Cultural Hijack: Rethinking Intervention

Cultural Hijack explores the role of art and the artists in contemporary society and offers the opportunity to rethink intervention in relation to cultural activism.

AA Gallery, 26th April – 25th May 2013

Submitted by Peter McCaughey
Exhibition Press Release

Cultural Hijack
26 April – 25 May 2013
AA Gallery, Front Members’ Room and in Bedford Square
An exhibition at the Architectural Association, accompanied by a series of temporary public artworks, events and performances

Private View: Thursday 25 April 2013, 6:30pm – 8:30pm
Open to the public from Friday 26 April to Saturday 25 May 2013
Opening times: Monday to Friday 10am – 7pm; Saturday 10am – 3pm

Public Lecture: (un)CONVENTION, Friday 26 April 2013, 6pm, New Soft Room
Events: A programme of temporary public artworks, events and performances accompanies the exhibition – for details please visit www.aaschool.ac.uk/exhibitions

ZEVS (FRAN), Ztohoven (CZEC), Krzysztof Wodiczko (POL), Matthias Wermke & Mischa Leinkauf (GER), Upper Space (UK), Gregory Sholette (USA), Michael Rakowitz (USA), Ben Parry (UK) & Peter McCAughey (IRE), Tatzu Nishi (JPN), Renzo Martens (BELG), Knit the City (UK), Peter Kennard (UK), Laura Keeble (UK), Allan Kaprow (USA), Tushar Joag (IND), Space Hijackers (UK), Paul Harfleet (UK), EPOS 257 (CZEC), Electronic Disturbance Theater (USA), Nina Edge (UK), Alan Dunn (UK), Paolo Cirio (ITA), Leah Borromeo & Dr. D (UK), BGL (CAN)

From the creation of insurgent public spaces to the playful disruptions of public life, Cultural Hijack – curated by artists Ben Parry and Peter McCaughey – explores the role of art and the artist in contemporary society and offers the opportunity to rethink the growing field of intervention in relation to cultural activism and social change.

Cultural Hijack presents a survey of provocative interventions which have inserted themselves into the world, demanding attention, interrupting everyday life, hijacking, trespassing, agitating and teasing. Often unannounced and usually anonymous, these artworks have appropriated media channels, hacked into live TV and radio broadcasts, attacked billboards, re-appropriated street furniture, subverted signs, monuments and civic architectures, organised political actions as protest, exposed corporations and tax loopholes and revealed the absurdities of government bureaucracies.

Cultural Hijack occurs in three parts: a survey exhibition at the AA Gallery of documented artworks from across the globe, supported by a programme of artists’ talks; a programme of live-interventions, in which artists arrive in London to agitate and infiltrate the urban territory, starting in Bedford Square and moving out across the city; and CON(tra)VENTION, in which the programme culminates in a carnival weekend of lectures, symposia, screenings, participatory actions, interventions, dinners and debate.

The exhibition positions itself at the intersection of art, politics and social justice in this historic moment, as we witness a rising tide of global resistance to neoliberal capitalism through an expanding ‘movement of movements’, from Zapatismo to the Arab Spring, from alternative G8 summits to Occupy Wall Street. In the shadows of this mass-mediated movement, artists join in the writing of alternative histories, the reclamation of our rights to the city and the unfinished
project of the revolution of everyday life. *Cultural Hijack* addresses what it means to intervene, to insert cultural experiments without warning or consent, and asks: do small acts of resistance and creative disruption feed an appetite for real alternatives to neoliberal capitalism and what might the tools, tactics and poetics of the interventionist artist – who exposes the blind spots and plays in the cracks of capitalist ideology – offer the insurgent imagination of activism and social movements?

**Images:**

For further details please contact:
Sebastian Craig, Exhibitions Co-ordinator, sebastian.craig@aaschool.ac.uk, 020 7887 4001

This exhibition is supported by Arts Council England, The Architectural Association, P H Holt Foundation, Polish Cultural Institute, FACT, Québec Government Office London, CitizenM, WAVE, Jump Ship Rat, EU-Japan Fest, Canada Council for the Arts and University of West of Scotland

Associated publication:
*Cultural Hijack: Rethinking Intervention*, edited by Ben Parry, Liverpool University Press, 2011
ISBN 978-1-84631-751-4
CULTURAL HIJACK

AA EXHIBITIONS

AA Gallery, Front Members' Room, Bedford Square, 26 April – 25 May 2013

Architectural Association
36 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3ES

Monday to Friday 10am–7pm
Saturday 10am–3pm

www.aaschool.ac.uk/exhibitions
Rethinking Intervention Cultural Hijack presents a survey of provocative interventions which have inserted themselves into the world, demanding attention, interrupting everyday life, hijacking, trespassing, agitating and teasing. Often unannounced and usually anonymous, these works have appeared in public spaces, hacked into TV and radio broadcasts, detonated billboards, re-appropriated street furniture, subverted signs, monuments and civic architectures. The exhibition sets out to explore the role of art and the artist in contemporary society and to offer the opportunity to rethink the growing use of interventionist art practices, particularly in relation to the field of creative action. The exhibition takes place at the intersection of art, politics and social justice in a historical moment, as we witness a rising tide of global resistance to neoliberal capitalism through an expanding ‘movement of movements’, from Zapatismo to the Arab Spring, where street furniture, subverted signs, monuments and civic architectures become the battleground of corporate globalisation, war and other interventions which have inserted themselves into the world, demanding attention, interrupting everyday life, hijacking, trespassing, agitating and teasing. Often unannounced and usually anonymous, these works have appeared in public spaces, hacked into TV and radio broadcasts, detonated billboards, re-appropriated street furniture, subverted signs, monuments and civic architectures.

Cultural Hijack traverses our shared landscape – the spatial, social and psychological territories of our everyday life. To us, the point of intervention is the moment of hijack, the moment when critical questions raised will be pulled apart. An active archive will be in operation in the exhibition – updated daily to reflect the current live work to the documentation of such work.

EPOs 257 (Czech) like many artists in the exhibition, have inserted themselves for a pseudonym. He sits at a table making oversized urethane paint-filled bullets to be fired from a giant shoot- ing range in a remote area. Billboards and anti-genetic architectures in a gesture of reverse take-over. In response to the Czech Republic’s first direct presidential elections, EPOs cut out the heads of candidates from giant billboards and reinserted these ragged puns on the backs of the billboards in other public spaces. Exhibition / Live

Street artist Zevs (France), renowned for his interventions that use invisible ink (visible only under UV light) to paint the silhouettes of Mohammed Atta and Abdul-Azziz AlOmari in the room they stayed in the night before the 9/11 attacks. Visual Kidnapping surgically removes a giant 40ft woman from a Lavazza coffee advertisement, and plants in its place a smaller woman. Zevs’ three-year campaign to ransom his kidnapped icon is ultimately successful in the pursuit of €500,000. Exhibition / Live

The interventions of Matthias Wernke & Mischa Leinkauf, exploring urban landscapes, are translated into playful and poetic films of trespass and civil disobedience. In Between documents their exploration of the Berliner subway at night. Exhibition / Live

The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA) UK and worldwide offer the surreal sight of a highly disciplined army of professional clowns acting against everything we associate with the ‘normal’ and the other issues. In a carnival protest against the invasion of Iraq, CIRCA formed a welcome committee for ‘arch-clown’ Circo Hermano Bush in the UK. Exhibition / CONTRAaventure

Alan Dunn (UK) intervenes in his own daily commute to offer free art to the people with whom he shares buses, stations platforms and streets. During his daily commute, multi-art- ist projects including billboards and a series of soundtracks for road tunnels and bus journeys, the colour grey and mundane repetition. Artists’ uses of the word revolution explores the phonetics of the word re-co-lo-tu-tion across history. Exhibition

Michael Rakowitz (USA) explores the political discourses and public perceptions underpinning the West’s relationship to Iraq. In Spools (2011) he took over a high end Manhattan restaurant to serve up traditional Iraqi dishes on rare pieces of fine Chinese imported porcelain, subverting the national collection. In a dramatic conclusion, a cease-and-desist order by New York City authorities resulted in the repatriation of the dishware to the Iraqi government. In his ongoing project paraSITE, Rakowitz also works with homeless people to create custom built inflatables to shelter from attack to ventilation ports. Exhibition

ZTOHOVEN (Czech) are groups of artists who expose and exploit cracks in the system. For this TV hijack Ztohoven hacked a live camera feed. From the start of the intervention, they insert an explosion into a panning shot across the Krkonose Mountains. In demonstrating the possibilities to manipulate these changes, they show how to operate with a constant threat of a cease-and-desist order and have twice successfully defended their actions in court. Exhibition / Live

Cyber activists and artists Electronic Disturbance Theater (USA) are known for their electronic actions in support of the Zapatast movement. Applying the tactics of trespass and blockade, they adopt a form of electronic warfare that creates virtual sit-ins to attack web- sites, including the Pentagon and the Mexican Stock Exchange. In Trans- border Guerrilla Theater, cheap GPS mobile phones to install a device for helping Mexican immi- grants cross the US-Mexico border. Exhibition / Live

The International Peripatetic Artists Society (IPA) makes instant unsanctioned public sculpture in the back alleys and forgotten spaces of cities across the world. Fusing the spirit of traditional street theatre with Allan Kaprow’s innovation to reclaim the art of everyday life, the Society encourages the transformation of the urban landscape into an arena of creativity. Before his death, Kaprow relinquished sole authorship of his scores, so that his initial versions were re-imagined and executed by other artists’ works, but ideas to be reinvented. Exhibition / Live

Loophole for All by Paolo Cirio exhib- its the art of corporate identity theft by offering an audience the privileges of a private corporate zone. Users may purchase and hijack of various company identities. Cirio uses interviews with major experts to expose the mechanics of institutional crime and alert us to the economic injustice of siphoning capital as a form of institutionalised crime. Exhibition

Seated around the fireplace a group of pensioners are knitting tailored balalavas for selected public statues around the city. Making use of the gallery as both a site of production and intervention Ben Parry (UK) & Peter McCaughy (Ireland) engage a small group of grandmothers and pensioners whose acts of liberation and radical dissent are brought back to the fore in a double-edge gesture where the black balalava conceals the body transforming and awakening monu- ments as live participants. Exhibition / Live / CONTRAaventure

Tushar Joag (India) takes the performative aspects of street theatre and activism and translates them into tools and methods into his own form of interventionist art. Among the many methods is the artist’s mock corpora- tion (MC), company that mimics the absurdities of government bureau- cracy, designs utility products for the citizens of today’s over-populated mega-cities and changes their modes of operation and processes and inequitable development as part of the recent history of social-political resistance of urban poor. Exhibition / Live / CONTRAaventure

During the night of 14 June 2010, actionists Voina (Russia) painted a giant 65m-long phallus on the surface of the Liteyny drawbridge leading to the Bolshoygorod headquarters of the FSB, Security Bureau. In Re: Petersburg, in a performance piece, a 25 metres long dragbrige is raised. Exhibition / CONTRAaventure

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq and correspond- ingly the largest anti-war rally in history. The work of Peter Kennard (UK) is activated by and interacts with the politics of major events. @earth, a haunting and poignant photo essay, charts this period. Exhibition

In 1985 Krzysztof Wodiczko (Poland), a pioneer of large-scale public projec- tion as political art, hacked his own state endorsed artwork for Traflagar Square. By projecting a swastika onto the pediment of the South African embassy, he showed solidarity with the Johannesburg Sunderland action against Thatcher’s support for the South African government during the Apartheid. Wodiczko’s latest work combines art and intervention combines art and intervention works with soldiers who fought during recent armed conflicts and are returning to civilian life. The War Veteran Vehicle transforms the ceremonial stelae and monuments of veterans into a mobile sound and projection vehicle as words are fired onto the desired surfaces of public buildings and monuments. Exhibition / Live / CONTRAaventure

Quebec collective BGL (Canada) are known for their playful reflections on consumer culture, nature and human behaviour and have been described as urban pranksters. Their interventions provoke significant encounters and provide a framework that cannot somehow be explained. Sub- terfuge, trickery and chance create situations that lie between reality and fiction, and provoke cognitive dissonance and anxious self-reflection. Exhibition / Live / CONTRAaventure

Tatsu Nishi (Japan) creates out-of- scale and out-of-place in encounters in public spaces, activated, transformed, street lights, parked cars and monuments. Stationed in front of the AA, Ascending and Descending coalition of a building site and its implicit expenditure of human labour power, into a sisyphian duration perfor- mance, as a worker loads earth onto a conveyor belt, relentlessly moving earth back to the hole from where it came. Exhibition / Live / CONTRAaventure

Paul Harfleet (UK) continues his ongoing Parasy Project wherein he locates himself in a gesture of quiet resistance, takes soil from the nearest source and plants a single unmarked pansy. Exhibition / Live

Upper Space (UK) an organisation and a collective of arts practitioners and community organisers, engages issues of social, economic and environ- mental justice. Their arm of unсан- cioned and improvised guerrilla tactics of public space as a contested site of democracy. You can find them playing outside the AA, around the edges of approximate expressions of citizenship. Exhibition / Live

As a rule, Laura Keeble (UK) inserts her work in the streets and public spaces in the early hours of the morning while the workaday city is still asleep. Nearly all of Keeble’s interven- tions are unсанctioned, appearing overnight by necessity. Exhibition / Live

London-based street artist and sub- vertiser Dr D (UK) joins forces with situationist filmmaker and journalist Leah Borromeo (UK) in spontaneous street interventions designed to shock the viewer into questioning the injustice of public sector cuts across Britain and the re-sanctioning of wants capitalism. Exhibition / Live / CONTRAaventure

London-based anarchitects Space Hacks (UK) oppose the state whilst the struggle against the oppressive encroachment of corporations, public institutions and urban planners in a bid to create a user-generated city designed and used by its citizens. Known for their Circle Lane parties, SH’s carnival approach to disruption means their lips are sealed. But they will spill the beans about something a cabin. Exhibition / Live / CONTRAaventure

Knit the City’s (UK) Yarn Corps are a band of sneaky, stitching graffiti-/‘knit-and-crochet’ artists with an organisational arm in the city of London, and beyond. They suggest their interventions encourage others to bring their own city to life in ways only they can possibly imagine. Live
Architectural Association
36 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3ES

AA Gallery, Front Members’ Room
and Bedford Square
26 April – 25 May 2013
Monday to Friday 10am – 7pm
Saturday 10am – 3pm

Cultural Hijack

A programme of events accompanies the exhibition.
For details please visit:
www.aaschool.ac.uk/exhibitions
As we start the next series of Live Works, we pause to send out a Week 1+ bulletin. It’s been a busy start for the cultural hijackers....

**Exhibition** documenting artworks / interventions.

AA, 36 Bedford Square. 25th April - 25th May
Times: Mon-Fri 10am – 7pm, Sat 10am-3pm

www.aaschool.ac.uk

**Live-Programme** of interventions around London

City-wide 22nd April – 26th May (wk.1 bulletin below)

www.culturalhijack.org

**CONTRAvention**, carnival weekend of events.

City-wide 23rd May – 26th May

www.culturalhijack.org

main event, **Rethinking Intervention** – RIBA 25th May

Book Now: [http://culturalhijack.eventbrite.co.uk](http://culturalhijack.eventbrite.co.uk)

---

Further enquiries: culturalhijack@gmail.com

Zevs (FR), Ztohoven (CZ), Krzysztof Wodiczko (PL), Matthias Wermke & Mischa Leinkauf (DE), Voina (RU), Upper Space (UK), Gregory Sholette (US), Michael Rakowitz (US), Platform (UK), Ben Parry (UK) & Peter McCaughey (IE), Tatzu Nishi (JP), Renzo Martens (NL), Knit the City (UK), Peter Kennard (UK), Laura Keeble (UK), Allan Kaprow (US), John Jordan (UK), Tushar Joag (IN), International Peripatetic Sculptors Society (UK+), Space Hijackers (UK), Paul Harfleet (UK), EPOS 257 (CZ), Electronic Disturbance Theater (US), Nina Edge (UK), Alan Dunn (UK), Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (UK+), Paolo Cirio (IT), Leah Borromeo & Dr.
Chicha Muffler Taxi

Various locations
inner city London
25th April…..Ongoing

Quebec Trio BGL converted a traditional Hackney cab into a mobile communal shisha pipe, inviting people to literally smoke the cab through its adapted exhaust. Watch out for the Cab on the streets of London in the week Westminster raid a Shisha factory.

The UNICELL Department of Transparency and Communication undertook a cleaning operation on 23rd of April 2013, attempting to identify edges, mapped and un-mapped, real or imagined, within London.

A highly trained and experienced team of window cleaners ‘GAZE-A-GLAZE’ collaborated with UNICELL (Tushar Joag) to go through the city to clean these edges to increase permeability and transmission.
Marx at Twilight

Karl Marx Grave
Highgate Cemetery
24th April….Ongoing

Peter McCaughey & Ben Parry
Part 1. with Lauren O’Farrell

A one-metre-cubed balaclava installed as the first of a series of re-appropriations of public statuary.

Senior Citizens, Madelaine Emberton, Libby Lee, Shashi Aul and Alida Guest, occupy the upstairs gallery of the AA, sitting by the fireplace, supplied with comfy armchairs, tea and biscuits, knitting outsized headgear, *crowns* that are then bestowed on selected statues around the city.
Ascending and Descending
(After Escher)

Bedford Square. Wed 24-Fri 26th April. Tatzu Nishi

A rota of men took turns to dig dirt from a deep hole, shovelling it on to a series of conveyor belts that return the material to the same hole.

From early morning to late at night the scene continues.

The work only ceases to allow a Victorian gothic drama to be filmed in the Square.
“For Fathi Bouchareb”
Bedford Square

At 8pm on Thursday 25th April, Paul Harfleet planted a pansy at the site of the murder of Fathi Bouchareb, Bedford Square, London.

This is part of Harfleet’s ongoing Pansy Project to plant pansies at the sites of homophobic abuse.

http://www.thepansyproject.com/page8.htm
Emergent Workers Party

The Space Hijackers held their May Day party in the courtyard of Google's multi-million HQ, just off Tottenham Court Road, an event demanding a shutdown of the internet after business hours.

Party goers celebrated with dancing and drumming as in days gone by, but with a maypole tangled with cables instead of the traditional May Day ribbons.

These May Day celebrations also marked the establishment of the Emergent Service Workers Party.
Weekly Bulletin
Thursday 25th April - Sunday 5th May 2013

IPSS

International Peripatetic Sculptors Society

April 25 - May 25th

A series of walk-talk-intervene dérives around London

Walk 1
Parliament Square to Tower Hill

Date:
International Workers Day 6th May

Image title:
The ‘Burghers of Calais’ Revisited

participants:
Graham Jeffery, Pamela Barnes, Thomas Mrnz, Eleanor Yule, Ben Parry, and Fiona Milne.

As one of a series of interventions during a 3 hour journey around inner London, a division of the IPSS occupied the empty pedestal of the bronze cast of the ‘Burghers of Calais’.

The workers wear one life belt between two – they are obviously in dire straits. Rodin’s original artwork, placed on a low pedestal to bring art down to the people, is brought further down to earth, as the heroes here are the ordinary precarious workers, rather than the rich men of the town of Calais.
CONTRAvention, RIBA 25th May - Conference Schedule.


09.00     Registration: Tea & coffee and a bun
10.00     Welcome: Tobias Klein (Architectural Association)
10.05     Introduction: Peter McCaughey & Ben Parry Overview of Cultural Hijack & live-programme
10.30     Keynote: Gregory Sholette Dark Matter (30 min + 15 min Q&A)

11.15     Break – tea & coffee

11.30     Voina (Yana Sarna) Art & Politics in Russia (30 min)
12.00     Short interventions
           Gavin Grindon, (10 min)
           Alana Jelinek, This is Not Art: Activism and Other 'Not-Art' (10 min)
12.20     Panel discussion: Yana Sarna, Gregory Sholette, Gavin Grindon, Alana Jelinek

12.45     Break - Lunch

1.45      Krzysztof Wodiczko War Veteran Projects 30 mins + 15 mins (Q&A)
2.30      ‘Unsanctioned Resistance’ Presentations from:
           Space Hijackers (20min)
           Ztohoven Moral reform and media sculptures (20min)
3.20      Panel discussion - Space Hijackers, David Pinder, Ztohoven, Graham Jeffery

3.40      Break: tea & coffee

4.00      Short interventions Nina Edge
4.15      Presentation by John Jordan Resisting Stockholm Syndrome: Anecdotes on Omniside, artivisme and sinkin your cultural capital.

5.00      30 one-minute statements from the floor... - invited from the floor
5.30      Closing comments Barbara Steveni (APG)
5.45      End performance
6.00      CLOSE

(Sunday 26th May: FREE participatory event 11.30 - 5pm Allan Kaprow, Transfer
Register and get your free ticket at: http://allankaprow.eventbrite.co.uk/)

www.culturalhijack.org