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SOCIAL TURNS

In Theory and Across the Arts

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As a scholar, critic, teacher, and enabler of cross-disciplinary, socially-engaged art, I am exploring a variety of questions that have emerged since the publication of *Social Works* in 2011. As artists, critics, and citizens work together to decide what social models we hope to be enabling under the rubric of social art practice, four intersections offer points of entry into these conversations: Social Practice and the Public; Social Practice and Social Support; Social Practice and Social Theory, and Social Practice Across the Arts. This chapter, divided into these four parts, offers a view of the debates, methods, and effects that influence and inform projects and histories included in the category Social Practice.

Part I: Social Practice and the Public

On a blustery late morning in Rotterdam in May of 2011, a group of people assembled on a stone sidewalk in front of a defunct city post office. In front of this "deaccessioned" civic space, an exquisite plinth and glass vitrine had been installed. Inside the vitrine, a perfectly smooth metal cone shone in the available light, reflecting and refracting the images of viewers who peered at it. Near the top of the cone, a metal handle was attached, evoking the shape of a designer tool or high-end household fixture, perhaps fabricated for the Alessi consumer. A large crowd of Rotterdam's civic figures came forward to welcome assembled guests. As the clock approached noon, they formed an expectant circle around the plinth. A bespectacled, wiry gentleman dressed in everyday clothes adjusted his flat cap and stepped forward to unlock the vitrine; he pulled out the cone by the handle, transforming the sculpture into a megaphone by raising it to his mouth. As the noon bell began to toll, the gentleman called out in international English, "It's never too late to say sorry." He spaced his words evenly and enunciated clearly, as if he wanted to make sure that all citizens within earshot were appropriately reassured. He then carefully replaced the megaphone, re-locked the vitrine, and walked out of the crowd and down the block. His gait and costume blended into the moving landscape of the city street as the bell tolled behind him.

"It's Never Too Late to Say Sorry" was conceived by the Scandanavian artists Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset and commissioned by the city of Rotterdam's public art council. Elmgreen and Dragset are artworld favorites who have made a career out of artworld critique. Despite or perhaps because of their higher art status, they often receive equivocal response from artists, critics, and citizens. My own intrigued and sometimes grumpy investigation of Elmgreen

and Dragset's work came from my reaction (Jackson 2011: 190–209) to their own differently intrigued and differently grumpy investigation into the role of public welfare systems in our contemporary imagination. As embodied in the large, extended installation entitled "The Welfare Show" of 2005 and 2006, I found them turning an ironic and suspicious eye on the bureaucratic, normalizing, encumbering Institution of the public sector. While all-too familiar a critique in a post-Foucault world, I wondered about the ultimate political effects of such a position and how critiques of a normative and bureaucratic Liberal welfare institutions were, paradoxically, enabling covert and not fully conscious identification with neoliberal processes of market-based self-actualization. This structure has been a recurrent concern as a critique of the faults of so-called Liberal Democratic institutions has simultaneously (and insidiously) been facilitating neoliberal attachment.

I found Elmgreen and Dragset sometimes worrying about those neoliberal attachments as well. As "The Welfare Show" toured from Norway to the UK to Toronto, their own artists statements began to change, oscillating between a critique of the controlling systems of the public sector as a State apparatus and an equally urgent critique of a privatized, neoliberal imaginary that would dismantle public sector systems altogether. In other words, Elmgreen and Dragset did not always seem sure whether to be targeting the normative backwardness of public sector, state, and civic institutions or to be targeting a neoliberal, privatizing move that wanted to dismantle public, i.e. "big government," institutions.

Indeed, this has been a question for me, worrying as I do that a generalized critique of institutions as "the Man," of Systems as Bureaucracy, and of "The State" as vertically structured Institution of oppression echoed, however oddly, the same anti-institutional, anti-governmental rhetoric of the Tea Party in the United States as well as other ultra-conservative, anti-Institutional movements worldwide. At a time when public systems in the US, in the UK, and abroad are being steadily dismantled and/or privatized, a socially engaged rhetoric that is anti-statist and anti-institutional can paradoxically help the dismantling.

Legions of culture workers are justifiably exhausted by the public sector, feeling that its institutional models dispensing social care are too anachronistic and cumbersome to do much good, and I largely support efforts by many to develop grassroots, DIY, horizontal, transversal, rhizomatic, non-programmatic actions, and campaigns that replace such tired social structures. Occupy showed us the potency of these alternate forms of governance where activists self-consciously form, not as uniform activist blocs or consensus seekers, but as compositions of singularities. How does such an ethos coexist with another one that recognizes the role that public systems have played—in schools, health care, public transport, and post offices—and will no longer continue to play with their erosion? How does a rhizomatic politics of horizontal, singular actions, and compositions square with efforts to restore publicly subsidized education or publicly subsidized transport, a restoration that might need the operational character of an Institution to collect taxes and to run on time? If so many Occupy movements are justifiably concerned about the privatization of public space, to what degree are public sector systems for maintaining the Commons part of what we want to see restored? The wide and rangy field of social art practice has not decided where it lands on this question, nor am I sure that it needs to come to some kind of collective agreement. But how do these questions about the past and future of social Institutions find their way back into what we think about—and revise—in our imagining of social art practice?

The structure of "It's Never Too Late to Say Sorry" allows for the exploration of our uncertainty about the future of collective social models—and the uncertainty about how we are supposed to feel about their precarious dismantling. In creating the piece, Elmgreen and Dragset worked with Rotterdam's civic arts commission to hold extensive auditions, eventually selecting

Wim Konings, who happens to have a dual career as an artist and a postal carrier, to play this role. Konings works at home each morning on repetitively geometric paintings and drawings, then leaves at mid-day to begin his repetitive route as a part-time postal carrier in the afternoon. As a piece installed before a de-accessioned post office, the casting could not have been more apt: "The city had to close down the building," an assistant in Rotterdam's sculpture project told me, "because all of the mail systems are becoming privatized. Some think it might be made into a mall for high end shops."[1] As Konings finished his announcement and walked down the block, heading firmly in the direction of city hall, the piece begged the question: who needs to say sorry? And for what? Do civic leaders need absolution? Prospective retail owners? Dutch anti-immigration activists? Elmgreen and Dragset themselves? Or the citizens of Rotterdam who are reckoning with their own relationship to immigration, to the EU, to imperiled public systems, to postal workers who might soon be out of a job?

Interestingly, there was ample time to consider different answers to such questions. The city of Rotterdam has committed to constant public reminding, authorizing Elmgreen and Dragset's piece to be repeated each day at noon for 365 days. The piece was thus an ongoing act of public penitence, one whose apparent content and addressee transformed throughout the year, subject to different kinds of interpretations by the Dutch citizens and tourists who choose to listen and those who choose to ignore. The city and its citizens contend with the force and reach of "saying sorry" as the conditions of performance change each day.

To come clean about my own embeddedness in the future of the pubic sector, and in the future of public institutions, I think about Konings's performance of the public next to a saying imprinted on a Fortune Cookie that I received and put on my office door some years ago, "You are faithful in the execution of any public trust." Often wondering why I put it there, I think it is a way of ensuring some kind of daily exposure to the question of what it could mean: what is public trust anyway? What does it mean to be faithful to its execution? What does it mean to be unfaithful? And what does it mean to say sorry if I am? As a public employee of the State of California and the United States, I—like other educators, social workers, or curators— find myself in an interdependent but also suspicious relationship to the public sector. A commitment to public values interacts with that suspicion to create a strangely confused affective sphere. How do we maintain suspicion of the public sector even as we call for its renewal? At U.C. Berkeley, the history of a 1960s' era protest culture is often remembered as resistance against The Machine; now, however, at least to me, the anti-Machine discourse does not always help us to argue for the maintenance of our university as a public institution. If political activism means "getting the System off our backs," how were we simultaneously going to argue that public systems had our backs? Within this kind of confused sphere, what is trust and who is sorry? When I think about the public sector—as a system, a hope, a punching bag, a repressed background—I feel that a primary ambivalence propels the sorrow, the hope, the guilt, the impatience, the commitment, the disdain, the condescension, and—in that strange space where the sensibilities of activist resistance actually feed the cocktail party conversation of artworld privilege—the occasional wish to be absolved from having to worry about something as old-school as public systems at all.

Part II: Social Practice and Support

One mode of debate around the role of Institutions in social practice is the reflection on the distributive social models of the public sector; another mode of debate is how art intervenes into this territory. Often both celebrators and detractors of artistic intervention imagine its effects as extra-aesthetic in character. In this formulation, art intervenes into the social in a way that

presumes that art and the social were separate in the first place, and that social intervention requires art to move away from its own domain. I often try another tack, one that presumes first an aesthetic stance on the construction and maintenance of social systems, as my way of addressing some of the many distressed and distressing conversations that vex the field of social art practice, in particular conversations that pose binaries between aesthetic standards and social efficacy.

As boring as this binary is, it is one that still shadows our practices, framing and constraining the terms in which we are asked to defend our work. I began to think more about how systemic engagement could have a kind of formal rigor, to think about how engagement and intervention within the supporting systems of the social were part and parcel of an aesthetic practice. I began to excavate the term "support," both for its aesthetic and social resonance. Once one picks up that corner of the rug, one realizes that the exposure of the supporting apparatus has been a central force in a variety of social and working class movements, and has also been a central feature of twentieth and twenty-first-century experimental performance and visual art. For Bertolt Brecht, theatre only became an arena of social reflection when the theatrical apparatus was exposed; debate about the supporting apparatus of society occurred in a theatre that was explicit about its interdependence upon its own supporting apparatus. This theatre art history around the exposure of support is matched by a visual art history where we find it in Constructivism's expanded practice, in Marcel Duchamp's interest in calling attention to the supporting apparatus of the museum, as well as in Minimalism's attempts to call attention to art's object status as interdependent with its relation to a beholder.

Relational Aesthetics (Bourriaud 1998) pushed that interdependent relation even further, substituting Minimalist geometries with structures that provoked artists and receivers to consider the interdependent, intersubjective relation itself as the central material of the artistic event. The question of the art object's dependence upon a supporting network of bodily relations and material infrastructures has propelled some of the central innovations of dance practice, where choreographers challenged the gendered hierarchies and anti-gravitational conventions of ballet to re-orient the dancers' relationship to the ground, the wall, and eventually the building itself.[2]

The concept of support offered some different possibilities for considering conjectures and joining socio-political preoccupations with aesthetic projects. First of all, it gave the domain of intervention an aesthetic rather than extra-aesthetic character, joining it to large artistic and formal histories that explored the degree to which the surround, the background, the apparatus, the support, are not clearly separate from the aesthetic object but part and parcel of it. Second, the language of support echoed some of my socio-political concerns about the language of Institutions, foregrounding intervention only as the act of an Individual who "Resists" the "System," but also as an act that might expose how a "system" could actually support our experience of equality and expression. Such social art practices acknowledge the interdependent systems of support that sustain human beings, even if we often feel constrained by them. They provoke reflection on the autonomy as well as the heteronomy of human beings, imagining agency, not only as systemic disruption, but also as systemic relation.

Assembling artistic acts that induced a kind of "infrastructural avowal" prompted me to think about recent contemporary work where the notion of infrastructure derives from a materialist discourse and "avowal" from what we might call a psychoanalytic or affective discourse. For instance, Paul Chan's "Waiting for Godot in New Orleans" received both artworld and civic attention for using site-specific theatre to prompt reflection on the loss and whereabouts of local and federal systems that could have sustained and might now rebuild New Orleans post-Katrina (Jackson 2011: 210–238). Chan deployed and redirected his privilege as an artist to launch a nine-month project that involved community collaboration and multi-sector buy-in to create a

project that put those sectors on display, using an aesthetic imagination to prompt an infrastructural imagination on what it means to acknowledge shared trauma and commit to a new future.

In the 1970s, feminist artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles's projects disclosed an interest in uncovering the custodial systems that supported the presumably autonomous works displayed in a museum in her "Washing Pieces" and in "Transfer," a project that eventually expanded to those that prompted citizens to reflect about their own dependence upon the custodial systems of a public sanitation apparatus. In "Touch Sanitation" she shook the hands of all 6,000 members of New York's sanitation department to say, "Thank you for keeping New York City Alive." In her 1983 "Social Mirror" citizens were invited to see themselves reflected on the side of a garbage truck. In all of these projects, the possibilities and perils of public sector engagement were subjected to the challenge of a Conceptual artistic frame (Jackson 2011: 75–103).

In these histories and so many other contemporary projects, we find artists navigating some long and fraught debates between aesthetics and politics. Often these artists are asked whether they are trading aesthetic integrity for social efficacy, compromising the autonomy of art in order to embark upon heteronomous engagement, or earning their aesthetic chops by maintaining a radically autonomous and/or "negative" aesthetic position.

Part III: Social Practice and Social Theory

Having tried to loosen and redefine the language of Institution and the language of intervention, it seems important now to turn to the affects that surround these puzzles and practices and the social theory cited when we try to process them. In social practice discourse, the affects mobilized and produced are varied, but they are often framed in polarizing terms that propose a choice between the do-gooding, harmony-seeking emotions of some projects next to the disturbing, "antagonistic" emotions of others. To some scholars (Bishop 2004), socially engaged art only does the deep work of aesthetics when discomfort or tension is produced. In order to see if there is any way out of yet another polarity, it is worth exploring antagonism, and in particular, why this term has become so resonant in social practice circles.

The legacies of social theory are key to framing what it means to expand aesthetically within social structures. This means noting that even a phrase like "social practice" has been in circulation for a while and in many contexts well beyond the landscape of *Artforum* articles and Master of Fine Arts (MFA) programs that have given the phrase currency in the twenty-first. In the history of social theory, the phrase "social practice" is associated with a particular Marxist and post-Marxist tangle of critical puzzles. Karl Marx's notoriously complex but notoriously generative *Introduction to the Grundrisse* exposes what he called the "relationality" of persons, worlds, and things that appear as given and discrete. Marx's stance on the commodity, on the laborer, and on all varieties of beings and objects was to expose their sociality, their spatio-temporal connection to other beings and objects on which their self-definition depended. The effort here was to show a thing to be a relation, a person to be a social practice. The trick of capitalism and of other constraining forces was that they prompted us to repress that relationality, repress the social practice that is a person, to sublimate the social practice that is a thing. That repression and sublimation, that alienation, worked its magic to create the sense of a world where individuals were discrete and objects autonomous, rather than bound by an interdependent relation of capital, labor, or a variety of other hierarchies and social systems. Marx wrote, "The reciprocal and all-sided dependence of individuals who are indifferent to one another forms their social connection" (Marx 1993: 156). This kind of alienation needed to be combated by thinking and making that foregrounded our repressed, connective relationality,

that showed the object's contingency in a social system, that revealed the interdependence of persons who thought of themselves as independent. This then is social practice in social theory. Social practice denoted a way of seeing and making that exposed the contingency and inter-dependence of our world. It always seems to me that, when we recall this aspect of his philo-sophical schema, Marx starts to look like a Conceptual artist.

Marx's subsequent interlocutors made the same Conceptual connection: Antonio Gramsci would begin to loosen other aspects of Marx's vision of progressive history and revolution, but the relational construction of persons and things that appeared non-relational would continue to guide him. In the mid-twentieth century, Raymond Williams cast an artistic discourse about medium and form within this wider relational construction of the social. Williams felt that shifts in aesthetic practices were indexes and propellers of social crisis; more broadly, processes where forms revealed themselves, not as discrete artifacts, but inevitably as social practices. He even used the phrase:

> Significantly since the late 19th century, crises of technique which can be isolated as problems of the 'medium' or of the 'form' have been directly linked with a sense of crisis in the relationship of art to society. ... Thus what had been isolated as medium, in many ways rightly as a way of emphasizing the material production which any art must be, came to be seen inevitably *as social practice.*
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> *(Williams 1977: 163 my italics)*

Interpreting media such as literature, sculpture, theatre, or television, Williams encouraged us to recognize forms, not simply as discrete media, but as domains where a crisis in the relationship between art and society was being wrestled with; to expand our recognition of forms and media in this way was in fact to see them as social practices. Later, Stuart Hall returned to the *Grundisse* to make sure that we recognized the primary relationality behind Marx's conception of indivi-duals as social practice, as well as the range of forces working to make us think otherwise about ourselves, that is, to create the illusion of our independence and to cultivate our indifference to the relational systems on which we depend:

> This concept – that the capitalist mode of production *depends* on social connection assuming the 'ideological' form of an individual dis-connection – is one of the great, substantive themes of the *Grundrisse* as a whole.
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> *(Hall 2003: 155)*

Social practice would then, by inference, seek to develop alternate forms of production that would be compatible with the avowal of this primary social connection. It is not simply that such practices would become "more social," but such practices would reveal the social relations that were already there.

This genealogy reminds us that the phrase that adorns our curatorial programs and our discourse is one with a long history, and elements of this social theory genealogy are invoked, if not always precisely, in contemporary debates about the integrity of social practice forms. Following Marx, Althusser, Gramsci, Hall, and many others, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe advanced post-Marxist thinking through the concept of antagonism. There is a connection between Marx's conception of social practice as contingent relation-ality and Laclau and Mouffe's resonant term, antagonism. Laclau and Mouffe are careful to emphasize that antagonism is not about "opposition" or any of the other simpler synonyms with which it is aligned:

antagonism cannot be a *real* opposition. There is nothing antagonistic in a crash between two vehicles: it is a material fact obeying positive physical laws. To apply the same principles to the social terrain would be tantamount to saying that what is antagonistic in class struggle is the physical act by which a policeman hits a worker militant, or the shouts of a group in Parliament which prevent a member of an opposing sector from speaking … It is because a physical force *is* a physical force that a countervailing force leads it to rest; in contrast, it is because a peasant *cannot be* a peasant that an antagonism exists with the landowner expelling him … Real opposition is an objective relation … antagonism constitutes the limits of every objectivity.

(*Laclau and Mouffe 1990: 122–125*)

In Laclau and Mouffe's frame, then, antagonism is the dimension and process that would question the givenness of a human being, the givenness of a peasant or landowner, rather than the social relation that constitutes both. To antagonize would be to expose the contingency of this supposed objectivity, to engage with humans and things as social practice, in social practice. So once again, antagonism has a degree of compatibility with Conceptual art; it finds ways to question the conventions that produce persons and objects as given and natural and discrete. The antagonistic concept is one that has made its way into a variety of debates in social practice recently, debates that seem to oppose edgy, ironic, and uncomfortably antagonistic social practices with those that are apparently community-based, do-gooding, feel-gooding non-antagonistic practices.

The Conceptual potential of the theory, indeed the social practice developed by this social theory, can be banalized if we decide that antagonism is equal to something like discomfort or discord. More specifically, I would suggest that binaries between uncomfortable and comfortable art do not offer rubrics complex enough to evaluate the antagonistic potential of a work. What if we remember that antagonism's potential in social practice is to expose "the limits of every objectivity" and to expose the primary relational construction of persons and things? It is possible for some uncomfortable practices to do this work of exposure, and apparently more "comfortable" practices might as well. Some edgy, divisive, and uncomfortable work might *not* antagonize, but actually reproduce the givenness of social beings and things as well, just as community-based or do-gooding work might reproduce that givenness as well.

To take this question of antagonism and affect to the work of a specific artist, let's consider Wafaa Bilal's 2007 "Domestic Tension" in which remote war game players shot paintballs onto his body, one that could not leave the gallery in which he was placed and continuously bombarded.[3] This is an uncomfortable artwork, but it does not antagonize *because* it is uncomfortable. Rather, it does the social work of antagonism because of the alienation and disconnection it exposes. By transposing and mixing the disconnected worlds of military war and military war games with the highly connective encounter of a body in a gallery, "Domestic Tension" antagonized the US norms of "indifference," exposing that indifference as the repressed condition of social connection between ourselves and those with whom we vaguely understand ourselves to be at war.

In other words, amongst the many discontented binaries that frame our contemporary discussion, the one that congealed around the antagonism terminology a few years ago risked banalizing the social theory it wanted to cite. Far more importantly, such binaries limit the imaginative potential of cultural work and risk celebrating "shock" and "distress" in social practice without deeper thought about whether given economic and political hierarchies are in fact antagonized in projects that produce such affects. We can imagine any number of art projects that can "shock" or create distress in their receivers, but is discomfort always smart discomfort? Is it a discomfort that antagonizes?

Finally, the banalization of antagonism as equal to discomfort forestalls the possibility of generating other kinds of affects within a socially antagonistic project. Whether applied to an art group like WochenKlausur, or a socially-engaged theater such as the Los Angeles-based Cornerstone, such questions suggest that discomfort is in the eye or heart of the beholder, and that many other affects can emerge in the midst of projects like theirs. The antagonism-as-discomfort equation forestalls the possibility of a compassionate antagonism, assuming that questions about the construction and reconstruction of the social somehow could not be posed in a landscape where citizens seek to understand or help each other.

Part IV: Social Practice Across the Arts

The fact that I come to The Art of the Social from performance, and the fact that I feel the need to include this, means that I do not assume that we all have a shared history for approaching questions of art and engagement. For visual art institutions such as Tate Modern, LA-MOCA, or MOMA in New York, the grouping of so-called performative work, and the grouping of so-called socially engaged art work, often happens under a similar rubric, or at least seems to occur in a similar space—under the galleries, in turbine halls, in tanks. I find myself moving betwixt and between different notions of what these art forms are—and different notions of from whence they come—and want to close with reflections of what it means to be working "across the arts" in social art practice.

First, disciplinary barometers influence our encounters with interdisciplinary art forms. There is utility in reminding ourselves of these different barometers, even in spaces where many of us feel committed to supporting hybrid, engaged art-making. I have described the resonance of the word support in visual art, in theatre, and in dance, and we might add other traditions of art practice to the mix, traditions, and skill sets from music, from video, from architecture. Our perception of innovation will differ depending upon whether we measure its distance from sculpture or public art, or choreography, or architecture. What would it mean to bring Cornerstone Theater and Suzanne Lacy into the same space? How would we have to understand them as rejecting or revising particular traditions in theatre or in visual art to understand their innovation and maybe their unexpected kinship? How do we use the practices of other art forms in our attempts to dismantle or redirect the aesthetic traditions from which we come? As a performance person, I have observed that practices that expand from the domain of visual art, including Ukeles or Chan, revised and supposedly "dematerialized" whole traditions of visual art practice by using the traditions of the performing arts. Whether in movements that might be choreographed, in installations that might be viewed as set designs, or in de-materialized actions that partook of the convention of acting, or in actors whose labor was transported to become site-specific material. It often seems that the deconstruction of one art form often involves the reconstruction of another.

Once we come clean about our latent formal preoccupations and the different goals and sensibilities we want to see affirmed, we can also get impatient with each other's work. This is to say that innovation to some looks like a re-invented wheel to others. The innovative act that breaks convention in one form looks curious from the perspective of another discipline. Innovation to some looks amateur to others. Experimentation to some looks like a capitulation to a culture of Spectacle, to the Culture Industry, or to the cult that celebrates Virtuosic skill to others. Indeed, what reads as Discomfort in one context may be easily assimilated in another.

It is worth reflecting on the inter-art politics of our judgments. Suzanne Lacy recently recalled to me her collaboration with Kathleen Chang on issues of racial privilege, California history, and social reform in "The Life and Times of Donaldina Cameron" in which Lacy

dressed as and presented the story of a white female social reformer while Chang's persona spoke from the perspective of a Chinese relative who was smuggled on a boat that crossed the Atlantic. Lacy told me that Chang came to the collaboration with a theatrical background that was different from her own; that is, their experiences and training, one who had been "leaving art" as object-based performance, the other who had been leaving theatre as proscenium display, had produced different assumptions of what it meant to adopt a persona or to address a public in character.[4] Lacy said, "Our debates about character and acting ended up being more heated than any debates we had about ethnicity."[5] This is one of many examples where aesthetic habits or skills bubble up unexpectedly to structure our encounters in socially-engaged art.

Hybrid artwork still circulates in un-hybridized networks. Because artists and art contexts still measure their distance from traditional art disciplines, their conversations and support networks often remain circumscribed by them. Expanded theatre artists talk to other expanded theatre artists and are presented by an international festival circuit. Post-visual artists talk to other post-visual artists and are represented in the biennial circuit and by the gallery-collector system. Moreover, the attempt to break from the so-called Institutions of one form can mean incorporation into the new Institutions of another form. Choreographers might break from the prescriptions of proscenium-stage theatre to enter the museum and gallery space, but when they decide to sell documentation of such work on the art market, some might argue that one anti-Institutional gesture is being happily reincorporated by another system.

The habits of criticism reinforce inter-art debate and inter-art blindness as do educational institutions. They affect who ends up on the Theatre syllabus and who ends up on the Art History syllabus, routinely structuring who is cast as post-Brechtian and who is cast as post-Minimalist. The fact that all of us are working to find our ways into different structures associated with the social and civic sphere means that such aesthetic questions will continue to emerge. Aesthetic barometers will coexist with social ones, producing possible expansions, but also possible reductions, in what qualifies as ART in socially engaged art.

References

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Further Reading

S. Jackson *Social Works* (New York: Routledge, 2011) expands on the histories and projects that formed the author's theories on social practice. G. Kester's *Conversation Pieces* (University of California Press, 2004) and *The One and The Many* (Duke, 2013) analyze practices and trace the evolution of dialogical art projects. N. Thompson *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991 to 2011* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2012) developed from an exhibit presented by Creative Time in New York and gathers a collection of artists, projects, and essays by scholars on socially

engaged art. C. Bishop *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012) provides an overview of this scholar's interpretation of social practice, its effectiveness, and its shortcomings. T. Purves *What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Postmodern Culture* (Albany: State University of New York, 2005) is a collection of essays by theorists and artists that examines the position and intentions of contemporary, socially engaged projects as well as the complex and complicated connotations of "generosity."

Notes

1 Author's interview, June 2011.
2 Artists who have re-oriented relations between dancers and gravity include Trisha Brown ("Walking on the Wall" 1971) and Joanna Haigood ("Picture Powderhorn" 2000).
3 See www.wafaabilal.com/html/domestictension.html
4 See Lacy, S. (2010) *Leaving Art: Writings on Performance, Politics, and Publics 1974-2007*, Durham: Duke University Press.
5 Personal conversation with author.