

FALSEWORK SCHOOL

SUMMER 2016, MAKING AMERICA AGAIN

VOLUME 3: ARTWORKING THE BERKSHIRES

30 JULY 2016

THIS AND ADDITIONAL MATERIALS AVAILABLE AT WWW.HICROSA.ORG

The distribution of the sensible reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed... it defines what is visible or not in a common space, endowed with a common language, etc. There is thus an 'aesthetics' at the core of politics that has nothing to do with Benjamin's discussion of the 'aestheticization of politics' specific to the 'age of the masses'... It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience. Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time. —Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*

An 'age' does not pre-exist the statements which express it, nor the visibilities which fill it. These are the two essential aspects: on the one hand each stratum or historical formulation implies a distribution of the visible and the articulable which acts upon itself; on the other, from one stratum to the next there is a variation in the distribution, because the visibility itself changes in style, while the statements themselves change their system... A way of saying and seeing, discursive practices and forms of self-evidence: each stratum is a combination of the two, and in the move from one stratum to the next they vary in terms of composition and combination. —Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*

This class, the third in Falsework School's Making America Again series, offers a chance to recollect the politics and meaning of our own art (broadly understood) in communion with other artworkers in the area. What kind of meaning do we want our work to have and why, and who do we think determines that? How do we bring a critical self-reflection to the production of art and culture in the Berkshires by getting together and articulating over, for ourselves at least, the communities in which we make our art, and to whom we feel accountable? What is the difference between locating our art in the world on the one hand, and locating our own practice among various material, social, and political realities? Amid Norman Rockwell's corpus and spirit, this learning day will engage with the works and self-descriptions of local artists and the range of their connected, intended, and received politics in the world. Readings will guide us to thinking of the relation between art, politics, and possibility, and how we come to that triangulation from each of our positions as artworkers in this world, especially in a moment when revisiting "America" as an object worthy of creation and recreation is an imperative for many of us who dismiss either the return to a grand American past or an uncritical affirmation of eternal America today.

The paradoxical relation between the 'apart' and the 'together' is also a paradoxical relation between the present and the future. The art work is the people to come and it is the monument of its expectation, the monument of its absence. The artistic 'dissensual community' has a double body: it is a combination of means for producing an effect out of itself: creating a new community between human beings, a new political people... To the extent that it is a dissensual community, an aesthetic community is a community structured by disconnection.—]acques Rancière, "Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art"

The democracy of experiences is defined as a view where no area of experience is in principle outside the critical reach of any other area of experience... The idea in the democracy of experiences... is quite simple: art (or artistic experience) can criticize science (or scientific experience), not to mention the possibilities of intra-artistic or intra-scientific criticism. In this sense, experiential democracy is co-terminus with the multi-directionality of criticism. In this way, we get a new interpretation of the criterion of (scientific) openness... it is in principle possible to question and criticize any and all forms or areas of experience from the point of view of any other area of experience.... Doing research is in itself a way of producing intersubjectivity with regard to an area of experience that has been void of ways of communicating in a shared language.—Mika Hannula, Juha Suoranta, Tere Vadén, *Artistic Research: Theories, Methods and Practices*

[A]n aesthetic politics always defines itself by a certain recasting of the distribution of the sensible, a reconfiguration of the given perceptual forms. The notion of 'heterology' refers to the way in which the meaningful fabric of the sensible is disturbed: a spectacle does not fit within the sensible framework defined by a network of meanings, an expression does not find its place in the system of visible coordinates where it appears. The dream of a suitable political work of art is in fact the dream of disrupting the relationship between the visible, the sayable, and the thinkable without having to use the terms of a message as a vehicle. It is the dream of an art that would transmit meanings in the form of a rupture with the very logic of meaningful situations. As a matter of fact, political art cannot work in the simple form of a meaningful spectacle that would lead to an awareness' of the state of the world. Suitable political art would ensure, at one and the same time, the production of a double effect: the readability of a political signification and a sensible or perceptual shock caused, conversely, by the uncanny, by that which resists signification. In fact, this ideal effect is always the object of a negotiation between opposites, between the readability of the message that threatens to destroy the sensible form of art and the radical uncanniness that threatens to destroy all political meaning. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*

The core of the problem is that there is no criterion for establishing an appropriate correlation between the politics of aesthetics and the aesthetics of politics. This has nothing to do with the claim made by some people that art and politics should not be mixed. They intermix in any case; politics has its aesthetics, and aesthetics has its politics. But there is no formula for an appropriate correlation. It is the state of politics that decides that Dix's paintings in the 1920s, 'populist' films by Renoir, Duvivier, or Carne in the 1930s, or films by Cimino or Scorsese in the 1980s appear to harbour a political critique or appear, on the contrary, to be suited to an apolitical outlook on the irreducible chaos of human affairs or the picturesque poetry of social differences. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*

There are politics of art that are perfectly identifiable. It is thoroughly possible, therefore, to single out the form of politicization at work in a novel, a film, a painting, or an installation. If this politics coincides with an act of constructing political dissensus, this is something that the art in question does not control. Brecht's theatre, the archetypal form of 'politicized' art, is built on an extremely complex and cunning equilibrium between forms of political pedagogy and forms of artistic modernism. He constantly plays between means of coming to political awareness and means of undermining the legitimacy of great art, which found expression in the theatre by admixtures with the 'minor' performing arts: marionette shows, pantomime performances, the circus, the music hall or cabaret, not to mention boxing. His 'epic theatre' is a combination between a pedagogical logic legitimated by the Marxist corpus and, on the other hand, techniques of fragmentation and the mixture of opposites that are specific to the history of theatre and production in the 1910s and 1920s. The political formula is identifiable. Nevertheless - between Brecht's exile in Denmark or the United States, the official position in the German Democratic Republic, and his adoption by the European intellectual elites in the 1950s - the encounter between this particular form of politics and its supposed audience (workers conscious of the capitalist system) never took place, which means that its suitability to its militant referent was never really tested. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*

Here blackness is defined of necessity as the *negative residuum* of the interracial encounter, left over and distilled, the difference subtracted not only from the mythic purity of whiteness but also from the sanctified "impurity" of the multiracial contingent. On this score, the multiracial camp would like to disentangle its incorporation of figures of "false" blackness from its inevitable expulsion of figures of "true" blackness, an annexation that is at the same time a distancing. Distancing *through* annexation: this is a differentiation installed by the new border, the new color line, the definition given to that which is not taken in and cannot be included under any circumstances. The disputed territories of race and culture therefore

Not coincidentally, the etymological roots of *race* link it to writing—to the scratch, the mark, the line. The general economy relates to the inevitable loss of this meaning or value, the going astray of the line of race

self-possession, privacy, or autonomy. Living in a permanent state of theft, seizure and abduction order the affairs of the captive community. Structural vulnerability to appropriation, a perpetual and involuntary *openness*, is the paradigmatic condition of black existence in the modern world, the defining characteristic of antiblackness.

At the dead center of "Banality" is *Michael Jackson and Bubbles* (1988), the most well-known of these well-known sculptures, a pietà-inspired homage to the King of Pop and his favorite monkey, in gilded porcelain. A wall label at the Whitney explains the significance of the piece for Koons. It reads, in part:

When the work was made, Jackson was arguably the most famous entertainer in the world and Koons admired him as the epitome of mainstream appeal, just as the artist's own celebrity was reaching new heights. "If I could be one other living person," Koons remarked at the time, "it would probably be Michael Jackson." Koons praised Jackson as someone willing to do "absolutely anything to be able to communicate with people." In Koons's eyes this included plastic surgery and skin-lightening procedures that he claimed Jackson undertook to reach more middle-class white audiences. "That's radicality. That's abstraction," Koons said.

You read that and you say, wait... what? Is that the Whitney praising Koons praising Michael Jackson for becoming white as the ultimate act of artistry?

black identity a rather miserable affair. One wonders, of course, whether the difficulties of black identity are considered inherent to its social position or simply an effect of the supposed inaccuracy or dishonesty of claiming it when one is "in truth" something else.

Artist Statement from Hannah Black's *Not You* (2015)

at Arcadia_Missa in Peckham, London

///

In the midst of worldwide flows of information and commodities, lives are interrupted and blocked by the same systems that guarantee their fungibility and movement. What happens under the sign of flow also happens under the sign of stasis. Liquidity swirls and freezes, in the same moment. The brand fixes an identity in place so that it can move.

I've been flying around a lot lately. In London airports you make your movements smooth and controlled to get through security without drawing attention. In Frankfurt they checked the passports coming out of the plane - an air steward who was literally and not figuratively in that moment a cop, holding out her hand - and again at passport control, where I queued for a long time and tried to keep my face neutral for the border cop's gaze.

Materials are treated as flags of a globalised subjectivity, of a system of false analogies made real through violence. But there is always the dream of escape or of flow, the dream that in another place I will find myself again intact. Both the systemic flow of capital and the fugitive flow of liberation get interrupted. Thought should be more ashamed of itself. Since I tried to give up analogies, I notice them everywhere.

I've been up there wrapped in the brand of flow - the flag of the colonial centre is an airline blanket. Some people are wrapped in whiteness. The relationships, the points of contact, feel fraught and uneasy. No we don't share a language, or the language we share is collapsing, should collapse, was always collapsing, was never really built. I am a token, like a coin. I am a thing that moves money around. I bring my fake skins to Peckham.

Even if (my) thought becomes jagged and raw under the burden of its new obligations, I don't miss the easy and false recognitions I once enjoyed, when I thought I could speak for someone other than myself.

Chicago Surrealist Group's Statement on the 1992 LA Rebellion *Excerpted*

In a time of massive political demoralization and incoherence, the most down-and-out people in the country changed the complexion and direction of American politics and pointed the way forward for all seekers of real freedom and justice for all.

The L.A. rebels showed that a few Black and Latino mayors and police chiefs, a few minority TV shows and token faces of Black and Latino celebrities on billboards are not solving and cannot solve the problems of those who are forced to live in America's Black ghettos, barrios and other "bad" neighborhoods. Sons and daughters of the Watts rebels of '65, grandsons and granddaughters of the zoot-suiters and beboppers of the '40s, the L.A. rebels rapped to one and all that nothing less than a complete transformation of social relations can create a life worth living.

For three full days many tens of thousands of people said "no!" to the slave system known as daily life in America. In the highly educational enthusiasm of mass action, long-established habits and routines of resignation were discarded in favor of improvisation, experiment, and discovery. However briefly, throngs who had been condemned to a living death discovered new reasons for living, new possibilities of life.

People who find themselves in a cop-free environment for the first time, conscious that they are freer than they have ever been in their lives, cannot be expected to be exemplars of free human beings in a free society. For, into their first tentative experience of freedom they bring with them a lifetime's accumulation of unfreedom. It would be absurd to believe that those who have been bound their whole lives will, at the moment their fetters are suddenly and unexpectedly shaken off, immediately move with a dancer's grace. No, they will not always do the right thing, and some will inevitably commit terrible wrongs. That excesses are a part of every rising of the oppressed is a truism — the American Revolution of 1776 was full of excesses — and only lickspittles of the status quo could denounce such uprisings because of the excesses of a few.

Contrary to those who profess to see nothing but illiteracy and ignorance in the "younger generation," we argue that America's poorest teen-agers, most of them high-school dropouts, are in many and fundamental ways far wiser than those who want them kept in school to prepare for (non-existent) jobs. If the best way to learn is by doing, the first thing is to decide what is to be done. There is every reason to believe that in some seventy-two hours of popular, creative destruction, L.A.'s insurgent population learned more than they did in all the years they spent confined in classrooms. Almost in passing, therefore, they proposed the only workable solution to the much-discussed crisis of American education.

The L.A. rebels manifested exactly what is needed to turn environmentalism into a real and effective movement: desperation, defiance, energy, a sense of the unbearable boredom and misery of American life today, a readiness to improvise, a willingness to take risks and a beautiful determination to win release from misery. With such outsiders' perspective to inspire and guide the actions of a new movement, an ecologically healthy planet could become a reality instead of a slogan.

Such new connections, however unthinkable to believers in dogmas, are the inevitable fruit of the revolutionary imagination. If the L.A. rebels drew inspiration from the poetry of rap, the rebellion itself remains a crucial factor in renewing the practice of poetry everywhere, as a revolutionary activity. The boldest dreams of poets always have expressed humankind's deepest aspirations, and any "program" that denies them is a sure ticket to misery and more misery. Any would-be "revolution" willing to settle for less than the realization of poetry in everyday life is a revolution at a dead-end before it starts.

Steeped in humor, open to poetry, aiming at a fundamental reintegration of humankind and the planet we live on and the creatures with whom we share it, this new global revolutionary movement naturally will be the most playful and adventurous of all time. How could it be otherwise?

The struggle for wilderness is inseparable from the struggle for a free society, which is inseparable from the struggle against racism, whiteness and imperialism, which is inseparable from the struggle for the liberation of women, which is inseparable from the struggle for sexual freedom, which is inseparable from the struggle to emancipate labor and abolish work, which is inseparable from the struggle against war, which is inseparable from the struggle to live poetic lives and, more generally, to do as we please. The enemies, today, are those who try to separate these struggles.

THE MUNDANE AFROFUTURIST MANIFESTO

The undersigned, being alternately pissed off and bored, need a means of speculation and asserting a different set of values with which to re-imagine the future. In looking for a new framework for black diasporic artistic production, we are temporarily united in the following actions.

The Mundane Afrofuturists recognize that:

We did not originate in the cosmos.

The connection between Middle Passage and space travel is tenuous at best.

Out of five hundred thirty-four space travelers, fourteen have been black. An all-black crew is unlikely.

Magic interstellar travel and/or the wondrous communication grid can lead to an illusion of outer space and cyberspace as egalitarian.

This dream of utopia can encourage us to forget that outer space will not save us from injustice and that cyberspace was prefigured upon a "master/slave" relationship.

While we are often Othered, we are not aliens.

Though our ancestors were mutilated, we are not mutants.

Post-black is a misnomer.

Post-colonialism is too.

The most likely future is one in which we only have ourselves and this planet.

The Mundane Afrofuturists rejoice in:

Piling up unexamined and hackneyed tropes, and setting them alight.

Gazing upon their bonfire of the Stupidities, which includes, but is not exclusively limited to:

Jive-talking aliens;

Jive-talking mutants;

Magical negroes;

Enormous self-control in light of great suffering;

Great suffering as our natural state of existence;

Inexplicable skill in the martial arts;

Reference to Wu Tang;

Reference to Sun Ra;

Reference to Parliament Funkadelic and/or George Clinton;

Reference to Janelle Monáe;

Obvious, heavy-handed allusions to double-consciousness;

Desexualized protagonists;

White slavery;

Egyptian mythology and iconography;

The inner city;

Metallic colors;

Sassiness;

Platform shoes;

Continue at will...

We also recognize:

The harmless fun that these and all the other Stupidities have brought to millions of people.

The harmless fun that burning the Stupidities will bring to millions of people.

The imaginative challenge that awaits any Mundane Afrofuturist author who accepts that this is it: Earth is all we have. What will we do with it?

The chastening but hopefully enlivening effect of imagining a world without fantasy bolt-holes: no portals to the Egyptian kingdoms, no deep dives to Drexciya, no flying Africans to whisk us off to the Promised Land.

The possibilities of a new focus on black humanity: our science, technology, culture, politics, religions, individuality, needs, dreams, hopes, and failings.

The surge of bedazzlement and wonder that awaits us as we contemplate our own cosmology of blackness and our possible futures.

The relief of recognizing our authority. We will root our narratives in a critique of normative, white validation. Since “fact” and “science” have been used throughout history to serve white supremacy, we will focus on an emotionally true, vernacular reality.

The understanding that our “twoness” is inherently contemporary, even futuristic. DuBois asks how it feels to be a problem. Ol’ Dirty Bastard says “If I got a problem, a problem’s got a problem ‘til it’s gone.”

An awakening sense of the awesome power of the black imagination: to protect, to create, to destroy, to propel ourselves towards what poet Elizabeth Alexander describes as “a metaphysical space beyond the black public everyday toward power and wild imagination.”

The opportunity to make sense of the nonsense that regularly—and sometimes violently—accents black life.

The electric feeling that Mundane Afrofuturism is the ultimate laboratory for worldbuilding outside of imperialist, capitalist, white patriarchy.

The sense that the rituals and inconsistencies of daily life are compelling, dynamic, and utterly strange.

Mundane Afrofuturism opens a number of themes and flavors to intertextuality, double entendre, politics, incongruity, polyphony, and collective first-person—techniques that we have used for years to make meaning.

The Mundane Afrofuturists promise:

To produce a collection of Mundane Afrofuturist literature that follows these rules:

No interstellar travel—travel is limited to within the solar system and is difficult, time consuming, and expensive.

No inexplicable end to racism—dismantling white supremacy would be complex, violent, and have global impact.

No aliens unless the connection is distant, difficult, tenuous, and expensive—and they have no interstellar travel either.

No internment camps for blacks, aliens, or black aliens.

No Martians, Venusians, etc.

No forgetting about political, racial, social, economic, and geographic struggles.

No alternative universes.

No revisionist history.

No magic or supernatural elements.

No Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, or Bucks.

No time travel or teleportation.

No Mammies, Jezebels, or Sapphires.

Not to let Mundane Afrofuturism cramp their style, as if it could.

To burn this manifesto as soon as it gets boring.

— Martine Syms & whomever will join me in the future of black imagination.

Murderous Humanitarianism (1932)

ANDRÉ BRETON, ROGER CAILLOIS, RENÉ CHAR, RENÉ CREVEL, PAUL ELUARD, J.-M. MONNEROT, BENJAMIN PÉRET, YVES TANGUY, ANDRÉ THIRION, PIERRE UNIK, PIERRE YOYOTTE. This declaration, written in 1932, first appeared in Nancy Cunard's Negro anthology (1934), translated by Samuel Beckett.

For centuries the soldiers, priests and civil agents of imperialism, in a welter of looting, outrage and wholesale murder, have with impunity grown fat off the colored races. Now it is the turn of the demagogues, with their counterfeit liberalism.

But the proletariat of today, whether metropolitan or colonial, is no longer to be fooled by fine words as to the real end in view, which is still, as it always was, the exploitation of the greatest number for the benefit of a few slavers. Now these slavers, knowing their days to be numbered and reading the doom of their system in the world crisis, fall back on a gospel of mercy, whereas in reality they rely more than ever on their traditional methods of slaughter to enforce their tyranny. No great penetration is required to read between the lines of the news, whether in print or on the screen: punitive expeditions, Blacks lynched in America, the white scourge devastating town and country in our parliamentary kingdoms and bourgeois republics.

War, that reliable colonial endemic, receives fresh impulse in the name of "pacification." France may well be proud of having launched this Godsent euphemism at the precise moment when, in throes of pacifism, she sent forth her tried and trusty thugs with instructions to plunder all those distant and defenseless peoples from whom the intercapitalistic butchery had distracted her attentions for a space. The most scandalous of these wars, that against the Rifians in 1925, stimulated a number of intellectuals, investors in militarism, to assert their complicity with the hangmen of jingo and capital.

Responding to the appeal of the Communist Party, we protested against the war in Morocco and made our declaration in Revolution Now and Forever!

In a France hideously inflated from having dismembered Europe, made mincemeat of Africa, polluted Oceania and ravaged whole tracts of Asia, we surrealists pronounced ourselves in favor of changing the imperialist war, in its chronic and colonial form, into a civil war. Thus we placed our energies in the service of the revolution - of the proletariat and its struggles - and defined our attitude toward the colonial problem, and hence toward the color question.

Gone were the days when the delegates of this sniveling capitalism might screen themselves in those abstractions which, in both secular and religious mode, were invariably inspired by the Christian ignominy and which strove on the most grossly interested grounds to masochize whatever people had not yet been contaminated by the sordid moral and religious codes in which men feign to find authority for the exploitation of their fellows.

When whole peoples had been decimated with fire and sword it became necessary to round up the survivors and domesticate them in such a cult of labor as could only proceed from the notions of original sin and atonement.

The clergy and professional philanthropists have always collaborated with the army in this bloody exploitation. The colonial machinery that extracts the last penny from natural advantages hammers away with the joyful regularity of a pole ax. The white man preaches, doses, vaccinates, assassinates and (from himself) receives absolution. With his psalms, his speeches, his guarantees of liberty, equality and fraternity, he seeks to drown the noise of his machine guns. It is no good objecting that these periods of rapine are only a necessary phase and pave the way, in the words of the time-honored formula, "for an era of prosperity founded on a close and intelligent collaboration between the natives and the metropolis!" It is no good trying to palliate collective outrage and butchery by jury in the new colonies by inviting us to consider the old, and the peace and prosperity they have so long enjoyed. It is no good blustering about the Antilles and the "happy evolution" that has enabled them to be assimilated, or very nearly, by France.

In the Antilles, as in America, the fun began with the total extermination of the natives, in spite of their having extended a most cordial reception to the Christopher Columbian invaders. Were they now - in the hour of triumph, and having come so far - to set out empty-handed for home? Never! So they sailed on to Africa and stole men. These were in due course promoted by our humanists to the ranks of slavery, but were more or less exempted from the sadism of their masters by virtue of the fact that they represented a capital which had to be safeguarded like any other capital. Their descendants, long since reduced to destitution (in the French Antilles they live on vegetables and salt cod and are dependent in the matter of clothing on whatever old guano sacks they are lucky enough to steal), constitute a Black proletariat whose conditions of life are even more wretched than those of its European equivalent and which is exploited by a colored bourgeoisie quite as ferocious as any other. This bourgeoisie, covered by the machine guns of culture, "elects" such perfectly adequate representatives as "Hard Labor" Diagne and "Twister" Delmont.

The intellectuals of this new bourgeoisie, though they may not all be specialists in parliamentary abuse, are no better than the experts when they proclaim their devotion to the Spirit. The value of this idealism is precisely given by the maneuvers of its doctrinaires who, in their paradise of comfortable iniquity,

have organized a system of poltroonery proof against all the necessities of life and the urgent consequences of dream. These gentlemen, votaries of corpses and theosophies, go to ground in the past, vanish down the warrens of Himalayan monasteries. Even for those whom a few last shreds of shame and intelligence dissuage from invoking those current religions whose God is too frankly a God of cash, there is the call of some "mystic Orient" or other. Our gallant sailors, policemen and agents of imperialist thought, in league with opium and literature, have swamped us with their irretentions of nostalgia; the function of all these idyllic alarms among the dead and gone being to distract our thoughts from the present, the abominations of the present.

A holy-saint-faced international of hypocrites deprecates the material progress foisted on the Blacks; protests, courteously, against the importation not only of alcohol, syphilis and field artillery but also of railways and printing. This comes well after the former rejoicings of its evangelical spirit at the idea that the "spiritual values" current in capitalist societies, and notably respect for human life and property, would devolve naturally from enforced familiarity with fermented drinks, firearms and disease. It is scarcely necessary to add that the colonist demands this respect for property without reciprocity. Those Blacks who have merely been compelled to distort in terms of fashionable jazz the natural expression of their joy at finding themselves partners of a universe from which Western peoples have willfully withdrawn may consider themselves lucky to have suffered nothing worse than degradation. The eighteenth century derived nothing from China except a repertoire of frivolities to grace the alcove. In the same way the whole object of our romantic exoticism and modern travel lust is of use only in entertaining that class of blasé clients sly enough to see an interest in deflecting to his own advantage the torrent of those energies which soon, sooner than he thinks, will close over his head.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS (1962)

James Baldwin

Perhaps the primary distinction of the artist is that he must actively cultivate that state which most men, necessarily, must avoid; the state of being alone. That all men are, when the chips are down, alone, is a banality—a banality because it is very frequently stated, but very rarely, on the evidence, believed. Most of us are not compelled to linger with the knowledge of our aloneness, for it is a knowledge that can paralyze all action in this world. There are, forever, swamps to be drained, cities to be created, mines to be exploited, children to be fed. None of these things can be done alone. But the conquest of the physical world is not man's only duty. He is also enjoined to conquer the great wilderness of himself. The precise role of the artist, then, is to illuminate that darkness, blaze roads through that vast forest, so that we will not, in all our doing, lose sight of its purpose, which is, after all, to make the world a more human dwelling place.

The state of being alone is not meant to bring to mind merely a rustic musing beside some silver

lake. The aloneness of which I speak is much more like the aloneness of birth or death. It is like the fearless alone that one sees in the eyes of someone who is suffering, whom we cannot help. Or it is like the aloneness of love, the force and mystery that so many have extolled and so many have cursed, but which no one has ever understood or ever really been able to control. I put the matter this way, not out of any desire to create pity for the artist—God forbid!—but to suggest how nearly, after all, is his state the state of everyone, and in an attempt to make vivid his endeavor. The state of birth, suffering, love, and death are extreme states—extreme, universal, and inescapable. We all know this, but we would rather not know it. The artist is present to correct the delusions to which we fall prey in our attempts to avoid this knowledge.

It is for this reason that all societies have battled with the incorrigible disturber of the peace—the artist. I doubt that future societies will get on with him any better. The entire purpose of society is to create a bulwark against the inner and the outer chaos, in order to make life bearable and to keep the human race alive. And it is absolutely inevitable that when a tradition has been evolved, whatever the tradition is, the

people, in general, will suppose it to have existed from before the beginning of time and will be most unwilling and indeed unable to conceive of any changes in it. They do not know how they will live without those traditions that have given them their identity. Their reaction, when it is suggested that they can or that they must, is panic. And we see this panic, I think, everywhere in the world today, from the streets of New Orleans to the grisly battleground of Algeria. And a higher level of consciousness among the people is the only hope we have, now or in the future, of minimizing human damage.

The artist is distinguished from all other responsible actors in society—the politicians, legislators, educators, and scientists—by the fact that he is his own test tube, his own laboratory, working according to very rigorous rules, however unstated these may be, and cannot allow any consideration to supersede his responsibility to reveal all that he can possibly discover concerning the mystery of the human being. Society must accept some things as real; but he must always know that visible reality hides a deeper one, and that all our action and achievement rest on things unseen. A society must assume that it is stable, but the artist must know, and he must let us know, that there is nothing stable under heaven.

One cannot possibly build a school, teach a child, or drive a car without taking some things for granted. The artist cannot and must not take anything for granted, but must drive to the heart of every answer and expose the question the answer hides.

I seem to be making extremely grandiloquent claims for a breed of men and women historically despised while living and acclaimed when safely dead. But, in a way, the belated honor that all societies tender their artists proven the reality of the point I am trying to make. I am really trying to make clear the nature of the artist's responsibility to his society. The peculiar nature of this responsibility is that he must never cease warring with it, for its sake and for his own. For the truth, in spite of appearances and all our hopes, is that everything is always changing and the measure of our maturity as nations and as men is how well prepared we are to meet these changes, and further, to use them for our health.

Now, anyone who has ever been compelled to think about it—anyone, for example, who has ever been in love—knows that the one face that one can never see is one's own face. One's lover—or one's brother, or one's enemy—sees the face you wear, and this face can elicit the most extraordinary reactions. We do the things we do and feel what we feel essentially because we must—we are responsible for our actions, but we rarely understand them. It goes without saying, I believe, that if we understood ourselves better, we would damage ourselves less. But the barrier between oneself and one's knowledge of oneself is high indeed. There are so many things one would rather not know! We become social creatures because we cannot live any other way. But in order to become social, there are a great many other things that we must not become, and we are frightened, all of us, of these forces within us that perpetually menace our precarious security. Yet the forces are there: we cannot will them away. All we can do is learn to live with them. And we cannot learn unless we are willing to tell the truth about ourselves, and the truth about us is always at variance with what we wish to be. The human effort is to bring

these two realities into a relationship resembling reconciliation. The human beings whom we respect the most, after all—and sometimes fear the most—are those who are most deeply involved in this delicate and strenuous effort, for they have the unshakable authority that comes only from having looked on and endured and survived the worst. That nation is healthiest which has the least necessity to distrust or ostracize these people—whom, as I say, honor, once they are gone, because somewhere in our hearts we know that we cannot live without them.

The dangers of being an American artist are not greater than those of being an artist anywhere else in the world, but they are very particular. These dangers are produced by our history. They rest on the fact that in order to conquer this continent, the particular aloneness of which I speak—the aloneness in which one discovers that life is tragic, and therefore unutterably beautiful—could not be permitted. And that this prohibition is typical of all emergent nations will be proved, I have no doubt, in many ways during the next fifty years. This continent now is conquered, but our habits and our fears remain. And, in the same way that to become a social human being one modifies and suppresses and, ultimately, without great courage, lies to oneself about all one's interior, uncharted chaos, so have we, as a nation, modified or suppressed and lied about all the darker forces in our history. We know, in the case of the person, that whoever cannot tell himself the truth about his past is trapped in it, is immobilized in the prison of his undiscovered self. This is also true of nations. We know how a person, in such a paralysis, is unable to assess either his weaknesses or his strengths, and how frequently indeed he mistakes the one for the other. And this, I think, we do. We are the strongest nation in the Western world, but this is not for the reasons that we think. It is because we have an opportunity that no other nation has in moving beyond the Old World concepts of race and class and caste, to create, finally, what we must have had in mind when we first began speaking of the New World. But the price of this is a long

look backward when we came and an unflinching assessment of the record. For an artist, the record of that journey is most clearly revealed in the personalities of the people the journey produced. Societies never know it, but the war of an artist with his society is a lover's war, and he does, at his best, what lovers do, which is to reveal the beloved to himself and, with that revelation, to make freedom real.



Charles Gaines, *Manifestos 2: Indocumentalismo*, (2010), 2013 graphite on Rising Barrier Paper

Yvonne Rainer, *No Manifesto*, 1965

No to spectacle.

No to virtuosity.

No to transformations and magic and make-believe.

No to the glamour and transcendency of the star image.

No to the heroic.

No to the anti-heroic.

No to trash imagery.

No to involvement

of performer or spectator.

No to style.

No to camp.

No to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer.

No to eccentricity.

No to moving or being moved.

* * *

We already had justice, the codification of vengeance. Science, the codification of Magic. Cannibalism. The permanent transformation of the Tabu into a totem.¹⁵

* * *

Down with the reversible world, and against objectified ideas. Cadaverized. The stop of thought that is dynamic. The individual as victim of the system. Source of classical injustices. Of romantic injustices. And the forgetting of inner conquests.

* * *

Routes. Routes. Routes. Routes. Routes. Routes. Routes. Routes.¹⁶

* * *

The Carib instinct.

* * *

Death and life of all hypotheses. From the equation "Self, part of the Cosmos" to the axiom "Cosmos, part of the Self." Subsistence. Experience. Cannibalism.

* * *

Down with the vegetable elites. In communication with the soil.

* * *

We were never catechized. What we really made was Carnival. The Indian dressed as senator of the Empire. Making believe he's Pitt.¹⁷ Or performing in Alencar's operas,¹⁸ full of worthy Portuguese sentiments.

* * *

We already had Communism. We already had Surrealist language. The Golden Age.

- - -

Selections from Oswald de Andrade's *The Manifesto Antropófago (Cannibalist Manifesto)*, 1928

* * *

Down with the antagonistic sublimations. Brought here in caravels.

* * *

Down with the truth of missionary peoples, defined by the sagacity of a mibal, the Viscount of Cairu:²²—It's a lie told again and again.

* * *

But those who came here weren't crusaders. They were fugitives from a civilization we are eating, because we are strong and vindictive like the *uti*.²³

* * *

Sol Lewitt, *Sentences on Conceptual Art*, 1969

1. Conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach.
2. Rational judgements repeat rational judgements.
3. Irrational judgements lead to new experience.
4. Formal art is essentially rational.
5. Irrational thoughts should be followed absolutely and logically.
6. If the artist changes his mind midway through the execution of the piece he compromises the result and repeats past results.
7. The artist's will is secondary to the process he initiates from idea to completion. His wilfulness may only be ego.
8. When words such as painting and sculpture are used, they connote a whole tradition and imply a consequent acceptance of this tradition, thus placing limitations on the artist who would be reluctant to make art that goes beyond the limitations.
9. The concept and idea are different. The former implies a general direction while the latter is the component. Ideas implement the concept.
10. Ideas can be works of art; they are in a chain of development that may eventually find some form. All ideas need not be made physical.
11. Ideas do not necessarily proceed in logical order. They may set one off in unexpected directions, but an idea must necessarily be completed in the mind before the next one is formed.
12. For each work of art that becomes physical there are many variations that do not.
13. A work of art may be understood as a conductor from the artist's mind to the viewer's. But it may never reach the viewer, or it may never leave the artist's mind.
14. The words of one artist to another may induce an idea chain, if they share the same concept.
15. Since no form is intrinsically superior to another, the artist may use any form, from an expression of words (written or spoken) to physical reality, equally.
16. If words are used, and they proceed from ideas about art, then they are art and not literature; numbers are not mathematics.
17. All ideas are art if they are concerned with art and fall within the conventions of art.
18. One usually understands the art of the past by applying the convention of the present, thus misunderstanding the art of the past.
19. The conventions of art are altered by works of art.
20. Successful art changes our understanding of the conventions by altering our perceptions.
21. Perception of ideas leads to new ideas.
22. The artist cannot imagine his art, and cannot perceive it until it is complete.
23. The artist may misperceive (understand it differently from the artist) a work of art but still be set off in his own chain of thought by that misconstrual.
24. Perception is subjective.
25. The artist may not necessarily understand his own art. His perception is neither better nor worse than that of others.
26. An artist may perceive the art of others better than his own.
27. The concept of a work of art may involve the matter of the piece or the process in which it is made.
28. Once the idea of the piece is established in the artist's mind and the final form is decided, the process is carried out blindly. There are many side effects that the artist cannot imagine. These may be used as ideas for new works.
29. The process is mechanical and should not be tampered with. It should run its course.
30. There are many elements involved in a work of art. The most important are the most obvious.
31. If an artist uses the same form in a group of works, and changes the material, one would assume the artist's concept involved the material.
32. Banal ideas cannot be rescued by beautiful execution.
33. It is difficult to bungle a good idea.
34. When an artist learns his craft too well he makes slick art.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969!*

Written a year after the birth of her first child, Ukeles' Manifesto calls for a readdressing of the status of maintenance work both in the private, domestic space, and in public. Through this she attempts to break down the barriers between what we think of as 'work' and what can be labeled 'artwork'.

MANIFESTO

FOR MAINTENANCE ART 1969!

Proposal for an exhibition "CARE"

MIERLE LADERMAN UKELES

I. IDEAS

A. The Death Instinct and the Life Instinct:

The Death Instinct: separation; individuality; Avant-Garde par excellence; to follow one's own path to death—do your own thing; dynamic change.

The Life Instinct: unification; the eternal return; the perpetuation and MAINTENANCE of the species; survival systems and operations; equilibrium.

B. Two basic systems: Development and Maintenance. The sourball of every revolution: after the revolution, who's going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?

Development: pure individual creation; the new; change; progress; advance; excitement; flight or fleeing.

Maintenance: keep the dust off the pure individual creation; preserve the new; sustain the change; protect progress; defend and prolong the advance; renew the excitement; repeat the flight;

show your work—show it again keep the contemporaryartmuseum groovy keep the home fires burning

Development systems are partial feedback systems with major room for change.

Maintenance systems are direct feedback systems with little room for alteration.

C. Maintenance is a drag; it takes all the fucking time (lit.)

The mind boggles and chafes at the boredom.

The culture confers lousy status on maintenance jobs = minimum wages, housewives = no pay.

clean your desk, wash the dishes, clean the floor, wash your clothes, wash your toes, change the baby's diaper, finish the report, correct the typos, mend the fence, keep the customer happy, throw out the stinking garbage, watch out don't put things in your nose, what shall I wear, I have no sox, pay your bills, don't litter, save string, wash your hair, change the sheets, go to the store, I'm out of perfume, say it again—he doesn't understand, seal it again—it leaks, go to work, this art is dusty, clear the table, call him again, flush the toilet, stay young.

D. Art:

Everything I say is Art is Art. Everything I do is Art is Art. "We have no Art, we try to do everything well." (Balinese saying)

Avant-garde art, which claims utter development, is infected by strains of maintenance ideas, maintenance activities, and maintenance materials. Conceptual & Process art, especially, claim pure development and change, yet employ almost purely maintenance processes.

E. The exhibition of Maintenance Art, "CARE," would zero in on pure maintenance, exhibit it as contemporary art, and yield, by utter opposition, clarity of issues.

II. THE MAINTENANCE ART EXHIBITION: "CARE"

Three parts: Personal, General, and Earth Maintenance.

A. Part One: Personal

I am an artist. I am a woman. I am a wife. I am a mother. (Random order).

I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning, cooking, renewing, supporting, preserving, etc. Also,

(up to now separately I "do" Art.

Now, I will simply do these maintenance everyday things, and flush them up to consciousness, exhibit them, as Art. I will live in the museum and I customarily do at home with my husband and my baby, for the duration of the exhibition. (Right? or if you don't want me around at night I would come in every day) and do all these things as public Art activities: I will sweep and wax the floors, dust everything, wash the walls (i.e. "floor paintings, dust works, soap-sculpture, wall-paintings") cook, invite people to eat, make agglomerations and dispositions of all functional refuse.

The exhibition area might look "empty" of art, but it will be maintained in full public view.

MY WORKING WILL BE THE WORK

B. Part Two: General

Everyone does a hell of a lot of noodling maintenance work. The general part of the exhibition would consist of interviews of two kinds.

1. Previous individual interviews, typed and exhibited.

Interviewees come from, say, 50 different classes and kinds of occupations that run a gamut from maintenance "man," maid, sanitation "man," mail "man," union "man," construction

worker, librarian, grocery store "man," nurse, doctor, teacher, museum director, baseball player, sales "man," child, criminal, bank president, mayor, moviestar, artist, etc., about:"

-what you think maintenance is;

-how you feel about spending whatever parts of your life you spend on maintenance activities;

-what is the relationship between maintenance and freedom;

-what is the relationship between maintenance and life's dreams.

2. Interview Room—for spectators at the Exhibition:

A room of desks and chairs where professional (?) interviewers will interview the spectators at the exhibition along same questions as typed interviews. The responses should be personal.

These interviews are taped and replayed throughout the exhibition area.

C. Part Three: Earth Maintenance

Everyday, containers of the following kinds of refuse will be delivered to the Museum:

-the contents of one sanitation truck;

-a container of polluted air;

-a container of polluted Hudson River;

-a container of ravaged land.

Once at the exhibition, each container will be serviced:

purified, de-polluted, rehabilitated, recycled, and conserved by various technical (and / or pseudo-technical) procedures either by myself or scientists.

These servicing procedures are repeated throughout the duration of the exhibition.

As a project of the Hic Rosa Collective, the Falsework School is committed to educational experiences as collations of concrete moments of study, thought, expression, and practice that dismantle the walls between teacher and student, artist and audience, participant and observer, and theory and practice. A typical learning day will be conducted like a facilitated community of study and practice. There will be a close study component, as well as guided discussion, ending with the production of a work of art or writing. While hailing from various academic contexts, we maintain that community education is not an extension or dilution of the academic classroom but an occasion to practice education without the various conceits, prerequisites, and instrumentalist and technocratic qualifications that beset institutions. Our approach to community education includes:

- (1) A concern not with methods of teaching and learning wielded by expert teachers and educationalists in a formalized system, but with what we all do every day, how we read, write, speak, and relate; with what it is to teach and learn in any situation, whenever or wherever it may be; and how we might change these toward a more just world.
- (2) An emphasis on relations within spaces we occupy, and communities we build and inhabit. A focus away from possessing knowledge toward how a community recognizes something as known. Activities of reading, studying, and working in each other's company allow the distinctions between doing, meaning-making, and knowing, and between various kinds of physical, mental, and emotional work to collapse.
- (3) A belief that communities of education are not supposed to perfect the object of knowledge for the community, but educate the community about itself and about the relations of power and inequality within it, making room for it to confront that knowledge. The fundamental premise of equality among learners in the educational space, with no qualifications or expertise placing one above the other, is what allows the inequalities within the wider community to become visible and able to be reflected upon. Hence, we are working not to instruct toward equality but to educate through equality, resisting institutionalizations of inequality and injustice, old or new.
- (4) A hope that, in the Berkshires and wherever else The Falsework School "pops up," this is an effort at collective study and self-reflection around social inequalities and injustices because it seeks to not replicate certain burdens of teaching and learning, presenting and spectating, evidence and ignorance, and their bearers, but to collectively own the task of building an ethos of equality and justice that works outward from the space of education.