office* (2002)² fits in here in a different way, because to create the work I invited a group of people to imagine what kind of prosthetic enhancement they would wish to have in order to be able to simultaneously do their “day job” and also do what they really would like to be doing instead of working (including making art). I then used their ideas to create miniature models and drawings, and then the project was installed at the University of Chicago’s Smart Museum of Art for *Critical Mass*, an exhibition curated by Stephanie Smith in 2002. Which gets us back, I think, to your last

¹ See Dieter Roelstraete, “A Letter on Difference and Affirmation,” in *Art and Activism in the Age of Globalization*, eds. Lieven De Cauter, Ruben De Roo, and Karel Vanhaesebrouck (Rotterdam: NAi publishers, 2011), 94–99.

² See http://www.gregorysholette.com/?page_id=37.

question, because *I Am NOT My Office* was in its own quirky way an attempt to materialize what Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt describe as the counterpublic sphere: a fragmented realm of unconscious fantasy produced by workers in response to the alienating conditions of capitalism. Almost a decade later, my book *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* used a different approach in order to respond to that same research problem.

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KvDB: What you said about the “mongrel researcher” and everyday practice in the “fragmented realm of unconscious fantasy” gives a quite clear indication that your work also includes a permanent self-questioning. Do you think “work” is an adequate term for your practice? If I define work as a kind of activity that ensures your livelihood—as “subsistence-work,” to use a Marxian term—would you say the activity you just talked about is work in this sense? Do you make your living by working as a “mongrel researcher”? Or is this more a privileged realm, enabled by other day jobs? When I visited you in New York you told me that you sometimes work with galleries, but you have no close connection to any one gallery, right?

GS: Your right, of course, Karen. As Theodor W. Adorno once quipped: “criticizing privilege becomes a privilege.” And you’re also correct that the term “work” in English is often loosely applied to things that we do regardless if they are waged or not, pleasurable or not. In terms of my personal finances, therefore, I am fortunate to draw a modest salary from teaching within the New York City public university system (at Queens College and at the Graduate Center), and also secondarily I support myself through lectures and sometimes art commissions. But my point is—and this is not my unique observation as I suggested before—for us “creative workers” so-called subsistence work is becoming less and less clearly differentiated from privileged forms of labor, so that even my taking time out now to answer your questions could be seen as a kind of work, or as a playful distraction, or both simultaneously. In other words, it is difficult to distinguish where one begins and the other leaves off because working on one’s own career is at best a fuzzy kind of labor. That might not be

true, say, of my brother, because if you were interviewing him instead of me, I suspect his bosses would most likely consider it extraneous to his salary. Or maybe not? After all, this is an economy where ephemeral activity generates prestige and “buzz” that might actually enhance company branding. Still, I doubt this kind of fuzzy labor “trickles down” to menial jobs that make up so much of the precarious economy that we are told is the “new normal.”

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KvDB: If you talk about “us creative workers,” I assume this includes more than just the art field. Therefore, I am curious if the “art field”—as a social field with its own norms, and maybe even with its own economy, as Pierre Bourdieu describes it—is still a relevant concept to you. Would you rather talk about a sphere of precarious creative workers than about the art field? Or do you still consider yourself to be a player within the art field?

GS: Hmm . . . perhaps it’s a bit like the way Karl Marx uses “capital,” “money,” “profit,” “surplus,” and other terms in order to investigate a single phenomenon that has different material manifestations depending on how he approaches the object of his research: capitalism. So, risking the loftiness of this comparison, I find I tend to use the term “creative workers” or “creatives” when referring to the broader arena of cultural production, and I use “artist” to describe what I and other academically trained plastic or visual artists do as a subset within that broader arena. To ignore this definitional specificity is I think a mistake, especially if one is concerned with questions about changing conditions of artistic labor as I am. And yet to pretend the “art world” is not a diminutive part of the larger post-Fordist enterprise economy is simply myopic, particularly if one is looking at art’s reception or its impact on society.

So, briefly—yes and yes; the issues we are discussing do relate to that larger category of imaginative social productivity within which “art” is situated, and, yes, these concerns also have specific possibilities and limitations for “us”—all of the visual artists, curators, critics, administrators, historians, interns, students, packers, installers, fabricators, dissidents, outsiders, and so on who habitually reproduce the symbolic and material

economy of the mainstream “art world.” This is what I describe as art’s political economy in *Dark Matter*, and what Oliver Ressler and I take as our thesis for the exhibition and the book *It’s the Political Economy, Stupid* (2013).

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KvDB: You are an assistant professor at Queens College in New York. How do you take all these considerations into account when you teach in a—if I might say—relatively traditional context of art education? I would be interested to hear what kind of advice you would give to one of your fine art students, if he or she were to ask you for possible strategies to make a living as an artist.

GS: It is indeed a traditional context I teach in. In fact, I was hired as a sculpture instructor, not a specialist in theory or socially engaged art. My undergraduate students are often the first in their respective families to attend college (as I was and remain), and they are typically immigrants to the US, or the children of immigrants. So as you might imagine, it raises lots of internal complications for me sometimes. But my approach to teaching is both pragmatic and idiosyncratic. As for the practical part I am always upfront with my students about the difficult conditions we artists find ourselves in today. I never sugarcoat the art “profession.” But just as my friend and former professor Hans Haacke explained to us back in the late 1970s, one must search out every possibility to make one’s work visible, and the same goes for finding meaningful employment. That advice, too, is bound to bring about its own contradictions. Nevertheless, for people not living on trust funds or grants—and that includes all of my students—“political correctness” must sometimes take a backseat to survival. So this past year, as chair of the MFA program, I specifically focused the semester on how to sustain oneself as an artist by inviting guest speakers with wide-ranging approaches to this challenge, including the graphic artist Josh MacPhee, whose online, worker-owned cooperative Justseeds sells inexpensive, politically focused print art. At the same time, I have to acknowledge that as Vladimir Mayakovsky’s friend Viktor Shklovsky insists: being an artist requires the energy of delusion. Well, OK—perhaps it is more akin to embracing delusion without becoming

delusional? And maybe art comes down to appreciating the thinness of the line separating those two possible states of being?

KvDB: Sounds like continuous struggle! But being an artist seems to be attractive anyhow. Moreover, it seems it has never been so attractive as it is today. The number of young people who want to be artists increases constantly. This leads me to my last question: Your work is, as you mentioned, about changing the conditions of artistic labor, and I would say your work is characterized by a politically active approach. But to what extent do you think art is an essential approach in the field of political activism?

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GS: The research I did for *Dark Matter* strongly indicated that an unprecedented number of people (at least in the US, UK, and Germany) claim to be artists these days—though I am not sure it is only young people. So, yes, being an artist is clearly attractive. Or has been attractive for some time. But why? I mean, considering that it has always been a precarious occupation—or better yet, vocation—and that today, after several decades of deregulation and privatization, it is even more so. At least this is true in the US where the lack of grants, jobs, health insurance, reasonable spaces in which to live and work (in key cities), and, of course, student debt that can reach well over \$50,000 makes studying and becoming a “professional artist” appear like a ridiculous pursuit. (I understand that sometimes from a European perspective it is less challenging to grasp our situation.) But would I describe it as a fun struggle? Maybe—in a curious, counterintuitive way. Or perhaps the thorny pleasures of being an artist somehow relate to the way a hyper-entrepreneurial society insists on creative risks and constant innovation? After all, it was a piece in the *Washington Post* a few years ago that asserted the “MFA is the new MBA!”³ That kind of hype may make such insecurity seem almost sexy. Or at least it may have made it so before the “society of risk” went over the cliff. In fact, I have been wondering if the stats are still going in the same direction since 2008.

³ Philip Kennicott, “Daniel Pink and the Economic Model of Creativity,” *Washington Post*, April 2, 2008, http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2008-04-02/news/36846243_1_fine-arts-left-brain-mba.

What about politics and art? As far as I am concerned, art is always political and always communal. People like Haacke made this clear to me long ago, as did having such friends and collaborators over the years as Lucy Lippard, Leon Golub, Carol Duncan, Andrew Hemingway, Martha Rosler, Janet Koenig, Oliver Ressler, John Roberts, Blake Stimson, Brian Holmes, Gene Ray, Gerald Raunig, Marc James Léger, Krzysztof Wodiczko, and Olga Kopenkina, as well as the many brilliant people I have worked and collaborated with over the years in such collectives as REPOhistory, Political Art Documentation/Distribution, and, most recently, the GulfLabor Coalition. Still, what is key, I think, is differentiating art made politically from art that only seeks to represent politics. And this is even more important today since art has apparently taken a “social turn,” to cite my colleague and friend Claire Bishop. So with all this talk about social practice and artistic activism, even within major museums (though it is really just “talk,” as far as I can tell), I am compelled to quote Jean-Pierre Gorin, another former professor of mine, who once said the point is not to make political art but to make art politically. That, however, does not always mean engaging with “politics” head-on. Most recently, for example, I have been exploring the way cultural production itself—in my case this means artistic labor and its related conditions of production—meshes with broader battles over liberty, democracy, and economic equality. I do this through my writings and research, and also through my art. Sure, sometimes this means addressing political issues directly—and yet “politics” also means engaging in processes of collaboration and/or exploring my own or other people’s fantasies of liberation or even outright “escape” (both are visible in such projects as *I Am NOT My Office*, *Fifteen Islands for Robert Mosses* (2012), *Imaginary Archive* (2010–), and, most recently, the graphic novel *Double City*). So I suppose for me making art is about adding a small, sometimes personal and sometimes communal, chapter to that long, winding history of struggle “from below.”

I Very Much Like the Art Field

Christoph Schäfer

Interviewed by Karen van den Berg

KAREN VAN DEN BERG: Christoph, you became internationally well known as an artist at the end of the '90s through your engagement within the public space project *Park Fiction* (1994) and later through your role as a kind of spokesman of the “right to the city” movement. Together with other artists like Margit Czenki you coined slogans like “Desires will leave the house and take to the streets” and invented a new approach to cooperative planning processes like the “collective production of desires” within the community. Since your *Archive of Desires* was presented at documenta 11 (2002), much of your work has not been seen in the gallery/exhibition system, but rather through organized conferences, public events, books, and lectures. One might assume, therefore, that you decided to step out of the art field. Against this background it would be interesting to hear your description of your practice.

CHRISTOPH SCHÄFER: I very much like the art field and define myself as an artist. Even the classical definition of art as “autonomous” appeals to me. But I do enjoy risking that autonomy. When I joined *Park Fiction*, it was more interesting to me to place my thinking and artistic activity in a collective, urban context. I was sick of the negative dialectic that informed the classical conceptual art (which I came from), and I also have

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Introduction

The forms of work in the art world of the twenty-first century have undergone a momentous transformation. Over the past several years in this field that sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu,¹ Howard S. Becker,² and Niklas Luhmann³ have called the “art field,” “art world,” or “art system,” a new type of art-related actor has emerged. Alongside the dominant order of exhibitions, museums, galleries, and art fairs, new art-directed networks, project spaces, and working arrangements have arisen with their own patterns of inclusion, professionalization, and recognition. Since then, a growing cohort of artists has started to operate in diverse areas, such as education, urban planning, research, and social engineering, while at the same time being active in numerous social fields. They have long since ceased to be just artists, but are simultaneously activists, initiators of barter networks, curators, independent critics, and freelance researchers as well. They often only consider themselves to be loosely connected to the gallery/exhibition nexus and to what Cynthia and Harrison

¹ See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

² See Howard Saul Becker, *Art Worlds: 25th Anniversary Edition, Updated and Expanded*, 9th ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

³ See Niklas Luhmann, *Art as a Social System* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

White describe as the established system of dealers and critics⁴ predominant since the nineteenth century.

Art Production beyond the Art Market? intends to take a closer look at these developments. It focuses upon an example-based review and reflection of such alternative forms of production. It is helpful to make a distinction here between art business and the art field in order to define more precisely what is meant by these artistic forms of production no longer geared towards an author-centered, global art market, a distinction which in turn characterizes that sphere we call “beyond the art market.”

viii The art business can be best described as an interactive space that is for the most part shaped by institutions, practical routines, and conventions. What is meant by “business” here is a series of complex organizations, regulated procedures, and defined economies—a social dimension, then, with which art theory has only engaged infrequently up to now. The art market with its institutions and initiated stakeholders—such as museums, curators, collectors, critics, gallerists, and ultimately also the artists themselves as the decisive suppliers (a category to which they have been reduced from this perspective)—belongs to this overall system as a culturally endowed organizational model. Conversely, whenever the art field is spoken about, then boundaries and fringes are always also implied. These very boundaries have been not only shifted, but are also often vigorously contested—and this is of particular interest here. Interpreted thus, Bourdieu’s art field also includes those patterns of activity that have developed outside of these established institutions.

As a result, *Art Production beyond the Art Market?* is aimed at practices that have established themselves in ways alternative to those patterns of interaction and institutions that have traditionally made up the art system. It would seem that a different alignment of working conditions concomitantly obtains a different relationship between producer and recipient.

There are many reasons, illuminated from a number of different perspectives in the interviews and essays in this book, for the increasing relevance of these practices.

4 See Harrison C. White and Cynthia A. White, *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

What is visible at present is a process of differentiation between art for the market and a more discursive, inquiring art geared toward intervention.⁵ One of the causes leading to this differentiation is the sustained critique of an author-centered production of objects that is closely connected to the specific social order of the art market—an art market in which artworks are sold, not to put too fine a point on it, to an affluent and expert audience. This contradicts the sustained boom since the 1990s of participatory and democratizing strategies that endeavor to form a new connection between art and social action and are situated in open, communicative art practices geared toward the suspension of the hierarchy between the author and the recipient.⁶

ix At first, the concept of the market appears to be an omnipresent formula, which has been tagged with negative connotation on account of the now popular, pointed emphasis in the term “market imperative.”⁷ American political scientist and Bill Clinton advisor Benjamin Barber had already tossed this term into the debate about globalization.⁸ Since then, the meaning of “market imperative,” which also contains a critique of capitalism, is also used in order to describe the exemplary expansion of one single segment of the art market, namely the so-called high price market. This very section has not only received a lot of media attention recently but has also featured disproportionately in novels⁹ and various art-theoretical discourses.¹⁰ As a

5 See Daniel Birnbaum and Isabelle Graw, eds., *Canvases and Careers Today: Is There a Market for Critique?* (Berlin: Sternberg, 2008); James Meyer and Tim Griffin, “Art and Its Markets: A Roundtable Discussion (Ai Weiwei, Amy Cappalazzo, Thomas Crow, Donna De Salvo, Isabelle Graw, Dakis Joannou, Robert Pincus-Witten),” *Artforum*, April 2008, 297.

6 These developments reach back well into the twentieth century. Worthy of mention here are the Interventionists around Guy Debord or semioticians such as Umberto Eco. See Umberto Eco, “The Open Work in the Visual Arts,” in *The Open Work* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 84ff; Guy Debord, “Report on the Construction of Situations” (1957), in *Situationist International Anthology*, revised and expanded edition, ed. and trans. Ken Knabb (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006), 25–46.

7 For more on the term “market imperative,” see Martha Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 30.

8 See Benjamin R. Barber, “Jihad versus McWorld,” *The Atlantic*, March 1992, 53–65.

9 See Michel Houellebecq, *Platform* (London: Vintage, 2003) and Thomas Wolfe, *Back to Blood* (New York: Little, Brown, 2012).

10 Isabelle Graw, *High Price: Art between the Market and Celebrity Culture* (Berlin: Sternberg, 2010); Don Thompson, *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark: The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

x result, artworks are primarily addressed thematically and valued in terms of their growing commercial success. The market imperative also refers to those speculation practices that turn artworks into potential capital investments. The impact of this is serious: artworks are not only flagged as luxury commodities, but above all, they are removed from the public sphere, as the insurance premiums demanded for public exhibitions from the responsible bodies are increasingly becoming prohibitively expensive. Rules regarding recognition here operate in terms of gallery rankings, product placement, and price. In this light, this particular segment of the market is part of the tradition of an elite audience, which is in a position to choose “re-sellable”—that is to say, “investment-worthy”—works from the sheer diversity of the art field. These modes of assignment are predicated upon a traditional concept of art that proceeds from the idea of self-contained body of work. However, such an understanding of the market only encompasses a minimal segment of the art field. Ninety-nine percent of the objects bought by galleries—according to the gallerist Gerd Harry Lybke¹¹—lose their market value as soon as they leave the gallery space or change owners. In this sense, only a relatively small number of the objects on sale in the art market are the object of speculative buying. In this sense, market hype, a term which crops up again and again, has become a ubiquitous media buzzword inasmuch as the art market that exists at today’s art fairs, biennials, and exhibitions actually comprises extremely differentiated practices. Thus it seems legitimate to assert that even art fairs are not just places of business for speculators but also sites in which philanthropists and patrons, critics and amateurs, viewers and theorists can meet. Moreover, we should view the market—all these reservations notwithstanding—very much, in terms of Hannah Arendt’s analysis, as a salient element of the public sphere: as a *res publica*.¹² Accordingly, it is not unproblematic when people speak of “the market” as a section of enemy territory. One of the intentions of the question mark in the title *Art Production beyond the Art Market?* is precisely to realign this perspective.

¹¹ Gerd Harry “Judy” Lybke is a German gallerist and the founder of the gallery Eigen+Art, in Leipzig and Berlin. The quotation is taken from Zoran Solomun’s documentary film *Super Art Market* (2009).

¹² See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 22ff.

In order to preempt any misunderstanding: this question mark is not aimed at a population of artists that has not succeeded in playing a part in the various market cycles that obtain between galleries, exhibition venues, and collectors. Instead, it implies another population of artists that has deliberately decided upon a different context for their artistic production and devised completely different production strategies that can no longer be situated in the system of exhibitions, auctions, and their associated institutions. The initial question posed at the outset, namely “Is there art production beyond the art market?,” and the example-based answers in the interviews and essays collected here have been grouped around the problem, in the widest sense possible, of how artistic activities that don’t offer any art product to speak of, nor wish to use any pre-existing channels for trade or the conventional art market, are organized within a market-dominated society, and how they can become visible and relevant. This entails the task of diffusing art into alternative practices, not as an extension of the art field in socially based, participatory projects but as an internal logic of cultural production that no longer acknowledges the art field as the genuine center of art. Consequently, the established art market, both as an agency of inclusion and exclusion and as the supposed hub of this field, forfeits its position as an unbounded, economic epicenter, even if the results of alternative practices are repeatedly co-opted by the art field. What is crucial here is the fact that reputation resources may well result from this reference, but their alternative economies of production are now no longer dependent on the art market.

It cannot be denied that the withdrawal from the so-called white cubes of the gallerists and exhibition makers has enjoyed a long tradition: the entire twentieth century is shaped by such migrations from the art field—be it the avant-garde movements of Land Art, political art, interventionist art, or participatory art. Moreover, these movements can be differentiated clearly from Institutional Critique, which primarily engages with its own economies, art production, and entanglements and remains firmly rooted in gallery spaces or museums—this is precisely why many of its exponents have long since lamented the somewhat stale taste it has left in their mouths.¹³

¹³ See Andrea Fraser “Speaking of the Social World,” *Texte zur Kunst*, March 2011, 153–56.

In addition to this, they differ from those so-called “market-reflexive gestures”—to use a term of Isabelle Graw—which can be seen in Andrea Fraser’s performances.¹⁴

The interviews and essays refer instead to those practices and forms of production situated in other, albeit institutional, contexts; that is, in social spaces that are no longer reserved for the art field. This in no way means art merging “into life,” which would be a serious misunderstanding because the protagonists—also reflected in the interviews in this book—insist upon their own artistic internal logic. As a result, a new perspective on artistic self-empowerment comes into play: in contrast to Jacques Rancière, who views the autonomy of art in the very possibility of distance from the world,¹⁵ this perspective refers more to a *cooperative* self-empowerment.

The selected essays and interviews with artists are grouped in this book in such a way as to provide information not only about the artists’ respective artistic self-understandings, but also about the economies in which they operate. A common characteristic would be a positioning within the critical and reflexive spaces of the art field and largely “beyond the art market,” as well as in the dominant gallery/exhibition nexus: the conceptual artist Hans Haacke, whose interventionist contributions in the art field have become exemplary for many artists, takes up a pivotal position, because he has been operating for decades within the system of international exhibitions and the art market and, at the same time, appears as its most vehement critic. The New York artists Pablo Helguera and Gregory Sholette provide insights into how artistic practice can be combined with art education and communication, with critical writing on contemporary art, and with political activism. The Hamburg artist Christoph Schäfer and the Dutch Slovenian architect and artist Apolonija Šušteršič explain how they are active in the very areas where the neighborhood-based “right to the city” threatens to be lost forever. The Viennese artist and documentary filmmaker Oliver Ressler, who has become well known through his markedly activist public space projects

and videos critical of capitalism, illustrates which role he expects art to be capable of in the field of political interventions. The art critic and writer Caroline Jones, working at MIT in Boston, ultimately focuses upon the altered access to an art world that her students still need to conquer.

The book opens with the essay “Exodus: Aesthetic Practice beyond the Art Institution” by the art historian Stephan Schmidt-Wulffen. He traces an artistic tradition that has repeatedly breached respective boundaries of the art field. However, he also illustrates the dynamics of return by means of an art discourse that, up to now, has reversed every single exodus, at least documentarily. Nevertheless, there are obviously new cultural practices that are becoming increasingly relevant because they favor “collective intelligence” and “neighborhoods” and don’t even expect to be drawn back into the art field, since they never intended to be part of it.

In her essay “Fragile Productivity,” the art historian Karen van den Berg engages with the issue of the extent to which, if at all, artistic practice should be labeled with terms like “work” and “production.” In keeping with Theodor W. Adorno’s dictum, which states that there is nothing self-evident about art, she illustrates the extent to which an engagement with one’s own conditions of production nowadays is integral to the essence of an artistic self-making. What this actually means for artists who see themselves as activists, researchers, or community developers is dealt with along the lines of different role models.

The art critic and writer John Roberts, in his essay “Art, Politics, and the Topological Turn,” traces the history of the exodus away from conventional museum spaces and toward an “expanded field.” By referring centrally to the critical consequences of these attempts at expansion in a post-institutional context and concentrating on the environments in which a new type of precariously poised, part-time artists enters into a new set of working conditions, he effectively re-charts the relationship between autonomy and heteronomy.

Social scientists Ulf Wuggenig and Steffen Rudolf concentrate upon the question of how the art market and its conservative impact and agency are researched empirically in academic writing. In their comparative study “Valuation beyond the Market: On Symbolic Value and Economic

¹⁴ Graw, *High Price*, 214ff.

¹⁵ See Jacques Rancière, “The Aesthetic Revolution and Its Outcomes: Emplotments of Autonomy and Heteronomy,” *New Left Review*, no.14 (2002): 133–51.

Value in Contemporary Art,” they present the status of current sociological research and its findings—including their own. What emerges here is a regulatory mechanism typical of the market, which generates two different forms of value: symbolic value and economic value.

In her essay “Why Artists Go Unpaid,” the sociologist Ursula Pasero shows that the indigent artist is no stereotype or romantic cliché but actually corresponds to social reality. The author puts forward the thesis that poverty is a socially relevant pattern of expectation for artists that ultimately derives from the imperatives of our work-oriented society. A practical response to this in Germany is an insurance fund for artists, which at least indemnifies them against illness and provides an opportunity for them to accrue pension rights. This leads to an increasing number of artists willing to try out new, “post-heroic” arrangements.

The economist and cultural sociologist Hergen Wöbken has been observing the Berlin art scene in a professional capacity for the past several years and has published empirical studies on the subject. Together with his colleague the political scientist Friederike Landau, he presents a current, empirically based study—“Artist Networks in Berlin”—in which the thematic focus falls upon different levels and qualities of such artist networks in the German capital. The authors have identified four different types of networks that provide evidence of the growing importance of “collective intelligence” and “neighborhood”: connection, support, project-based cooperation, and collectives.

Under the title “Art and Repressive Liberalism: The Dutch Cultural Policy System,” the Dutch cultural sociologist Pascal Gielen traces a cultural-political development in the Netherlands characterized by extreme vicissitudes: from the Second World War up until 1987, artists were generally eligible for benefits, but since then this funding has died away, been frozen, or been abolished completely. The author sketches the considerable cultural upheaval caused by this policy, and, on the basis of examples, illustrates how and where contemporary artists breach gaps in the wilderness caused by the depredations of this Dutch brand of repressive liberalism.

Art historian Merav Yerushalmy, in her essay “Imaging Communalities: The Case of the Barbur Gallery in Jerusalem,” describes the foundation of

a communal gallery in a somewhat impoverished quarter of Jerusalem. The way in which this gallery associates with the local residents and opens itself to the surrounding neighborhoods constitutes the dynamic range of this particular example-based description.

“(Not) More Autonomy” is the title of Kerstin Stakemeier’s contribution, which concludes the book. Herein the art historian delineates the history of engagement with the concept of autonomy against the backdrop of a history of Marxist theory. She reveals how attempts at autonomy are, constantly, interwoven with an economic capitalization.

KAREN VAN DEN BERG AND URSULA PASERO

Translated from German by Tim Connell.